

Surviving Zombie Capital

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Abstract: Contemporary Australian poet Gig Ryan's early work explores lyric romance between zombie-like subjects and survivors. Bringing the zombie into contact with the lyric, this work raises questions about how the subject feels their transition into posthuman states of being in Anthropocene neoliberalism. Often neglected from discussions of zombie capitalism, poetry written in the 1970s and 1980s presents anxieties that existed for the first generation of youth culture in neoliberalist late capitalism. Ryan's punk, anti-ballad confrontations with the Orphic lyric such as the well-known poem "If I Had a Gun" indict its alignment with a broader metaphysics of dead bodies lyricised in romantic code. As a result, by her mid-career period, Ryan has developed a Eurydicean counter-lyric in which the lyric speaker assails the violence of patriarchal romance, and the masculine-feminine divisions that sustain it, through post-punk negativity.

Keywords: Gig Ryan, zombies, neoliberalism, Orphic lyric, punk, post-punk

The wings of home enfold you and lock
under the city's poisoned coronet or halo
You gaze at the supermarket's petrified food
and respond like a zombie to the past's ghosts
and semblance of meaning
Jewelled cigarette, they got on criminally
Sorrow autonomously surges
Affirmations curl up on the fridge
(Ryan, "Eurydice's Suburb," *New and Selected Poems* 133)¹

Here we are in Eurydice's suburb. Yet, unexpectedly, that suburb is not the Underworld. First, the supermarket. Then, somewhere domestic with a "fridge." This is not the Underworld, not unless we are already dead.

The speaker of "Eurydice's Suburb," a mid-career work by contemporary Australian poet Gig Ryan, is not a benign narrator recalling the affairs of Orpheus and Eurydice from the outside. Classical poets such as Virgil once did so, braiding the characters into a lengthy georgic narrative without the embedded, implicated lyric speaker that Ryan renders in her account. Nor does this speaker adopt the radical Orphic desire of master poet wielding an abyss-delving lyre, like early twentieth-century modern Rainer Maria Rilke once did. Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* "Sonnet 9:" "Only he who has also raised / his lyre among shadows / may find his way back / to infinite praise. / Only he who has eaten with the dead / from their stores of poppy / will never again lose / the softest chord" (Rilke 367). The modern Orphic lyric poet according to Maurice

¹ All Ryan's poems analyzed in this article are taken from *New and Selected Poems* edition (2011), though separate collections are referred to where required.

Blanchot represents the archetypal poet. The poet's role is to enable "the metamorphosis of the visible into the invisible," a state in which we are radically other to ourselves: "[t]o speak is essentially to transform the visible into the invisible; it is to enter a space which is not divisible, an intimacy which, however, exists outside oneself" (Blanchot 142). Rilke's gesture is an apophatic one, Zen in its obsessions with nothingness, developing a modernist existential metaphysics. Later in *The Space of Literature* (1982), Blanchot makes his most radical statement on the intersection between death, the subject, and the work of the poet: "in the work of art, being is risked" (239). The Orphic poet's artful use of language ties them to the profounder expression of something experienced in common by beings with language; "[t]o risk language: this is one of the forms of this risk" (238). Yet, not with Orpheus and all these affirmative poetic values attached to a closing proximity to negation, void, and death does Ryan associate herself, but with Eurydice. Such a comportment suggests at once a concern with the physical rather than the metaphysical, as well as for the assumptions of lyric tropes.

Ryan speaks on behalf of an adopted Eurydice no longer consigned to death, but existing at a liminal subjective point characterized as a state that feels "like a zombie," living in an environment characterized by zombie capitalism. Through this impersonation of the living dead, "Eurydice's Suburb" disturbs the allegiance between language and death brokered by Orphic poets for theorists such as Blanchot, just as zombies too disturb this allegiance in contexts of society and consciousness. Moreover, such a manoeuvre in relation to lyricism and her contemporary moment, in this case between the late 1970s and the millennium, Ryan's engagement with the feelings of zombie life constitutes an experiment with the Orphic account of poetry as transcendental medium for reviving the dead and an exploration of feminist poetics in late capitalism.

Certainly zombie life can be extrapolated from the major revival of Eurydice in modernist literature—H.D.'s "Eurydice." Such a poem offers a towering feminist reclamation of Orpheus's art in its defiant Eurydicean reply speaking out from the hell of art and death Orpheus's failure consigns her to—"hell must break before I am lost" (55). H.D.'s Eurydicean voice is one of vengeance, a call for accountability against Orpheus's "arrogance / and ... ruthlessness," and an important retort against the patriarchy implicit in the Orphic model of the poet (53). Orpheus, deposed from his place as archetypal poet here, has his role in lyricism reversed, becoming the accomplice of death and one who for this reason occupies a world as hellish as the underworld—"hell is no worse than your earth" (54).

H.D.'s is the major anti-Orphic poem of the twentieth century, and its opposition presages Ryan's deconstructive experiments with the Orphic tradition and its binary construction. By contrast with H.D., Ryan engages in several other counter-ballad strategies that rethink lyricism's Orphic binaries more than simply upturning them. As I hope to show, Ryan engages in a deconstruction of the tradition Orpheus represents, with life-death, animate-inanimate, natural-unnatural, metaphysical-real, and presence-absence among those constitutive binaries that are rethought in this work through the liminal figure of the zombie. Ryan's very *speaker* is zombified. Her Eurydicean speaker enacts a real intrusion into the idealized world of the living while skirting the realm of the dead that provides the negative condition for life's value. My essay explores the implications of this ambiguously zombified lyric subjectivity and the

counter-ballad experiment in the early work of Ryan that ensues, with later work “Eurydice’s Suburb” acting as a culmination point in the development of this mode.

It is not commonplace in literary studies to register the lyric self as a Eurydicean zombie. Consider the troubling connotations that the zombie suggests: mindlessness, dispiritedness, abject corporeality, and the posthuman. To situate such characteristics in the context of Blanchot’s Orphic imaginary, for example, we would say that these attributes suggest the abyssal realm after the literary work, a fantasy, of metamorphoses one supposedly can never return from to write about. But contemporary poet Ryan does register the speaker in this explicit way. The simile of zombification in “Eurydice’s Suburb” betrays the boundaries that the zombie too is supposed to transgress to horrify us. The zombie in “Eurydice’s Suburb” becomes the subjective locus of memory and the past not under duress, but after it, passing through an environment of consumerism ordinarily suggesting place and experience *without* history. What are the implications of this performance of subjectivity as a property synonymous with the zombie, and a self-conscious zombie at that?

First and foremost, the title of that poem gives it all away. We are interested in a trajectory anterior to Orpheus: the suburb of Eurydice. A poem from mid-career book *Heroic Money* (2001) and collected in the poet’s *New and Selected Poems* (2011), “Eurydice’s Suburb” arrives after more than two decades of work that similarly tracks states of anaesthesia, anxiety, and negative feeling in the contexts of contemporary life in urban Australia. Close links to drug and youth subcultures of the 1970s and 1980s in the early work contextualise the zombie as a human subject without any consciousness of autonomic function under particular socio-economic, as well as chemical, control.

Ryan confronts Orpheus with the terms of Eurydice’s formerly silent but sung-for underworld through a consciously reanimating inversion. Ryan rails against the “dead lady” trope of lyricism that such classical characters as Eurydice typify by way of an impersonation of the undead in a state of contemporary return beyond clear divisions of life and death. Eurydice is a metaphor for many muse figures from the classics that tend to appear in post-classical forms of lyric, with Eurydice standing in for the lyric’s demimonde. Note the many perished women of late medieval François Villon’s *Le Testament* (c1461), for example, and their classical referentiality: “And there / was Echo once, a trace on air, / by ponds and commons she would show / a beauty more than humans bear: / where is the drift of last year’s snow” (Villon 62). I quote this version of “42 Ballade” from *Le Testament* rather than Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s version, unambiguously titled “The Ballad of Dead Ladies,” since Peter Dale’s translation emphasizes with more sense of continuity (and less narrative character) another mythic character, Echo, and her role as a posthuman apparition with a latent dialectical power. Eurydice taken out of this underworld of the ballad and delegated to a consumerist Australian present confronts the world of the living from the viewpoint of consignment to reanimation, fundamentally confounding distinctions between life and death.

Confounding such distinctions does not merely target assumptions of gender difference, but also the semiotics of lyric metaphysics. Destabilising the gendered division between life (masculine) and death (feminine) allegorised by the myth destabilises the ideology that situates poetry as a meta-physical arcana of transcendental song. We can forecast that a Eurydicean

lyric would, first of all, involve the reality of transcendental song as a metaphysics of women's dead bodies. Empowering Eurydice and placing her in the contemporary suburbs empowers what is abject in Orphic poetry from Virgil, to Villon, to Rilke: the facticity of death and its confronting morphologies. Thus, Ryan's experiments with lyric at this early stage in her career suggest a desire to confront the allegorical qualities of lyric with real, rather than imagined, existential crisis in cognate contexts of romance, gender relations, poetic subjectivity, and poetry's in-vocative power. This philosophical attitude to the lyric similarly indicts the arrangement of subjectivity between real and imagined crisis in the poet's contemporary period. In this early work that I wish to investigate, the poet foregrounds already-dead facets of so-called human life, such as found in the attenuated corporealities of consumerism in a late capitalist imaginary. What results can be called lyric in a certain sense; as Jonathan Culler defines it, at least: "lyric as epideixis—public discourse about meaning and value," a principally performative, ritual form of address distinguished from fiction (Culler 350). In the following close readings, I hope to trace posthuman guises adopted by the poet in which the infiltrations of death into life through processes of zombification come to be implicated as facets of modern subjectivity and expression in an epideictic mode that nevertheless dispenses with many of the conventions of the Orphic lyric.

Theories of the Zombie

If the zombie symbolizes humanity in a dystopian post-crisis circumstance of abject survival, how then does the zombie resonate with the more mundane cultural situation of Australia in the 1970s and 1980s? In the Australian context, Meaghan Morris indicts Australia in the post-crisis moment following the Stock Market Crash of 1987 as a nation in thrall of economic reason (see Morris 1992). One of Morris's key influences here is cultural historian Donald Horne, who similarly characterized the nation in "Money Made Us" after the Vietnam War as defined by a veritable "secular faith" in profit and economic growth (Horne Ch. 12, paragraph 1). Of course, such intersecting socio-economic matters in the posttraumatic context after the Vietnam War are well-summarized by David Harvey's theory of neoliberalism, a theory which indicts numerous pre-Vietnam War historical ideologies and conditions abetting economic reason's triumph over social consciousness realised in this era. Harvey describes the ideology of neoliberalism in a way which I think also presents a vision of how zombification of the subject is systematised in late capitalism:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey 2)

Elsewhere in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), Harvey characterizes neoliberalism as a social and political framework which entails, *pace* Karl Marx, "dispossession [of the subject] by accumulation [of capital]," achieved through what in Chapter 6 is delineated as "[p]rivatization and commodification," "[f]inancialization," "[t]he management of crises," and "[s]tate redistributions" (160-64, original emphasis). In such a world, impersonality and dehumanization undergoes further extenuation as its referent as the concept of the human becomes further negotiable through abstractions of capital. Indeed, such processes draw

Bernard Stiegler to call the neoliberal Anthropocene “an Entropocene,” punning Anthropocene with entropy (161). So, PTSD, the automation of capital, the digitization of information in repositories (and behind paywalls), drug epidemics, “liquid modernity” (see Bauman 2000), the nuclear umbrella—such rescaling and dispossession of subjective autonomy and agency going on at this stage in late capitalism gives birth to a monstrosity with human shape. Nicholas Beuret and Gareth Brown, engaging with the ideas of Marc Abélès and “Bifo” Berardi, situate the zombie as this monstrosity, as the pre-eminent posthuman figure of the Anthropocene:

Abeles—like Franco Berardi—argues that the decline of the welfare state and current stuttering of neoliberal capitalism eviscerate the very notion of progress and thus the future. The Anthropocene figures a break with existing narrations of survival however, insofar as it suggests an ecological and not economic end to the future. As the name for an on-going ecological disaster that has already arrived, it is not something that can be repaired or transformed, only endured. (Beuret and Brown 338)

Following Beuret and Brown, we might summarize that zombification is an outcome of neoliberalism in the Anthropocene in which surviving, as well as becoming the zombie, is a shared condition that is felt and distributed unevenly. Put another way, the zombie represents an end point in what Lee Edelman describes throughout his monograph *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) as “reproductive futurism”. That is to say, the zombie is a dystopian view of the end of a future defined by principles of “heteronormativity” such as the cultural sanctity of reproduction, and, instead, one defined only by the rebirth of the dead *qua* dead. Not crisis, but post-crisis; entropy as the ironic reality of apocalyptic heteronormativity. Zombies become the norm, and so-called creative human life the exception and in a state of fleeting subsistence.

Late capitalism’s entanglements with historical imperialism and its multiple colonialisms too emerge in the genre. Through the genre’s special focus upon post-crisis, thus posthuman survival, Beuret and Brown note of recent popular television show, *The Walking Dead* (2010-), and its treatment of endless survival that

[t]he need to focus on survival and making things work is suggestive of the inability to finally resolve the tension between bare life and making a life within survival. At no point does the violence foundational to forming social orders, from the fictional creations of community in *The Walking Dead* to the historical violences that mark the European legacies of colonialism and fossil fuel capitalism, ever cease. At no point does it become a matter that can be incorporated into a history of founding or forgotten within an origin story. Rather the question of violence—how violent to be, what violence is justified and what to care for or abandon—is continually posed. (350)

To the extent that the automation of public consciousness, intelligence, information, and value had been further assimilated by the apparatuses of capital than ever before, the subject in the neoliberal Anthropocene more than ever before comes to resemble the dispirited human vessel

called the zombie that now dominates our screens. And, if it doesn't, that figure ever in a state of exception might be said to survive it.

The exceptional survivor figure of the zombie genre is often its protagonist, or at least the type of character populating a coterie of central characters making up a survival set. Beuret and Brown helpfully summarise the shift in ontological and environmental values that the zombie genre illustrates through the lives of the survivor set, the conditions of which arguably resemble our lives in the Anthropocene more and more as we advance through it. For Beuret and Brown, recent zombie narratives frame capitalism as a natural force:

In *The Walking Dead*, capitalism as a social form has come to an end. The excesses of plague-nature have undone it. We could suggest that the Anthropocene invokes a future end of capitalism through a similar process of excessive nature—storms, floods, sea-rises, etc. Or also by absences—no people, no workers, no clear ground in *The Walking Dead*; no oil, no soil, no room to expand in the Anthropocene. In both scenarios that which is terminated by disaster is capitalism. (346)

Hope for a better world is thus severely attenuated in a zombie imaginary. Like zombies, survivors work within a frame of posthuman existence in which becoming is reduced to subsistence gestures. Here we find Ryan's zombie imaginary.

In Ryan's *The Division of Anger* (1980), a collection of poems written in the 1970s, lyrical romance is continually aborted. The book's radical pessimism toward the future recalls nonregenerative attitudes found in Edelman's book. Moreover, Ryan adopts a post-crisis perspective that transforms the tropes of lyrical romance, confronting them with nonregenerative forces characteristic of the zombie imaginary. In "Dying for It," for example, love is characterized by Thanatotic forces which escalate subjective crisis (Ryan, *New and Selected Poems* 8-10). At first, the speaker describes departure: "Out that door when I leave I'll disintegrate / in your backyard" (8). Soon we discover that this language orders what remains of an amorous economy: "I would kill a thousand crocodiles for you. His sincerity clacking like chainmail, / death-hot, and your dead throat moves / one dream down" (8). Here, both the speaker and the male romance foil are described like animated corpses. The speaker will "disintegrate" while the lover's "black lung sing[s] sleep" and "[y]our voice drags like footsteps" (9). Then, the poem concludes thusly:

5
I will go down into the black water
and peel its wetness back into the shore
where it will shiver like a dress.
Down between the dry rock and the soft weed
is this green blood drawn.
From the close dream and the indefinite past
the black sky calling birth. (10)

This final stanza contemplates a Stygian entrance reminiscent of Rilke. Orphic lyric fatalism is a necessary referent. Then, the denaturalizing effect of the "green blood" in line five alerts

the reader to a more disfigured happening beyond Orphism in which nature no longer lies firmly between heaven and hell. Such a division between life and non-life has been breached by a seeping monstrous fluid. Unbalance in the state of nature is confirmed in a Baudelairean finale to this poem in which a symbol of death supplants a symbol of parturition, a “black sky calling birth.” Significantly, the lyrical lover is not the poem’s speaker. Instead, “[y]our heroic gestures fall flat,” says the speaker. With the morbid inversion of birth at the end of the poem seething with an unnatural lifeblood, the abjectly delayed romance of the poem’s opening takes on an altogether undead impression. Close as such imaginings may seem to be to Romantic and post-Romantic Orphism such as found in Rilke’s “stores of poppy,” Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s melancholy dreamscapes, or Charles Baudelaire’s flowers of evil, of all bio-worlds that come to mind in Ryan’s poem it is the *zombi mundi* that is most suggested here. A Eurydicean speaker takes stock of romance tied to dead matter and departure and bears witness.

Considering such powerful echoes, it is curious to find that poetry is almost entirely left out of the discussion of the zombie myth in literary criticism, and yet Berardi, among others, lately put special emphasis on poetry to excite a consciousness of zombification under capitalism (Berardi 163). Ryan’s early work such as “Dying for It” tacitly suggests why we should change this track, and this work is an apt candidate to enlist to this task, I think. Specifically, Ryan’s work alerts us to how the zombie allegorizes imaginative intersections between patriarchy, politics, anthropocentrism, and subjectivity in post-crisis literature. Poems such as “Dying for It” suggest how the milieu of 1970s youth culture becomes the context for and subject of critique of forms of zombie ontology ramified by capital and patriarchy. Such poems also willingly confront territories of experience that were considered bad taste for canonical perspectives of lyric. An openness to what was once considered bad taste is crucial to understanding Ryan’s early mode. Early Ryan explicitly dispenses with the decorous writing and the internalisation of affect expected of serious poets, most especially serious women poets.

Violence is not the only condition of the *zombi mundi*. The collapse of the defining social contracts involved in supporting human life feature as another crucial dimension of the zombie genre. I am thinking specifically of the zombie genre as popularised in the 1970s, best associated with the work of auteur director George A. Romero. This director’s career apexes around the time of Ryan’s first four books. Indeed, the subjects of critique in Ryan’s first book are strikingly similar to the subtexts of Romero’s first three zombie films, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and *Day of the Dead* (1985) that Barry Keith Grant details in an essay on feminism and zombies:

Night ... has been read variously as a critique of the Nixonian “silent majority,” of American involvement in Vietnam, and of the family under capitalism. *Dawn* self-consciously uses the zombie as a conceit for macho masculinity and conspicuous capitalist consumption, “the whole dead weight of patriarchal consumer capitalism,” as Robin Wood puts it. (Romero’s own description of the film as “a satirical bite at American consumerism” is equally apt.) *Day* shows the extent to which society has collapsed five years later, concentrating the political connotations of zombiedom on the issue of sexual politics. Men in the film are consistently shown to be as much of a threat to life as the zombies that are forever surrounding the band of human survivors. (Grant 230)

Cryptic complicity and conformity, dangerous masculinity, zombified sexuality, and consumerism—all also feature as opponents to the intelligent survival of Ryan’s lyric and dialogic personae throughout *The Division of Anger*. Why the zombie figure has so often been drawn into critiques of such socio-cultural arrangements and their underlying economic and political formations should be explained. The reason is rather obvious: the zombie by nature indicts the environment which gives birth to it. Why the zombie and not some other monstrous threat to the human happens to be imagined to illustrate the Anthropocene’s entropy is also rather obvious. The zombie represents an entirely anthropocentric monstrosity. Kevin Alexander Boon elaborates that the zombie myth’s vision of monstrosity involves a fundamental threat to human selfhood’s supposed ontological impermeability, whether the zombie narrative conceit is based on zombies as a consequence of a novel virus, a metaphysical curse, or a pernicious misanthropic humanmade invention. For Boon, the zombie’s version of monstrosity isolates the monster within the human’s instinct for survival:

The zombie, as found in literature, film, and culture, is the most fully realized articulation of this dynamic interdependency between the human self and the monstrous other. The zombie myth embodies the monstrous, inhuman other and rightly locates the human instinct for the survival of self in issues of mortality. ... Like physical death, zombies show no favouritism and exercise no judgment. Because they are the personification of corruption, zombies cannot themselves be corrupted. The army of the undead does not vanquish the enemy, it recruits them. To succumb is to become, and once you have become a zombie, self is lost irrevocably to the other. (34-5)

The morphology of the zombie is wholly dependent on their catastrophic environmental conditions and the manner in which they have denaturalized the human life cycle. Thus, the zombie represents an inquiry into the division between crisis and post-crisis subjectivity. Visions of what a post-anthropocentric circumstance of the Earth might be necessarily entail speculating about the entropic trajectories toward human annihilation underlying contemporary socio-cultural formations of the human. As such, the 1980s work of filmmaker Romero and poet Ryan circulate around common zombie forces.

The Anthropocene Zombie

A particular value in studying zombie apparitions in Ryan’s early books is that the zombie is not an intentional character of this work as such, but rather an allusion to underlying zombie forces of capital. Ryan’s *zombi mundi* suggests a presentiment of a biopolitical condition located specifically at the heart of the neoliberal Anthropocene. Illustrated explicitly in the contexts of youth and drug culture in the 1970s and 80s, Ryan’s representations of thwarted or contaminated feeling involve a counterpoint with and immersion in zombie existence. Such representation involves the registration of incursions into life by undead forces, the contamination of human feeling, agency, and consciousness by automated human action, and elaborated anxieties about global capital as a dispiriting socio-economic circumstance. Ryan’s configurations are personified as much as textual. Complicity draws the speaker to nominate her thoughts as “android sentiments” (17), and opposition is blunt: “I had to leave” (11), “I want to throw up,” (21), or “I’d shoot the man who ...,” the elaborated refrain of “If I Had a

Gun” (22-24). This zombie characterisation of the 70s youth demimonde culminates in the conversations with and characterisations of interactions with men in this first book, and in instances from the three books that come after, *Manners of an Astronaut* (1984), *The Last Interior* (1986), and *Excavation (arguments and monologues)* (1990). The *zombi mundi*’s first sign of existence lies in the colour blue, a recurring trope lighting scenes and flesh across these books, as early as the “blue mist” in the second poem in *The Division of Anger* and opening poem of the *New and Selected Poems*, “Cool Black August / Point Lonsdale” (3), and as late as *Excavation*’s “Napoleon,” where “a stuck radius / ... // your blue face flags” (63). The latter poem reminds us too of what agent promulgates this blueness in its dramatic finale:

... *Property* tells me to fuck off
so I lose Austria. Go and kiss her
level. The head blows in its socket. (63; emphasis mine)

That final image, evocative as it may be of Emily Dickinson’s exalting claim about the power of poetry, aligns Ryan more closely with the grim images of Romero’s imagining and a particularly explosive image from *Dawn of the Dead* when “Wooley’s gone apeshit.” Indeed, Ryan’s willingness to visit bad taste is part and parcel of what distinguishes an early punk attitude in poetry utilizing punk attitudes to defy lyric norms of self-expression.

Ryan’s two pastorals, “Newtown Pastoral” and “Kings Cross Pastoral” from her fourth book, *Excavation*, are drug poems. We could call them zombie pastorals, given the complete absence of a regenerative hope for idyllic life in the two urban settings of “Newtown” and “Kings Cross.” The confident presentation of survival displayed in the effervescent negativity of Ryan’s voice counterbalances the urban scenes in a way which does recall the pastoral’s inherent dialectic of real and imaginary nature. From “Newtown Pastoral:”

Her head comes up through the ice in her coat
Dingy customers plonk themselves on the doorstep
and scrape
Either way it’s a joke
A basin of pity kills me to the top
Amongst the lovers and the nylon flowers
(*New and Selected Poems* 74)

Ryan’s dismissiveness reserves an impressive arsenal of repulsion toward the voice’s milieu, this in addition to the ironic title of the poem. Since “pity kills me to the top,” a contrary reality is confirmed: the speaker not only survives the circumstances of the drug scene in which she participates, but disseminates the pitiless character that survival engenders, darkly mocking her own pity. This is not to say that the speaker in this poem, nor the range of speakers in this collection, show no sympathy for drug addiction. That is certainly not the case. Tragedy and mourning provide the tonal conditions of many of the bleak romances in poems as early in the book as “To a Kind Man” (“To a Kind Man”)². There are multiple suggestions of the speaker’s own experience of dependency—consider “All Our Gods” (18-19) or “Stopwatch” (4), among

²This poem is not collected in Ryan’s *New and Selected Poems*, hence I have cited a digital version of the poem available online.

many. Finally, a sense of moral obligation to realism underlies much of Ryan's pitiless candour. Moments of ecstatic representation of such a milieu thus stand out when they appear; consider "All Our Gods:" "The junkies with their sublime shattered faces / are distant and contained" (18). If idealism is dispensed with, sublimation by way of the image is not. Really, Ryan's pastorals set in Sydney are clever inversions of a genre usually concerned with ideal human-environment relations. Even "Eurydice's Suburb" continues this trajectory of pitiless inversion of pastoral idealism: addressing the "Great Artist of Nostalgia," we read that, "praising the tractor / for its patriotism, you"—no doubt the poet with pastoral sympathies—"buzz into sunset / having shunned the sea's snapped edge" (134). Ryan's approach renovates the pastoral elegy into a pitiless medium of memory but carrying echoes of the darker extremities of the genre's history. Oblivion and futility certainly have some resonance in John Milton's "Lycidas," Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," or, indeed, in the modern period in Australia in Kenneth Slessor's "Five Bells." So, Ryan's pastorals knowingly involve the reappropriation of the assumed idyll of the pastoral elegy to render the pitiless negativities of her drug milieu with an affective sensitivity. Thereby, Ryan avoids the falsifying attributes of a performance of the kind of sympathy only outsiders, not the real survivors of the milieu, feel. Sympathy, indeed, undergoes a consciously pejorative treatment by Ryan elsewhere, such as in the poem "Not like a Wife," whose critique of such condescension I discuss later in this essay.

I think punk is inherently implicated in such intersections of drugs, poetic subjectivity, and crisis. Over neo-romanticism, in this early work Ryan engages in a post-lyrical poetry of image, dialogue, and monologue. All could be described as anti-ballad. Helpfully, Daniel Kane in his monograph on punk and poetry in New York studies an inverse and dynamic influence between the two, with poetry influencing the emergence of punk, which would then go on to influence punk rock-inspired anti-balladists such as Eileen Myles and Dennis Cooper (Kane 172-97, 198-215), poets who by my estimation have much in common with Ryan. Impressive candour, audacious presentations of dark content, and complex linguistic strategies for elaborating negative affects are some characteristics of Ryan's poetry similar with the work of these two contemporaries. In Kane's view, New York punk, a genre and scene deeply engaged in these subjective and aesthetic characteristics, precisely emerged by way of a deconstruction of the romantic figure of the artist maintained by some early punks influenced by New York School and second-generation New York School poets (Kane 13-16). Kane's complex critical manoeuvre requires explanation. Kane writes that "[t]he 'first-generation' New York School poet Frank O'Hara had already set the punk stage in his mock manifesto 'Personism' by stripping shamanic authority from the poet" (14). Kane might have said "stripping [Orphic] authority from the poet." Kane then proposes that the beginnings of New York punk involve a problematization of the romantic lyric persona: "it is that clash that [Patti] Smith alludes to [in a letter to Anne Waldman] between a traditional romanticism and a more playful and at times even silly New York School aesthetic that informed some of the best early New York-based punk music" (16). Readers of first and second-generation New York School poetry will be conscious of the casual, realistic, and unromantic ways in which drug culture circulates in this poetry also.

Such informality in New York School poetry will give way to more posthuman visions of drugs in punk and poetry as its casualties and depredations transform the personal lives of its participants later on. Ryan in 1980 is prophetic in regards to this turn, or at least in the middle

of it. Ryan's tonal and narrative contributions to a transformed lyricism involve scaling up such concerns to questions of human life larger than her immediate social environment, with special adventure made into questions of posthuman experience. We saw how poems such as "Stopwatch" mentioned earlier redraw lyric romance in a state of contaminated impossibility. Ryan's early poems foresee the allegorical quality of the opiate-addicted body and what by the 1980s became portentous of a post-catastrophic life of the biopolitical body in late capitalism. These were times in which the human's usefulness for capital determined its health, and whose failures to be useful were allegorised in the complementary character types of the junkie and the zombie. I have already characterized Ryan's work as a political poetry concerned with what Achille Mbembe terms "necropolitics" (qtd. in Wakeling 42) The State's administration of the terms of death for the polity are really part and parcel of the *zombi mundi*. Complementary to Mbembe's account of postcolonial forms of the State, Harvey characterizes the capitalization of health and survival this way:

If conditions among the lower class deteriorated, this was because they failed, usually for personal and cultural reasons, to enhance their own human capital (through dedication to education, the acquisition of a Protestant work ethic, submission to work discipline and flexibility, and the like). Particular problems arose, in short, because of lack of competitive strength or because of personal, cultural, and political failings. In a Darwinian neoliberal world, the argument went, only the fittest should and do survive. (157)

Neoliberalism we understand then sets the scene for a new social Darwinist socio-economic framework in which one's capitalizability figures one's ontological fitness; the junkie is another apparition of corporeality falling outside of flows of value, designating spheres by nature coded as abject. Ryan finds a language to describe a tropic hybridity found within the animated cadavers of neoliberal fallout, figures without the capital to survive but, nevertheless, continue to be animated by chemicals and the persistence of bare life.

Feeling the Zombie

How can one feel in circumstances in which subjectivity is in a state of irretrievable crisis, in states of evacuation, or, indeed, excavation, to use the title of Ryan's fourth book? At one end of the spectrum within the affective coordinates of feeling in the *zombi mundi* would be the dismissiveness we observed in *Excavation's* pastorals. Rather than pity, an engaged pitilessness animates the subject, energizing the rejection of an environment that gives birth to the zombie. And we know that this pitilessness is not for want of trying pathos; bearing a post-crisis subject's viewpoint, pity has already "kill[ed]" the "I" voice, Ryan writes in "Newtown Pastoral" (74). At the other end of the survivor's spectrum of feeling would be alarm, sometimes stemming from grief, sometimes anger, but often a wilful progression towards an exit. Alarm is synonymous with the affect of anxiety that orients previous work on Ryan, except with a different relation to time (see Plunkett; Wakeling). Alarm means anxiety in a state of more immediate urgency and with a greater intensity regarding the future-tense. As one whose subjectivity remains an autophagic prize for and an exception to the zombie, the survivor utilizes alarm and dismissiveness to ensure agency and autonomy. This characterisation of the survivor subject in Ryan's early work can be understood both lyrically and conceptually;

Ryan's personae dramatize the urban drug subcultures of Sydney and Melbourne that carry not only experiential significance but also aesthetic and philosophical import for this poet.

Felicity Plunkett notes that Melbourne-raised Ryan moved to Sydney in 1978 and returned to Melbourne in 1990 (Plunkett 279). But, we must remember that *The Last Interior* and *Excavation* explicitly adopt the voices of numerous speakers of monologue whose bleak lyricism is deceptively personal. The survivor of crisis is a particular subjectivity in zombie narratives with important consequences for the socio-political significance of what I am calling "alarm." For example, Beuret and Brown write that

[s]urvivors exist in a world without frontiers or new territories to expand into. It is a world saturated with waste and ruins—with objects severed from their previous use values. Abandoned factories, empty buildings, quiet roads. More than this, social roles no longer hold their value. (337)

So, survivors suggest an immunity to ruination at the same time as a poverty of ontogeny. In these poems, the zombie is positioned as an obstacle to autonomy, a ruinous romantic foil, and a harbinger of abjection demanding militant response; the well-known poem "If I Had a Gun" (22-24) would be an apex in imagining the latter. Ryan's post-crisis subject thereby suggests an interloper in the context of what Paul Sheehan describes as a "particular posthuman limit ... embodying the climate of fear that is the hallmark of the new century" (258). Neoliberalism's production of these fears of posthuman biological and social collapse gained traction in the Cold War moment, arguably worsening with this "new century" that Sheehan is more concerned with. Ryan's early work situates urban progress and junkie life as dimensions of the same trajectory undergirded by disaster.

Not all the aborted romances depicted in *The Division of Anger* are set as explicitly in a zombie milieu. But, even in such cases, the zombie milieu remains an enveloping condition only temporarily in a state of calm. Those poems that are not explicitly set in the *zombi mundi*, such as "Not Like a Wife" (13), otherwise feature complementarily black social comedies to the stinging critiques of the zombie condition. Moreover, these poems' preoccupations with real socio-economic differences simply take on a more realist orientation. Consider the romantic foil of "Not Like a Wife," for example. Here is a condescending lover whose comments suggest an ignorance of poverty and the predicament of youth in the community in which poet's speaker circulates. The feminist dimension of the poem implicates patriarchy in the devaluation of the speaker through the deployment of tropes of market value, the persona recalling her own lack of so-called success with "a rich man" because she did not commodify herself in line with Americanized tastes—"I was never blonde, and suntans you know, / so bland. I never looked American enough / on the beach" (13). The foil's objectification of the poem's speaker extends to imagining her adorned with jewellery, eliciting an explicit cash evaluation—"You could look like a million dollars you know" (13). "Not Like a Wife" does not seek to feel what underlies the objectifying motivations of the wealthy suitor here. His synchronicity with patriarchal logics of capital means the predicament of the zombie does not appear to arise for discussion, but is, rather, obscured by market logics of social health. So, in *The Division of Anger*, if not zombified failed lovers, as we have seen, such figures still turn out to be functionaries of a zombie system.

Ryan’s avant-gardism was feminist in orientation as early as her debut, *The Division of Anger*. In the context of contemporary feminist discourse on poetics, Ryan holds an established place in Australia’s “rich history of feminist poetry,” with Ryan singled out for “sardonic wit” (Cassidy and Wilkinson ix). Ann Vickery elaborates that Ryan’s early work involves frustration with a gender-segregated intellectual world, “the relationship between female subjectivity and sexual performance” (269; 278). Similarly, I want to suggest that this early work countervails gendered lyric norms by transgressing Orphic divisions by way of punk rock sensibilities engaged in by this musician poet as well as the zombie allegories given rise to. Punk rock’s own frequent references to the zombie and the socio-political concerns that the zombie suggests—cultural stagnancy, automation, dehumanization, and brainlessness—prove eminently relatable to Ryan’s own anti-balladry. In this sense, the development of the zombie is historically relevant to Ryan’s work; unique as it appears to be to poetry, such an allegory most of all involves horrors of zombification suffered by the first generation of neoliberal subjects.

Ryan’s most anthologized poem, “If I Had a Gun,” is Australia’s only poem (so far) explicitly contemplating reprisal against a *zombie* patriarchy. Written utilizing many of the strategies found in the early work described so far, of Ryan’s poems this work imagines the survivor best mobilized to survive zombification. This survival is enabled by counterattack, expressed in a refrain involving the future conditional tense: “[*If I had a gun*] I’d shoot the man who” A critical caveat separates what could be viewed as a revolutionary quality poised toward future emancipation from another interpretation, that is, understanding the poem to be a vision of gratuitous self-vindication through abject violence. Ryan’s title all along tacitly states that *if I had a gun*—that is, if the poem’s speaker wished to be armed with a firearm and held some of the ideologies which encourage their ownership—she speculates that she would act out such a counterassault. Looking closely at this famous feminist poem, one can see that it imagines the patriarchy in a zombie film-like insurgency that is reminiscent of Romero’s films. They come from all directions:

I’d shoot the man last night who said *Smile honey*
don’t look so glum with money swearing from his jacket

...

... I’d shoot the man
 who thinks he can look like an excavation-site
 but you can’t, who thinks what you look like’s for him
 to appraise, to sit back, to talk his intelligent way.

...

I’d shoot the man who goes stupid
 in his puny abstract how-could-I-refuse-she-needed-me
 taking her tatty head in his neutral arms like a pope
 I’d shoot the man who pulled up at the lights
 who rolled his face articulate as an asylum
 and revved the engine, who says *you’re paranoid*
 with his educated born-to-it calm

(23-4)

But, where zombie genre survivors like Romero's film protagonists work in the assaulted infinitive, blasting zombies as they invade, you can see that the embedded protagonist in this unique Ryan monologue fends off zombie potential in the future conditional tense, "I *would* shoot the man." To use Romero parlance, the speaker has not yet "gone apeshit." But, however recognisable as acts of casual sexism, each zombie incursion withholds an immediate threat of fatality for addressor and addressee. That is, what heteronormative society would often excuse as trivial masculine communication Ryan interdicts as a dangerous threat to her agency. Notably, earlier examples of objectification of woman as a body reduce the speaker to a foodstuff for consumption and gratification. Such objectification Ryan figures as a catastrophic threat to intelligent life: "I'd shoot the man last night who said *Smile honey / don't look so glum with money swearing from his jacket*" (original emphasis). As trivial as it may seem, conspicuous wealth does "swear[]" in a neoliberal context. Moreover, such armature of neoliberal patriarchy emboldens this brainless autophagy to belittle and overwrite the resistant affective deportment of the speaker. Thus, we see punk tropes and zombie subtexts converge here as the incessant list of sexist responses escalates. Heteronormative interpretations of femininity defining the terms by which the future of the subject is to be imagined are explicitly singled-out as adversaries to survival. Woman as care-giver, sidekick, supplement, vessel, and cradle are explicitly presented as the assumptions for the reproduction of patriarchal futures intended by the speaker's opponents in their seemingly casual sexist offenses. Put more simply, these figures, by other means, really do threaten to devour the speaker's brains.

The punk sensibilities of "If I Had a Gun" operate in concert with inflections of a *zombi mundi*. Rather than have a future in this familiar patriarchal regime, the poem's speaker opts for no future, "no future" being in punk discourse a term commonly tied to lyrics in Sex Pistols' "God Save The Queen:" "Don't be told what you want / Don't be told what you need / There's no future / No future." Ryan's thoughtful staging of a countervailing attitude in future conditional tense situates the fulcrum of her offense in the context of the provisional future as a category that she will negate. Staccato and barrage replaces lyric melopoeia as the means of poeticising such negations. Of course, we know that the "no future" anthem has a critical role in theories of post-crisis, post-future life in the Anthropocene such as Edelman's and Berardi's. Importantly, numerous instances of what once might have been viewed as casual interactions—e.g. "the man who whistled from his balcony," "the man who said / *Andrew's dedicated and works hard, Julia's ruthlessly ambitious*," or, "who's standing there wasted as a rifle / and explains the world to me" (22, 23, 24)—undergo re-evaluation as existential threats to the poem's speaker. Moreover, these are threats that require urgent counterattack. Interestingly, many of the offending subjects appear in the context of flirtation. In lyric terms, these are courtly encounters, failed attempts to become lovers. But rather than the fodder of the lyric, such courtly encounters have become the opponent of the Eurydicean lyric. Instead of lovers and love objects, we have survivors and zombies.

Execution of such opponents for complicity in the *zombi mundi* might seem excessive. But, to think that it is excessive means overlooking the poem as a punk poem and a zombie one at that, a poem concerned with survival in circumstances of posthumanity. In such circumstances, human traits are ultimately decided by proximity to dead matter and reanimation. "If I Had a Gun," like other examples from *The Division of Anger* considered so far, construes the love

foil as a kind of threshold similar to the posthuman limit Sheehan characterizes of the zombie, a threshold whose limen marks a border between life and non-life. The poem's chilling final line consolidates what conceives of patriarchal figurations of the subject as existentially threatening: "*Relax honey come kiss my valium-mouth blue*" (24, original emphasis). The line's insidious request recalls Boon's earlier characterisation of the zombie as one who does not simply destroy the human, but, rather, recruits them to the realm of the dead. The colour blue thus returns to register a threshold. Here, the threat to the speaker's subjectivity lies in the threat of turning blue, recalling the make-up used to depict the undead figures of the second Romero zombie film, *Dawn of the Dead*. In Ryan's frightening image, functionary, automaton, corpse, and patriarch indissolubly merge.

Ryan's zombies and their survivors themselves have particularly punk sensibilities, not surprising given Ryan's circulation within the punk rock communities of Melbourne and Sydney in the 70s and 80s. Ryan was a vocalist and songwriter in her own right from the 1980s into the 2000s. She featured in post-punk band Disband, whose sound recalls The Laughing Clowns, and Driving Past, a band whose members, among others, include post-punk historian David Nichols. In a major anthology of women's writing from 1986, Ryan identifies as "[p]oet, guitarist and singer" (Hampton and Llewelyn 278). In the context of so-called serious Australian poetry at the time, identification with the more mainstream (but, inevitably, edgier) sphere of rock music suggests a mutual desire to be associated with the music scene she was engaged in for much of her career as with Auspo. Plunkett characterizes the poet's involvement in these two scenes as "cross-pollinat[ing]:"

The expression of emotion is at the heart of each mode [music and poetry], but Ryan eschews mawkishness, preferring instead the lacerating, the acerbic, and complication—a thickening of imagery. Her poetry and song lyrics cross-pollinate: the former borrows the edginess of the rock-lyric genre, while the latter is complicated by the subtleties and complexities of her poetics. (279)

And, yet, in Ryan's world, underground music, art, and poetry scenes amounted to the same, however divided, milieu. To get past the assumptions that, say, punk rock is negative and simple where poetry is lyrical and complex, or poetry is establishment where punk rock is anti-establishment, attention to Kane's attitudes toward the dynamic relations between poetry and punk nuance how we understand this intersection true of Ryan's contexts in many ways as much as Kane's focus of downtown New York:

While establishing the ways in which so much major music from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s drew on poetry, *Do You Have a Band?* correspondingly reveals how writers such as Myles, John Giorno, and Cooper turned to punk to develop fresh ideas for their own poetics and related performance styles. This approach offers new ways to think about a range of poets whose debts to punk music have proved consistently generative and fascinating. (Kane 2)

In this respect, poetry springing out of that tumult of the 70s and 80s must in some ways be understood, if its sensibilities lie there, as a punk-inspired poetry. Punk itself, Kane shows, is dynamically connected to the Beat-generation and avant-garde-poetry-inspired "proto-punk"

musicians such as Lou Reed and Patti Smith (see: Kane 40-69, 121-44). That downtown scene during such a period, site of punk-poetry figures such as Myles, was an Eliotian waste land, in some respects, zombified by late capitalist social demobilization and the ubiquity of hard drugs. What designated its difference most of all from modernism was that its poets often made a sociable, not apocalyptic, poetry of it. Following comments made by Myles about a shift in attitude and membership of the so-called second-generation New York School and its inheritors following a fire in 1978 that damaged the scene's pseudo-headquarters, St. Mark's Poetry Project, Kane notes that

Myles, aghast at the polite turn St. Mark's was taking after the fire, would begin to create a body of work in the late 1970s and 1980s that rhymed as much with New York's punk scene and the decrepit neighbourhood she lived in as it did with the New York School "Manhattan Museum of Modern Art artworld cocktail ballet scene" she had been bequeathed. (188)

Ryan's early work chimes more with the punk scene's philosophical and attitudinal imaginary than the scene's social poetics. Ryan is thus closer then to the extreme neo-realist chiaroscuro of Robert Mapplethorpe's photography or The Sex Pistols' bleak imagery than second-generation or later New York School poetry at that time, engaged as that poetry is in more social poetics.

Although not within the scope of this essay, to contextualize Ryan in a more immediately poetry-affiliated scene, much could be made of Ryan's associations with Sydney feminist punk (and similarly post-punk) poet figure Pam Brown also. Conscious of punk's limitations as a series of postures that were becoming populist and mainstream, Ryan's involvement might be said to be post-punk in nature. "If I Had a Gun" explicitly countervails brainlessness, vacancy, and blankness. Ryan certainly appears to depart from the kind of vacancy worshipped in Pistols' "Pretty Vacant"—"don't ask us to attend / cause we're not all there." Ryan's anatomies of zombified vacancy we have considered of *The Division of Anger* so far do not synchronize well with such attitudes. Of course, anatomizing zombification as Richard Hell and the Voidoids did in their song "Blank Generation" (1977)—"I belong to the blank generation and / I can take it or leave it each time"—amounts to a radically self-reflexive negativity that would suggest a Frankfurt School theory of negation were it not for such punk maxims' assimilation into mainstream *popular* culture. Ryan's uneasy relationship to punk as a musician and a poet evidences the kinds of vacillating seriousness, humour, and protest regarding practice and sensibility happening in punk and in her generation. This sensibility includes a rising discontentment with new social and textual practices emerging in the face of escalating zombification, I want to suggest.

We should align Ryan with post-punk most of all because of a matter-of-factness to Ryan's early bleakness that I think conveys a posthuman, deconstructed lyrical quality lacking in punk rock's bluntness and contrarian sociability. Consider the similarity of Ryan's negative lyric in "January" with post-punk band The Go-Betweens's pastoral narrative in "Cattle and Cane." The Go-Betweens are less adversarial toward balladry than Ryan, to be sure, but the band's 1983 single disfigures the form in ways common to their shared post-punk milieu and to Ryan's experiments with the sensibility. Specifically, both The Go-Betweens and Ryan utilise

formerly romantic contexts—a pastoral landscape—for unique imagistic representations of dead matter:

as her limp eyes stare and wander,
scuffles the sheet under her chin, and worries like a tablet.

And that young man. His eyes
romantic as aluminium strewn against a sea-wall.
(Ryan, *New and Selected Poems* 16)

Through fields of cattle
Through fields of cane
From time to time
The waste
memory wastes
The waste
memory wastes
(The Go-Betweens, “Cattle and Cane”)

Ryan’s ironic simile for the young man establishes a memorable and ambiguous image, just as memory’s emphasis upon “[t]he waste” is both a waste of memory and a post-lyrical statement about metonyms of recollection in The Go-Betweens’s song. Doesn’t this remarkable phrase “[t]he waste / memory wastes” recall “Eurydice’s Suburb” also? Both works analyse memory and self-presence in a post-crisis context of negativity. That is certain. Ryan’s poem is anti-Orphic where you might say that the Go-Betweens song is anti-pastoral. Both retain a sense of the world in which the dead is animated, an atmosphere of what H.P. Lovecraft in his zombie tale “Herbert West—Reanimator” describes as a “chapel picturesqueness” (215). Punk’s polyvalency facilitated all sorts of contradictions such as these in later punk-inspired works. Post-punk is merely the extenuation of radical strategies of non-participation found in punk positioned toward points of departure from aesthetic and generic fealty. Even as this post-punk sensibility approaches catatonic states of observation and feeling “romantic as aluminium,” punk’s influence remains a central pivot.

Conclusion

Ryan’s willingness to construct lyric personae in such close proximity to the zombie, as figures whose worlds cannot be distinguished from zombies, and whose subjectivities exist at the ambiguous threshold between survival and zombification in the Anthropocene, suggests a radical identification with forces that few poets would be willing to identify their lyric subjectivity with. Punk rock, I argue, is a lens through which early Ryan can see a possible intersection between youth subculture, modernism, feminism, and the lyric. Opposing the Orphic distantiation of poet subjectivity from the circumstances of Eurydice, while refuting the assumption that the lyre—the medium of poetry—permits free movement between living and dead spheres, Ryan confronts readers with a spellbindingly abject sphere of posthuman encounter with dead life in animation. Anti-ballad in premise, this punk lyric draws upon the liminal mobility of Eurydice the zombie to interdict patriarchy and capital.

The present essay did not consider a potentially more obvious target motivating Ryan's confrontations with the ballad: the ideological framework of the colonial Australian ballad form. The colonial Australian ballad is a genre of poetry that is chauvinistic and patriotic in nature. The work of bush poets such as Banjo Paterson who praise the adventure and virtue of Australian pastoralism are its exemplars. Such balladry may be another object of Ryan's anti-ballad orientation, along with the post-classical feminist orientation that I did discuss. I have shown how Ryan's more obvious foil is the Orphic poet; such confrontations suggest that Ryan is far more concerned with the long history of the Western lyric. But, the Australian ballad form would be a worthy comparative subject to consider in future studies of Ryan's anti-balladry.

Ryan's pitilessness at times allows the coordination of a post-crisis state in feeling in which lyric personae circulating among the undead feel, and sustain, their survival. This zombie lyricism I see as ultimately less condescending than lyric performance of sympathy, given that this posthuman subjectivity Ryan illuminates could only be articulated by a poetic attitude so intimate with and deeply sensitive to the fallout come about by an accelerating, nascent neoliberal late capitalist environment in which health and capital are indistinguishable terms in an economy of capitalist abstraction. Ryan's lyrical negative feeling examines states of peril and absence, pursuing the real within post-crisis states in the Anthropocene. Such a range of feeling I think draws Ryan to a return to the roots of the lyric and its Orphic ambitions. There, Ryan discovers another realm, the Eurydicean, the symbol of a desire to somehow survive death and feel one's self again without being sung for.

As we saw, by the time of "Eurydice's Suburb," a point of arrival for attitudes toward zombification developed in the early work, the subject wanders the contemporary supermarket. Here, Ryan uncovers not Walt Whitman, as Allen Ginsberg did, but, rather, the posthuman self emembering what it feels to be "like a zombie." Is this "[t]he waste / memory wastes"? Ryan manages to make the zombie feel more real than the images of the "Great Artist of nostalgia". Shuddering in a field of changing negative affects in the suburb of Eurydice, as readers we are somehow buoyant in the dark, drifting in limpid imagery, like the "paper lights / tossed in desolate water / in the fish-lined plastic sea" (134).

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