Photo credit: Alessandra Capodacqua

As reported by the New York Times on April 24 of this year, a study by the Public Religion Research Institute concluded that, "besides partisanship, fears about immigrants and cultural displacement were more powerful factors than economic concerns in predicting support for Trump among white working-class voters" (Cox, et al). The importance of partisanship cannot be dismissed; according to the Times' demographic analysis of more than 24,000 exit polls, 90% of voters who identified

themselves as Republicans cast their ballots for Donald Trump, making that factor the single most accurate demographic predictor, more than gender, race, ethnicity, income or any other factor. And yet partisanship is itself not separable from the fears of displacement the PRRI study identified – considering opinions as opposed to demographics, 90% of Trump voters also disapproved of President Obama's performance in office (again, the highest correlation between any political opinion and voting for Trump). Given the strong economic recovery of the last Obama years, the absence of corruption or scandal, and the generally improved global relations of the US, it is hard to see what aspect of "performance" such voters could mean, if not the inclusivity of his rhetoric, his (rather belated) support for marriage equality, and his often expressed vision of a future that would not be the same as the past.

I suspect the views of supporters of Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen, the rulers of Myanmar and other anti-immigrationists track closely to those of Trump's political base; in any case, recent years have seen an alarming global rise in nativism as a political force. Nativism is, in essence, the politics of normalization – it seeks to privilege as rulers of a polity (a city, a country, a state) a particular constituency within that polity that regards itself as normal and constructs all other identities as deviations from that norm (to be tolerated only to the extent the nativist constituency determines). Ironically, nativism in this sense has no relationship to actual histories of habitation – having been born and lived within a polity's borders or even having been tied to a location for generations does not provide membership in the privileged identity group that styles itself as "native." Nativism is virulently anti-historical, typically denying the rich demographic variety and great migratory movements that have produced current population patterns in favor of a fantasy monocultural past. Trump's well-documented propensity for fabrication is not merely an accidental accompaniment to his nativist rhetoric; disregard for documented facts is the essence of nativism. Indeed, nativism is not in truth nativist at all; it uses the rhetoric of nationalist attachment to place as a blind for normalizing a dominant (and frequently racialized) population group against a set of excluded "others," regardless of their equal or superior claims to political power and representation. For nativists, the plurality rules; groups who do not enjoy demographic prevalence of some sort may at times spawn separatist movements, but are never soil for the sort of nativism I have described.

How, then, are the humanistic disciplines to respond to the rise of nativism? To counter-balance the rhetoric of nativism requires a radical de-normalization of all the various identity-positions that have laid claim to normality in both the geographical context and intellectual climate of one's teaching and scholarship. The list of historically-normalized identities is daunting, and de-normalization is complex;

while, for instance, many humanities departments at American colleges and universities have done a great deal to challenge the normalization of male experience, the de-normalization of the idea of binary gender itself has not proceeded nearly as far. Nor, in the globalized centers of higher education where many of us teach, will all students carry the same set of cultural normalizations. The pre-marital celibacy that one cultural group normalizes may clash with the pre-marital sexual activity that another regards as normal. The goal is not so much to denormalize each normalized identity position in turn as to challenge the practice of normalization itself.

There are many ways to challenge a practice as multi-faceted as normalization; one very direct means is to use the stuff of popular film to expose the linkage between normalized identities and nativist attitudes toward bounded and open communities. A familiar figure like the vampire serves admirably. Consider, for instance, the relationship between F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Thomas Alfredsson's *Let the Right One In* (*Låt den rätte komma in*, 2008).

Nosferatu reflects the values of a bounded community (in keeping with what Siegfried Kracauer calls "the introvert tendency" (59) of post-WW I German film): Count Orlok, the vampire, is an Eastern European outsider who resides in Transylvania, which is envisioned in the film as an alien and threatening world, marked as being "other" in comparison to Germany as much by the Slavic clothing of its inhabitants as by the presence of vampires and werewolves. Nosferatu's physiognomy, Judith Freier suggests, may associate him with that long-time European other, the Jew. Orlok's entry into the German city of Wisborg is figured as a visitation of the plague; he is accompanied by rats and coffins, and the populace attributes the string of deaths that follow in his wake to a mysterious disease. Germanism is, meanwhile, unmarked, invisible – the norm against which all outside is an invasive threat.

By contrast, in *Let the Right One In*, the vampire Eli (who is of no fixed gender; she has only a few small scars in place of genitals) brings escape from the very sort of bounded community that *Nosferatu* envisions as being under threat, liberating "her" human consort, Oskar, from a strictured and stifling little town into a world of indefinite boundaries. The film ends with Eli and Oskar on a brightly-lit train bound for no specified destination. They have escaped in particular from the adult world, with its definitions and limits; as Eli informs Oskar when, having learned she is a vampire, he asks her age, "I'm twelve. But I've been twelve for a long time." Eternally preserved from adulthood, she represents an escape from norms and normalization, from a monocultural grayness that is more horrifying than her own acts of violence.

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