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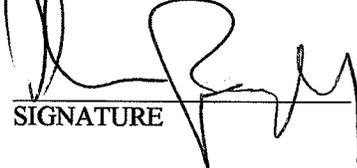
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"Tracing something unknown back to something known gives relief, soothes, satisfies, and furthermore gives a feeling of power. The unknown brings with it danger, disquiet, worry—one's first instinct is to get rid of these awkward conditions. First principle: any explanation is better than none" (Frederick Nietzsche *Twilight of The Idols* 1895).

Introduction

Anonymous is well known for its qualms with the Church of Scientology; attack of security firms like HB Gary; leak of emails, data, and credit card information from intelligence company Stratfor, Inc.; ties to the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement; involvement in the 2012 Steubenville rape case; and iconic internet addresses. But perhaps Anonymous is most associated with the grinning and cartoonish Guy Fawkes mask. This mask is not only a symbol for Anonymous but also a symbol for what draws spectators like me into speaking with Anonymous. Its image iterates throughout the Internet, protests, and bumper stickers, yet I have not been in this mask's physical presence. I have not had the opportunity to rip it from the head of its wearer to see what face exists behind. Even if I did, I would still not know the identity of Anonymous; I would be left still feeling powerless and without the footing of certainty. For Anonymous is many ethnicities, genders, citizenships, and ideologies. Having no official organization or governing body, Anonymous is a vehicle for virtually any identity.

Because it can be any identity, it is no one identity. Moreover, without no one identity or even a countable few, Anonymous puts me, and so many others, in an "awkward condition," as Nietzsche writes. This thesis is written in the same spirit as his comment: it is an empowering pursuit to explain the mysteries that make us feel powerless. The result of my endeavors has been, however, a documented exploration rather than a solacing conclusion. That exploration consists of three chapters. The first of which navigates through the major themes of Anonymous

evoked by the mask and its prevailing rhetoric, particularly the themes of immortality and ghostliness. The second chapter of this thesis explains the particulars of Anonymous' structure and ethos, which is shifting and opportunistic; this chapter emphasizes that current understandings of Anonymous as activism-oriented are short sighted synecdoche of its whole's participation. The third and final chapter explores the implications Anonymous has for concepts of power and identity in the scope of psychoanalytic, literary, and anthropological traditions; this chapter's findings are that Anonymous' structure invites a parodic interpretation of popular conceptions of power and identity.

In full, this thesis makes use of grand dinner party at which various speakers are invited; their variety is not limited to their places in history and discipline but also ideology and stance. Many of the speakers, such as Gabriella Coleman and Michel de Certueau have qualms with another side of the table, Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin. All the while, Jacque Derrida pulls the place mats from the table, making loose dishes rattle and other speakers uneasy. Needless to say, the table is at war in some places and at others, the guests share amicably plates. What is certain is that they are all invited to speak on Anonymous, some for the first time and some are regulars to this event. And most, if not all, are extensively invited in other conversations of cultural studies. I can give solace with this fact, those guest speakers that I have assigned seats next to one another because either they explain the same phenomena from different angles or one frequently cites the other. The survey of all speakers, however, aptly nods to the multiplicity that is found in Anonymous and the invitation this thesis extends to other speakers.

Despite all of my critical exploration, this utterance still evokes an irrational fear: "We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forget. We do not forgive. We do not forget." Speaking is the haunting face anyone can wear.

Chapter 1: The Mask and Ghostliness

Other than its name, perhaps the most pervasive symbol of Anonymous is the Guy Faux mask, a cartoonish depiction of a failed revolutionary's visage. The film *V for Vendetta*, an adaptation of a graphic novel of the same title by Alan Moore, popularized the particular mask worn by Anonymous. In the film, when we first meet the vigilante wearing the mask, the protagonist, Evey Hammond asks, "who are you?" to which the vigilante replies, "Who? Who is but the form following the function of what and what I am is a man in a mask [….] I'm not questioning your powers of observation; I'm merely remarking upon the paradox of asking a masked man who he is." Our vigilante has a point. Audiences cannot ask the question "who" of a figure hiding his face and not expect resistance. By wearing a mask, this figure clearly wants to retain anonymity. Until we can ascribe an identity to the person wearing the mask, we might investigate the mask with which he or she has decided to conceal his or her identity.

The mask in question proliferated during the demonstrations of the Occupy movement, which many Anonymous members sympathize. In fact, the mask became a key symbol of uprising for OWS as well. In his essay, "Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation," W. J.T Mitchell states, "Positive icons [of the movement] such as…the face of the revolutionary idea embodied in the mask of Guy Fawkes… will no doubt survive" (9). Mitchell's diction is apt because *survival* is very much a part of what wearing the Guy Fawkes mask entails—in both the comic, as well as its film adaptation, and the movements wearing it today. In the comic and film, *V for Vendetta*, the main character V takes advantage of the mask in order to escape death and even defy it. V places a mask on every individual he holds hostage before the police raid the room; the police's confusion as to which is the real V or if all are the real V allows him the diversion to make his escape. In an instance of defying death, the last of the film, thousands of

Londoners wear the mask while they march on Parliament; when the building explodes, we see every character who has died in the course of the movie unmask themselves among the living to watch the destruction of the iconic building. This chapter seeks to explain the escaping and defying of death through the Guy Fawkes mask in order to prime further explanations of Anonymous' existence as a text.

Masquerading Survival

Through a progression of wearers of the mask, hero myths often lend themselves to future generations of storytellers—especially within comics. The purpose and values associated with the mask often deal with common, general conflicts—justice, patriotism, liberation, etc.. The character to whom the mask is being passed can easily be painted as one who fits the times, one who is representative of individuals existing in a specific historical condition. The film *The Mask of Zorro* (1998) depicts Zorro passing on the mythic identity of Mexican liberty to an impoverished, criminal character, according to Nadia Lie, "one that permits the lower-class Hispanics of U.S. and Mexican society to identify more easily with [Johnston] McCulley's myth" (498). Lie points out the contrast between McCulley's more Spanish aristocratic depiction of Zorro and Spielberg's Zorro who more dynamically empathizes with those he liberates.

Perhaps the most appealing character in regards to masked concealment is Batman. Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) highlights the genesis of a mask and process affording it to inheritance. Ra's Al Ghul, the character who trains Batman in the art of fighting and concealment, convinces Bruce Wayne to join him: "But if you make yourself more than just a man, if you devote yourself to an ideal, and if they can't stop you, then you become something else entirely... a legend, Mr. Wayne. A legend." Later, after defying Ra's Al Ghul's motives, Wayne makes a similar comment when deciding to assume his role as Batman: "People need

dramatic examples to shake them out of apathy and I can't do that as Bruce Wayne, as a man I'm flesh and blood I can be ignored. I can be destroyed. But as a symbol, as a symbol I can be incorruptible; I can be everlasting."

In fact, the last film of the series perhaps aptly concludes its comments on how an identity based on concealment reconfigures the privileges of the spectator. The villain in the third film, Bane, states, "It doesn't matter who we are, what matters is our plan. No one cared who I was until I put on the mask" (*The Dark Knight Rises*). Bane replies in way (similar to how V replies) addressing the question, *who is under the mask*, and redirects it to, *what purpose requires the mask.* Bruce Wayne passes on the Batman identity to Robin, an orphan like Wayne but one of humbler beginnings. Early in the movie Robin becomes the only person in the series to deduce the secret identity of the Batman. In readdressing Robin's discovery and answering the question about why he wears the mask, Bruce Wayne says, "Batman could be anybody; that was the point." The importance, then, is not the identity behind the mask but the identity of the mask itself, which can be assumed by all.

In both the cases of Zorro and Batman, immortality has two avenues of possibility in relation to masks. First, the static identity of the mask creates a sense of immortality for other characters in that narrative universe. Second, the actual identity under the mask can change through time (immortalizing the mask) and, therefor, is often one of a particular historical necessity. This necessity is determined by the writer and will range from issues about global warming, terrorism, poverty, imperialism, and so on. Other instances of this masked progression include, but are not limited to, the "Dread Pirate Roberts" in book and film *The Princes Bride* (1973, 1987); the Phantom in *The Phantom* comics and film (1936-present, 1996); and numerous characters in Alan Moore's other graphic novels *Tomorrow Stories* and *Watchmen* (1999-2002,

1986-1987). This literary device of inheritance, passing on the torch, changing of the guard—call it what you will—is facilitated by a recognizable and uniform mask and name, which come with a particular set of values all in themselves also recognizable by audiences.

In Order to Be Timeless

Working in the same arena of comics and heroes, Umberto Eco, in his essay "The Myth of Superman," focuses on the narrative of Superman as an "inconsumable" myth. Eco is keen to mention that the narrative structure and Superman's powers of invincibility are inseparable a how it is, in fact, an endless narrative. He focuses on how the narrative structure of comic books (but best exemplified in those of Superman) disjoints time, in turn, sustaining itself. He states:

> In Superman stories the time that breaks down is the *time of the story*, that is, the notion of time that ties one episode to another. In the sphere of a story, Superman accomplishes a given job (he routs a band of gangsters); at this point the story ends. In the same comic book, or in the edition of the following week, a new story begins. If it took Superman up again at the point where he left off, he would have taken a step toward death. On the other hand, to begin a story without showing that another had preceded it would manage, momentarily, to remove Superman from the law that leads from life to death through time. (955)

Eco's argument is essentially that time becomes untied in following the character Superman through his numerous battles with evil and mundane life as Clark Kent; however, what the reader follows are not *necessarily* consecutive events. Particular guarantees must exist to sustain the endlessness of the narrative such as Superman never disclosing his identity, never marrying Lois Lane, and never killing his arch-antagonist, Lex Luthor. These acts would orient the reader in

temporality, suggesting Superman has reached landmarks in his life that cannot be reversed[1].

These actions are forbidden because with each, Eco suggests, "[Superman] has taken a step toward death, he has gotten older, if only by an hour" (953). Both commercially and entertainment-wise, the death of the "man of steel" is unacceptable.

The hero V in *V for Vendetta* does die at the end of both the graphic novel series and its film adaptation. In this way, the character is "consumed" which is much more a linear progression of events than those in the narrative of Superman. As noted earlier, however, V was not the only character in the narrative to wear the mask; this, as in the case of Zorro and Batman and other masked characters, facilitates immortality like that which Eco notes. Clark Kent must be inconsumable like Superman because, being one in the same, he is the last male Kryptonian[2]. Dismissing the fact that introducing a mask would queer the iconic image of Superman, Supergirl could not take his place because she could never assume the physique and iconically square jawed masculinity of Superman. The inconsumable myth found in *V for Vendetta* is not V but the Guy Fawkes mask he never takes off for any of the other characters. Moore creates a mysterious figure in V who is a bodily vehicle for larger themes. Although this thesis addresses body/idea dichotomies exhaustively in its second and third chapter, let the following example for the film suffice as evidence for the purposeful wearing of the mask: after being shot by, then slaying, eleven men with machine guns, V approaches Mr. Creedy, his final foe who shoots him repeatedly asking, "why won't you die?" As V kills him, he says, "Behind this mask there is

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[1] In the 1978 film, Superman reverses the revolution of the earth thus turning back time to save Lois Lane from an avalanche, which had previously killed her. This is perhaps the most extraordinary *deus ex machine* and testament to Superman's endlessness, for he is empowered with god-like abilities.

[2] In the 1980 film, three villainous Kryptonians (two males, one female) endowed with the same powers as Superman visit earth but are eventually neutralized.

more than just flesh. Beneath this mask there is an idea, Mr. Creedy. And ideas are bulletproof".

V's comments are strikingly similar to the mask-ethos also purported in Nolan's Batman films. The dichotomies of "man" and "legend" by Ra's Al Ghul; of "flesh and blood" and "symbol" by Bruce Wayne; and of "flesh" and "idea" by V—when all juxtaposed and overlaid, these dichotomies seem to privilege a platonic perspective: the material world is subordinated to the abstract world of ideas because the latter does not die and decompose like the former. A Derridean perspective, however, would counter that the world of ideas would not exist if left unthought-of by people, who (comparatively) are corporeal and material; this space of dependency found in decentering the material and abstract is where the mask occupies. Although its wearers may die, the visage of the mask survives in oral and written traditions. In the words of W.J.T. Mitchell, the value that "survives" and will continue to do so in the Guy Fawkes is that of "revolution."

Re(V)olution

For inspiring a mass of thousands of people to see parliament's destruction, all of who wore the Guy Fawkes mask, V's public appearance is incredibly brief. In fact, the public only knows him for his introductory speech and the destruction of The Old Bailey, which he takes credit for through the same speech. Other than that isolated incident, that particular masked man who incites the march on Parliament a year later is virtually absent from public eye. Those who do encounter him either die or are held at his ransom, like Evey. The significance in V's swaying of London into revolution is not his ability to do so in a short speech on television; it is that he provides London with the ability to voice itself—albeit through civil disobedience—under a disguise that is revolutionary in itself.

From 1606 to 1859, a Parliamentary Act designated November 5th as a day of

giving thanks. On that day in 1605, the plot to blow up parliament by Guy Fawkes and fellow conspirators was foiled and Parliament left unscathed (David Prior). Four hundred years after the fact, Englishmen still burn effigies of Guy Fawkes on bonfires to celebrate the continuance of Parliament and English government (although the more politically correct refer it to Bonfire Night and now use the day to celebrate the beginning of winter) (Michael Freidman 118). Yet *V for Vendetta*'s Englishmen put on Fawkes' face to march on a Parliament, this time, successfully demolished by the *terrorist*. The reversal of this historical figure's notoriety within the narrative is completely left unnoted by the characters. Also ignored is how Fawkes and his fellow conspirators were plotting to kill multiple Parliament officials for the sake of a Catholic-governed England, and yet those who march on Parliament do so not for the sake of religion but for the dismantling of a fascist police state. Therefore, even wearing a mask so specific to English distaste is a revolutionary act for citizens of England. V's appropriation of Guy Fawkes's notoriety rewrites the context and the means by which a revolution is found necessary—a context and means more fitting to the narrative's London than historical London.

The audience of V's speech, which is very much a call to arms, is only privy to a bit of information as to what those "arms" constitute. As far as the general public is aware, V does four acts inherently reactionary to authority: he kills party officials, he demolishes a public building (at the time of his speech, he has only blown up the Old Bailey), he interrupts regular broadcasting to espouse his own propaganda, and he conceals his identity governed by surveillance and census. The controlling party frames all of V's actions as those of a terrorist. They even provide misleading footage to "prove" the terrorist has been killed by the authorities; the decision, however, transforms V into a

martyr for a public who already distrusts and dislikes the controlling apparatuses. In fact, when V officially fulfills his martyrdom, it is unbeknownst to everyone except for Evey and a sympathetic police officer. Until that time, V's mistaken martyrdom inspires the group of events affirming his cause before his actual martyrdom.

The first V-inspired act is performed by a television producer who throws out the government-approved script and replaces it with one mocking the high chancellor for his ineptitude. As a result, the authorities kill this producer. His act of subversion emulates V's hijacking of regular broadcasting to criticize the government. A little girl performs her own destruction of public property by writing 'V' over multiple government propaganda posters (not blowing up a national monument, but it will do). She is killed by a policeman, which in turn spurs onlookers into killing the policeman. Her offense was not to the degree of V's demolition of the Old Bailey and her avengers do not exhibit the one-against-many mentality like V (they rather form a mob). But both the vandalism and the vigilante murder fall under the bar set by the martyred V. As we can see, within the narrative there is growing unrest not articulated until V comes onto the scene.

V's fourth aspect of revolt is perhaps the most significant appropriation by the audience (both those in the narrative and of the actual comic/movie). By concealing his identity behind a mask, he creates a space for his audience to place themselves and their neighbors behind the mask: if behind the mask is someone, but we don't know who, it could be anyone[3]. In conjunction with the words of his speech and overall subversive actions, the mask becomes a plural voice, one speaking for many viewers under the same government V subverts; in this way,

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[3] In *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox*, A. David Napier writes, "From the Stoics…we have inherited the logical paradigm called the *larvatus*, the 'masked man.' According to this paradigm, I do not know the identity of a certain masked man; I know well the identity of my own father; the masked man, therefor, is not father" (226).

he enlists the audience. Toward the end of the narrative, V takes advantage of this absent space of performativity, as well as the plurality that could imaginably fulfill it, by mailing every house in London a Guy Fawkes mask, hat, and cape; in this way, V mobilizes them (however, the audience outside the narrative must purchase these items themselves) with a means to articulate their growing unrest toward the government: revolution.

The last scene of the film, where thousands of citizens wearing V masks gather at parliament, is not very far from the simulachred version of today. W.J.T. Mitchell writes:

> [I]t was also a key ideological feature of the Occupy movement, which insisted on an iconography of nonsovereignty and anonymity, renouncing the face and figure of the charismatic leader in favor of the face in and of the crowd, the assembled masses. When faces did emerge, they were those of anonymous individuals or indefinitely repeatable *masks*, such as the grinning visage of Guy Fawkes, a singularly awkward and inappropriate icon of a nonviolent revolution (3).

In the film, Parliament explodes into flames and fireworks, which creates an ominous experience out of seeing OWS demonstrators who wear Guy Fawkes masks in front of public buildings. Even if it is a peaceful demonstration, one with symbolism evocative of a movie about terrorism, destruction, and anarchy is bound to turn heads and cause anxiety. In essence, OWS and Anonymous' appropriation of the Guy Fawkes mask sends a clear message, which is the film and comic's thesis, "People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people." Like the means Englishmen appropriate from V, Anonymous reflects a subversive and frightening ethos to government and structure.

The Revenant

Gabrielle Coleman, professor at NYU, is currently the foremost cultural theorist regarding Anonymous. She states "Anonymous manages to achieve spectacular visibility and individual invisibility at once. After studying Anonymous… my impression of the group is one of faint figures lurking in the shadows" (93). Coleman has been in close contact with many members from the group and has gained its respect in some regards; however, as her comments reflect, Anonymous is still very much a mystery to her. Its cultural appropriations other than, but also in conjunction with, Guy Fawkes and V for Vendetta, have helped sustain this mystery. A great deal of these appropriations can be traced back to the evocation of ghostliness or the presence of a revenant.

The natives of the island he inhabits call comic book hero Phantom, the ghost who walks. Similarly, Batman, Zorro, and other heroes have been thought of as ghosts because when they should have been dead, they spontaneously returned. Thematically, Guy Fawkes demonstrates the same return in the *V for Vendetta* and again today in the Occupy movement and online where Anonymous resides. V introduces himself to his first high profile victim as "the ghost of Christmas past" after the victim takes on a Scrooge-like fear. At the end of the film, when the Parliament explodes in front of masses of Guy Fawkes masks, they begin unmasking themselves; underneath the masks are the people killed earlier in the narrative by the same state whose monument explodes before them.

How very much like a ghost does Guy Fawkes return to England and to Parliament! But when the identity is without discernment, who is to say the same, violent revolutionary has not returned because of some unfinished business? He shows up on every television in London to say, "Last night I destroyed the Old Bailey, to remind England of what it has forgotten. More

than four hundred years ago a great citizen wished to embed the fifth of November forever in our

memory. His hope was to remind the world that fairness, justice, and freedom are more than

words, they are perspectives." V distances himself from Fawkes by using the third person "he."

V suggests rather that his presence and actions are *to remind* of a man who also *sought to*

remind. Moreover, today, the group in question wears the same face says, "We do not forget All

of these actors seem to arrive for the sake of ethical values; they are timely presences arriving to

instigate and receive the criticism of being terrorists, of causing terror. Just as those other

masked heroes, whose names and appearances precede them, the Guy Fawkes mask is one of

survival even beyond death for the sake of justice! What better thing to travel between life and

death than the ghost?

The author of V for Vendetta wrote a response about Anonymous and OWS's use of the

Guy Fawkes mask and his work on Vendetta. After speaking of past English injustices, Moore

states,

> Today's response to similar oppressions seems to be one that is intelligent,
>
> constantly evolving and considerably more humane, and yet our character's
>
> borrowed Catholic revolutionary visage and his incongruously Puritan apparel are
>
> perhaps a reminder that unjust institutions may always be haunted by volatile 17th
>
> century spectres, even if today's uprisings are fuelled more by social networks
>
> than by gunpowder… Some ghosts never go away. (BBC)

Here Moore reveals a new aspect of the ghostliness of Guy Fawkes' face; his face and

accompanying attire is not just the return of revolution but also of the historically hegemonic

institutions against which revolutions clashed. The idea of Moore's V is that he is some kind of

return of England's past, a return bringing with it both past institutions and the objections to

them. In V for Vendetta, society is passive while surveilled, policed, and brutalized by the government. V's actions and mask reminds them of a *citizen* (which is a key consideration in distinguishing a terrorist and a revolutionary) who once objected to the same[4] governing institutions and sought to change the course of history in doing so. It is not until "fairness, justice and freedom" are threatened yet again that Guy Fawkes, now a specter, returns in the *V for Vendetta*[5].

  Jacques Derrida offers a thought provoking approach to looking at the specter. Spurred on by the opening phrase of the *Communist Manifesto*, "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism," Derrida uses a specter as a device for deconstruction and advocate for historical justice. He gives perhaps the most concisely stated objective of his "hauntology" when he writes, "If we have been insisting so much since the beginning on the logic of the ghost, it is because it points toward a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic, the logic that distinguishes or opposes *effectivity* or *actuality* (either present, empirical, living—or not) and *ideality* (regulating or absolute non-presence)" (*Specters of Marx* 78). The ability of the specter, then, to challenge perspectives of what is present and absent, lends an effective type of juxtaposition to those writing and/or performing narratives. The juxtaposition of presence and absence, past and present and future, is inherent in a specter. Derrida annotates the phrase "the time is out of joint" from Hamlet, suggesting the alternative translation "time is off its hinges," providing a conceptual image of ghosts removing the threshold between ways of thinking when they arrive in the scene (22). The effect breaks down time similarly to Eco's

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[4] The Queen in the comic is a cog for the fascist government. In the film, she is completely absent, and the High Chancellor, Adam Sutler, usurps her prominence. Parliament, though it loses its functionality in the narrative, remains a symbol of government.

"Myth of Superman"; without two points to draw a certain progression from, linearity of time ceases to be certain. The ghost of a man 1605 making an appearance in the 21st century makes time less credible as a linear progression. Depending on that specter, the juxtaposition—always unique to conventional binary logic—changes. The specter of Guy Fawkes, in particular, is one of symbolic of revolution in various forms of simulacra. Whether against anti-Catholic oppression, fascist oppression, or, now, capitalistic oppression, a citizens revolutionary acts behind the mask of a dead revolutionary transcend terrorism in lieu of other historical injustices to which he once responded.

When speaking about growing up in a country that celebrated every November 5th by burning the likeness of a 17th century criminal figure, Alan Moore describes a post-war Britain akin to his comic's passive Britain that V awoke into action. He states, "When parents explained to their offspring about Guy Fawkes and his attempt to blow up Parliament, there always seemed to be an undertone of admiration in their voices, or at least there did in Northampton" (BBC). Merely an undertone he heard. Neither Moore nor Britain ever witnessed citizens wearing a Guy Fawkes masks marching for a cause—until recently. And now, the face of Guy Fawkes is no longer an exclusively British symbol but one that is international. Although Moore's graphic novel series from 1980 to 1989 gained an impressive following, the movie can be credited as providing global recognition of Guy Fawkes's face. And this face now comes without exact reference to its history but rather with one citing multiple appropriations and allusions (without adequate annotation) of their history. One thing remains the same. The face means to disrupt the status quo. In summoning Guy Fawkes for the Vendetta narrative, Allen Moore, with a little help from Hollywood, has given Fawkes and the Gun Powder Plot a new ethos—one that is collectivistic—which Anonymous transforms even further.

Coleman states, "The lasting effect of Anonymous may have to do with facilitating alternative acts of sociality—upending the ideological divide between individualism and collectivism—as with attacks on monolithic banks and sleazy security firms" (*Our Weirdness is Free* 95). Concluding her article, Coleman suggests the Guy Fawkes mask adequately symbolizes Anonymous because its cultural evolution allows it to be "everything and nothing at once" (95). Guy Fawkes, at the time of his trial and death, was joined only by his fellow conspirators; his capture and death did not rally masses of citizens to finish the task of usurping the queen for a Catholic rule. It was Moore and Hollywood that attached to the mask a kind of "all for one and one for all" attitude V spurs on citizens *to act as a collective under the guise of an individual*—an image conveying the predominant ethos of Anonymous and OWS.

Moore prescribes particular 21st century attributes and tactics to his character V helping Guy Fawkes claim the support he would not have gotten in the 17th century while affirming his ghostliness in the narrative; Anonymous happens to share, and are perhaps most recognizable by, the same tactics. V's first public appearance comes over the fascist-universe's version of BBC, taking over every television in England. The act is inherently *hacker* and refers back to one of the ethos's early cultural representations, the film *Hackers* (1995). In the film, the catchphrase "hack the planet" accompanies a collective move to take over broadcasting systems around the globe to air an emphatic disclosure of corruption. Similarly, V enters jumbo-trons in public squares and private televisions at home to proclaim corruption and call for justice. And similarly, the controlling authority attempts to take back control of, to take back possession of, their communications systems.

Exorcising Anonymous

As if they recognized their ghostly features, Anonymous refers to itself as Legion, which

alludes to a story in the bible about possession. In this story, Jesus asks the name of the demon

possessing the man. To which the demons reply, "We are legion, for we are many" (King James

Version, Mark 5:9). The name Legion then refers to many entities under the same cause, but it

has its roots in being initially mistaken as one entity. The use of the name, however, is most

often used in cases of possession. In many ways, to hack is to take possession of. As I will show

in following chapters, computers are now much less an extension of ourselves but a part of our

identity. Under this lens, the action of one or more people by way of their computers trespass

into the computer of another begins to look much more like possession than intrusion and theft.

Asking the name of the demon possessing a body as Jesus does is a formal aspect of

many exorcism rituals. *The Ritual Romanum*, a catholic guide to religious rites (among them, the

rite of exorcism), requires the exorcizing priest to say, "I command you, unclean spirit, whoever

you are, along with all your minions now attacking this servant of God … that you *tell me by*

some sign your name, and the day and hour of your departure" (*The Roman Ritual*). Derrida

comments on a similar phenomenon, that calling on the name of a non-physical entity is

necessitous to dispelling it. He plays with the French word for conjuration, which means both "to

call forth" and "to summon away" (49-60); the oppositional meanings embedded in the same

word must be read in context many translators will say. But Richard Kieckhefer, in his

Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century, demonstrates that the

different contexts of calling forth and summoning away are not very different. He states, "In all

these essential elements conjurations are analogous to exorcisms; indeed, the terms 'conjuration'

and 'exorcism' are essentially interchangeable in medieval usage, regardless of whether the

intent is to summon or to dispel the evil spirits" (127). Regardless of whether one is evoking or

casting out, *identification* provides the control to do either; the control occurs by putting the non-physical into the command of language—a virtually rhetorical act.

In practical terms, identification is the necessary for law enforcement to function. In order to arrest someone for illegal hacking, the arresting officers must know whom to arrest. Records of Guy Fawkes's arrest state that when asked his name, he provided the alias John Johnson repeatedly; however, after torture and investigation, Guy Fawkes did eventually disclose his name. It was then, with his real name at hand, his signed confession becomes valid and his prosecution lawful. Fawkes was also tortured for the names of other conspirators. He is noted as replying, "You would have me discover my friends; the giving warning to one overthrew us all." His comment suggests his plot is foiled and his friends defeated, so there is no reason for him to betray his friends more than they already have been by another of the same group. Anonymous, behind the face of the same tortured conspirator, faces a similar problem. If anyone in Anonymous is caught, it is likely they will be asked to provide the names of other members. The anonymity of Anonymous, even among the individuals of Anonymous themselves, seems to be a poetic revision to "Guy Fawkes" conspiracies; one individual of Anonymous is less likely to divulge the identities of other individuals in Anonymous if he or she never knew who they were in the first place—"I never saw him/her; he/she always wore a mask."

Commenting on the ghost in Hamlet, Derrida states, "This is what distinguishes a visor from a mask with which, nevertheless, it shares incomparable power, perhaps the supreme insignia of power: the power to see without being seen" (8). Coleman's comments about Anonymous' "spectacular visibility and individual invisibility at once" suggest Derrida's comments are not far off (93). This visibility from behind the mask must also be thought of as a metaphor of the technological apparatuses through which much of Anonymous performs its

operations. The virtual space provides both anonymity and access on an information-based medium. The combination of withholding information while gathering it not only provides Anonymous practical power but also further demonstrates its spectral power. Hilaire Kallendorf writes in her article "The Rhetoric of Exorcism,"

> The purpose behind these amplifications [or parallel constructions] (as is usually the case with exorcisms) goes beyond mere rhetorical effectiveness to accomplish a greater spiritual aim: if the exorcist can amass more information, he can thereby gain more control over the demon. As Joseph Kaster has explained in the context of several world religions, the more specific the knowledge the exorcist has about these spiritual forces, the greater the power he can exercise over them. (222-223)

Therefore, the ghost, specter, or demon's personal information is vital to its expulsion. Anonymous' anonymity is then not only a rhetorical element of its sometimes-illegal functions but also a contributing factor to its ghostly, as well as inevitable, presence.

We must not forget that Anonymous refers to itself as Legion. The amount of individual names canvased by that *one* is virtually unknowable in a group like Anonymous, where anyone can pick up a Guy Fawkes mask and survive its name—even without any affiliation with other individuals in Anonymous. This conspiracy is a large one to foil. From the perspective of governing institutions, Anonymous' comings and goings are then uncontrollable. And the mask, especially one of a dead man, creates a sense of uncertainty at least for an instant. As Derrida says of witnessing the ghost behind a visor or mask,

> One does not know if it is living or if it is dead. Here is—or rather there is, over there, an unnameable or almost unnameable thing: something, between something and someone, anyone or anything, some thing, 'this thing,' but this thing and not

any other, this thing that looks at us, that concerns us, comes to defy semantics as

much as ontology, psychoanalysis as much as philosophy (5).

And so this "almost unnameable thing" Anonymous, which we can be neither certain is living or

dead, estranges us from logic and puts us in a position where we can barely define, name, and—

consequently—control it.

Derrida notices this uncontrollable appearance and reappearance of a specter and

relegates it to the term revenant. He states, "A question of repletion: a specter is always

a *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*" (11).

Each year, due to the government's declaration of November 5th as a day of thanksgiving, Guy

Fawkes was expected to arrive on the scene again. Not only is the historical Guy Fawkes without

corporeality and now a specter, but he is also a revenant. From the multiplicity of Guy Fawkes

masks in *V for Vendetta* to the endurance of Anonymous' use of the same masks, this revenant

finds itself making revenants out of the corporeal; all those who wear the mask create an

uncertainty in their audience as to whether this is Guy Fawkes, V, Anonymous, or anyone else.

Derrida says of this uncertainty, "It may always be a case of still someone else. Another can

always lie, he can disguise himself as a ghost, another ghost may also be passing himself off for

this one. It's always possible" (7). Another ghost. Derrida continually comments that more than

one specter of Marx exists. Anonymous guarantees this is true of Guy Fawkes and those "almost

unnameable things" behind his visage, seeing while remaining unseen.

Anonymous puts authority and audiences in a confusing position. It both evokes the

specters of the past and creates specters out of the corporeal, those who wear the masks and

perform its functions in anonymity; in some ways, it blurs the division of those two instances. In

either case, we cannot identify those behind the mask and a keyboard. And "Since we do not see

the one who sees us … we cannot identify it in all certainty, we must fall back on its voice. The

one who says 'I am thy Father's Spirit' can only be taken at its word" (Derrida 7). We must take

this speaker behind the mask at its word. In this specter's words: "We are Anonymous": by

virtue of its name, this specter wishes to keep its real name(s) undisclosed and unaccounted for;

"We are legion": it assures us of its multitude and that it has taken possession in some regard;

"We do not forgive. We do not forget": it is a source of justice, one addressing past injustices;

and "Expect us": it is indeterminably part of the future, a revenant to come and go as it pleases.

Chapter 2: Structure and Ethos

Anonymous' proclamations of having no hierarchy and no limitations on membership leads one to assume, along with those premises, there is no set code of conduct or ethics for members to obey. And yet, Anonymous threatens, "We do not forgive. We do not forget." Is its threat not indicative of some system of ethics? Juxtaposing the past with notions of forgiveness or attrition reinforces presumptions of an ethical system. For when does justice, particularly punitive justice, govern over unperformed deeds? Even the charge of conspiracy to murder charges chiefly the conspiracy and not the murder. Surely, Anonymous evokes the past in not forgiving and not forgetting; evokes the future when it says next, "expect us"; and, in doing both, evokes the notion of justice carrying with it some system of ethics to improve the future based on the past. But divisions within Anonymous (there will always be division by its nature) problematize what this justice and ethics may entail.

Old Anonymous ~~vs.~~ New Anonymous

Seeking out Anonymous for conversation and to know it for one's self is a strange experience. Like speaking with a ghost, uncertainty and, at some level, disbelief permeates all rapport. It is a singularly awkward procedure of taking individuals at their word in forums beset by rules and customs all their own. Places like internet relay chats (IRCs), where some of the most secure and anonymous forums on the internet occur; image boards, where popular culture conversations and images evolve and shift like a burkean parlor turned joke factory; Twitter, where dialogue is limited to 170 characters per delivery and seeking response is like yelling a question to the main act in crowded concert hall; and Turntable.FM's channel AnonFM, where conversation is accompanied by a multi-genre (no genre restrictions in this room) playlist of music—all of these places guarantee little to no credibility to what is being said, posted, or re-

posted. And all of these places consist of the living, breathing Anonymous among other haunts on the Internet[6].

Each of these forums can be simultaneously cruel and altruistic yet, without difficulty, still count everyone as part of Legion; however, the forums themselves often operate as a egalitarianism that sometimes excludes those in the margins or create new margins via rules. For instance, the Anon.FM Room Rules state, "1. No genre rules, with exception of Parody/Comedy 2. 1-song limit, or 2-song limit during off-peak hours… 3. No racism / bigotry / general douchebagginess" ("AnonFm"). These rules alone, enforced by a handful of moderators (some denying being part of Anonymous), exclude a well-known ethos of Anonymous: the troll. Trolls are individuals on the Internet who prank others. The rule of thumb is, the angrier the victim of a trolling becomes, the more successful the troll. Ironically, the troll often relies on such rules to incite anger; in this case, Anon.Fm's rules engender a working ground for Anonymous to troll its own. Being banned by a moderator, in fact, is often praised as mark of achievement; the room sometimes lauds the troll after he or she is booted from the forum (usually only temporarily)[7]. Despite this tradition, some jokes or pranks still incite enraged conversations that advocate social justice and equality as a duty of Anons. This division—found in an increasing number of Anonymous locales—marks a digression from, what is sometimes termed as, Old Anonymous. Old Anonymous can be characterized as those who carry on the days of the Anonymous that was filled with ruthless trolls, pranks, hacks, and rabble-rousings, whose main target was to engender

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[6] It is important to note that these forums are relatively free, barring the cost of a computer, Internet, and their access.

[7] In *Ritual Masks* Henry Pernet notes that an element of "trickery" sometimes exists with mask wearing and rituals that requite anonymity; tricks are a tool to enforce the illusion that a transformation takes place. He notes that some mask wearers become so enthralled in their roles that they too are deceived by the illusion, believing they have transformed (117-118; 123).

OLD ANONYMOUS

FEARED, RESPECTED FINAL
BOSS OF THE INTERNET
HATER OF NIGGERS

JUSTICE
FOR
TRAYVON

DOWN WITH
INTOLERANCE

NEW ANONYMOUS

CAUSE-ORIENTED, FRIENDLY BUTT OF
EVERY JOKE ON THE INTERNET

chaos from the human condition. The internet meme "Old Anonymous vs. New Anonymous" demonstrates a comparison of Old Anonymous and the current Anonymous in which the chaos-oriented former starkly contrasts to the activism-oriented latter.

As Internet memes often do, this one evolved from a much less aggressive meme, in which the New Anonymous had only a cat on his or her shirt and he or she instead says, "Ron Paul, bee! Let's change the world next week, guise"; Old Anonymous

was previously depicted without anti-Semitic adornment or any background, accompanied by only "Feared, Respected Final Boss of the Internet" (Anonymous). The given evolution of the meme presents a fine example of an Old Anonymous ethos characterized by inciting anger. The addition to the background, two giant hentai (cartoon pornography) girls playing with a plane and, what seem to be, two fallen Twin Towers; to the foreground, a swastika and crossed out Star of David; and to the margin, the phrase "hater of niggers"—these are sure to anger or offend an individual who ascribes to a mantra anywhere in the same vein as "down with intolerance." In fact, these additions are likely to offend most reasonable viewers who understand the implications and histories of the symbols involved. It is in the same taste as this meme that has popularized for Anonymous the term "Moralfags" to describe its newer agendas and driving ethos. It is both the offensive and offended that make up these noticeable divisions within Anonymous today, coexisting under the same name.

And yet coexisting may be too simplistic a term for the relationship between Old and New Anonymous. The term itself suggests more distinction between two or more entities; as we have said and will continue to say, Anonymous is indefinite and its structural topology, amorphous and indeterminable—such an entity cannot be easily discussed in terms of factions, let alone a politics between such factions. The name Anonymous is quite enough to indicate such complexity. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker suggest in their book *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, "To name a network is to acknowledge a process of individuation ("the Internet," "al-Qaeda"), but it is also to acknowledge the multiplicity that inheres within every network ("the Internet" as a meta-network of dissimilar subnets, "al-Qaeda" as a rallying cry for many different splinter groups)" (12). I cannot think of a better name for Anonymous that encompasses it as a network (for anonymity with a capital 'A' individuates Anonymous from

other uses of the word, and anonymity as a concept acknowledges the multiplicity that exists

behind an indeterminate number of potential identities can never be fully actualized)[8]. So

division, multiplicity, and contradiction are not only expected in Anonymous, they are a

necessity for it to remain, for the most part, anonymous just as consensus, cooperation, and

similarity are necessary for it to remain, in some part, functioning. This seemingly paradoxical

standard of existence, however is not so different from the existence of already, widespread

ideologies of governance—particularly that of liberalism!

Hacking for Freedom: The Roots of Anonymous

       In their article "Hacker Practice," Gabriella Coleman and Alex Golub suggest that

hacking has a long rapport with liberalism; the extent of the relationship, they suggest is a

dialectical one defined by "multiple voices" that attempt to express themselves by "multiple

genres." Coleman's and Golub's goals:

> [To] demonstrate how liberalism works as one important context by which
>
> hackers make sense of their selves and their world as well as justify the tools they
>
> produce. But because of the different, sometimes conflicting, moral positions that
>
> are evident among hackers, we can also discuss the diversity and tensions within
>
> both computer hacking *and* liberalism. In keeping with [Mikhail] Bakhtin's
>
> notion of heteroglossia,…we draw on the ethnographic and historical record to
>
> present canonical moments, events, technologies and figures out of which three
>
> hacker genres have developed. (258-259)

Coleman does not write about Anonymous in this particular article, and her evocation of Bakhtin

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[8] Antisec and Lulzsec, splinter groups of Anonymous, demonstrate their relationship to security firms and measures. By provoking (anti) and pranking, or trolling, (lulz) firms like HB Gary these splinter groups show a more focused and organized ethos derived from a more chaotic and multifaceted Anonymous.

unfortunately does not carry over into her work on Anonymous—at least none so far; however, extending her formulations seems entirely appropriate given that Anonymous so aptly works as a heteroglossic model and the actions of Anonymous often deal with institutions that reciprocate a liberalistic ideology (law enforcement, public office, security firms, political parties, etc.). The "canonical moments, events, technologies, and figures" Coleman and Golub cite are very much formative for not just Anonymous but Internet culture as we know today. In essence, the two writers delve into what bred the culture that bred Anonymous.

Coleman and Golub believe "[c]onceptualizing hacker ethics as a constellation of genres…provides a powerful heuristic device [that] enables us to simultaneously analyze the interconnected heterogeneity of hacker ethical codes as well as those of liberalism" (271). The 'constellation' they map out for their reader is a plot of three hacker practices: the hacker underground, crypto-freedom movements, and Free and Open Source Software movements.

> [T]he themes raised again and again by hackers – free speech, meritocracy, privacy, the power of the individual – suggest that we can read the hacker material as a cultural case in which long-standing liberal ideals are reworked in the context of interaction with technical systems to create a diverse but related set of expressions concerning selfhood, property, privacy, labor, and creativity. (267)

Hackers today are generally imposed with the reputation of identity thieves and irresponsible security threats. But many people immersed in computer culture can vouch that some of those that revolutionized the industry did so by hacking or, at least, started out by hacking: people like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Steve Wozniak. Even Julian Assange has an American following today that suggests his brand of *free speech, property*, and *privacy* are alternative (and largely

digital) notions to traditional liberalistic concepts. Hacking has always been in dialogue with

business and politics when it comes to emerging technology.

In his work *Against the Machine*, Lee Siegel looks critically at Internet ethos and rhetoric

of the Internet to determine where it has come from and where it is going. His central thesis

seems to be that the "revolutionary" momentum by information-technology advocates has been

geared toward a new consumerism, or what Alvin Toffler labels, "prosumerism" (31). Seigel

explains this as "a world in which leisure time is saturated with economic urgency—the Internet

transvalues all experience into commercial experience" (60). Seigel is right; almost every use of

the Internet collects information through the use of "cookies"[9] and data mining algorithms.

Using Google, the site sells the information of what you search to various sites, and the sites you

visit thereon sell more information about your "internet-travelling." The very people ensuring

these surveillance-esque mechanisms stay in place, despite growing objections to their use, are

the same "Internet-boosters" that like Lawrence Lessig and Bill Gates, who persistently use the

words "democracy" and "freedom" to describe how the proliferation and use of the internet

safeguards and nourishes culture and human rights. Siegel states "For all their visionary-like

rhetoric about radically overhauling consciousness and culture, the revolution that they are really

describing is the overthrow of disinterested existence by the ethos and priorities of business"

(31). When Seigel delves into Standford Law professor and Internet activist, Lawrence Lessig's

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[9] Oxford English Dictionary defines cookie: "*Computing*. A token or packet of data that is passed

between computers or programs to allow access or to activate certain features; (in recent

use *spec.*) a packet of data sent by an Internet server to a browser, which is returned by the

browser each time it subsequently accesses the same server, thereby identifying the user or

monitoring his or her access to the server."

rhetoric, he notes the same evolution of liberalistic ideals Coleman points out in hacker culture. Furthermore, Seigel identifies the fallacious reasoning that led to such evolution. He states:

> More telling is Lessig's idea of "democracy," a word that in the American context means government by the people through freely elected representatives. Lessig seems to think it means "creative," or, as they like to say on the Internet, "self-expression." But even tyrants allow their subjects to write love poems or exchange favorite recordings. The Roman emperor Augustus cherished Ovid for the Latter's love poetry—until Ovid's romantic dallying came to close to the emperor's own interest. And only tyrants forbid their subjects to make political criticisms—loving to hate a politician in public is hardly an expansion of democracy. It's the result of democracy. Lessig has confused what makes democracy possible—certain political, not cultural, mechanisms—with what democracy makes possible: free "expression." (127)

Expression is indeed a value for which Internet-boosters like Lessig extol the Internet. This is the same language used by not just hacker culture but even average online users regarding Internet regulation and procedure; however, hacking culture has much more at stake.

The virtual space is a paradigmatic forum for constructed identity; here gender, race, and many other forms of identity do not have to contend with the unavoidable assumptions brought on by physical presence. Hackers have a more intimate understanding of the power of virtual space than the average user. Coleman and Golub suggest this space is essential to the expressive self of the hacker: "Hacker practice is at the center of [political, cultural, and scientific] debates, experientially and theoretically, because technology is not a means to an end for hackers, it is central to their sense of self – making and using technology is how hackers individually create

and how they socially make and reproduce themselves" (271). Anonymous, being born out of a virtual space littered with hackers, will most definitely concern itself with issues of free speech, privacy, and property rights in order to maintain its identity. And as more and more social networking sites gain the interest of individuals not necessarily proficient in hacker culture, the culture nevertheless gains a massive population to mobilize—with the proper persuasion, of course.

We are Legion: Join and Change the World!

Hacking is not just hi-tech and advanced tampering and retrieving of information. A hacker practice known as social engineering does not require too much technical aptitude. Social engineering is con artistry, tricking people into either divulging information they ought not or doing something they might not have done otherwise. In many ways, social engineers are the charmers and socialites of the hacking culture. It is this trait that has united a vast number of people under one cause; because of few individuals and their well placed words and links large groups of individuals have marched to the beat of a stranger's drum. Just as trolls often attempt to incite the anger of their own on the Internet, social engineering fellow Anons is also fair game (though it opens the door for retaliation).

Hacking culture and American culture's mutual ancestry in liberalistic values has kept a bridge between the two. Generalizing key terms into cues for who is friend and who is foe is a valuable weapon for both. In her book *We are Anonymous*, Parmy Olsen writes a journalistic narrative of Anonymous' major players and events. Here one participant in Anonymous recalls how easy replenishing Legion's ranks with impressionable youth was:

> They want to think the world is against them so there's something to justify their
> angst," he said. That's why it was almost easy to get people to join the revolution

in Anonymous. "You can just make stuff up [about government or corporate corruption] and they buy it." To write a rousing post on /b/ [a forum and haunt of Anonymous], for instance, you just needed to write in a way that would appeal to the Anon crowd, using linguistic devices like alliteration, repetition, sound bytes, and dramatic words like *injustice*, *oppression*, and *downtrodden* to describe corporations and governments, and *justice*, *freedom*, and *uprising* when referring to anonymous (Olson).

In many ways, it was rhetoric of this kind that helped create visible shift in ethos from Old Anonymous to New Anonymous. Activists for decades has demonstrated an immense power to organize and recruit based on its rhetoric, which empowers individuals with the change he or she could make; Douglas McAdam[10] labels this empowerment "biographical impact." Anonymous was already inclined toward subversive action; it was only a matter of time until a few individuals commandeered the collective toward activism.

One of Anonymous' most well known actions were those against The Church of Scientology, known as #OpChanology. Initially perturbed by the church's attempt to remove a video of famous actor and member, Tom Cruise, from the Internet, Anonymous hacked the church's websites. Legion used a denial-of-service attack (DDOS), the equivalent of stadium crowd trying to enter a revolving door at the same time, which virtually clogs up access to the site. Soon after, Anonymous bombarded various Scientology buildings with protests. It was at these historical moments where Anonymous demonstrated a physical presence, an ominous suggestion that its Internet presence should be taken more seriously than previously thought. The significance of these two events, however, suggests a mode of thinking consistent with Coleman

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[10] Stanford Professor, Douglas McAdam, specializes in Political Sociology and Social Movements with a particular interest in urban movements.

and Golub's comments; indeed, Anonymous was evoked (as well as provoked) by an instance of attempted censorship on a technology that it uses to express themselves—a technology that, like that which evolved the meme shown earlier, which relies on reproducible cultural material. Internet censorship essentially takes away Anonymous toys and instigates a tantrum of unpredictable proportions. Many activist organizations already against the Church of Scientology joined in on the attacks—not only wearing Guy Fawkes masks during protests but also adopting particular technological campaigns like DDOS (Olson); Anonymous got to exact its lulz over high-profile targets and some of its new activism-oriented participants[11] got to fight against what they thought was a corrupt church.

In "LOIC Will Tear Us Apart," Molly Sauter examines the tools used for digital activism, their design, and ethics. LOIC (Low Orbit Ion Canon) is a tool typically used to test server strength and endurance. Anonymous, during its attacks on Scientology and during #OpPayback, repurpose LOIC to DDOS various sites[12]. Sauter analyzes this tool as utility and text; she determines that its highly user-friendly helped enlist varied users to employ the tool against Scientology sites. LOIC requires one enters the site address he or she want to put under stress, put how many times the tool should simultaneously visit the address, and press enter. A three step process endowing a great deal of power to individuals, assuring them that they are making a difference, is quite a tempting offer for someone looking to be a change in the world. A rise in LOICing and DDOSing in the name of Anonymous helped appeal to an activism-oriented demographic. During these operations some of Anonymous was upset by the increasing ethical

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[11] There is difficulty in distinguishing the two; some individuals may be included in Anonymous unwittingly. The unofficial and open movement challenges media, government, and this thesis's perception of membership. Who is with who and who is not?

shift; they were angered that others "were messing with [their] lulz" (Sauter). Tarnishing the bad name of Anonymous with "do-gooding" has since been an irk to some Anons. Today the activism portion of Legion has gone further into civil activism than the Old Anonymous portion would like.

DDOS is an illegal activity in the eyes of the government while public protests like those in front of the Scientology buildings and at the Occupy Movements are legal forms of free speech. A number of participants of Anonymous' operations (#OpChanology, #OpAvengeAssange, #OpTitstorm, #OpPayback and others) have been arrested for DDOS. In response, Anonymous not only created more operations, for instance #Opfreeanons, but also sought to legalize DDOS by petitioning to the United States government. "We the People" on the White House website offers a mode of creating and signing online petitions. Anonymous' attempt at legalizing DDOS as a form of protest failed to meet the needed 25,000 signatures. The attempted petition , written and endorsed by Anonymous, evoked a response characteristic of the media's understanding of Anonymous. Journalist, Dara Kerr writes in her article about the petition, "It's hard to imagine a group that adheres to anarchic ideology would want its actions legalized under U.S. law, but that is exactly what Anonymous is doing" (Kerr). The public understanding of Anonymous and even a surface level gleam of this thesis may procure a portrait of Anonymous as an "anarchic ideology," but this would be a misunderstanding. Anonymous, by its nature, is an anarchic *structure* while its ideology is multiple (and often contradictory) within that structure. For instance, Anonymous' petition to legalize DDOS, to sediment its brand of protest and free speech, supports Coleman's and Golub's categorization of the hacker ethos as in some way purporting liberalistic values, which tend to ideologically justify a governing body

(contrary to an anarchic ideology). And still, other parts of Anonymous are motivated by chaos: they post links of flashing and strobe light images to epilepsy forums[13].

United as One, Divided by Zero

Anonymous, as we have again and again said, does not uphold a single ideology. But today's media as well as many academics with an interest in Anonymous see somewhat of a movement, which is usually indicative of a shared ideology. Either way (Anonymous with a multiple or singular ideology), Anonymous exists as a heteroglossic text, a *work* with many voices and many listeners; both ensure a certain quality in the other's life. Bakhtin writes, "The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a constant renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers" (254). Bakhtin uses "work" to describe a novel or story with two lives: a first life born out of "creation" and a renewed, second life out of "creative perception." On either side of a text exists a continuance of a living idea contingent upon an effort of inscribing or ascribing (attributing) meaning to its content. Have no qualms about it: the life of a text relies on an author and a reader to perceive something authored.

Read Anonymous as a hacktivist organization, and authors like Jeremy Hammond and Sabu[14] can be assigned to the work as co-authors in a malfunctioned collaboration; read Anonymous as a group of pranksters and tricksters only set on breaking rules, and any anarchist or pseudo-anarchist punk with a keyboard will make a fine jacket-cover picture; or read

[13] In 2008, Anonymous attacked various epilepsy resource sites, which resulted in a few seizures. *Wired* magazine reported it as "possibly the first computer attack to cause physical harm."

[14] Jeremy Hammond was handed over by fellow Anon Sabu, Hector Xavier Monsegur, to the FBI. Since the betrayal, Anonymous disdains Sabu and advocates for the release of Hammond, a bad-boy activist figure noted as a true believer in revolution.

Anonymous any way you wish, and assign credit wherever. In his article "The Ethics of Anonymity," Mark Robson states, "Attribution to one author always involves the dis-attribution of another, of all the others. This remains true even when the 'original' author is 'anonymous'" (356). If we were to ascribe to the acts and existence of Anonymous the names of any of the individuals mentioned, along with the ideologies that come with them, we would deny the essential qualities of Anonymous that probably drew them to Legion in the first place: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. These, of course, are the second life of the text that is anonymous—that which sustains itself through perception.

Sometimes referred to as the hive or the hive mind, Anonymous proclaims a sense of grandeur in being a know-all-see-all entity. This sets it apart from many movements, especially of those in the same historical period. Olson compares it to the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street; each "became fragmented by the user-generated, crowd-sourced, nature of a web-enabled society… vague in their goals, but their supporters fought passionately against rival ideologies" (Olson). Her comments reflect that she privileges the activist ethos of Anonymous, the ethos that does not want to be fragmented and does not want to be ambiguous. Anonymous, which supports multiple ways of thought and sometimes called "the hive mind," has a structure where fragmentation does not matter and ambiguity works in its structure's favor. Olson is right, however, to juxtapose Anonymous with these other movements because they are in close rapport. As I have stated earlier, Anonymous often worked in the favor of the Occupy Wall Street. The same cannot be confidently said about the Tea Party. As a movement (if we wish to limit it to such a term), Anonymous is without the bounds of traditional rhetoric, tactics, and ties to a particular trajectory; this poses a significant threat to some ideologies if Anonymous is commandeered by an opposing ideology, like it was for OWS. A structure like Anonymous'

lends itself to any and all ideologies willing to enlist and act with it. This ideology would, of

course, have to contend with the chaotic and malicious Anons[15]. The fact remains: Anonymous

shall always remain shifting and multiple because it is without structure.

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[15] Strangely, although we may speak about the hacker ethic within Anonymous as steeped in a tradition of (digital) liberalism, discussing ideology so plainly is appropriate because it can be assumed by any—even those so far unthought-of and unnamed. The multiplicity of potential ideologies shows the vastness, and therefor futility in naming ideologies which in themselves are changing and fluid. No name can mean what it meant yesterday.

Chapter 3: A Perpetual Parody

We have given ample attention to the structureless structure of Anonymous to accentuate Legion's particularly paradoxical existence as a network without the necessity of networking (a valuable quality in the information age). As a narrative, Anonymous represents momentum without a discernable first movement[16]; an ongoing plot inhabited by any character[17]; and a meaning as ephemeral and changing as it is resonant and haunting. The rhetoric permeating Anonymous—from its signature manifesto to the response invoked by its name (an ironic occurrence)—helps perpetuate its paradoxical existence, one distinctly of evocative of other texts and other experiences.

Through the narrative of *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore attempts to communicate the fear of living under an overwhelmingly powerful government as well as the individual's responsibility to liberate himself or herself from that government. The very mask that ensures the safety of individualism yet grants the power of collectivism is that of a failed revolutionary, a ghost that haunts governmental forces. Anonymous prefers to wear this mask; even if it doesn't—even if it objects to being linked to Guy Fawkes or *V for Vendetta*—its structure disallows anyone to officially say so—there is no official Anonymous. The adornment of the mask during protests, video posts, emblems, and numerous other cultural acts on behalf of Anonymous has inevitably linked them to Moore's narrative as well as the narrative they create through such cultural acts. In many ways, the mask has become a tactic of symbolic and practical nature: the concealment

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[16] In reference to the philosophical paradox of the "unmoved mover" by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics and Physics* to investigate the momentum of the universe. It was later cited in theological arguments about the existence of God.

[17] The performative aspect is inherent in all participants under anonymity. To act not like oneself is to play a character in Anonymous.

of identity is paramount to its structure and main ethos, and the particular visage doing the concealment carries the revolutionary ethos Anonymous fancies itself as having.

Anonymous, through its rhetoric and symbolism, certainly shares connotations with Moore's *V for Vendetta*. This fact is undeniable. But the experience onlookers have when in play with Anonymous traces back to something much more primal than mere intertextuality and cultural appropriation can offer. The experience to which I refer is haunting and peculiar, like seeing a ghost or the feeling that ghost is seeing you—what Sigmund Freud calls "uncanny." When referring to his movie *The Shining* for an interview, Stanley Kubrick advocates his work citing Freud,

> A story of the supernatural cannot be taken apart and analyzed too closely. The ultimate test of its rationale is whether it is good enough to raise the hairs on the back of your neck. If you submit it to a completely logical and detailed analysis it will eventually appear absurd. In his essay on the uncanny, *Das Unheimliche* ["The Uncanny"], Freud said that the uncanny is the only feeling which is more powerfully experienced in art than in life. If the genre required any justification, I should think this alone would serve as its credentials. (Michel Ciment)

Kubrick refers to the Freud's claim that "[the uncanny in literature] is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life" (150). In the case of Anonymous, the uncanny cannot be simply relegated into categories of "fiction" and "real life." The unique nature of this ambiguity arrives at our attention from two different trajectories, which we have hitherto explored: (1) the *real* structure of Anonymous and (2) the possibilities that actualize that

structure which are mere *fiction* until realized; where the two trajectories meet exists uncanny feelings as fecund as those crafted by fiction.

The Uncanny

Freud endeavors into a literary criticism of "The Sandman" by E.T.A. Hoffman in order to make valuable revisions to Ernst Jensch's concept of the uncanny. Freud's main point of contention is that the doll Olympia, which according to Jensch's account represents the uncanny's simultaneous attraction and revulsion, is not the primary source of the uncanny. Freud posits that fear of losing one's eyes is instead a more powerful instance of the uncanny. The specter that haunts Freud's most notable work also provides testimony in "The Uncanny": the specter of Oedipus Rex. Freud's famous reading of the Greek myth of Oedipus, who unwittingly bedded his mother, finds its double in Freud's reading of "The Sandman." He writes, "The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration — the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*" (132). To Freud, the fear of castration and the fear of losing one's eyes, derives from the guilt of hidden desires or acts of which are not limited to the sexual desire of a mother figure.

The Repressed

To Freud, "The uncanny is something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it. Everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition" (146). Familiarity and repression (especially the return from repression) are symbolically reliant on the eyes; for the familiar is so because it has been sensed before, and the return from repression is often evoked from sensing once again. Sensing, of course, does not have to be limited to faculty of sight, but eyes are a prevalent factor in both the narratives of Oedipus Rex and "The Sandman". Perhaps the most basic element of the uncanny and the eyes is the taboo. Society

determines what is taboo and, therefor, hidden from sight; however, because the taboo is hidden from sight, the desire to see what is unseen becomes insatiable—thus Jensch's attraction and revulsion explained via Freud's eyes. Freud and Jensch both work with literature to explain the uncanny because of its employment of symbols that effectively represent taboos. The taboo of death, for instance, offers great insight into what the human psyche covers up and fears yet knows intimately. Cadavers remind us of our own death, which is certainly inevitable and therefor familiar, yet a cold body on a morgue table is an unnatural and unwelcoming sight. Freud suggests that "most likely our fear still implies the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him" (143).

When Anonymous states that it is "Anonymous" and it is "Legion," how many minds resort to the famous authorial title whose work has spanned the existence of writing or, perhaps, to the defiant league of demons whom Jesus exorcised and whose number is unknown? Why not all of you speak your names, demons? Why not place your names upon your compositions, great authors, instead of sharing the mysterious moniker that is so prevalently shared, we often capitalize it? When we capitalize anonymity, individuating and affirming it, the name Anonymous seems an elaborate conspiracy to cause anxiety and uncertainty. Like they were secret admirers, ransom note authors, or the writers of an unsigned diaries—we attempt to (as)sign these anonymous texts during our reading of them, to attribute names to it their production; during this attempt, we are inconsolably in play with ghosts:

> Effectively, all attribution seems to contain an element of forgery, of signing on
> behalf of another. As such, it is an act of substitution as much as restitution. An
> attributionist might then feel moved to say: 'I began with the desire to speak for
> the dead.' In this semi-parody of Stephen Greenblatt's resonant phrase, I am still

trying to make a serious point, since it is important not to forget the honesty with

which Greenblatt quickly admits that he came to understand that all he could hear

in his desire to speak with the dead was his own voice. (Mark Robson 362)

How eloquently this writer illustrates that the strangest implication of finding *the who* behind

Anonymous, the author, is finding one's *self[18]*. Reading about Anonymous on an individual level

reminds us we can hide or be forgotten, a simultaneously comfortable and dreadful feeling; on

another level, being spoken to directly ("Expect us") reveals an inescapable relationship with the

unknown: its ability to hide (out in the open, no less) and ours to forget that it is there. Even our

comforts in being forgotten and let alone are shook when Anons say, "We do not forget."

The Double

The theme of "the double" is linked with the eyes according to Freud. Not exclusive from

the concept of the repressed, the double provides a more in depth and complex explanation for

the phenomena of the uncanny. Two distinct occurrences of the double, which can be

individually unfolded towards the same meaning, include: (1) "characters who are to be

considered identical because they look alike…" and (2) "the doubling, dividing and

interchanging of the [subject's] self" (Freud 135). In the first occurrence, the iteration of the

same likeness and persona creates an overwhelming sense of helplessness as if one were

outnumbered. What is more, the occurrence is often exaggerated by the iterations sharing a

"telepathic" connection "so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in

common with one another" (135). In the second occurrence, the doubling of self creates

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[18] Imagine if I had not included the name of the author. Even reading the quote through to the end, where the name is located, indicates a momentary confidence in the self's own reasoning (in deliberation of the truthfulness of the text) rather than relying on the credibility created by the mere presence of the author's name. Some readers might make a practice of checking the author's name before the content cited from that author. Any reading of Anonymous' work most definitely reveals the reading practices of the reader.

subjective confusion as to the genuine self and the double. The doubling of self perhaps harks back to notions of self-preservation; Otto Rank, who studies the double most exhaustively, believes it is representative of a larger wish for immortality. For instance, the "immortal soul" and even the tendency of parents to name their offspring their own names demonstrates a doubling of self for the sake of survival still in practice (136). In the same way, multiple generations occupying the same superhero persona represents a doubling not necessarily of the original occupant but of his or her alter ego. The masquerade survival of superheroes demonstrates a doubling of both occurrences. The genesis of the trend is the creation of an alter ego (second occurrence mentioned by Freud) like that of Batman or Phantom, which iterates across generations (first occurrence mentioned by Freud) via other wearers[19].

The uncanny doubling in Anonymous is no mystery! The iteration of the V mask at protests and in front of Parliament in *V for Vendetta*; the "hive mind" illusion that cloaks varying thoughts and emotions under the same name, Anonymous; and the ability for anyone to speak and act as Legion, creating a double of themselves—all of these contribute to the uncanny feeling that Anonymous could be anyone and is not necessarily one. For those who already fear the unknown and feel a sense of persecution, Anonymous is a daunting source of the uncanny. And yet, this source of fear is also one of hope, for its structure offers those same people a place to amplify their voice and be on the other end of their fears—on the other end of the unknown.

Although doubling is a process inherent in participating as an Anon, it also occurs for those merely observing and perhaps more so. Freud states, that

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[19] In many cases, the hero deals with identity issues from the complication of their doubling. They often resort to rhetorical reassurances. For instance, Batman uses, "It's not who you underneath; it's what you do that defines you" to affirm the cohesive identity of Bruce Wayne and Batman.

> In the pathological case of delusions of being watched, [the conscience as a] mental agency becomes isolated, dissociated from the ego, and discernible to the physician's eye. The fact that an agency of this kind exists, which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object — the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation — renders it possible to invest the old idea of a 'double' with a new meaning and to ascribe a number of things to it — above all, those things which seem to self-criticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times. (136)

A more common feeling of this paranoia has to do with how we turn the external into the internal (127). He references in particular the "delusions of being watched" as making the conscience separate from the self. Here the higher functions of the mind, although still occurring in the mind, are projected onto external figures more symbolic of watching and capable of persecuting. Although Freud cites this function of the mind as "pathological," in his *Civilization and its Discontent*, he states that "Each one of us behaves in some one respect like [someone suffering from paranoia], corrects some aspect of the world which is unbearable to him by the construction of a wish and introduces this delusion into reality" (81). Freud offers up the higher functions of the mind as a constructed double (from delusion to reality) invested with the power to rule over the self; we know this as conscience: "The super-ego is an agency which has been inferred by us, and conscience is a function which we ascribe, among other functions, to that agency. This function consists in keeping watch over the actions and intentions of the ego and judging them, in exercising censorship" (136). In the frame of other analyses, paranoia becomes a normalized tool of discipline for the western, especially post-industrial, citizen and worker.

The Panopticon

As a young boy, my grandfather told me, "Evan, if you are doing something you wouldn't like your parents to see, you are probably doing something wrong." For much of my life, this has been a guiding principle—not because my parents actually watch but because, with the help of western ideology, I feared *they could*. In *Discipline and Punishment*, Michel Foucault re-imagines power as a permeating force, constantly in flux and never isolated to a single locale; his thesis, if I could reduce his complex work to one, is that power has its vehicle through institutions that facilitate self-discipline and self-surveillance. To explain such an idea, he employs the architectural design of the panopticon, the prison structure conceived by political theorist and law philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. This structure's main features includes a solitary and central tower, which looks outward to multiple confined cells, none of which can see or communicate with the other. The ingeniousness of this design is that no prisoner would know for certain if they were being watched whereas the warden, via narrow peepholes in the central tower, would have such certainty and also the certainty of watching: "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (201-202). Power lay within the mere suggestion that one is subject to the gaze of authority.

The discourse established between the self and (an)other who surveils that self engenders specific and conditioned responses at the most ordinary of levels. In essence, Bentham exhorts where Foucault exalts the power of the panopticon to engender a self-discipline—to put prisoner and warden in the same body: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-203). The fundamental operations of the

panopticon are not separate from those of the uncanny. Both very much rely on the individual's relation to sight, his own and that of the other: "Freud connects potency to the gaze. The power and potency lie in the optic ability for control…. Power lies in the optic possibility for overview and control—the panoptic ideal" (Svein Tjelta 171). When one is deprived of sight and threatened with being seen, powerlessness resonates and discipline scaffolds itself in the place of retaliation. Freud explains the result of this powerlessness in terms of child development: "By means of identification [the child] takes the attackable authority into [himself] or [herself]. The Authority now turns into his [or her] super-ego and enters into possession of all the aggressiveness which a child would have liked to exercise against it" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 129); identification here can be simplified as internalizing the external. The irony is that the prisoner who believes in the possible presence of the warden substantiates the power of discourse that makes him a subject to it.

Real world applications of panoptic systems of observation and discipline are not limited to the unique architecture designed by Bentham; the architecture is merely an apt metaphor for modern modes of discipline. The prevalence of technologies that *watch* grows vaster each year. Traffic light cameras, police helicopters, and security cameras are just a few public eyes that keep people wary of their activities. Then there are those locales where discourse suggests the eye is there, though we may not see it. This includes Google Earth and Maps, which give people a low-grade demonstration of high-power satellites; drones, which have become an issue of controversy regarding their domestic use[20]; and even the signs that say "Speed Limit: 70. Radar Enforced" alongside highways. We live in a surveillance society becoming more and more

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[20] Drone strikes are becoming more and more a topic of interest. Columbia Law School's Humanities Council currently attempts to keep the death toll; refine the media's understanding of drones and drone research; and question the devices' legality. And currently, there are reports of domestic drone use.

familiar to us—familiar, not in the sense of intellectual understanding but one of disinterested regularity. Whether its participants are cognizant of it or not, Anonymous challenges such familiarity.

The Panoptic Double

Foucault's analysis of power demonstrates how the functions of discipline work with both internal and external authority. In his work, Michel de Certeau attempts to highlight the *tactics* that resist control in its many forms. *The Practice of Everyday Life* seems a like a play on Foucault's illustrations of panoptic power, which he calls "a way of defining power relations in terms of the *everyday life* of men" (205 my emphasis). de Certeau warns about too narrowly relying on panoptic power for a total explanation of historical panoptic surveillance:

> Beneath what one might call the 'monotheistic' privilege that panoptic apparatuses have won for themselves, a '*polytheism' of scattered practices* survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number….It remains to be seen how we should consider [these] other infinitesimal, procedures, which have not been 'privileged' by history but are nevertheless active in innumerable ways in the openings of established technological networks. This is particularly the case of procedures that do not enjoy the precondition, associated with all those studied by Foucault, of *having their own place (un lieu proper)* on which the panoptic machinery can operate. (48-49).

The warden's central tower more than symbolically functions as a point of authority; it is one that maintains a single discourse towards all of its subjects. Foucault and Bentham, when speaking about the panopticon's ability to serve as prison, school, sanitarium, and so forth, do so

with the assumption that a panoptic structure would function as one or the other rather than all simultaneously (one of the great benefits to the warden in the panopticon is the promise of a lighter burden; juggling managing different disciplines or dealing with other disciplinary managers would contradict the ease at which he was promised his job would have). A bureaucracy of sorts—dividing up activities like observation, documentation, and allotment of its subjects—is overshadowed by the dominant discourse. And these activities are overshadowed once more by the subjects' willing participation in them, contributing to their own observation, their own documentation, and their own allotment. In essence, the procedures that contribute to a panoptic system permeate our day-to-day activities; they successfully become part of our routine, one that contributes to our own subjection under particular ideologies. Here we may identify the difference between panoptic powers that are not yet internalized and those that still operate on a bureaucratic level, reliant on actual (rather than imagined or feared) hierarchies and matrices of operators. If Anonymous evokes an uncanny response particular to the current historical moment, it is most through its existence as a double to the panoptic systems it parodies. Through this panoptic parody, Anonymous highlights or breaks down the fourth wall to challenge the internalized.

Without structure and identity, Anonymous plays with the issue of authority—the kind of authority it has had turbulent history with in the past. Those government and corporate entities, bureaucratized and titled with names that insinuate their authority (central, intelligence, agency, federal, administration, etc.), stand opposite to Anonymous. The response in playing opposite to the methods of authority is not unique; however, each response is particularly opposite to the authority it opposes:

> [A]symmetric conflict is in fact a historical response to the centralization of
>
> power. This type of asymmetric intervention, a political form bred into existence
>
> as the negative likeness of its antagonist, is the inspiration for the concept of "the
>
> exploit," a resonant flaw designed to resist, threaten, and ultimately desert the
>
> dominant political diagram. Examples include the suicide bomber (versus the
>
> police), peer-to-peer protocols (versus the music conglomerates), guerrillas
>
> (versus the army), netwar (versus cyberwar), subcultures (versus the family), and
>
> so on. (Galloway and Thacker 21-22)

By breaching corporate emails, government documents, and the like; by tagging and passing on

this information; by dismantling a website's structure with tools meant to test structural integrity

of sites; and by affirming the threat that it can and will do so again, Anonymous exploits the

structured and categorized nature of certain panoptic systems. Foucault states, "[I]t will even be

possible to observe the director [or warden] himself. An inspector arriving unexpectedly at the

centre of the Panopticon will be able to judge at a glance, without anything being concealed from

him, how the entire establishment is functioning" (204). These tactics, albeit unconventional, put

it in the seat of the warden, demonstrating Anonymous also watches and disciplines. The

changing of the guard is not necessarily external or formal, for Anonymous is without structure

and current governing apparatus are already in place; internally, however, the seat of the

traditional warden is under contestation. The warden, of ethics and reason, has no static loyalty.

The act of making transparent that changeability, or "revealing what should have remained

hidden," contributes to an uncanny feeling.

     Of course, artists and entertainers notice these shifts and incorporate them into their own

work. Satirical works, in particular, articulate the phenomena created by Wikileaks and

Anonymous rather well. The position of satirists allows them to appeal to their audience's fear, humor, and interests about political topics. For instance, Saturday Night Live (SNL), which has created weekly representations of current affairs for the past thirty-eight years, plays off of the notoriety of Wikilieaks editer-in-chief Julian Assange. All three sketches centered on Assange start and end the same way: each start with key figures (President Obama, Mark Zuckerberg, and the customer relations manager of MasterCard) giving addresses that, queued by white noise and a static screen, Julian Assange highjacks—"Hello, world. I am Julian Assange". They each end with his warning, "And remember, if I die—even if there is a suicide note—it was murder". Assange (played by Bill Hader) gives commentary criticizing the motives of the American government, companies like Facebook, and journalism outlets. In some, he threatens to shut down or manipulate websites and phone apps like Amazon, Orbitz, Facebook, Netflix, Angry Birds, and "the *free* porn sites." The sketches convey Assange as smug and more competent than those he threatens; his ability to take over the airways of such iconic broadcasts speaks to his ethos of elusive and in control.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, a satirical news and talk show demonstrates a similar fascination with such an ethos. When Parmy Olson, author of *We Are Anonymous*, appears as a guest Stewart asks Olson if she was worried that Anonymous would try to ruin her life for writing her book *We Are Anonymous.* She responds, "Don't give them any ideas." John Stewart, jokingly feigns fear and paranoia, "Of course not; I don't even have a computer!" Their entire conversation revolves around fearing Anonymous and hyperbolizing the extent of their success: "Let's be honest, we will all be working for them. Because if you understand how to manipulate [online], you win," says Stewart. While touching on the subject of fake identities and lying, Stewart interjects, "Are we talking about the government or Anonymous?" Paralleling the two is

an astute move on Stewart's part: Anonymous does remind us of the covert and deceptive nature of Government. Anonymous does remind us of the powerful and momentous force of the government. And when looked at for what it actually is, Anonymous reminds us that both it and other entities with power rely on the observer's inability to observe completely. Olson's closing remarks to Stewart were, "That's their biggest power…. Their ability to create a mirage of power and scale—and fear as well."

Carnival of the Internet

We must not forget Anonymous is playful. Trolling and toppling websites is a source of entertainment, albeit unconventional one, for many. These actions translated offline would be considered harassment and destruction of private or public property. The Internet, however, already dissociates victims from their victimhood and criminals from their criminality—though people are advocating for stricter enforcement that would govern otherwise. "A whole new world" would be a hyperbolized tagline for this strange calibration of ethics, yet "a whole new economy" (and the ideology it accompanies) more aptly describes the issue. Slavoj Zizeck makes comment on Alexander Bard and Jan Soderqvist's *Netocracy*, which, according to Zizeck, developed out of Gilles Deleuze's "postcapitalism":

> As opposed to feudalism and capitalism,] in the newly emerging netocracy the measure of power and social status is the access to key pieces of information. Money and material possessions are relegated to a secondary role. The dominated class is no longer the working class, but the class of consumerists (consumtariat), those condemned to consume the information prepared and manipulated by the netocratic elite. This shift in power generates an entirely new social logic and ideology; because information circulates and changes all the time, there is no

longer a stable, long-term hierarchy, but a permanently changing network of

power relations. Individuals are "nomadic," "dividuals," constantly reinventing

themselves, adopting different roles; society itself is no longer a hierarchic whole,

but a complex, open network of networks. (Zizeck 303)

Zizeck goes on to criticize this concept as not postcapitalistic but still part of late capitalism, as

its main aspects are "only sustainable within a capitalist regime" (304); however, he agrees that

individuals do already attempt to operate as though this economy existed and that many features

of today's business indicate a shift toward this ideal. The key operations of this society are based

on a continuous shift of power based on the flow of information. Although Zizeck is correct in

pointing out its dependence on capitalism, the netocratic model provides an accurate portrayal of

how the Internet perceives itself—the significance is that many users act as if this utopia were a

reality. A reality without traditional hierarchies, one based on information rather than labor,

offers a liberating forum for people to redefine themselves and their lives.

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin explores folk culture of the Middle Ages and

Renaissance period. He finds in the undervalued work of François Rabelais a valuable rendition

of how the carnival feast turned the world, particularly its organization and values, "inside out"

(11). A similar shift in values occurs in the ideological netocracy that some in the Internet age

have adopted. Of course, this shift works best on the Internet itself, facilitated by certain

mechanisms of operation—many of which Anonymous treat and uphold as *rights*. The historical

context of Rabelais's work was that of Renaissance. It is in the carnival that we find an active

and uninhibited social rebuttal to the antecedent time period—one "between art and life" (7). It is

in Anonymous that we find an active and uninhibited social rebuttal to the antecedent time

period—one also between art and life, yet it is one distinct to (and indicative of) our particular historical condition.

Carnival time was a moment of liberation for all those who participated. Liberation involved shirking off the structures of class and nobility, which affected everyone when they were not participating the carnival (9); the new social values adopted within the carnival reflected a response to external politics: "[carnivals] were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (9). These values prove to be the same of those liberalistic values purported by Anonymous' hacker ethic, identified by Gabriella Coleman and facilitated by its structureless structure. Similarly, carnival "marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions," which I do not need to embellish at this point to say, parallels Anonymous' openness[21] to differences in ethics among its membership (Bakhtin 10). For instance, even the hierarchy framing the importance of good and bad or winning and losing is transgressed by Anonymous' love for trolling. Trollers are kicked out of chats but praised and victims are humiliated. The cheer is not long lasting, which leaves it open for another troll. The important rule of this performing in this spectacle is that victim not become angry and open them up to the ploy the troll[22]. The design of social networks allows all spectators to become participants: to comment, to share, or to rate. The tool that most assists in the carnival as a place of suspended hierarchy and disruption between the spectator and performer is the mask.

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[21] We must clarify this openness refers to its membership and not of its tolerance for fellow Anons.

[22] John Fiske examines wrestling in depth as a modern carnival. He finds the importance of "degradation and humiliation" of the loser in places of the suspended "good loser" ethic found in regular sports.

Masks have, in an anthropological sense, indicates transition periods[23]. Bakhtin makes

the point that the carnival mask effectively represents transition:

> The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay
>
> relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects
>
> conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the
>
> violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains
>
> the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and
>
> image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. (39-40)

Modern westerners, unlike some "primitive peoples," are likely to see wearing the mask as a

mere performance rather than actual transformation (Pernet 118). Freud, however, suggests that

all peoples share the "strange instinct" of feeling *one with the universe*[24], a notion imperative in

allowing the spectator's belief in transformation; this instinct, hidden by modern western

rational[25], contributes to the uncanny feeling when it is once again realized. The performative

presence of the body wearing the mask is what chiefly grounds us to the idea that a performance

occurs rather than a transformation thereby interrupting a potential return of the repressed

instinct. This interruption is a key difference in the carnivalesque as Bakhtin explores and that

created by Anonymous. Bakhtin hones his focus on Rabelais's ability to render the *grotesque*,

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[23] Napier writes, "The presence of masks in situations relating to transition is so commonly the rule that exceptions to it are hard to find. Whether the change is from one social status to another or in the conscious states of the mask wearers or their audiences, again and again mask users or their observers attest to some change in conjunction with a mask's presence" (16).

[24] In an anectdote about revealing to a friend that religion is an illusion, Freud brings up a common, "oceanic" feeling, which he himself does not share. This feeling, he posits from an outside perspective, "is a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 65).

[25] One could sum this rationale up as Cartesian, creating a mind/body dichotomy.

which uses images of "copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment," all of which were "contrary to the classic [aesthetic] images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development" (*Rabelais and His World* 25). The body, although incomplete and contorted, is very present in the grotesque. The grotesque uses the body to evade old ideas and produce new ones (I think here of dying bodies begetting living bodies). The renaissance carnival themselves were places of gluttony, swearing, drunkenness, and purging—activities that require the bodily presence[26].

The Carnvalesque Masquerade

The carnivalesque in Anonymous more closely resembles those "primitive" aspects of the mask in which "concealment…does not in any way deceive the audience, but from a desire to avoid having the wearer be too present as an individual in a scene or narrative where he has no place" (Pernet 131). A mask covers the face—a biological quality that aesthetics and philosophy has attributed too much importance [27]. With the help of a prosthesis like the Interent, the body too becomes absent from the carnival; the body is masked fully. Although many partcipants of Anyonmous may not fully be aware of the effectiveness in negating their own presence (especially on a video where performance is more dynamic than in a picture or plain text), Anonymous is imbued in rhetoric that explicitly subordinates the individual body to ideas. For instance, the largely repeated quote from *V for Vendetta,* "You cannot kill an idea," spoken by a dying man. Also, the implications of using "Legion" work more than to express multiplicity but

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[26] Fiske writes about the carnivalesque, "So the pleasures and excess of the body—drunkenness sexuality, idleness, rowdiness—were seen as threats to the social order. The pleasures of the individual body constituted a threat to the body politic" (75).

[27] I recall Cicero's words, "The countenance is the portrait of the soul" and Sir Thomas Browne's, "There are mystically in our faces certain characters which carry in them the motto of our souls, wherein he that cannot read A, B, C may read our natures."

also to extend the history of the body as a vehicle of agency rather than as agent itself. The body, already inundated with assign meaning, gets in the way of larger ideals with which it might conflict[28]: "When the mask brings judgment, anonymity, even if only in principle, it affirms the transfamilial or transclanic character of this justice" (Pernet 131). We may then extend the theme of the mask to one of prosthetic quality, linking man with idea.

Anonymous differs from the typical carnivalesque because there exists a forward movement of political and social opposition, which is usually only implicitly and momentarily suspends hierarchies ("white-knuckle" theme park rides for instance). The difference lies within the security of the body. The typical carnivalesque—though it may suspend political and social hierarchy—requires the exposition, and therefore vulnerability, of the body, whereas Anonymous protects the body through prosthetic interaction. The anonymity offered by such *social prosthesis technologies*[29] therefore suspends social and political hierarchies associated with the identity of the body as well as protects the body from exertion, harm, and profiling practices that work to find out and reinstate said hierarchies. For instance, many chat room users announce getting high or drunk, which often evokes similar responses the equivalent of "cheers." Inebriation, no way evinced except by the speaker's word, is a staple among those chatting. As people from numerous time zones participate, interaction with someone intoxicated all

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[28] This conflict is necessary for the point of the grotesque: to criticize the completeness of the body.

[29] Man ultimately has created for himself a tool to accommodate his sociality. I use the term prosthesis in reference to Freud's notion of man's relationship to tools. He writes, "With every tool man is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory, or is removing the limits to their functioning….Writing was in its origin the voice of an absent person; and the dwelling house was a substitute for the mother's womb, the first lodging, for which in all likelihood man still longs, and in which he was safe and felt at ease....Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown onto him and they still give him much trouble at times" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 90-92).

throughout the day; as Jimmy Buffet says, "It's five o'clock somewhere," and chat rooms often engender this mentality. The atmosphere effectively suspends the stigmatization of drinking in the morning or being high in public: the geography of publicness and temporality become irrelevant in the prosthetic space of a chat room (like a casino that employs artificial lights to disguise the time of day). Collective, public defiance occurs under the guarantee individual anonymity; it is safeguarded and sealed by the absence of the individual body.

The Disembodied

If we return to the panoptic model for a moment, we realize the importance of the physical body for the purpose of discipline. It is the body that is subjugated in those prison cells, and the threat of corporal punishment or confinement that convinces the mind to allow for the body's subjugation. De Certeau mentions how "the law constantly writes itself on bodies" (140). In *Understanding Popular Culture*, John Fiske expands, "Tools are the means by which the law is written on the body; the by itself is meaningless, until the law, as the agent of social discipline, writes it into a text, and thus inserts it into the social order" (91). Even our conceptions of beauty have been disciplined:

> The relationship between the body beautiful and the body ugly between the healthy and
>
> unhealthy, the well and the badly dressed, the groomed and the unkempt, the muscular
>
> and the flabby, are social relationships of norms and deviations, and therefore political
>
> relationships aimed at naturalizing in the body the norms of those with most power in the
>
> social formation. The meanings of health are social and not physical, the meanings of
>
> beauty are political and not aesthetic: health and beauty are equally sociopolitical and are
>
> therefore discourse for the exercise of social power. (Fiske 92)

Removing the individual body from physical interaction has implications that reach the most menial human perceptions. The internet technology that hosts the manipulated aesthetic and staged performances of the body (I think here of the booming pornography and fashion industries) also provide the cloak with which individual users hide their own bodies, which will most definitely differ from the photoshopped Frankensteins[30] idealized in the digital age's *Vogue*. Chat rooms do not necessarily disintegrate hierarchies; they are merely suspended by the belief that identities and bodies can be fabricated without proof of authenticity.

Body Ideal/Body Real

In Elizabeth Grosz's attempt to suggest the faults of philosophies reliance on the human body, she highlights a significance distinction between the actual and the ideal. The ghost Anonymous plays somewhere in between. She states, "there is no body as such, there are only bodies" (19). N. Katherine Hayles expands on this concept by assigning bodies (and their embodiment) to the actual and the body to the ideal; she suggests "embodiment" is, in fact, merely an individual and "contextual" "instantiation," seeking either difference or similarity to "the body," a culturally constructed abstraction. She states, "Embodiment is akin to articulation that it is inherently performative, subject to individual enactments, and therefore always to some extent improvisational. Whereas the body can disappear into information with scarcely a murmur of protest, embodiment cannot, for it is tied to the circumstances of the occasion and person" (197-198). In this lies the difference in the social implications of Rabelais' carnival and that of Anonymous.

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[30] "Photoshop" has become normalized verb deriving from a computer program. The term demonstrates interesting juxtapositions and double meanings. "Shop" in the sense of a garage, a place of engineering and doctoring, then in the sense of merchandising, reflect the process and ends of images in a technologically capable economy.

Any articulation or action performed by the member of a group, especially on behalf of that group, is a unique historical embodiment of that group; however, in doing so, this member inevitably differs from the *body* of the group, essentially the ideal of its membership and ethos—even if that ethos is characterized by drunk, disorderly, and masked. On the other hand, in Anonymous—whose existence is based upon an ideal of digital anonymity and structurelessness—its participants never make themselves distinct from their group when acting in its name: one, there are no rules; two, there is no structure; three, there is no individuality under anonymity (yet it is individuality that makes Anonymous the vibrant anarchical existence it is); and four, there is no body. The Anon, whose existence is only known to spectators by the result of his or her actions, is as abstract and disembodied as Anonymous; the context specific to his or her material conditions is erased and assumed by the phantom body of Anonymous.

Anonymous and the individuals participating in it exist as disembodied, forgotten from their positions in space and time. This ephemeral shift by Anonymous' participants from the actual to the ideal feels unnervingly fictitious, yet the ruins and victims left by Anonymous affirm its actuality; in this way, they play on the border of fiction and reality, art and life. Freud warns us, "[A]n uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on" ("The Uncanny"145). The play between actuality and ideality is not enough to produce the uncanny. That play is merely the facilitation of our senses to produce the uncanny ourselves. As Freud suggests in his comments: delusions of being watched often come with the disassociation of the self, particularly the projection of a persecutory instinct onto an external figure, the double. The words "We do not forgive. We do not forget." echoing in the

space between actual and ideal is enough make people second-guess that they are under the surveillance of Anonymous. It is a fear that already exists with government and other generalized, abstracted figures of persecution and watchfulness. Think on the phrase and its alternate versions, "Once it is on the internet, it is there forever (even if you delete it)." In the context of this phrase's utterance, "it" often means *you* or the audience of the platitude. I can safely say that I am on the Internet every day making transactions and transitions between other people and web sites. There are mechanisms (of which most know barely a scintilla about) that log my activity information and in some cases sell it. The body of knowledge about internet use suggests I click here and avoid clicking there, but my embodiment of that knowledge is never perfect—in some cases due to naiveté and in others, resistance. Hayes states, "Formed by technology at the same time that it creates technology, embodiment mediates between technology and discourse by creating new experiential frameworks that serve as boundary markers for the creation of corresponding discursive systems" (205). Discourses suggesting to me where and where not to click, as well as warns me about the permanence of posting on the web, is the very same discourse Anonymous affects. It affects me, you, and everyone else that has heard, "We are Anonymous. We are Legion. We do not forgive. Expect us."

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