The Emergence and Development of the Sentient Zombie: Zombie

Monstrosity in Postmodern and Posthuman Gothic

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of

Philosophy

Division of Literature and Languages

University of Stirling

31st October 2015

Abstract

 "If you've never woken up from a car accident to discover that your wife is dead and you're an animated rotting corpse, then you probably won't understand." (S. G. Browne, *Breathers: A Zombie's Lament*)

The zombie narrative has seen an increasing trend towards the emergence of a zombie sentience. The intention of this thesis is to examine the cultural framework that has informed the contemporary figure of the zombie, with specific attention directed towards the role of the thinking, conscious or sentient zombie. This examination will include an exploration of the zombie's folkloric origin, prior to the naming of the figure in 1819, as well as the Haitian appropriation and reproduction of the figure as a representation of Haitian identity. The destructive nature of the zombie, this thesis argues, sees itself intrinsically linked to the notion of apocalypse; however, through a consideration of Frank Kermode's *A Sense of an Ending*, the second chapter of this thesis will propose that the zombie need not represent an apocalypse that brings devastation upon humanity, but rather one that functions to alter perceptions of 'humanity' itself. The third chapter of this thesis explores the use of the term "braaaaiiinnss" as the epitomised zombie voice in the figure's development as an effective threat within zombie-themed videogames. The use of an epitomised zombie voice, I argue, results in the potential for the embodiment of a zombie subject. Chapter Four explores the development of this embodied zombie subject through the introduction of the Zombie Memoire narrative and examines the figure as a representation of Agamben's Homo Sacer or 'bare life': though often configured as a

non-sacrificial object that can be annihilated without sacrifice and consequence, the zombie, I argue, is also paradoxically inscribed in a different, Girardian economy of death that renders it as the scapegoat to the construction of a sense of the 'human'. The final chapter of this thesis argues that both the traditional zombie and the sentient zombie function within the realm of a posthuman potentiality, one that, to varying degrees of success, attempts to progress past the restrictive binaries constructed within the overruling discourse of humanism. In conclusion, this thesis argues that while the zombie, both traditional and sentient, attempts to propose a necessary move towards a posthuman universalism, this move can only be considered if the 'us' of humanism embraces the potential of its own alterity.

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Authors Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

Parts of this thesis appear in the following publications:

Gardner, Kelly. "Zombie Survival Guides: Denying the Apocalypse." *A Critical Approach to the Apocalypse*. Ed. Heidi Yeandle and Alexandra Simon-López. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary, 2013. N. pag. E-Book.

Gardner, Kelly. "Braaiinnsss! Zombie Technology, Play and Sound." *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture: Technogothics*. Ed. Justin D. Edwards. New York: Routledge, 2015. 71-83. Print.

Gardner, Kelly. "Reading and Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse." *Imagining the End: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Apocalypse*. Ed. Thomas E. Bishop and Jeremy R. Strong. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary, 2015. 185-208. Print.

Gardner, Kelly. "'They Are Not Men, Monsieur... They Are Zombies...': The Construction of Haitian Identity and the Work of the Left Hand." *Tropical Gothic in Literature and Culture*. Ed. Justin D. Edwards and Sandra G. T. Vasconcelos. S.l.: Routledge, 2016. 73-86. Print.

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Introduction

The figure that we have now come to know as the zombie has haunted the peripheries of folklore and narratives since the first stirrings of literature. Defying concrete definition, the figure has been in a state of flux, metamorphosing with each appearance, a descriptive manifestation of cultural anxieties regarding selfhood and the transition from life to death. While genealogical approaches to zombie research habitually credit the zombie's African origins, this is but a mere stage in the development of the zombie of contemporary literature.

In the introduction to the collection of essays entitled *Better off Dead*,[1] editors Lauro and Christie recognise the difficulty in defining the nature of the zombie:

> If the zombie has evolved so much over the course of the twentieth century that, at the beginning of the twenty-first, it is nearly unrecognizable, then surely there is a need to define exactly what we mean when we call something a zombie, to chart the evolution of this concept, and to map out the ways that this monster has been and will continue to be a useful theoretical apparatus… (Christie and Lauro 2-3)

As this suggests, there has been much debate regarding the particular classification of a zombie and how this particular form of monstrosity can be distinguished from its fellow revenants, vampires and other Gothic horrors. June Pulliam writes of the two basic criteria that should be applied when categorising a creature of horror as a zombie.[2] Firstly, she says, "it must be the reanimated corpse or possessed living body of *one* person (or animal)" (Pulliam 724), thereby excluding the amalgamation that is

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[1] Deborah Christie, and Sarah Juliet Lauro. *Better off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-*

Frankenstein's monster and various materials that are used in the formation of a golem. Secondly, to be classified as a zombie, Pulliam maintains that the figure must have "a lack of free will" (Pulliam 724). It is these two characteristics that separate the zombie from his fellow walking dead. In an attempt to label a creature that is still very much in development, given the current obsession with the flesh-eating hordes, Pulliam is limiting the scope of academic study with regard to a figure like the zombie. By stating a definitive formula with which we are to measure against all existing versions of zombieism, Pulliam is excluding a number of zombie figures that, when duly considered and studied, could substantially enrich our knowledge and understanding of the current cultural zombie phenomenon.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this thesis takes inspiration from Frank Kermode's theory of narrative trajectory, as explored in *The Sense of and Ending*.[2] Kermode states, "to make sense of their span [men] need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems." (Kermode 7) For Kermode, it is the meaning of the narrative that informs its structure, and in the same way that Kermode speaks of "satisfying one's need to know the shape of life in relation to the perspectives of time" (Kermode 3), the structure of this thesis has been dictated by the very narrative it will examine, starting with the earliest folkloric suggestions of zombieism and extending beyond contemporary manifestations to a prediction of what awaits the figure in the future.

As a figure of malleable representation, the zombie is best considered from a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, and as such, this thesis will incorporate a

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[2] *The Sense of an Ending* will return to play a critical role in Chapter Two's exploration of apocalypse.

range of critical theories in the examining of a wide spectrum of zombie narratives in varying forms. The narratives featured within this thesis are not strictly literary, as the figure of the zombie denies relegation to a single mode of representation, rather, this thesis will examine the role the contemporary zombie has played in folklore, film, literature, and video games.

The aim of this thesis is thus to consider the emergence and development of the sentient zombie in contemporary zombie literature by mapping this exploration alongside the larger narrative trajectory of the figure from its origins to its modern incarnation. I use the Haitian origins of the zombie to demonstrate that the concept of identity is firmly linked with the figure. I then explore the connection between the zombie and apocalypse, particularly the role of Zombie Apocalypse Survival Guides, to demonstrate that the figure of the zombie cannot simply be annihilated, but rather indicates the necessary societal changes that must occur should society wish to exist beyond the apocalyptic aftermath. This notion of existing beyond apocalypse is further explored in the final chapter. Following on from apocalypse, I explore zombie-themed video games and the emergence of an identifiable zombie voice; while this rudimentary development allows the zombie to speak of nothing else but "braaaaaiins", the importance of its development is that it indicates that there is the potential to develop this voice further so as to return the subject to the objectified figure. The return of the subjective voice can be seen in the rise of the zombie memoire genre, which is the main focus of the fourth chapter. I demonstrate, here, that the reclamation of the zombie voice further problematises the societal standing of the figure, and that despite the minimal differences between zombie and human, the sentient zombie finds itself excluded from the societal discourse of humanism. In the final chapter I explore the zombie as a truly posthuman figure and argue that the

emergence of the sentient zombie complicates the restricting binaries of humanistic discourse. In conclusion, I argue that the figure, in adherence to the narrative trajectory from folkloric to postmodern representations, essentially encourages a move towards a new and inclusive posthuman discourse.

Chapter one begins by exploring the emergence of the Haitian zombie as constructed through the lens of American sensationalism, and examines the threat imposed on Haitian Identity. In this way I will firmly establish the notion of identity as intrinsically linked to the figure of the zombie. The main text that I examine in the first chapter is William Seabrook's quasi-anthropological study of Haiti, *The Magic Island* (1929). It was this seminal text that went on to inspire further representations of Haitian zombieism. The primary film I consider is *White Zombie* (1932), by Victor and Edward Halperin. Theoretically, I draw from Karl Marx's notion of the capitalist mode of production,[3] but the primary theoretical framework of the chapter is informed by Franck Degoul's semi-anthropological study of Haitian identity,[4] as I analyse the endogenous and exogenous representations of Haitians and their manipulation of Voodoo in the creation of both a hetero-image and an auto-image. Furthermore, I will contrast Wade Davis's ethnographic exploration of Haitian Voodoo and zombieism, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985), with Wes Craven's horror film adaptation of the same name, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988). The purpose of this contrast is to demonstrate the persisting concerns of Haitian identity and the manner it is perceived by the contemporary American imagination, to demonstrate that the notion of identity and selfhood were inscribed at the core of the figure from its earliest conceptions.

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[3] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Samuel Moore, and Karl Marx. *Capital*. Vol. 1. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952. Print.
[4] Franck Degoul. ""We Are the Mirror of Your Fears": Haitian Identity and Zombification." *Better off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-human*. Ed. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro. Trans. Elisabeth M. Lore. New York: Fordham UP, 2011. 24-38. Print.

While the first chapter works to establish the importance of identity at the heart of the figure, in my second chapter I move away from the Haitian zombie and proceed to explore another integral aspect of the zombie, its connection with apocalypse. I examine the role of the zombie in apocalyptic narratives and observe the emergence of the Zombie Apocalypse Survival Guide genre as a means of denying the forced lineal societal development imposed by the apocalypse. As alluded to earlier, Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* serves as the theoretical foundation for this second chapter, furthermore, I draw on theories of science-fiction as explored by Ketterer and Wagar in their studies of eschatological fiction as instructive examples of dealing with real-world change.[5] The primary text that this chapter is concerned with is Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954), which arguably features the earliest modern interpretation of the contemporary zombie. *I am Legend* was the first text to combine the figure of the zombie, although the novella refers to the monstrous beings as vampires, with an apocalyptic plotline, thereby combining the gothic monstrosity with science-fiction apocalypse. I look to Judith Halberstam's exploration of the monstrous figure in *Skin Shows* (1995) in conjunction with Michel Foucault's notion of the soul, taken from *Discipline and* Punish (1987), to examine this connection between zombie and apocalypse before moving on to a range of Zombie Survival Guides to examine their function within the larger scheme of apocalypse.[6,7]

My third chapter involves an examination of sound in zombie-themed mobile device applications and the emergence of the call of "braaaaaiins" as a definitive

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[5] Here I refer to David Ketterer's *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (1974) and Warren Wagar's *Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things* (1982).
[6] Judith Halberstam. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. Print.
[7] Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London [etc.: Penguin, 1987. Print.

zombie voice. In this chapter I will look at four zombie-themed games that vary in strategic gameplay but share the common usage of the zombie drone as the driving force behind the narrative trajectory and interactivity of gameplay. The games I have chosen to focus on are: the tower defence game *Plants vs Zombies* (2009) by PopCap Games, the squad-based strategy defence game *The Walking Dead Assault* (2012) by Skybound Entertainment, the episodic graphic adventure game *The Walking Dead* (2012) by Telltale Games, and the immersive running game *Zombies, Run!* (2012) by Six to Start. I will use Robert Munday's definition of "game music"[8] and Isabella van Elferen's theory on game sound to explore the importance of an aurally constructed environment within video games.[9] In conjunction with this, I look at the importance of sound in two different approaches to the study of video games, the Narratological approach and the Ludological approach. Informed by Zach Whalen's research on video game music,[10] and William Whittington's theory of sound design in science fiction,[11] I explore the role of sound and its effects on immersion and engagement. The intention of this chapter is to identify the objectification of a specific zombie voice that is used as the motivating factor behind narrative trajectory and gameplay. It is this initial objectification that allows for the potential development of subjectivity through the reclamation of an objectified voice, which serves as the subject for the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Having established the emergence of a zombie voice, my fourth chapter charts the development of the sentient zombie in literature, examining the role of the sentient zombie in the emergence of the Zombie Memoire genre. Here, I use Mary Shelley's

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[8] Rod Munday. "Music in Video Games." *Music, Sound and Multimedia: From the Live to the Virtual.* Ed. J. Sexton. Edinburgh UP, 2007. 51-67. Print.

[9] Isabella Anna Maria Van Elferen. *Gothic Music the Sounds of the Uncanny.* Cardiff: U of Wales, 2012. Print.

[10] Zach Whalen. "Play Along - An Approach to Videogame Music." *Game Studies.* N.p., Nov. 2004. Web. 26 May 2012. <http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/whalen/>.

[11] William Whittington. *Sound Design & Science Fiction.* Austin, TX: U of Texas, 2007. Print.

seminal Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818/1831), and the monster's intellectual and emotional development, as the foundation onto which I map the emergence of the sentient zombie within contemporary literature. While this chapter incorporates numerous examples of the zombie within literature, the primary narratives that feature are George A. Romero's series of zombie films categorised as the *Dead Series* (1968-2009), S. G. Browne's novel *Breathers: A Zombie's Lament* (2009), John Ajvide Lindqvist's novel *Handling the Undead* (2005), and Dominic Mitchell's television series *In the Flesh* (2013-2014). I use these examples to construct the zombie as an example of Giorgio Agamben's concept of *bare life*,[12] existing in a *state of exception*.[13] I combine Agamben's theory of *Homo Sacer* (1995) with both Judith Butler's concept of ungrievable violence and René Girard *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) to demonstrate that the development of a subjective zombie voice allows the figure to present itself as an example of Girard's scapegoat within the zombie memoire genre.[14,15] The development of a sentient zombie voice, however, also places the figure in the position to renegotiate the inclusivity of the humanistic discourse that dominates the social structures of these texts. It is this renegotiation of heteronormative human boundaries that is examined in the final chapter.

My concluding chapter expands on the role of the sentient zombie and incorporates cyborg theory and posthumanism to explore the transition of the contemporary zombie from human towards the posthuman state of sentient zombie that extends beyond our current definitions of 'humanity'. This chapter returns to a number of texts that appeared in previous chapters, most notably *I am Legend*, but the

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[12] Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.
[13] Giorgio Agamben. *State of Exception*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2005. Print.
[14] Judith Butler. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009. Print.
[15] René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.

primary material that this chapter is concerned with is Robin Becker's novel *Brains: A Zombie Memoire* (2010), Robert Heinlein's short-story "All You Zombies" (1959), and Robert Longo's sculpture installation *All You Zombies: Truth Before God* (1986). Further narratives that contribute to the development of my argument are Diana Rowland's *My Life as a White Trash Zombie* (2011), Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010) and Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985). I use Lauro and Embry's *Zombie Manifesto* (2008),[16] inspired by Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985),[17] and Katherine Hayles posthuman theory from *How We Became Posthuman* (1999)[18] to explore the zombie as a figure of posthuman futuriority that problematises the self/other binaries that are perpetuated within the discourse of humanism. I use Sartre's notion of subjectivity to differentiate between two distinct categories of zombie figures that emerge in the representation of the zombie as a posthuman figure.[19] The Izombie, is the re-established figure of a sentient zombie that unknowingly re-inscribes the humanist values it attempts to question, and the zombii, an antisubject and the only truly consciousless posthuman figure that annihilates the subject, therefore forcing a consideration beyond what we believe to be a posthuman existence. Further, I utilise, here, Stefan Herbrechter's critical analysis of posthumanism to explore both the traditional zombie and the sentient zombie as posthuman figures that are indicative of a necessary movement away from the

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[16] Sarah Juliet Lauro, and Karen Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *Boundary* 2.35 (2008): 85-108. Web.

[17] Donna Jeanne Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81. Print.

[18] Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 287

[19] Jean-Paul Sartre. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Trans. Philip Mairet. York: Methuen, 2013. Print.

limiting boundaries of heteronormative humanist values towards the development of a more inclusive, less prescriptive, posthumanism.[20]

The following section of this introduction will explore manifestations of zombie-like figures in folklore that predate the Haitian zombie, which will be the main focus of the chapter that follows. Thereafter, this introduction will present Kevin Boon's process of zombie categorisation, whereby he recognises the nine categories of zombie that have emerged over three overlapping periods: the figure's journey from African mythology to Haitian reality and then into the popular American Imagination. The intention of this introduction is to acknowledge the popularity of zombie-like figures, that is, figures that return from the dead, within the greater scope of folklore so as to establish the culturally rich history of a Gothic figure that is often cited as a creation of postmodernity. While Boon's process of categorisation attempts to account for all manifestations of zombieism, Boon neglects to consider zombie figures that reacquire their sentience and volition. It is this emergence and development of the sentient zombie within contemporary narratives that will be the main focus of this thesis.

The Historical Zombie

The zombie serves as a figure of death, and the cause of its malleability stems from a universal cultural preoccupation with death and what lies beyond. The concepts of death and the separation of the soul from the body, or the frightening prospect of a rampant body lacking the guiding reticence of a soul, have figured as themes within

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[20] Stefan Herbrechter. *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.

folklore and literature from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (circa 2100 BC),[21] considered the

earliest great work of literature.[22] This epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia features

an instance wherein Gilgamesh rejects the amorous attention of Ishtar, the goddess of

war, sex, and love. As revenge for this rejection, Ishtar approaches her father, Anu,

god of the heavens and the sky, and demands her father's assistance:

> Father, give me, please, the Bull of Heaven,
>
> so in his dwelling I may slay Gilgamesh! (*The Epic of Gilgamesh* 50).

Should her father fail to assist her, Ishtar threatens:

> If you do not give me the Bull of Heaven,
>
> I shall smash the gates of the Netherworld, right down to its dwelling,
>
> To the world below I shall grant manumission,
>
> I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,
>
> I shall make the dead outnumber the living. (*The Epic of Gilgamesh* 51)

The contemporary reader recognises Ishtar's threat as remarkably similar to that of a

zombie apocalypse, an observation that, contrary to Deleuze and Guattari's claim that

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[21] George, A. R. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*. London: Penguin, 2003.

[22] Egyptian funerary texts have been in existence since 2400 BCE, with the Pyramid Texts found within the pyramid of King Unas. One of the most recognisable and earliest known texts, dating to approximately 1550 BCE, the Egyptian funerary text the *Book of the Dead* serves to inform and guide a person through the process of death, into the underworld and then on to the afterlife.

"the only modern myth is the myth of zombies,"[23] the origin of the zombie myth might not be as modern as originally perceived.

While *The Epic of Gilgamesh* exhibits the returning dead in the literature and folklore of Mesopotamian poetry, further examples of zombie-like figures feature in additional ancient texts, most notably, the Bible. The Bible is abundant with risen corpses and the returning dead; in addition to the nine examples of human resurrection from death in the name of God: most notably Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:1-44), the Widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17: 17-24), and of course Jesus Christ himself (Matthew 28: 5-7), the Bible offers scenes of returning dead that rival those of Ishtar's threat. In Zechariah we read:

> And the LORD will send a plague on all the nations that fought against Jerusalem. Their people will become like walking corpses, their flesh rotting away. Their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.
>
> On that day they will be terrified, stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will fight their neighbours hand to hand. (Zechariah 14:12-13)

In Isaiah we are presented with the following:

> But your dead will live, LORD;
>
> their bodies will rise—
>
> let those who dwell in the dust
>
> wake up and shout for joy—

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[23] Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1983. 335

your dew is like the dew of the morning;

the earth will give birth to her dead.

Go, my people, enter your rooms

and shut your doors behind you;

hide yourselves for a little while

until his wrath has passed us by.

See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling

To punish the people of the earth for their sins.

The earth will disclose the blood shed on it;

The earth will conceal its slain no longer. (Isaiah 26:19 – 21)

Isaiah's End-of-Days prophecy calls on righteous believers to take shelter in their homes while the wrath of God is unleashed upon the world as punishment for the sins of humanity. While the examples presented here are reminiscent of the apocalyptic nature of the resurrection of the dead en masse, individual examples of the dead returning to disturb the living can be found in the folklore of almost every civilisation.

The uniqueness and abnormality of the ghosts of Iceland and Scandinavia, for example, stem from their corporeality. Scandinavian ghosts are not apparitions or disembodied spirits that whisper from shadowed corners; rather, as Chadwick notes,[24] "They are animated corpses, solid bodies, generally mischievous, and greatly to be feared" (Chadwick 50). Stories of Scandinavian reanimated corpses were documented

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[24] Chadwick, N. K. "Norse Ghosts (A Study in the Draugr and the Haugbúi)."*Folklore* 57.2 (June, 1946): 50-65.

as far back as the twelfth century in the *Heimskringla*, a collection of sagas about the Norwegian kings written in Old Norse by historian Snorri Sturluson (Chadwick 52). The ghost, known as a *draugr* (pl. *draugar*), or *haugbúi* (pl. *búar*), was the corporeal animated corpse inhabiting the barrow in which he had been buried. Come nightfall, the *draugr* was known to leave its barrow in order to seek out prey in the form of animal or man (Chadwick 55). It was believed that the only way to bring about the *draugr's* second death would be through decapitation, dismemberment, and burning.[25]

Parallels can be drawn between the Icelandic Sagas, with their *draugr,* and the walking corpses of Medieval England, most notably in Yorkshire, in the narratives by William of Newburgh, and in a manuscript discovered at Byland Abbey some two hundred years later.[26] William's revenants can be found in Book V of the *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (1198), where there is an evident departure from the contemporary ideas of that time involving medieval ghosts. The strangeness of these revenants, Jacqueline Simpson explains, "consists in the way they combine incongruous elements: Christian doctrines about sin, death, and the afterlife on the one hand, and on the other some macabre or grotesque beliefs which appear incompatible with theology" (Simpson 389). With particular regard to William's revenants, questions were raised regarding the nature of such revenants and whether their animation was the result of demonic or logical processes, and whether the corpse should be returned to rest through physical or spiritual means. Both collections of tales, all of William's and most of the Byland tales, feature corporeal ghosts who have physically emerged from their graves to walk among the living (Simpson 390). The link between the Scandinavian *draugr* and the walking revenants of both William of Newburgh and the

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[25] Gregg A. Smith. *The Function of the Living Dead in Medieval Norse and Celtic Literature: Death and Desire*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2007.

[26] Jacqueline Simpson. "Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England." *Folklore* 114.3 (December, 2003): 389-402.

Byland manuscript may be based on beliefs that are not native to England, "but imported traditions, surviving among the descendants of Scandinavian settlers in what was once the Danelaw" (Simpson 390). However, Simpson points out that archaeological discoveries of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon burials reveal that in certain cases the corpse was buried facedown so that should it, by chance, rise from the dead it would dig deeper into the earth as opposed to freeing itself from its grave. In addition to this, some bodies were decapitated, with the head placed between the feet, a practice that exhibits that beliefs in corporeal revenants and a traditional means of approach in the prevention of reanimation "was indigenous to Britain long before the Viking settlement, and persisted several centuries after the Conversion" (Simpson 390). As Nancy Caciola notes,[27] "Medieval conceptions of death were fluid; […] one could die a "good" or a "bad" death; one could undergo a temporary or a more permanent death; and one could die a partial death—that is, a death of the personality without a death of the body, or vica versa" (Caciola 7), this "partial death" being reminiscent of the soul/body divide we see occurring in Haitian ethnographic examples of walking corpses.

Similarly, in a short recounting of an instance from his childhood in the late nineteenth century, Dr. H. F. Feilberg describes his first encounter with a "corpse-door"[28] on the west coast of Jutland. He had assumed the bricked-up hole in the wall to be an old oven-door; however, he is told it is in fact a "corpse-door. " As he recalls:

> There were very few such left now, but in olden days it had been the custom
> that the coffin, which was always placed in the upper room, was carried out
> through this opening, which was bricked up again as soon as the procession

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[27] Nancy Caciola. "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture." *Past & Present*, No. 152 (August,1996): 3-45.
[28] H. F. Feilberg. "The Corpse-Door: A Danish Survival." *Folklore* 18.4 (1907): 364-75.

had started for the church, so that on their return they could again assemble in the room and partake of the funeral meal. As the doors in these old-fashioned houses are low and narrow, this seemed to be a practical way of getting over a difficulty. (Feilberg 363-5)

However, the purpose of the corpse-door extends beyond a mere exit point for the coffin: as Feilberg notes, "it lies in the nature of the dead that they are always trying to get back to the places where they have passed their lives" (Feilberg 367). The "corpse-door" becomes yet another funerary practice in the prevention of a returning corpse. Like the tying together of the corpse's toes and the insertion of needles into the soles of the corpse's feet, these practices ensure that the corpse is unable to return home. As Feilberg notes, "When the opening through which he left his home is closed up, it is not in his power to return" (Feilberg 374). This type of practice is not solely restricted to Danish folklore, as evidence of the custom has been documented in the Icelandic sagas, as well as, Feilberg notes, " in comparatively modern Danish life, in judicial documents of the Middles Ages, in Swabia, in Greenland, among the North American Indians, the Slavonic races in Russia, […] among the Ostiaks, Siamese, Chinese, Hottentots, and Caribbees" (Feilberg 373).

In accordance with the African and Haitian approach to multiple souls inhabiting a body, Chinese examples of similar beliefs can be found in the writings of the poet and scholar Yuan Mei (1716-1797) of the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912). One such story, Sing-chen Lydia Francis suggests,[29] "may be read as a displaced fascination with the multiplicity of selves" (Francis 138). Entitled "Two Scholars of Nanchang," Yuan Mei's ghost story details the close friendship of two scholars and

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[29] Sing-chen Lydia Francis. ""What Confucius Wouldn't Talk About": The Grotesque Body and Literati Identities in Yuan Mei's "Zi Buyu"" *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* Vol. 24 (December, 2002): 129-60.

the aftermath following the death of the eldest. The corporeal figure of the deceased elder scholar enters the bedroom of his living friend and in a pleasant manner requests his friend's assistance in carrying out a handful of unfinished tasks. The young friend agrees to help and requests that his elder friend stay longer in order for them to share a few memories before they separate for eternity. The elder agrees to stay and they talk for a while before the elder abruptly stands announcing his departure. However, despite his final farewell, the corpse remains stationary as his face slowly begins to deteriorate into a state of decay and grotesqueness. The young scholar becomes frightened by his friend's stillness and sudden change in appearance and flees from the room, but he is closely followed by the corpse, who chases him for many miles until the young friend jumps over a wall and falls unconscious on the ground. Unable to climb the wall the corpse comes to rest with his head on the wall, his saliva dripping on to the unconscious face of his friend. In the end, the young scholar is revived and the corpse is collected for a proper burial. The explanation for this peculiar event comes down to Chinese beliefs regarding the multiplicity of the soul: while "the *hun* soul is benign […] the *po* soul is evil, and the *hun* soul is intelligent but the *po* soul is not."[30] The corpse returned to his friend with both *hun* and *po* souls intact. Once the corpse had made arrangements for his unfinished business to be seen to, "the *hun* dissolved, *po* stayed" (Yuan Mei *quan ji*, vol. 4, p. 3). The duality of the souls is explained thus: "When *hun* stays, the person still is, and when *hun* leaves, the person is no longer. The moving corpses and running shadows of the world are all doings by *po*" (Yuan Mei *quan ji*, vol. 4, p. 3). Francis notes that traditional ghost stories of the Chinese literati characteristically consider the construction of the soul(s) as a united entity and the *gui* (ghost) to be an individual's "essential (as opposed to

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[30] Yuan Mei *quan ji*, vol. 4, p. 3 (cited by Francis)

the corporeal) identity in the afterlife" (Francis 139). In contrast, however, Chinese popular religion ordinarily considered a more complex construction of personhood, whereby an individual was comprised of three *hun* and seven *po*, alternatively, different classification systems all point towards various constructions of a number of souls. The multiplicity of souls in the construction of personhood exposes a common conception regarding the afterlife and the absence of an individual soul. Francis notes that "The multiplicity of Chinese souls reflects the *contextual* nature of how the living define and interact with the dead with regard to the different areas of religious or ritual concerns" (Francis 139). Yuan Mei's depiction of a single *hun* and a single *po* is therefore a departure from the traditional notions of multiple souls. While Yuan Mei's presentation of soul duality differs slightly from those of Chinese popular religion, Yuan Mei's intention was to expose the separation of body from being. While the *hun* remains in place, the returned body is referred to as the 'elder Scholar'; however, once the *hun* has disappeared and only the *po* remains, the narrative refers to the scholar as a corpse.[31] The absence of *hun* leaves only a *thing* behind: "it has ceased to be a social being and as such is regarded as alien and horrific" (Francis 141). The multiplicity of human identities explored in the story reveals the creation of the self as a '*cultural construct*':

> Such a notion dictates that a person's life and death are not defined by the
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> individual but by society at large, so much so that this culturally determined
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> identity may even contradict physical reality. (Francis 141)

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[31] The *hun* is constructed as a social identity, and can be considered in conjunction with Agamben's conception of Homo Sacer and the notion of *bios* and *zoê*. The removal of the *hun*, or the legitimised social identity of Agamben's *bios*, is viewed as more horrific than physical biological death. The concept of Agamben's Homo Sacer will be unpacked further in a later chapter.

Another example taken from Chinese folklore, which can be observed in texts dating back to as recently as the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912), would be that of the *Jiangshi*, or hopping corpse. The *Jiangshi* is described as a demonic revenant, "an autonomous, moving corpse harbouring inexplicable malignity towards the living" (Francis 143). Ji Yun describes two kinds of *Jiangshi*, the first being a newly deceased person awaiting burial, who would suddenly return to life and attack people, and the second kind are long-buried corpses that turn into demons as opposed to decaying. The threat of the *Jiangshi*, which Francis claims contributes to ensuring the position of the *Jiangshi* as "the most dangerous of monsters in the folk" (Francis 144), is the indifferentiation between the corporeal body and its souls: "The horror of the risen corpse, therefore, is the horror of mistaking physical appearance for an essentialised human identity" (Francis 144). However, this threat does not exclusively belong to the *Jiangshi*, but rather can be seen as a common thread that links the walking corpses of most folklore and certainly serves as a foundational feature that informs the development of zombie mythology.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the very first English appearance of the word "zombie" was in Robert Southey's three-volume *History of Brazil*, published between 1810 and 1819. The "zombie" to which Southey refers is a deity of Angolan folklore. This deity was invoked by the leader of the slave movement that revolted against the Spanish in 1694. The elected leader was, Southey notes, "chosen for his justice as well as his valour […] it is said that no conspiracies or struggles for power had ever been known among [the slaves]. Perhaps a feeling for religion contributed to this obedience; for Zombi, the title whereby he was called, is the name

for the Deity, in the Angolan tongue…"[32] While Sebastian da Rocha Pitta, the Portuguese historian whose writings informed those of Southey's, notes that the term "zombie" translates to "Devil," Southey's writings correct this misinterpretation in his confirmation that the true translation for "nzambi"[33] is in fact "deity." While the supernatural link is formed with the word, owing to the religious undertones connoted by the sense of an omnipotent deity, the contemporary interpretation of the term was not yet fully developed.

Marina Warner notes that "the zombie becomes a new way of thinking about a person, from the turn of the eighteenth century onwards, until the concept was naturalised in mainstream orthodoxy of the supernatural" (Warner 120). While these early folkloric examples of the risen dead bare little resemblance to the "nzambi" that inspired Southey's appropriation of the term in *History of Brazil*, the intrinsic element that links these folktales to the contemporary zombie of popular culture is their questioning of the body/soul divide and the haunting prospect of a peripatetic soul-less corpse. The concept of a risen corpse and the existential chaos that accompanies it echoes, world-wide, throughout historical folktales and speaks of the very concerns that ground the *magnum opus* that is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (circa 8 AD), that of soul migration. Warner notes that it is this notion of soul migration that is "rediscovered" in the figure of the zombie and "reconfigured in the growing imperial possessions" that duly became, "in the fallout from slavery, a vehicle to express a new, psychological state of personal alienation, moral incoherence, and emptiness" (Warner 120).

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[32] Marina Warner. *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 119-120
[33] "Nzambi" being the root word from which the term "zombi" emerged.

Ancient threats of the dead rising to consume the living, Biblical warnings of plagues of walking corpses, their rotting flesh falling from their bones with every step, folklore depicting the unexpected return of deceased loved ones, and questions regarding the nature of the soul, its implication in the construction of identity, and its connection to the body—these are the concerns that lie at the heart of the zombie figure. The very same issues are raised with each new appearance of the zombie figure in contemporary literature, signifying that zombie-like figures have been in existence for as long as humankind has been concerned with death and what lies beyond human-life; all that the figure needed to galvanise its existence was a name. Following Southey's use of the term 'zombie', a more definitive development of the figure can be seen emerging in the American imagination; as explored in Boon's system of zombie categorisation.

Zombie Categories

In Kevin Boon's exploration of the zombie as monstrous other,[34] he notes that Zombie mythology can be seen as having been established over three overlapping periods. Restricting his examination to purely African influence, Boon claims that the initial stage of development emerged from the zombie's presence in African tribal mythology; the slave trade carried the zombie from Africa to the Caribbean, where it was transformed through Caribbean religious practices into the Haitian zombie figure, most recognisable as the forefather figure of zombie lore. The Haitian zombie, through a process of manipulative American sensationalism, went on to further develop in the contemporary imagination into the flesh-eating horde of contemporary cinema (Boon 50). The most recent development of the figure, I argue, has seen a

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[34] Kevin Boon. "The Zombie as Other: Mortality and the Monstrous in the Post-Nuclear Age" Ed. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Deborah Christie. *Better off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-human*. New York: Fordham UP, 2011. 50-60. Print.

fourth period emerge in which there is a departure from the zombie as a mindless, hunger-driven, primal monster into a sentient figure capable of linguistic expression and self-reflection. Boon notes that "Metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological issues distinguish these three periods and link the evolution of zombie mythology to shifts in Western thought during the past several centuries" (Boon 50). In addition to these three periods explored by Boon, a fourth period, as I argue in this thesis, can be distinguished by the Philosophy of Self, as an extension to the ontological issues that occupy the narratives of zombieism. The emergence of a sentient zombie and the increased interest in the post-human development of zombie selfhood in the twenty-first century is the consequence of the figure's capacity to stimulate existential anxieties regarding human impermanence and fluctuating classifications of humanness.

Boon's exploration of the zombie traces the mythology back to a spiritual being originating in, and overseeing, "the Bantu and Bankongo tribes of the Nzambi Mpungu region of the lower Congo River area" (Boon 50-51). The "Nzambi," a term dating back to the seventeenth century, is described in the anthropological writing of R. P. Van Wing,[35] as being:

> above all… the sovereign Master, unapproachable, who has placed man here below to take him away some day, at the hour of death. He watches man, searches him out everywhere and takes him away, inexorably, young or old. (Smith 159)

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[35] J. Van Wing. "Etudes Bakongo (Goemaere, 1921; Pp. 170 Ff)." Trans. Edwin W. Smith. *African Ideas of God: A Symposium*. 2nd ed. Bruxelles: Edinburgh House, 1950. 159.

The Nzambi, in accordance with Southey's original interpretation of a 'deity', was therefore a religious and highly spiritual cultural being, a harbinger of both life and death, the belief of which was made possible by positing the origin of truth as external, stemming from the greater power of a god, or gods. This epistemological belief system can be compared with that dominating Western religious thought prior to the enlightenment, in which an external truth was posited as stemming from an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God, despite a lack of empirical evidence. Consequently, both African and Western traditional belief systems "posited spiritual beings and the truth they presumably possessed outside of the self" (Boon 52).

The shift from this first period of zombie mythology to its second period, as suggested by Boon, is "rooted in the African diaspora" and "mirrors the shift from faith in God to faith in Science" (Boon 53). The African slaves that were brought to Haiti continued to interpret the term "zombi" as a spiritual revenant;[36] however, following the collision of Western thought and African beliefs during the nineteenth century, the "zombi" underwent the transformation from a mighty spirit in its own right to a spirit capable of possession. Eventually the term "zombi" came to represent an individual who, as a victim of Voodou, loses their subjectivity and consciousness at the hands of a Houngan, and it is in this we see the shift from spiritual interpretation to physical manifestation. Boon classifies this figure as the "zombie drone" (Boon 53), examples of which can be seen in, but are not restricted to, the first wave of zombie literature and film (1900-1968). The zombie drones are typically those of Haitian folklore as described in the anthropological narratives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the plethora of zombie films that trailed

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[36] As indicated in M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Mery's 1789 definition of the term as "a creole word which means spirit, revenant" (Kevin Boon 53). Originally found in Peter Dendle's unpublished manuscript: The Zombie in Haitian and US Folklore (2005).

its initial introduction to cinema with *White Zombie* (1932). The "zombie drone" represents a figure lacking sentience and volition, a vacuous shell, dead or alive, who functions as an instrument of force, be it slave labour as in the case of the sugar mills of Haiti, or, if we allow the definition to stretch beyond the specificity of the term "zombie," the somnambulist Cesare from Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) who is manipulated by Dr. Caligari into committing murder. On the peripheries of this development, yet another addition to the zombie mythology began to stir, inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). H. P. Lovecraft's "Herbert West—Reanimator," which appeared as a serial in the amateur publication *Homebrew* between 1921 and 1922, saw a zombie-like figure emerge that could be connected to both creation through scientific means as well as to cannibalism. The figures in "Reanimator" cannot strictly be categorised as zombie drones, despite being resurrected at the hands of a scientist, as these figures were uncontrollable in their violent aggression. They serve, however, as an indication of the development from the second zombie period into the third, a liminal figure bridging the zombie drone of the second period with the zombie ghoul of the third.

As Boon notes, "The empirical (pro-science) view that took root among the general population toward the end of the nineteenth century ironically resulted in an increased objectification of self" (Boon 53). While the middle ages, up to the fifteenth century, had perceived the self in its entirety as an undivided whole, developments in thinking and a turn towards Rationalism resulted in the metamorphosis of the self into an object of enquiry. The potential arose for the self to be questioned by the self in light of Cartesian thinking and Descartes' integral dictum *cogito ergo sum*; the examination of selfhood from within the self saw that the "source of truth" became located within. Boon explains that "rationalism divided the self between what is "me"

and what is not "me," and imbued the self with uncertainty" (Boon 53). Similarly, Cartesian Dualism explored the separation between psychological mind (*res cogitans*) and physical body (*res extensa*), enabling a subjective examining of the objective body. The self could simultaneously serve as both an object and a subject of enquiry This divided self, and its ability to examine both physical and psychological notions of selfhood, enable further comprehension of the epistemological and ontological issues concerning Boon's "zombie drone," which first emerged towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The separation of the psychological self from the physical self is reminiscent of the body/soul divide that features as a concern in the aforementioned folklore of the first part of this introduction. While earlier zombie figures are dominated by the body/soul dichotomy, this is replaced with the body / mind distinction as informed by Cartesian dualism.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre differentiates between unconscious and conscious being. Unconscious being, *en-soi* or being-in-itself, can be seen in contrast to conscious being, *pour-soi* or being-for-itself. The difference between the two can been defined by a being's awareness of its own consciousness, and as such, the being is capable of actuating their own existence from nothingness. When the zombie entered the American imagination, it did so as a figure emblematic of Sartre's notion of Negation,[37] according to which we are able to recognise the zombie as other due to its absence of consciousness, and in effect, this absence of identity reduced the zombie to a figure, or more specifically, a receptacle of nothingness (Boon 54). The fear that the zombie represents is the potentiality of nothingness, a mere physical shell lacking substance, and lacking in all aspects of humanity. While a conscious being is capable of constructing their selfhood from

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[37] Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. London: Methuen & Co, 1976.

nothingness, an unconscious being lacks this ability of choice and, therefore, remains in a state of nothingness. The zombie drone represents humanity reduced to mere objects, functioning purely as tools at the hands of those who control them. Boon notes that this absence of selfhood is "ontologically terrifying because it denies humans that which makes us human" (Boon 54).

Examples of the zombie drone echoed throughout the cinema of the early twentieth century: the Halperin brothers' *White Zombie* (1932), Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), and Jean Yarbrough's *King of the Zombies* (1941) serve as examples of the Caribbean playing host to zombie practices; however, the follow-up to *King of the Zombies*, Steve Sekely's *Revenge of the Zombies* (1943) and the Halperin Brothers' unofficial sequel to *White Zombie*, *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), saw a departure from the Caribbean setting as interest in this exotic land began to wane. Instead, the American imagination turned towards Europe, and early suggestions of war, for its inspiration. Coincidently, despite being a relatively unsuccessful and overambitious venture, *Revolt of the Zombies*, Jamie Russell explains, "was the first film to appreciate the fact that one potential avenue for the living dead's development was in linking the image of the zombie to the masses" (Russell 30), thus reminiscent of the threat made by Ishtar in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the plagues of walking dead that stalk eschatological End of Days prophecy. In addition to the notion of an army of zombies, *Revolt of the Zombies* relocated the setting from the Caribbean to Cambodia and simultaneously represented its zombies not as the reanimated corpses to be found in *White Zombie*, but rather—in the absence of Garnett Weston whose knowledge of Seabrook's research informed *White Zombie*—as zombie soldiers, under the influence of mind-control, that never tire and are savagely impervious to pain. While critics attacked the film's adaptation of

zombie lore as it replaced voodoo, and its mysterious ties to the magic of the 'dark continent' with mind-controlled living soldiers as zombies, Russell notes that "*Revolt* opened up the genre's scope in quite unexpected ways that, in time, would have significant impact on the zombie movie" (Russell 30). This impact becomes evident as the figure of the zombie began to move into its third period of zombie mythology.

Following the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945, Boon notes, "The bomb resulted in the disillusionment of a generation and a shift away from modernism" (Boon 55). The onset of the post-nuclear age injected American society with scepticism towards science and the potential devastation and wide-scale destruction that science could generate. The second zombie period came about as faith in god, or gods, shifted to a faith in science, that is, in something objective that is external to the self. The third zombie period therefore came about due to the *loss* of confidence in science, this external referent of truth. Boon notes that as a result of this, the individual was left with "no source of truth beyond self" (Boon 55). What remained was the self, and the individual was left in an existential state wherein truth was established relative to self. Fear shifted towards a loss of self, and the zombies of the post-nuclear age represented this shift as they clutter movie screens with their gaping mouths and vacant eyes void of humanity, something Boon terms "an abyss of nothingness" (Boon 55). The threat towards the self became the "threat of engulfment" by the world in which the self operates and the fear of the self being completely overwhelmed and consumed by the world, thereby resulting in the nullification of self and annihilation of identity. The post-nuclear zombie enters the American imagination fuelled by this existential imbroglio. It is at this point that the figure transforms from an object controlled and utilised by the zombie master, to fulfil his own malicious deeds, into an object that is driven by its own bestial hunger. Boon

briefly suggests that the Zombie Drone became infused with the belligerence of the ghoul mythology, but he neglects to further elaborate on this proposal. The ghoul is an evil demon found in Arabic mythology,[38] Ahmed K. Al-Rawi notes: "the ghoul was part of beliefs held by Arabs long before the advent of Islam and was a perceived reality for most living in Arabia" (Al-Rawi 291). The ghoul that, according to Boon, informed zombie mythology, however, was itself a mere exaggerated interpretation of Arabic folklore as the figure became embellished with additional sensationalist characteristics during the translation of *Arabian Nights* into French by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717. According to the Arabic Lexicon, the verbal root of "ghoul" is "ghāl" which translates as "to kill," and the ghoul was traditionally thought of as a female demon, or genie, who would lure travellers off their paths with the intention of killing them (Al-Rawi 292).[39] In Galland's translation of "The Story of Sidi Nouman"[40] a man narrates his experience with his new wife, discovering that her eccentricities are as a result of her being an enchantress and an acquaintance of a ghoul. The husband explains that ghouls "of both sexes are wandering demons, which generally infest old buildings, from whence they rush, by surprise, on people that pass by, kill them, and eat their flesh…"[41] Galland further sensationalises the ghoul as the husband continues his explanation stating that "in want of prey" the ghouls "will sometimes go in the night into burying grounds, and feed upon dead bodies that have been buried there" (Al-Rawi 299).[42] While the original Arabic version of the tale has not been found, Galland's translation reflects a liberal reinterpretation of the original Arabic tales as he sensationalises characteristics that do not appear in any earlier

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[38] Ahmed K. Al-Rawi. "The Arabic Ghoul and Its Western Transformation." *Folklore* 120.3 (2009): 291-306. Web.
[39] Al-Rawi references early texts by Abū al-Fadil Ibn Manẓūr (1232 -1311 C.E),*Lisān al-'Arab,* and Ismā'il al-'Ābād, *al-Muhīt fi 'l-Lughah* in his examination of the term Ghoul.
[40] *Arabian Nights Entertainments* 1718, vol. 11, 78-91
[41] Ibid 81
[42] Ibid

Arabic folktales (Al-Rawi 200). However, it is Galland's version of the ghoul that went on to populate the literary imagination, and, similarly, it is this version that added to the development of the zombie drone into the zombie ghoul.

At a time when the American imagination was concerned with "the threat of engulfment by the world" (Boon 56), it seems natural that the figure of the zombie mutated into a figure of consumption. Inspired by the mythology of the frightful and flesh- devouring Arabic ghoul, the zombie drone becomes a figure propelled by its unrelenting drive to consume. Boon notes that "the "zombie ghoul" symbolises the malignant universe surrounding the existential self" (Boon 56) and the figure functions in a way that obliterates the selfhood of identity, mindlessly spreading the infection among the population, increasing the number of the horde until all that remains is an "abyss of nothingness" (Boon 56). The post-nuclear human condition provided ample inspiration for representations of the zombie ghoul in literature; Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954), albeit not strictly a zombie fiction, became one of the first influences in the production of the zombie ghoul, serving as inspiration for George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). In *Night of the Living Dead* radioactive contamination from a returning space probe is responsible for the dead rising from their graves. Despite being the prototypical zombie figure, the term 'zombie' is absent from the film and the risen dead are instead referred to as ghouls. Utilising Matheson's incorporation of plague analogy, the zombie virus is spread in a plague like-manner; however, unlike a plague, wherein the virus requires physical contact for transmission, any human that dies in Romero's film reanimates as a zombie, and it is a figurative plague of violence that results in the spreading of the zombie infection. As Boon astutely notes, "Thus we find in the post-nuclear world that the instinctual human fear of being dead occupies second place to a more intimate

fear of being undead, and that the living death of the zombie is more monstrous that the grave" (Boon 57).

The zombie drone and the zombie ghoul serve as two of the more recognisable categories of contemporary zombies. The zombie figure, however, cannot be restricted to these two categories as it continues to exist as a malleable figure in a state of flux, altering in significance and form to represent the cultural anxieties relevant to the text in which it is located. Boon recognises seven additional categories of zombie to date, with each category overlapping the next as the figure resists concrete definition. The "Tech zombie" is a category ascribed to zombies that have lost their freewill due to technology. This type of zombie is reanimated, or adapted, by technology with the intention of reducing the individual into an object of manipulation, as seen in the novels *The Stepford Wives* (1972), by Ira Levin, and Doris Piserchia's *I, Zombie* (1982). The "Bio zombie" is similar to the "Tech zombie"; however, the use of an external substance or chemical is used in the place of technology. Examples of the Bio zombie can be seen in the films *The Crazies* (1973), by George A. Romero, wherein the Trixie virus turns a small town into homicidal maniacs; Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002); and Juan Carlos Fresnadillo's sequel *28 Weeks* Later (2007), where animal-rights protesters accidently release animals infected with the Rage virus into a highly populated London. Similarly John Erick Dowdle's *Quarantine* (2008) incorporates the popular connection made between the zombie virus and prion diseases,[43] presenting the audience with an infection caused by a mutated rabies virus. The zombies from *Night of the Living Dead* could also be categorised as Bio zombies, since the cause of their infection was as a result of

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[43] Prion diseases, also known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, are progressive neurogenerative conditions known to affect both human and animals. An example affecting humans would be the Kuru disease that infected the Fore tribe members of Papua New Guinea, who were known to take part in mortuary cannibalism.

external contamination. The zombies, or "ghouls" as they are referred to in the film, of Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959) could fall into either the Tech or Bio zombie categories as aliens resurrect the dead in order to prevent the construction of a Doomsday weapon by human scientists. This cross-categorisation reflects the fluidity of these boundaries. The "Zombie Channel" is one whose body has been inhabited by another controlling consciousness, like the zombies in the novel *The Rising* (2003) by Brian Keene, in which demons possess dead bodies, and Stephenie Meyer's *The Host* (2008), which, though not specifically a zombie novel, portrays the consciousness of the characters being overridden by a parasitic alien race. Boon suggests that Stephen King's *The Cell* (2006) features zombies that might classify as Zombie Channels; however, the nature of their zombification is more technological, owing to a telephonic cell-phone "pulse," a detail which suggests they would be better suited under the Bio or Tech zombie categories, producing further reflection on the fluidity of the classification process. The "Psychological Zombie" has lost its consciousness through some sort of psychological means, like hypnotism, as in the case of Cesare from Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). The "Cultural Zombie" which Boon maintains offers "a fascinating bridge between zombie mythology and the wider, general culture" (Boon 59) are literary characters who exhibit zombie-like characteristics relating to identity and consciousness within narratives devoid of a supernatural or fantasy element, such as Joyce Carol Oates's *Zombie* (1995). The "Zombie Ghost" category covers narratives in which the dead return as corporeal figures; these narratives would more appropriately fall under the category of Ghost story. However, the corporeality of the ghost places it on the boundary between ghost and zombie, the prototypical revenant like the Scandinavian *draugr*. The Zombie Ghost is the only category wherein Boon allows for figures that retain their original

sentience, owing to a number of corporeal ghost narratives that are included in zombie anthologies. A recent example of the Zombie Ghost can be seen in *The Returned* (*Les Revenants*), a supernatural French drama series by Fabrice Gobert. The television series is based on *They Came Back* (2004), a French film directed by Robin Campillo, and features a small French town's reaction to the unexpected return of several dead townsfolk. Finally, Boon's typology acknowledges the existence of the "Zombie Ruse," which consists of narratives that use the term zombie in their title in order to attract readers. This technique is more commonly used in children's literature to exploit the popularity of the zombie within popular culture, and examples include Francesca Simon's *Horrid Henry and the Zombie Vampire* (2012).

Boon's intention is to create a system of categorisation that allows for a more methodical and defined articulation of the complete attributes of a zombie, in order to form the foundation upon which further discussions of contemporary zombie mythology can be based. Boon recognises the fluidity of the cross-categorisation that takes place within zombie narratives, and notes that this mutability obstructs the constitution of a finite definition for the term 'zombie'. However, within his specific categorisations he attempts to establish a common characteristic with which all zombie incarnations can be linked, namely the absence of the body's original sentience and volition. But how, then, do we comprehend zombies that regain their sentience and volition?

The past decade has seen the increased emergence of zombie narratives wherein the zombie, having regained its sentience, is positioned in the role of protagonist-narrator. This type of thinking-zombie, aware of its position in society as a scourge of humanity, has divided critics and fans alike with, most disregarding the sentient zombie as part of the zombie canon. The sentient zombie appears, at first

glance, to be a move away from the traditions of zombie literature; gone are the hoards and the uncontrollable insatiable desire to consume the entirety of humanity, and in its place we find sensitive individuals trapped in the process of existential doubt. This new trajectory need not be seen as a complete departure from the "traditional" zombie of the twentieth-century; rather, in the same vein as the development from zombie drone to zombie ghoul, the sentient zombie should be approached as the next step in the evolution of this multifaceted revenant. It is this figure, in particular, that preoccupies me in this project.

Chapter 1

Haitian Identity and the Caribbean Zombie

The concept of zombification first entered the popular imagination during the American occupation of Haiti by means of William Seabrook's quasi-anthropological study, *The Magic Island* (1929). Seabrook's colourful descriptions of Voodoo rituals and eerie revelations of soulless corpses slaving in the sugarcane fields functioned as the inspiration for both the short-lived stage play by Kenneth Webb entitled *Zombie* (1932) as well as the more successful, and arguably foundational, Halperin film *White Zombie* (1932). Seabrook's depiction of Haitian life and the Halperin's embellished reimagining of Haitian Voodoo became the exogenous lens through which American audiences regarded Haitian reality (Degoul 24).[44] This chapter will examine the historical context from which the zombie emerged and the manner in which authentic accounts of Haiti, and zombieism itself, were sensationalised in cinematic depictions in order to construct a primitive Haitian identity. Furthermore, an engagement with imagological concepts will allow a discussion of how an endogenous auto-image of Haitian identity was established in response to the Western exogenously constructed hetero-image of Haitian savagery, revealing that, above all else, while the past century has experienced numerous manifestations of this malleable figure as an "empty signifier" (Laclau 76), the notion of *identity* occupies the very essence of zombieism. It is important, here, to emphasise this intrinsic link with identity in early zombie figures in order to argue, later in this thesis, that the emergence of the sentient zombie is not only reflective of contemporary concerns of selfhood, but also echoes back to concerns raised by the emergence of its Haitian ancestors.

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[44] When Voodoo practices are used with malicious intent, those practices are referred to as: "the work of the left hand."

As a figure of contemporary horror, the monstrous zombie has roots in the sweltering heat of the Caribbean rather than in the darkened forests of his feted European brethren, such as the vampire, the werewolf, or the ghostly spectres that haunt decrepit British houses. Emerging from tales of Haitian Voodoo, the zombie owes much of its notoriety to the American trepidation of Haiti as the first independent black republic. Initiated by the Haitian Revolution, tales of Voodoo and zombification disseminated slowly through the Americas before dispersing to Europe. Apprehension regarding Haiti and her subsequent independence transmuted into apprehension of Voodoo and its association with cannibalism, thereby foregrounding assumptions of Haitian primitivism and savagery in the American imagination. However, Chera Kee notes that, following the U.S. occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, a fear of cannibalism was replaced with a fear of zombies, and in so doing, the cannibalistic discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries regarding Haitian Voodoo was replaced with a highly racialised discourse perpetuated by early zombie films (Kee 9-10). As the zombie continues to develop into the Gothic figure of contemporary representations, often void of any reference to its Haitian history, it has become apparent that the racialised discourse it once inhabited has transformed into a more generalised discourse of Othering in its appropriation of "a more diffuse definition of the Self and the Other" (Kee 10). On the most basic level, the Other can be understood as that which deviates from what is considered the idealised cultural norm within a society. The Other is positioned externally to the Self; additionally, in terms of groups of people, the Other can function as the group on to which another group can project its fears and insecurities, in line with Julia Kristeva's theory of Abjection.[45] Accordingly, the evolution of the zombie, as well

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[45] See: Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York:

as the evolution of the films it inhabits—instigated by the shift in representation initiated by George A. Romero and his *Dead* series—has demonstrated the new emphasis placed on the instability of the boundary between "us" and "them," and subsequently between "self" and "other." [46] The zombies were no longer distinguishable by nationality and race, as every member of the population became susceptible to the infection of a zombie virus. Countries, communities, and families were depicted as being in a state of turmoil as survivors took up arms to defend themselves against zombiefied family members, friends, and neighbours. The recent emergence of the "zombie self" in contemporary zombie-themed literature, film, and television reflects a shift towards a discourse of identity detectable in the early discussions of Haitian identity in zombie and Voodoo related investigations. Isaac Marion's novel *Warm Bodies* (2010), the 2013 film adaptation of the same name, and the Bafta award-winning series *In the Flesh* (2013) created by Dominic Mitchell, all explore the development of zombie sentience, a contemporary trend which raises questions regarding a zombie selfhood.[47] In order to appreciate this development in contemporary zombie representation, it is vital first to examine the origins of the zombie figure in the early American imagination. Thus our attention must first be redirected to nineteenth-century Haiti and the threat posed by American intervention on Haitian identity.

Haiti and Voodoo

On the 1st of January 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed the independence of Saint-Domingue following over a decade of slave revolts inspired by the French

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Columbia UP, 1982.

[46] The first three in the *Dead* series being *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), followed by *Dawn of the Dead* (1979), and *Day of the Dead* (1985) concluding the original trilogy.

[47] For examples in literature see: Browne, S. G. *Breathers: A Zombie's Lament*. New York: Broadway, 2009. As well as the *White Trash Zombie* series by Diana Rowland: Rowland, Diana. *My Life as a White Trash Zombie*. New York: Daw, 2011.

Revolution. As a result, Haiti was declared "the first black-ruled independent nation in the Western Hemisphere" (Kee 10). And yet, in spite of this, the then U.S. President, Thomas Jefferson, as well as the prominent leaders of the majority of European nations, refused to recognise the independence of Haiti as a new republic. Voodoo ceremonies played a vital role in the rebellion, as they served as an environment in which the instigators of the revolution could assemble and discuss objectives with their supporters. Historically, the Bois Caïman Voodoo ceremony of August 1791 is often credited as the event that initiated the revolution. Serving as both a religious ceremony and tactical political assembly, Bois Caïman ensured that the root of Haitian independence and, as a result, Haitian identity itself, became securely tied to Haitian Voodoo (Dubois 99). In effect, this central link between the Revolution and Voodoo provided antagonists to Haitian Independence with "a means to disparage revolutionary ideas by linking them to a supposedly barbaric, superstitious belief system" (Kee 10). Similarly, the violence of the Revolution was portrayed as "racialised violence" specifically targeting the white populace of Haiti, a claim which served to reinforce the opinion that, as David Brion Davis notes, "slave emancipation in any form would lead to economic ruin and to the indiscriminant massacre of white populations" (4). The purposeful refusal to accept the independence of Haiti by the U.S. and most of Europe resulted in Haiti's relative isolation from the rest of the trading world, and thus, imaginative stories regarding this black-ruled republic were able to spread without refute. Kee notes "Haiti's revolution deprived white Europeans and Americans of the ability to "civilise" the black world formerly known as Saint-Domingue" (11). Thus, in order to justify American occupation, Haiti was demonised, compelling thus the intervention of the

"civilizing forces of the white world" (Kee 11) to act as redeemers in order to negate the revolution.

Sensationalised reports of Voodoo spread unchecked and unverified. Haiti was depicted as the carcass of a once boundless colonial beast, the promise of French colonialism slain by the primitive savagery of superstitious Voodoo, by black magic controlled by black hands. The former slave population of Haiti were regarded as de-evolved natives, their rejection of the colonial civilising process seen as proof of their inherent animality and their subsequent return to an African ignorance (Kee 12). Following the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines on 17 October 1806, Haiti was a divided state. Henri Christophe ruled the Kingdom of Haiti in the north, while Alexandre Pétion ran the republic in the south. Successor to Pétion, Jean-Pierre Boyer succeeded in reuniting the north and south and ruled the island from 1822 until 1843 when he was forced out of office. However, in the lead up to and following the departure of, Boyer, Haiti found herself once more in a state of upheaval. Successive coups and increasing poverty had resulted in Haiti being viewed as an example of self-destruction, a self-destruction which threatened to breach the border and infect the Americas. Therefore, in an attempt to stabilise the situation, 1915 saw the beginning of the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Kee indicates that "to most Americans, the United States occupied Haiti under the pretence of civilising it" (Kee 13) and therefore the sensationalised renditions of Haitian Voodoo, with particular emphasis on the maliciousness of black magic and the barbarism of Voodoo, became integral to justifying the occupation and maintaining national support of the necessity for America to civilise her animalistic neighbour.

Haitian Zombie

As *The Oxford English Dictionary* notes, it was in 1819 that the word "zombie" first made its appearance in written English language. However, it was not until Lafcadio Hearn published the article "The Country of the Comers-Back" (1889) in *Harper's Magazine* that whispers of the walking dead began to circulate in the English-speaking world of North America (Russell 9). An amateur anthropologist, Hearn discovered that the inhabitants of Martinique in 1887 were not forthcoming with information regarding these *corpse cadavres* and that, more worryingly, those who were relayed "contradictory anecdotes, vague stories and superstitious mumblings" that proved "more confusing than illuminating" (Russell 9). It was Hearn's inability to discover the truth of the zombie myth or, at least, his inability to discover a single coherent first-hand account of zombieism that led to his eventual article for *Harper's Magazine,* which colourfully detailed his expedition to the Caribbean. Only the slightest hint of zombies was enough to provoke interest and intrigue in the notion of the returning dead, the Comers-Back.

Despite Hearn's article, it was not until 1929 that the notion of zombieism took hold of the American imagination with the publication of William Seabrook's anthropological account of Haiti, *The Magic Island*. Seabrook, whose colourful background and enigmatic anthropological research practices cemented his position as one of the "Lost Generation" of writers, inhabited the island in an attempt to embed himself in Haitian culture. Befriending locals and engaging with practitioners of Voodoo, Seabrook familiarised himself with the cultural folklore and Voodoo rituals of the island. In a chapter entitled "…Dead Men Working in the Cane Fields," Seabrook detailed a conversation he had with a Haitian farmer named Polynice: "I recalled one creature I had been hearing about in Haiti, which sounded exclusively

local—the zombie" (Seabrook 94). This emphasis on locating the zombie as "exclusively local" established the zombie as the product of Haiti. Seabrook explains:

> The zombie, they say, is a soulless human corpse, still dead, but taken from the grave and endowed by sorcery with a mechanical semblance of life—it is a dead body which is made to walk or act and move as if it were alive. (Seabrook 94)

The method, as documented by Seabrook, is as follows:

> People who have the power to do this go to a fresh grave, dig up the body before it has had time to rot, galvanise it into movement, and then make of it a servant or slave, occasionally for the commission of some crime, more often simply as a drudge around the habitation or the farm, setting it dull heavy tasks, and beating it like a dumb beast if it slackens. (Seabrook 94)

Polynice recounts a story wherein he describes the zombies as "vacant-eyed like cattle" (Seabrook 96). Furthermore, Seabrook himself recounts his own personal experience with zombies, who "continued dumbly to work" in an "unnatural and strange" manner, noting: "They were plodding like brutes, like automatons [with] the eyes of a dead man, not blind, but staring, unfocused, unseeing" (Seabrook 101). Seabrook's physical description of zombies, as well as the connection drawn between the zombie and slave labour, served as the archetype for future depictions of the zombie in the years that followed.

The sensationalised link made between Haiti and the zombie coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression in 1930. The figure became contemporarily relevant as a moral critique of capitalist exploitation as the dispossessed population of

the United States came to identify with the powerlessness of the zombie workforce. Similarly, the social financial turmoil initiated by the depression resulted in the worsening of racial tensions, whereby "stereotypes of colour," Kee notes, "thrived in this sort of environment" (14). At that time, Hollywood utilised actors of colour to portray marginalised characters and thus the prospect of an entirely marginalised island posed a promising opportunity for the entertainment industry. Removed from the reality of Haitian life, Voodoo existed outside the "norm of whiteness" and could therefore be embellished as monstrous. As a nation of slaves "zombies were faceless masses: a new means of robbing the Other of its individuality in order to keep it as the Other" (Kee 14).

Inspired by Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, Kenneth Webb lifted the zombie from the pages of the travelogue and placed it on the stage in New York. *Zombie* the stage play opened in 1932 and despite having a limited run, Webb's contribution to the zombie trope was twofold. Firstly, adhering to Seabrook's account, the zombie, as a figure of colour, was associated with disposable slave labour, tirelessly toiling at the will of the controlling master. In his review of the play, J. Brooks Atkinson identified with the theme of exploitation and noted that, "If zombies are those who work without knowing why and who see without understanding, one begins to look around among one's fellow countrymen with a new apprehension. Perhaps those native drums are sounding the national anthem."[48] Secondly, Webb acknowledged the unspoken socio-political fear of miscegenation that had arisen in the American imagination through his depiction of a white female as the victim of both the zombiefied black male figure and his Voodoo master known as a Hongan. The staged exotic barbarism of Voodoo

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[48] J. Brooks Atkinson. Rev. of *Zombie,* by Kenneth Webb. *New York Times*, 11 February 1932, clipping in *White Zombie Production Code File.* The Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

and its practitioners threatened to corrupt the sanctity of white American femininity. Without overtly casting a black actor in the role of manipulative Houngan, the threat of "blackness" was instead projected onto the enactment of Voodoo practices, thereby tarring the religion as a malicious endangerment to American values (Kee 15). While this self-proclaimed "Play of the Tropics" garnered extra publicity with the enlistment of two Haitian immigrants as a more authentic replacement for actors in blackface, Webb's script lacked the dramatic flair required to establish the zombie as a veritable figure of horror (Russell 20). In spite of this, Victor and Edward Halperin recognised the horrific potential of the zombie and enlisted Garnett Weston as the screenwriter for the zombie's Hollywood debut. As a documented figure of fact, the zombie existed outside of the realm of copyright, therefore when the Halperins released the feature-length film *White Zombie* a few months after the final stage performance of *Zombie* in 1932, Webb's legal claims of infringement were viewed as nothing more than disparagement and professional jealousy. Weston's familiarity with Seabrook's account of Haiti, having already penned an inspired short story "Salt Is Not For Slaves," resulted in a depiction of the zombie that replicated the mystique and horror of Seabrook's original ghouls, with an added element of Hollywood sensationalism. And in casting Béla Lugosi, fresh from his title role in Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), in the role of Voodoo master Murder Legendre, the Halperins ensured that *White Zombie* catapulted the figure into the Gothic imagination. (Russell 20)

Despite its status as an independent production, *White Zombie* had sought to expand on the themes introduced by Webb in *Zombie*. However, Russell notes that an aggressive marketing campaign was used to "play up the veracity of the events depicted in the film" (Russell 22) by stating that the film was based on factual

evidence and events. In the build up to the film's opening night on 29 July 1932 the advertising campaign reached a crescendo, as is evident in an excerpt from *The 1922 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures*:

> When *White Zombie* was ushered into the Rivoli Theatre in New York, all Broadway was startled by the sudden appearance of nine zombies on the boardwalk erected above the marquee of the theatre. Thousands packed the sidewalks and gasped with amazement as the nine figures, faithfully garbed and made-up to simulate actual members of the *White Zombie* cast, went through a series of thrilling dramatic sequences […] The doll-like figures of the girls were dressed in white flowing robes and the men looked as if they had been dug up from the ground with wooden splints on their legs and battered facial expressions […] crowds gathered all day, lured there not only by the drama enacted above the theatre but by the *White Zombie* sound effects records which included the screeching of vultures, the grinding of the sugar mill and the beating of tom toms and other nerve wracking sounds. (Alicoate 101)

Onlookers were immersed in a sensory explosion of Haitian exotica, wherein the "otherness" of Haiti, her people, and her secrets, were exploited and amplified in an attempt to sell movie-theatre tickets. In effect, Haitian identity became a commodity; in other words, a construction of Haitian Identity, as perceived though the lens of American sensationalism, was commodified. Due to the emphasis that had been placed on the anthropological legitimacy of the film, America's already-polluted perception of Haiti thus became further distorted.

The "white zombie" of the film is Madeleine Short (Madge Bellamy), a young, newly married American woman who becomes a zombie after drinking poison administered by the wealthy plantation owner, Charles Beaumont (Robert Frazer). Beaumont, having obtained the poison from the Houngan, Murder Legendre (Béla Lugosi), quickly regrets his decision to transform Madeleine into a zombie once he realises his zombiefied bride is nothing more than an unresponsive automaton. Legendre refuses to return Madeleine to life, choosing, rather, to zombify Beaumont and take Madeleine for himself. Legendre's zombification of Madeleine has various implications. Firstly, the concept of zombification comes to exist as an aspect of the primitivism associated with Haiti. Therefore, Madeleine's susceptibility to Legendre's Voodoo implies, Kee would suggest, "that a primitive nature lurked inside the civilised white person" (Kee 17). Legendre's decision to betray Beaumont and claim Madeleine for himself spoke to the white societal fear of miscegenation that was prevalent during the 1930s. It is through Legendre's claim to the white woman that conventional boundaries between Self and Other begin to collapse; the traditional colonial roles of white master and black slave are reversed as the "whiteness" of the "civilised" Western world is breached by the primitivism of black magic for, as Gyllian Phillips notes, "Legendre threatens to infect whites with the contagion of native magic and pharmacology by transforming them into zombies" (Phillips 27). Haiti is therefore instantiated as a land of primitivism, sacrifice, and Voodoo, wherein the young white American female requires rescuing from the racially impure hands of the Houngan and zombieism. As Degoul notes, "The American imagination appropriates, then, a theme that issued from the Haitian imagination, racialises and eroticises it, all the while associating it in quasi-symbolic fashion with the Haitian

situation, with Negro Haitianness more broadly, as marked by witchcraft" (Degoul 27).

White Zombie begins with a scene taken directly from Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, wherein Madeleine and her soon-to-be husband, Neil (John Harron), witness a Voodoo burial ceremony occurring in plain view along the roadside. The scene immediately sets the tone of the narrative, catapulting both characters and viewers into the unfamiliar exoticism of the Haitian way of life. Madeleine asks, "Driver, what is it?", to which he answers, "It's a funeral, Mademoiselle. They're afraid of the men who steal dead bodies." The carriage continues on down the road until it stops next to a stranger, Murder Legendre, to ask for directions. Legendre ignores him and instead, stares transfixed at Madeleine until the driver notices a group of shuffling figures heading towards the carriage. "Zombies!", the driver yells, before hastening the horses onwards. Later, the driver explains, "They are not dead, monsieur. They are dead bodies. Zombies! The living dead. Corpses taken from their graves and made to work in the sugar mills and fields at night." This explanation drives to the very still undead heart at the core of zombieism: *They are not men*. The zombies depicted in both *Zombie* and *White Zombie* are portrayed as having been stripped of their identity and, subsequently, their humanity. Herein it is possible to identify the American attraction to the zombie in the 1930s as stemming from the possibility to "cast an entire group of people as beings without humanity" (Kee 17). Human beings are reduced to automata, toiling tirelessly and endlessly, the definitive other, void of selfhood, existing only as a nonentity. A definitive scene in *White Zombie* features a working zombie silently tumbling into the sugar mill where his body is obliviously ground-up with the sugar cane by his unresponsive comrades, further illustrating the insignificance of the dehumanised figure. The scene, as a critique of slavery, signifies

not only the capitalist system's exploitation of workers but is also indicative of white sugar, a product of the capitalist system, being stained with the blood of disposable labour, a concern which echoes Karl Marx's notion of the capitalist mode of production where he states: "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from the very pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx 834). In this scene the product of capital is visually represented as contaminated with the ground up remains of an enslaved labourer. However, the central force of horror within *White Zombie* is not emphasised as originating in the capitalist system, but rather with the Houngan, Murder Legendre. It is his extensive knowledge of Voodoo that gives him the power to de-humanise men in the creation of zombies.

Haitian Identity: Exogenous and Endogenous

The construction of the zombie as a specifically Haitian figure of horror originated, as I have argued above, in the ethnographic and anthropological investigations of Western researchers exploring the social and cultural systems of Haiti. In so doing, the zombie has been fabricated as a figure of Haitian *folklore*, as opposed to purely a feature of Haitian *folklife*: that is, the figure was elevated and mythologised out of the customary Haitian experience and presented to the American audience with an air of mysticism and fantasy (Bishop 41). Therefore, Bishop suggests, the figure should "be approached as both a disciplinary subject and the resulting product of such academic investigations" (Bishop 41). However, in his recent anthropological research on Haiti, Franck Degoul indicates that there is perhaps an additional aspect to consider when investigating the connection between the zombie and Haiti. Most notably, "the way the practice is thought of and practiced by Haitians" (Degoul 25) encapsulates the Haitian image, self-produced as a response to the sensationalised image created by outside perceptions of Haiti.

Degoul utilises the term "exogenous" when referring to the construction of the Haitian image by Western authors. The term "exogenous" becomes integral to this investigation as it is vital to regard these interpretations of Haiti as emerging from "outside the sociocultural Haitian context" (Degoul 24), established "through the interpretive prism that defines zombification and witchcraft as unfailingly linked" (Degoul 24). The imagological notion of "hetero-image" is the construction of a national "image," namely of Haiti, as assembled from an external perspective of foreigners to Haiti and therefore differing greatly from the "auto-image" created internally, endogenously, by Haitians themselves. Degoul maintains that the "auto-image" of Haiti was constructed by Haitians, in response to the negative "hetero-image" propagated by sensationalised reports of primitive Voodoo folklore. The concept of zombieism can thus be explored from two perspectives: firstly, from the perception of foreign visitors to Haiti; and secondly, as a product of the "Haitian indigenous movement, born precisely in reaction to the American occupation" (Degoul 27). As previously mentioned, the primitive image of Haiti perpetuated by American forces was used to justify the necessity of the American occupation of Haiti in an attempt to "civilise" the devolved, and de-evolved, nation. While Seabrook's *The Magic Island* ignited the spark of the American fascination with Voodoo and zombies, an alternative textual analysis of Seabrook's interactions with Haitian natives exposes the way in which his Haitian interviewees presented notions of Voodoo and zombies in a manner that allowed for, and invited, the perpetuated sensationalism in the construction of the Haitian hetero-image. The reinforcement of the potential threat of Voodoo facilitated the simultaneous construction of a powerful and purposeful depiction of an Haitian auto-image in opposition. In an interview with a local Haitian informant, Colbert, Degoul explores the purposeful representation of

Haitian "vaudou", finding that the depiction of an Haitian auto-image occupies the Haitian imagination of contemporary times in a similar way to that during the initial American Occupation:

> Colbert: Dominicans are afraid of us: It is for this reason [zombification]. You haven't seen the video of Koudjay [a Haitian "roots" musical group]? The video from last year? (I say no. He begins to sing.) "Nap tan yo! Mwen tandé Sendomeng ap vin okipé nou! Mwen di yo: la yé! Nap tan yo." You see, and then in the video we see a Dominican who (armed, demonstrating his power) is armed, and then the Haitian holds in his hand (mimes a powder that he blows in this person's direction, who is clearly a soldier).
>
> Q: And the other one becomes a zombie? Is that right?
>
> Colbert: Yes! Yes! It is a reality; they are afraid of us!
>
> Q: And in the words of the song, what does it say? "We are waiting for you," right?
>
> Colbert: "We are waiting for you!" Yes. "We are waiting for you!" "Keep your armoured tanks and your weapons… we are waiting for you." At the same time, When the Americans penetrated Haitian soil, in 1994, it was us who had invited them. It was the people who had invited them. If this had not been the case, they couldn't have… It was the country's power that had invited them… If it hadn't been for that, they wouldn't have been able to do it. Because… we have Vaudou… we have devils. (Degoul 31)

A similar comparison can be drawn with a more recent ethnographic exploration of Haitian Voodoo and zombieism, Wade Davis's *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985). Davis, an ethnobotanist, travelled to Haiti with the intention of dispelling the supernatural myth behind the creation of zombies. While his anthropological investigation conducted a measured approach of the island, its inhabitants and their culture, the 1988 horror film of the same name, inspired by the book and directed by Wes Craven, presented an account of Haiti that used its basis on factual research to justify the veracity of sensationalised depictions of Voodoo and zombies. The relationship between *The Serpent and the Rainbow* and its cinematic adaptation suggest that the representation of Haitian identity and its connection to Voodoo continues to dominate American perceptions of Haiti, an observation that echoes Najman's statement that "The great powers, which had never accepted the birth of the completely new black republic, would instantly associate Vaudou and witchcraft before making the zombie the incarnation of the 'bad Haitian'" (Najman 249).[49] The practice of zombification is established as a symbol distinguishing the difference between the cultures of the civilised white American from that of the barbaric black Haitian. In so doing, this difference is racialised and reduced to a matter of nature, which results in implying an inherent Haitian mysticism.

As a 'black' country, Haiti was categorised by its association to Africa and the imported primitive practices of Voodoo. As a result of this, zombification was constructed as the reigning emblem of an inherited tradition, "a sign of the Negro

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[49] This quotation is taken from the translated version which appears in Degoul, Franck. ""We Are the Mirror of Your Fears": Haitian Identity and Zombification." *Better off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-human*. Ed. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro. Trans. Elisabeth M. Lore. New York: Fordham UP, 2011. 27

atavism that pushed the Haitian to cruelty, as revelatory of his incapacity to access the "civilisation" to which, at the time, the Americans were trying to guide him" (Degoul 28). As opposed to recognising the exogenous origins of this perception of Haitian identity as being informed by a Western imagination that held it to Western ideals, zombieism is maintained as an intrinsic element of the Haitian reality, "Haiti: it is Vaudou; Vaudou: witchcraft; and witchcraft… zombification" (Degoul 29).

Consequently, this exogenous perception influenced the way in which the endogenous portrayal of Haitian identity was adapted in order to take advantage of the flawed impression of Haitian abilities. Haiti, Degoul notes, "defended itself by means of zombification" (Degoul 29), using techniques unique to Haiti and exploiting existing superstitions regarding Haitian mysticism. "Americans make weapons, but us, our weapon is the principle of zombification!", Claudel, an informant of Degoul's, explains, "In the same way, if we cannot zombify you, if we see that we cannot zombify you, we'll try another route that we call 'pyès,' that we call 'powders'"[50] (Degoul 31-32). The Haitian association with zombification as established and documented in travelogues during the early years of the American occupation, such as in Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, created an "emblem of Negro Haitian savagery" (Degoul 32) that was positively reappropriated by Haitians in the construction of an auto-image that confirms the American trepidation of an intrinsic Haitian mysticism. Seabrook describes his informant Polynice as "rational," (94) as the least credulous of the "negroes" interviewed, as "too intelligent to believe [the superstitions] literally true" (93). And yet, Polynice remarks "Superstition? But I assure you this of which you now speak is not a matter of superstition. Alas, these things—and other evil practices connected with the dead—exist. They exist to an extent that you whites do

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[50] "Powders" are also mentioned by Wade Davis in *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, see page 185 for Davis's expansion on the subject from an anthropological context.

not dream of, though evidences are everywhere under your eyes" (94). Polynice's suggestion that the existences of Haitian "evil practices" are outside of the "white" sphere of experience implies that the Haitians are in possession of a certain kind of knowledge imperceptible to white visitors, an inherent Haitian knowledge. In an interview with a Houngan named Max Beauvoir, Wade Davis is told of Haiti: "This is a land where things are not the way they seem" (Davis 47). The racialised knowledge of zombieism is utilised as a cultural trait "to mark a fundamental difference between Haiti" (Degoul 32) and white visitors to her shore as a defining affirmation of Haitian identity.

Zombification, exogenously, was established as a demonstration of Haitian primitivism, and used as the basis for the separation between American 'self' and Haitian 'other'. Sensationalised accounts of zombieism in film, particularly in *White Zombie* and *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, projected the hetero-image of a savage Haitian mysticism into the realm of the Western audience, whereby attention was redirected back towards Haiti. Positively reappropriated, the exogenous sign of Haitian barbarism becomes an endogenous indicator of Haitianness, implying a unique knowledge of practices outside the realm of Western perception— a knowledge that Degoul identifies as "completely Haitian and jealously protected" (34). Western attempts to access this specifically Haitian knowledge are depicted in both films as being detrimental to the men involved. In *White Zombie* Charles Beaumont enlists the power of Murder Legendre: using the Houngan's potion to zombify Madeleine, Beaumont appears to have accessed the world of Voodoo knowledge. However, following his expressed displeasure and disappointment with the zombiefied Madeleine, he is promptly poisoned by Legendre and reduced to the state of a mere white zombie. Similarly, in *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, Dennis

Allan journeys to Haiti with the intention of discovering the secret active ingredient in a drug used to make zombies. Allan's attempt to gain this closely-guarded knowledge results in him being arrested (twice), having his scrotum nailed into a chair, framed for murder, held at gunpoint, zombiefied, buried alive, embroiled in a battle of feuding Houngans and, finally, having to rely on the assistance of his "Jaguar spirit" to defeat an evil Houngan in a hallucinogenic final scene. In both films, however, the knowledge is never wholly attained.

These films, and the travelogues on which they are based, depict a purposeful journey to Haiti with the objective of gaining insight into the fiercely protected knowledge at the heart of Haitian Voodoo. As Other, the Western seeker enters the realm of Haitian mysticism with the intention of gaining an understanding of the fundamental basis of Haitian identity. The Houngans of these narratives allow the Western Other a participatory role in their private practices, proving the authenticity of their abilities without revealing the true source of their powers. The Western seeker finds himself immersed in Haitian alterity, while failing to define or comprehend the basis or magnitude of this uniquely Haitian power. In his anthropological research of the subject, Degoul explains that "the desire demonstrated by certain "blancs" to be initiated into its rites, takes on the quality of suspicious intrusions into the very core of their Haitianness" (Degoul 36). An intrusion into the very source of the construction of Haitian identity, the acquisition of such knowledge would threaten the Haitian ability to maintain control of "that which the Haitian national identity is founded on, and which gives it its strength and power" (Degoul 37).

Conclusion

The difference, therefore, between "self" and "other," in these examples, extends beyond differences of nationality into the very essence of nature, and of race. In the same way that the Haitian was depicted as lacking a natural capacity to appropriate the civilising practices offered by the French colonialists and then the American occupiers, now the white American is positioned as "other" with a racialised incapacity to comprehend or possess the Haitian mysticism of Voodoo. This all hinges on the doubleness of the figure of the zombie: on the one hand, it is a sign used to validate the colonial endeavour, but on the other, it is a means through which the colonised country might resist the Western imperatives of knowledge and science. Voodoo practices, particularly that of zombification, operating in a manner of "explicitly racialised Haitianess" (Degoul 38), surpass their original conception and become significant factors in the construction of a "collective Haitian Identity" (Degoul 38). The exogenous image constructed of zombieism as a notion of barbaric Haitianess is positively reappropriated in the endogenous conception of a uniquely Haitian national identity informed by its inherent understanding of, and participation in, a knowledge of Voodoo and its practices to serve as a strategic defence against the imposing control of American powers.

While, on the one hand, the figure of contemporary zombie cinema has been stripped of its exoticism following Romero's extrication of the figure from Haiti and enabling, as Chris Vials notes, "a more progressive bent within the genre" (42), the relocation of the figure from the exotic to the domestic has allowed the zombie to function as a somewhat "empty signifier" in that the term "can [now] be attached to the most diverse social contents" based on an absence of a "content of its own" (Laclau 76). The zombie has become a figure of malleable meaning, extending beyond the realm

of the Gothic into corporate, political and legal discourse. Words like 'zombie banks', 'zombie funds', 'zombie investors', and 'zombie computers' circulate in a world far removed from the folkloric origins of the term. The zombie is used to critique capitalism, consumerism, the threat of miscegenation, obsessive technology trends, overzealous science, and the concept of a zombie apocalypse has even been utilised in training templates for large-scale catastrophe planning and by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention as a tongue-in-cheek approach to engage with a wider audience. In these and other instances, the racial moorings of the zombie seem to have been occluded, repressed and lost. Within contemporary literature, there has been an increasing shift from the threat of a zombie apocalypse to the emergence of zombie sentience, wherein zombie protagonists navigate the "living" landscape as an "other" negotiating the construction of identity in consideration of their own "selfhood." While much of the zombie's traditional significations might have been lost, and while the figure has become greatly detached from the exoticism of Haiti and the implications that this has for notions of colonialism and race, what remains, as I show in this thesis, is a fundamental, foundational concern with notions of identity.

Chapter 2

Reading and Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse

There is an undeniable connection between the zombie and the notion of apocalypse, so much so that the first has come to imply the second, implicating Zombie literature between the two genres of Gothic and Science fiction as it does so. The intention of this chapter is to explore the relationship between eschatological fiction and the figure of the zombie, especially how the presence of the zombie affects the ultimate aim and intention of the apocalyptic vision. Beginning with an exploration of Frank Kermode's *A Sense of an Ending* (2000), this chapter will discuss critical approaches to apocalyptic literature and establish the apocalypse as an age of transition that is reflective of contemporary crisis. If apocalyptic literature is to be successful in its endeavours, it must use the destruction of apocalypse as a catalyst for the envisioning of a new way of being. The role of apocalyptic literature is thus to present the reader with an opportunity to imagine the destruction of the world as they know it, and to work through the transitional process, resulting in a final abandoning of the old way of life and an acceptance of the New. However, the presence of zombies within the apocalyptic environment encompasses a shift in attention away from the apocalypse and towards the figure of the zombie: the focus changes to surviving the zombies, as opposed to the apocalypse itself. While many zombie-based apocalyptic texts have portrayed a successful integration of the two themes, one particular sub-genre of literature, the zombie apocalypse survival guide, has been unsuccessful in its interpretation. Subsequently, it can be argued that in its attempt to survive the onslaught of zombies, the survival guide essentially denies the apocalypse by failing to acknowledge the necessary transition from old world to new world, focusing only on the elimination of the zombie-as-threat. An exploration of apocalyptic literature is

pertinent to the consideration of this connection, and will ground our understanding of eschatological fiction and the subgenres that it encompasses. The importance of this chapter is to demonstrate that the zombie, and the apocalypse that accompanies it, signals towards the necessary development from one saeculum to the next. In the final chapter of this thesis I return to this idea as I propose that the sentient zombie suggests a move away from the limiting binaries of humanism towards a more inclusive posthumanism, in this we see the end of one saeculum and the start of a new beginning.

The Sense of an Ending

The term "apocalypse" is a concept stemming from the Greek word *apokaluptō*, which translates as "uncover, reveal" (*OED*, 6 ed., 1990). It is the revelation of something formerly unknown or hidden, and is commonly used to refer to the last book of the New Testament, the *Revelation of John*, wherein John of Patmos receives a divine revelation, through prophetic visions, of the end of days before the second coming of Christ and the promise of a new heaven and a new Earth. While the book is particularly violent and graphic, the revelation is revealed in seven visions, corresponding to the seven days of the creation in Genesis. Revelation uses symbolic and metaphorical imagery to prophesy the complete destruction of the world:

> And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:8)

Subsequently, the biblical visionary rhetorically enquires,

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:17)

The revelation details Jesus' resurrection of the righteous, the final damnation of the wicked in a burning lake of fire and the use of the burning lake of fire to cleanse the Earth prior to God's recreation of the Earth as paradise. The Revelation of John is one of many End-of-Time prophecies, and it serves as a prime example of apocalyptic literature, perhaps the most influential in the canon of eschatological narratives.

In *A Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode addresses eschatological fictions and explores their popularity as a genre, arguing that apocalyptic notions are used as a means of establishing a sense of belonging in the world as an attempt to relate oneself to a beginning and an end, imagining a "significance for themselves in these unremembered but imaginable events" (Kermode 4). Kermode is worryingly essentialist in his approach; however, he proceeds to examine imaginings of the end and "varying existential pressures" (Kermode 5) under which those imaginings have been influenced. Kermode begins his examination by approaching apocalypse as something "which ends, transforms, and is concordant" (Kermode 5), and views apocalyptic thought as rectilinear, as opposed to the more common cyclical view of apocalypse. As Kermode argues, "events derive their significance from a unitary system, not from their correspondence with events in other cycles" (Kermode 5). A period of time should be seen as an ordered series of events that comes to an end and has no relation to any other series of events but rather stands on its own. Kermode's views can be illustrated and further explained by applying them to a consideration of the Revelation of John: the world exists as we know it, the onslaught of the apocalypse will bring about change, and the lake of fire will be used to cleanse the Earth prior to its transformation into a paradise, in which the righteous will be given

residence. Through the process of judgment during the end of days, the wicked will be completely destroyed and the new world will be home to a new way of thinking. This process is not cyclical, as a cycle would presuppose the rebirth of what went before; instead, it correlates to Kermode's notion of the rectilinear, as it presents the opportunity for an altered way of life, a lifespan unconnected to anything that went before. In this way, we can view apocalypse in accordance with Kermode as something that ends, transforms and is concordant, insofar as the end is in accord with the beginning.

Kermode explains culture's relationship with apocalypse by comparing men to poets:

> Men, like poets, rush 'into the middest,' in *medias res*, when they are born; they also die in *mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. They fear it, and as far as we can see have always done so; the End is a figure for their own deaths. (Kermode 7)

In *medias res* and in *mediis rebus* are Latin terms that refer to the beginning of a narrative locating its starting point in the middle of a greater narrative. To deconstruct Kermode's use of two seemingly similar terms we should consider the interpretation of in *medias res* to be "*into* the middle of things," while in *mediis rebus* is merely "*in* the middle of things," therefore to be born in *medias res* is to be born *into* the middle, while to die in *mediis rebus* is to die *in* the middle. By asserting that Man is born in *medias res* and dies in *mediis rebus*, the individual is left to define their own beginning and ending within a greater narrative, so as to discover a personal meaning to their life. Kermode maintains that within this context an individual creates his own

reality relative to his own start and end point, birth and death. Kermode implies that a preoccupation with apocalypse arises due to the profound human need to humanise the common death (Kermode 7), evidence, no doubt, of his essentialist way of reasoning. In a similar vein, Kermode argues that we thrive on epochs and this obsession is something which "reflects our deep need for intelligible ends" (Kermode 8). From our place in the *middest*, a term that Kermode uses to refer to the middlemost point in history, we cannot see the complete structure, so we "project ourselves—a small, humble elect, perhaps—past the End, so as to see the structure whole" (Kermode 8).

Man, according to Kermode, is essentially self-consumed and self-imposed as the most important species on the planet, and thus the personal death of an individual exposes the insignificance of the single man and instead we turn to the common death to establish our importance. Similarly, the continued popularity of End-of-Time prophecies and eschatological literature throughout history exposes the conception of a culture's establishment of its own generation as being paramount; this is evident in the continual immanence of the supposed apocalypse. Kermode maintains that the plethora of apocalyptic interpretations insist that the End is in the near future. Predictions of apocalypse, particularly historical allegory, are constantly revised so as to assert their relevance within contemporary times. Time invariably discredits these prophecies of apocalypse, however, and Kermode asserts that this deferral of prophecy is not so much discreditation as it is disconfirmation: "Apocalypse can be disconfirmed without being discredited" (Kermode 8).

Kermode refers to an "indifference of disconfirmation" (Kermode 16), which entails the inability to accept the apocalyptic prophecy as being false but to rather assume it has been misinterpreted. The disconfirmation does not falsify the prophecy of

Apocalypse, but rather falsifies that specific prophetical interpretation and leaves the believers not to abandon their pursuits of the apocalyptic but to defer the date to some time in the future. The American sociologist, Leon Festinger, researched and infiltrated apocalyptic sects and named this process of prophecy deferral, *consonance* (Kermode 16-17). Kermode notes that these believers "sought to restore the pattern of prophecy rather than to abandon it, and on this erects a general doctrine"(Kermode 17). There is need for consonance with regard to apocalyptic data. As Kermode states:

> Men in the middest make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle. That is why the image of the end can never be *permanently* falsified. But they also, when awake and sane, feel the need to show a marked respect for things as they are; so that there is a recurring need for adjustments in the interest of reality as well as of control. (Kermode 17)

Kermode uses the rhetorical trope of *peripeteia* in examining the falsification of apocalyptic beliefs. Peripeteia refers to a reversal or change of circumstance or a turning point, a sudden movement towards the opposite of what is, and has been, expected. It is a sudden reversal determined by intellect or logic. "Now peripeteia," Kermode explains, "depends on our confidence of the end; it is a disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route" (Kermode 18). Kermode insists that this change is not dependent on our reluctance to reach an end but rather views our assimilation of peripeteia as a means of readjusting what we expect from the end; this is a thought-process that he believes is an evident feature of "naïve apocalyptic" (Kermode 18). If

we consider this notion with regard to the subject of zombies, it is evident that for the zombie narrative the moment of peripeteia is always the initial appearance of the zombie itself: from their very first emergence within the narrative, there is a shift in narrative direction, and in most cases this shift dramatically points towards a definitive end, if not of the world, then towards the end of society and civilisation as the character knows it.

Kermode acknowledges that an end can never be denied: "it is one of the great charms of books that they have to end. But unless we are extremely naïve […] we do not ask that they progress towards that end precisely as we have been given to believe. In fact, we should expect only the most trivial works to conform to pre-existent types" (Kermode 23-4). In this sense the apocalyptic novel breaks away from conventional endings of realist narrative. There is no attempt figuratively to appease our concerns or to tie up loose strings: the apocalypse is about an abrupt ending; it is an ending in itself, not a conclusion. It does not disclose; instead, it leaves the end as unexplained, refusing to comfort the reader with a neat denouement. It ends, sometimes abruptly, sometimes catastrophically. The realist novel ends with a resolution and a tidy conclusion, but the Apocalyptic Novel concludes with an untidy ending.

The theme of apocalypse is recurrent and perpetually revisited, but it is in a constant state of metamorphoses, dependent on our changing attitudes towards society and the living environment. In the 1840s, John Nelson Darby developed the idea of *The Rapture*; in conjunction with the popularity of C. I Scofield's *The New Scofield Reference Bible,* the two introduced the masses to the notion of the rapture and reinforced the final resurrection of the holy as simultaneous to the second coming of Christ. This biblical approach saw the apocalypse firmly planted in the minds of God-fearing Americans. In an interview with the BBC, Barrett Gross, co-author of *The*

Last Myth: *What the Rise of Apocalyptic Thinking Tells Us About America* (2012),
suggests that apocalyptic thinking, once firmly based in the religious imagination,
spread to the secular following the detonation of the atomic bomb in 1945, an event
which influenced the idea of an immanent end to the world. This shift saw apocalyptic
inspiration transferred from divine destruction to man-made machinery, and the
apocalyptic literature of the time was reflective of this transition. More recently, the
uncertainty regarding the banking crisis, triggered by the 2008 decline of the global
economy, has seen financial markets in a scurry to find a short-term resolution to a
crisis which essentially requires a re-investigation of "the fundamentals of future
growth—infrastructure and human capital," as suggested by Robert Zoellick in an
article for *The Observer* (2012 1). This notion of planning for the future, as opposed
to momentary resolutions for the financial crisis, is mirrored in the contemporary
threat of ecological crisis. Gross and Giles argue that the increase of apocalyptic
thinking inhibits some people from attempting to reach more pragmatic solutions to
twenty-first century problems.[51] They suggest that as an alternative to the shortsighted
response of stockpiling food cabinets and reinforcing shelters in preparation for a
future disaster, society should be conscientious of the ecological decisions they make
in the present and rather prepare for the effects of long-term climate change. With
reference to the advancement of science and a shift from the religious to the secular,
Gross argues that the apocalypse is at the forefront of the American imagination: the
only question, he posits, is whether "Jesus or global warming" will be the first to
arrive. To coin a phrase, we are living in apocalyptic times, the sense of an imminent
and abrupt ending to life as we know it fuelled largely by ecological and economic
concerns. To counter the essentialism of Kermode's argument, then, we might say

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[51] Mathew Barrett Gross, and Mel Gilles. The Last Myth: What the Rise of Apocalyptic Thinking Tells
Us about America. Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2012. Print.

that fears of the apocalypse, while not unique to our culture, assume a particular resonance and urgency in capitalist societies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The zombie, of course, has become central to this cultural fear, the most recent figure through which intimations of the apocalypse are articulated.

As Kermode explains, "The apocalyptic types—empire, decadence and renovation, progress and catastrophe—are fed by history and underlie our ways of making sense of the world from where we stand, in the middest" (Kermode 20). Kermode discusses fiction as a way in which humanity makes sense of its world, in that it enables the fictive structure and ordering of past, present and future, as well as the fictive ordering of crisis (Kermode 93). While it has been widely accepted that our modern time is one dominated by crisis, "technological, military, cultural" (Kermode 94), Kermode believes that failing to recognise these ordering fictions as being fictive, failing to address them critically, leads the narratives away from fiction and into a realm of myth, a move which is detrimental, as "such a myth, uncritically accepted, tends like prophecy to shape a future to confirm it" (Kermode 94).

Kermode explains the distinction between myth and fiction as follows:

> We have to distinguish between myths and fictions. Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive. In this sense anti-Semitism is a degenerate fiction, a myth: and *Lear* is a fiction. Myth operates within the diagrams of ritual, which presupposes total and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent. (Kermode 39)

Kermode is calling for the recognition of the apocalyptic narrative as a fiction, for if we were to believe it to be myth then it would imply an absolute regarding the principles upon which the apocalyptic imagination is constructed: crisis. Kermode insists that crisis is "a central element in our endeavours towards making sense of our world" (Kermode 94) and it is therefore imperative that crisis allows for change.

Returning to the notion of perpetual apocalypse, Kermode recognises that "it seems to be a condition attaching to the exercise of thinking about the future that one should assume one's own time to stand in an extraordinary relation to it" (Kermode 94). Anxiety affixes itself to the eschatological, and as it is dependent on the changing of the times, Kermode suggests that "we can best talk about the differentiae of modern crisis in terms of the literature it produces; it is by our imagery of past and present and future, rather than from our confidence in the uniqueness of our crises, that the character of our apocalypse must be known" (Kermode 95-6). Every age has been in fear of looming apocalypse; however, there has been a marked flourish of apocalyptic literature emerging of late, which indicates that thoughts of apocalypse are at the forefront of the modern mind, perhaps more so than our predecessors. The most notable examples of the contemporary apocalypse include Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), which imagines a somewhat dystopian future wherein the inhabitants of London, now an archipelago, worship a book written by a bitter, drug abusing London cabdriver. Jim Grace's *The Pesthouse* (2007), is an envisioning of the dystopian future of America thrown into a chaotic dark age: following a series of seismic shifts and the onslaught of the plague. Liz Jensen's *The Rapture* (2009) is an eco-tragedy that sees a modern day Nostradamus predicting the end of the world as an ecological apocalypse. Arguably the best contemporary example of apocalyptic literature is Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), which is described by George

Monbiot, in an article for *The Guardian*, as "the most important environmental book ever written" (Moniobot 29). The novel, set in a dystopian future, imagines a collapse of the biosphere, which leaves humans as the only surviving life form. The absence of readily available food leads the survivors to cannibalism and "all pre-existing social codes soon collapse and are replaced with organised butchery, then chaotic, blundering horror" (Moniobot 29). Moniobot argues that *The Road* is an influential piece of literature, one which encourages readers to recognise the importance of a fully functioning ecosystem and suggests that we conscientiously consider our ecologically harmful actions in order to ensure the future survival of not just the human race, but of all living organisms.

This obsession with apocalypse suggests that society has reached a pinnacle in our thinking about crisis. There is a recurring pattern of anxiety, which varies in its difference, depending on its relevant stage of modernity, reflective of contemporary approaches to our position in the middest. Kermode believes that this pattern determines both our position in history and position at the end of an epoch (Kermode 96). This way of thinking attaches itself to Joachism, namely "the belief that one's own age is transitional between two major periods turns into a belief that the transition itself becomes an age, a *saeculum*" (Kermode 101); a saeculum refers to the average potential lifespan of a person or the time taken for a complete renewal of a human population. It is this fiction of transition that allows us to assume that the end is *immanent* rather than *imminent*, in so far as notions of the end time being inherent to our sense-making of the present; "it reflects our lack of confidence in the ends, our mistrust of the approaching of history to epochs of this and that. Our own epoch is the epoch of nothing positive, only of transition. Since we move from transition to transition, we may suppose that we exist in no intelligible relation to the past, and no

predictable relation to the future" (Kermode 101-2). Similarly, the change in development of contemporary apocalyptic literature has been evident of this way of thinking, perhaps more so than the literature that preceded it. Apocalyptic literature has seen its ends being divided into three categories: ends brought about by humans, such as the plague suggestively caused by war in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954); ends brought about by nature, the seismic shifts of Jim Grace's *The Pesthouse* (2007); and ends brought about by the divine, as in Ernest Angley's *Raptured* (1950), the story of a man facing the final tribulation alone after his mother and other Christians are raptured. Of late, apocalyptic literature has seen an emphasis on the end as being transitional, with the cause of the apocalypse often remaining unspecified. The end is no longer the lead attraction; instead it has become something we assume, a part of the transition towards a new world. Due to this change in perception of apocalypse, the narratives that explore them have seen a development. With a particular emphasis on science fiction and eschatological fiction, I will now move on from Kermode's theoretical approach to apocalyptic literature in order to examine the development of the apocalypse in the realm of science fiction by looking to Wagar and Ketterer for further extrapolation.

Science Fiction and the Apocalypse

While Kermode views eschatological fiction as man's attempt to make sense of his position in history, and essentially making sense of his place in the world, Ketterer and Wagar are more concerned with Eschatological fiction, particularly that of the science fiction genre, as being an instructive example of dealing with change. Science fiction, as a literary genre, falls into the category of Speculative Fiction. It sets itself apart from other speculative fictions in that it presents the reader with what could be assumed to be *plausible* content of futuristic environments, parallel universes and

space travel, to name but a few. While the scenarios of science fiction are indeed fictional, there is an emphasis on the plausibility of the content, as opposed to the fantastical elements of other speculative fictions. If, as Kermode has stated, we view our epoch as a *saeculum* of transition, science fiction deals with our process of accepting this change. We essentially become accustomed to the possibility of gross fantastical change and in reading about these possible future situations we develop a level of acceptance. The end of the word is not the culmination of our time on earth; rather, it acts as the catalyst for a prosperous new world. Ketterer suggests that "science fiction is not primarily valuable as prediction. Rather, it teaches adaptability and elasticity of mind in the face of change" (Ketterer 25). As Ketterer continues,

> The proliferation of science fiction is a response to abruptly changing social conditions. During times of stability, when change neither happens nor is expected, or happens so gradually as to be barely noticeable, writers are unlikely to spend time describing the future condition of society, because there is no reason to expect any significant difference. With the nineteenth century, things speeded up, and now change is a constant and unnerving factor in our daily lives. If we are able to live rationally, and not just for the moment, some attempt must be made to anticipate future situations. Hence, writers are drawn to science fiction; it is an outgrowth and an expression of crisis. (Ketterer 24)

In *Terminal Visions*, Wagar suggests an additional possibility that "visions of the end express neurotic feelings of guilt" (Wagar 69). These feelings of guilt are impressed on us since childhood, of an undefined calamity that will be forced upon us should we fail to obey authority, leading to the belief that we experience the world based on a system of reward and punishment. Biblical apocalyptic events mirror this belief in that God punishes evildoers by condemning them to a place of eternal torment, Hell.

Good believers, however, have their place reserved in Heaven alongside the Lord. Notions of guilt extend beyond biblical beliefs to the ecological guilt of environmental abuse. We see examples, such as M. Night Shyamalan's *The Happening* (2008), wherein nature recognises the threat of mankind and responds by releasing an airborne neurotoxin which renders those infected as suicidal. Mass suicide ensues until the plants mysteriously abandon their mission, positing the onslaught as a mere warning, an example of the apocalypse awaiting man should he fail to recognise the fault of his ways. The expectation of apocalyptic destruction incites both guilt and anticipation as the individual weighs up a lifetime of moral and amoral behaviour. "Hence," Wagar concludes, "we may produce or obsessively consume scenarios of the end time because we feel guilty about our misconduct, which includes our sadism, whether acted out or not" (Wagar 69).

Alternatively, an attraction to eschatological fiction, Wagar believes, can be explained by its ability to "enable us to imagine ourselves heroically evading death, as we identify with the survivors of the world disaster" (Wagar 70). Imaginings of the end allow us to consider our own abilities to survive, and offer us the opportunity to consider how we would imagine the building and structuring of a new world. There is an emphasis here on "new-ness" in post-apocalypticism. The New Jerusalem is not a rebuilding of what was before, but rather a completely new structuring of society. For the post-apocalyptic world to thrive, it must renounce the ways of the old world and formulate a new way of life suited to the post-apocalyptic environment. Herein lies the determination of the survival of the New World. The survivors of the apocalypse bear the burden of laying the foundations of the New World and in this regard there is a similarity between the survivors of apocalyptic literature and those of the zombie apocalypse. The true survivor is not determined by his physical prowess, nor is his

survival dependent on mental capabilities or the contents and size of his stockpile. The success of survival is purely based on the individual's ability to adapt to change. Examples of this necessary adaptability can be seen from the very first contemporary model of the zombie in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) and remain evident throughout the genre.

Gothic Apocalypse

The seed of what has now grown into the contemporary imaginings of the zombie was first planted in the Gothic genre with Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954). The novel saw its protagonist, Robert Neville, existing, isolated, in the midst of a worldwide apocalypse, as the sole survivor of a mysterious pandemic, which caused sufferers to exhibit vampiric / zombie-like tendencies. The victims, referred to as vampires, were susceptible to the commonplace items used to ward off vampires, such as garlic, mirrors and crosses, and were killed by a wooden stake through the heart. It was not until the 1964 film adaptation *The Last Man on Earth*, directed by Ubaldo Ragona and Sidney Salkow, that the early form of the zombie began to take shape. The pandemic-infected figures are seen to shamble around the screen, void of the flair and elegance commonly associated with vampires. The trailer for the film makes multiple references to their zombie-like nature and opens with the title "This is the world of the living dead," a phrase which went on to inspire George Romero's first instalment of his zombie film series, *Night of the Living Dead*, a mere four years later. In "The Space of Apocalypse in Zombie Cinema", David Pagano suggests, "Romero's films invoke the particularly apocalyptic paradox that the world must end in order for there to be any future for the world" (Pagano 71), a theme which we see recurring in the multitude of zombie narratives that follow Romero's led.

While Romero is famously credited as the creator of the modern zombie, it is Matheson's narrative that not only connects the figure of the zombie with apocalypse, but also sees that the zombie has its foundation in science fiction. John Browning explains that Matheson's novel was the first to interpret the zombie and vampire mythos within a dystopian framework; similarly, it was the first to connect the zombie with mob-mentality. More importantly, Browning notes that "the setting depicted in Matheson's novel is an inversion of typical Gothic space and geography" (Browning 43) due to the threat of the external zombies attempting to enter the "Gothic edifice": Robert Neville's barricaded house. The novel moves the Gothic threat from something that haunts from within, to something external that is fighting to consume him. Matheson's novel centres on the formation and maintenance of a survival space; the protagonist's daily activities are methodically formulated around a dreary survival, which sees the humdrum, repetitive nature of Robert Neville's existence. His life, post-apocalypse, resembles the mundane, suburban way of life of pre-apocalyptic existence: he works hard during the day to provide himself with food and security; at night he escapes to the refuge of his fortified home: he listens to music on his record player and drinks alcohol to numb the dissatisfaction that he feels towards his way of life. He cannot escape the pattern of life to which he had grown accustomed, and this inability to adapt to change is what leads to his eventual downfall. The post-apocalyptic world of *I Am Legend* is divided into three categories of beings: Robert Neville; the only surviving human immune to the pandemic, the vampire / zombies; dead bodies resurrected through infection; and finally, a group of humans who have over come the vampiric qualities of the infection and are attempting to rebuild society, and who are essentially the new form of human. Neville works tirelessly to destroy as many of the infected as possible, but he is unaware that there is a

distinction between the infected living and the infected dead, so he kills unassumingly and relentlessly. His quest to rid the world of the vampires is seen by himself as virtuous and necessary, but the pandemic survivors view him as a monster, something they must conquer in order for them to build a new society. Once they have captured him, Ruth, the woman who was sent out to lure him in, asks him why he failed to flee after she had warned him of the new society's plan: " 'I couldn't… go. I was too used to the house. It was a habit, just… like the habit of living. I got… used to it' ' (*I Am Legend* 155). Neville's attachment to the old way of life leads to his eventual capture and death. Ruth attempts to explain the society's actions and Neville realises that his failure to adapt to the new ways of the post-apocalyptic world has resulted in him becoming monstrous in the eyes of the remaining survivors:

> 'New societies are always primitive,' she answered. 'You should know that. In a way we're like a revolutionary group—repossessing society by violence. It's inevitable. Violence is no stranger to you. You've killed. Many times.'
>
> 'Only to … to survive.'
>
> 'That's exactly why we're killing,' she said calmly. 'To survive. We can't allow the dead to exist beside the living. Their brains are impaired, they exist for only one purpose. They *have* to be destroyed. As one who killed the dead *and* the living, you know that.' (*IaL* 156)

The full realisation of his position outside of society comes when Ruth refers to him in the following terms: " 'Robert Neville,' she said, 'the last of the old race'" (*IaL* 157). Once he has been killed, there will no longer be any of his kind left in the new society. Robert realises that he has no place within the new world; he has become "anathema and black terror to be destroyed" (*IaL* 159) and he accepts his fate as the

process of an evolving civilization, once something he was a part of, but to which he has now become a mere superstition:

> Full circle, he thought while the final lethargy crept into his limbs. Full circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition entering the unassailable fortress of forever. I Am Legend. (*IaL* 160)

I Am Legend reveals the subjective and historically contingent construction of evil and monstrosity: Neville's actions are viewed as monstrous by the very beings he considers to be monsters. As Halberstam states, "Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity, one which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known" (Halberstam 2). Your place within society as a member or a monster is dependent on perspective. The figure of the zombie calls into question our ideas regarding society and the nature of the soul, for the zombie is most commonly represented as a ravenous body without a soul. In *Skin Shows* (1995), Judith Halberstam explores monstrous figures and their development, referring to Foucault's notion of the soul; she argues that the shift in monstrous characteristics is reflective of changing attitudes towards the nature of the soul. In the same way that literary apocalypses reflect the crises of the contextual time, the development of the zombie is contextually reflective of psychoanalytical studies of the soul. Halberstam notes:

> Michel Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* that "the soul is the prison of the body" and he proposes a genealogy of the soul that will show it to be born out of "methods of punishment, supervision and constraint. (Halberstam 2)

Foucault rejects the notion of the soul as being illusionary or ideological and instead believes that the soul should be viewed as "the present correlative of a certain

technology of power over the body" (Foucault 30). The soul is created, according to Foucault, by the governing bodies of power to which a person will be held responsible. Matters of morality are merely reflective of a society's individualised perspective of what morality should entail. As with *I Am Legend*, Neville failed to evolve with the changing governance of morality and inadvertently went from being moral to monstrous. Foucault states:

> This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint. This real, noncorporal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. (Foucault 29)

Our souls govern our actions and our way of thinking in such a way that we are unaware of the extent to which we are limited. As Foucault argues,

> A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself, a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (Foucault 30)

The existence of zombies within a narrative comes hand-in-hand with the fall of government and politics; the world is thrown into a state of anarchy, there is no longer an over-ruling power dictating the right from the wrong and zombies emerge from the chaos as soulless bodies, released from their prisons.

Coinciding with Foucault's publication of *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Romero directed two films wherein this changing attitude to an ungoverned soul merges with notions of apocalypse. The first film, *The Crazies* (1973), sees a small American town devastated by the accidental release of a military biological weapon. The affected townsfolk exhibit homicidal tendencies and as ungoverned chaos reigns over the town there is a difficulty in distinguishing the violence of those infected with the pandemic to those who merely take advantage of the lack of governance. The second film, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), is the sequel to Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and continues the theme of the zombie apocalypse by relocating the setting from "small town America" to inside a shopping mall. Romero uses visuals of mindless zombies streaming through a shopping mall as a critique of mass consumerism, and as an attempt to criticise the propaganda of consumerism inspired by the work Edward Bernays. The zombie is a multifaceted figure of allegory. While it represents the chaos of ungoverned bodies, it is also used to represent an insatiable, thoughtless need to consume and serves as a warning that unrestrained mass consumerism could have apocalyptic results. The figure of the zombie thereby acts as a means of linking Gothic monstrosity, and excess, with the speculative notion of apocalypse that is expressed through science fiction.

Halberstam recognised that Gothic novels offer multiple interpretations of embedded meaning and "part of the experience of horror comes from the realisation that meaning itself runs riot" (Halberstam 2). Halberstam asserts that the body of the monster, in conjunction with Kermode's notion of *peripeteia*, is produced as "a symbol for this interpretive mayhem" (Halberstam 2) and it is against this figure that we are able to measure further examples of monstrosity. The problem that arises with zombies is that while they are the monster, they are also unwillingly, unknowingly

monstrous. The monstrosity is brought upon them usually by some man-made/man-caused disaster, a disease, or the origin of the pandemic is simply not mentioned. Zombies do not have souls, and returning to Foucault's suggestion, if the soul is the prison of the body, then the soulless zombie is the body set free. We see this in the primal, instinctual hunger of the zombie. Completely animalistic and monstrous in the human form, zombies are unable to govern their actions; they are incapable of intelligent thought and simultaneously immune to the power of overruling forces.

Punter and Byron, in their influential text *The Gothic*,[52] explain:

> Monsters, as the displaced embodiment of tendencies that are repressed or, in Julia Kristeva's sense of the term, 'abjected' within a specific culture not only establish the boundaries of the human, but may also challenge them. Hybrid forms that exceed and disrupt those systems of classification through which cultures organize experience, monsters problematize binary thinking and demand a rethinking of the boundaries and concepts of normality. (Punter and Byron 264)

Used contrastingly and comparatively, the true monstrosity of zombie narratives does not lie solely with the flesh-hungry zombie: the landscape of the zombie apocalypse becomes one in which the characters fear both the dead and the unruly living. In many cases, the true horror lies not in the uncontrollable actions of the walking dead, but in the intentional monstrosity of ravaging humans who exploit the absence of ruling governance. In Alden Bell's The *Reapers are the Angels* (2010), the protagonist, Temple, spends the majority of the novel fleeing from a human pursuer, while the zombies become part of the landscape and pose very little obvious threat. The true

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[52] David Punter, and Glennis Byron. *The Gothic*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004. Print.

monstrosity lies in the conscious actions of human survivors. The zombie acts as the *peripeteia*, the moment of sudden change or reversal, that allows us to recognise this shift, and the role of the figure is therefore two-fold as we recognise both the move towards apocalyptic destruction, as well as an alteration in changing monstrosity. Halberstam recognises this shift of monstrosity as a condition of postmodern Gothic and states:

> Within postmodern Gothic we no longer attempt to identify the monster and fix the terms of his/her deformity, rather postmodern Gothic warns us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence. The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities. (Halberstam 27)

Halberstam turns to *Frankenstein* (1818) as Shelley's remapping of the geography of terror, stating that "the architecture of fear" in *Frankenstein* is replaced by physiognomy, the landscape of fear is replaced by sutured skin, the conniving villain is replaced by an antihero and his monstrous creation" (Halberstam 28-9). Shelley converts the body into the locus of fear, suggesting that "it is people (or at least bodies) who terrify people, not ghosts or gods, devils or monks, windswept castles or labyrinthine monasteries" (Halberstam 28). The birth of Frankenstein's monster saw the emergence of body horror and with that came the possibilities for multiple interpretations. As Moretti argues of Frankenstein's creature, "The 'totalizing monster,' a modern invention, threatens community from all sides and from its very core rather than from a simple outside. The chameleonic nature of this monster makes it a symbol of multiplicity and indeed invites multiple interpretations" (Halberstam

29). The monstrosity of the zombie, similarly, is one from within: it questions human capabilities, and it reveals the threat as something that emerges from within us. Our hunger for consumption, power and possession, if left ungoverned, erupts from within to destroy society.

Generic Hybridity: Science Fiction and the Gothic

At a base interpretation, the zombie is a revenant. It is a soulless, reanimated corpse that returns to wreak devastation upon society, but this simple definition relegates the figure of the zombie to sole containment within the Gothic sphere. Shelley's incorporation of scientific practices in the creation of Frankenstein's monster makes her novel an early example of science fiction. As well as introducing the notion of body horror, Shelley is suggesting that it is adventurous and overzealous scientific pursuits that have the ability to bring about monstrous bodies. Frankenstein's monster, therefore, becomes the first stage in the development of hybridity between the horror of Gothic and the speculation of science fiction. With the release of *I Am Legend* (1954), the figure of the zombie begins to break away from the trend set by the forerunners of the zombie genre. While earlier zombies, such as those seen in Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932) and Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), were reanimated through the supernatural powers of the Haitian voodoo master, the *Houngan*, in *I Am Legend* the vampire / zombies are infected victims of a plague brought about by the dust storms of wartime bombing. Similarly, while Robert Neville initially turns to the Gothic pages of *Dracula* (1897) for advice in his battle against the vampires, he later resorts to scientific principles in search for a cure for the virus. Likewise, Romero's zombies emerge as a result of radioactive contamination, and due to Romero's influential effects on the zombie genre, subsequent reincarnations of the zombie have primarily blamed a miss-use of science for the

emergence of zombies. The connection between the zombie and science fiction is thus two-fold: not only is the monstrous figure produced through science, it also inspires speculative notions of apocalypse due to the extent of devastation it wreaks on society. The zombie links the body horror of the Gothic with the principles of science fiction and as a result, becomes a modern monster whose liminality is echoed in the concerns of apocalyptic transition.

As Ketterer has argued:

> The apocalyptic imagination may finally be defined in terms of its philosophical preoccupation with the moment of juxtaposition and consequent transformation or transfiguration when an old world of mind discovers a believable new world of mind, which either nullifies and destroys the old system entirely or, less likely, makes it part of the larger design. (Ketterer 13)

Ketterer recognises the necessary correlation between the destruction of the old world and the birth of the New Jerusalem; simultaneously, he recognises the necessary peripeteia within the moment of juxtaposition. As he states, "the term apocalyptic allows for a dialectic, conflict, or tension of oppositions" (Ketterer 7-8). Ketterer considers the fragile precipice upon which "order maintains itself" (Ketterer 14) against the threatening unknown that stands before it, and suggests that:

> The successive collapse of meaning and structural coherence, of which we are today painfully aware, has long been a concern of the American imagination. But the fulfilment of the apocalyptic imagination demands that the destructive chaos give way finally to a new order. (Ketterer 14)

Ketterer locates science fiction as the purest outlet of apocalyptic thought, but recognises that it also finds expression within the Gothic mode (Ketterer 15). The zombie, a hybrid monster birthed from the liminality of science-fiction possibility and Gothic monstrosity, has stepped forward as the harbinger of the apocalypse and with him has emerged a specific subgenre of literature, the 'Zombie Apocalypse Survival Guide'. We will now shift our exploration to the concerns of apocalyptic zombie narratives and consider the zombie survival guide as a response to the growing expectation of a true-to-life zombie apocalypse, a sign that the zombie may be on the precipice of breeching Kermode's earlier warning of fiction transforming into myth.

Halberstam states that the arrival of cinematic body horror saw the modern period experience a shift "from the literary Gothic to the visual Gothic" (Halberstam 3); this shift was accompanied "by a narrowing rather than a broadening of the scope of horror" (Halberstam 3). This narrowing was seen as a result of the limited visual register for monstrosity; similarly, this shift explains the extent of influence of Romero's version of the zombie stereotype. The slow lurching zombie did not reach the height of its popularity as part of literary Gothic; on the contrary, following *The Last Man on Earth*, Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* was one of the first versions of visual Gothic to present the apocalyptic zombie to horror movie fans. The zombie had shed the shackles of his Haitian forefathers and traded political concerns of colonisation for more pertinent concerns of the time, such as race, gender inequalities and mass consumerism. The contemporary zombie had no literary birth into popular culture: we were denied the opportunity to imagine him for ourselves; he was purely a monster of the visual and, hence, Romero's representation of the zombie became the prototype. Similarly, on the difference between eschatological disaster portrayed in science fiction films and novels, Sontag states:

In the films it is by means of images and sounds, not words that have to be translated by the imagination, that one can participate in the fantasy of living through one's own death and more, the death of cities, the destruction of humanity itself. (Sontag 212)

Our apprehension of filmic disaster extends only as far as the images displayed; however, the scenes described in novels are as extensive as the reach of the reader's imagination. With regard to the development of zombie fiction growing into a thriving written world, the images of the flesh-devouring zombie and scenes of apocalypse satiate our appetite for disaster to a certain extent but our hunger for the eschatological has been unsatisfied by presented images of film, and has turned to literature to expand the vision of the apocalypse.

Sontag suggests that Science fiction films are not entirely about science: instead, "they are about disaster, which is one of the oldest subjects of art. In science fiction films disaster is rarely viewed intensively; it is always extensive. It is a matter of quantity and ingenuity. If you will, it is a question of scale" (Sontag 213). This attraction to scale, with particular reference to the scale of disaster, is why the genre of science fiction lends itself to the excess-obsessed nature of Gothic fiction. Gothic is concerned with the abjection of that which returns to haunt and what better fear than one who returns not only to haunt but to threaten destruction on an excessive level: the zombie. Science fiction is preoccupied with the aesthetics of destruction and while zombie literature differs slightly in that it does not share the hunger for a physical destruction of the landscape, it pertains to the destruction of mankind, the physical decay of humanity, and with it, the destruction of manmade systems of power and knowledge. The landscape, as seen in the majority of zombie literature such as *The Reapers Are The Angels*, is reclaimed by nature as if nature were attempting to

remove all signs of man's former inhabitance. Sontag recognises certain traits shared by both science fiction and horror films, particularly the "primitive gratification" (Sontag 214) of "the depiction of urban disaster on a colossally magnified scale" (Sontag 214); Sontag refers to the rampaging of cities at the feet of towering monsters. While the monsters of zombie movies are no towering beasts, and although the destruction that they bring does not rattle the physical foundations of cities, the zombie's destructive force that tears through the foundation of society on a more personal level is no less acute. They see to the destruction of infrastructure and public services. The zombie apocalypse is a clashing of two genres: Gothic literature attempts to expose the abjected and Science Fiction attempts to make sense of crisis. The combination of the two is a modern approach to understanding and attempting to deal with the crisis of the time.

Sontag states that "modern historical reality has greatly enlarged the imagination of disaster, and the protagonists- perhaps by the very nature of what is visited upon them- no longer seem wholly innocent" (Sontag 215), referring to the changing nature of the protagonists of science fiction films going from a man with an impressive heritage of heroism to a man whose heroism is questionable, the anti-hero. Much like zombie films, whose hero is not wholly innocent but culpable in the final killing of zombies, Robert Neville, the hero in Matheson's *I Am Legend*, has his role reversed when he considers his action from the perspective of the remaining survivors. Wagar states:

> Depending on one's ethical and political convictions, a given character may be seen as good or evil. Even if writer and reader can agree on the moral issue, there is the further problem of the extent to which literature (eschatological or

otherwise) is designed to satisfy the hunger of its readers (and sometimes of its writers) for violence and death. (Wagar 76)

In *The Reapers Are The Angels*, Temple is constantly questioning her nature and whether she is evil or not. The reader undoubtedly believes that Temple is not evil but as she considers her own violent actions, and the ease with which she can kill a man, living or walking dead, troubles her thoughts of salvation. Temple's actions, though considered unacceptable to society before the apocalypse, are now accepted as necessary for survival. Zombie literature calls on the protagonist to embody character traits that walk the fine the line between hero and villain. He must be a weapon-wielding fighter, capable of looking into the eyes of a humanoid figure before planting a bullet in its brain. He must have vigilante tendencies, be the ultimate bricoleur; he must be relatable, and most importantly, he must be able to adapt to his changing environment. The reader must be able to read his or her own survival through the story of the protagonist, returning to Wagar's view of the survivalist nature of the apocalypse.

As Sontag states, "The lure of such generalized disaster as a fantasy is that it releases one from normal obligations" (Sontag 215), more so when the disaster is not merely the crippling of society, but the crippling of the system that overrules society. Sontag suggests that the trump card, so to speak, of apocalyptic movies is "the fantasy of occupying the deserted metropolis and starting all over again, a world Robinson Crusoe" (Sontag 215). This is yet another feature that zombie films and sci-fi share: *The Last Man, Omega Man*, AMC's *The Walking Dead* and, most famously, *Dawn of the Dead*, all feature scenes of occupying an abandoned metropolis or shopping centre. The possibilities of these unguarded areas offer yet another representation of "extreme moral simplification- that is to say, a morally acceptable fantasy where one

can give outlet to cruel or at least amoral feelings"(Sontag 215). This is something that is shared with the horror movie. As Sontag states:

> This is the undeniable pleasure we derive from looking at freaks, beings excluded from the category of human. The sense of superiority over the freak conjoined in varying proportions with the titillation of fear and aversion makes it possible for moral scruples to be lifted, for cruelty to be enjoyed. The same thing happens in science fiction films. In the figure of the monster from outer space, the freakish, the ugly, and the predatory all converge- and provide a fantasy target for righteous bellicosity to discharge belief itself, and for the aesthetic enjoyment of suffering and disaster. (Sontag 215)

The strongly moralistic undertones of science fiction propose the correct and humane use of scientific research, as opposed to an obsessional quest for knowledge and power, the kind that often leads to the mass destruction in the film. This is a common theme for both science fiction and horror, with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) being the most noteworthy examples. Similarly, Sontag suggests that along with anxieties of physical disaster and annihilation, "science fiction films reflect powerful anxieties about the condition of the individual psyche" (Sontag 220). While earlier horror films positioned our abjected animality as the threat to our dehumanisation, the threat has now shifted to the ease with which man could be turned into a machine (Sontag 222). The ease with which man is able to settle into the triteness of routine, the mindless acceptance of jurisdiction and our slavery to the capitalist system suggest that we are at risk of becoming mere automatons, controlled by people in power. As Sontag states:

> Ours is indeed an age of extremity. For we live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror. It is fantasy, served out in large rations by the popular arts, which allows most people to cope with these twin specters. (Sontag 224)

Zombie Survival Guides

Wagar begins his investigation into the psychology of apocalyptic literature, which he refers to as "terminal visions," by researching the Second World War and the effects of wartime disaster on different groups of individuals. Wagar notes that falsely predicted mass panic failed to materialise and what was seen instead was a notion of responsible cooperation. Using Martha Wolfenstein's idea of "post-disaster utopia," Wagar explains that what was experienced in place of the predicted panic was a "period of exceptional social harmony immediately subsequent to any kind of catastrophic happening, remembered with nostalgia by the participants in later years" (Wagar 68). Wagar explains that there are two approaches to the expectation of apocalyptic disaster, and that these two approaches depend on the mental state of an individual. "Mentally stable individuals," Wagar writes, "even when they realise that disasters may befall their world in the future, do not often allow themselves to become emotionally disturbed by the prospect" (Wagar 68-9). They assume that the world will endure the disaster with the precautionary practicality to which they themselves assign and they exhibit the adaptability required for survival. "The less stable or neurotic personality," writes Wagar, "by contrast, finds reality difficult to accept. He lacks the full powers of self-control in facing reality available to 'normal' people" (Wagar 69). The unstable individual projects his own instability onto the world, expecting his own destructive forces to be mirrored by the reality he can barely face. As Sontag notes, "the expectation of apocalypse may be the occasion for a

radical disaffiliation from society" (Sontag 224), to which Wagar adds, "such spectacles release the viewer from all normal obligations. He can identify with the survivors and take pleasure in the fall of the rich and the mighty" (Wagar 69); the individual finds an outlet for his "cruel or at least amoral feelings" (Sontag 215). This amoral behaviour can be seen frequently depicted in the zombie narratives of the twenty-first century. Aside from obvious scenes of looting and anarchical violence, the zombie, itself, becomes a target for these cruel attitudes. I shall address this aspect of the genre in a subsequent chapter of this thesis.

Zombie survival guides posit the possibility for survival on the reader's approach to the zombie. In Max Brooks' *The Zombie Survival Guide* (2009) readers are advised that, "feelings of any kind are not known to the walking dead […] Joy, sadness, confidence, anxiety, love, hatred, fear- all of these feelings and thousand more that make up the human 'heart' are as useless to the living dead as the organ of the same name" (*TZSG* 15). The void of human-ness renders the zombie as nothing more than a threat, a moving target you are 'morally' allowed to attack, be it with gunfire or brute force. In Theos and Sutton's, *The Ultimate Survival Guide: Zombie Apocalypse* (2011), the reader is warned that neighbours, an asset to the neighbourhood while alive, should not be given consideration once they have been infected by a zombie, your only option being: "You have to shoot him in the face" (*TUSG: ZA* 2). This condoned and promoted violence against known members of your own community can be read in accordance with Wagar when he states that, "in imagining universal death and destruction, the neurotic may also be venting repressed hostility. Sadistic desires that cannot be fulfilled in overt behaviour find play in relishing the doom scheduled to befall others" (Wagar 69).

While the zombie narrative details the unfolding of, or the years following, a zombie apocalypse, the zombie survival guide acts as a manual to overcoming the apocalypse. The approach towards the apocalypse is one of pragmatic rationalism and, in effect, reduces the apprehensive sense of panic projected onto such an event. Wagar touches on the possibility of Doomsday fiction as being mildly therapeutic; if this is so, then survival guides are the forerunner of this category. Wagar calls on Bruno Bettelheim's suggestion that the facing of fears, with a comparison to a child enduring a horrific fairy tale, has the ability to dispel those fears, essentially building the individual's self-confidence (Wagar 69). The reader of a zombie survival guide faces the fictional zombie apocalypse as one removed from the immanent threat, unlike a narrative, which throws the reader into the sensational experience of life-fearing battle. The horror instilled by an action-packed narrative is replaced with sensible apprehension of an event and the logical approaches one can take to ensure one's own survival.

As previously stated regarding eschatological fiction, Wagar believes that " they enable us to imagine ourselves heroically evading death, as we identify with the survivors of the world disaster" (Wagar 70). Survival guides take this a step further by giving us the tools to manifest our survival, should we find ourselves in the same situation as the characters of eschatological fiction. Survival guides are essentially maps towards a post-disaster utopia. The embodiment of a post-disaster utopia plan would be Sean T. Page's *War Against The Walking Dead* (2011), where he covers the usual zombie apocalypse information, detailing the process of zombification and the pseudo-science behind the disease. Page promotes his novel as being the definitive guide to survival following the initial chaotic months of the apocalypse and explains that waging war against the walking dead is far greater an issue than merely annihilating zombies. War against the walking dead will only be won once society is

able to re-establish themselves into functional communities. The chapters that follow Page's extensive discussion of weapons and tactile deployment are focused on one thing, victory over the walking dead, which is, at its core, a model for the reformation of society. Chapter 35 is aptly entitled, "Building an Agrarian Society and the Big Wall" and is essentially a plan for the creation of a post-disaster utopia.

"Terminal fictions," writes Wagar, "are full of scenes of food-gathering and feasting, erotic gratification. The formation of warm and loving relationships among survivors, new simplicities and rough comforts that compare favourably indeed with the humdrum, or the decadence, or pre-disaster society"(Wagar 71). Examples of post-disaster utopias are littered throughout zombie narratives and act as a safe-haven for its inhabitants and an idealised utopia for the travellers trying to reach it. In Alden Bell's *The Reapers are the Angels*, the reader encounters four potential post-disaster utopias. *The Reapers are the Angels* is set twenty-five years into the zombie apocalypse: the protagonist, Temple, is a fifteen-year-old girl whose only experience of life is of a time wrought with apocalyptic doom and the ravaging walking dead. In *The Memory of Place* (2012), Dylan Trigg states: "As places alter, so our bodies take the time to master the environment, and the objects that inhabit that environment" (Trigg 170). Temple is the prime example of this "altered" state having fully mastered her environment. Her viewpoint, therefore, remains untainted by life before the apocalypse and she cannot relate to Wagar's notion of post-disaster utopia as "analogous to a fondly remembered childhood" (Wagar 71). She does not experience the utopian locale as a recapturing of the "love and security sacrificed during the 'catastrophe'" (Wagar 72); for her, there is no "pre-catastrophe," and equally, no utopia in which she finds comfort because the apocalypse is her reality. The world that predates the apocalypse is utterly alien to her:

Subdivisions. Those magnificent bone-white homes, duplicated row after row on grids that seem to grow like crystal with the sharpness and precision of God's artisan-ship, with those softly sloping sidewalks, square patches of overgrown lawn and the garage doors like gleaming toothy grins. She likes them, the way the homes fit together like interlocking blocks. When she hears the word community, this is the image that comes to mind: families nested in equally spaced cubes and united by a common colour of stucco. If she was living in a different time, she would like to live here, where everything is the same for everybody, even the mailboxes. (*TRATA* 54-5)

The novel is rich with examples of constructed utopias, the first being the four towers that Temple encounters on her journey:

Above her rise four identical towers, each taking up a full city block. There are retail stores on the ground level and most likely business offices on the rest of the floors. The four buildings are connected, about six storey's up, by enclosed footbridges to create one massive insular complex. (*TRATA* 23-4)

The four towers are revealed to be the safe haven for seven hundred and thirteen people, each tower comprising a different neighbourhood. This post-disaster utopia consists of a school, medical facilities and a department store; the floors of offices are reused as residences. Temple, the eternal wanderer, momentarily considers making it her permanent home, but her plan is abandoned after she accidently kills one of the community's men as he tries to rape her. She flees from the four towers, finding her next respite in a heavily secured family home. The four towers are revealed to be a false utopia; similarly, the subsequent utopias that Temple encounters are also revealed to be less than idyllic: a secured manor house with the inhabitants living

their lives isolated from the apocalypse and in denial of the zombies, while the zombiefied father is caged in the basement. The falsifying of encountered utopias suggests that there is no possibility for a utopian society following a zombie apocalypse. The characters have not dealt with the cause of the apocalypse; they have merely denied it by attempting to recreate their former lives. The only character that remains unattached to the past is Temple, who was successfully surviving in the post-apocalyptic world prior to her involvement with "old world" characters. Once Temple begins to involve herself in the ways of the old world, her fate is sealed.

Fear of dying is at the centre of eschatological fictions: "Since the certainty of an ultimate personal end time is also the most overwhelming datum of the human condition" writes Wagar, "it is safe to guess that every public end time fiction serves its readers to some degree as metaphor and reminder of their own mortality" (Wagar 70). The countdown to death has proved to be an effective device in narrating *last things*. Max Brooks' short story, "Steve and Fred," is essentially a double-layered zombie narrative. The story begins with the gallant Steve and his charge, Naomi, on a motorcycle, ramping over a wall to relative safety from a horde of zombies. Once on the other side and about to make their escape, Steve's eyes "locked on someone- no, some*thing*" (*Closure* 43). He is referring to the zombiefied Dr. Theodor Schlozman, advancing on them with open arms and gnashing teeth. Steve approaches the Doctor and mockingly asks, "'still tryin' to save Mother Earth from her spoiled children?'" (*Closure* 43). The mocking tone of the question suggests a sense of animosity between the two, with Steve's revenge acted out as he proceeds unnecessarily to slash at the doctor with a short sword, firstly slicing off his fingers, his hands and forearms before launching into the air and kicking the doctor's brain out of his skull. The doctor's brain, "once hailed as 'Evolution's Crowning Achievement'" (*Closure* 44), is

then splattered under the spinning wheel of Steve's motorcycle as he and Naomi race off to be rescued by an approaching helicopter. The second part of the story reveals that Steve and Naomi are characters in a zombie novel being read by Fred, as he slowly wastes away, locked in a toilet cubicle in the midst of a "real" zombie apocalypse. Fred details his own countdown to extinction in which the reader is able to track his process of deterioration:

> Day two, when he'd stopped trying to widen the twelve-by-twelve-inch window with his fingernails and teeth. Day four, when he'd taken his last solid crap. Day five, when he'd stopped screaming for help. Day eight when he'd tried to eat his leather belt... (*Closure* 49)

Fred's slow demise is detailed, along with his feeling of failure at becoming trapped in the small room. Fred's narrative is constantly interrupted by self-imposed warnings not to think of "her." This "her" is not an object of his affection but rather an implied longing for his mother:

> She was okay. She had to be. She knew how to take care of herself. She was still taking care of him, wasn't she? That's why he was still living at home. He needed her, not the other way around. She would be fine. Of course she would. (*Closure* 50)

Fred's denied adulthood due to his reliance on his mother has inhibited his ability to become "the hero". The moans and banging of zombies on the other side of the wall is an unrelenting reminder of his own mortality: they form the soundtrack to his existential turmoil. His only respite is to the dog-eared pages of a zombie novel where he can repeatedly and vicariously live out the remainder of his life through the narrative of Steve. What Wagner refers to as "The thanatotic temptations of the end

time are endless" (Wagar 76-7) when faced with possible death at the hands and teeth of ravenous zombies; the option of suicide as a dignified demise is at the forefront of an eschatological character's mind. As Wagar states, "In the immunity uniquely available to criminals in the end time lurks further possibility of crime against oneself. Vice and suicide are easier to get away with than murder in normal times, but they take on a special perverse allure in terminal situations" (Wagar 80); zombie narratives are rife with examples of suicide, or the thought of it. Some approaching it as a means of martyrdom, such as the deployment of a willing decoy while his comrades flee for safety. In the case of Max Brooks' "Steve and Fred," we see Fred's regret at not having slit his wrists while he still had the strength, before his body began withering away. A poignant scene in Alden Bell's *The Reapers are the Angels* is the discovery of the long-deceased bodies of Jeb and Jeanie Duchamp; an empty prescription pill bottle on the side-table is the evidence of their organised suicide. The discovery of their lifeless bodies brings Temple's mission to a disappointing end. Earlier in the novel she rescues a mute and dumb man from a crowd of zombies, his recently deceased grandmother draped across his arms. In his pocket is a note with his name, Maury, and a request to deliver him to his family "out west" in Texas. The promised utopia of a sanctuary for Maury is shattered by the discovery of the selfish suicide of his remaining family members. It is a suicide that symbolises both the will to die in a world gone mad and the loss of hope that the world will return to a liveable state.

Wagar notes that "such intensity of concentration on morality is comparatively rare in terminal fictions. More to the point is their grasp, desperate or exultant, of the possibilities for life that remain" (Wagar 71). Similarly, zombie narratives are less concerned with the existential morality of the individual and focus, rather, on the process of survival. Zombie survival guides, in particular, fail to address existential

thought but place an emphasis on pragmatic utilitarian modes of survival and the reformation of communities that evoke pre-apocalyptic ways of life. As Wagar suggests, "Fictions that deal with catastrophes of the near future give ampler opportunity for developing contrasts between the present day and the glamours of the end time" (Wagar 72). However, the zombie acts as the subject to which our attention is directed and when viewed literally, zombie survival guides centre on surviving zombies, not surviving an apocalypse. As Page states in the blurb of *War Against the Walking Dead*, "More than 63% of people now believe that there will be a global zombie apocalypse before 2050," by implying the reality of zombies, they begin to transgress into myth:

> Apocalyptic literature is concerned with the creation of other worlds, which exist, on the literal level, in a credible relationship (whether on the basis of rational extrapolation and analogy or of religious belief) with the "real" world, thereby causing a metaphorical destruction of that "real" world in the reader's Head. (Ketterer 13)

The problem that arises with zombie based apocalyptic survival guides is that they, to an extent, suggest that zombies do exist. The zombie steps out of the world of fiction and into the world of myth and as it does so we fail to recognise the zombie as a metaphor. The zombie survival guide, while elaborate in its discussion of tactile deployment, fails to address the societal problems represented by the figure of the zombie. The post-apocalyptic utopia that zombie survival guides attempt to create is essentially a false utopia. A utopia is dependent on the apocalypse as being transitional; it presupposes a change has to occur which will differentiate the Old World from the New World. Zombie survival guides neglect the necessary *change* and instead focus on killing zombies and rebuilding a world that reflects what existed

before. I shall address this strange return to problematic ways of being in the final chapter of this thesis: though the zombie seems to challenge the limits of humanist ways of thinking, its move into posthumanism is often compromised by the reinscription of humanist systems of value, and all the problematic political categories contingent upon this. The same operates, as I have argued here, in relation to the notion of apocalypse: while the zombie is intimately tied into notions of impending crash and doom, the zombie survival guide actively works against the building of a new, ethical future in focusing not on remedying the initial breakdown, from global finance to ecological disaster, but on the mere fact of fighting, and surviving, zombies. If apocalyptic fiction is instrumental in the imagining of a new world, the zombie survival guide is more concerned with the eradication of the immediate zombie threat.

Conclusion

The zombie is a figure that can be used to represent and interrogate aspects of contemporary social, political, and environmental concerns, but the ultimate aim of the figure is how it is utilised to highlight the destructive forces of the time. The humanoid nature of the zombie and its presence within apocalyptic literature suggests that the apocalypse will be brought about by the hands of mankind. As I have argued in this chapter, the hybridity of the genre means that the intention of the zombie apocalypse is two-fold: Gothic literature aims to reveal that which we abject, while science fiction attempts to teach the reader adaptability to change. The presence of the zombie in apocalyptic literature reveals the contemporary societal fear that the end of the world will be brought about at the hands of humankind. The insatiable hunger of consumerism, the ease with which violent crimes are committed against fellow humanity, the banking crisis which questions the reliability of the future based on

capitalism, and the disregard for ecological awareness and climate change are at the forefront of the contemporary imagination and have been realised in recent renditions of the zombie apocalypse. The apocalypse requires some sort of transitional change in order to advance from the old world to the new world and the presence of the zombie is representative of that which must change. The zombie survival guide attempts to guide its readers through the apocalypse and towards a utopia, but this utopia is falsified in that the survival guide fails to recognise the necessary metaphorical change that is required by the apocalypse. *I Am Legend* is thus an example of a successful zombie apocalypse, in that the death of Robert Neville is the true casting off of the old world. It is the end of one saeculum and beginning of a new one and with this we see that the sense of an ending gives way to a new beginning.

Chapter 3

Braaiinnsss!: Videogames and The Objectification of the Zombie Voice

Of all the celluloid monsters, there is one whose fortissimo moaning elicits a rising panic like no other. The contemporary zombie, popularised by George A. Romero in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and its numerous sequels (1978-2010), has flooded every medium of the Gothic. Having its roots, as I have argued, in Haitian folklore, the figure of the zombie, whose reign extends through film, literature and the technological world of gaming, has now breached the boundary of the intangible, and become a role-playing game involving full immersion. Post-apocalyptic zombie-themed survival experiences, taking place in abandoned venues across the globe, have increased in popularity, a development which has spurred game developers to take the zombie game one step further. Dan O'Bannon's film, *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985), first introduced the menacing zombie drone for "brains" into popular culture. While O'Bannon's Tarman and his call for "brains" is a parodic representation of the zombie genre, this ominous call, along with the monotone groaning, has become a distinguishing feature of the zombie trend and is broadly used to provoke anxiety and fear across all forms of zombie-based media. Zombie narratives are premised on the assumption that plot and character-development are secondary to the development of tension through visuals, and more importantly, through audio composition. The intention of this chapter is to examine zombie-themed mobile device applications with regard to both the ludological and narrative views of game theory, and to explore the role of sound and its effects on immersion and engagement. I will examine the specific use of sound within four games, all loosely falling within the survival horror genre but differing in gameplay, and explain why the figure of the zombie, above all other Gothic monsters, is capable of instilling fear in the player with just a single

sound. This chapter will also explore the notion of narrative techniques as being subordinate to audio stimulation in a range of modern zombie technologies, and argue that the game narrative is dependent on the successful incorporation of video game sound to enhance the gaming experience, to the extent that the allure and terror of the zombie game genre can be epitomised by a single word, "Braaiinnsss!" In doing so, I aim in this chapter to demonstrate the intrinsic connection between the zombie and what could be considered as the 'iconic zombie drone'. This connection can be used to explore the importance of the use of sound in zombie-themed media, specifically in the establishment and development of a distinguishable zombie voice, albeit one only capable of emitting a groan for brains. By examining the use of sound in zombie-themed video games it becomes evident that through the objectification of the zombie voice the figure of the zombie becomes the driving force behind the fear and horror of the zombie genre. The emphasis placed on audio stimulation over and above narrative techniques relegate the figure to the position of a mere object of fear, and as such, the zombie is denied a certain subjectivity. However, the use of an iconic zombie drone, as I explore more fully in the next chapter, identifies the figure as predisposed to potentially developing a subjectivity through the reclamation of its objectified voice. Thus, it can be claimed that the development of sentience, as is discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, would not be possible if it were not for this initial objectification of the zombie voice.

The investigation of the role of sound in video games has been largely neglected in current strands of video game discourse. Similarly, critical discourse on the Gothic has placed very little emphasis on contemporary Gothic technologies and their specific use of sound to enhance and dramatise present-day examples of the genre, focusing more specifically on the profusion of the visual (van Elferen 1). A

greater understanding of the continuous impression of gameplay can be explored by addressing the musical soundtrack of a video game and the effect it has on the gaming experience. Challenging what we may describe as this ocularcentrism, Cazeaux argues that "the senses operate in a synesthetic unity: we listen and simultaneously see and feel the drama" (Collins 23). Listening incorporates a simultaneous interpretation and associations with events, objects, and emotions from past experiences. Visual information lacks the essence of authenticity that sound utilises to envelope the listener.

I want to begin this investigation of the function of sound in video games with a clarification of the major terms of my argument. The term "Game Sound" will be broadly used to refer to all the generated sound of the game world, including Foley (a sound-effect technique involving the post-production addition of everyday sound to the visual material); general secondary background Foley; primary Foley; as well as generated game music and compiled soundtracks of accompanying popular music. Additionally, both diegetic and non-diegetic sound will be included within the category of game sound, as though, while arguably serving different purposes— diegetic sound to drive the narrative forward and non-diegetic to enrich the gaming soundscape—they conjointly function to enhance the gaming experience. I will be adhering to Munday's constructed definition of Game Music, one that takes into consideration the "specifity"[53] of the medium:

> Video game music is a discrete patterns of sounds and silences generated by the game software, which, in combination with other visual, kinaesthetic and

[53], Rod Munday "Music in Video Games." <u>Music, Sound and Multimedia: From the Live to the Virtual</u>. Ed. J. Sexton. Edinburgh UP, 2007. 51-67.

tactile sensory stimuli, contribute to creating the phenomenon of the game

world. (Munday 54)

I will group the horror zombie's grunt and the comedic zombie's call for brains into an overarching category as the 'Iconic zombie drone', since both sounds have similar functions within the gameworld and its soundscape.

The figure of the zombie is perhaps the only Gothic monster that is so definitively tied to a specific sound, or, what could be considered as the crude beginnings of an established zombie voice. The zombie inhabits two distinct genre strands, the first being horror, popularised by Romero's imaginings of the shambling revenant, and the second being parody, initiated by O'Bannon in his black comedy *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985). *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) established the figure as one of muted horror. Seemingly void of speech, the horror zombie shuffles across the screen grunting and groaning with the insatiable hunger for human flesh. In 1985, O'Bannon released a revised version of an intended sequel to Romero's original film, with an intentional shift away from the Romero-esque zombie, which had steadily become the established norm. *The Return of the Living Dead* sees an emphasis placed on black comedy and slapstick humour. In addition to the added comedic element, O' Bannon imbued his zombie "Tarman" with the ability to call for "braaiins." The lurching zombie grunting for brains became synonymous with zombie comedy, and in turn went on to inspire the development of zombie comedy as a genre. While *The Return of the Living Dead* contributed towards the zombie's comedic aspect, it also initiated the development of a potential zombie voice. The implication of endowing the figure with the ability to groan for brains is that future developments of the figure might see the zombie evolving in its capabilities to voice more than its simple hunger for human flesh.

The iconic zombie drone within a game locates the game world within the larger canon of zombie literature, and in so doing, an element of zombielore becomes implicit: a single bite is infectious and ultimately fatal, and destroying the brain is the only way to defeat a zombie. Zombie-themed video games have an expansive reach over a variety of gaming genres. As opposed to works of fiction, the genre of a video game is not determined by setting or narrative theme, but rather by the intention and structure of gameplay. The iconic zombie drone is used as a common motivating factor and therefore facilitates the investigation of sound over a vast variety of game genres. Though the examples of zombie video games in contemporary culture are numerous, I want to focus here specifically on the following: the Tower Defence game *Plants vs Zombies*, the squad-based strategy defence game *The Walking Dead: Assault*, the episodic graphic adventure game *The Walking Dead*, and the immersive running game *Zombies, Run!*

Approaches to the study of video games have largely been divided between two theories, the Narratological and the Ludological. The Narratological approach places an emphasis on the game narrative and supposes that games can therefore be studied using narrative theories. The Ludological approach, however, asserts that the study of games should be focused on the game in and of itself: the rules that dictate game play, the process of playing, and the interactivity between player and game. Here, the narrative is secondary, if important at all. As Whittington explains:

> The genre contract regarding horror films often stresses visceral impact over narrative causality and unity. Therefore, films are often held together and judged by their ability to sustain tension or provide shock to the filmgoers, which often supersedes the need for narrative causality as the dominant framework for understanding and fulfilment. (Whittington 131)

Similarly, Survival Horror,[54] as both a film and gaming genre, places an emphasis on means of survival and fear-inducing shock-value in place of narrative weight. A recent addition to, and development of, the Survival Horror genre, however, exhibits an effective emphasis on both the process of game play and narrative, necessitating a symbiosis of the two.

As Whittington notes, "In general, horror films use music and sound effects to establish emotive intensity and impact far more aggressively and conceptually than any other genre, aside from the musical" (Whittington 130). The establishment of an apprehensive atmosphere captures the attention of the viewer and keeps them on tenterhooks, thriving on the interplay of both curiosity and dread. Survival Horror, as a genre of video game, borrows its influence from Horror Cinema and enriches the gaming experience in its exploitation of both the fear instilled in the viewer and the responsive urge to retaliate (Chien 64). As Isabella van Elferen notes, "Gothic spectres are often audible before they become visible" (van Elferen 4): the presence of the Gothic spectre is gestured towards sonically as a precursor to their visual arrival. In the absence of a visible figure, the viewer's imagination initiates a process of speculation and anticipation, and as a result, the viewer experiences a heightened sense of anxious apprehension.

Although film music and video game music are arguably quite similar, Munday notes that the primary difference between them is that video game music is used to "structure the game's narrative elements on the basis of familiar dramatic conventions" (Munday 62), while film music serves certain mythologising functions. One of the greater gestures towards film is the video game's use of leitmotifs, melodic

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[54] The term 'Survival Horror' has its roots in zombie cinema, originating from the loading screen of the game "Resident Evil" (2006), a game inspired by Romero's *Living Dead* series, as it invites players to "[e]nter the world of Survival Horror."

phrases attached to certain characters or scenarios, which are usually placed at the beginning and end of levels to signify start and conclusion, and success in minor (or major) challenges. Leitmotifs are also used to establish setting, stage and difficulty level, and therefore function as an implied narrative guide (Munday 62). The difference between cinema and the gaming experience lies in interactivity, and the gamer's ability actively to manipulate the outcome of the game. Van Elferen notes that as a result of this active manipulation "[v]ideogame music thus has more agency than film or television music" (van Elferen 107). While a film viewer can cower behind raised knees and distract themselves by blocking their ears from emotive audio overload, the gamer is actively invested in the gaming process and assumes responsibility of his actions to further his character's survival.

Sound

As Munday notes, "In the context of mediated communication, a virtual doorbell sounds exactly like a real one, because waves of recorded sound are perceived in exactly the same way as waves of real-world sound" (Munday 52). It is the very manner in which this communication is mediated that allows for the element of authenticity. If we consider the visual representation of an ambulance driving down the road, for instance, the sentiments it arouses in the viewer are often inconsequential compared to the sensation of hearing an ambulance siren nearby. In this instance the purely visual offers a lower quality of experience than that of sound. The viewer's gaze is limited in the way it acknowledges a two-dimensional image, as the image cannot be known in its entirety with a single glance; instead, the viewer's gaze is divided between the point of concentration and that of the peripheral (Munday 52). In contrast, the listener's ability to hear is divided between the two ears. This 'surround sound' allows for an audible perspective that makes sound, in some senses, superior

to sight as it allows for an element of directionality. The use of surround sound in three-dimensional gaming allows the player not only to perceive the encroaching presence of threat, but also indicates towards the direction of the approach. Van Elferen notes that the player often perceives game music subconsciously and that this "seemingly subservient position is precisely what enables it to exert great influence on the ways in which foregrounded events are experienced" (van Elferen 5). Van Elferen suggests that this subconscious perception of the background music is what facilitates its ability to destabilise and unsettle. Munday notes that the earliest form of electrically generated virtual reality was through the use of stereo recordings, and the formation of an "immersive acoustic space," a blank auditory environment upon which an illusory setting could be projected (Munday 52-53). A prime example of an immersive acoustic space is elegantly exhibited in the augmented reality of *Zombies, Run!*, a gamescape constructed entirely of sound. In the absence of visuals, *Zombies, Run!* relies on the connotative potential of multi-layered audio to establish an authentic apocalyptic gamescape; the real-world visual of the player's environment is given an added layer of the uncanny through a veil of simulated audio. The foreground sound of authoritative narrative instruction is confirmed by the supporting background sound of piercing alarms and clanking security gates.

In video games, players are encouraged to "perceive the gameworld in 360 degrees, with most of the information outside of the visual frame being provided by the soundtrack " (Munday 53). In this way, the gameworld is implied and created through the use of audio composition. Strategically-utilised Foley can aurally create the image of the character's immediate landscape, such as the crunching of gravel underfoot. Similarly, this technique is used to place the immediate landscape within a greater gamespace. The objectified zombie drone is introduced to announce the

presence of zombies in the immediate environment, and in so doing, the zombie drone functions to destabilise the constructed perception of the gamespace.

Volume is used to imply distance between the player and the root of the sound, such as a siren in the distance or a nearby car alarm. In zombie-themed games, the zombie drone is given an added element of urgency as the sound gradually increases, indicating proximity and the slow but sure approach of the threat. Michel Chion argues that sound is not merely used as aural duplication of what is seen on the screen, but rather that sound is *"added value"* (Chion 5). Sound has the ability to enrich an image by evoking emotions and memories pertaining to the viewer's personal experiences and therefore adds value to what is seen on the screen. The images acquire their meaning from the sound that accompanies the visual. To return to the above example, a muted visual of a passing ambulance would give rise to a certain set of thoughts, but once the visual is accompanied with a crescendoing frantic siren, the visual is enriched. Similarly, an increase in volume of the siren implies a sense or urgency and immediacy that the muted image alone is not capable of generating. The less realistic the image, the greater the need for sound to fix its meaning. Music and sound effects are required to give meaning to the computer-generated environments of computer games, as these generated environments fail to produce their own natural sounds (Munday 53). In the same way that the image is generated layer-by-layer, specific sounds are added to enrich the generated image and contribute to the meaning it renders in absence of a real to life image. As Whittington observes:

> Music and sound effects, particularly ambient effects, in horror films present a
> dark lyricism shaped by the need for a spectacle of intensity or excess, dark
> emotions, and atmosphere. Orchestrations in minor keys, thunder rumbles and

guttural growls can foreshadow a descent into unfamiliar territory or accentuate psychological fracture or weakness within characters. (Whittington 131)

While Whittington is referring specifically to the ambience created in horror films, sound similarly enriches and characterises different levels and worlds within video games. In early platform games such as *Super Mario Brothers*, more sinister music would replace the upbeat tempo, as the character is transported to an underworld environment; the background image would change from one of a bright blue, suggestive of a blue sky, to a more threatening black background (Whalen, 2004). As Van Elferen notes, "[a]s the frightful connotations of the music haunt the gameplay and influence the player's mood, a layer of specifically musical immersion overlays the virtual reality of gaming" (van Elferen 105). The melancholic overthrows of both sombre music and gloomy imagery have a more influential sway on the perceiver than those of a sunnier, happier tone. When the two contrasting arrangements are paired together, melancholic music will overrule a bright and sunny image, in the same way that a melancholic image will deny the light-hearted sentiments of happier music. With regard to the latter, Munday suggests that the scene is made "comic by its ironising sense of defiance" (Munday 55). An example of this can be found in the closing credits sequence of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). Romero overlays scenes of a zombie-infested shopping mall with jovial fairground music, using a soundtrack that seemingly contradicts the onscreen horror. This ironic contradiction of visual imagery and accompanying soundtrack contributes to the socioeconomic critique of consumerism that runs throughout the film. While jovial music paired with a sombre image makes for uneasy irony, Munday notes that a sombre atmosphere created through music will take "interpretive precedence" as it makes "good

evolutionary sense for human beings to be more responsive to danger signals than benign ones" (Munday 55). Similarly, a player immersed in a game of survival horror relies more instinctually on descriptive threatening game sounds to ensure the survival of their avatar.

Immersion and Flow

The level of the player's sense of immersion in a video game is largely dependent on the capacity of the music to immerse that player in the constructed video game world. The "immersion" to which I here refer is the metaphorical sense of the term, describing "either the heightened sense of a particular aspect of a person's immediate surroundings, or the sensation of being transported into a mediated alternate reality" (Munday 56). In the absence of visuals, *Zombies, Run!* relies on the connotative potential of multi-layered audio to establish an authentic apocalyptic gamescape. The foreground sound of authoritative narrative instruction is confirmed by the supporting background sound of piercing alarms and clanking security gates. For immersion to be successful, the visual and audio content of the video game, as well as the gaming activity, has sufficiently to engage the player, so as to isolate him / her within the process of playing, and thereby excluding him / her from the external stimuli of real-world surroundings. One of the most successful and accessible ways to illuminate the mediated world of the game is through the use of sound: *The Walking Dead* and *Zombies, Run!* notify the player that the gaming experience will be maximised through the use of headphones. Successful immersion, in these examples, depends on the utilisation of headphones and a significant volume setting, in order to override any real-world background noise that could potentially interfere with the engagement of the game. However, the level of immersion is subjective, and relies on varying factors dependent on both the player and the game, such as the process of playing,

participation with the intended mission, and the level to which the player is enraptured with the narrative. As a consequence of this subjective variability, notions of immersion are somewhat difficult to define and formalise. Despite this, the satisfaction of playing the game is, arguably, directly proportional to the player's dedicated involvement with the game and narrative. The level of immersion is dependent on the ability of the music to support this involvement and hence, despite the subject nature of the experience, 'immersion' lends itself as a convenient analytical metaphor.

There are two main processes involved in video game immersion, *cognitive immersion* and *mythic immersion*. "Cognitive immersion," as Munday explains, "focuses on the way certain neuropsychological aspects of the brain are stimulated by video-game music to promote the player's involvement in the game" (Munday 56). In keeping with the so-called 'Cocktail Party Effect', a phenomenon identified by British cognitive scientist Colin Cherry, audio and visual perception can be differentiated by the brain's ability to focus exclusively on a singular sound, while simultaneously perceiving a number of additional sounds (Munday 56). In video games, sound works cognitively to immerse the player by engaging the parts of the brain that focus on non-linguistic sounds; once these areas of the brain are occupied, a "wall of sound" is created which is intended hypothetically to avert the player from distraction by external non-related sound. This wall of sound is created through the use of wall-to-wall background sound.

In PopCap's *Plants vs Zombies*, for instance, each stage takes place in a different part of Crazy Dave's homestead, and the wall-to-wall background music reflects both the environment as well as the time of day. The opening bars of the daytime soundtrack are dominated by a piano composition in a minor key, while the

opening bars of the night-time soundtrack are dominated by a plucked string composition. While both soundtracks share a similar ominous cello melody, a layer of trepidation is added to the night-time soundtrack with the use of fragile string plucks. In the absence of sunlight, the player is limited in the speed with which he can plant seeds and the trepidation of the music is realised. While *Plants vs Zombies* utilises wall-to-wall background music as the foundation of its game sound, many games have replaced the music-based soundtrack for one composed of studio produced sound effects. This is evident in Telltale's *The Walking Dead*, which is void of background music but which successfully utilises game sound composed of layer-upon-layer of Foley to present the player with a convincing and engaging game environment. Outside environments are created with the sound of a running stream, wind noise, bird song and the ambient call of cicadas. The crunching sound of boots on a dirt track changes to one of thumps on wooden flooring, as the player moves from outside to inside. Similarly, the daytime call of cicadas is replaced with the chirps of crickets and the crackling of an open fire.

In both cases, the wall-to-wall sound is non-diegetic and serves mainly as an environmental function. This cognitive aversion, so central to the process of immersion, is performed while the player's primary attention is captivated by the graphics, gameplay, and diegetic sound - like zombie drones and warning alerts (Munday 57). Cognitive immersion can thus be thought of as a form of unconscious immersion, performed as a somewhat unintentional result of the mind being occupied by background noise.

Mythic immersion, alternatively, stems from the role-playing aspect of many games, which allows the player to imagine himself or herself as the game's protagonist. This enables the imaginative transcendence of everyday life and the

adoption of fictional personalities (Munday 21). Strategy defence games like *Plants vs Zombies* and *The Walking Dead: Assault* rely on mythic immersion to a lesser extent than the narrative driven *The Walking Dead*, in which the player is required to embody the protagonist avatar. The manner in which the narrative unfolds is dependent on the decisions that the player makes through the use of the avatar. The disposition of the avatar is constructed through the player's choice of interactions with the game environment and secondary characters. The player is free to determine the level of benevolence or malevolence exhibited within the game. Often the level of myth determines the extent to which a player emerges their conscience in the game: the higher the level of myth, the greater the opportunity for the player to abandon the constraints imposed by formal society and exhibit behaviours and actions that are ordinarily inhibited (Munday 58). Real-to-life role–playing games make use of props as a means of establishing a greater sense of immersion, such as the simulated environment of zombie apocalypse experiences, which often feature hospital check-points and costumed medics looking for 'zombie bites'. In video games, the use of costumed actors and crude props are no longer required to enrich the imagining of a fantasy setting. The player is free to explore a world of vibrant sounds and graphics, with very little restrain placed on their personality. The mythic environment of the game supports and, in many cases, encourages an exploration of the restrained psyche and players are free to do as they will. While the real-life role-playing zombie apocalypse experience utilises living actors in the roles of zombies, physical contact and violence against the "zombies" is prohibited, but violence against video game zombies is invited and usually necessitated (Munday 58). Mythic immersion relates directly to Munday's third music category, the diegetic, the successful telling of stories through sound. Munday notes that music is used to imbue the visual images of

a narrative with meaning by conforming to the suggestions of the image, or by adding a layer of transparency to a somewhat opaque image (Munday 60).

The narrative of many video games is most commonly established through the intermittent use of cutscenes,[55] which serve as checkpoints, incorporating traditional filmic devices and tropes to drive both the narrative and gameplay forward. Espen Aarseth asserts that video game narratives are concerned with collections of "aporia" and their complementing "epiphanies," a series of challenges and accomplishments that the player must undertake, and experience, in order to proceed through the gaming world. These aporia and epiphanies, usually signalled by a leitmotif, are generally gestured towards in the cutscenes. The cutscene's level of complexity is dependent on the nature of the narrative. Similarly, game soundtracks are also dependent on the type of narrative: a game with a simple narrative (*Plants vs Zombies* and *The Walking Dead: Assault)* will have a simple soundtrack, dedicated to motivating the player onwards and utilising tonal and rhythmic music to determine a pace of play (Munday 61). A more complex narrative (*The Walking Dead* and *Zombies, Run!*) requires a more intricately designed score and often incorporates environmental Foley in the formation of a soundscape.

In some cases, a predetermined composed score, like that of *The Walking Dead: Assault*, becomes problematic in the divide that it installs between the visuals on the screen and the accompanying sound. Often the player is not restricted to a set course of action and therefore the visuals and the music have to find a way in which to cohere; often these "melodies and harmonies are meandering rather than moving towards cadences that would musically suggest closure" (van Elferen 107). *The Walking Dead: Assault*, albeit a game of simple narrative, has navigated this

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[55] A cutscene is a short filmed or animated scene that separates active moments of play.

visual/sound coherence through the use of a strategically composed musical loop. The first level of the game "Chapter 1: The Hospital" is used as a tutorial level to familiarise the player with the game. The game sound incorporates the opening theme music of *The Walking Dead* television series, which serves both to situate the player within the larger *Walking Dead* franchise while simultaneously connoting the start of a new episode. Before starting the game, the player is advised to play the game while utilising headphones to maximise the gaming experience. The background music is a loop of 115 seconds of dramatised music that has been strategically exaggerated to enhance the gameplay, by incorporating moments of suspense with moments of sharp, crescendoing staccato notes. The loop of music starts with low industrial tones as a mere ambient background noise to set the scene of the abandoned hospital; the industrial noises begin to increase in rapidity and volume until reaching a somewhat regular rhythm. This ambience is enhanced as the recognisable theme tune from the television series joins the industrial sounds and the music begins to build to a crescendo. The low, gravely bass drum beats are contrasted with a sharp, and somewhat frenetic, string composition, creating both a sense of urgency and a sense of apprehension of the oncoming danger. Despite the music being played on a repeating loop, the game has been designed in such a way that zombie encounters have been placed accordingly within the environment to coincide with peaks within the musical arrangement. Although each player will navigate the environment at their own pace, and despite the fact that the zombie placement and timing is merely estimated, the music enhances the gameplay by enriching the game with the sensation of urgency and danger; as van Elferen notes, "it is for this reason that ludic game music is often designed as dynamic audio, which can (to a certain extent) adjust to spontaneous change" (van Elferen 108). This loop serves as the wall-to-wall

background music, and is completely disconnected from controls within gameplay. Each moving zombie is linked with a zombie groan and this groan is activated when the player's avatar enters the vicinity of the zombie. The groan, as objectified zombie voice, signals to the player that there is danger in the area and that he must remain alert. Due to each zombie being assigned a groan, the more zombies appearing onscreen, the more groans will echo through the environment, increasing in volume depending on the proximity of the avatar to the zombies.

Zach Whalen posits the motivational function of game music on the use of a "safety/danger binary",[56] an alternation in pitch and tone signifying the presence of danger. Zombie games utilise the zombie groan to indicate oncoming danger, and since the groan is so deeply embedded within zombie mythology, there is less need for a tonal change in the background soundtrack. The use of a groan is motivation enough, in other words, without necessarily altering the score. While the predetermined score of *The Walking Dead: Assault* does ebb and flow between a somewhat state of calm and one of distress, other simple narrative games, such as *Plants vs Zombies*, utilise an in-game development of the soundtrack to generate a sense of urgency and hence as a form of motivation.

In *Plants vs Zombies,* the wall-to-wall soundtrack situates the player within a specific environment. Stages that take place in a day-time setting have a less ominous tone than those that take place in a night time setting, with the most eerie music reserved for the "Fog" stage. The track for each level is completely separate from the gameplay, and uses additional sounds layered over for effect. In standard Tower Defence manner, the player needs to fortify their homestead by planting a range of

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[56] Zach Whalen. "Play Along - An Approach to Videogame Music." *Game Studies*. Vol. 4, 1, Nov. 2004. Web. 26 May 2012. <http://www.gamestudies.org/0401/whalen/>.

specially abled plants. Each plant has its own sound effect, and thus, the more plants planted, the more sounds are added to the soundscape. The initial warning of the oncoming hoard is introduced with a grating "The zombies are coming!"; following this, the first zombie enters the screen. Like the plants, each type of zombie produces a unique sound, with the basic zombie producing a groan and a drone for brains. Similarly, there is an increase in the ferocity with which the plants shoot their missiles and the sound of strategically placed explosives echo from the game to the point where the background music is all but drowned out. Cognitive immersion comes into effect as the game utilises the gradually increasing volume of groans and battle sounds as a means of creating an air of urgency and danger, forcing the player to immerse himself within the activity of gameplay, and to ignore outside distractions in an attempt to succeed in the game; the intensity of play demands the player's full attention and simultaneously motivates him onwards.

'Immersion' and 'Engagement' are perhaps the most significant aspects to consider when investigating the role of video game sound. However, Whalen argues that an understanding of gameplay can be substantially enriched if we consider an additional aspect, that of 'Flow'. As Whalen explains, there is a need to recognise the "ideal condition of flow" (Whelan, 2004) when considering interactive narratives, describing 'Flow' as a "dialectic between unconscious states of immersion and conscious moments of engagement" (Whelan, 2004). Immersion in a narrative equates to being absorbed by, and into, the literary text, the narrative becoming the reader's primary area of focus; real-time events and environments fade into the background of the reader's perception, and time passes, almost unnoticed. Contrastingly, engagement requires a necessary level of awareness: an engagement with the narrative necessitates an awareness of the object from which that narrative

has originated. The ideal moment of flow can therefore be described as "being actively immersed in the moment of engagement" (Whelan, 2004), which necessitates an element of *interactivity*. There are eight major components of flow:

> clear goals; high degree of concentration; a loss of the feeling of self-consciousness (sense of serenity); distorted sense of time; direct and immediate feedback; balance between ability level and challenge; sense of personal control; intrinsically rewarding. (Cox 6)

A player immersed in an episode of *The Walking Dead*, on hearing the objectified voice of the iconic zombie drone, would recognise the need for urgent action. He would survey his avatar's immediate environment, instantaneously searching for both a means of escape and objects to utilise as weapons. While being immersed in the moment of danger, the player would simultaneously be engaging with the game device, physically controlling his avatar's actions. Botting notes that "[r]ational faculties are overwhelmed by the bombardment of images, an informational sublimity in which sense is overstimulated by sensory excitation and consciousness sacrificed to the absorbing immersion in the 'flow' of the game" (80).[57] The player is actively immersed in the moment of engagement, primarily dedicated to completing the gaming mission and captivated by the game to the extent that the real-world environment fades into the background and thus we comprehend the ideal condition of flow.

Interactivity

Zombies, Run! is part audio narrative, part fitness survival game influenced by the plethora of newly popular "Zombie experience" events. These events situate the

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[57] Fred Botting. *Limits of Horror: Technology, Bodies, Gothic*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008. Print.

player in an imitational "real-life" apocalyptic environment, such as the America-based *Run for You Lives* and the UK-based *Zombie Evacuation.* This type of location-based gaming is a simulated zombie obstacle course requiring players to navigate through a five-kilometre course, while also avoiding the grasping hands of 'zombies'. The player becomes "bodily present in the game world"[58] and within the landscape there is an evident oscillation between topophilia (a strong sense of place) and topophobia (a fear of that place). *Zombies, Run!* manipulates these real-life experiences, removing the need for specialised sets and zombie actors, and relocating the locus of fear from the externalised environment to an internalised imagined event. This, in particular, is what separates *Zombies, Run!* from other zombie games: in the absence of visuals, the game relies solely on its audio ability to create the imagined gamespace

Zombies, Run! is a running-companion application that records the runner's distance, pace and time. The runner's advancement through the game is controlled by the progress of each run and its corresponding mission. The missions are consecutive, and each one equates to a chapter of the narrative. The missions are narrated by voice actors and are broken into sections that are automatically synced to a predefined music playlist. The game takes place in Abel Township, an apocalyptic landscape overrun with zombies. The player becomes part of a survivalist team and takes on the role of a "runner" whose main objective it is to traverse the dangerous landscape, gathering supplies to benefit the base camp, and gradually to investigate possible causes for the zombie apocalypse. The collected supplies become part of the player's inventory and can be utilised after the mission to develop the player's own version of Abel Township. The more supplies collected, the more developed the Township, and

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58 Stine Ejsing-Duun. *Location-based Games: From Screen to Street: Ph.D. Dissertation*. Thesis. The Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, 2011. 4.

the further the players / runners are able to advance through the game. The player can track his running and monitor his statistics per mission by activating the mobile device's GPS or accelerometer. In addition to this, the player can activate "Zombie Chases," a form of zombie-themed interval training. During the mission the runner will be notified that zombies are approaching, at which point a beeping tone will indicate the proximity of the zombies to the runner; a quicker succession of beeps indicates the rapidity of advancing zombies. The player needs to accelerate in order to avoid the zombies, and if he does not increase his pace, he will be caught by the zombies and "drop" items from the inventory as a means of escape; and the loss of these items, in turn, impacts negatively upon the player's progression through the game. The player maintains an unremitting level of vigilance, cognizant that crescendoing moans could be greeting him at the next corner.

The allure of *Zombies, Run!* is initially found in the intricately designed narrative. However, the apprehension that drives this narrative is only appreciated through the audio delivery of the game. Award-winning novelist Naomi Alderman has constructed an enveloping account that sees a progression from the standard audio book into a narrative that immerses the player within the storyline, giving them the role of 'Runner 5'. Convincing voice acting and a well-paced plot aurally create an apocalyptic environment within the mind of the player. The narrative therefore works conjointly with the gameplay, as it is the cogent storyline that allows for the immersion in the game-world. The fictional route of each mission is generically designed to overlay the player's tangible environment as a site-adaptable game, and the player links the world of the narrative to his environment through coincidence, projecting described locations in the narrative onto coinciding landmarks of his immediate locality. It is this imaginative projection of fictional locations that add to

the playability of the game. However, the success of the game relies on one primary activity: running. David Pinder notes that in "the gap between the scenes as described and as experienced, questions arise about the supposed stability of what is seen" (11).[59] Kris Darby observes that the "immaterial landscape of the game"[60] derives its authenticity from the destabalised perception of place that is caused by running, and the game loses its immersive qualities if the player denies his role within the game world by choosing to walk (Darby 10). The level of immersion in the game is thus dependent on the player's dedication to the game by fulfilling his role as Runner 5, and actively interacting with the game by running. This level of *interactivity* is what establishes *Zombies, Run!* as an effective audio-based game, a form of interactivity that also distinguishes it from standard audio narratives.

Non-interactive forms of media have played a dominant role in entertainment: television, cinema, recorded music and radio are forms of entertainment that, while enjoyable, require very little interactivity. The term "interactivity," however, has more recently come into play as we turn away from passive forms of entertainment and towards new media and the technology that has mediated a fundamental change in our approach to, and interaction with, this new media. Collins notes that while previous studies have investigated the "corporeality of the cinema," the majority of research relies almost exclusively on the "visual-corporeal connection of the audience to the film" (Collins 21); very little criticism has explored the corporeal connection to sound. As Jennifer Barker writes, "Often, a film encourages a muscular gesture in the viewer and then expresses its empathy with us by performing the same gesture itself" (Barker 81). This would occur when an off-screen sound elicits a viewer's response to

[59] David Pinder. "Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City." *Cultural Geographies* 8.1 (2001): 1-19. Web.
[60] Kris Darby. "Zombies Run!: Outrunning the Living Dead." Plymouth University, Apr. 2013. Web. 26 July 2013. <http://www.academia.edu/3348774/Zombies_Run_Outrunning_the_Living_Dead>.

look in the direction suggested by the sound; the film manifests this response by cutting to a shot that reveals the source of the sound. This empathy arises, Barker suggests, from an attempt to maintain viewer engagement, as opposed to a possible break in connection the viewer would experience should they physically turn their gaze from the screen. However, Collins maintains that, despite this shift in the gaze, "sound continues to exist in our space after the visual connection is broken" (Collins 22), a claim which challenges the assumption that film is solely a visual form of media: the viewer is still connected to the film through the continuation of sound. In *Zombies, Run!* the player is solely connected to the game through sound, and the player is forced to interact with events in the real world while simultaneously remaining fixed to the game. Similarly, the muscular gestures encouraged by diegetic game sound extend into the player's physical interaction with the gaming controls. The iconic zombie drone breaks through the wall of sound, and interrupts the narrative to signal the presence of danger, necessitating a physical response from the player. The mechanics of sound are what differentiate the "viewers' corporeal relationship to film" from "the game-playing experience of embodiment" (Collins 22). While in film, the audio-visual functions as an effective indicator device, persuading the viewer how to feel, or what to believe, about scenes or objects, in games, sound affects the players' responsive actions. Successful navigation of the game is dependent on the player's interpretation of the audio-visual. The player actively engages with sound as they navigate their way through the game world, an instance of the *flow* initiated by the interplay of immersion and engagement.

Sound in interactive media is multimodal in that it necessitates the involvement and interaction of multiple sensory modalities (Collins 22). Interactive game sound entails the additions of both visuals and haptics as a multimodal

experience.[61] In the case of *Zombies, Run!* the mobile device will vibrate when the player has successfully retrieved an item. Haptics is often used as a form of positive reinforcement. The difference, therefore, between the sound experienced in film and the sound experienced in games lies in the difference between *effect* and *affect*. Film sound is used as an *effect*, which influences the viewers' perception of events, while game sound *affects* the players' response to those events in gameplay. *Zombies, Run!* is a prime example of this: although the narrative could be enjoyed while remaining stationary, the experience of crescendoing zombie moans are of a different and greater magnitude if you are actively participating in the game. The stationary listener will perhaps grow anxious with anticipation and dread, while the same moans will affect the player to increase his speed, forcing a specific physical response from the player. Similarly, spectators of the graphic adventure narrative *The Walking Dead* would enjoy the horror film-like qualities of the game: the oscillation between moments of uncertainty, moments of attack, apprehensive expectation and breathless moments of escape. The player, however, must carefully consider the manner in which his avatar interacts with the gameworld, while simultaneously remaining alert to the groans of zombies. The player must maintain a level of order, intuitively operating to counteract the destabilising effect of the horror initiated by the iconic zombie drone.

Horror cinema creators exploit haptic associations by strategically littering the filmic soundscape with emotive resonances in an attempt to both immerse the viewer and to increase levels of discomfort for the viewer; the snapping of bones, the ripping of flesh and the squelching of innards will have the viewer writhing in unpleasant associations. Horror films are often characterised by "narrative disjunction, character fracture, non-sequiturs and spectacles of excess" and as a result, sound becomes

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[61] Haptics is the tactile feedback the player receives through the gaming remote.

"crucial in establishing narrative intent, drive, and unity" (Whittington 132). Similarly, the game player will actively be influenced in the game through an extended representation of the self, as they navigate their avatar through the treacherous landscape of the game world. The horror genre, in film and games, has evolved to one that speaks "to the filmgoer in a visceral and primal way" (Whittington 133).

Conclusion

The figure of the zombie is most commonly associated with a distinct sound, more so than many of the monsters that plague the contemporary Horror genre. The monotone moaning of zombies *en masse* is the driving force behind their horrific presence in zombie-based media, and it is in this sense that the zombie voice has been objectified. It is a sound of relentless encroachment, which upsurges as the threat draws nearer, crescendoing as the horde attracts stragglers to the cause. Zombie-themed video games utilise the definitive zombie drone, and all of its connotations, aurally to situate a player in an imagined landscape. "Sound conveys the inscrutability of the unfamiliar, particularly of places—jungles (crickets, animal howls), deserts (wind, middle eastern music)" (Whittington 136), and the horror of the apocalyptic landscape is best characterised by the low grumbling of an insatiable hunger, the steady grind of decomposing bones and the ominous grunting for 'brains'. These excursions into the realm of the unfamiliar test the sanity of characters and audiences alike. For the filmgoer, and the game player, the experience becomes tantamount to its effect: anxiety, tension, dread and its affect, namely, the player's interactivity and interpretation within the survival space of the gamescape. As I have argued in this chapter, sound within video games simultaneously follows two trajectories, to expand and enrich the fictional world of the game, leading to both cognitive and mythic

immersion, and to engage the player, driving them onwards through the fictional landscape. Both of these functions are brought about through the objectification and use of the iconic zombie drone, which places the game in the wider scheme of zombie literature while also motivating the player to engage the game with a level of interactivity. A convincing narrative aids in the player's successful immersion within the gamescape, and yet, the narrative is subordinate to the ability of sound to facilitate the ideal condition of flow that results in an active immersion in the process of engaging with the game. The iconic zombie drone is the driving force behind the gaming mechanisms of zombie-themed video games, and as a result the allure and terror of zombie-themed video games can be epitomised with a single word, "Braaiinnsss!" However, while objectification of the iconic zombie drone allows for the identification of the zombie as a figure of fear, this establishment of a zombie voice contributes, eventually, towards the potential development of that voice into something greater than a mere groan for brains. While video games neglect narrative techniques in order to capitalise on the fear-value of the zombie drone, the zombie genre in film, television, and literature has seen a steady trend towards adopting the zombie voice in a reversal of the objectification of the figure. The reclamation of the zombie voice allows for further development of a zombie sentience as the zombie begins to evolve into a subject capable of articulating more than just its animalistic desire   for   brains.

Chapter 4

Zombie Sentience

While, as the previous chapter of this thesis has argued, O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead* (1985) succeeded in objectifying the zombie with a single word, *Braaaaiins,* other fictions in the zombie genre have maintained the zombie's otherness and subsequently, its objectification, by denying the zombie the ability to utter anything other than unintelligible sounds. The development from sounds to words is what drives the transition from an 'it' to an 'I', from an object to the subject. The development and emergence of the contemporary sentient zombie, despite appearing diametrically opposed to its antecedents—the zombie of Haitian folklore and the prototype established by George Romero—has, at its core, themes that echo the foundational science fiction novel *Frankenstein* (1818; 1831) by Mary Shelley. As a product of the Modern Prometheus, Frankenstein's Monster can be used as a framework to explore similar themes raised in contemporary zombie narratives. In this chapter I will explore the themes of 'knowing', family, and selfhood in contemporary zombie narratives, utilising *Frankenstein* as the lens through which the importance of these three concurrent themes for the emergence of the sentient zombie can be examined. As I argue, it is to Mary Shelley's novel that the contemporary zombie narrative continuously alludes, finding in the text a rich template for exploring notions of monstrosity, the Monster's coming to sentience, and the role that the Monster plays within an intolerant society.

Frankenstein, Mary Shelley's seminal Gothic novel, explores a notion of overreaching alchemical experimentation and the creation of an exotic body. While the figure of the Monster, at the outset, appears to be categorically different from the

stereotypical zombie, Shelley drew influence from the same plethora of corporeal revenants that have informed zombie mythology.[62] This chapter will look beyond the constricting boundaries of corporeal definitions and focus, instead, on the shared psychological advances that take place in the development of zombie subjectivity, and examine the emergence of zombie subjectivity as a critique of the inclusive heteronormative values that inform both society and individual identity.

Knowing versus unknowing is a theme that echoes throughout zombie narratives. Frankenstein's own overambitious studies of alchemy and the philosophies of Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albert Magnus in his "fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature" (*Frankenstein* 21), as he attempts to understand the science of life, lead to his eventual downfall. Recognising the same ambitiousness expressed by Captain Robert Walton and his team on their expedition to explore the North Pole, Frankenstein says to Walton, "You seek for the knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been" (*Frankenstein* 13). Similarly, it is the same desire to understand and control a mystical knowledge of cultural myth and magic that leads ethnobotanist Wade Davis on his exploration of Haitian Zombies in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985). Davis's book, sensationally dramatised in the 1988 film of the same name, depicts a similar moral and psychological descent in the attempt to attain a knowledge, the liminality of which borders both science and mysticism in the cultural practices of created zombies.

In early versions of the zombie narrative, those invoking the folkloric Caribbean origins of the myth, the use of knowledge has be used to emphasise the palpable divide between those knowing and understanding the truth behind the

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[62] Patrick Nobes, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. *Frankenstein*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

mysteries of the zombie figures, and those who do not: those who know are typically the voodoo masters, known as Houngans, and the indigenous inhabitants of the island, with the unknowing victims being the white colonialists. In Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932)[63], Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943)[64] and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)[65] there is a distinct divide between the white colonialists who fall helplessly victim to the "magic" of the island and the indigenous folk who warn against, or lead towards, their eventual interaction with zombies and the Houngan. In contemporary versions of the zombie narrative, by contrast, there is the interplay and confusion that exists between the governments, who purportedly understand what is occurring, and the confused inhabitants of their countries, who remain uninformed or misinformed. These narratives exhibit a chaotic relaying of knowledge and an underlying theme of the search for knowledge, for an understanding of the unexplained. In both earlier and more recent zombie narratives alike, those who "know" are juxtaposed with those who want to know, and power relations are defined on the basis of who knows more, or who can offer the most to unknowing masses. Along with this need to "know," in the same vein of apocalyptic revelation, the search for knowledge, regardless of the truth upon which that knowledge is based, results in a defiance of the overruling power and often results in a breakdown of authority. Folkloric slave narratives, for instance, demonstrate the breaking down of the colonial authority, while modern narratives demonstrate the breaking down of political authority. Governments no longer hold the power, and in many cases, the governments' lack of knowledge regarding the presence of zombies leads to its eventual downfall. The idea that the "omniscient" leaders do not have all the answers suggests that there is a force beyond our knowledge that has overall

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[63] *White Zombie*. Dir. Victor Halperin. Perf. Bela Lugosi. United Artists Corp., 1932. DVD.
[64] *I Walked with a Zombie*. Dir. Jacques Tourneur. RKO Radio Pictures Inc., 1943. Film.
[65] Jean Rhys, and Andrea Ashworth. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin, 2007. Print.

control of our future. Contemporary zombie narratives such as Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002)[66] and its sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007)[67] examine the role of knowledge in contemporary culture as one of overabundance, due to ever-constant media exposure and images of worldwide events, particularly those of a devastating nature, suggesting that society has been oversaturated with knowledge and information and that, consequently, we have been shocked into a zombiefied state ourselves. Here, the only thing that separates the infected from the uninfected is the degree to which the former have been exposed to the "rage virus," equating high levels of exposure to violent visual material, twenty-four hour news channels, or the voracity of a prion disease.[68] Similarly, *28 Days Later* posits the root of the Rage virus outbreak as lying in the disconnection between knowing and unknowing. The overzealous science experiments conducted on the captive laboratory chimpanzees result in them being infected with the Rage virus; despite being warned of this infection, the animal liberation activists free the chimpanzees, unknowingly initiating the apocalyptic chaos much like Frankenstein's unconsidered release of his Monster into the world.

In *White Zombie* the fear of the zombie is very different from contemporary manifestations; the threat that Madeleine (Madge Bellamy) poses as a zombie is not one of savage beast, but rather as a stark, haunting reminder to Neil (Johan Harron) of the woman that used to be his fiancé. Madeleine lacks a soul, and although her body remains, she is but a mere shell, a pretty exterior that lacks substance and a knowledge of herself. Lauro and Embry note that "as unconscious but animate flesh, the zombie emphasises that humanity is defined by its cognisance" (Lauro and Embry

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[66] *28 Days Later*. Dir. Danny Boyle. 20th Century Fox, 2002. Film.
[67] *28 Weeks Later*. Dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. 20th Century Fox, 2007. Film.
[68] See footnote 25 for more information on Prion diseases.

90). [69] The zombies of *White Zombie* have no will or cognisance of their own, only that defined by the megalomaniac Haitian voodoo master 'Murder' Legendre (Béla Lugosi). And yet, the message at the end of *White Zombie* is one of hope; once the Houngan is killed, Madeleine regains self-consciousness, suggesting that the film is a critique of dictatorship, a fact that seems germane to its historical context, being released, as it was, during the years of the fascist Mussolini's rule and prior to the outbreak of World War Two. Once the dictator has fallen, the island returns to a state of relative peace and order is restored; there is no overarching sense of the apocalyptic doom that we see tainting the zombie narratives of today. This is indicative that the threat towards contemporary society is no longer from a single overruling power, but rather that the threat has taken an essentialist shift to one from within. Society itself has replaced the dictator, with our own megalomaniac desires threatening to destroy us. The result of this seems inevitably to be apocalyptic: society as a whole is responsible for its own downfall. The zombie narrative therefore much like the conceptualisation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, serves as an intriguing envisioning of potential futuriority, as well as a contextual exploration of "humanity's experience of lived frailty and the history of civilization" (Lauro and Embry 90), grappling with themes of mortality in both content and form.

The allure of the zombie has led to what Ellis calls "a postmodern paradigm for the zombie"[70] in that the zombie figure is not restricted to horror films but lends itself to a range of genres, or at least encourages a generic intermingling: science fiction zombies, like those in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959); western zombies in Rene Perez's *Cowboys and Zombies* (2011); comedies like Edgar Wright's *Shaun*

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[69] Sarah Juliet Lauro, and Karen Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *boundary* 2 35, no. 1 (2008):85-108
[70] Markman Ellis. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ., 2005. 205 Print.

of the Dead (2004); pornography such as Joe D'Amato's *Porno Holocaust* (1980); and Nazi zombies in Tommy Wirkola's *Dead Snow* (2009), to name a few. Ellis maintains that in "endlessly proliferating variations, the zombie fails to stop signifying, and predicates a kind of ontological exhaustion" (Ellis 205). He goes on to suggest that, "Drained of almost all its original significance, the post-modern era threatens to occlude the zombie's enduring and distinctive history" (Ellis 206). However, while interest in the zombie waned somewhat throughout the nineties (Bishop 16), Ellis fails to notice that following the 'Zombie Renaissance', which saw the figure re-emerge from the depths of the slapstick comedy and complacency that dominated America during the nineties, the zombie has returned as a social critique of contemporary anxieties. In contrast to Ellis's argument, I maintain that the ability of the zombie to serve as an endlessly proliferating subject of contemporary culture does not necessarily result in ontological exhaustion. Rather, the zombie becomes a signifier of the times. It is not "drained of almost all its original significance" for it was originally an object of the void, all subjectivity removed, a mere puppet controlled by the will and desire of the Houngan. The zombie's enduring and distinctive history, of which Ellis speaks, will not be occluded by the post-modern era; rather, the figure will continue to be manipulated and rehashed, a blank screen or page upon which the narratives of the contemporary imagination can be cast.

A Nuclear Threat

In *Frankenstein*, everything that the Creature knows he has learnt as the result of his empirical interaction with the world; this extends into his perception and expectation of familial relations. Following a series of cruel altercations with frightened villagers, the Monster escapes to a low hovel attached to a small cottage. From the hovel the Monster observes the daily practices of the De Lacey family, and in so doing

simultaneously develops an understanding of and abilities for language, as well as a longing to be embraced as part of the family. The Monster observes the kindness and care with which the cottagers treat each other and develops an appreciation for the underlying motives of their actions and their emotional responses to one another, often referring to them as "my friends" (*Frankenstein* 80). The Monster spends months in hiding, planning his eventual reveal to the family, further developing his language skills so as to "first win their favour, and afterwards their love" (*Frankenstein*, 81). However, the Monster's frightening appearance serves as the barricade between him and his acceptance into both the De Lacey family as well as society. On entering the room to find the Monster at the feet of his blind father, Felix De Lacey tears the Monster from his father's knees and strikes him with a stick before the Monster flees from the cottage, and from the family he had so long dreamt of being a part. This instance of rejection marks the Creature's transition into a monstrous other, lighting a violent flame within the Monster's being in which he declares an ever-lasting war against the human species, "and more than all, against him who had formed me, and sent me forth to this insupportable misery" (*Frankenstein* 97). As the narrative progresses, we see the Monster's revenge enacted in a considered manner in which he gradually brings about the deaths of all those close to Frankenstein, steadily reducing Frankenstein to a solitary state, much akin to the loneliness felt by the Monster. The Monster is perceived as a threat to the De Lacey family, and serves as a veritable threat to Frankenstein's family, both of which have resulted from the Monster's lack of his own family. The absence of parental guidance from his creator has resulted in the Monster having to shape his identity and perception of the world based on his interactions with the world and he therefore becomes a product of ignorant hatred and fear: "Unfeeling, heartless creator! You had

endowed me with perceptions and passions and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind" (*Frankenstein* 100). The Monster is unlike any other being as he is completely without kin; he is biologically unique, and it is his otherness that threatens the heteronormative family structures within the text. Similarly, within zombie narratives the zombie has an 'othering potential', an 'other' itself, the zombie has the ability to infect family members with the virus, thereby othering members within the family and destabilising heteronormative perceptions of both family and identity.

Robin Wood asks the question, "What do the Living Dead represent?",[71] coming to the conclusion that there is something about the figure that resists any meaning that we attempt to assign to it. He suggests that among the many interpretations of Romero's "Dead" series, the most consistent analogy is that of the nuclear family; here, the term 'nuclear' is used in two different ways, first, as the nuclear threat of radiation, and secondly, the threat upon the structure and restructuring of roles within the nuclear family. In *Night of the Living Dead* we learn that a possible cause of the living dead epidemic is radiation from outer space, which is reflective of contemporary apprehension. This first film was released during a time in which fears of a nuclear holocaust were rife following public condemnation of the American military's embroilment with Vietnam. The connection can be made between the devastation and collapse of Western society and the problematic nuclear family structures that exist as a continuing trend throughout the "Dead" series, and culminating in Romero's final instalment, *Survival of the Dead* (2010).[72] In *Survival of the Dead,* the living dead exist as a secondary storyline to the primary feature of

[71] Robin Wood. "Fresh Meat: Diary of the Dead." *Film Comment* 44. 1 (2008): 28-31. Web.
[72] *Survival of the Dead*. Dir. George A Romero. Magnet Releasing Optimum Home Entertainment, 2010. Film.

two feuding families. Wood follows the theme of the nuclear family through five of the six "Dead" movies in an attempt to examine Romero's demolishing of the nuclear family as representative of the demolishment of the central structures of modern civilisation.

Night of the Living Dead presents the viewer with three nuclear families and one standalone individual in the form of the protagonist, Ben (Duane Jones). Barbra (Judith O'Dea) and Johnny (Russell Streiner) are the first family we encounter, and the first to be torn apart. They are attacked by a zombie while visiting the grave of their father, and despite escaping, Barbra is left in a somewhat catatonic, childlike state. Barbra is evidently in denial of the loss of her brother and is left facing the world, and the onslaught of the dead, relatively on her own. Her distress is compounded by her mistrust of the help offered by the black character, Ben. Barbra is later attacked by the zombies, one of which is the body of her brother. In the relative safety of a farmhouse we encounter another two nuclear families, that of the younger Tom (Keith Wayne) and Judy (Judith Ridley), who meet their demise while selfishly abandoning Ben as they attempt to flee from the zombie horde in a flaming vehicle. The third family is an unhappily married couple of Harry (Karl Hardman) and Helen Cooper (Marilyn Eastman) and their infected daughter Karen (Kyra Schon). The film sees the nuclear Cooper family destroyed by their own daughter as she stabs her mother to death with a trowel before on her father.[73] The fratricide and parricide that repeatedly feature in both Romero's films, as well as throughout the zombie genre as

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[73] This parricide is echoed in episode 12 of the second season of *The Walking Dead*, entitled "Better Angels" wherein Carl kills the reanimated body of Shane Walsh, who served as his surrogate father in the absence of his biological father, Rick Grimes. In episode 4 of the third season entitled "Killer Within" Carl's mother, Lori, dies while giving birth to a child thought to be fathered by Shane. Carl shoots his mother's corpse in the head to prevent her from reanimating as a zombie.

a whole, are representative, Wood suggests, of the past and an inability to escape from it.

In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978),[74] the nuclear family is represented in the form of Stephen (David Emge) and the pregnant Francine (Gaylen Ross) who have both retreated to the safety of a shopping mall with the help of SWAT team members Roger (Scott Reiniger) and the black character of Peter (Ken Foree). The nuclear family becomes jeopardised during an attack when a zombiefied Stephen leads a group of zombies to Francine and Peter's hideout. The film ends as the newly-formed nuclear family of black man and pregnant white woman escapes by helicopter to face the unknown future of the outside world. The follow-on, *Day of the Dead* (1985),[75] presents the viewer with no obvious nuclear family, a move indicating the complete breakdown of civilisation. Instead of the breaking down of nuclear families, what we see is an abandonment of traditional "family values" as both "families" and their "values" are reconstituted in an attempt to rebuild the notion of a nuclear family. This reconstitution of the nuclear family becomes a reoccurring theme in zombie narratives, as characters are forced into constructed, makeshift family-like environments as a means of survival. In the trailer to the fifth season of *The Walking Dead*, Rick Grimes recognises this family trope by declaring "these people are my family," referring to the members of his team of survivors. The most striking point of *Day of the Dead* can be found in Bill (Jarlath Conroy) and John's (Terry Alexander) attempt to create a "home-like" environment. Bill invites Sarah to the trailer that he shares with John; the sign outside the trailer reads "The Rits," and on entering it, we are met with another sign, "God Bless This Home." The chintzy interior of the trailer is starkly different from the underground military bunker in which it is located; the

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[74] *Dawn of the Dead*. Dir. George A Romero. United Film Distribution Company, 1978. Film.
[75] *Day of the Dead*. Dir. George A Romero. United Film Distribution Company, 1985. Film.

trailer is furnished in true homely fashion, and Bill leads Sarah through to the back door while saying, "We don't get many visitors." Bill opens the back door and the viewer sees that the two of them have decorated the area to resemble a backyard. John sits reading in a garden chair and looking up he says, "Welcome to civilisation, Sarah." John is reading government records that seem to list every defining factor of the pre-fallen civilisation. He suggests that they leave the bunker and the records to the zombies, thereby abandoning the final remnants of the old-world, and go off to find an island in an attempt to rebuild civilisation afresh. The three succeed in their plan, as the film ends with a scene of relative peacefulness, John, Bill and Sarah safely enjoying the beautiful setting of an exotic island. This ending seems to look towards the possibility of the reformation of a functional civilisation, but in retrospect, the three remaining characters that form the resultant nuclear family are unlikely to procreate and populate the island, especially since, though unspecified, there is an underlying theme of homosexual attraction between Bill and John which, despite its upbeat ending, leaves the viewer feeling slightly sceptical about a reproductive, heterosexual future. *Land of the Dead* (2005)[76] seems to confirm our sceptical doubts as we find the world still over-run by zombies. However, a new formation of civilization has indeed emerged, but it is the embodiment of Capitalism and very oligarchic in structure. There is no specific representation of the nuclear family displayed within the film. The allusion to any form of family could arguably be found in the final scene; the zombies are left to take the city for themselves, Pretty Boy (Joanne Boland) sets Big Daddy within the sights of Dead Reckoning's weapon and Riley (Simon Baker) stops her from firing and tells her, "No, they're just looking for a place to go, same as us." There is a sense of duality here; the living characters

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[76] *Land of the Dead,*. Dir. George A Romero. Universal Pictures, 2005. Film.

are dislocated from what they knew to be their homes. The United States of America, and society as they knew it, has been brought to a complete halt and the living humans are forced to reconsider a way of life in which the living and the undead can coexist peacefully. Romero's evolution of his own zombie figure within the first four films of the "Dead" series questions the notion of what constitutes a nuclear family; more specifically, and on a broader scale, Romero's films question the notion of community and how families within that community reconstitute themselves during a time of great threat.

The fifth film in the series breaks away from the temporal post-zombie outbreak that was established in the first four films. Instead, *Diary of the Dead* (2007)[77] serves as a contemporary reimagining of the day on which the dead began to rise. Romero presents the film as a homemade documentary composed of first-hand video footage and footage downloaded from the Internet. The news report that, unintentionally, features the first filmed zombie attacks introduces the audience to the confusion, violence and horror that will continue throughout the film. The reporter and film crew were originally reporting on a murder-homicide event; Bree Reno (Laura DeCarteret), reporting from a place called "Homestead," tells us that a "tragedy befell an immigrant family. An unidentified man has shot his wife and sixteen-year-old son to death before turning the gun on himself." The family's foreignness is emphasised in the scene in a way that suggests contempt towards immigrants; emphasizing the fear of the 'other'. It is this immigrant nuclear family that rises from their gurneys and proceeds to attack the predominantly white characters that surround them. The unknown origins of the family and their 'un-American-ness' initially present the virus as something strange and other, but as the

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[77] *Diary of the Dead*. Dir. George A Romero. The Weinstein Company, 2008. Film.

film progresses, the virus moves from something that originally infected the strangers to something that penetrates the heart of society. The film follows a group of film students who are trying to make their way back to their respective homes in order to face the zombie attack with their families. Debra Moynihan (Michelle Morgan), the girlfriend of Jason Creed (Joshua Close) who films most of the documentary, narrates the final edit of the film and explains, "It's funny, you spend so much time resenting your parents, separating yourself, building your own life, but as soon as the shit hits the fan, the only place you want to go is home." When Debra finally makes it home, she is attacked by her little brother and finds her mother feeding on her father. She is forced to kill her parents, in yet another moment of parricide, in order to assure her own survival. The location of the threat has shifted from the foreign, unknown family to the centre of the American nuclear family, and family members are forced physically to separate themselves from their families in order to survive. The movie ends with Debra, fellow film student Tony Ravello (Shawn Roberts) and their faculty advisor Andrew Maxwell (Scott Wentworth) locking themselves in the panic room of their deceased zombiefied friend, Ridley Wilmott's (Philip Riccio) house. The forced reconstruction of a family in a home that is uncanny, or both familiar and strange— though it is a home, it is not their home, and has been overrun with zombies—is a representation of the greater concern of America facing invasion and the dislocation from what was once familiar.

In the final film of the "Dead" series, Romero extends the analogies of family and home by setting the main location of the film on an island that is home to two feuding Irish families. The plot of the zombie apocalypse is secondary to the plot of the feuding families, and Romero clearly emphasises the notions of family and community in this final film. Plum Island is home to the O'Flynns and the Muldoons,

who choose to approach the problem of the recently risen dead in opposing ways. Patrick O'Flynn (Kenneth Welsh) believes that the safety of the remaining inhabitants of the island depends on the undead being eradicated, while Seamus Muldoon (Richard Fitzpatrick) believes that the undead should be kept alive on the premise that a cure might be found, optimistically thinking that the undead would pose very little threat if they could be taught to eat meat other than human flesh. Several members of the O'Flynn family, including Patrick, are exiled from the island. In an attempt to anger Muldoon, who resents strangers, O'Flynn adopts the pseudonym of "Captain Courageous" and films a video falsely advertising Plum Island as a welcoming, safe haven where the zombie outbreak has been kept under control. When O'Flynn returns to the island, he finds that the living people he has directed to Plum have been killed on arrival, while the undead that have climbed ashore have been corralled in the stables. He also learns that members of the Plum community who have turned into zombies have been chained to items around the island, forcing them to re-enact actions from when they were alive. Romero reintroduces the idea that he first explored in *Day of the Dead*, namely that zombies retain some sort of memory from their former lives; however, their actions are motivated more by what could be "muscle memory" as opposed to any form of rational thinking. The undead mailman is chained to a mailbox and constantly repeats the process of walking to the mailbox, putting mail inside and walking away until his chain stops him at which point he returns to the mailbox. Muldoon's own wife has been chained within her kitchen, an obvious metaphor reflective of his own beliefs of the role of women. Muldoon explains that his intention for keeping the undead animated is to "keep them with us." Muldoon shows Tomboy (Athena Karkanis) a series of photographs depicting deceased members of the community and it becomes clear that his intention of

preserving the undead is a form of *Momento Mori*, a moving memory of who the person was when they were alive. By the end of the film, both O'Flynn and Muldoon have turned into zombies and the final scene sees the two of them meeting on a hill in an attempted standoff, indicating that their feud went beyond the grave and that their own stubbornness has led them to an unfulfilled existence. In attempting to maintain the integrity of their families and the Plum community, they have neglected the true essence of both family and community. While the last film in the "Dead" series lacks the conviction that led to the popularity of its predecessors, the emphasis on family, community and communication is just has persistent but perhaps fractionally forced in *Survival of the Dead*.

In *Survival of the Dead*, the concept of the *Momento Mori* is suggested, and although Muldoon tells us that the preservation of the zombies is a physical attempt to memorialise their lives, there is no true essence of "loss" expressed in the film. Romero has, throughout his "Dead" series, presented the question of personal connection between family members prior and post zombification, but the nature of his films, despite the underlying criticism of society, has always placed the zombie as an enemy. He has largely avoided dealing with the grief and trauma that his characters would have undergone with having to deal with the death, zombie resurrection and subsequent killing of family and friends. Romero's neglect of this spectrum of human emotion is understandable due to his particular genre of zombie films falling into the "Survival Narrative" category, which allows for very little character development or examination due to the excessive nature of the genre. What is evident, however, is Romero's message that suggests the breaking down of the nuclear family is a warning sign of the collapse of society as a whole, or in the very least, serving as a reflection on contemporary dislocation. The collapse of the heteronormative nuclear family in

the face of apocalyptic doom results in a measured approach to reconstituting a family environment, where the lack of blood-ties allows for the incorporation of new "family" members to be more considered, as opposed to a biological given. This is evident in *The Walking Dead,* where Daryl Dixon (Norman Reedus) pledges his allegiance to Rick and the other survivors, over his blood-tie with his brother Merle Dixon (Michael Rooker).

In Shelley's novel, the Monster, lacking a family of his own, turns to Frankenstein; "I am alone, and miserable," he pleads, "man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create" (*Frankenstein* 103-4). The Monster desires a mate, a companion as horrible as himself. Frankenstein considers the eloquence of the Monster's speech and notes: "His tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations; and did I not as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow?" (*Frankenstein* 105) However, as the creation of the Monster's mate nears completion, the doubt and ignorance that once clouded Frankenstein's understanding of the Monster return and he destroys his second creation. The prospect of unleashing another Monster on the world fills Frankenstein with greater fear:

> Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. (*Frankenstein* 121)

By denying the Monster a mate, Frankenstein denies him the possibility of constructing his own family, thereby ensuring the Monster's solitude as the first and last of his race. The Monster is unable to find community in a world that abhors him and can only view his subjectivity as removed and isolated from the human world. The zombies of contemporary literature, however, are not solitary creatures like Frankenstein's Monster, who comes into consciousness through sole observation, empirical experience and reading. Emerging en masse, the contemporary zombie exists as one of many "others" with which he may find community, as is the case in *Breathers*. It is through this sense of community that the development of subjectivity can thrive as the zombies are able to consider themselves in relation to others.

While Romero mapped the degradation of the heteronormative nuclear family structure, he was simultaneously introducing a consideration of alternative incarnations of zombie identity itself. This indicates that shifting attitudes towards the heteronormative family structure also apply to heteronormative identity as reflected in the emergence of an alternative zombie subjectivity. As I will elaborate below, there has been a shift from the objectification of the zombie, solely capable of groaning for *Braaaaiins*, to a subjective sentient figure concerned with discovering the complex nature of its othered monstrosity.

I, Zombie

Following Romero's *Day of the Dead*, the zombie genre took a turn from socially critical horror towards parody and comedy. In such films as O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead* (1985) zombies were seen more as "gross exaggerations of kitsch instead of telling social metaphors" (Bishop 158). In an attempt to return the zombie to its former state of social metaphor, the figure was forced to undergo a few

developmental changes, with Romero being the first to present his audience with a more evolved zombie, one that is capable of expressing an element of sentience. In spite of its relatively unsuccessful release, *Day of the Dead* (1985), the third film in Romero's "Dead" series, introduced the suggestion of a zombie that is capable of being influenced and driven by more than just its hunger. *Day of the Dead* is set in an underground military bunker in the midst of the zombie apocalypse. Among the last surviving members of the U.S Government and military is Dr Logan, a scientist obsessed with the domestication of zombies. In *Day of the Dead* there is an evident reversal on the Frankenstein/Monster relationship between bub and Dr Logan. While Dr Logan is not the root of Bub's reanimation, as in the case with Frankenstein and his Monster, Dr Logan occupies the role of substitute mentor where the Monster was lacking one. Logan recognises Bub's aptitude for development and nurtures his growth, introducing him to objects of his former life in an attempt to socialise him, rewarding him for positive behaviour. Logan attempts to protect Bub from the malicious attitudes of the remaining military, thereby positioning himself in the line of threat. Sarah asks Dr Logan what he is hoping to achieve by socialising the zombies and Logan replies that he is "hoping to satisfy the urge […] they are us. They are the extensions of us. They are the same animal simply functioning less perfectly." Dr Logan gives Bub a bucket of meat before turning the light off and wishing Bub a "good night"; his exit from the room is intercepted by Rhodes, a rogue member of the remaining military, who grabs Dr Logan by the lapels and asks "What are you giving him in there, Frankenstein?" Dr Logan has been feeding Bub the remains of dead soldiers and when Rhodes makes this discovery he brutally murders Dr Logan, riddling his body with machine gun bullets. Later, Bub comes across the dead body of Dr Logan and while he remains incapable of speech, he is visually distraught, lifting

his chain and offering it to Logan, as if pleading with him to return to life. Bub sees some discarded weapons on the floor and lifts a gun; he goes in search of Rhodes and when he finds him he chases him down the corridor, haphazardly shooting at Rhodes before chasing him into the arms of waiting zombies, thereby enacting revenge for the murder of Dr Logan. Bub's decision, for he clearly chooses the weapon, indicates his resolution to enact violence in a socialised capacity over his own monstrous abilities. Bub displays an attachment to Logan wherein a mutual respect between the two exists as a perverse father/son relationship. This is the very opposite of the relationship between Frankenstein and his Monster. Bub's capacity for being domesticated sets him apart from his fellow zombies, serving as an example of how a zombie can be trained through the tenets of Behaviour Theory, that is, through a series of actions involving consequence and reward. Good behaviour is rewarded with a bucket of human flesh and Bub quickly develops an understanding of what is expected of him. The theme of the domesticated zombie has undergone further exploration, most notably in the Canadian zombie comedy *Fido*, directed by Andrew Currie. The film is set in an alternative nineteen fifties-esque universe (presumably an implied sequel to *Night of the Living Dead*) where remote controlled collars are fitted to zombies in order for the zombies to be used as slaves and servants.

Romero's *Land of the Dead* (2005) saw additional evolutionary development in the figure of the zombie. While the three prior movies in the "Dead" series presented zombies as creatures to fear, with a slight exception to *Day of the Dead*'s Bub, *Land of the Dead* broke with tradition by establishing a zombie figure in the role of a sympathetic protagonist. As Paffenroth states, "*Land of the Dead* surprisingly and consistently puts the zombies in our shoes, making them more human than any of the other films, and therefore no longer the objects of our revulsion and fear, but of

strange sympathy and respect".[78] The zombies, who appear to be recreating an existence resembling their former lives, seemingly attempt to act as humans; they pose no apparent threat and are presented in contrast to the gun-wielding human scavenger team who tear through the town, aimlessly firing at the defenceless zombies. The brutality exhibited by the human characters disturbs the relatively peaceful setting established in the opening scenes of the zombie-infested city. Following the attack, Big Daddy, the sympathetic zombie protagonist, leads a horde of zombies towards the human population of the heavily guarded Fiddler's Green. The audience establishes a connection with Big Daddy, and in contrast to his previous films, Romero presents the audience with Big Daddy's visual perspective, a director's gesture which sutures him with the audience, thereby creating a connection in which the audience experiences situations from the subjective view point of Big Daddy himself. Bishop explains that these various filmic techniques employed by Romero "ensure a greater level of audience identification with the zombie",[79] but the film exists as a mere first step in the evolutionary representation of the sentient zombie. This process relies, in part, on the formulation of a distinctive zombie voice: though once signified as objects capable of emitting only the iconic utterance "Braaaaaaaaaaaains" zombies are increasingly becoming the subjects of speech, language and fluent linguistic expression. Of course, this is attested to through the very emergence of the form of "zombie memoire" itself.

This is to suggest that, while filmic representations are capable of exposing the audience to the visual perspective of the zombie, as well as auditory association with simplistic guttural utterances, it has only been very recently that the thought processes

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[78] Kim Paffenroth. *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth*. Waco: Baylor UP, 2006: 115 Print.
[79] Kyle William Bishop. *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture*. North Carolina: McFarland, 2010: 192 Print.

of zombies and the inner workings of their hungry minds have been fully realised in a new fictional subgenre to the Zombie tradition, that of Zombie Memoire. Again, Mary Shelley's novel is crucial to this genre. The narrative structure of *Frankenstein* presents the reader with three accounts or frame-narratives, each embedded in the former. The first account is that of the explorer Robert Walton in his letters to his sister Mrs Saville. The second account is that of Frankenstein as he details his history and the events that led to his eventual helplessness in the Artic. The third account, nestled at the core of the novel, is that of the Monster which serves, if you will, as the Monster's memoire, a memoire of the establishment of his own identity. The Monster's narrative begins with an acute awareness of the importance of his voice over his appearance. Frankenstein says to the Monster, "Begone! Relieve me from the sight of your detested form" (*Frankenstein* 70). The Monster responds with "Thus I relieve thee, my creator," placing his abominable hands over Frankenstein's eyes he says, "thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me and grant me thy compassion" (*Frankenstein* 70). The Monster speaks with an eloquence that far outweighs the language used by other characters in the novel, and it this eloquence that convinces Frankenstein to consider the Monster's narrative. Similarly, the Monster tells Frankenstein, "I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language; which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure; for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted" (*Frankenstein* 80). Peter Brooks remarks that "in becoming the narrator of his story, the Monster both dramatises his problem and provides a model for its solution, the solution implicit in the discursive interdependence of an "I" and a "thou" in any interlocutionary situation" (Brooks

202). This remark can also be applied to the narrative techniques of the Zombie Memoire, wherein a certain bond of contract is established between reader and zombie narrator.

Homo Sacer

For the first time since their initial appearance in *White Zombie (1932)*, zombies have been given their own voices and the sympathetic protagonists of contemporary Zombie literature allow the reader to experience what life is like for the living dead. S. G. Browne's *Breathers*,[80] for instance, is set within a contemporary America that sees zombies having risen from the grave, apparently at random, throughout history, posing no direct or immediate threat to their families or those around them, existing more as an obligatory nuisance than object of fear. The zombies, much like the alienation as experienced by Frankenstein's Monster, or Victor's ruthless annihilation of the Monster's female mate, can be viewed as an example of Agamben's "Homo Sacer" [81] or sacred man, existing outside the realm of human rights and having lost all credibility as human beings following their resurrection. They are violently and emotionally abused by members of the human community, the "Breathers," an opprobrious term that the zombies use to describe their "living" counterparts. As the zombie protagonist in *Breathers*, Andy paints a cruel and frightening image of life as a zombie, having been reduced to "bare life," threats of being dismembered and burned "alive" are rife, and, as in the case of Agamben's account, without any consequence whatsoever. Parallels can be drawn between both the Monster and Andy's narratives wherein they each consider and remark on their own otherness. The Monster notes, "Increase of knowledge only discovered me more clearly what a

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[80] S. G. Browne. *Breathers: A Zombie's Lament.* Bantam Dell Pub Group, 2009. Print.
[81] Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true; but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in water, or my shadow in the moonshine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade" (*Frankenstein* 93). While the Monster first has to develop an understanding of his environment and the nature of humankind before he can reflect on his otherness, initially based on his physical appearance, Andy returns to life aware of his position as "bare life" and frequently references his own insignificance stating "my parents are going to ship me off to a zoo when they get back from Palm Springs" or, alternatively, they could "ship [him] off to a research facility out of spite" (*Breathers* 2). While these statements are seemingly made in jest, Andy reveals the text's awareness of zombies as Homo Sacer when he explains: "After the requisite holding period, unclaimed zombies get turned over to the county and salvaged for body parts or sold off for medical experiments" (*Breathers* 16).

Agamben's conception of Homo Sacer is based on the distinction between two Greek terms that contribute to our understanding of the term "life": "*zoê,* which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 1). The difference between the two separates the 'bare life' of bodies from the political, qualified life of citizens. The zombies are stripped of their political rights, their citizenship, and reduced to a state of bare life, like animals in a zoo, or rats in a laboratory. The zombies find themselves in a 'State of Exception', which, as Agamben notes, "marks a threshold at which logic and praxis blur with each other and a pure violence without *logos* claims to realise an enunciation without any real reference" (40). [82]

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[82] Giorgio Agamben. *State of Exception*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2005. Print.

Breathers is about Andy's journey of self-discovery as a zombie, the daily challenges he faces and the companionship he finds within the relative safety of his zombie support group. The zombies of *Breathers* live in fear and are a telling contrast to the violent, hungry, demonised zombies of Romero's "Dead" series. As astutely suggested by Bishop, "The next step in the evolution of this highly specially subgenre will likely literalise the metaphor, presenting narratives in which the zombies tell their own stories, acting as true protagonists and even heroes" (Bishop 196). Botting explains that monstrous figures such as vampires and zombies are no longer objects of fear, but have become "sites of identification, sympathy, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant monsters are rendered more humane while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes" (286).[83] The evolutionary trajectory of the zombie appears to be following the same route as that of vampires, but although there is a movement towards zombies being given their own voice, the common thread throughout existing zombie memoires is that despite these attempts, the living and the undead, it is constantly suggested, can never coexist peacefully; that is, even with its human-like sentience, the zombie remains a persecuted 'other', epitomised by the Monster when he says to Frankenstein, "If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would surely do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction" (*Frankenstein* 69). The sentient zombie, much like Frankenstein's Monster, thus operates on the border between two seemingly conflicting theoretical possibilities. As Homo Sacer, reduced to bare life in a state of exception, the sentient zombie is alienated from the society he once inhabited. Violence enacted upon him remains unpunishable, and his death in no way answers to notions of sacrifice. Contradicting

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[83] Fred Botting. "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004. 277-300. Print.

his position as Agamben's Homo Sacer—that which can be killed, without consequence, and without his death being registered as a sacrifice—both sentient and non-sentient zombies can also, simultaneously, be considered in conjunction with René Girard's "surrogate victim mechanism" [84] of scapegoating, a process that Girard theorises in *Violence and the Sacred,* whereby social violence enacted towards the zombie serves as a means of ensuring post-apocalyptic social cohesion. In what is ostensibly a shift away from the death of Homo Sacer, the zombie becomes the object of sacrifice, and herein lies the conflict at the core of the Zombie Memoire: obliterated without consequence, on the one hand, but sacrificed in order to ensure the integrity of the social, on the other.

Bishop explains that while the idea of an evolved zombie might seem "antithetical to the generic protocols of the subgenre" (Bishop 159), the message it relays is relevant within a post-millennial, post-9/11 climate, namely that "the humans are not necessarily humane […], but neither are the zombies necessarily monstrous" (Bishop 159). The upsurge of zombie narratives post 9/11 could be seen as a representation of violence against the dehumanised other. The "other," formerly construed as Native Americans, African Americans and homosexuals, has now become the Afghan family, the Iraqi family and the Palestinian. Violence against the other can be viewed as violence that cannot be measured, or marked, as "violence as ungrievable," having been reduced to objects by their dehumanisation, "consequently,"[85] as Judith Butler writes in *Frames of War*, "When such lives are lost they are not grievable" (Butler 31). A similar notion of ungrievable violence pertains to Frankenstein's Monster in Shelley's novel when he acutely observes, "You would

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[84] René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Great Britain: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.
[85] Judith Butler. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009. Print.

not call it murder, if you could precipitate me into one of those ice-rifts, and destroy my frame, the work of your own hands" (*Frankenstein* 104). Violence against the always already dead other does not leave a mark, does not count as violence, because to count it as violence would be to grant lives and a moral equivalency to the 'bare life' of 'zombies', the perpetrators and the victims of war against terror: equating the victims of 9/11 with victims of American aggression. Ungrievable violence is a persistent issue throughout *Breathers*, with that violence being committed by humans against the zombies. The violence extends beyond a mere physicality in that the protagonist, Andy, constantly reflects on the fact that the emotional aspect of physical abuse is often more traumatic for the victim than the physical abuse itself, as is the case when Andy's best-friend, Ted, has his arm violently removed from his body by a group of drunken fraternity boys. The bodily experience of having a limb removed is overshadowed by the emotional trauma of having a physical part of your "self" stolen.

Frankenstein's Monster blames his violent actions and demeanour on the hostility expressed by humans to his monstrous form: "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend" (*Frankenstein* 69). The Monster's monstrosity becomes a product of his environment as a response to his physical otherness within society. Similarly, the problem that the zombies in *Breathers* face is the image created of zombies by the media. References to Hollywood and George Romero are rife within the novel and Andy is constantly comparing his own actions as a zombie to those that the media tells you to expect. In earlier zombie movies, the characters are frequently faced with the possibility and realisation that a loved one could or has been infected with the zombie virus. On such occasions, the unaffected characters are thrown into a state of moral turmoil: faced with having to kill the infected loved one, or watch that loved one die and reanimate as a hunger-driven shell of their former lives. In "Vatos,"

episode four of the first season of Darabont's *The Walking Dead* (2010), the group of survivors face a surprise zombie attack, during which Amy (Emma Bell) is bitten by a zombie. What follows is a touching scene in which Darabont reproduces the anguish of Andrea (Laurie Holden), Amy's older sister, regarding the untimely infection of her younger sister. Andrea uses the period of time between Amy's slow death and reanimation, to grasp the full extent of the situation, finally accepting that she needs to put an end to Amy's life as the only way to save her from an unforeseeable future as one of the flesh-eating horde. In *Dawn of the Dead* a television broadcast features Dr Milliard Rausch (Richard France) who tells viewers that "we must not be lulled by the concept that these are our family members or friends. They are not… They must be destroyed on sight." This is a popular theme within the zombie genre, and as Bishop observes, the emphasis is placed on the 'un-human' nature of the zombie: "Although the living and the dead look physically similar, the latter are *not* human; instead, the zombies merely represent the unavoidable fate of all humans, film characters and humans alike" (Bishop 173). In both *The Returned* (2012)[86] and John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Handling the Undead* (2005) the reaction to the reanimated corpses is a representation of the indoctrinated notion that the re-living are no longer part of the human race. This reaction is manifested in the confused, inhumane treatment of the reliving and the gratuitous violence unjustly aimed towards the reliving in the closing sequences of both narratives. *Breathers* further utilises this notion in that the mistreatment of its zombies is wholly influenced by the precedent set by Hollywood as depicting the figure as "bare life":

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[86] *The Returned*, or *Les Revenants*, is a French television series of eight episodes based on the French film *They Came Back* (2004). The series, created by Fabrice Gobert, was released in November 2012 and sees a small French town coming to terms with the inexplicable return of some previously deceased loved-ones. The series follows the ill-fated attempts of the reliving as they attempt to return to their old lives and the apprehension expressed by the loved-ones to which they return.

While some West African and Caribbean cultures believe that zombies are created by voodoo spells or by the transmission of a virus, the most widely held opinion is that zombies are flesh-eating monsters, a stereotype perpetuated by Hollywood and horror writers doesn't help us in our ever losing battle to change our public image. (*Breathers* 74)

We are as much victims to our own stereotypes as those whom we stereotype; our own prejudices and ignorance stop us from recognising the humanity within the "other" and instead forces them into becoming the monsters we already accuse them of being. Andy says:

If you ask me, the media is as much to blame as anyone for the proliferation of anti-zombie sentiments. With twenty-four hour news available up and down the channel guide and a public that demands the sensational and fear-inducing over the humble and uplifting, zombies get more bad publicity than the president and Congress and O. J. Simpson put together. (*Breathers* 74)

This is reminiscent of contemporary hysteria regarding terrorist attacks where misreported or premature accusations often implicate the "non-American" or the "outsider" as responsible. Andy exists in a world where his future prospects are unstable; the anxiety regarding his existence and the fact that his continued existence is in the hands of his temperamental father is evident in the way that he constantly reminds himself and the reader that one wrong move on his part could lead to a life worse than his current state of affairs. The precedent set by the horror movies of Hollywood have created a vile, dangerous image of the risen dead, one that influences the way the zombies are received by society; regardless of the true desires of the

zombies, and in spite of the characteristics displayed by the zombies, they are, on the basis of these representations alone, treated as aberrations.

Similarly, Andy acknowledges the complications involved, for both the living and the re-living, with the process of re-assimilating into society, observing that "when your only son reanimates from the dead, it creates an entirely new dynamic that your average parents just aren't prepared to handle" (*Breathers* 3). However, this should be addressed in conjunction with the negligence of not considering the psychological effect of returning to life from death:

> After all, it's not like there's a handbook for dealing with spontaneous resurrection. That's the technical term for zombies you hear thrown around by experts on talk shows and news programs, as if they know what it's like to be a reanimated corpse. They have no idea of the emotional fallout from a rapidly digesting pancreas. Or how hard it is to keep your tissues from liquefying. (*Breathers* 3)

The recent BBC television series *In the Flesh*, created by Dominic Mitchell, capitalises on the trauma of returning to life with PDS (Partially Deceased Syndrome) serving as an obvious equivalent to Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). The implied recognition of the difficulties faced by the reliving is superficially catered for with counselling; however, outside of the counsellor's office, the reliving are inundated with constant reminders of their otherness. The zombies of *In the Flesh* attempt to re-assimilate into society with the help of stabilising medication, which keeps their monstrosity at bay, and make-up to create the semblance or simulation of life. They are forced to live side by side with family members of their victims, as well as with former members of the Human Volunteer Force (HVF), a militia group of civilians

who fought to protect the townsfolk during the initial uprising of zombies. In a feeble attempt to re-humanise the re-living, the government initiates a PDS Give Back scheme, in which PDS sufferers are involved in community service to repair the damage caused during the Rising. Simon Monroe, the twelfth disciple of the Undead Prophet in *In the Flesh*, is a PDS Rights Activist who rejects the PDS Give-Back scheme that reduces the reliving to nothing more than no-wage labourers. Simon rallies support from disgruntled PDS sufferers and, as a group, they work to oppose the oppression of the Give-Back scheme. The PDS sufferers recognise the importance of reclaiming their political rights on their own terms, as they navigate their role within society from *zoê* back to *bios,* from "bare life" back to civilians. However*,* in conjunction with this reclamation of their "human" rights, the Undead Prophet and his Undead Liberation Army (ULA) attempt to spread the word of a Second Rising, wherein the living will be obliterated and the reliving will rule. The ULA serve as a terrorist organisation that propagate the use of a drug called Blue Oblivion, which instantly reverts the reliving back into a rabid state. The ULA appear to condone this rabid state as the intended way of survival and similarly recommend embracing the monstrosity of rabidity as the true state of being.

Handling the Undead manifests the mistreatment of the reliving in the way that the reliving react to the thoughts of those around them; this can be seen in comparison with the development of the zombie figures within *Breathers*. In an attempt to escape from what they believe to be malicious fraternity boys, Andy and two fellow zombies meet Ray Cooper, essentially the catalyst to the climax of the novel. The alienated zombies, isolated in the world of the living, encounter an example of a zombie that 'plants the metaphorical seed' that feeds the desires of the zombies to reclaim their identities, independence and more importantly, their freedom. Ray says, "Just because

we're undead doesn't mean we don't like creature comforts" (*Breathers* 51). And it is the "creature comfort" of preserved human meat that leads to Andy and his fellow zombies attempting to reclaim their freedom. Although initially the meat handed out by Ray is undisclosed as being human, consuming it is the first step towards becoming the "creatures" society had always accused the zombies of being.

In an attempt to avoid terrorist organisations like the ULA forming, the zombie commandments that govern the way zombies are allowed to act within the society of *Breathers* state that zombies should not be allowed to adopt online personalities and have restricted internet access in an attempt to prevent them from developing "a political community that would petition for social change" (*Breathers* 55). Language becomes the tool that enables the zombies to re-enter society, however, it simultaneously offers them their chance to air their grievances, to acknowledge the paradox that even though they have the ability to use language—suggesting a possible escape from monstrosity—their acquisition of language becomes seen as threatening. In the Monster we see a character with by far the most advanced language abilities, which sets him apart from his human counterparts as he is seen as almost elevated above them. In *Breathers* the zombies reanimate having maintained the capacity for language; however, their sheer capacity for communication is seen as something that must be monitored to prevent unchecked groups of zombies forming to collaborate a coup as a preventative measure to restrict the interaction of zombies so as to minimise the threat of a zombie uprising. However, zombies are allowed to attend organised support groups that see proclamations such as, "YOU ARE NOT ALONE" (*Breathers* 6) and "I AM A SURVIVOR" (*Breathers* 8) written on the chalkboard at "Undead Anonymous" meetings, reminiscent of the contemporary support groups that have emerged for support through all of life's hardships, addictions and inflictions.

Andy says, "With Undead Anonymous chapters popping up all over the country and creating local communities for zombies that never existed before, we're becoming a more accepted part of society—if you can call being denied basic human rights being *accepted" (Breathers* 39). Andy introduces Ray to the support group and once all the members have experienced the magical healing properties of preserved human flesh, the journey towards a protest to be accepted is initiated.

Andy is constantly emphasising the divide between himself and the reader, making statements that imply that the reader would not understand his experience unless he had experienced it for himself: "If you've never woken up from a car accident to discover that your wife is dead and you're an animated, rotting corpse, then you probably wouldn't understand" (*Breathers* 10). Further emphasis of this divide is evident in the physical differences between zombies and humans in the novel, with particular regard to appearances. Browne draws an obvious comparison between the decaying of Andy and his therapist Ted's obsession with self-preservation. Andy mocks Ted for having had excessive plastic surgery procedures and his fixation with looking younger. However, Ted's extreme attempts are no different from Andy's use of formaldehyde to keep the decomposition process at bay. Browne emphasises the similarities between the living and the zombies, evidently attempting to link the two with their over-ruling need to prolong their lives: "formaldehyde is the magic elixir that slows decomposition down to an almost imperceptible pace, enabling the undead to maintain some sense of pride" (*Breathers* 10). The question of differences is further raised later on in *Breathers* when the consumption of human meat reveals itself to be an antidote to the decaying of the death process. Andy begins to show signs of healing and connects it to his frequent consumption of human meat; as the novel progresses we discover that some of the zombies' hearts have begun to beat and

they begin to show fewer physical signs of being dead, which calls into question their being classified as zombies. As Kavka observes, "The question of whether such creatures are dead or alive, human or nonhuman […] reveals an ambiguity about the separation of existential spheres that is fundamental to the Gothic film" (217).[87] While Kavka's observation is primarily concerned with film, we can see that the same ambiguity remains a fixed aspect of the zombie novel. Andy thinks to himself, "I'm beginning to wonder, if my heart starts beating again, am I still a zombie? Am I technically one of the undead if I have blood pumping through my veins? And what if I start to breathe again? Does that make me human? Will I regain the rights and opportunities that once defined my existence?" (*Breathers* 197). The same questions are raised in *In the Flesh* as the second season came to close with Amy Dyer's return to life. While the physical differences between the living and the dead are emphasised and visible on screen, the subjective narrative of a zombie memoire blurs those definitive divides; with the added element of a "re-beating" heart, the reader is left wondering what exactly determines who can be classified as a zombie, especially since, as Andy says, "it's not like we're any different than when we were before we died" (*Breathers* 37) and life as a zombie is very similar to life as a living being: "It's not like I reanimated with a five-year plan. And no one exactly prepped me on How to Be a Zombie. It's a big adjustment, harder than you might imagine. After all, I still have the same basic hopes and desires I had when I was alive, but now they're unattainable" (*Breathers* 16). The main difference, of course, between Frankenstein's Monster and sentient zombies is that while the zombies are returning to a familiar world they once inhabited, the Monster is birthed into a world he must discover on his own. "A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt

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[87] Misha Kavka. "The Gothic on Screen." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004. 209-28. Print.

at the same time," (*Frankenstein* 70), the Monster tells Frankenstein. As if narrating his own birth, childhood and adolescence, the Monster recounts his formative months alone in the forest and the development of his ability to distinguish different sensations. The Monster narrates his wonder and awe at first discovering a village, and notes how his excitement swiftly turned to fear as he was chased from the village with shrieks and thrown stones. The only brief moment the Monster experiences unprejudiced humanity is when he briefly converses with the blind De Lacey, and when this meeting is violently interrupted by De Lacey's son, Felix, the Monster assumes the role that society has forced upon him, "There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared ever-lasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me, and sent me forth to this insupportable misery" (*Frankenstein* 97).

The zombies in both *Breathers* and *In the Flesh* return to a semblance of humanity, their beating hearts and assertion of selfhood implying a casting off of Homo Sacer and suggesting a levelling between human and zombie. However, while both texts appear to humanise the zombies to the point where they are able to edge themselves out of the position of Homo Sacer, the zombies become re-inscribed in another economy of death, as objects of sacrifice, to bolster up a sense of 'the human'. The final poignant scenes in the last episode of season two reveal the shift from Homo Sacer to sacrifice. Having only recently returned to life, Amy is violently stabbed to death by Maxine Martin, an MP and member of Victus, an anti-PDS sufferer "pro-Living" political party. Maxine believes that in order to initiate the Second Rising, which would supposedly return her deceased brother from his grave, the first risen zombie must be sacrificed. Maxine, who reinstated the Human

Volunteer Force under the title of Roarton Protection Service, in an attempt to reignite the flame of anti-PDS hysteria, stabs Amy while citing "The first and the last," cementing the zombie as a figure of sacrifice. Maxine attempts to direct violence towards the reliving in retribution for the lives lost during the Rising. Her final act of violence elevates Amy as a figure of Girard's scapegoat, the surrogate victim: "The surrogate victim dies so that the entire community, threatened by the same fate, can be reborn in a new or renewed cultural order" (Girard 291).

Andy lists some of the rules that zombies are forced to live by in order to coexist with the living, aptly named the "Undead Commandments":

> You will not disturb the living.
>
> You will not be out after curfew.
>
> You will not commit necrophilia.
>
> You will not covert your neighbor's flesh. (*Breathers* 28)

The zombies have been given a code to live by and are restricted within a society that is, in itself, uncensored in its own treatment of the zombies. This treatment is reminiscent of countless examples throughout history of forced regulations placed on citizens "othered" within their own societies, such as the black South Africans during the time of Apartheid who were not only forced to carry identity passes at all times but had to abide by strict regulated rules regarding how they should act within their own society and among white South Africans. More specifically, the mistreatment of zombies as crash-test dummies and research subjects recalls the horrific acts of Nazis on Jews during the Holocaust. The widespread abuse of zombies within *Breathers* should be viewed as wide scale genocide that bases itself not on race or religion, but

on whether you are categorised as living or undead. Andy's choice to dress as Frankenstein's Monster for Halloween expresses his own internal turmoil of questioned identity; he exists within a world that refuses to acknowledge his being and the reason for his resurrection remains unknown. He is an anomaly, which accounts for his identification with Frankenstein's Monster, who was resurrected against his will, feared and misunderstood throughout his life, and his right to life denied due to his being unclassifiable within society.

The problem that Andy encounters when petitioning for zombie rights revolves around the definition of "*citizens* or *persons,* which is the language in which the Fourteenth Amendment and the rest of the Constitution is written" (*Breathers* 85). The constitution makes no reference to zombies and in itself allows for very little Constitutional interpretation. Andy decides that the only way to change the way that zombies are received is to fight against the perceived notion of the zombie's nonhuman status. Andy is under no false illusions as to the difficulty of the task ahead of him; he recognises that he would be taking society on as a whole:

> While the 1950s brought the beginning of the civil rights movement for African Americans, zombies became increasingly targeted for discrimination and violence. Public lynchings were common, and you didn't have to be a card-carrying member of the KKK to enjoy one. (*Breathers* 85)

Society has become united in its hatred towards zombies and if we consider zombies to be a metaphorical figure of societal "others" and we are all ultimately "othered" from one another, then it can be ascertained that we are fundamentally united by our mutual hatred of our fellow man. The zombie, in this scenario, becomes a scapegoat, a necessary object in the process that Girard describes as 'the sacred'. Andy's vocal

chords were severely damaged in the car accident that killed him, and as a zombie, he is forced to face the world as a mute. His physical silence is a metaphor for his political silence and as he slowly starts to take a stand against the discrimination faced by zombies as bare life, he begins to find the return of both his political voice and his physical voice.

Andy's actions and his responses to his actions are influenced by what he has come to learn from Hollywood's representations of zombies: "Hollywood zombies don't tend to exhibit any sentimentality when eating friends or loved ones. And I've never seen a hungry, reanimated corpse in a movie stop to consider the consequences of its actions" (*Breathers* 206). He begins to view these representations as an allowed moral code that forgives certain atrocious acts, saying, "After all, I am a zombie" (*Breathers* 206). Like Shelley's Monster, whose apprehension of his reflection leads him to assuming "I was in reality the monster that I am" (*Frankenstein* 80), Andy justifies his actions as merely living up so his namesake; he appears to feel very little guilt regarding the killing and eating of his own parents because he is only giving in to the temptation that society has forced upon him. Andy recognises the influence of the media in how he is treated by the public, saying, "I know that in the movies, zombies devour limbs and buckets of internal organs and can't seem to get enough. But that's just more Hollywood propaganda" (*Breathers* 209). However, Andy has an advantage due to his own knowledge of being a zombie and uses these false beliefs to his own benefit. Andy's approach to media representations of zombies seems confused in that while he uses it to justify his actions, he simultaneously dismisses it as mere propaganda; herein lies his internal turmoil in that he is denied a role in society and thereby views himself as separate from that society and exempt from the moral code that society dictates. Like Frankenstein's Monster, who claims that "Man, you shall

repent of the injuries you inflict" (*Frankenstein* 123), Andy finds himself in a perpetual cycle of monstrosity wherein he seeks to reassimilate into the world he once knew but simultaneously wishes to adopt the monstrous image perpetuated by society. Both characters are viewed as monstrous and in return they become monstrous. The only example of an identity which he can relate to is the media representation of zombies, which he acknowledges as being nothing more than fictional entertainment, but which he eventually succumbs to once he realises that society will not accept him as anything other than a monster. Andy says:

> After all, I can't change who or what I am any more than I can develop mammary glands and start breastfeeding.
>
> And just like that, the catharsis from the release of grief is replaced by the liberation of accepting my situation, of accepting what I have become.
>
> I am a zombie. One of the undead.
>
> I am most definitely not alone.
>
> And I believe I've found my purpose. (*Breathers* 211)

Andy believes his "purpose" is to be what nature has reincarnated him as and to live up to the persona given to him by the media, a breather-flesh-eating zombie. Andy accepts the truth of his reality and becomes the monstrous figure that society has forced upon him. Andy rejects the notion of reassimilating back into his nuclear family, referring to his parents' body parts as nothing more than meat; they no longer retain the sentimentality of family figures, but are objectified as sources of delicious nutrition in the same way that he has been objectified and would be further objectified

if sent to a zombie zoo: "I hear that at some zoos, Breathers are even allowed to take home a piece of preserved zombie as a souvenir" (*Breathers* 201).

As Andy undergoes the psychological transformation into a monster, he begins to lose signs of his humanity; things that were important to him before his enlightenment begin to fall away, such as the desire to be reunited with his daughter. He convinces himself that Annie is better off thinking he doesn't exist anymore: "I just don't think it's a good idea to expose her to what I have become, for me or for her" (*Breathers* 221). His reasoning is weak and the reader starts to lose respect for him, for it becomes obvious that he is starting to be driven by his hunger as opposed to the sensitivity that initially established him as an endearing character. By the end of the novel Andy's plight has reached the media; his touching story has won him televised interviews with the likes of Jay Leno and Oprah Winfrey, and he starts to spread the word, calling for worldwide recognition of zombies as credible members of society. By his own admission, he has become a form of spectacle:

> I've been turned into this tragic, sympathetic zombie figure.
>
> A human interest story about a non-human.
>
> A cult hero for a society that abhors me. (*Breathers* 258)

Despite his cult-hero status, Andy receives no payment for his interviews or for appearing on television or at events; he is still not considered equal to human status but there is a suggestion of a new category within society to be developing. Before his first television interview, Andy thinks of the bullet hole in the centre of his forehead and tells us:

> I asked the makeup artist to cover it up with concealer, but the director wants to accentuate my zombieness so the audience can feel for me, so they can understand my anguish. My anguish is that I have a hole in my forehead that looks like the world's largest blackhead. (*Breathers* 261)

The fact that Andy's "zombieness" is accentuated points towards the possibility of zombies being recognised as a separate category of being within society; already their hopes, dreams and desires are being aired on television stations and the media is bringing the story of the average zombie into the households of the American nation. Andy recognises the manipulative power of the media and how its representation of zombies could both aid and inhibit the struggle of those othered by society, bitingly saying, "You can have your Jesus Christ […] My savior is the American Media" (*Breathers* 259).

Conclusion

Despite this positive development of zombies as recognised members of human society, the novel concludes with a note of hopelessness that echoes the conclusion of *Frankenstein*. In a scene that reimagines Frankenstein's destruction of the Monster's desired mate and the prospect of reproduction, Andy's best friend and pregnant girlfriend are burned to death by a group of fraternity boys. Like the Monster, Andy and his fellow zombies storm the house enacting their revenge, ripping every living soul to shreds. When facing the police on the final page of the novel, Andy says, "We'll go down fighting for our right to exist" (*Breathers* 310). The uncomfortable conclusion of *Breathers* indicates that despite the progress that society appears to have made in the attempted embrace of the other, prior existing prejudices and the

negative images perpetuated by the media will always stand in the way of complete acceptance.

As Botting observes, "Zombies are 'shocked subjects,' traumatised beyond affective capacity by too much stimulation, taken beyond feeling and sentience by too much feeling, to the point that they are no longer subjects at all: there is, by definition, 'no subject self-present in shock'" (Botting 182).[88] If there is a present trend towards imbuing zombies with a sense of sentience and self-consciousness, then contemporary zombie narratives such as *Breathers*, *Brains* and *In the Flesh* are attempts to return subjectivity to the zombie. Perhaps culture is currently in a state where the recognition of Botting's suggested "apotheosis," of zombies representing "the effects on the screen of too much affect from it" (a-ffect-less 182), has forced us to consider the trajectory we have placed ourselves on, towards our own eventual self-destruction. Or, is it perhaps time to recognise the emergence of a "New Humanism."

While these texts, like most in the zombie memoire genre, attempt to re-imbue the zombie with an essence of humanity, the recuperative gesture often results in this shift from Homo Sacer to Scapegoat, thereby implicating the figure between these two economies of death. Frankenstein's Monster says:

> But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any

intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered

only with groans. (*Frankenstein* 86)

Once the monsters of literature are given their own voices and subjectivity, they are

subsequently in the position to renegotiate the inclusivity of Humanism. The problem,

as I argue in my next chapter, lies in the forced re-inscription of traditional

heteronormative Humanist values.

Chapter 5

All You Zombies

<div align="center">

All you zombies show your faces

All you people in the street

All you sittin' in high places

It's all gonna fall on you. (The Hooters – All You Zombies, 1982*)[89]*

</div>

 "And then I was reborn,"[90] proclaims the theatrical Jack Barnes, a former English Professor and the sentient zombie protagonist of Robin Becker's *Brains: A Zombie Memoire* (2010) as he revisits the moment of his transition from human to zombie:

> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. For I am evil. And I am the shadow. And I am death. Not just zombie but archetype. Not just villain but hero. Jungian shadow, id and ego. Man is woman. Ovaries are testes. Cats are dogs. Mr. Hyde was inside me clawing his way out. Dr. Jekyll was nowhere in sight. (36)

Contemporary literature and advancements in both medical and cognitive science indicate that humanity is currently, and has already been, on a trajectory towards a posthuman epoch, an age in which the discourse of humanism will be forced to reconsider the inadequate binary concepts currently and previously used to make sense of the world and its inhabitants. The liberal humanist metaethic that has governed the imagination of Western culture has traditionally been informed by sets

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[89] Lyrics taken from "All You Zombies", a song by the Hooters, written by Eric Bazillian and Rob Hyman

[90] Robin Becker. *Brains: A Zombie Memoire*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010. 36

of ideological binary oppositions, such as "natural and artificial, organic and technological, subject and object, body and mind, body and embodiment, real and virtual, presence and absence, and so on" (28).[91] These binaries have long been critiqued, by both postmodernism and posthumanism, for their tactical separation as a means of inclusion and exclusion, such as in a master/slave dialectic, in the construction of the self and the other. In Jack's dramatic recollection of his transition, he verbalises the very paradox posed by the figure of the zombie. Both living and dead, the zombie crashes through the binaries established within the discourse of humanism and arises as a critique of humanism's anthropocentric ideology. By its very nature, we might say, the zombie stands as a challenge to humanist modes of thought.

The zombie as a posthuman figure can be considered as emerging from two distinct strands of zombie literature. The first, and most well-known, strand is the traditional zombie narrative, as popularised by Romero, in which a post-apocalyptic landscape is overrun with zombies devoid of consciousness. In the absence of individual consciousness, the zombies function as a 'swarm' operated by a hive-mind. These traditional narratives can be seen in conjunction with, and in contrast to, the recent emergence of the Zombie Memoire, the second strand of zombie literature as explored in the previous chapter of this thesis. The Zombie Memoire genre sees zombies emerge, having developed or regained sentience. These narratives do not place an emphasis on the apocalyptic effect of zombies, for some texts like *Breathers* see zombies emerge free from any notions of apocalypse; rather, these texts focus on the sentient zombies' existential anxiety of existing as uncategorisable figures in a world of binaries.

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[91] R. McCallum, V. Flanagan, and J. Stephens. "The Struggle to Be Human in a Posthuman World." *CREArTA* 6.Special Issue (2006): 28-44. Web.

Robin Becker's *Brains: A Zombie Memoire* (2010) joins the zombie memoire genre by following a similar metaphysical slant as that taken by *Breathers*. Like most examples of the genre, the central focus is the existential questioning of what it means to be human. The protagonist, Jack Barnes, a former English professor proficient in postmodern popular culture, narrates his transition into a state of zombification and elucidates further on zombie existence. For Jack and his fellow sentient zombies, there is a great effort to show evidence of their having retained consciousness in an attempt to justify themselves as authentic beings, thus separating themselves from the many mindless zombies that flood the environment. Like the zombies within *Breathers,* Jack feels torn when faced with the notion of 'zombiehood'; when a group of "corpse catchers" approaches Jack, he views the encounter as a chance to prove his sentience, saying "this was my opportunity to show the real me, the man beneath the animal" (46) as he reaches into his tweed jacket pocket to finger papers of his writing, "evidence," he argues, of his cognition (47). Throughout this chapter, the sentient zombie will henceforth be referred to as the '*Izombie*', my own critical coinage, in which the addition of a capitalised "I" symbolises an emphasis on the importance of subjectivity, a thinking, cognitive 'I', within the genre. As I aim to demonstrate in this chapter, the figure of the *Izombie* is implicated in a complex dynamic, one that is characterised by the apparent movement into the realm of the posthuman, but followed by the inevitable reinscription of humanism and humanist values. As I show, the zombie's posthuman endeavour founders substantially in these fictions of zombie sentience. As I argue, both strands of narrative attempt to position the zombie in the role and realm of the posthuman. However, while the first appears to propose a version of posthumanism that successfully moves beyond the realm of the human, the second fails, serving only to recuperate the ideology of a humanist model. As I

demonstrate, the *Izombie* can be read in conjunction with its science-fiction cousin, the cyborg, in that both, on some level, are figures with which we can explore the boundaries of what it means to be human. Both serve as figures that enable an exploration of the possibility of posthuman futuriority.

This chapter will first introduce the concept of humanism by exploring three of its overlapping critiques. I will then explore posthumanism, and introduce the *Izombie* as a posthuman figure. I will do so by utilizing Robert Longo's sculpture *All You Zombies: Truth Before God* to demonstrate the humanist binaries that the amalgamous Gothic hybridity of the *Izombie* complicates, particularly notions of a continued subjectivity as defined by what is claimed to be a pre-existent 'state of nature', albeit a 'state of nature' that should be seen as a by-product of market relations and the civil society of capitalism. I will then introduce Lauro and Embry's "Zombie Manifesto" and their suggestion of the *zombii* as the only truly consciousless posthuman figure. While both *Izombie* and *zombii* exhibit a move towards the posthuman, I will explain how the *zombii,* as antisubject, and the *Izombie,* as reestablished-subject, offer two possible types of posthuman futuriority. While the *Izombie* appears to be a move towards a more easily accepted posthumanity, more attractive than the annihilation of the subject as proposed by the *zombii*, in reality, the *Izombie* denies its own position as posthuman by reinstating humanistic discourse, and in turn, adhering instead to the capitalist system that maintains the binaries of humanism. Finally, I will use Robert Heinlein's short story "All You Zombies—" (1959) to demonstrate the reflexivity involved in the creation of self that we see exhibited in *Izombie* narratives. This reflexivity, unlike the annihilation and anticatharsis presented by the *zombii*, reestablishes the systems of power that uphold a humanist dialectical model. In conclusion, this chapter presents two contradictory

perceptions of posthumanity as proposed by the *Izombie* and *zombii*, the first being a flawed reinscription of humanism, and the second being a complete annihilation of the subject, and consequently the systems of power that seek to control it. I argue that instead of these two extremes, what the zombie figure, as both *zombii* and *Izombie,* should propose is neither reinscription, nor annihilation, but rather a reconceptualisation of humanistic discourse that will allow for a more fluid transition into an era of posthumanity.

Humanism

In order to understand what is meant when referring to humanism, and the ideals that are recuperated in the figure of the *Izombie*, attention should be directed towards three overlapping critiques of Humanism. The first critique is antihumanism, which largely critiques the traditional humanistic ideas of 'humanity', 'man', and 'human nature'. Antihumanists, like Friedrich Nietzsche, critique the humanist notion of a universal morality that binds 'humanity' to an unrealistic, and over-idealistic, 'moral code'. This moral code serves as a universal essence that governs humanity. The second critique is that of Transhumanism, which often serves as the transitory stage between humanism and post-humanism. While transhumanism embraces the dualism put forth by René Descartes as a means to gesture towards the potentiality of the technological separation of the mind from the body, Joseph Sassoon in *The Humanist Society* explains the humanist rejection of Cartesian Dualism, stating that "the entelechial process cannot exist without a body. Nor can it exist without a mind. Therefore, it can exist only within us as psychophysiological beings" (Sassoon 73). Humanism therefore perceives of a necessary connection between mind and body. In contrast to this, transhumanism's acceptance of Cartesian dualism proposes the technological advancement of the human condition and embraces scientific technologies that are

often critiqued as working against the intrinsic moral code of humanism. In *Human Purpose and Transhuman Potential* (2013), Ted Chu notes that "it is becoming increasingly clear that technologies such as cloning, stem cell research, and genetic engineering are increasing the ability to alter not just nature but human nature" (Chu 4). Transhumanism critiques the stagnation of humanism's conception of a universal human nature. Chu notes that "Opponents of such fundamental change often speak of the Promethean hubris entailed in 'overcoming nature' that will surely end in our self-destruction" (Chu 4). The 'self-destruction' to which these opponents refer is essentially the 'destruction of self' that is necessary to progress beyond the restricting confines of a humanist ideology that is based on the notion of a 'universal nature'. It is the notion of a 'universal nature' that regulates the construction and maintenance of the binaries that inform traditional humanistic beliefs. For example, humanists would use the argument that technological advancements of the human work 'against one's human nature' in order to reject certain ideas, or similarly, would claim these advancements as 'unnatural'. In *From Transgender to Transhuman: A Manifesto on the Freedom of Form* (2011), Rothblatt examines the humanist binary constructed between male and female genders, arguing against the inherent discrimination that follows gender assignment at birth. Rothblatt uses the transhuman, and posthuman, figure of the avatar to explore the limits imposed on humanity by conforming to this gender binary. "Gender is the set of different behaviours that society expects of persons labelled either 'male' or 'female'," Rothblatt explains; however, she goes on to describe the manner in which gender *should* instead be conceived: as a continuum, she argues, "ranging from very male to very female, with countless variations in between" (Rothblatt 1). This deconstruction of gender signifies a flaw in humanism's conception of a universal human nature and opens up the possibilities of further

explorations of transhuman potentiality. This transhuman potentiality need not be specifically focused on technological advancement: a mere advancement in cultural thinking, such as that associated with gender, is enough to move towards a transhuman future. The third argument against Humanism, and one that will be focus of this chapter, is that of posthumanism.

Posthumanity

In her seminal research on posthumanity in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetic, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles asks, "What is the posthuman?" (2), emphasising that her explanation is in no way intended to be perceived as either definitive or prescriptive. As Hales notes, "First, the posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation, so that embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life" (Hayles 2), which allows for the dislocation of consciousness from the physical body, acknowledging the potentiality for human transcendence of the body. "Second," Hayles continues, "the posthuman view considers consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition long before Descartes thought he was a mind thinking, as an epiphenomenon, as an evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it is the whole show when in actuality it is only a minor sideshow" (Hayles 2). In other words, consciousness is a mere by-product of humanism. The natural superiority that humanity claims as justified by an advanced level of consciousness is merely a display of egoistic anthropocentrism. "Third, the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born" (Hayles 2). This suggests the possibility for further technological bodily evolution that is advanced by Hayles'

fourth point: "and most important, by these and other means," she claims, "the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" (Hayles 2). Hayles' final point speaks to examples of a dislocated consciousness having been uploaded into a computer, or into a mechanical body, as in the case of cyborgs and robot avatars. While these considerations of an actualised body/mind divide seem to merely appeal to the creative authors of science-fiction, Hayles' perception of posthumanity has real-world implications as we move into a technological age in which such a dislocation between mind and body is becoming an authentic consideration for further human technological development, as well for further human-life extension. Projects such as the *2045 Strategic Social Initiative* propose the possibility of uploading a human consciousness onto a robot avatar as early as 2045 to ensure cybernetic immortality.[92] The *2045 Initiative* manifesto states: "We are facing the choice: To fall into a new Dark Age—into affliction and degradation—or to find a new model for human development and create not simply a new civilisation, but a new mankind." The *2045 Initiative,* founded in February 2011 by the Russian interpreter Dmitry Itskov, hopes to:

> …create technologies enabling the transfer of a [*sic*] individual's personality to a more advanced non-biological carrier, and extending life, including to the point of immortality. We devote particular attention to enabling the fullest possible dialogue between the world's major spiritual traditions, science and society.

To date, as many as 39666 people have enrolled in the project, and that number is increasing daily following the support of a range of religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

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[92] More information on the *2045 Initiative* can be found on the website: http://2045.com/

Posthuman Izombies

The contradictory nature of posthuman discourse is evidence enough of the malleability and fluctuation of a concept that is still very much in development. The zombie, a malleable figure itself, then serves as an ideal figure or trope to represent posthuman concerns within literature. The sentient zombie, which will now be referred to as the *Izombie*, emerges from the zombie genre as a Gothic hybrid, a monstrous figure whose multiple interpretations are reflective of each decade in which it manifests on screen. Uncanny in its otherness and yet echoing a familiarity that speaks right to the core of humanistic anxieties, the *Izombie* is an amalgamation of each preceding manifestation of zombieism and can best be analysed in conjunction with Robert Longo's sculpture entitled *All You Zombies: Truth Before God*.[93]

[93] *All You Zombies: Truth Before God,* (1986) Acrylic and charcoal on shaped canvas; cast bronze on motorised platform of steel and wood. Overall size, 176-1/2 x 195 x 177-1/2 inches/448 x 495.3 x 451 cm. Image taken from artist's website © 1977-2015 Robert Longo: http://www.robertlongo.com/portfolios/1029/works/32543

Jennifer González refers to Longo's art installation as staging "the extreme manifestation of the body at war in the theatre of politics",[94] a description that seems appropriate also to describe the highly politicised body of the zombie.

The "zombies" to which the title *All You Zombies* refers is as equally ambiguous as the figure itself; not particularly male, nor female, but rather a crude amalgamation of both sexes, the figure is presented on a revolving platform in front of a semi-circular canvas background decorated to represent the interior box-seats of a concert hall. In a stance reminiscent of the figure of Liberty in Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), Longo's monstrosity stands in a forward lurch, its left arm raised to the sky holding a flagpole, the base of which is a spear that pierces the

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[94] Jennifer González. "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies." Ed. Chris Hables Gray. *The Cyborg Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 273. Print.

figure's ribcage to the left of a feminine breast. The charred unrecognisable flag hangs at half-mast. The figure is constructed as an unplaceable being, adorned with an amalgamation of inscriptions and objects that borrow from a multitude of cultures, its origin unknown and its heritage inconceivable. Its helmet, half kabuto—inspired by ancient Japanese warriors—is enhanced with the addition of a Viking horn reaching skyward from the left hand side. The helmet is halved with a Mohawk-fringed spine that separates the ancient aesthetic of the left side with the futuristic, almost armadillo-like grates of the right side. Below the helmet the double-faced figure viciously snarls from its caged mask, the left side of its face vaguely human in contrast with the right side's mechanical stalked eye and forked tongue. A string of symbols circles the figure's neck; among them are a Christian cross, the Judaic star of David, the star and crescent of Islam, the gender symbols for male and female, and a Nazi Swastika. A feminine hand thrusts from the figure's masculine chest, tearing through a torso composed of toy soldiers, toy insects, and miscellaneous shrapnel. Chains and ammunition are draped across the figure's warrior physique; on its back is a network of corrugated ventilation pipes that snake in and out of an engine-like exoskeleton. One-cent coins form the scales that cover the figure's limbs, its right hand clutching the bodiless neck of a guitar and its erect penis emerging from the protection of an insect-like wing encasement. The figure's muscular and well-armed thighs are transformed from the knees down into wolf-like lower legs that strain to support the entire structure, indicative of the strain that war places on the natural environment. The figure therefore becomes part-beast, part-human, and part-machine, a veritable cyborg the sight of which both repels and absorbs the observer's attention. With each passing minute of observation the figure simultaneously becomes more recognisable and more alien, as the monstrosity of the structure is revealed to have

been composed of familiar parts. In a brochure from the 1989 exhibition of the artwork,[95] Longo describes *All You Zombies* as a symbol of 'American Machismo';[96] the composition of the figure is thick with warlike motifs, but the figure serves as more than a mere representation of war. The figure is a product of its environment, both male and female, and, all-encompassing in its representation of culture and religion, it is a product of war. However, it also serves as a figure rising against the systems of power that bring about war and the relationship between the figure and its environment is therefore reflexive.

In the description of *All You Zombies: Truth Before God* taken from the 1989 exhibition, we are told that "Longo deliberately evokes the image of the highest angel in eternal rebellion against God, vainly raging for a power he will never attain—the power to control his own destiny"—the highest angel of course being Satan. The figure is not only rebelling against the body of politics that bring about war, but also heading straight to the source and renouncing the God that informs such systems. The figure can be seen in opposition to Paul's defence of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 10:3 – 5, where he states:

> For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (New King James Version).

Alternative wording can be found in the New International Version, where we read:

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[95] The Exhibition ran from 1 October 1989 until 31 December 1989, in the Robert O. Anderson Building of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
[96] Los Angeles County Museum of Art. *Robert Longo*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989. Education Department. Web. 16 July 2015.
<http://www.lacma.org/sites/default/files/reading_room/New%20PDF%20from%20Images%20Output-9compressed4.pdf>.

For though we live in world, we do not wage war as the world does. On the contrary, they have divine power to destroy strongholds.

It is clear that in the renunciation of God, the figure becomes all too worldly in its construction, and, as such, wages war against the world in the same fashion of its creation.

While the cyborg hybridity of *All You Zombies: Truth Before God* is noted by González as a visualisation of "possible ways of being in the world" (González 275), it is simultaneously positioned as a mercenary martyr, "raging involuntarily even against its own existence, the hybrid figure in *All You Zombies: Truth Before God,* stands as its own terrible witness of a militarised capitalist state" (González 275). The sculpture affronts the ideals of humanism by crossing and confounding the sacred binaries constructed to keep the world in order. The sculpture is neither man nor woman, but a monstrous reconfiguration of both genders. Similarly, as part machine and part animal, the figure cannot be accurately assigned the title of 'human', but rather challenges the all-too-restrictive categorical system that humanism imposes in its ordering of humanity. The figure stands as uncategorisable and demands the reconsideration of the binaries that have, for so long, informed the humanist system.

Comparisons can be drawn between Longo's figure and the malleability of the zombie in the utilisation of the zombie as an empty signifier within literature. As a mirror for contemporary cultural anxieties, the zombie is reincarnated seemingly anew with every manifestation, but like Longo's figure, the zombie surges forth with each prior interpretation discoverable within the folds of its narrative. Notions of slavery, capitalisation, mass consumerism, and identity are emblazoned on the figure as a product of its environment and are simultaneously critiqued by the figure as it

stalks the sugar cane fields, shopping malls, and cities of zombie narratives hungry to control, consume and obliterate. The *Izombie* emerges thus with the same reflexivity of its forerunners, a product of the environment it so wishes to destroy.

As Hayles notes, "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals" (2-3). The prospect of posthumanity extends beyond even the mere transfer of consciousness to a machine, wherein Hayles recognises the inclusion of a computer-simulated consciousness in addition to that of human consciousness. For Hayles the question of posthumanity articulates concerns for the continuation of subjectivity, which she explores in consultation with C. B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (1962).[97] Macpherson, whose interest focuses on the liberal humanist subject, offers an analytical perspective on the possessive individualism of subjectivity: "Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them […] The human essence is freedom from the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession" (3). Macpherson's perspective, as indicted by the title of the text, is informed by arguments made by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on the existence of a "state of nature" prior to the formation of market relations and civil society. Due to the nature of the individual as "proprietor of his own person" predating civil society, nothing is then owed to society and Hayles notes that this establishes a relationship between individual and society in which one earns wages through the "sale" of one's labour (Hayles 3). However, Macpherson complicates the existence of a "state of nature" by examining it as a "retrospective creation of a

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[97] C. B. Macpherson. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1962. Print.

market society" (Hayles 3). Macpherson, informed by the tenets of classical Marxism, denies that the notion of a liberal self predates market relations, and insists, rather, that it emerges as a *construction* of market relations and civil society. Hayles argues that this paradox of the "state of nature" as existing prior to, or as a construction of, market relations can be overcome in the emergence of the posthuman, by abolishing the notion of the 'natural' self itself. As Hales notes, "The posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogenous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles 3) like the amalgamation-formed figure in Robert Longo's *All You Zombies*.

Similarly, for Hayles, the posthuman figure as an amalgam exhibits a "collective heterogenous quality" which "implies a distributed cognition located in disparate parts that may be in only tenuous communication with one another" (Hayles 4). There is therefore little consideration for a single agency, but rather a collective will of many (disparate parts), like Robert Longo's two-faced figure and perfectly literalised in the formation of a zombie horde where the subjective 'I' is transmuted into a collective 'we'. Much the same operates in relation to the figure of the *Izombie*. Jack Barnes, the protagonist of *Brains*, for instance, notes:

> As we rot, we become more alike. What was distinct and individual in life—a Marilyn Monroe mole, red hair, big breasts, Buddy Holly glasses, a penchant for making puns or wearing yellow suspenders—is erased and replaced with the shuffle, the moan, the torn clothes, the stink, the pallor, the dripping flesh, and the insatiable yearning. As we decay, we become one entity. United we stand. Or sway, rather (Brains 46).

Jack's conscious awareness of his position as one of many within the horde verbalises the "collective heterogenous quality" of the posthuman as theorised by Hayles. As one of the horde, though operating at a level that appears to be mindless, the grouping of individual zombies into a collective whole results in an organism that continually functions to produce and reproduce itself. As Hayles notes, "Organisms respond to their environment in ways determined by their internal self-organisation. Their one and only goal is continually to produce and reproduce the organisation that defines them as systems" (10). In this sense, the zombie horde, as an organism, becomes autopoetic in its continual re-construction of itself as an emergent whole.

Posthumanism and the Zombie Response

The three different ideological responses to posthumanism that Hayles recognises can be seen in conjunction with the various strands of zombie literature outlined above. The first response to posthumanism is one of apocalyptic antihumanism, as found in traditional Romero-esque zombie narratives. Etched in the Gothic responses of shock, horror, and fear, these narratives propagate an apocalyptic end to humanity and the discourse of humanism. This type of narrative, depicting a negative posthuman future in which the zombie horde threatens the extinction of humankind such as that seen in *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels, "informs and shapes both radically utopic and dystopic visions of the future" (McCallum, Flanagan, and Stephens 41).

The second response functions as a recuperative gesture that reinstates the values of the liberal humanist subject. Texts like Diana Rowland's *My Life as a White Trash Zombie* (2011)[98] and Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010)[99] feature the

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[98] The first book in the White Trash Series, followed by *Even White Trash Zombies Get the Blues* (2012), *White Trash Apocalypse* (2013), and *How the White Trash Zombie Got Her Groove Back* (2014)

[99] The film adaptation was released in 2013 and directed by Jonathan Levine.

narratives of *Izombie* protagonists that find themselves reinscribed within the liberal humanist systems of values. In the case of *Warm Bodies*, the zombie protagonist, R, transcends the boundary between zombie and human, death and life, as his heart starts beating following his romance with a human girl, Julie:

> Julie presses her hand into my chest so hard it's almost king fu. Against the pressure of her palm, I feel it. A movement deep inside me. A pulse.

> 'R!' Julie nearly shrieks. 'I think… you're alive!' (*Warm Bodies* 228)

The third response to posthumanity has not yet been fully realised in zombie narratives. Although many sentient zombie texts gesture towards a reconceptualisation of what it means to be human, none have problematised the conventional discourse of humanism's binaries to the extent that a true inclusive posthumanity emerges. *I Am Legend*, with its 'new society' of adapted plague survivors, most closely resembles the response of a reconceptualised form of humanity. However, in this case, Robert Neville becomes the 'other' to a reinscribed system of humanism, and it is not clear whether or not the 'new humanism' of the survivors differs much from that which preceded it. Though not a zombie narrative, but of the same plague genre, Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985) presents a narrative in which the whole of society is infected by a man-made virus of nano biological computers called 'noocytes'. The noocytes reprogram the biological structures of the humans that they infect to the extent that all of humanity, and the human environment, becomes assimilated into a single macro-organism:

> As for the cities themselves—not a sign of normal living things, not a sign of human beings. New York City is an unfamiliar jumble of geometric shapes, a city apparently dismantled and rearranged to suit the purposes of the plague—

if a plague can have a purpose. Indeed, what we have seen supports the popular rumour that North America has been invaded by some form of intelligent biological life—that is, intelligent microorganisms, organisms that cooperate, mutate, adapt and alter their environment. (*Blood Music* 164)

The noocytes, and each human that is assimilated, become one of many voices within the hivemind-like consciousness of the macro-organism that operates as a whole. This new civilisation grows at such a rate, and to such a size, that it eventually transcends the normal plane of existence to one that is not restricted by a physical substrate. However, posthumanity need not necessarily result in the end of the world, but rather, posthumanity necessitates the end of normative conceptions of what being a human entails.

A Zombie Manifesto

Drawing inspiration from Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry present "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the era of Advanced Capitalism," in which they postulate an emergence of a zombie figure not yet in existence, that of the *zombii*, which they describe as "a thought-experiment that exposes the limits of posthuman theory and shows that we can get posthuman only at the death of the subject" (Lauro and Embry 87). Lauro and Embry emphasise the distinction between the *zombie* and the *zombii*, noting that while the *zombie* is the figure most commonly used for metaphorical discussions pertaining to the plethora of themes explored within contemporary traditional zombie texts, such as slavery, mass consumerism, capitalism, and power dynamics, the *zombii* represents a true

incarnation of the consciousless posthuman (Lauro and Embry 90).[100] Lauro and

Embry do not completely align their thinking with Haraway; however, unlike

Haraway's position on the cyborg, which she views as a positive catalyst to the

breaking down of social binaries, particularly gender binaries, they do not propose

that the role of the zombie is one of liberation, but rather consider the paradoxical

incongruity of the figure as demonstrative of the inadequacy and deficiency of a

subject/object dialectical model: "Simultaneously living and dead, subject and object,

slave and slave rebellion, the zombie presents a posthuman spectre informed by the

(negative) dialectic of power relations rather than gender" (Lauro and Embry 91).

They insist that the *zombii* imposes its own "negative dialectic" and, as such, true

posthumanity can only arise following the development of an antisubject. Lauro and

Embry's *zombii*, as indicated by their insistence on the death of the subject, can best

be explored in conjunction with the zombie drones and ghouls of traditional cinematic

zombie narratives. Placing an emphasis on the hive-mind that develops within the

zombie horde, they state: "Our manifesto proclaims the future possibility of the

zombii, a consciousless being that is a swarm organism, and the only imaginable

spectre that could really be posthuman" (Lauro and Embry 88).

In order to understand what is meant by the over-determined term

'subjectivity', let us first consider Sartre's notion of subjectivity as explained in his

defence of existentialism:

Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be but he is

what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing—as he wills

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[100] It is important, here, to emphasise the distinction between these three similar terms. The term
"zombie" acts as the umbrella term for all categories of zombie figures used in metaphorical critical
discussions utilising the figure. The *Izombie* and *zombii* are two categories of zombie figures. The
Izombie represents the sentient zombie figure, a figure that maintains or retains consciousness and
operates within the domain of Humanism, while the *zombii* represents a figure lacking consciousness
and therefore operating in the realm of Posthumanism.

to be after that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism. And this is what people call its "subjectivity," using the word as a reproach against us. But what do we mean to say by this, but that man is of a greater dignity than a stone or a table? For we mean to say that man primarily exists—that man is, before all else, something which propels itself towards a future and is aware that it is doing so. Man is, indeed, a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss, or a fungus or a cauliflower. Before that projection of self nothing exists; not even in the heaven of intelligence: man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be. (30) [101]

Herein lies the existential anxiety at the root of all *Izombie* narratives: in possession of existential subjectivity the *Izombie* finds himself within a world in which he cannot perceive of a direction in which to project his self and his existence, for he is posthuman in a human world.

Critics often question the nature of the fear inspired by the zombie and the continuity of the zombie's enduring appeal. Lauro and Embry, for example, make recourse to a psychoanalytic frame of reference when they argue that "we are most acutely aware of ourselves as subjects when we feel afraid—specifically when we feel threatened by a force external to our bodies" (Lauro and Embry 88-9). The external force of the zombie threatens the termination of individuality. Jack tells us: "I'm glad I ate Lucy. I'd hate to see her dulled, reduced to an object, a thing. A rabid automaton" (*Brains* 52). Death has the ability to reduce the subject into an object. The walking corpse, particularly the *Izombie*, appears to inhabit both subject and object roles. As an antisubject, the *zombii* lacks the "precondition for moral or political

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[101] Jean-Paul Sartre. *Existentialism and Humanism*. Trans. Philip Mairet. York: Methuen, 2013. Print.

agency"[102] that is ascribed to a thinking subject, like the *Izombie* Jack, and the zombie swarm, unthinking but relentless in its drive to consume, serves as an unpredictable, and uncontrollable, all-encompassing wave of annihilation. This is the annihilation of humanity, but more importantly, the annihilation of human identity—the absence of self:

> 'Death is not anything. Death is not…' Ros said.
>
> 'Life?'
>
> 'Death is the absence of a presence. But living death is…'
>
> 'The presence of absence?' (*Brains* 71)

The terror and horror that feed the enduring myth of the zombie is therefore twofold: first, the fear of the physical body being devoured, and secondly, the fear of human subjectivity being nullified as the infected are resurrected as one of many belonging to the zombie swarm. As Lauro and Embry note, "Both of these fears reflect recognition of one's own mortality and ultimately reveal the primal fear of losing the "self"" (89). While the "self" is lost, all that remains is the body and the archetype zombie, therefore, is all body and no mind. What, then, can be made of the *Izombie* that has grown in popularity over the past decade?

The Rise of the Izombie

Izombies emerge from the swarm in order to find their own identity and can therefore be seen as playing two potential roles: on the one hand, zombies like Kieren Walker from *In the Flesh,* and those in *Breathers* and *Brains,* attempt to aspire towards a new

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[102] Amy Allen. "The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the Death of the Subject." *Philosophical Forum The Philosophical Forum*31.2 (2000): 113-30. Web.

strand of all inclusive humanism, a 'new humanism', if you will, that attempts to redefine the boundaries of classification that previously divided the 'human' from anything 'other'. However, in order to do this, the *Izombie* necessarily desires to secede from the zombie swarm—the collective consciousness which Lauro and Embry consider as the only true form of posthumanity—and in so doing, the *Izombie* denies the death of the subject—a prerequisite for the development into a posthuman state. This denial of submitting to a collective consciousness, and the reclamation of their own subjectivity, can be seen as standing in contrast to the *zombii*'s movement toward a posthuman antisubject.

While, in *I Am Legend*, to become infected was to become the post-human, the *Izombie* becomes a way to explore the same theme, but in a way that appeals to humanistic thinking. The problem occurs when sentient zombies do not result in an advanced posthumanism, but rather revert back to the ideology of humanism, reinstating humanism as opposed to developing into the posthuman. While in traditional zombie texts it is the living human characters that attempt to reconstruct a society mirroring the one that has gone before, as explored in the second chapter of this thesis, in *Izombie* narratives we see the *Izombie* protagonist exhibiting a performativity of simulacrum as they attempt to reposition themselves within the society to which they do not belong. In Diana Rowland's *My Life As A White Trash Zombie* (2011)[103] and Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010)[104], we see zombies forcing their way back into a regulated traditional lifestyle. In *My Life As A White Trash Zombie,* female protagonist Angel Crawford, a high-school dropout with a criminal record, finds herself reanimated following a violent car crash. Angel views her

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[103] The first book in the White Trash Series, followed by *Even White Trash Zombies Get the Blues* (2012), *White Trash Apocalypse* (2013), and *How the White Trash Zombie Got Her Groove Back* (2014)

[104] The film adaptation was released in 2013 directed by Jonathan Levine.

reanimation as a gifted opportunity to improve the deadbeat life she had led while living. She leaves her drug-dealing boyfriend, is given a job at the morgue working with the coroner—which conveniently allows her access to guilt-free brains—and by the end of the third book she has sat and passed her GED while also finding herself in a stable loving relationship with a handsome zombiefied police officer. Angel falls back in line with humanism by becoming a functional member within society, and maintains the zombie/human binary constructed within the text by entering into a heteronormative relationship with another zombie, not a human. Similarly, in *Warm Bodies*, the zombiefied R—the novel makes extensive intertextual use of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*—falls in love with the human girl, Julie. However, though their romance blossoms while she is human and he is zombie, R, as a result of Julie's love, transcends his zombiefied state and returns to the category of human before their love can be consummated. This, again, maintains a humanistic zombie/human binary, and sets considerable store in the redemptive powers of romantic love.

R and his fellow zombies that occupy the airport terminal that has become their home wander through this space in a vacant state, re-enacting actions and practices that bare a resemblance to their former lives. And yet, these actions lack an element of authenticity, as the zombies never truly attain any form of fulfilment or satisfaction. However, R tells us that at least being in the terminal and having something to do gives their zombie lives a hint of purpose: "to have nothing at all around us, nothing to touch or look at, no hard lines whatsoever, just us and a gaping maw of the sky. I imagine that's what being full-dead is like. An emptiness vast and absolute" (*Warm Bodies* 4). R even finds a zombie girlfriend and they are married in a bizarre church service led by the Boneys, a group of skeletal 'ancients' that have

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decayed to point where all that remains of them are their bones. R finds very little meaning in the service, as he fails to understand the nonsensical chants and waving arms of the Boneys. This hollow simulacrum of former human life is reminiscent of Baudrillard's "precession of simulacra," in which the new life they have created as zombies attempts to conceal the truth that life as a zombie is void of purpose and meaning and that there is an absence of authenticity. To be a zombie is to be in a state of absence. R discovers that this re-enactment of pre-apocalyptic life is not restricted to the realm of the zombies when he visits the stadium that has become the safe-haven for a group of surviving humans. Julie takes R to a juice bar called The Orchard, a simulacra itself, for while the appearance is that of a traditional bar, "dart boards, pool tables, flat screen TVs with football games" (*Warm Bodies* 168), in reality the liquid being consumed by the customers is not beer, but rather grapefruit juice, and the sport on the television is not live, but rather pre-recorded games on overplayed VHS tapes. As R notices, "They watch these abbreviated, eternally looping contests with blank eyes and sip their drinks like players in an historical reenactment […] Something about this scene is burrowing into my mind. A thought is developing like a ghost on a Polaroid" (*Warm Bodies* 168). R sees the absence of humanity reflected in the eyes of the blank customers: "I'm staring at the TVs. I'm staring at the people. I can see the outline of their bones under their muscles. The edges of joints poking up under tight skin. I see their skeletons, and the idea taking shape in my head is something I hadn't expected: a blueprint of the Boneys. A glimpse into their twisted, dried-up minds." The connection that R draws between the Boneys and the customers reflects the emptiness of the simulacra created to maintain the appearance of a simulated reality in the denial of change and advancement. R says:

The universe is compressing. All memory and all possibility squeezing down to the smallest of points as the last of their flesh falls away. To exist in that singularity, trapped in one static state for eternity—this is the Boney's world. They are dead-eyed ID photos, frozen at the precise moment they gave up their humanity. That hopeless instant when they snipped the last thread and dropped into the abyss. Now there's nothing left. No thought, no feeling, no past, no future. Nothing exists but the desperate need to keep things as they are, as they always have been. They must stay on the rails of their loop or be overwhelmed, set ablaze and consumed by the colours, the sounds, the wide-open sky. (*Warm Bodies* 168-9)

Prior to his romance with Julie, R is going through the motions of life as a zombie, reflecting on the futility of their empty actions:

I am dead, but it's not so bad. I've learned to live with it. I'm sorry I can't properly introduce myself, but I don't have a name anymore. Hardly any of us do. We lose them like car keys, forget them like anniversaries. Mine might have started with an 'R', but that's all I have now. (*Warm Bodies* 3)

R attempts to piece together the puzzle of his identity by addressing his appearance, using his clothing as an indicator of his former lifestyle:

None of us are particularly attractive, but death has been kinder to me than some. I'm still in the early stages of decay. Just the grey skin, the unpleasant smell, the dark circles under my eyes. I could almost pass for a living man in need of a vacation. Before I became a zombie I must have been a businessman, a banker or a broker or some young temp learning the ropes,

because I am wearing fairly nice clothes. Black slacks, grey shirt, red tie.
(*Warm Bodies* 3)

While R's clothing reveals an aspect of his identity, his pre-zombie life remains a mystery. R and his fellow zombies have no specific memories of their formers lives, "just a vague, vestigial knowledge of a world long gone. Faint impressions of past lives that linger like phantom limbs" (*Warm Bodies* 4). R places the notion of identity as intrinsically linked to names, and therefore views the absence of a name as the greatest cause of existential crises. Lacking a name signifies an absence of identity, an absence of a self: "But it does make me sad that we've forgotten our names. Out of everything, this seems to me the most tragic. I miss my own and I mourn for everyone else's, because I'd like to love them, but I don't know who they are" (*Warm Bodies* 4).

The absence of subjectivity in the figure of the zombie is a stark reminder that individual cognisance is the defining attribute of humanity; as Lauro and Embry note, "to be a body without a mind is to be subhuman, animal; to be a human without agency is to be a prisoner, a slave" (90). Lauro and Embry also note that the lumbering figure of the zombie serves as a reminder of humanity's mortality, and the inherent imprisonment associated with the fragile human body. We are slaves to our bodies, and our human advancement can only extend as far as the human body is capable of extending; the fragility of the human body serves as a limiting threat that restricts further mental development beyond the body's death. The zombie, however, rises from death, and the zombie metaphor therefore not only serves as a metaphor for slavery, as exhibited by the Haitian zombie, but also as a dual metaphor for slave rebellion. Denying the limiting constraints of death to rise again, Jack tells us "we're beyond the body" (*Brains* 84) as he boasts about the absence of pain or the need to

defecate, as the risen corpse overrides the constriction of human life. Lauro and Embry note that "While the human is incarcerated in mortal flesh, the zombie presents a grotesque image that resists this confinement—animating his body even beyond death" (90). The zombie is not restricted by the boundaries set in a humanist dialectic, but rather serves as a hindrance to standard conceptions of both subject and object in its occupation as an animated, but yet dead, figure.

Zombii vs Izombie

If we consider the notion of subjectivity as purely a construction of humanistic thinking, then surely an authentic posthuman figure would be one without a subject. We should not consider this figure in terms of *lacking* a subject, however, a term which would imply an absence that could be filled, but rather as a true posthuman figure that would exist beyond the realm of the limiting discourse of humanism. It is at this point that perceptions of the posthuman are divided: the zombie can be used to explore two of the many schools of thought that consider the emergence of a posthuman future. Lauro and Embry introduced the *zombii* as a truly consciousless posthuman figure and I argue the *zombii* as posthuman can be compared and examined in conjunction with the *Izombie*. The *Izombie* can be viewed in accordance with a strand of cyborg theory that allows for the development into a state of posthumanity through technological adaption of the human body, or as in the case of an uploaded consciousness, through the complete replacement of the human body with a machine. This line of thought can be applied to the *Izombie*, who transgresses the boundary between life and death to further complicate the subject/object divide. The *Izombie* experiences a human death and is then resurrected as a liminal figure, neither alive nor dead. The *Izombie* can be considered as posthuman having moved beyond the controlling realm of humanism into an as-yet-undefined realm of

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posthumanity, a realm that suggests an urgent reconsideration of the inflexible boundaries of humanism. This school of thought maintains the central premise of humanism but allows for an adaptation in its structuring principles. This type of posthumanism presents the human species, as Stefan Herbrechter notes in *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (2013), as "a historical 'effect', with humanism as its ideological 'affect', while distancing itself from both" (7). Herbrechter argues that this type of posthumanism can not be established as having emerged "after" humanism, but should rather be considered as deconstructively inhabiting humanism itself: "A post-humanism which, precisely, is not post-*human* but *post*-human(ist)" (Herbrechter 7).

The second school of thought, as discussed earlier, emphasises a movement beyond the common discourse of traditional humanism in the presentation of the *zombii*, a truly consciousless posthuman non-subject. In *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and informatics*,[105] N. Katherine Hayles problematises the posthumanity presented by the cyborg and the *Izombie*, indicating that technical adaptation or the replacement of the human body does not amount to posthumanity if the figure continues to identify with the Enlightened subject of liberal humanism (Hayles 287). Similarly, while the *Izombie* appears to emerge as a veritable posthuman figure, its position within posthumanism is complicated due to its emphatic insistence on the establishment and maintenance of its identity as a subject. While the emergence of the *Izombie* appears to progress towards a new dialectical model, the reestablishment of both an identity informed by humanism, as well as an overtly humanist socio-political model, indicates a denial of radical, absolute posthumanity. Herbrechter questions the origins of essential humanity asking: "[Is it]

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[105] Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 287

in its 'savageness'?... Or in its capability of speech, its culture or social drives… is the human in fact human because of its 'nature' or its 'culture'?" (Herbrechter 8). Herbrechter argues that the human race should be considered as a cultural construct within a relevant historical timeframe, as opposed to transcendental beings that operate outside of the realm of an ideological belief system. Humanity, Herbrechter continues, needs to be considered as evolving within a great ecological context: "This approach only becomes posthumanist when the human is no longer seen as the sole hero of a history of emancipation, but as a (rather improbable but important) stage within the evolution of complex life forms" (Herbrechter 9).

The *Izombie* thus operates on two contradicting planes—firstly, as it regains sentience it is denying its position within a hivelike structure of the zombie horde, the horde which presents a truly post-human position in that the body continues to outlive the soul; secondly, the development of the sentience in a dead figure demonstrates a moving beyond a human state of existence into a posthuman state. However, these narratives reinscribe humanistic modes of being, as evidenced by Jack's insistence on writing "A Vindication of the Rights of the Post-Living" (*Brains* 177), Angel's reassimilation into functional human society (*My Life as a White Trash Zombie*), and R's return to life as a result of his heteronormative relationship with the human, Julie. The actions of these *Izombie* characters overwrite the potentiality for the true emergence of the posthuman.

This paradoxical movement in and out of humanism is literalised in the series *In The Flesh*, in which the zombies find themselves caught between two prospective identities. The law requires the zombies to medicate themselves with Neurotriptyline, a drug that stabilises their zombie characteristics and desires, and allows for their reintegration within society. On the other hand, the Undead Liberation Army, a group

of anarchist zombies, propagates the use of a drug called Blue Oblivion, which acts in the opposite way of Neurotriptyline, emphasising the monstrous characteristic of zombieism. Under the influence of Blue Oblivion the zombie becomes the ravenous beast of traditional zombie literature, forgoing all elements of rational sentience. The Undead Liberation Army declares this monstrous zombie state as the true intended state of being and calls on their fellow zombies to embrace their true identities as zombies. The zombies are faced with the dilemma of choosing between life as an *Izombie* versus life as a *zombii*. The Undead Liberation Army views Blue Oblivion as a means of developing beyond the boundaries of the human, becoming posthuman in embracing life as an antisubject, while Neurotriptyline becomes a means of reassimilating zombies back into the discourse of humanism.

While both schools of thought appear to postulate a posthuman reality, an authentic move towards posthumanism, as indicated by Hayles, would require not only the abandonment of the human body, but also the abandonment of the Enlightenment subject position. The *zombii* seemingly fulfils this role for, unlike the *Izombie* who offers a return towards flawed humanistic principles, Lauro and Embry maintain that, "the *zombii* does not reconcile subject and object, but, rather, as walking antithesis, holds them as irrevocably separate; in the figure of the *zombii*, the subject position is nullified, not reinvigorated" (95). Lauro and Embry therefore uphold that the only truly posthuman model would be one based on the "neither/nor" rejection of both subject and object as exhibited in the figure of the *zombii* which works "in the mode of negative dialectics" (95). The *zombii* therefore serves analogously to represent both contemporary humanity, as well as the threat towards contemporary humanity.

While the figure of the cyborg was used as a means of disbanding the difference of binaries between self and other, subject and object, male and female, the potential of the *zombii* to surpass the hybrid cyborg's categorical levelling stems from the *zombii*'s own defining inconsistency. The *zombii* is paradox manifested: as a member of the living-dead it is neither subject nor object, and further complicates the cyborg model, as well as that of the *Izombie*, by demonstrating that a mere adaption of "either/or" into "both/and" is insufficient. Rather, the *zombii* functions to obliterate all bonds between subject and object, adapting the cyborg's "both/and" into "neither/nor". Lauro and Embry note that, as a result of this, "The body of the *zombii* is itself this indeterminable boundary" (95).

Izombie as Consuming Capitalist

The zombie, the epitome of anti-catharsis in its never-ending drive to consume and the unrelenting growth of the swarm as consumption that leads to infection, speaks directly to the "shuffle generation" of twenty-first century Western identity, the mass-consumerist generation that fails to be satisfied in their quest to acquire the status, objects, and wealth with which they attempt to define their identities. Jack verbalises this in *Brains*, stating:

> That's the brilliance of *Dawn of the Dead*, the second movie in Romero's trilogy… the accumulation of material goods is panacea, a substitute—it can never fill the void at our spiritual centre. It can never acquire the depth of real meaning. It keeps us tethered to the material world, with zombies clawing at the double doors, greedy for more. And zombies are never satisfied. (*Brains* 83)

Like pressing the shuffle button on a music device, the shuffle generation's constant desire rapidly to ascend the societal hierarchy of status based on an identity constructed of *au courant* possessions is encapsulated in the discursive model of the zombie narrative. Lauro and Embry maintain, therefore, that their "zombie manifesto" does not necessarily call for a positive change as much as it calls for "the destruction of the reigning model." (91)

The essence of the zombie speaks to a philosophical illusion of selfhood informed by the Cartesian principle of "I think, therefore I am." This illusionary construction of selfhood that is based in relation to and as separate from others, informing the separation between subject and object, fuels the capitalist system that has deluded workers into a false sense of freedom. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno imply that "the subject and object are rendered ineffectual categories under capitalism, as the commodity fetish animates objects, and reification objectifies the worker." [106] In line with Marxism, the mass consumerism of contemporary Western countries and the global capitalism that drives it has, in effect, converted "the worker into a living appendage of the machine."[107] The divide between subject and object, in the figure of the zombie, is eradicated as the subject becomes objectified. The zombie, as objectified subject, analogises the current socio-economic juncture "where we feed off the products of the rest of the planet, and, alienated from our own humanity, stumble forward, groping for immorality even as we decompose." (Lauro and Embry 93)

The discourse of humanism distinguishes the essence of the individual and the assertion of individual selves. It is this mode of thought that allows for imprisonment

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[106] Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr.*Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002. (Lauro and Embry 92-3)
[107] Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1* (1867), trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Classics, 1990) 614

within a global capitalist structure and it is the illusionary concept of subjectivity, as argued by Horkheimer and Adorno, that contributes to ideological control of this subject (23). Lauro and Embry utilise the *zombii* as "an enactment of negative dialectics"(93) in that the *zombii* as analogous figure does not emerge as a metaphorical means of resolving the problematised conception of the subject/object divide/merger within a capitalist system. The *zombii* offers no suggestion of resolution within the current system, but rather as an unidentifiable boundary figure itself, forces us to readdress the legitimacy of such a system in the first place. Operating as both subject and nonsubject, the *zombii* differs from the *Izombie* in that the consciousness that the *Izombie* attempts to both verify and justify is completely absent in the figure of the *zombii* and while the *Izombie* attempts to claim its own subjectivity, the *zombii* negates subjectivity in a way that agitates the categories of humanism.

Contemporary zombie mythology necessitates the destruction of the zombie's brain in order to ensure that it is killed. This necessary destruction of the organ so deeply associated with human identity and selfhood represents the elimination of the liberal humanist subject as a means to "forfeit the already illusory sense of the individual" (Lauro and Embry 95). In this regard the zombie represents the disenfranchised worker of the capitalist system who is, according to Horkenheimer and Adorno, "entirely nullified in face of the economic powers."[108] The worker becomes part of the means of production, almost completely absorbed into the system that provides for them. The worker's dependency on the capitalist system informs identity to the extent that the individual becomes "a fiction conjured by the economic structure to ensure greater domination" (Lauro and Embry 96). The *zombii*, Lauro and

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[108] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xvii

Embry suggest, is the "literalisation" of this annihilation of the individual who continues to mindlessly forge onwards (96). It is at this point that the multiplicity of the zombie analogy becomes confused as both cause and result; Lauro and Embry note that "The *zombii* thus suggests how we might truly move posthuman: the individual must be destroyed" (96); however, the *zombii* arises as a result of selflessness caused by the dehumanising effect of industry. As they continue, "With this rupture, we would undo the repressive forces of capitalist servitude" (96) , a claim which implies that the dehumanisation of workers within the capitalist system would ultimately lead to a destructive schism that would bring about the downfall of the larger controlling structure. The *zombii* therefore represents and promises destruction, but as an anticathartic figure it offers no resolution and no replacement.

The horror of the zombie is the recognition of contemporary commercialism in the zombie's unending mindless drive to consume beyond needs. The zombie's performativity is twofold in its representation of both the worker and the machine: like the sugar mill scene in *White Zombie*, zombie mythology represents the underpaid labour force as well as the machine that uses and disposes of workers at will. The development of the zombie figure has seen it pass from the hands of colonial slaves in Haiti to the capitalist worker and mindless consumer of contemporary America. The zombie becomes both machine and product, producing more consumers in its endless drive to consume. This continuation of consumption and production reveals that "the urge of self-preservation is united with the propagation of the species: the urge of the individual body is the same as the will of the collective" (Lauro and Embry 99). What becomes necessary for the continuation of the individual also results in the continuation of the whole. Speaking to the isolation of individualism the zombie poses a continued existence as part of a swarm

organism; however, the mindlessness of both zombie and swarm ensures the continuation of the species as directionless and without purpose. Jack reflects on his position as part of a collective and says: "…I missed being human. We were part of something larger now, something as timeless and inevitable as death. Or as death used to be. We had already changed the world" (*Brains* 134).

As Lauro and Embry postulate, "If the potential of the posthuman subject exists in its collectivity (and in its multiplicity and its hybridity), then the posthuman *zombii* is that which forfeits consciousness as we know it—embracing a singular, swarm experience" (106). The emergence and development of the posthuman can therefore only successfully function within an environment void of the humanistic dialectic that informs systems of capitalism, as the two concepts are seemingly mutually exclusive in the sense that the discourse of capitalism must come to an end prior to the initiation and development of a posthuman future. The *zombii* as a necessarily anticathartic figure offers no resolution in the destruction of humanist systems as it positions the evolution of posthumanity as "endgame": "it is a becoming that is the end of becoming" (Lauro and Embry 106).

All You Zombies… the failure of the Izombie

Robert Heinlein's short story "All You Zombies--" (1959), though it contains no traditional zombie figures, exhibits the potential for the zombie as metaphor to capitalise on the exploration of existing in a state of disconnection from the world, lacking a certain presence. Heinlein's short story is a classical example of time travel fiction incorporating the temporal paradox, wherein an object brings about its own existence by some or other action in a causal loop. The subject of Heinlein's story is the "Unmarried Mother" who tells the tale of his existence to the "temporal agent"

narrator of the story. The Unmarried Mother started life as an abandoned baby named Jane. Following her upbringing in an orphanage, Jane experiences a short-term love affair with a mysterious stranger who disappears shortly after they consummate their relationship. Jane finds herself pregnant with the stranger's baby and gives birth to a baby girl. The baby is kidnapped by an older man, while the complicated birth reveals that Jane is in fact an hermaphrodite. Jane's female organs are damaged beyond repair and the surgeon decides to undertake transgender surgery, manipulating Jane's female organs into male organs. The temporal agent promises to help the Unmarried Mother find the strange man who impregnated and abandoned him, and transports him through time to introduce him to his younger, female self. The Unmarried Mother seduces Jane, while the temporal agent travels forward in time from that point to kidnap Jane's baby from the hospital and relocates her to the orphanage where she is to grow up. It is revealed that each character in the story is the same person, the hermaphrodite Jane, at different stages of her life, for it is the Unmarried Mother who enrols at the temporal agency recruiting centre and in this the reader realises that the temporal agent narrator has consequently, and intentionally, recruited himself.

The only mention of the term zombie comes in the closing passages of the story:

> Then I glanced at the ring on my finger.

> The Snake that Eats Its Own Tail, Forever and Ever… I know where *I* came from—but *where did all you zombies come from?*

> I felt a headache coming on, but a headache powder is one thing I do not take.

> I did once—and you all went away.

> So I crawled into bed and whistled out the light.

You aren't really there at all. There isn't anybody but me—Jane—here alone in the dark.

I miss you dreadfully! (46)

While the "zombies" to whom the narrator refers are presented as ambiguous, Russell Letson regards the solipsism of Heinlein's work as evidence that the zombies in question refer to others who, unlike the narrator, have not been responsible for their own creation.[109] The Unmarried Mother serves as a transhuman figure as a result of undergoing gender reassignment surgery. Similarly, the technological manipulation of time in order to bring about the incestuous recreation of self pushes the figure into the territory of the posthuman. As posthuman figure, the Unmarried Mother differentiates him/herself from the 'normal' zombies. Letson notes: "by totally closing the loop, making the Unmarried Mother his/her own begetter—alone in a universe of 'zombies,' metaphysically and biologically if not emotionally self-sufficient—the story develops… a convincing portrait of the self-created, solitary being" (Letson 205). As the creator of him/herself the narrator exhibits a concrete knowledge of his sense of self, having interacted with different manifestations of him/herself throughout the temporal dimension. David Wittenberg notes that "the 'zombie' is a subject both tied to and cut off from its own origins, fallen into belated self-alienation" (208).[110]

Both *Warm Bodies* and *Brains* present the reader with zombie protagonists that have, to an extent, created their own subjectivity among a horde of anti-subject zombies. Like the Unmarried Mother, they view themselves as posthuman *Izombie*

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[109] Russell Letson. "The Returns of Lazarus Long." *Robert A. Heinlein*. Ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg. New York: Taplinger Pub. Co. 1978. 194-221
[110] David Wittenberg. *Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013.

figures thus separated from 'normal' zombies. It is their own 'discovery of themselves' that serves as the catalyst for their fellow zombies to discover their own sentience. In *Brains* we see Jack's dissatisfaction of existing as a lone sentient figure aware of his paradoxical position as both living-dead and yet also of having retained an element of sentience which he attempts to develop further. Jack considers the dislocation of his soul and body and says "the separation was complete: physical and spiritual; mind and body; thought and action. I was the living dead embodiment of Cartesian dualism: Though my soul was housed in my body, my body was divorced from my soul" (*Brains* 121). Jack searches for a flicker of intelligence in the eyes of the zombies he meets, of whom there are few:

> I searched the eyes of my companions as we shuffled along, looking for a glimmer of intelligence, recognition, memory. I saw nothing. Their eyes were soulless and flat, devoid of thought, empty of feeling, and hell-bent on finding loved ones and neighbours to eat. Instinct alone propelled them forward, one rank foot in front of the other. Programmed for one thing and one thing only, they wouldn't stop until they got it. (*Brains* 15)

That is until his eyes meet those of Joan's where he finds that, "there was a light in them, a positive glow, a corona of higher cognitive functions. Brains! The woman had brains" (*Brains* 55) and although Joan is illiterate, Jack devises a simple system of signifying signs to enable them to communicate: "A pat on the tummy meant hunger. Nods and shrugs meant yes, no, I don't know, or whatever depending on the context…" (*Brains* 57). Jack gathers a group of ragtag zombies, and as they journey across the state to reach the scientist responsible for the zombie outbreak, they each begin to exhibit more advanced stages of sentience as they slowly start to rediscover their own subjectivity.

"All You Zombies" is essentially a contemplation on the nature and construction of identity; the ouroboros-inspired causal loop of the temporal agent's creation bares a flicker of resemblance to Nietzche's postulation of the Eternal Return, wherein time is cyclical and what occurs in the present moment is simply a recurrence of the past. In this sense, time, and the world, is simply a repetition. Like the temporal agent in his cyclical creation, whether he is the female Jane, the strange male lover, or the unknown older kidnapper, all are the same person. There is no prospect of further development for the cyclical nature ensures only that what has gone before will occur again. These narratives exhibit a reflexivity in that what they produce reproduces the systems that allowed for their production in the first place.

As Sartre notes, "subjectivism means, on the one hand, the freedom of the individual subject and, on the other, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity" (Sartre 31). In this we see the paradox of the *Izombie*, seemingly posthuman, but whose subjectivity denies him the possibility of transgressing the boundary between human and posthuman, denying his existence within a posthuman realm. The continuation of capitalism relies on the continuation of a societal association with individual consciousness, for it is this sense of individualism that hinders the emergence and development of a defiant collective. For as long as the ego reigns supreme, so do the systems of power that strive to enslave it. The destruction of the zombie's brain is necessary for its defeat in the same way that humanism must be defeated to allow for the emergence of posthumanity. The *zombii* and *Izombie* operate differently in this regard, for while the *zombii* requires the absence of ego, the *Izombie*, like the slave that defied colonialist power, attempts to justify a posthuman existence by establishing an identity that extends beyond the humanist constructs of life. The problem that arises with the *Izombie* and its preoccupation with selfhood,

however, is its insistence on emerging as a self in order to return to the same humanist dialectic model that gave birth to its emergence in the first place. As Julie in *Warm Bodies* postulates:

> 'It's not about keeping up the population, it's about passing on who we are and what we've learned, so things keep going. So we don't just end. Sure it's selfish, in a way, but how else do our short lives mean anything?'

> 'I guess that's true,' Nora allows. 'It's not like we have any other legacies to leave in this post-everything era.' (*Warm Bodies* 149)

While the slave fought to establish his identity as a subject within the discourse of humanism, if the *Izombie* wills to enter into a state of posthumanity, it must abandon the discourse of humanism. As Lauro and Embry note, "If the subject survives the apocalypse, so will capitalism" (107). Jack's declaration of subjectivity, and his manipulation of fellow sentient zombies, drives him to separate himself from the zombie horde, and thus, from his journey towards a truly posthuman future. His insistence on utilising the humanistic discourse of moral rights to construct a manifesto of the Vindication of the Rights of the Post-Living results in his reincorporation into the capitalist system of humanism.

Conclusion

What is it about the concept of becoming posthuman that evokes both terror while simultaneously excites pleasure? The nature of the prefix "post" implies a necessary termination of the 'human' as we know it, as well as the overruling ideology of humanism that informs the dialectical model to which it ascribes. Julie considers the cause of the zombie apocalypse in *Warm Bodies* and states:

'I think we crushed ourselves down over the centuries. Buried ourselves under greed and hate and whatever other sins we could find until our souls finally hit the rock bottom of the universe. And then they scraped a hole through it, into some… dark place.'

I hear pigeons cooing somewhere in the eaves. Starlings zip and dive against the distant sky, pretty much unaffected by the end of our silly civilisation.

'We released it. We poked through the seabed and the oil erupted, painted us black, pulled our inner sickness out for everyone to see. Now here we are in this dry corpse of a world, rotting on our feet till there's nothing left but bones and the buzz of flies.' (*Warm Bodies* 221)

The termination of humanism can be seen from two perspectives. The first would merely require the reformulation of humanist concepts into a posthuman discourse that allows for the abolishment of binaries previously used as a means of anthropocentric inclusion and exclusion. This perspective is literalised in the figure of the *Izombie*.

The second, more drastic perspective, as literalised in the figure of the *zombii*, envisions a future in which the only manner in which posthumanism can be achieved is with the displacement of humanism as the dominant ideology, with one that moves beyond the subject/object discourse it enforces. A true posthuman figure can only emerge once the notion of individual subjectivity has been abolished. In this impossible, as yet unrealised future, humanity will be faced with an option similar to that posed to Robert Neville in *I Am Legend*: aimlessly to fight against the inevitable evolution, or to submit to it in the acknowledgement that it is the only way to advance. "You're quite unique, you know." Ruth tells him, "When you're gone, there

won't be anyone else like you within our particular society" (*I Am Legend* 156). Robert Neville considers his role as an *other* within this newly formed society and thinks: "I'm the abnormal one now. Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man" *(I Am Legend* 159); in conclusion, "Robert Neville looked out over the new people of the earth. He knew he did not belong to them; he knew that, like the vampires, he was anathema and black terror to be destroyed" *(I Am Legend* 159).

However, these are only two of the many perspectives that centre around the entailment of a posthuman future. The posthuman allows for a multitude of prospective ways in which humanity can be re-explored and re-examined, and invites the development of new ways of thinking about the current social, political, technological and ecological environments and how these environments influence ideas of what it means to be human. The posthuman need not necessarily predicate the end of humanity. Rather, as Hayles notes, "It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualise themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice" (Hayles 286). Hayles emphasises that the only truly destructive perspective of posthumanism is when the liberal humanist view is re-presented under the guise of posthumanism, which denies the expansion of "prerogatives in the realm of the posthuman" (Hayles 287) and thereby merely reflexively foregoing any positive ideological development in the liberal humanist recuperation of the posthuman figure. Lauro and Embry choose dramatically to conclude their "Zombie Manifesto" as follows: "When we become *zombiis*, when we lose our subjectivity and the ability to rationalise, there will be no difference between the two. Therefore, when we truly

become posthuman, we won't even know it" (Lauro and Embry 108).While some perspectives, like that of Lauro and Embry and their postulation of a *zombii*, veer towards the apocalyptic by presenting a radically antihuman posthumanism, it is possible to view the development of posthumanity not as one that annihilates, but rather as one that reinforms and restructures the destructive ideology of humanism, into one which avoids the reinscription and repetition of past *malheur*.

While contemporary zombie narratives, both sentient and traditional, gesture towards the development of a certain posthumanism, none have managed to present a posthumanity that necessarily encompasses a movement towards the inclusivity, or universalism, of a discourse that neither annihilates the subject nor re-imposes humanism. The zombie figure will, therefore, continue to oscillate between these two approaches, suggesting the potentiality of a posthuman future, while failing to fully realise its own posthuman potential.

Conclusion

Monsters, as the displaced embodiment of tendencies that are repressed or, in Julia Kristeva's sense of the term, 'abjected' within a specific culture not only establish the boundaries of the human, but may also challenge them. Hybrid forms that exceed and disrupt those systems of classification through which cultures organize experience, monsters problematize binary thinking and demand a rethinking of the boundaries and concepts of normality.

(Punter and Byron 264)

The intention of this thesis has been to explore the recent emergence and development of the sentient zombie within contemporary zombie narratives. The sentient zombie has stalked the peripheries of horror narratives, with approximate manifestations appearing intermittently throughout the larger canon; however, the past decade has seen a proliferation in its appearance in both film and text mediums. The role of the sentient zombie as protagonist dramatically alters the normalised construction of the zombie narratives in which they appear. The 'traditional' zombie narrative, which customarily follows an established and predictable plot—infection, apocalyptic chaos, and either survival, or complete destruction—has been complicated with the addition of a sentient zombie protagonist. The intention of this thesis has been twofold: first, to explore the development of the sentient zombie in order to demonstrate that the foregrounding of the concepts of identity and selfhood, concepts that are generally underexplored in the immediate premise of traditional narratives, are in fact concepts that ground the very existence of the zombie, and have grounded the figure since its appearance as fetid Haitian horror and, even before Southey's naming of the figure, in

the folklore of various cultures throughout history. My second intention has been to demonstrate that the emergence of the sentient zombie, through the development and establishment of an identifiable zombie voice, reforms the figure of the zombie from an object to an identifiable subject. The development of a zombie subjectivity invites the audience to explore the world of the zombie narrative from the perspective of the Other. By attempting to normalise the zombie experience, these narratives force the audience to question standardised humanist routines of the establishment of worth, with regard to the worth of human life and whether or not one category of 'life' is more valid than any other '*othered* life'.

In an issue of *Historical Materialism* (2002) devoted to the theme of "Marxism and Fantasy"[111] Steve Shaviro utilises the Marxist concept of 'capital as vampire'[112] to propose that the contemporary fixation with zombie-like figures is intrinsically connected to the zombie's affiliation with global capitalism:

> In contrast to the inhumanity of vampire-capital, zombies present the 'human face' of capital monstrosity. This is precisely because they are the dregs of humanity: the zombie is all that remains of 'human nature,' or even simply of a human scale, in the immense and unimaginable complex network economy. Where vampiric surplus-appropriation is unthinkable, because it exceeds our powers of representation, the zombie is conversely, what must be thought: the shape that representation unavoidably takes now that 'information' has displaced 'man' as the measure of all things. (Shaviro 288)

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[111] Steve Shaviro. "Capitalist Monsters." *Historical Materialism* 10.4 (2002): 281-90.
[112] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Samuel Moore, and Karl Marx. *Capital*. Vol. 1. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952.

The term 'zombie' has breached the border of narrative to become the placeholder term to indicate an absence or abnormality in a lapse of function in real-world experiences. The collapse of financial institutions is regarded as the result of zombie banks and zombie funds. Computers that have had their security compromised by either viruses or hackers are known as zombie computers. Zombie shares and zombie investors cause havoc in the stock market. The connotation of zombieism, with its destructive consumption and resultant production of nothing more than infinite reproductions of itself, has become the consummate metaphor for the unrelenting transformation of subjects, and the devastation that capitalism has wreaked across the world. Shaviro adds that "the proliferation of zombie bodies" inescapably concludes with "extermination and extinction" (Shaviro 286), which serves as the conclusion to the horror of over-consumption. The absolute destructive forces of capitalism result in its logical representation in the form of apocalypse, and as I argued in my second chapter, the presence of the zombie in apocalyptic narratives is representative of that which must change in order to progress on from the devastating onslaught of apocalypse: the Othering of capitalism.

The figure of the zombie within traditional narratives epitomises the other because the audience never conceives of themselves within the position of the zombie. As Gerry Canavan notes, "they are *Other* people, which is to say they are people who are not quite people at all."[113] This is where the sentient zombie complicates matters: by giving the zombie subjectivity, the audience is able to identify with the struggles it faces as a non-living being in a living world. This identification works towards, to some extent, an examination of the '*othering*' process. Thus, while the sentient zombie presents his identity to the reader as *othered*

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[113] Gerry Canavan. ""We Are the Walking Dead": Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative." *Extrapolation* 51.3 (2010): 432 (emphasis added)

within his community, the ability of the zombie to articulate his position within society—as we seen in *Brains* with Jack's use of his writing to validate himself as separate from one of the hoard, and also in *Frankenstein* when the Monster decides to master English before approaching the De Lacey family—the sentient zombie uses his subjectivity to break through the wall of *othering* to appeal to the reader.

The position of the zombie as a posthuman figure has the potential to inspire a move away from humanism and the dehumanising effects of capitalism. However, within the genre, unless the sentient zombie feigns traditional humanist practices, such as we see with the white trash zombie, Angel, and the zombie lover, R, the societies in which these sentient zombies exist reject the possibility of a move towards the embrace of the posthuman. As a result, like the traditional zombie, the sentient zombie must also be defeated. Zombieism, on a whole, becomes the deadly impurity that must be impeded. The zombie exists as a liminal figure signifying the separation between lives deemed worthy and those deemed disposable; correspondingly, Canavan notes that "the evocation of the zombie conjures not solidarity but racial panic" (Canavan 433). To reintroduce Deleuze and Guattari's often quoted phrase in context:

It is true that war kills, and hideously mutates […] Above all, the State apparatus makes the mutilation, and even death, come first. It needs [its subjects] preaccomplished, for people to be born that way, crippled and zombielike. The myth of the zombie, of the living dead, is a work myth and not a war myth. Mutilation is a consequence of war, but it is a necessary

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condition, a presupposition of the State apparatus and the organization of work.[114]

The State apparatus establishes the codes of racial binaries in order to produce its required "preaccomplished" subjects and this establishment produces the definitive divide between the qualified life of citizens (*bios*) and the disposable life of *others* (*zoê*), zombie life. In this way, Canavan suggests, "the myth of the zombie is *both* a war myth *and* a work myth" (Canavan 433). The zombie therefore functions to interrogate the past construction of a capitalist society and the conflict causing binaries of humanism, as well as the future trajectory of these failing discourses.

As a figure of binaries, the zombie, as I have argued, straddles the divide between the genres of horror and science fiction, inhabiting both the position of horror's monster as well as the creature of science fiction. The flexibility of such genre-mingling, as discussed in my second chapter, allows the figure to occupy the concerns of both genres simultaneously. Vivian Carol Sobchack notes that "The horror film is primarily concerned with the individual in conflict with society or with some extension of himself, the [science fiction] film with society and its institutions in conflict with each other or with some alien *other*."[115] By this distinction it becomes clear that the difference between the two genres depends on the notion of scale. In the construction and maintenance of personalised small-scale survival spaces within the larger environment of the worldwide zombie epidemic, the zombie exhibits a comprehensive intermingling of the two genres. Similarly, the genre of science fiction emerged as a "technologised" development of the horror film "to suit the demands for

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[114] Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1987. 425. Print.
[115] S Vivian Carolobchack. *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2001.30. Print. (emphasis added)

'modern' horror from an increasingly pragmatic and materialistic audience" (Sobchack 30). In this way, the figure of the zombie represents the abjected fear of horror incorporated into the apprehension of speculative technological advancement. It is a figure of the past literally rising from the grave to obstruct the development of the future. At the core of the zombie's horror concerns is the moral disorder that embroils the natural order of life with a chaotic, destabilising turmoil of science fiction's large-scale societal disorder. In this we see the collision between 'moral' and 'social'. As Canavan notes, "Unlike horror's Monster, [science fiction's] Creature is unparticularized and uninteriorized; it does not hate, nor seek revenge, and does not even 'want' to hurt us. It just does" (Canavan 434). While Canavan's words may apply to the mindless hordes of traditional zombie narratives, the sentient zombie further complicates the expectations of traditional zombie narratives. In both the narratives of *Breathers* and *Brains*, the sentient zombies, frustrated with their position in society as bare life, fight against the systems that enslave them by committing vengeful murder with glee and satisfaction. Operating between the two genres of horror and science fiction the zombie is, as Canavan notes, "both local and global, personal *and* depersonalized, symptom of moral chaos *and* cause of widespread social breakdown, gross-out consumer of flesh *and* spectacular destroyer of our intricately constructed social and technological fortifications" (Canavan 434).

Similarly, the zombie's position as a figure of science fiction allows for it to be considered in terms of what John Rieder terms the "colonial gaze"[116] of science fiction:

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[116] John Rieder. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008. Print.

When we call this cognitive framework establishing the different positions of

the one who looks and the one who is looked at the structure of the "colonial

gaze," borrowing and adapting Laura Mulvey's influential analysis of the

cinematic gaze in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." The colonial gaze

distributes knowledge and power to the subject who looks, while denying or

minimizing access to power for its object, the one looked at. (Rieder 7)[117]

Having its roots in the colonial history of Haiti, the zombie continues to function

within the realm of the colonial gaze. The traditional zombie, as objectified threat,

wholly lacking a sense of self and a sense of perspective, becomes "the one looked

at," while the sentient zombie in the position of both subject and protagonist has the

potential to obstruct this colonial gaze as the zombie perspective becomes the "subject

who looks." In this position, the sentient zombie has the potential to become the

mirror onto which the colonial gaze of humanity is reflected, and as such, the sentient

zombie allows the audience to perceive of the destructive quality of the colonial gaze.

However, the sentient zombie maintains the position of the one who looks only for the

duration of its adherence to the governing discourse of humanism, for it returns to the

role of Other once the boundary between humanism and something *other* has been

breached. At this point the sentient zombie re-joins the hoard of its mindless family,

and as the result becomes yet another 'threatening' Other which must be disposed. In

Society Must Be Defended Foucault notes:[118]

In the biopower system, in other words, killing or the imperative to kill is

acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in

the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species

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[117] Laura Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18. Web.
[118] Michel Foucault. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76*. Trans.
David Macey. New York: Picador, 1997. Print.

or race […] In a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable. (Foucault 256)

Both traditional zombie and sentient zombie, in their roles of posthuman potentiality, threaten the heteronormative discourse of the biopower system of humanism. Having their roots in the othered history of the blackness of Haiti, these figures can be seen to be threatening the white colonial power of humanism. Similarly, these zombies become, to borrow from *I Am Legend*, the "anathema and black terror to be destroyed."[119] Canavan notes that the "biopolitical state […] *needs* to create this sort of racial imaginary in order to retain its power to kill" (Canavan 438) and in so doing, the division between *bios* and *zoê* is maintained.

The zombie virus strikes unreservedly and indiscriminately through all social classes and races, thereby reducing everyone it infects to the place and role of Other. The epitome of death the leveller, the zombie virus has the potential to articulate both opposing perceptions of an imperial narrative in its reimagining of the "violence of colonial race war," (Canavan 440) as the audience has the chance to imagine themselves within the role of apocalyptic survivor, as well as in the role of the persecuted Other. The zombie narrative justifies uncontrolled and exaggerated violence against the Other on the basis of the threat posed to the maintenance of imperial ideologies. The continuing popularity of the zombie film speaks to the racially charged genocidal discrimination that continues to persecute those considered as Othered within contemporary society and it is the zombie narrative, both traditional and sentient, that serves as what Canavan terms "the motivating license for confrontation" (Canavan 440) that forces the audience to reconsider the unjust binaries of humanistic discourse.

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[119] *I Am Legend* (159)

In my fourth chapter I introduced Agamben's conception of the 'State of Exception' and the way in which the sentient zombie, as a subject, is able to verbalise his position within the state of exception. As Agamben notes:

> […] modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. (Agamben 2)

In this way the annihilation of zombies can be seen as a fictional interpretation of the Holocaust, wherein a racialised group were cruelly constructed as bare life and were therefore the victims of what was considered, by the perpetrators, as justified mass violence. Though thinly veiled as an attempt to maintain core cultural values, this state of exception continually re-emerges within the governance of contemporary politics, most recently evident in the Bush Administration's initiation of the "War on Terror" following the 'alleged' coordinated terrorist attack by al-Qaeda on the World Trade Centre on the eleventh of September 2001. While the true initiators of this terrorist attack remains a debated subject, the mass 'Islamophophia' that ensued following both the attack and the war has had worldwide implications for the lives of Muslims. A similar phobia of the Other can be seen in the European apprehension displayed towards the thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing their war-torn country at the hands of the jihadi extremist militant group ISIS, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. While violence towards these escaping refugees has been small-scale and localised, the sheer ambivalence expressed towards them, most notably by the British government, exhibits the same disregard for the *other* that zombie films use as capital.

Similarly, within narratives like *The Walking Dead*, it is the technology and weapons of empire that elevate one group above the other, not just in the case of humans and zombies, but also in the case of feuding human groups. In the second episode ("JSS") of season six of *The Walking Dead*, Alexandria, the gated community in which Rick and his group have found sanctuary, is invaded by a masked group of vigilante humans who call themselves the Wolves. The Wolves, armed with knives, tear through the community brutally murdering any residents they encounter. Rick's group fights off the Wolves using their guns as an advantage, and the invaders eventually retreat after Morgan Jones (Lennie James) warns them: "Leave. My people have guns, yours don't. They may be aiming at you right now. Eyes at the scopes. Fingers on the trigger. Boom." The Wolves in their ragged and dirty clothing, a "W" branded on their foreheads, are visually contrasted to the pristine neatness of the residents. The Othering extends, in this case, beyond the zombie wherein two groups of human survivors are positioned as opposites and it is the group in possession of the weapons of empire that reigns supreme. Alexandria, in this example, epitomises the "walled-in space for whiteness characteristic of late American Empire" (Canavan 443).

The scope of future research could invite particular attention to be drawn towards the role of the female within the zombie apocalypse, as human survivor, and as both traditional zombie and sentient zombie. Within these narratives there is a pre-feminist perspective that centres on the 'commodity of the womb'. The protection of the 'weaker gender' features as an anxiety in the assurance of continued existence and therefore most narratives tussle with the theme of the compromised women. Similarly, films like Marcel Sarmiento's *Deadgirl* (2009),[120] Jeff Baena's *Life After*

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[120] *Deadgirl*. Dir. Marcel Sarmiento. By Trent Haaga. Perf. Shiloh Fernandez and Candice Accola. Dark Sky Films, 2009. DVD.

Beth (2014)[121] and Alden Bell's novel *The Reapers are the Angels* (2010) feature objectified zombiefied female characters whose zombification reduces them to nothing more that objects in the hands of the male characters. In both *Deadgirl* and *The Angels are the Reapers* we encounter zombiefied female characters who are utilised as sexual objects by groups of wayward sex-hungry men. Both narratives see the zombiefied female restrained while the men take turns in debauched scenes of rape. In *Life After Beth*, Beth Slocum (Aubrey Plaza) returns from the dead as a somewhat rational, sentient zombie but transforms into an overprotective and flesh-hungry, crazed "ex-girlfriend" once her boyfriend, Zach Orfman (Dane DeHaan), tells her he had intended on ending their relationship prior to her death. Zombie narratives objectify these female characters in a way that reveals the propagation of gender stereotypes, and reflects contemporary misogyny and violence against women. Similarly, the role of the female zombie could be further explored with regard to the proliferation of monstrosity, as it is female zombie who is sacrificed to avoid the potentiality for monstrous posthuman births, such as we see in *Breathers* with the killing of the pregnant Rita, and in Frankenstein's dilemma regarding the creation of a female mate for the monster and the latent "race of devils"[122] that could result from their union.

Individuals situated on the outskirts of what is considered to be the normalised patriarchal society represent a threat towards the future continuation of the discourse of humanism and must be sacrificed in order to ensure the sanctity of the future. Equally, those within these patriarchal communities necessarily remain the objects of

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[121] *Life After Beth*. Dir. Jeff Baena. Perf. Aubrey Plaza and Dane DeHaan. A24, 2014. DVD.
[122] "Even if they were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror." (*Frankenstein* 121)

interrogation in order to constantly survey their loyalty, strength, and infection-free health. The sentient zombie presents the community with an alternative, with the opportunity to embrace difference and move forward towards a new way of being, but his existence threatens the stability, like the Haitian identity, of the heteronormative American 'ideal' under the power of capitalism. In the zombie narrative we find a replication of "the racial myth of inimical Otherness" (Canavan 446) and are hence able to address persisting notions of Othering that extend beyond the demarcations of race to include further marginalised categories within society, such as those based on gender, sexuality, and wealth. The prejudice represented by the zombie is not merely "some deceased artefact of the 'bad past'" (Canavan 446), but rather a persistent uninformed prejudice that extends into the concerns of the contemporary imagination.

In Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004),[123] concerns are raised for the manner in which lives are segregated on the value of their 'mournability'. In her consideration of both the occupation of Palestine and the war in Iraq, Butler notes:

> Is a Muslim life as valuable as legibly First World lives? Are the Palestinians yet accorded the status of 'human' in US policy and press coverage? Will those hundreds of thousands of lives lost in the last decades of strife ever receive the equivalent to the paragraph-long obituaries in the *New York Times* that seek to humanize—often through nationalist and familial framing devices—those Americans who have been violently killed? Is our capacity to mourn in global dimensions foreclosed precisely by the failure to conceive of Muslim and Arab lives as *lives*? (12)

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[123] Judith Butler. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. Print.

While the zombie is but a mere figure of fiction, the real-world concerns mirrored in its many narratives, under the guise of zombieism, indicate that the colonial binaries represented by the emergence of the Haitian 'zombi' have persisted through the decades and have developed to increasingly represent the pitfalls of the humanist constructions of empire and capitalism. The development from *zombi* to *Izombie* is evidence that there is an increasing trend towards the recognition of those that find themselves Othered from society, those which have been reduced to a zombiefied state by the injustice of systems of capitalisation. To embrace the Other fully*,* the binary systems of 'us' and 'them' have to be obliterated and in order to progress past humanism into a state of posthumanity would require submitting to the levelling power of the *zombii,* or recognising and incorporating the posthuman potential of the *Izombie*, a course which would require a universality wherein the 'us' of humanism embraces the potential of its own alterity. The latent risk of this embrace entails a necessary move towards recognising 'our' own disposability, but in so doing the 'we' of humanism will abandon the 'zombie gaze' and instead recognise the necessity of the 'zombie embrace'. The plight of the sentient zombie recognises the necessary struggle involved in the attempted move towards a universalism that requires a "self-decentering," "self-deprivileging," and "self-renunciation" (Canavan 450) that might prove difficult to achieve, but is all the while necessary in order to advance beyond the limiting discourse of humanism, or what one might call "our collective zombie nightmare," [124] the nightmarish history of *our* own existence.

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[124] Canavan 450

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