

Gray Is the New Black: Race, Class, and Zombies

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There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses.
— Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*

When we think of zombies, let us not only think of American zombie films. While the ghoulish undead are increasingly familiar to movie audiences as a dominant figure of contemporary monstrosity, much less attention is accorded to written zombie narratives. Indeed, critical study of the horror genre has been firmly rooted in film, with a far more tenuous toehold in literature. Moreover, unlike the vampire or the ghost — two monstrous entities with canonized literary ancestors — the zombie has only become familiar, if not quite respectable, through the history of the cinema. This situation has changed somewhat recently with the enormous popularity of Max Brooks's elaborately episodic *World War Z* (hereafter referred to as *WWZ*)¹ and Seth Grahame-Smith's clever mash-up, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.² Zombie narratives have emerged in a variety of genres, from graphic novels to trading cards to games. Yet literary works remain an under-examined area of investigation. While many contemporary short zombie horror stories³ could and should be discussed, this essay will direct its focus towards *WWZ*, ending with some reflection on the Canadian writer Tony Burgess's grim, starkly beautiful novel, *Pontypool Changes Everything*.⁴

The film-centric focus of critical analysis of horror leaves scholars of horror literature to extract the marrow of useful theories from film criticism, which is what I intend to do here. One reason for such a focus is that, in literary criticism, the study of horror fiction has been eclipsed by the looming shadow of the Gothic. I term the prevalent notion that all horror can and should be traced back to eighteenth-century Gothic literary forebears, the "Gothic consensus." This consensus does not leave much space for contemporary zombie fictions, those bastard children of colonialism, adopted first by George Romero and then, gleefully and gorily, by the "splatter punks." Why do we find zombies so compelling? As Peter (Ken Foree) says in *Dawn of the Dead*,⁵ "they're us." For Judith Halberstam's version of the Gothic, however, monstrosity is located in "someone else," a markedly foreign Other that "condenses various racial and sexual threats to nation, capitalism and the bourgeoisie in one body."⁶

Monstrous identities are produced in particular ways; according to Halberstam, they are "imagined communities which are 'conceived in language not in blood'" and which find their way from the exotic locales of eighteenth-century Gothic literature to more familiar and contemporary settings. Halberstam argues that racism "may be drawn from imperialistic or colonialist fantasies of other lands and peoples, but it concentrates its imaginative force upon the other peoples in 'our' lands, the monsters at home."⁸ The monstrous figure of the vampire, associated with feudal Europe, was gradually displaced by the rise of the serial killer in industrial, capitalist America. This conjunction of mass culture and mass murder resulting in what Mark Seltzer has termed the "mass in person."⁹ In turn, the serial killer seems to have moved over lately to make way for the post-industrial, late capitalist, globalized zombie horde, the impersonal mass, as the leading "monster narrative" of contemporary horror. The contemporary zombie might be seen as an updated vampire, condensing in its rotting body a number of threats to both capitalist and "imperialistic or colonialist" expansion, including challenges to racism and class privilege. In this essay, I will compare *WWZ* and *Pontypool* as examples of these challenges.

The zombies of the Global North have migrated from their origins in the *voudun* practices of enslaved colonial subjects struggling and resisting in Haiti; first refashioned as occult exotica by W.B. Seabrook and others in the early twentieth century in the form of "white zombies"; then shifting shape into Romero's silent, implacable ghouls and the more vocal variety with a comical fetish for brains; finally, metamorphosing into a malleable monster that can assume different forms (running or slowly lurching in pursuit, ghoulishly feeding or rabidly murderous, purposefully seeking or mindlessly wandering). Far from being an enslaved soulless corpse strictly under the control of a *bokor*, the zombie, once unleashed, freely ranges over cities and countries, in massive hordes that overwhelm organized resistance, no matter how expert or militarized.

In spite of its migrations and transformations, the zombie remains redolent of the subaltern, continually challenging experts, institutions, and authorities' attempts to categorize and contain it. In apocalyptic narratives, zombies spectacularly rehearse what both the late Canadian film critic Robin Wood and Carol Clover identify as the collision of hegemonic "White Science" with subjugated, but powerful "Black Magic," to use the terminology of [Canadian ethnobotanist Wade Davis's book on *voudun* culture in Haiti] *The Serpent and the Rainbow*:

White Science refers to Western rational tradition. Its representatives are nearly always white males, typically doctors, and its tools are surgery, drugs, psychotherapy, and other forms of hegemonic science. Black Magic, on the other hand, refers to Satanism, voodoo, spiritualism, and folk variants of Roman Catholicism. A world of crosses, holy water, séances, candles, prayer, exorcism, strings of garlic, beheaded chickens, and the like, its inhabitants are blacks, Native Americans, mixed-race peoples (especially Cajun and Creole) and third-world peoples in general, children, old people, priests, Transylvanians—but first and foremost women.¹⁰

The resurgence of such subordinated identities in fiction takes on monstrous forms, as Wood points out,¹¹ because "what escapes repression has to be dealt with by oppression."¹² Wood's claim that horror's "apocalyptic" phase renders it "the most important of all American genres and perhaps the most progressive, even in its overt nihilism" is founded in large part on the zombie films of George Romero.¹³ The increasing "nihilism" of Romero's zombie apocalypse is welcomed, clearing the way, in its vision of utter social breakdown, for the possibility of a "new social order." It must be noted, however, that the zombie narrative masks its revolutionary potential under the guise of cataclysmic breakdown rather than organized struggle. Paul Virilio argues that this fantasy of a "general accident" is peculiar

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to our times: brooding on the risk of a sudden, catastrophic event that is "the hidden face of technical progress":

No technical object can be developed without in turn generating "its" specific accident: ship=ship wreck, train=train wreck, plane=plane crash.... [A]cceleration has reached its physical limit, the speed of electromagnetic waves. So there is a risk not of a local accident in a particular location, but rather of a global accident that would affect if not the entire planet, then at least the majority of people concerned by these technologies.¹⁴

Virilio specifies that the attacks on September 11, 2001 (even though this atrocity was deliberately planned), were precisely such an occurrence of a general accident enabled through these technologies. The cultural aftershocks of 9/11 revived apocalyptic disaster and war film genres, shone a spotlight on imperialist aspirations and disrupted the dominant narrative of the United States as an infallibly virtuous superpower. These subversive ripples strongly recalled cultural work already performed by apocalyptic horror fictions depicting devastating outbreaks and desperate survivors. It is not surprising, therefore, that the decade since 2001 has seen an enormous spate of remakes of horror films and that cultural preoccupation with the zombie apocalypse persists in the context of an ominous sense of ongoing atrocities occurring on a global scale. Virilio notes the cultural tension between the Otherness and the familiarity of zombies:

Depending on the time and the latitude, the multitude of bodies with no soul, living dead, zombies, possessed, etc., is imposed all throughout history: a slow-motion destruction of the opponent, the adversary, the prisoner, the slave; an economy of military violence likening the human cattle to the ancient stolen herd of the hunter-raiders, and by extension, in modernized and militarized European societies, to the soulless bodies of children, women, men of color and proletarians.¹⁵

Zombies function therefore as gray go-betweens between subaltern and supremacist, black and white, selves and others, lurching over borders as inexorably as they break through farmhouse walls. Wood observed of the Val Lewton film *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) that it "proceeds to blur" all of its initial, "apparently clear-cut structural oppositions": "Canada-West Indies, white-black, light-darkness, life-death, science-black magic, Christianity-Voodoo, conscious-unconscious."¹⁶ Zombies are now traded back and forth on the auction blocks of intertextual, trans-cultural venues and media, both as the gory allegorists of apocalypse and the ragged gladiators of "splatstick" entertainments. Increasingly trans-generic and trans-cultural, their growing popularity has given rise to "zomedies" and even "zomrom-coms," zombie romance comedies. The British zomedy *Shaun of the Dead* (2004),¹⁷ the Canadian *Fido* (2006),¹⁸ and the American *Dead and Breakfast* (2004),¹⁹ as well as the more recent *Zombieland* (2009),²⁰ all indicate that the zombie film is becoming more presentable, more popular, and more obviously intended for mainstream consumption.²¹ In *Fido*, for example, all the elements of the apocalyptic Romero narrative are present, including a fortified zone, zombies wandering the perimeters, disaster capitalists, and intimate conflicts raging within surviving families. Scottish comedian Billy Connolly plays a lovable, domesticated zombie, at least as long as his electro-shock collar stays on.

Familiarity with film's zombies may breed contempt, evinced in an increasing propensity to settle the roaming monsters into entertaining "zombielands." The zombie is now bound to the service of stock Hollywood master narratives such as boy-meets-girl, boy-battles-zombies, boy-gets-girl.²² Yet, many zombie fictions, even such a gentle satire as *Fido*, do retain their postcolonial bite. They are carnivals of the *status quo*, raising the radical possibility of an apocalypse that not only exposes, but also destroys entrenched systems of power feeding on racism, patriarchy, gross inequality and other institutionalized follies. They are so popular, I contend, precisely because they signify an unsated cultural appetite

in the Global North for the type of radical transformations that a relatively affluent and politically complacent society cannot achieve. In short, zombie gray is the new black.

Zombie narratives condense comedic “splatter” and radical, apocalyptic “punk” in a sensibility that has been memorably named by Philip Brophy “horrality” or “horror, textuality, morality, hilarity.”²³ This term, coined to describe the differences between horror films post-1975 and their “more traditional generic” predecessors, has been particularly applicable to zombie narratives since Romero’s films created a *mythos* of the living dead for the Global North. Brophy observes that modern horror “is involved in a violent awareness of itself as a saturated genre” and exhibits the tendency, often in a grimly funny fashion, to “recklessly copy and re-draw [its] generic sketching,”²⁴ a trait which has also been identified with postmodernist texts. The contemporary zombie narrative is inescapably intertextual, a text that is engaged in a constant exchange with other genre texts every time it is read or watched anew.²⁵ In *Dead and Breakfast*, for example, the zombies suddenly break into the famous zombie dance sequence from Michael Jackson’s *Thriller*²⁶ music video, released in 1983, while *Fido* is set in a town named Willard, a reference to the town in *Night of the Living Dead*.²⁷ These “knowing winks” are, as Mark Kermode writes, one of the chief pleasures of horror fandom.²⁸

Another good example of such textuality in zombie film can be traced through Peter Jackson’s *Braindead/Dead Alive*.²⁹ The Great White Explorer at the beginning of the film discovers a “Sumatran rat-monkey” that infects people with a zombie virus (the border between Black Magic and White Science is played here for laughs). He is bitten by the rat-monkey and swiftly dispatched by his crew of locals, but the creature is taken to a zoo where it bites and infects the protagonist’s overbearing mother who soon begins to deteriorate and whose behavior becomes alarming. She eats his girlfriend’s dog (or, as the protagonist points out, “not all of it”). The film’s humor is inseparable from its notorious gore, cartoonish in its sheer, over-the-top, sickening excess. Bodies are exploded and reanimated as malignant wreckage, including tops of heads that are sheared off but whose eyes still blink. A vengeful walking, gurgling digestive system, complete with gas-emitting lower intestine, stalks the protagonist, who finally takes a lawnmower to the zombies encircling him, and ends up ridiculously skidding in a “splatstick” pile of blood and guts. Nods to *Braindead/Dead Alive* appear in other zombie films: for example, the reanimated Nazi ghoul of the Norwegian zomedy film *Død Snø*³⁰ messily slaughter a victim who is wearing a *Braindead* tee shirt. *P&P&Z* also renders homage to *Braindead*’s gross-out by having a “stricken” Charlotte Lucas slowly degenerate into a groaning “dreadful,” like the evil mother in Jackson’s film, mindlessly consuming the pus that drips from her zombifying body onto her plate.

Written zombie fictions derive their horrality not only from such intertextual weavings, but also from expanding and embroidering upon Romero’s vignettes of survival. “Orality” should therefore be added to “horrality,” for it is important to preserve horror’s connections to the old art of oral storytelling.³¹ Linda Badley, following Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*,³² points out that “[i]n preliterate culture you knew only what you could recall, and the oral performer functioned as a library or computer whose information could be accessed by a key word or sound formula.” Badley sees horror as “postliterate culture in process of becoming ... a language for an age of secondary orality.”³³ Badley, however, maintains the Gothic consensus’s emphasis on the Gothic novel as the literary antecedent to the “postliterate” horror novel. In so doing, she ignores the enormous quantity of short fictions that have not yet forsaken primary orality, not only through their intertextuality, but also through such diegetic narrative devices as framing tales in settings such as campfires, gentlemen’s clubs, and survivors’ accounts.

World War Z’s framing narrative as an “oral history of the zombie wars” also aligns

with horror's storytelling tradition. Like other written zombie horror fiction, *WWZ* follows the Romero mythos (the book is dedicated to the filmmaker), but Brooks extends Romero's social critique to include many references to current preoccupations with the decline of the United States as a global hegemonic superpower. For example, a purged and demoralized CIA fails to acknowledge the zombie threat it is first warned of in the Warmbrunn/Knight Report, which ends up neglected in the bottom of a drawer.³⁴ At the same time, it is implied, the stop-loss program of the U.S. military and the wars on drugs and terror have fatally weakened the ability of the United States to manage the outbreak: "This generation had had enough, and that's why when the undead began to devour our country, we were almost too weak and vulnerable to stop them."³⁵

WWZ could be read as a descendant of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with zombie apocalypse substituted for the Black Death: a series of accounts, narrated through interviews, of various survivors' experiences. These are arranged to give a rough chronology of the apocalypse and aftermath, beginning with the doctor who treats "Patient Zero" in China, the "richest and most dynamic superpower."³⁶ China is also the location where the zombie outbreak begins, in the areas the government has designated to be flooded by the gigantic Three Gorges Dam project, resulting in the forced displacement of thousands of villagers. Fengdu, drowned by the dam, is one of these villages, also known locally as the "City of Ghosts." The outbreak therefore retains the discourse of Black Magic as a "curse" by vengeful spirits,³⁷ mingled with White Science (medical and government authorities), while simultaneously recalling Western fears of infection in the form of tainted formula, lead paint and other toxins from Chinese manufacturers.

Throughout *WWZ*, the frightful possibility of a zombie apocalypse is measured against grim realities from the past and the present. The first public zombie attacks, for example, are located in South Africa, in the township of Khayelitsha, a site of poverty and violence where people, conditioned by years of apartheid's brutal oppressions, have cultivated "an instinct born in a time when they were slaves in their own country" to flee at the sound of "they're coming." Even though they do not know "they" are zombies, people run because "everyone knew who 'they' were, and if 'they' were ever coming, all you could do was run and pray."³⁸ A global Great Panic ensues and entire populations flee, creating a fictional affinity with those oppressed by real-life regimes.

Brooks continues Romero's critique of hegemonic agents of repression such as the military. For example, a veteran bitterly recalls the last-ditch stand against the undead in the spectacular scene during the battle of Yonkers, in which doomed American soldiers, encumbered by their high-tech military gear, vainly battle millions of zombies. The global sweep of Brooks's chronicle brings the American nightmare into the realm of a contemporary, globalized *Zeitgeist*, while its commitment to storytelling supplies a diverse range of perspectives and narrations that linear film narration cannot match. Oral history includes "the human factor," characterized by "opinions" and "feelings," that more official accounts of the zombie apocalypse fail to capture.³⁹ In the framing narrative, we learn that the collected stories of *World War Z* have been dismissed as "too intimate" by the commissioners of the post-apocalyptic UN official report, who want "a collection of cold, hard, data."⁴⁰ The framing narrator protests that the human factor is what distinguishes us from the zombies. As we know from Romero's films, the "human factor" in both its positive and negative aspects is also the key to either the downfall or the survival of those facing an apocalypse.

Greed, prejudice, arrogance, and ignorance are also portrayed as deadly infections. These factors serve to escalate the worldwide outbreak and to impede potential solutions, which leads to the zombie plague bursting the boundaries of "official" containment. While these follies can be traced through individual and group acts during Romero's films, *World*

War Z shows them occurring on a global scale. Desperate refugees carrying the infection are smuggled through Tibet. They are illegally transported by “snakeheads”⁴¹ (human smugglers) into the “First World ghettos” of the “self-righteous hypocritical North,”⁴² where certain outbreaks, particularly those in lower-income areas, are “neglected.”⁴³ The first name for the zombie plague, “African rabies,” is a clear reference to the racism-tinged panics that accompanied the growing awareness of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and the ongoing racism-fuelled indifference towards the scourge in Africa.

In the opening story of “Patient Zero,” the puzzled Chinese doctor who discovers the first zombie — a young boy — contacts an influential friend, who, when he grasps what is happening, gives orders to the doctor in a “flat robotic voice, as if he had rehearsed this speech.”⁴⁴ His response implies that not only were the authorities already aware of the possibility of a zombie outbreak, but that, in fact, they may have been anticipating it. This not only opens the account *in medias res*, but further suggests that these same authorities may somehow be responsible for the outbreak, even though its original cause is concealed from the reader. In less than an hour, the “Goanbu” or Chinese secret police arrive to remove both the zombie and the infected villagers.⁴⁵ A “War on Drugs” soldier in Kyrgyzstan encounter zombies, only to have the story covered up by Canadian authorities that attribute his report to “exposure to unknown chemical agents” and “a healthy dose of PTSD,” sending the soldier for evaluation. The soldier remarks: “Evaluation ... that’s what happens when it’s your own side. It’s only ‘interrogation’ when it’s the enemy.”⁴⁶ Social inequalities, as well as racism and totalitarian manipulation, escalate the crisis. For example, the black market in harvested organs from China causes an outbreak in Brazil, where wealthy people go for organ transplants. The implication is that this outbreak is caused by the careless and cannibalistic predations of the rich on the bodies of the poor. The narrator, a former surgeon, drops hints about “executed political prisoners” from whom the organs might have been removed while the “donor” is still alive and indignantly exclaims:

Who knows how many infected corneas, infected pituitary glands ... Mother of God, who knows how many infected kidneys [China] pumped into the global market. And that’s just the organs! You want to talk about the “donated” eggs from political prisoners, the sperm, the blood? ... Few of you Yankees asked where your new kidney or pancreas was coming from, be it a slum kid from the City of God or some unlucky student in a Chinese political prison.⁴⁷

While money flows in from these surgeries, however, underwriting the narrator’s “herbal Jacuzzi,” he is content to set these questions aside. Another follower of “big-time, prewar, global capitalism” peddles a phony zombie “vaccine” Phalanx, generating huge profits by exploiting people’s fear.⁴⁸ This amoral businessman sees “the opportunity of a lifetime” in the first reported outbreaks of “African rabies” and finds a “workable pitch”: “A cure would make people buy it only if they thought they were infected. But a vaccine! That’s preventative! People will keep taking that as long as they’re afraid it’s out there!”⁴⁹ Zombies draw our attention to the hungry gaze that capitalism focuses on people: what Naomi Klein calls “disaster capitalism” or “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities.”⁵⁰ A critique of disaster capitalism is found in practically all zombie apocalypse fictions, as survivors learn that some of the complicated, crafty living are worse than the simple, mindless dead, described by Louis Gross as “the proletariat” to the living’s bourgeoisie.⁵¹ As one Internet commentator said of the then-upcoming television series based on the comic book series *The Walking Dead*, “Zombie stories treat the ghouls as the environment, and not as the antagonist. The antagonist in a good zombie story is other (living) people.”⁵² The “Phalanx King” expresses no regret for his exploitation: “I chased my dream and I got my slice.”⁵³

The bankruptcy of the system that allows such practices to flourish is demonstrated by the complicity of the politicians and corporate-owned media, with devastating consequences.⁵⁴ The former White House chief of staff explains that Phalanx was a welcome placebo because it “calmed people down and let us do our job”: “What, you would have rather we told people the truth? That it wasn’t a new strain of rabies but a mysterious uber-plague that reanimated the dead? Can you imagine the panic that would have happened: the protest, the riots, the billions in damage to private property?” To this official, echoing the businessman, who blames the inevitable panic on the media for finally blowing the whistle, the truth is “political suicide.”⁵⁵ Phalanx is thus aligned with the popular medications Adderall and Ritalin, prescribed as coping aids for a stupefied, fearful population who cannot keep “track of it all,” meaning the global 24-hour news cycle suffusing twenty-first-century awareness with appalling stories, in which those of marauding zombies become just another piece of bad news. As a former suburban housewife plaintively asks, “How do you know which one is really real?”⁵⁶ This character, at first reminiscent of the catatonic Barbra in *Night*, after surviving zombie attacks and pulling one zombie’s head off to save her child, eventually becomes the mayor of a rebuilt, fortified community where houses on stilts are accessed through retractable walkways and ladders. She gets one of the last words in *WWZ*, which returns to some of its interviewees at the conclusion: “You can blame the politicians, the businessmen, the generals, the ‘machine,’ but really, if you’re looking to blame someone, blame me. I’m the American system, I’m the machine....”⁵⁷

In the post-apocalyptic U.S., class differences are reversed as manufacturing skills become paramount. Formerly privileged white-collar workers are burdens on the new society, as the head of “DeStRes,” the agency set up to handle rebuilding efforts, explains:

You should have seen some of the “careers” listed on our first employment census; everyone was some version of an “executive,” a “representative,” an “analyst,” or a “consultant,” all perfectly suited to the prewar world, but all totally inadequate for the present crisis. We needed carpenters, masons, machinists, gunsmiths.⁵⁸

In Romero’s films, technical “apocalypse know-how” is also crucial to survival — knowing how to handle weapons or to fly the helicopter in *Dawn of the Dead*, for example — and, as with *Dawn*, the senseless accumulation of consumer goods becomes not only obsolete, but also sinister. In *WWZ*, a diver refers to the unsettling experience of having to navigate the massive amounts of inessential goods that were dumped overboard in harbors by those fleeing during the Great Panic: “Plasma TVs always crunched when you walked over them. I always imagined it was bone.”⁵⁹ In addition to the uncanniness of these heaps, the corpses of dead luxuries joining the undead underwater, this sentence also evokes the apocalyptic zombie’s onscreen origins.⁶⁰

Notably, the much maligned, first-generation immigrants, formerly inhabiting subaltern cultures, become the saviors of post-apocalyptic America. A “mixed group of instructors” is “tasked with infusing these sedentary, overeducated, desk-bound, cubicle mice with the knowledge necessary to make it on their own”⁶¹:

These were the people who tended small gardens in their backyards, who repaired their own homes, who kept their appliances running for as long as mechanically possible. It was crucial that these people teach the rest of us to break from our comfortable, disposable consumer lifestyle even though their labor had allowed us to maintain that lifestyle in the first place.⁶²

The breakdown of class privilege is “scarier than the living dead” for the formerly “high-powered” elite: one woman with an MFA cannot handle being instructed by her former cleaning lady, whom she insists on addressing by her first name “Magda.”⁶³ “Mrs. Magda Antonova,” formerly and familiarly subaltern, is dignified with her surname in the aftermath

of the apocalypse. The former White House chief of staff who welcomed the cover-up of Phalanx is interviewed while he is shoveling dung for fuel.⁶⁴ In *WWZ*, in effect, another, internal, American Revolution has happened.

The breakdown of the more absurd and reprehensible aspects of “the machine” is an occasion for revolutionary celebration in zombie narratives. A Texan bodyguard recounts the memorably absurd failure of the gated compound containing thinly disguised versions of well-known Hollywood celebrities and their entourages who broadcast a reality show from within their plush haven’s walls. These “pampered parasites” are “Romanovs”: “that little rich, spoiled, tired-looking whore who was famous for just being a rich, spoiled, tired-looking whore” is clearly an allusion to Paris Hilton and her ilk.⁶⁵ The celebrities sit back and watch the “peons” fighting the zombies, but they are themselves invaded and overcome by a frantic horde of people who have bought into the idea that celebrity privilege equals safety. Confronted at last with reality, the celebrities’ security forces walk out on them in disgust.⁶⁶

The dramatic reversals and restructurings of society that follow the zombie wars challenge preconceived perceptions of individuals, cultures, and nations. The “prewar paradise” of Iceland, for example, becomes “a cauldron of frozen blood” while Cuba, in an ironic reversal, becomes a refugee haven, accepting boat people from the United States.⁶⁷ “The Arsenal of Victory” undergoes subtle changes as Cuban society becomes more open as a result of an influx of refugees in a kind of “infection” of ideas.⁶⁸ In the post-apocalyptic world, the Cuban peso is “king.”⁶⁹ The Russian chaplain who euthanizes infected soldiers as an act of “Final Purification” finds a new type of spirituality.⁷⁰ This leads to a “religious fervor” in the new “Holy Russian Empire” which begins to show signs of totalitarian corruption at the close of *WWZ* as priests are organized into “death squads” and hints abound that Cold War-type hostilities might resume.⁷¹

Other reversals of established systems of order abound: global life expectancy is “a mere shadow” of what it used to be. The post-apocalyptic U.S. implements universal health care.⁷² New corporal punishment laws are put in effect, putting people in stocks and whipping them in the town square: “What were you going to do with thieves and looters, put them in prison? Who would that help? Who could afford to divert able-bodied citizens to feed, clothe and guard other able-bodied citizens? ... [S]eeing a senator given fifteen lashes for his involvement in war profiteering did more to curb crime than a cop on every street corner.”⁷³ Some survivors who are abandoned in the isolated zones foment rebellions, which are later brutally put down by a resurgent post-apocalyptic American government, as the Yonkers veteran notes: “That was the first time since crossing the Rockies that I ever saw tanks. Bad feeling: you knew how that was gonna end.”⁷⁴

The zombie apocalypse stops the machine, but the machine’s effects clearly linger on in the survivors. Some survivors, in their desperation, become “quislings” or zombie sympathizers, while others resort to eating human flesh for food, representing, as Wood reminds us, “the logical end of human relations under capitalism.”⁷⁵ Survival, it is implied, may entail becoming as impersonal, amoral and bloodthirsty as the living dead themselves. Survivors must defeat not only the zombies, but also representatives of the old order struggling with the new for post-apocalyptic hegemony. In *WWZ*, “greed, fear, stupidity and hate” are eternal issues for those trying to survive and rebuild.⁷⁶

Zombie narratives such as *WWZ* and *Pontypool*, as we will see, can thus be read as a kind of postcolonial dystopia in which “the political disfigurement of the oppressed” causes their transfiguration. Such dystopias reverse the utopian “foundation myths of nations.”⁷⁷ In contrast, we hear from the de-nationalized and displaced, the walking wounded, racked with survivors’ guilt, narrating their stories of the zombie wars. If utopianism is based on

"assumptions of human perfectibility,"⁷⁸ then zombie dystopias presume that, before the situation improves, people will turn to cannibalism and that things will inevitably fall apart. Zombie horror does not gloss over the traumas of social upheaval. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, her meditation on the photography of war atrocities, Susan Sontag describes the zombies that arise at the climax of *J'Accuse* (1938), French director Abel Gance's antiwar film:

"Morts de Verdun, levez-vous!" ("Rise, dead of Verdun!"), cries the deranged veteran who is the protagonist of the film, and he repeats his summons in German and in English: "Your sacrifices were in vain!" And the vast mortuary plain disgorges its multitudes, an army of shambling ghosts in rotted uniforms with mutilated faces, who rise from their graves and set out in all directions, causing mass panic among the populace already mobilized for a new pan-European war. "Fill your eyes with this horror! It is the only thing that can stop you!" the madman cries to the fleeing multitudes of the living, who reward him with a martyr's death, after which he joins his dead comrades: a sea of impassive ghosts overrunning the cowering future combatants and victims of la guerre de domain. War beaten back by apocalypse.⁷⁹

Filling our eyes with zombie horror, it is suggested, allows us to regard the pain of others with a little less complacency. For example, *WWZ* optimistically postulates that Israel, the first nation to enact quarantine in the face of the zombie outbreaks, invites the Palestinians into the quarantined zone, thereby settling the longstanding conflict in the Middle East by uniting against the zombies.⁸⁰ The Palestinian narrator recounts his disbelief at hearing what was thought to be a "Zionist lie."⁸¹ The Israelis use sniffer dogs to distinguish the infected from the healthy at their checkpoints. At first, they take away an elderly Palestinian man, confirming the narrator's suspicions, but then they also drag away an American Jewish man who is screaming, "I'm one of you!"⁸² "Everything I thought was true went up in smoke..., supplanted by the face of our real enemy."⁸³ A civil war in Israel is waged between those opposed to the repatriation of Palestinians, a pullout from the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the razing of settlements: "A lot of Israelis had to watch their houses bulldozed in order to make way for those fortified, self-sufficient residential compounds."⁸⁴ War is beaten back by apocalypse as long-established hostilities are overturned. At the Honolulu Conference following the apocalypse, where the American president proposes that the living launch an offensive and return from their "safe zones," the complete reversal of pre-war hegemonies becomes clear as more zombies are to be found frozen in suspended animation in the Global North:

Many of the colder countries were what you used to call "First World." One of the delegates from a prewar "developing" country suggested, rather hotly, that maybe this was their punishment for raping and pillaging the "victim nations of the south." Maybe, he said, by keeping the "white hegemony" distracted with their own problems, the undead invasion might allow the rest of the world to develop "without imperialist intervention." Maybe the living dead had brought more than just devastation to the world. Maybe in the end, they had brought justice for the future.⁸⁵

The Chilean narrator finds this reaction understandable but ultimately unproductive: "They just wanted revenge for the past.... After all we'd been through, we still couldn't take our heads from out our asses or our hands from around each other's throats."⁸⁶ No nation, it is implied, holds the monopoly on oppression. When a South African radio broadcast is set up to combat ignorance, "misinformation," and "the various indigenous solutions people believed would save them from the undead," the radio station operator who is narrating this segment remarks, "Everyone was furious with his own people. Everyone was ashamed."⁸⁷ This shame causes a rash of suicides among radio operators who monitored the anguished voices from all over the world.⁸⁸ Although the American president's proposal

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is scorned by the narrator as "typically NorTEAMERICANO," it is also presented as redemptive and heroic. This vision prevails as the inheritors of the zombie apocalypse set out in the final pages of *WWZ* to rebuild their world along radically different lines. It will be interesting to see whether or not the soon-to-be-released filmed version of *WWZ* retains its critical consciousness of the American tendency to capitalize on disaster. The Chilean narrator cynically remarks of the American presidential speech: "I guess, if this was a gringo movie, you'd see some idiot get up and start clapping slowly, then the others would join in and then we'd see a tear roll down someone's cheek or some other contrived bullshit like that."⁸⁹ Earlier in the book, however, a filmmaker creates narratives of resistance to help fight the suicides and despair that torment the survivors.⁹⁰ Although the filmmaker is depicting technological fixes that don't work, his films do raise the morale of the survivors because "Americans worship technology."⁹¹ The filmmaker justifies his "contrived bullshit" by emphasizing the need for stories of courage and hope: "The lies our government told us before the war, the ones that were supposed to keep us happy and blind, those were the ones that burned, because they prevented us from doing what had to be done."⁹² This dueling and ambivalent perspective on narrativity and Hollywood sentimentality amplifies the subversive power of orality in the written text. It resists being the "gringo movie," undermining hegemonic patterns of representation and dissolving black-and-white portraits of nationalized and racialized identities.

WWZ thus continually sidesteps essentializing narrative moves by self-consciously contrasting itself to simplistic Hollywood heroic narratives. Gray also applies to the ethical choices that people are forced to make during the zombie apocalypse. As Selena (Naomie Harris) tells Jim in *28 Days Later*, survival necessitates being prepared to kill infected loved ones "in a heartbeat." This horrific possibility recurs in *WWZ*, but the book also juxtaposes the narratives of unsympathetic characters such as "the Phalanx King" or the cosmetic surgeon, with more innocent, likeable, or downright heroic characters. For example, Sharon, a mentally disabled girl found "in the ruins of Wichita," provides one of the more moving accounts of the book. While Sharon's understanding is limited, she can mimic the moan of a zombie almost perfectly and describes being barricaded, along with other women and children in her community, inside a church that is being overrun.⁹³ As we struggle to piece together Sharon's fragmentary words to understand what is happening, it becomes agonizingly evident that women are killing their children to save them from being devoured. A woman who has already lost her own daughter to the zombies, saves her, shooting Sharon's mother before she can kill her daughter.⁹⁴ This church may be the same one that an army patrolman, interviewed much later on in the book, discovers: "We once broke into a church in Kansas where it was clear the adults killed all the kids first."⁹⁵ In this way, seemingly disparate and fragmented stories are interwoven and cross-referenced throughout *WWZ*.

In a similarly heartbreaking story, another young woman, Jesika Hendricks, recalls the agonizing choice her family makes to consume human flesh to survive. She describes the gradual disintegration of communal ties among a band of survivors fleeing north, changing from a friendly group that cooperates and shares or trades its resources to a dangerous situation in which "people started getting mean":

There were no more communal fires, no more cookouts or singing. The camp became a mess, nobody picking up their trash anymore.... I wasn't left alone with neighbors anymore, my parents didn't trust anyone. Things got dangerous, you'd see a lot of fights.... The only time anyone ever came together was when one of the dead showed up.⁹⁶

Eventually, Jesika's parents abandon their scruples to hunger and trade her radio for a bowl of "steaming hot stew. It was so good! Mom told me not to eat too fast.... She was crying a little." Later, she understands the "look" that changes her father's face when her parents

fall ill and she has to care for them. It is left up to the reader to guess how she does this, presumably by killing others or making some other appalling choice. At the close of the novel, although the interviewer makes reference to “trials” of those who practiced cannibalism, the Yonkers veteran says that it is better not to judge “questionable survival methods.” Such awful choices, *Realpolitik* on a national scale, save humanity in the form of the Redeker Plan. Originally a ruthless blueprint for the survival of an apartheid regime, the plan is adopted, first by the South African post-apartheid government “of all colors”⁹⁷ and then by other nations. Redeker himself is depicted as being unable to live with this plan and is committed to a psychiatric institution under another name.⁹⁸

The effect of telling from multiple, international perspectives, rather than showing a limited (American) range in a linear Hollywood film, allows the reader to move beyond the borders of the text to imagine the heterogeneous range of situations, conflicts and scenarios evoked, but not covered by the accounts compiled in *World War Z*. For example, some passing allusions to “Flight 575” by a former “snakehead” leads the reader to imagine what might have happened on board. A British survivor recounts the castles and stately homes of Europe being fortified against the besieging zombie hordes, referring to, but never elaborating upon, several spectacular failures such as Versailles and Muiderslot in Holland.⁹⁹ Another sequence left to the reader’s imagination is the battle of “One Tree Hill” with five hundred Maori “versus half of reanimated Auckland.”¹⁰⁰ In this way, *World War Z* is a written work that is also self-consciously about a zombie film that, after we have read it, will be “now playing” in the theatres of our minds. At the same time, the global scale of WWZ forces the conventional zombie narrative of a handful of survivors to expand and to overrun both its national and its textual boundaries. It will be interesting to see whether the forthcoming film adaptation with its main character — the frame-narrator who is compiling the oral history — will be able to make such transmediated gestures.

If WWZ in its (h)or(r)ality ambitiously imagines a global apocalypse, the apocalypse depicted in *Pontypool Changes Everything*, although equally rooted in social causes, retains the intimacy of a particular locale — rural southern Ontario. Although the book was written in 1998, it was reissued in 2008 following Bruce McDonald’s film adaptation, for which Burgess wrote and re-wrote the script. Burgess adapted a portion of the book into a linear story that follows the struggles of only one of the sets of characters depicted in the book. The book, on the other hand, is another Chaucerian web of non-linear, but interconnected tales, again escaping the limitations of narrative film through its mirror maze of reflections of and on the apocalypse.

In his afterword to the new edition of *Pontypool Changes Everything*, Burgess self-consciously distances himself from his earlier self, “insufferably preoccupied with literary malformations.”¹⁰¹ Burgess’s zombie virus is itself a literary malformation, a tongue-in-cheek amalgam of influential semiotic theories. Like Baudrillard’s simulacra, the virus is endlessly copying itself.¹⁰² In keeping with the conventions of the zombie genre, however, institutionalized experts, including academics, are notably at a loss to explain or control the outbreak. One character avers that “a whole host of disciplines are working together on this one,” “teams of doctors, semioticians, linguists and anthropologists worldwide.”¹⁰³ He also claims, ridiculously, that the “immature virus looks a bit like a sunfish ... it has two long, pointy fangs, which it uses to practice scratching at the paradigms it will eventually invade.”¹⁰⁴ In a nod to Julia Kristeva, “the mature virus,” we are told, “resembles the figure of abjection,” leaving the reader to hopelessly try to imagine a figure of “death infecting life,” “what disturbs system, identity, order,” “in-between,” “ambiguous” and “composite.”¹⁰⁵ Another expert adds Chomskyan linguistics to the mix: “It gestates in the deep structures prior to language. Or, at least, simultaneous with language. In the very primal structure

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that organizes us as differentiated, discontinuous copies of each other."¹⁰⁶ *Pontypool's* protagonists—Les/Greg/narrator/Grant Mazzy—are also "differentiated, discontinuous copies of each other," just as "H/ellen," a mental patient, is an amalgam of two female characters, Les's wife Helen and Ellen Peterson. H/ellen quotes Walt Whitman's line about "the beautiful uncut hair of graves" from "Song of Myself."¹⁰⁷ Earlier, we read that Ellen's husband, Detective Peterson, mumbles "Bad boy Walt Whitman" as he succumbs to the virus. *Pontypool*, unlike its film adaptation, resembles *WWZ*. It is a song of many selves, chronicling the breakdown of relationships, whether personal or societal.

Whereas Burgess's zombies are frightening, murderous creatures, they are also pitiable and in some ways indistinguishable from what Burgess calls "unsound bodies" or the socially vulnerable—the physically and mentally handicapped, children, and drug addicts. For example, Ellen's empathy for the zombies is created by her experience of having suffered a stroke: she thinks, "*These poor people have all suffered strokes*" [italics in original].¹⁰⁸ The abject zombies and the "unsound bodies" of *Pontypool* are informed by a historical social subtext that keeps *Pontypool* firmly within the same apocalyptic zombie tradition as *WWZ*. In 1998, under the Conservative provincial government of Mike Harris, a "Common Sense Revolution" or the imposition of capitalist neoliberalism in Ontario was in full swing. Social programs were gutted, particularly those for the vulnerable: single mothers, welfare recipients, drug addicts, and the mentally ill, many of whom were forced onto the streets and kept there by the cuts to social housing and income supports, as well as the closure of hospitals and the elimination of thousands of hospital beds.¹⁰⁹ *Pontypool* describes these displaced persons as "high-functioning mercenaries," whose "strange ability ... frightened the proto-Yuppie colony that had just recently moved into the area."¹¹⁰ The Harris government also slashed funding to education (such as Burgess's graduate program in semiotics) and created a culture in which non-profit-oriented work and study was devalued.

This social and cultural upheaval unmistakably forms the backdrop for the creation of Burgess's zombies. These all-too-human monsters, whose infection deprives them of the ability to communicate with each other, are forced to attempt an escape through the open mouths of their victims. In this Ontario, the zombie's look, "familiar to the followers of zombies," "though inanimate, is fresh with the experience of abjection, of failure."¹¹¹ A recurring theme is the inability to express and to communicate. This characterizes all the "unsound bodies" in *Pontypool*: Robin Wood's Othered monsters—zombies, junkies, women, and children. The first deaths of zombies we see are, unlike the splatstick of many zombie films, tinged with empathy:

The killer's neck is broken and he stands over the nurse with his head dropping to his chest. His mouth is open, a bright red gasket through which the bleating of animals can be heard. The sound he makes isn't human; the message, however, is unmistakable. He's saying: "*This doesn't work, I'm failing.*"¹¹²

Empathy haunts *Pontypool's* characters in much the same way that survivor's guilt haunts the characters in *WWZ*. *Pontypool* makes a similar point that empathy creates vulnerability. At the same time, the novel is insistent that the loss of empathy means the essential loss of humanity, even though it is perilous. For example, it is not clear whether or not Detective Peterson is stricken by the zombie virus or by empathy when "he feels the bowling ball holes of the hunter's eyes slipping behind his own sockets."¹¹³ This slippage is also conveyed in the film by the sequence in which Sydney Briar (Lisa Houle) struggles with infection, stuttering over and over again on the word "kill." Only by convincing her that she has actually said "kiss," can she fend off being transformed into a zombie. The non-stricken characters similarly struggle with language and expression, in a way that could not be conveyed by film that demands sound—Ellen, in the aftermath of having to kill her husband, "makes

a fist of her long hand to push against her mouth. The crying that she feels is very young, and she cannot trust herself to let it up."¹¹⁴ Ellen subsequently encounters a strange group of zombies who are "working" (dumping garbage into the pond and picking it up again, possibly duplicating Harris's welfare programs for welfare recipients). Fearful abjects, they are filled with anticipation of violence: "Why, if he's cold, won't he freeze?"; "You don't hate him yet. But if you don't know him will you stab him with a knife?"; and "If you don't want to kill him, does that mean that you want to run him over with a car?"¹¹⁵ Ellen finds herself consoling the hapless killers, leading the reader into a chapter entitled "Policy" in which the zombies invert her language of compassion: "It's OK": "It's OK to kill biting, y'know." "And I know it's OK to tear fuckin' fuckers' heads off."¹¹⁶

In another segment, a junkie on the streets of Vancouver is portrayed as a type of innocent zombie, smiling at onlookers while blood drips down his chin. The narration provides a calm commentary on his frightening state. It is an inner monologue told in retrospect: "Oh dear. Sometimes you can't help but notice how sick you're becoming":

You know that you have been barking at people lately. In fact, that's why you got thrown out of the Columbia Hotel. "Do you know you've been barking at people in the lobby?" You shrug miserably at this kind of question. *No, I'm afraid I didn't know....* You make a face like Buster Keaton, tilting your jaw. *Yes, the problem is huge, altogether too far gone, I think [italics in original].*¹¹⁷

Like the zombies, the nameless junkie cannot communicate these thoughts. He ends up in a psychiatric ward being forced to watch "hateful" films like *Terms of Endearment*, which the patients turn into "*Agonizing Screams of Endearment*" by adjusting the volume.¹¹⁸

Les's struggle with mental illness paradoxically protects him from the zombie virus.¹¹⁹ He struggles with the "delusional worms" surrounding him as he escapes and "rightly thanks his illness for peeling back at least one layer from the hideous stop of the sky."¹²⁰ Later, as Les makes his escape, he reflects that he has "isolated a part of himself that he commits to sanity, and from here he has decided that the difference between his relaxed psyche and the outside world is so negligible that to worry about losing touch is not the most urgent game."¹²¹ Les's delusions of "The War in Ontario" and "the Underground"—about finding bodies in the garbage he picks up—echo the heartlessness of Harris's "Common Sense Revolution" which social justice groups such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) described as a war on the poor.¹²² His hallucinations of cannibalism are nightmarish allegories of late capitalism as a

Canada's Wonderland made of bodies. Giant bloodslides. Houses of torture where children's kidneys are twisted like sponges in the fat hands of musclemen. There would be buns crammed with the cooked knuckles of teenagers, and a king, sitting on a mountain of kings, eating his own shoulder.¹²³

In keeping with the bleak tradition of zombie narratives, Les Reardon does not survive, appearing as one of the many silent, uncommunicative bodies in the aftermath of the zombie apocalypse in Dr. Mendez's autopsy lab. Dr. Mendez's attempt to dignify the deaths of so many invites empathy as his one-sided conversations with corpses become another failure of language. Later, the doctor beseeches his callous teenage helpers not to be "seagulls" and to "cry every so often."¹²⁴ Like the monstrous babies to be found elsewhere in the book—Les Reardon's son and the creature that drags him to the bottom of the lake—the silent, tearless teenagers, indifferent to the pile of corpses they are cleaning up, do not inspire hope.

The indiscriminate slaughter detailed in *Pontypool's* "novel" section becomes grimmer and more documentary than hallucinatory, taking the form of WWZ-type vignettes. Not all of the deaths can be ascribed to the zombie plague. In a rapid succession of scenes, "a

man with his hands clasped behind his neck kneels in a barn in Pontypool. One of two men standing behind him steps forward and fires a handgun through the back of his head," while a baby in Niagara Falls falls out of its highchair and down a flight of stairs.¹²⁵ Elsewhere, a "tiny fish-hook is dropped into the lettuce at a salad bar by a madman and swallowed by a dieting accountant."¹²⁶ These awful deaths are mingled not only with the zombie mayhem, but also with satire: "A public poll is taken about the confidence people have in Emergency Task Forces; however, most of the respondents are zombies, and half of the pollsters are killed on front porches."¹²⁷

In Barrie, a defiant population takes to the streets to embrace their cannibal brothers and sisters. An emotion-choked voice blares from a megaphone, pleading for people to return home. The snapping of compassionate necks can be heard clicking through the town and army personnel descend with guns blazing under tear-streaked faces.¹²⁸

These vignettes escalate into devastation: "The population of Norwood is zero. Guelph, three hundred. Maybe. St. Catharines, eight hundred." We are told that "Hamilton is particularly disastrous. Pockets of homicide flare up with crazy unpredictability, confounding a military strategy that flexes itself, finally, in an anguished genocidal nightmare. Hamilton: population definitely zero."¹²⁹ This scene is duplicated at the conclusion of the film adaptation, when the radio station is bombed, reducing zombies and survivors alike to rubble. It is *Night of the Living Dead's* ending writ large, the sheriff's posse replaced by aerial bombardment. While the film takes *Pontypool's* communication breakdown out of Ontario and into the federal "two solitudes" with its premise that speaking French protects one from zombification, the "strange new edicts" in the book ban "all forms of communication" apart from "militarese": "Speaking, listening, reading, even sign language are punishable at the brute discretion of Ontario's own licensed assassins.... [T]he only words spoken aloud in Ontario through the winter are militarese, punctuated with a sharply barked 'Sir!'"¹³⁰

The devastating conclusion of the film is a grim reminder of the wars in which Canada is currently engaged, which flourish on nothing so much as breakdowns of understanding, erasures of difference and spectacular failures of empathy. The arrival of such monsters in Canadian cultural productions ought to serve as a warning that no national identity can remain fixed and complacent in the globalized world that is mirrored so darkly in our zombie tales.

Notes

1. Max Brooks, *World War Z* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006).
2. Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Philadelphia: Quirk Productions, 2009).
3. These include (but are not limited to) Richard Matheson's early zombie tale "Dance of the Dead" (later filmed by Tobe Hooper as a *Masters of Horror* episode in 2005) and the short stories in the Romero-inspired shared-world anthology *Book of the Dead* (Skipp & Spector, 1989), notably Joe Lansdale's "At the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks" and David J. Schow's unforgettably gory "Jerry's Kids Meet Wormboy." Nina Kiriki Hoffmann's "Zombies for Jesus" joins these memorable satires on the rise of evangelical Christianity. Also noteworthy are S.P. Somtow's historical horror story "Darker Angels" (*Confederacy of the Dead*, 1993), Dennis Etchison's tale of exploited zombie temp workers on "The Late Shift," Neil Gaiman's "Bitter Grounds," Poppy Z. Brite's "Calcutta, Lord of Nerves," and Dale Bailey's short story "Death and Suffrage," which forms the basis for the *Masters of Horror* episode "Homecoming" directed by Joe Dante. The 2008 collection, *The Living Dead*, edited by John Joseph Adams, compiles many of these short stories.
4. Tony Burgess, *Pontypool Changes Everything* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1998).
5. *Dawn of the Dead*, DVD, directed by George Romero (Laurel Group, 1979).
6. Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 3.
7. *Ibid.*, 14.
8. *Ibid.*, 15.

9. Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.
10. Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 66.
11. Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan ... and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, 2003).
12. *Ibid.*, 64.
13. *Ibid.*, 76.
14. Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1977, 1986), 92–3.
15. Virilio, *Speed*, 76.
16. *Ibid.*, 77–8.
17. *Shaun of the Dead*, DVD, directed by Edgar Wright (Studio Canal, 2004).
18. *Fido*, DVD, directed by Andrew Currie (Lions Gate Films, 2006).
19. *Dead and Breakfast*, DVD, directed by Matthew Leutwyler (Ambus Entertainment, 2004).
20. *Zombieland*, DVD, directed by Reuben Fleischer (Columbia Pictures, 2009).
21. Not only in the growing popular entertainment of “zombie walks,” but also in commercials such as the recent Ford Fiesta ad that presents the compact vehicle as a better zombie survival option than its competitors, the Honda Fit and the Toyota Yaris (whose drivers are pursued and devoured). In these ads, as Stephanie Boluk observes in correspondence, the critiques of consumption circulating around the figure of the zombie have come full circle.
22. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Toronto: Random House, 1978).
23. Philip Brophy, “Horrority,” in *The Horror Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder (London: Routledge, 2000).
24. *Ibid.*, 227–8.
25. The term “intertextuality” has been broadly expanded since Julia Kristeva, interpreting Bakhtin, advanced the concept. Here I take it in its original sense as indicating the connections between texts, discourses and traditions as “a mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 66–69).
26. *Thriller*, directed by John Landis, performed by Michael Jackson (1983).
27. *Night of the Living Dead*, DVD, directed by George Romero (Image Ten, 1968).
28. Mark Kermode, “I Was a Teenage Horror Fan: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Linda Blair,” *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, ed. Martin Barker and Julian Petley (London: Routledge, 1997), 60.
29. *Braindead/Dead Alive*, DVD, directed by Peter Jackson (WingNut Films, 1992).
30. *Død Snø*, DVD, directed by Tommy Wirkola (Euforia Film, 2009).
31. Clover makes the interesting assertion that intertextuality or “horror’s habit of cross-referencing” is a “standard feature of oral cycles.” *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 9.
32. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982).
33. Linda Badley, *Film, Horror and the Body Fantastic* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 37.
34. Brooks, *World War Z*, 48.
35. *Ibid.*, 53–4.
36. *Ibid.*, 6.
37. *Ibid.*, 10.
38. *Ibid.*, 30.
39. *Ibid.*, 1.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, 13.
42. *Ibid.*, 22.
43. *Ibid.*, 61.
44. *Ibid.*, 9.
45. *Ibid.*, 9.
46. *Ibid.*, 21.
47. *Ibid.*, 27–8.
48. *Ibid.*, 54–5.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 6.
51. Louis S. Gross, *Redefining the American Gothic: From Wieland to Day of the Dead* (Ann Arbor/London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 86. For another reading linking serial killers, zombies and capitalism, see Annalee Newitz’s *Pretend We’re Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture* (2006). In the context of the financial crisis at the time of this writing, the discourse of “zombie banks” as a mark of disaster capitalism’s opportunism is particularly apt.
52. “ZeroCorpse” commenting on *The Walking Dead* in “Holy Zombies, This Looks Good,” <http://www.fark.com/cgi/comments.pl?IDLink=5630682>.
53. Brooks, *World War Z*, 58.
54. *Ibid.*, 56.

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55. Ibid., 60.
56. Ibid., 66.
57. Ibid., 334.
58. Ibid., 138.
59. Ibid., 305.
60. I am indebted for this insight to Stephanie Boluk in our email correspondence.
61. Brooks, *World War Z*, 139.
62. Ibid., 140.
63. Ibid., 141.
64. Ibid., 59.
65. Ibid., 84.
66. Ibid., 88.
67. Ibid., 230.
68. Ibid., 232.
69. Ibid., 337.
70. Ibid., 297.
71. Ibid., 331.
72. Ibid., 2.
73. Ibid., 149.
74. Ibid., 322.
75. Wood, *Hollywood*, 22.
76. Brooks, *World War Z*, 148.
77. Ronald Niezen, “Postcolonialism and the Utopian Imagination,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 38.
78. Ibid., 39.
79. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
80. Brooks, *World War Z*, 32.
81. Ibid., 37.
82. Ibid., 41.
83. Ibid., 44.
84. Ibid., 43–4.
85. Ibid., 266.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 197.
88. Ibid., 198.
89. Ibid., 267.
90. Ibid., 160.
91. Ibid., 166.
92. Ibid., 167.
93. Ibid., 73–7.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., 325.
96. Ibid., 129.
97. Ibid., 107–8.
98. Ibid., 111.
99. Ibid., 189.
100. Ibid., 332.
101. Burgess, *Pontypool*, 237.
102. Ibid., 147.
103. Ibid., 168.
104. Ibid., 169.
105. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
106. Burgess, *Pontypool*, 167.
107. Ibid., 125.
108. Ibid., 115.
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Generation Zombie

Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture

*edited by Stephanie Boluk
and Wylie Lenz*



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