

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**

**POLITICS OF ZOMBIE MOVIES
FROM VOODOO TO BIOHAZARD**

Master's Thesis

GÜLİZ NOYAN

ISTANBUL, 2014

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FILM AND TELEVISION**

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Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. KAYA ÖZKARACALAR

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Güliz Noyan
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ABSTRACT

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Zombie movies are politically charged since the beginning of their time. *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932) is considered to be the first feature length zombie movie and it has a rich post-colonial sub-text. At the end of 1960s, George A. Romero renders the genre even more political with his anti-capitalist subtexts. His movies established the conventions for the genre. In the 21st century, we see that the sub-genre is still carrying Romero's legacy on one hand and on the other, a new theme is introduced into the genre: virus. The introduction of scientific explanations and virus as a "theme" slightly shift the anti-capitalist meaning towards new directions. This helps the genre to become more charged than ever since they tend to bring democracy, private property, armed forces, state power and identity politics into questioning. This thesis aims to outline the way in which this shift has happened, to detect the newly introduced concepts and to see how all this fits into other American movies.

Keywords: Zombie Genre, Horror Genre, Psychoanalysis

ÖZET

ZOMBİ FİMLERİNDE POLİTİK ALTMETİN VUDUDAN BİYOLOJİK TEHLİKEYE

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Zombi filmleri, ilk örneklerinden bugüne politik bir mesaj taşırlar. *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932), ilk uzun metrajlı zombi filmi olarak kabul edilmektedir ve zengin bir post-kolonyel altmetine sahiptir. 1960'ların sonlarından itibaren, George A. Romero antikapitalist almetinleriyle, türü daha da politize hale getirir. Filmleri, türün kurallarını belirlemede önemli rol oynar. 21. yüzyıla geldiğimizde, alt-türün bir yandan hala Romero'nun mirasını taşıdığına şahit olurken, bir yandan da yeni ortaya çıkan "virüs" temasıyla tanışıyoruz. Anti-kapitalist alt-metin, bilimsel açıklamalar ve bir "tema" olarak virüsün türe dahil olması ile birlikte yerini yeni yönelimlere bırakmıştır. Demokrasi, özel mülkiyet, silahlı kuvvetler, devlet gücü ve kimlik politikalarını sorgulamaya yönelik alt-tür, her zamankinden daha da politize bir duruş kazanmaktadır. Bu tez, bu yönelimin oluşum biçimlerinin ana hatlarını belirlemeyi, öne sürülen yeni konseptleri saptamayı ve bütün bunların diğer Amerikan filmleri içinde nasıl bir yer edindiğini görmeyi hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zombi Sineması, Korku Sineması, Psikanaliz

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1. INTRODUCTION

Western culture's earliest encounters with the word zombie is with Lafcadio Hearn's and William Seabrook's travel reports published in 1889 in *Harper's Magazine* and in 1929 respectively (See in Russel 2005, pp. 9-17). Jamie Russel (2005, p. 9) notes that The Oxford English Dictionary had already recorded the term "zombie" in 1819; however it was Hearn's and Seabrook's publications that popularised the image. Hearn's account was all about the hushed whispers that he heard here and there and people's unwillingness to talk. It was Seabrook who could really uncover some truth about the "walking dead". Russel (2005, p. 11) notes that European settlers changed the nature of the native belief system of the island and that "the slaves' religious beliefs gradually transformed into a complex hybrid of African animism and Roman Catholicism that eventually became known to Westerners as 'voodoo'"

According to Seabrook's accounts in voodoo ceremonies, the central concept was possession by gods (See in Russel 2005, pp. 9-17). What the voodoo priests tried to accomplish through a set of rituals was to cast the good and evil spirits out of the body to enable a trans-like state which was necessary for possession to take place. He went on his account asserting that some voodoo priests would abuse their powers by abandoning the ritual once the soul and body disintegrated and enslave those soulless bodies to force them to work on fields. He also claims that voodoo priests would dig fresh graves for bodies already soulless. He recounts events that he supposedly witnessed. Whether his witness accounts are true or not, the fact that Haitian law covers such matters means that this is a real issue for Haitians. There are many rules and regulations about burial and how to protect the burial site within the means of both the poor and the rich.

Seabrook's book *The Magic Island* was first published in America in 1929, it became quite popular as well. Three years later, *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932) was released in theatres. The movie shows resemblance to the depictions in the book. A voodoo priest in Haiti, owns a horde of zombie workers who work in sugar cane mill and execute the master's orders. The priest offers his services for money as well.

Following zombie movies differ in plot details but remain quite alike in motifs. Additionally, the location is generally a former colony. This is not surprising at all when we take into consideration Russel's (2005, p. 15) chapter *The Zombie in the West*. He explains how Haiti fought to free itself from the French rule and after that how American interest and presence grew on Haitian lands. The idea of freedom was becoming even more unreachable and the fear of eternal slavery was growing. These were common despairs for any colonial society. The concept of enslavement even after death was the biggest nightmare. If even death does not provide a way out of slavery, then what will?

The image of zombie might have emerged from such socio-cultural roots however it went through a long evolution process. The important thing here to keep in mind that the genre was very much related with the era's post-colonialist atmosphere. Later as the world kept changing and political moods kept swinging, zombies changed identification as well. Bad guys and monsters had always a tendency to represent the contemporary enemies, but still it is hard to find a species that transformed itself as much as zombies did.

In early 20th century, the genre stood upon the colonial and social darwinist ideas of the time. In post-World War II years, Oriental figures and nuclear disaster were more scary. And for United States the enemy now resided in the outer space. The origins of a zombie breakout and the way in which zombies acted were adjusted accordingly. They were either alien-possessed dead bodies or they were the result of an experiment that went wrong.

In 1960s, except for some latecomer masterpieces, theatres and studios were fed up with aliens and undeads. Just by looking at the movie titles produced in 1950s and 1960s one can understand the extent of exploitation of the subject matter. European studios kept producing zombie movies such as *Doctor Blood's Coffin* (Furie, 1960), *Plague of the Zombies* (Gilling, 1966) or Santo series but the big American studios were looking for new things now.

Meanwhile, towards the end of 1960s, a low-budget film-maker and two producers funded a small cost movie out of their own pockets; also known as *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968). Unexpectedly, the movie was a big hit. For today's audience, it may not be very interesting; however at that time it was shock after shock. It was as shocking as Marion Crane dying in the middle of the movie and Norman Bates, the guy next door, being a schizophrenic, cross-dressed serial killer. Not-that-dead-looking normal man attacking people in broad day light, kids eating their parents alive, the governments and the army are clueless and helpless. In the end nobody survives. Our last surviving protagonist is shot and tossed out in a pile of zombies. Such horrible nihilism was quite a shock to American conformist audiences. What is worse was the fact we never really knew for sure why it happened. The movie changed the zombie genre in many ways. At the very least, the act of flesh eating was introduced into the genre and it never got old ever again. More importantly, Romero rendered the genre post-apocalyptic, which was not the case until then except for a few such as *The Last Man on Earth* (Ragona, 1964).

As for the movie's least mentioned but highly important impact, it was the fact that the real danger was people rather than the undead. This has always been the case in the genre, however it was not that obvious until *Night of the Living Dead*. In the early years of genre, the voodoo master was the enemy. Later, the enemy resided in space. And lately it has been different groups of people trying to survive. The enemy has never been the undead but Romero was the first to say it explicitly and in a daring way.

Romero's following zombie movies solidified the genre's conventions regarding the nature of zombies. With each movie, he also dared even deeper political criticism. By producing his movies' remakes as well making original ones, he kept his authority over the genre. During 1980s and 1990s there was not a zombie movie controversial enough to challenge Romero's work.

Luckily, status-quo was shaken again in 2002, this time by Danny Boyle. His *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002) was followed by *Resident Evil* series which put the genre on the high market again. With these examples voodoo, aliens and gore for the sake of gore

left their places to new themes. Viruses and bio-chemical weapons seem to be the most popular ones. One theme that never gets old is the concept of possession but then again possession's connotation is changed. Yet the Romero impact was still felt in all as corporations and military were still on the target. Post-apocalyptic struggle to survive was still the main issue.

As for today, it might be called the post-post-Romero period that still needs to be defined. Its most important representative is the famous TV series *The Walking Dead*. Unlike the title suggests, it has almost has nothing to do with the zombies. The undead is merely a catalyser, a plot trigger, a take-off motif for the story. The show is mostly about human nature, ethics and the social contract. Its perspective to the genre influenced the motion picture as well. The number of big budgeted post-apocalyptic and dystopian movies which use the genre's themes and imagery without really dealing with the undead is increasing.

In a very quick retrospective look back, one thing that is obvious is that a zombie may be many things. Its definition has changed over time. Its part in the story has defiantly changed. Its actions changed, motivations changed, even the way in which it "spread" changed. One thing that did not change is that zombie is just another monster but it is rarely the enemy. Therefore it has always been a tool to tell a different story other than the most obvious.

While this was the genre's rough history in the American cinema and for some degree in British cinema, it followed a different path in the continental Europe. There, the genre has been feeding upon the concepts and imagery that Catholic myths provide.

Especially after Romero, the continental Europe produced very popular zombie movies for their internal markets. In 1971, Ossario came up with the concept for his *Blind Dead* series. The first movie *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (Ossario, 1971) was so popular that Ossario became a famous horror director. Common themes in his films, including the *Blind Dead* series were possession, exorcism, blood drinking and witchcraft. Italian horror cinema was blooming as well since the 1950s. Dario Argento was an important

figure in the Italian horror cinema. He left a mark both on American and Italian horror film. One of his most famous collaborations was with George Romero in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). In Italy, the film was released as *Zombi*. The movie became so popular that a year later Lucio directed a sequel, *Zombi 2* also known as *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*, for the European market. According to Donato Totaro (2003, p. 162) the movie “established and/or perfected much of the Italian zombie lexicon, some of the which was taken from Romero, some not”. The Italian horror cinema and more specifically zombie cinema might be in close relations with its American contemporaries in fiscal and technological matters however the overall intentions differ. Totaro (2003, p. 162) comments that *Zombi 2* “has less in common with Romero’s classic than one would assume”. According to him, the tone of *Zombi 2* does not share *Dawn of the Dead*’s nihilist and black humorous tone. He also suggests (2003, p. 162) that the make-up and costume make the zombies look like “a homogenous mass of undead beings who have, in some cases, just risen from the bowels of the earth - a more direct and Catholic localisation of Hell and the apocalypse”. The latest popular example from Europe was probably *Rec* series. It was interesting to see how *Rec* (Balaguero and Plaza, 2007) movie had similar patterns with *28 Days Later*. It suggested an epidemic caused by a virus. However, the sequel *Rec 2* (Balaguero and Plaza, 2009) was back at the European traditions once again. Catholic Christianity and demonic possession was again a major issue in the movie.

In other words, the history of the genre changes both over time and according to cultural background. While the trends in American zombie movies are closely linked with the contemporary politics and highly charged with economic ideologies, continental European zombie productions deal mostly with Catholicism and gothic mythologies.

My research is focused mostly on the American examples but still touches upon a few examples from the greater Anglo-Saxon movie industry. Along the way I will look for correlations or lack of correlation between the contemporary political atmosphere and the genre. In order to get a more or less complete picture, I will utilise various psychoanalytical theories and various image reading techniques.

2. MONSTERS AND VICTIMS

Horror is one of the earliest and largest cinematic genres. Its monsters vary and evolve over time as technology allows improved special effects and as the audiences' reception changes. As horror monsters and victims change so does the film critics' approaches. Many different social theories and approaches had been adapted to film studies over the century. As for the horror genre, it was psychoanalysis that provided a frequent analytical tool.

One of the most prominent critics who adapted psychoanalytical tools to film studies was Robin Wood. His approach was a Marxist reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis and his works influenced following generations as well. He borrowed terms from Marcuse and Gad Horowitz. In his works, he familiarises his audience with the terms basic and surplus repression. Basically, basic repression functions as a natural and intrinsic super ego. It is what enables human beings to be social and to live in a society. It enables the human beings to develop self-control, empathy mechanisms and memory processes. Surplus repression, on the other hand, is not either natural or universal. As Wood (2003, pp. 63-64) reformulates it; surplus repression "is specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture". In other words, it is the set of cultural norms that are imposed on its members. Surplus repression aims to create a society as homogenous as possible. According to Wood (2003, p. 64), Western surplus repression envisages a "monogamous, heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists" society.

Next, Wood (2003, pp. 66-67) summarises what is repressed in the occidental societies and accordingly the identities of the Other. These identities of the Other is crucial since it provides a perspective on the identity of monsters and the victims. It is important to recognise how a movie positions the other and the norm as well as the monster and the victim. Wood (2003, pp. 66-67) classifies the Others in eight groups. The first one is the "other people" themselves. According to him, in a capitalist society, no human

relationship can avoid the power and hierarchy dynamics. Therefore all individuals are others to each other. The second, is the “woman”. In a patriarchal society, women who spoils the gender roles are seen as a threat to the society’s norms. The third is the “proletariat”, with whom the bourgeois has a long and a complicated history. Here, he only mentions the bourgeois obsession with cleanliness as a symptom of sexual repression and how the bourgeois attributes myths of squalor and sexuality to the working classes and the poor and portrays them as a reverse image of themselves. “Other cultures, other ethnic groups within that culture and alternative ideologies or political systems” are next in Wood’s list as they propose another set of complex norms with deep roots. “Deviations from ideological sexual norms” are strongly repressed as well as they are perceived as a threat to the patriarchal heterosexual family norms. The last but not least in this categorisation is the children. Wood (2003, p. 67) states that the children might be the most oppressed section of the population. From the Freudian perspective, every generation repress in their children what was once repressed in them in order to create a perfect reflection of themselves.

Wood’s approach shed light on understanding the dynamics and trends in American horror film in the 1970s and 1980s. He follows certain patterns in the movies and reveals how they are interconnected with the social fears, repressed desires and memories. And he was not the only one. Laura Mulvey was introducing striking new theories by applying other psychoanalytical tools to the film studies. However, later works especially on the audience pleasure out of horror discovered that neither Wood’s nor Mulvey’s approaches were enough to understand the power struggles both within the film and between the film and the audience. Barbara Creed, Carol J. Clover, Matt Hill and many others developed new approaches to psychoanalysis and horror film.

Clover’s (1993, pp. 3-20) starting point was *Carrie* (De Palma, 1976). Carrie is a teenage girl whose sexuality and femininity are violently repressed. Her profile fits Wood’s categorisation of others. But then how to explain Carrie? Is she simply a “return of the repressed” as Wood suggests or is she both victim and monster as Clover suggests? Neither Wood’s the diagram of the repressed nor Mulvey’s theories about the male gaze are enough to answer Clover’s questions. In her elaborate work, Clover

shows how the killer and the victim changes positions and how the audience's identification with them oscillates between them and psychoanalyses that shift. She also shows how the return of the repressed is not enough to explain the others in horror genre.

Hills' 2005 interest is different than Clover, however he also finds the previous dissertations inadequate and he is in the search of new directions. First of all, he rejects the repressed sexuality arguments. He notes that "[Anthony] Elliot's argument points out that sexuality has hardly been repressed in modern culture; rather, sexualised imagery and discussions of sexual identities have discursively proliferated in the modern period" (Hills 2005, p. 52). Hills agrees with Elliot on this and rejects the arguments and theories based on repressed sexualities to begin with. He adds that according to Wood's theory, monsters are either "simply evil" or "totally human" and that there is no in between. Hills finds this argument invalid since he takes a closer look at audience reactions. From their standpoints, it is fair to summarise that Hill finds Wood's monsters are "un-empathaisable", though this is not the case for all monsters of the genre.

These arguments get even more interesting when we put the zombies on the monster table. As the definition and description change multiple time throughout the genre's history, it is hard to come to simple conclusions about them. When they first appear on the screen, they are represented as enslaved souls who are exploited by the colonialist patriarchy. They might have started out as victims but as soon as they started to devour flesh they became monstrous for sure. And as they wander around just following their instinct, one might argue that they are free from both basic and surplus repression and that they represent the return of the enslaved zombies. From Wood's perspective this would make sense.

However, if we take a closer look to other psychoanalytical theories on the horror genre, we can unveil more about their political position. The flesh eating might have turned them into monsters but they are rarely the real monsters. In most cases there are still bigger powers, such as the voodoo masters in the past, that either cause or benefit the

problem. Or, it is the living people who become monstrous in order to survive. Human instinct to survive and dominate is in constant conflict with the flesh eating instinct. Zizek (2002, 5) points out that "The division friend/enemy is never just a recognition of factual difference. The enemy is by definition always (up to a point) invisible: it cannot be directly recognized because it looks like one of us.". Zizek's point shows that it is hard to draw clear distinctions between the "self" and the "other" as Wood suggests. According to Wood's categorisation the zombie would be the other and therefore the enemy while the living is the victim. However we see the living going after the living and torturing the undead in many cases. The genre makes it explicitly difficult to draw a clear line between the monster and the victim. Therefore, it calls for an individual reading rather than conclusive categorizations.

3. THE EARLY ZOMBIE

First examples of the zombie movies have common landscapes and plot lines. This chapter discusses the implication of these common points together with the role that zombies play in the first zombie movies. *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932), *Revolt of the Zombies* (Halperin, 1936) and *I Walked With a Zombie* (Tourneur, 1943) are selected to be the main reference points for the period that covers the 1930s and 1940s. Next, the golden age of science fiction for Hollywood will be covered. The contemporary zombie image will be discussed in relation with the popular themes and concepts of the 1950s.

3.1. VODOO MASTERS

White Zombie is known to be the first feature length zombie movie. The movie starts with some sort of a religious ritual where African men and women are shovelling earth on an area that looks like a burial place. Our protagonists (a white Western couple) witnesses this ritual while passing by and then their coachman stop the carriage in order to ask directions from a man who is just happens to be standing on the side of the road with his cloak and hat. The first time we see this man standing on the road we see his eyes superimposed on his image as well. After the cut to his face, we recognise immediately Bela Lugosi, the actor who had played infamous Count Dracula. As the events proceed, we learn that Bela Lugosi's character is called "Murder" and that Murder is an exotic voodoo master. His zombies are in a trance-like mode and they do as he commands. He makes use of their labour force in a sugarcane mill and of their intimidating image as well.

Before going into the star image that Lugosi brings into the movie, I also would like to point out that the events take place in Haiti. This Caribbean country has a "special" cultural code when it comes to death and burial rituals and this is still the case today. However I believe that the location decision is not entirely depends on this distinctive cultural code but rather it depends on the fact that Haiti was colonised for a long time by the French and that the Francophone culture is very deep and in effect on this land. The

reason why I claim so is that the following big zombie movie productions, they all take place in European colonies as well. One of them is *Revolt of the Zombies*, again a Halperin movie, takes place in Cambodia, again a French colony. Another cult zombie movie *I Walked with a Zombie* takes place on a colonised island called Saint Sebastian.

What these movies share is more than the colonised territory. The demographic choices are also similar. Some European Americans travel to the land of the exotic, of plantation, of slavery; in these new territories some love triangle presents itself among the Westerners but the woman falls under the spell of a voodoo master or she develops a curiosity towards voodoo practices. And in the end, whether it's a happy or a sad one, they get to go on with their lives as long as they leave that place behind and let it be.

This Western / non-Western, reason / witchcraft, civil / savage dichotomy is not at all surprising compared to contemporary movies. The existence of Bela Lugosi is itself a statement about these dichotomies. After all, it was him; Dracula who made Western women fall under his spell. In order to eliminate him, he had to be followed to his main land all the way to the east, where superstition and savagery reside. Dracula is a strong image of Western fear of a non-Western society, culture, practices, values and so on... Therefore, Lugosi playing the first voodoo and zombie master, one year later he starred as Dracula, draws a strong impact from Dracula's image and it also consolidates the threatening oriental image. In the second movie I mentioned, *Revolt of the Zombies*, Lugosi's presence is still lingering. He does not appear in the movie, however, the superimposed image of his eyes from *White Zombie* appears whenever someone pokes their noses into the voodoo practices and ancient temples. Later, Bela Lugosi continued to star in other voodoo and zombie movies as well, such as *Voodoo Man* (Beaudine, 1944) and *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (Wood, 1959).

In *White Zombie*, after the mysterious encounter with Murder, our protagonists (Madeline and Neil) arrive at a big mansion that belongs to a mutual friend. They plan to get married there but their host (Charles) makes a deal with Murder in order to win Madeline's heart. At first, he hesitates to use the potion Murder provided him since he knows Madeline is going to end up like zombie workers but still proceeds with their

plan. As soon as she is poisoned, Murder starts carving a doll. After Madeline is buried, Murder and Charles dig her up and she starts walking around like a somnambulist. Long story short, after the final climax, Murder's horde of oriental zombies are forced to jump off a cliff since they have no free will. Murder dies as well and the spell on Madeline is lifted. She gets reunited with her fiancé; Neil as if she has never been dead. The difference of *Revolt of the Zombies* is that this time the voodoo master is a white Western male; Armand, who is using the ancient Cambodian knowledge. In the former movie, the voodoo master was an exotic figure, someone we extra diegetically now from Transylvania and he was practicing an ancient, native knowledge. In *Revolt of the Zombies*, the knowledge and the tradition are still oriental however instead of a exotic, oriental figure, we face with an ambitious Western man who wants to enslave and control people around him under the supervising eyes of Murder. Armand recruits an army of slave-zombies from the indigenous people and from Westerners as well. Although there are only four years between the two movies, it seems that Halperin stand point towards the issue has been changed as he no longer points the finger only at non-Western threats but rather to the corrupt ones among the Westerners.

The message that the endings are carrying is widely different as well. As mentioned before at the end of *White Zombie*, the zombie gang is tricked into jumping off a cliff and Murder is killed by Charles. Therefore, it is a Western man who is killing an evil Oriental figure to right his wrongs. On the other hand in *Revolt of the Zombies*, the voodoo master Armand gives up his voodoo powers to prove his love to Claire. As soon as the spell is lifted, the "once-were-zombies" Cambodians revolt against him. They break free of the curse and decide to kill Armand so that he can never do it again. Both movies kill off their voodoo master at the end however the shift in their and their killers' identities change the moral of the story as well. First of all, while in *White Zombie*, zombie slaves were walking to their death because of no will power, in *Revolt of the Zombies* they regain consciousness and attack their master. In the former ending zombies are depicted as forever lost, soulless bodies whereas in the latter we know that they are not evil by nature, someone is using them against their will. Interestingly enough, although the avengers are no longer zombies, the title still treats them as such. Even if they regain consciousness, the title still suggests a revolt of the "zombies". In

the former movie, a Western man was killing an Oriental figure; while in the latter oriental “zombies” kill off the evil white man. Looking at all these reference points, we can draw the conclusion that the orientalist images are very strong in the collective unconscious and they are never totally innocent. In all cases it is the “otherised” culture that provides the voodoo knowledge. In the former movie, the evil and the exotic are the same figure. When a Western man kills him, it is not an act of violence but justice. In the former, the white man is the evil force but then again when the awakened zombies decide to take their revenge, the mob consists of only Asians, though Armand enslaved his Western colleagues as well. Moreover, these Asians who ganged up on Armand really tear the town down before they get to Armand. While Charles was only correcting his mistake by killing one evil force, former zombie Asians damage anything that they come across. Halperin might change the identity of the source of evil and point the finger not only at Orientals but also at evils within the Westerners; but still he can not escape repeating the Orientalist discourse.

In *I Walked with a Zombie*, the situation is a little bit more different. First of all the “voodoo master” is a Western woman who came to the island as a doctor (Mrs. Rand). She is not really a voodoo master but pretends to be one and never shows her face to the villagers. This way, she convinces people towards conventional medical practices rather than witchcraft. Later she confesses that her daughter-in-law (Jessica) who is presumed to be clinically insane is actually dead; “living and dead” as she puts it. She also confesses that before she pretending, she used to watch the islanders’ rituals. During one of these nights she was possessed by their gods and asked them to make Jessica a zombie. When she came to her senses she regretted it and kept telling herself that there is no such thing as zombie but when she got home she found Jessica having a fever. After her confession, Jessica’s doctor refuses that Mrs. Rand has anything to do with Jessica’s situation since she did not die or went through any stage that resembles death such as coma. The audience finds out that Jessica did actually went into a coma, a fact that suggests that Jessica is really a zombie.

The way in which the zombies are described in these movies is very different compared to genre’s post-Romero years. In the early zombie movies there is still no consensus on

whether zombies are animated corpses or people in trance. In *White Zombie*, Madeline comes back to life after the curse is broken though she was dead and buried. In *Revolt of the Zombies*, the zombie state is nothing but a mere state of trance and somnambulism. Only in *I Walked with a Zombie*, it is suggested that the voodoo zombies are dead and can never be *cured*. Also, as we can see zombies do not eat flesh yet. These examples suggests that what makes them zombies is not death or flesh-eating but rather the loss of free will and enslavement. This connects the zombie genre very much with political philosophy. In the early years of the genre we witness manifestations of fear resulting from orientalist images that had been engraved in the Western collective unconscious. The fact that slave zombies in *White Zombie* were working on sugarcane plantations is also a powerful image.

David Cohen (1972, p. 60) writes that

“(...) Others have speculated that the zombie is sort of a slave’s nightmare For the slave the only hope of release was death and the possible promise of a blissful afterlife. But if a dead slave’s body was reanimated for labor as a zombie, then the slave existence would continue even after death, a particularly horrible thought.”

It is also suggested by Peter Dendle (2001, p. 190) that the zombies in *White Zombie* are no longer distinguishable from the gears and the machines of the sugar mill. They disappear forever by blending in with the order that enslaves them. Dendle’s remark is an important one since it opens up a Marxist approach to the movie. According to Marx, together with the division of labour, industrial production also requires “converting the worker into a living appendage of the machine” (Marx 1990, p. 614). Romero might have shocked his audience with his humiliating critic of the consumerist bourgeois society in *Dawn of the Dead* (1979), however the genre is open to such Marxist readings since its first examples.

The political debates move to the next level in the aftermath of the Cold War. On one hand, the American movie industry seems to be very much affected by the the Space Race, and eventually voodoo and witchcraft loses its weight in the industry. On the other hand European zombie movies rely mostly on tales of witchcraft, ancient evil

powers and voodoo practices even long after Romero's game-changer *Night of the Living Dead* (1968).

One last but equally important point that needs to be taken into consideration is that in all these examples it was the living who caused all these troubles. Zombies were mostly nothing but victims. This is an important situation in order to understand the monstrous in the genre.

3.2 ALIEN POSSESSION AND ZOMBIES IN THE 1950s

1950s are known to be the golden years for science fiction movies. What I mean by golden is; first, the increase in science fiction productions and second is the fact that big budgeted science fiction films were not scarce compared to earlier decades. Victoria O'Donnell (2003, p. 169) reports that "five hundred film features and shorts are estimated to have been produced between 1948 and 1962." As mentioned before the budgets were engrossing as well particularly for special effects departments. B-movies with less budget were also becoming quite widespread and popular rather than having a small but highly obsessed kind of fandom.

This rush for science fiction seems highly natural when we consider the contemporary conditions. "Science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster" (Sontag 2004, p. 101) and 1950s for USA were all about the fear of an upcoming disaster. Mainly because, the years between 1950-1965 are the post World War II and post atom bomb trauma years as well as the societal paranoia of Communism heated with the Space Race and technological advancements in Eastern Bloc (mainly in USSR). Additionally Hollywood studios were losing their audience to the rapid expansion of TVs in households and Peter Lev (2003, p. 107) argues that their response to this loss "was to emphasise the motion picture's capacity for spectacle." Together with colour, cinemascope and widescreen, special effects were becoming an important tool for the anticipated majestic effect of the silver screen. Studios' need for big spectacles and special effects might have paved the way for bigger science fiction and horror productions however it is obvious that the zeitgeist weighs way more in the

producers' decision making process considering the plots and messages transmitted in those movies. Additionally O'Donnell (2003, p. 169) explains briefly what the contemporary science fiction movies were all about as follows: "science fiction films presented indirect expression of anxiety about the possibility of a nuclear holocaust or a Communist invasion of America. These fears were expressed in various guises, (...)" These "various guises" were mostly an alien contact or a monster unleashed by either a nuclear disaster or an error committed by a scientist.

This setting had an effect on zombies as well. As mentioned before the voodoo and witchcraft themes survived after 1930s and 1940s. But still, the definition and depiction of zombies started to change a great deal together with "space themes".

One of the most important example of this "kind" is *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956). The movie was not intended to be a zombie movie and was not received as such. However it does not fall very far from the contemporary zombie conventions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the earlier years of the genre zombie was defined as someone who has no free will. They were not eating human flesh and the question of whether these zombies were dead or not was not very clear.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers develops in a very suspicious way that the audience can not make sense of what is really going on. We only see some people who are complaining that their relatives are not themselves, that somehow they are someone else because they lack that something *je ne sais quoi*. After a day or two, they take back what they said. And then there are these weird, featureless bodies that seems so unnatural. Towards the end one of the characters (Dr. Dan Kauffman) explains the situation to the two protagonists; Miles and Becky and eventually to the audience as well:

KAUFFMAN - Santa Mira was like any other town people with nothing but problems. Then out of the sky came a solution. Seeds drifting through space for years took root in a farmer's field. From the seeds came pods which had the power to reproduce themselves in the exact likeness of any form of life. So that's how it began... out of the sky. Your new bodies are growing in there. They're taking you over cell for cell, atom for atom. (...) and you're reborn into an untroubled world.

MCCARTHY - Where everyone's the same?

(...)

KAUFFMAN - There is no need for love.

MCCARTHY - No emotion? Then you have no feelings, only the instinct to survive. (...)

KAUFFMAN - You say it as if it were terrible. Believe me, it isn't. You've been in love before. It didn't last. It never does. Love, desire, ambition, faith... without them, life's so simple, believe me.

What I would like to underline here is the way in which the movie fits into the zombie genre. With Kauffman's explanation, we understand that these pod people have no emotions. They only have the survival instincts and memories. This has been the case for zombies as well. The movies mentioned in the previous chapter all described zombies as people who show no sign of emotion and no enthusiasm towards life. In *I Walked with a Zombie*, Jessica walked around the family property because she knew the place. In *Revolt of the Zombies*, enslaved zombies tended their daily occupations unless they were summoned or unless they had not been given orders. Their only difference with the pod people is that they are being controlled by another force.

Pod people left their imprint on the future zombies as well. Their gathering around town square is a conventional shot for a zombie movie. Them, being attracted to something and walking mindlessly towards it, is a typical signifier of the genre. The movie's other contribution is the scene where Miles and Becky are trying to run away by passing through pod people. They decide to pose as pod people by not showing any emotion. And the plan works until Becky cracks and the whole town starts chasing them. This trick makes also a very common scene for the genre. Even in latest productions such *The Walking Dead*, we see examples of this. In the second episode, Rick and Glenn cover themselves up with zombie blood and try to get pass a horde of zombies by posing as them.

I will not go as far as arguing that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a typical zombie movie since these replicate bodies are not undead. But then again that is not always the ontological premise for zombies. Still, for whatever makes a zombie, a zombie, they always look or act different than the human beings. There is something that makes the

humans spot them visually. Here, there is no such remark. That is why pod people are not the conventional zombies. Yet again, the problem that humans have with the pod people is the fact that when they look at them, they see and recognise the people they used to know, but they know for a fact that that person is not themselves. This is the typical implication of “possession”. In possession movies like *Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), you can see and recognise the person but the minute they start to talk or act, one can see that this is someone else. The fact that most people can not kill their loved ones after they have been infected or turned into zombies is because they still see and recognise the person they used to know. But still, they know something has changed forever and they can not take it back. People who are close to a zombie or a possessed person go through the same psychological trauma. In our case, humans may not be pointing guns at pod people, but still they are going through the same contradiction. In a way, what makes the pod people zombies is also the reason why they are not zombies. Therefore, I repeat, I will not go as far as arguing that *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a typical zombie movie. However it is inevitable to see the way in which pod people and zombies are alike. Moreover, this analogy comes in useful since it provides a new perspective for reading the movie.

Going back to the quoted dialogue; it also explains in detail how the pods came to the earth and in what way “snatched” people are different than before. The most dreadful thing about this movie is that it does not depict an alien invasion where good and evil clash with each other but rather the earth is taken over silently while everybody is sleeping. Most people do not even see it coming. The next morning they just wake up feeling nothing. They go on with their lives only by instinct and memory.

M. Keith Booker (2006, p. 65) states that

(...) the film has come to be widely regarded as an iconic cultural representation of its contemporary climate of anti-communist paranoia. It is certainly the case that the replacements, who look the same as everyone else, but feel no emotion and have no individuality, directly echo the era's most prevalent stereotypes about communists.

Though the movie has no horrifying shots or special effects, this notion of the sneak attack is what makes the movie terrifying. Not to even see the monster is scary. Booker

(2006, p. 66) also argues that the film could be read as a critic of anti-communist hysteria. He goes on by explaining how alienation was a central concern for American society in 1950s and how the movie could be all about the fear of alienation as in not fitting in as well. The movie might provide a criticism for its time but most contemporary science fiction films did not go beyond making use of the popular space and alien images and focusing on the current anxieties.

Invisible Invaders (Cahn, 1959) provides a rich text since it touches upon almost all main issues of American society in 1950s. The movie starts with a nuclear explosion in scientist's, (Karol Noymann) laboratory. After the explosion his colleague Dr. Adam Penner refuses to continue the government's project on nuclear materials because it is too dangerous and has terrible effects. After he retreats to his home, Penner is visited by an alien who is using Noymann's body in order to communicate with him. These aliens have the technology to alter the matter's nature which gives them the knowledge to make anything invisible. The alien says that they have been controlling a very large group of planets and satellites thanks to their technological superiority and that they had not bothered with earth until now because of its slow scientific development. Now that the earth is approaching the "Space Age", they want the earth to surrender to their rule. Penner shouts out that this is "a dictatorship of universe". And in return the alien Noymann threatens the earth:

We cannot be defeated. We have never been defeated. Just as I have done with the dead body of Carl Noymann, my people will come to your planet and inhabit the bodies of other dead Earthmen. The dead will kill the living. And the people of Earth will cease to exist.

It is not surprising to see recurring themes from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Again there is this alien force that takes over human bodies, but this time they "snatch" the already dead bodies and rise from the graves. Then they start to attack the world unlike pod people who maintain their conformist average daily activities. In any case, the movie's main focus is not the dead but Adam Penner, his daughter, a younger scientist and a soldier who are hiding in an underground laboratory that was intended for an atomic bomb shelter and experiment on a solution. There are two messages that the audience is given so very directly; one at the beginning and one at the end. The first message is given by the alien through Noymann's body: the earth is experimenting with

deadly materials and they are becoming a threat to themselves and to the galaxy. Second message that comes at the end says that the nations of earth should work together in order to protect the planet and the habitat on it. Both messages already heard very clearly on *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise, 1951).

These are explicitly articulated in the movie. And of course, there are some inexplicit ones, maybe even unintentional ones. While every character in the movie has American names and accents, the one that blows himself up together with the town around him, Karol Noymann has a foreign name and accent. He is also the one who first comes back as a zombie and threatens the world. He is the messenger of the “dictatorship of universe”. Therefore, it would be fair to say that *Invisible Invaders* repeats the xenophobic images together with fear of nuclear experiments related to atom bomb and the fear that humans may be going too far by interfering with “space stuff”.

The message may not be very original but still, it is interesting to see how *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* made an impact on the concept of zombie. *Invisible Invaders* take popular messages of the era, mix it with the new identities of the “other” and consolidates the new zombie definition along the way. However it would not be just to say that the zombie definition completely changed after this period. The idea of “possession” is still very much valid. During the earlier years, zombies were mostly possessed bodies by voodoo spells. This time the space trend makes them to be possessed by aliens. It was not that long ago when REC serial also used the possession concept and became quite popular. It may not be the dominant trend in every period, however it is one that never gets old and never outdated.

In 1959, another alien-zombie movie was released; *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. In this one we see aliens visit the earth with “flying saucers”. However they are met with hostility and as a result they execute Plan 9 which is rising the dead from their graves. There is really no explanation how rising them from dead is going to make a difference but it is mentioned that “those they take from the graves will lead the way for their other operations” as well. So, again there is the suspicion that the dead might be possessed by these alien. However the undead, among them Vampira and Bela Lugosi, do not much

more than wandering around the graveyard at night. Towards the end, humans and aliens meet at last. Very human looking aliens confess that they were trying to get earth's attention to deliver their message. They say their they come with friendly intentions to talk, to ask the earth's help. The first thing they want is recognition, they want to end the earth's denial about their existence. Their second agenda is to stop earth's destruction. Since earth built larger and larger bombs, "split the atom", "exploded the air itself" with a hydrogen bomb; the space people got uneasy. They fear that next thing the earth will discover is the know-how to blow up the sun. They admit that they already have that technology and they just do not trust in earth people because they are "stupid" and "mad" enough to kill each other.

Though it is on the "worst movies ever" lists, it is one of the best examples to see the repeating themes of the decade. The movie is mostly about the fear of technological advancements and wars rather than the communism anxiety and xenophobia. The aliens excuses to take more hostile action are justified. After all, it is not that they are violent, bad creatures who want to take over the earth. They do want to destroy the entire planet, but only because the earth people are too stupid to listen. The real problem is that earth is getting more violent against themselves. Bigger and bigger bombs are built and now, the aliens fear that the time has come to blow up the solar particles which will destroy the whole universe.

As we can see from these examples, zombies of the "Space Age" are merely tools for aliens to invade or destroy the earth. The plots does not revolve around them. They are introduced to the audience as a narrative tool. It was mostly the case in earlier years as well. The undead is either someone's possessed soldier or a spectacle element in the power show off. The real problem for the living is not the undead in these movies. They are only the signifier of the evil that the audience should watch out for.

4. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD AND LIVING DEAD SERIES

In 1968, George A. Romero released just another low budget horror movie. Unexpectedly, it turned out to be more than that. It is fair to say that it changed the course of the genre. Therefore, I will make a small shift in my methodology as well. From this chapter on, I will focus on the topics that are discussed in the genre, rather than a historical survey of the genre. This chapter focuses on the *Living Dead* series. It explores what makes *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968) a breaking point in the genre. It discusses the recurring themes and situations in other movies of the series as well.

4.1. APOCALYPTIC GATHERING

One of the most striking novelties about Romero's masterpiece is the "randomness" in plot development. The movie starts with two siblings (Barbra and Johnny) driving to their parents' graveyard where they got attacked by someone for no reason. Johnny can not run away but Barbra manages to drive away. At night fall, she takes refuge at an abandoned house. While still in panic, another person (Ben) takes shelter in the house. After quite some time, other people come out of the basement. We meet a young couple and family of three. In the end, there is a family which is the core social institution, a young couple and two other random individuals. This demographic picture becomes a significant element in the genre's future.

It is important to note that not everybody is complete strangers to each other. Typical social bonds from the modern times as we know it, still exist. The way in which people with these bonds come together is what makes them random. People from different backgrounds and different cities and towns are stuck in this together. What they have in common is the house they shelter in.

What makes this kind of group of protagonists coincidental is the fact that they become a pattern. In *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978), two SWAT team members

who met each other a few hours ago, a television program executive producer and her traffic reporter boyfriend are stuck with each other. They are flying on the helicopter, landing for supplies and looking for somewhere safe. In the end they build a home together in a shopping mall. In the *Day of the Dead* (Romero, 1985) we see again two different groups; a research group and military. They have been brought together shortly after the zombie breakout in order to figure out the situation. There may be people who knew each other from before like in the previous movies but the important thing is that these two groups would not have been stuck underground together if it was not for the breakout.

The surviving groups in these examples are accidentally together. They are not a group of teenager friends, they are not neighbours, or members of the same family. Their randomness is a reminder to the audience and to the protagonists. It tells us that the world as we know it has come to an end. The old relationships and courtesies are all suspended. Those who can not adapt to it can not survive. Helen is bitten and eaten by her daughter because she can not kill her already dead daughter. Barbra shares the same faith because she throws herself at her zombie brother, thinking that he would help her. In *Diary of the Dead* (Romero, 2007), there is a shift in the way in which characters meet. They are all friends from school. When everything breaks out, they try to get back to their families but soon after they realise that they have no family or home to go back to. The survivors may not be total strangers but still, Romero takes their families and the security of their homes away from his characters.

These incidents are indicators of the end for social institutions as we know it. This is a world where family ties do not mean anything anymore. This is the strongest image that gives us the feeling of an apocalypse in *Night of the Living Dead*. As we do not see what is going on outside that house, there is not a description of an apocalyptic world. This is one of the closest moments we get to that idea. It is important to note that earlier zombie movies did not have apocalyptic sub-texts. They are about innocent people against zombie masters or alien invaders. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956) is the most apocalyptic one among them but in its case, life goes on as it is after the “apocalypse” and nothing seems to be changed. Romero’s apocalypse is a chaotic one

where anarchy runs wild and the world turns upside down. In his following zombie movies, Romero puts his characters through this dilemma over and over. The protagonists eventually start to do better and those who can not kill their loved ones are quick to go before we even learn their names.

The civilisation might be falling apart, however the nature has not completely taken over. To be the quickest to adapt is never enough to survive. When it comes to the living humans, it is not about the survival of the fittest in the natural sense. Ben in *Night of the Living Dead* did not survive despite his survival skills. He knows what to do, how to hide, how to run, he has no older affiliations, no responsibility to anybody, he does not hesitate to do the necessary thing. And the irony was that he was almost devoured by the dead because of a living in the house and at the end he was killed again by the living. As I mentioned many times in previous chapters, the real danger always comes from the living rather than the dead. In the *Dawn of the Dead*, the intruder group with motorcycles and in the *Day of the Dead* the military men ruin the shelter that was hardly acquired.

After the first three movies of the Living Dead series, Romero does not use this theme very much. In *Land of the Dead* (Romero, 2005), *Diary of the Dead* and in the *Survival of the Dead* (Romero, 2009), he does not use the randomness as a theme. The surviving groups are still mostly accidental but the the story covers the part where they have already met. Instead of the accidental get-togethers, he brings out other issues that he had little chance to deal with in his previous movies. One of them is the unity and solidarity among the zombies as opposed to the scattered living.

This distinction is most visible in the *Land of the Dead*. The living has never been polarised this much before. While the poor is living in the streets, the rich lives in their luxurious tower like nothing happened. It is a world where money still matters unlike most apocalyptic zombie movies. There are only two different groups but they are constantly in dispute amongst themselves. The dead is much more diversified but they are united and act as a whole. The cheerleader, the musician, the butcher, the whole zombie town walk together. Usually these unified zombie groups give the sense of a

gang but in this case they look more like protesting citizens rather than a criminal group. The living is not composed of random groups unlike the former three movies. What Romero wants to emphasise here is that the living is the worst enemy to the living.

In the former three movies, we do not see apocalyptic images from towns and big cities. Only in *Dawn of the Dead*, we can see for ourselves the scale of the outbreak, but still these images are not as dramatic and powerful as in the *Land of the Living Dead*'s ghost city image. The audience also have reasons to believe that it's been some time since the *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* as the living knows how to distract zombies. They also know that one bite is enough to become a zombie. Apparently, the basic survival knowledge is established. Since the apocalyptic background is set, Romero does not feel the need to underline it by forcing strangers from different socio-economic backgrounds to come together and by forcing them to demolish the inured institutions. Instead he focuses on the solidarity among the dead and how dispersed the living are.

The important thing to note is that with *Night of the Living Dead*, Romero introduced the apocalypse theme into the genre. We never know for sure how it all started and what happens in the end. It is mentioned in the news that a mysterious high level of radiation might be responsible for the dead walking the earth; however this information is not confirmed. In any case we still do not know if there is a universal cure, a way to co-exist, a way to educate the *ghouls*. We only witness what happens in between and it is always about *homo homini lupus est*.

4.2 LANDSCAPE

Landscape had always significance in a zombie movie. During genre's earlier years, the colonial territory highlighted the connotations associated with east - west, witchcraft - science, insane - sane, savage - civilised dichotomies.

Romero increased the political dosage of the location in the genre. Particularly after *Dawn of the Dead*, genre gained a Marxist twist and this twist was made visible over

readings on landscape. The movies of the series usually has one or two main locations. They might be few in numbers but their reading reveals a lot.

In *Night of the Living Dead*, all the events take place at the countryside. Maybe not for 1960s, but in the future, the countryside will have a special connotation in the genre and that connotations foundations lie here. *Night of the Living Dead* might have borrowed unconsciously the idea from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. There, Miles and Becky run away from the townspeople and when they realise that they are not safe in their homes, private properties or in the streets, they run out of town. They run towards mountains and forests that encircle the town. It is as if they instinctively knew that they should run away from civilisation in order to survive. In future, this dichotomy between city and countryside will even more emphasised.

In *Night of the Living Dead*, the protagonists and the audience learn from the radio that “unidentified assassins” attack people in countryside, suburbs and city centres. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the radio does not really have a clue about the situation, therefore the audience should approach everything it says with doubt. Consequently we do not know yet if it the situation is the same or worse in cities.

For now, we only have a house at countryside in our hands. This house could be a survivalist fortress or just another death trap. Ben tries so hard to make it a survivalism castle by demolishing it. He breaks the furniture and uses the pieces to fortify the doors and windows. He sets a couch on fire to scare “those things” away from the house. He rips off curtains to make torches. In the previous section, it was mentioned that Romero’s apocalypse meant that modern social institutions and morals should be suspended. And we witnessed that not being able to break old family ties could mean death for the whole family. Here, we see that Ben breaks a house apart. A house is a very sacred place in every culture. In American culture, it is cherished much more because it represents additionally one’s right to their private property which is very sacred and important in American society and laws. Romero makes people tear up all the concepts that the society cares. Here as Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner (1998, p. 180) point out, “it is important that (...) that the horror that emerges to destroy the good

middle-class family comes from the basement of the house”. The child, the symbol of the innocence and the future, attacks her own parents, in the basement, symbol of the subconscious. While Ben is tearing down the house physically, a family that can pass “the norm” is getting attacked from within. Romero first carries out an assault on the family and the home and then he moves on to other social institutions.

Ten years later, *Dawn of the Dead* attacks at other notions of modern society. This time, the target is the banality of the daily life and consumerism rather than general social institutions. Two SWAT team members (Peter and Roger) and two TV journalists (Stephen and Francine) fly away from the city with a helicopter and land on a suburban shopping mall. They realise that the place is full of supplies and there are rooms on the roof that can not be seen outside, as a result they decide to stay there for a while.

First, they make a plan to clear out the mall. While they are still on the roof, observing the place, they look over the zombies wandering around and they have the following conversation:

FRANCINE: What are they doing? Why do they come here?

STEPHEN: Some kind of instinct. Memory of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives.

Stephen’s answer is actually very disturbing because the idea that shopping malls are important places in our lives is a very disturbing one. On top of that, it is important to remember that this is a suburban shopping mall. These zombies who are wandering around are probably the people who wake up every morning, drive to work with their cars and sit at a desk all day long, go back home, sleep and do this again. This routine makes some people rich but the people who are repeating the routine are making the money to house and car mortgages, canned and frozen foods in the supermarket. They are constantly buying goods that are mass produced to be fast consumed. They watch commercials and feel the need to buy things. In short, they are kept busy with a routine where they do a bunch of bureaucratic paperwork and in return they satisfy their artificial urge to consume. It is very clear, for Romero, that such a life is no different to become a zombie. Shopping mall zombies are just remembering what they used to do.

They are repeating what they always did and live the same way they used to do. They act by instinct, memory and impulse and the result is spending the life in a shopping mall forever.

And on top of everything, the music that Peter and Roger turn on plays on every corner of the shopping mall is a over-caricatured piece of music and it is played in a very ironic way. While this playful music plays, zombies are falling on the escalator. Romero constantly mocking these zombies who used to live in the exact same way when they were alive. The provocative thing about it is that most of his audience live that perfect American suburban dream as well.

As the movie goes on, we see that the protagonists fall to the same trap as well. First, they withdraw cash and then they go shopping. They redecorate their “penthouse”, they shop for clothes and food. Their faces show excited and happy expressions. One night, Peter even puts a very modern romantic dinner for Francine and Stephen. They rebuild the civilisation as they know it. They are not entirely satisfied with all that, but still no one seems to be complaining except for Francine. At the very beginning, when they first gather supplies, Stephen tells to Francine that “You should see all the great stuff we got Frannie, all kinds of stuff. This place is terrific. It really is, it’s perfect. All kinds of things.” He looks really excited and happy, though Francine looks worried, scared and sick. Later that night, Francine shares her concerns: “Stephen, I’m afraid. You’re hypnotized by this place. All of you! You don’t see that it’s not a sanctuary, it’s a prison! Let’s just take what we need and get out of here!”

However, they do not go away. At one point she gets carried away as well with all the maternity supplies. But then again, when their excitement fades away, it’s Francine again who dares to ask in despair: “What have we done to ourselves?” during one of their very civilised and normalised dinners.

Moreover, as they lock the zombies outside the gates, they guarantee that they are the only ones who have access to all the supplies. They monopolise the access to the goods. And we see the zombies banging on the shop windows or on the glass doors at the mall

entrance. With this image, Romero, reconstructs a model of capitalist society. A group of people have all the access to more than what they need and yet they do not share, they prevent anyone getting near to the stores. They leave the poor outside staring at the shop windows and craving to get in. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner (1998) also point out the violent and selfish behaviour. They argue that the zombies “represent programmed compulsive consumption” while the shopping mall “serves as a metaphor for an America of material goods” (Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner 1998, p. 181). According to them, this change in the character of the zombies from *Night of the Living Dead* to *Dawn of the Dead* is a sign that “Freudian night has given way to a more Marxist dawn” in Romero’s cinematography (Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner 1998, p. 181).

Romero makes his characters feel sorry for the zombies for being stuck at a shopping mall and repeating a sad routine but at the same time he makes them stuck at the same place doing the exact same routine. There is no more big differences between the zombies and the survivors anymore. This is why zombies are not the enemy. They are victims as well in all these scenarios. It is the living who cause all the problems. Here, again another group of the living who want what our protagonists have for themselves brings death to that place. They tear down the gates letting all the zombies in. In the end no one gets to keep that place. A similar situation was depicted very recently in *The Walking Dead* as well. The governor and his people destroy the prison fences which provide protection for Rick and his group just because they want it all to themselves. Rick openly warns the governor that if the fences are destroyed, the prison would not be a shelter for anyone, not for him either. But the governor is not convinced and he tears everything down.

In *Land of the Living Dead*, Romero intensifies these images. This time he builds a luxurious tower, Fiddler’s Green for the rich free from zombies. The rich go shopping, they have dinners served and they live in the residences on top of the shopping complex. Common people live outside this tower in the streets watching the commercials for Fiddler’s Green. They see the building with their eyes but they only know what is inside from the TV. One of the characters, Cholo, works hard to save enough money to buy a

place in Fiddler's Green. What is more, he works for Kaufman, the president of Fiddler's Green's elite board. And when he declares that he saved the necessary amount, Kaufman puts him off on the pretext that there is a long waiting list. The truth is, Fiddler's Green is just a commercial to keep things calm in the streets, an image of artificial possibility and hope. Those who live in it, already know that they will not share the American dream with anyone.

In this movie, we do not simply see how suburban conformism swallows up anyone dead or alive. This time Romero depicts very brutally the distinction between the poor and the rich. He positions the zombies even lower on this pyramid. They are the ones who are cut off from the city. They are constantly harassed and massacred by the living. I used the term "massacre" very deliberately because we hear the same word from one of the living in the movie who attack the zombie town.

Whether the zombies are suburban shoppers or the molested, ordinary townspeople, Romero always blurs the line between the living and the undead. He even makes his character acknowledge them. He underlines the similarities more than the differences. In *Land of the Living Dead*, while observing zombies, Mike says to Riley "They are pretending to be alive" and Riley replies him: "Isn't that what we're doing? Pretending to be alive?" With this line, Romero even blurs the line between aliveness and death. As he stresses out the common grounds, he is able to use zombies as mirror images to make a statement about modernity and everything that comes with it.

4.3 AFRICAN AMERICAN PROTAGONIST

1960s were not the times where one would see many African-American leading roles in theatres. African-American Civil Rights Movement was a hot topic in USA. Duane Jones playing the leading role is one of many shocking elements of *Night of the Living Dead*. More importantly, Jones' character Ben is not depicted in a pejorative way. The audience have their reasons to support him. The moment he comes into the house, he fortifies the house, gathers supplies, sets the radio, gets rid of the bodies inside the house, puts slippers on Barbra's feet and makes her comfortable. He knows how to

scare of the zombies. He is the perfect survivalist. Being in a total catatonic state, Barbra probably would not have survived a minute if it was not for Ben. The biggest trouble maker is a white, middle class, family man (Harry). He is everything that the society holds as norm but he is an even bigger problem than the zombies. He even tries to lock Ben outside with ghouls despite his knocks on the door and calls for help. In the end a moment comes where it is either Ben or Harry and Ben shoots Harry. The audience might have felt weird back then because there is no motif to be sorry for Harry. Romero daringly makes it okay for an African-American man to kill a white father.

Romero's provocative tone does not end here. At the end of the movie, Ben is the only surviving character. He has the audience's sympathy and blessings in his struggle. He manages to survive through the night and the next morning he wakes up with gunshots. While he tries to figure out what is going on, in the safety of the house, he gets shot and killed because he is mistaken for a ghoul. There are sheriff deputies and redneck-looking townspeople armed by the sheriff's department among the group that killed him. Later, in still photographs, we see that he is tossed on top of a ghoul pile. The ending in still photography is an interesting choice. Romero explicitly gives that scene a sense of documentary. He does not let the issue to become insignificant just like any other unlikely situation depicted in the movie. He gives that part a sense of reality and makes it newsworthy. He provokes the audience by showing white, middle class normal American men hunting down African-Americans for no reason and by making it extra realistic than the rest of the movie.

In *Dawn of the Dead*, again we have an African-American character, Peter. Just like Ben, he is the most calm, reasonable and helpful character. He almost dies because of whites but manages to get to the shopping mall. There, he defends their territory with his best. He prepares a romantic evening for Stephen and Francine giving them the privacy they need. Both Ben and Peter are like companions one should invite to a deserted island. Once again what he fought so hard to build and protect is torn down by an armed gang of whites.

We face with another important African-American character (Big Daddy) in *Land of the Dead* as well. At the opening sequence we see that the living distract the undead with fireworks. While they are catatonically watching flashing lights in the sky, the living kill them and pass by them to get supplies. Big Daddy seems to have figured the trick somehow and he tries to hinder others from looking up. When the living leaves, he gathers every zombie in the town and starts marching towards the Fiddler's Green. Along the way, he manages to utilise a gun and teaches others how to use their weapons as well. He is like a folk hero who rebels against the injustice.

It seems like Romero deliberately casts African-American actors for the "good guy" parts. However, these characters carry out another connotation. Here we should remember that zombie genre gets its root from the voodoo culture which is associated with Africans. In *Dawn of the Dead*, Peter reminds us that connection by saying that his granddad was a voodoo priest in Trinidad and that he used to say "When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the Earth". This shows us that Peter is not as clueless as the rest of us about the situation. He would probably never imagine something like that either. But still, both Ben and Peter are surprisingly great survivalists. Maybe this is because somewhere deep down they have some knowledge about the situation because of their cultural background. Big Daddy may not be a survivor but he also carries a difference which is the make-up on his face. He does not show signs of decomposition or scars like the rest of the zombies. Instead, he has a tribal make-up on his face. These connotations might be intentional; meaning Romero might have wanted to make a reference or a small act of homage to the genre's earliest years. Or he might have fallen into the same orientalist imagery. Either way, it is fair to say that he maintain his provocative political tone in every aspects of his movies.

5. BIOHAZARD

28 Days Later (Boyle, 2002) achieved what *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968) did back in 1968. It changed the future of the zombie genre for good even though it was not totally a zombie movie. *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) was released in 2002 as well. These two movies changed many aspects of the genre. In this chapter, the focus will be placed on *28 Days Later*, *28 Weeks Later* (Fresnadillo, 2007) and *Resident Evil* series. It will discuss which aspects of the genre are changed and what way.

5.1 THE OUTBREAK

2002 is a milestone for the genre like 1968. It was a new chapter in the genre's history. The first novelty that stands out is that the audience is given the chance to witness the big bang. Both *Resident Evil* and *28 Days Later* open with a prologue dedicated to explain how things get out of control.

28 Days Later starts at "Cambridge Primate Research Centre". A group of animal rights activists break into the facility to document the conditions in which animals are being held. While they are taking pictures, someone from the science team catches them. Meanwhile one of the activists gets so carried away with what she sees that she decides to free the monkeys. Despite the scientist's warnings she sets one free. The freed monkey attacks the activist. First she throws up blood and then her eyes become all red and she starts acting weird and violent as well.

Resident Evil starts with an inscription about a commercial entity called Umbrella Company. It says that the corporation became the largest in the USA. It also says that medical products, health care, military weaponry, viral weaponry are the industries that the corporation makes the most profit. Right from the start, a dangerous combination presents itself. Then we see someone filling a case with DNA tubes and releasing one in the laboratory before they leave. Next thing we know, the system in the building locks everybody in and then kills them. The thing is they do not stay dead.

As mentioned above these two opening scenes depict the beginnings of a breakout. In the former, the scientist tells the activists that the monkeys are infected with rage and it is dangerous to let them go. In the latter we are informed about an Umbrella Corporation and what it is capable of. Next, we see that one of their experiment is released in the air and created a highly biohazardous environment.

In the earliest zombie movies, the knowledge about the cause consisted of mostly rumours, supernatural or religious beliefs. Either way the explanation was never compatible with positive sciences. Only the voodoo master could break the spell. Since they were not very eager to reverse the curse, killing them was the most common and effective “cure”. Moreover, in some cases, the enslaved zombie victims go back to their lives as soon as the spell is broken.

Whereas, in apocalyptic zombie movies, neither the characters nor the audience had an idea about the reason why the dead started walking or why they eat flesh. Since nothing about the reasons and the beginning was revealed, it has never been clear if there was a solution to all this or not. It would be fair to say that Romero owned the post-apocalyptic zombie movie genre and he never showed interest in the reasons for such an event. At the end of most of his films, surviving characters went towards obscurity. They never had an idea about how to reverse the situation. Some found a way to condition the zombies eat non-human flesh, some found a way to exist with them in separate territories. However a hope for cure was not even an issue.

It is only logical that Romero did not care about a “cure” since there was nothing to be cured. His ghouls/zombies were already all dead. There was no one to cure. Post Danny Boyle period was able to offer a biological cure because their zombies are not dead. They are only infected people.

In *28 Days Later*, the scientist explicitly indicates that the monkeys are infected with rage. The freed monkey bites the first human out of rage, not because it is a flesh-eating animated corps. The bitten person does not die. The infection takes her over in a few

seconds. This is why in *28 Weeks Later*, all the zombies are dead because of starvation. Actually, nobody gets up after they are dead. In *28 Weeks Later* (Fresnadillo, 2007), a possibility for a cure present itself. A woman is discovered to be immune to the virus. She and her son share a gene that causes their eyes to be two different colours. As they share this rare gene, the boy might be immune as well. However, before any study is conducted, the mother dies and it is not very clear what happens to the boy.

Resident Evil is a similar story. As the pieces of the sequel get released, we put together the narrative puzzle and find answers to what makes people zombies. It seems like a scientist developed a cure for his daughter's rare disease. The cure is a virus called the T-virus. Umbrella Corporation takes over the project and develops this virus as a means to "build" better human beings or human weapons. However, the virus gets out in the Umbrella Facility called The Hive while it still shows unpredictable results. Some people become flesh eating raged people, some mutate and become human weapons as intended meaning, they are fast and powerful. And there are some, like our protagonist Alice and the scientist's daughter Angela, whose DNAs bond with the virus perfectly.

In the first *Resident Evil*, we see that there is an antidote for the virus. In *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (Anderson, 2010), Alice is injected with the anti-virus and then in *Resident Evil: Retribution* (Anderson, 2012) she is injected with the virus again, becoming the ultimate human weapon. However as we have seen in *Resident Evil: Extinction* (Mulcahy, 2007), even Umbrella Corporation still does not fully understand the virus they created. Moreover, they work more on perfecting and understanding the virus' results rather than reversing the situation.

Genre's recent examples such as the ones mentioned above might provide a totally different image of the genre, however it is important to note that Romero was also still making *Living Dead* movies during the same time period. He, himself, also broke some of the genre's conventions that was his creation in the first place. He switched from groups composed of random survivors to people who knew each other for a longer time. He showed that the cities could be retaken from the zombies, that living in the nature was not the only solution for survival even though that model meant a horrible

recreation of capitalist modern society. On the other hand, he insisted that the ghouls or the zombies are the undead eating human flesh. He also kept defending the idea that zombies act with their memories and that through these memories they can be conditioned.

Flesh eating is the most persistent convention Romero ever brought. The idea inspired many other provocative and political movie in the 1970s as well such as *The Hills Have Eyes* (Craven, 1977) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974). The movies were about cannibalism rather than zombies, but still they helped the flesh eating as a concept to improve its political connotations. Now it is an indispensable part of the genre. It was definitely more influential than zombies being death since the genre went back to its origins in that part. In the early years of the genre, zombies were not necessarily dead. They were mostly possessed or invaded. In 2000s, we see that this idea made a come back as what we call zombie in *Resident Evil*, *REC* or in *28 Days Later* is not dead either.

A zombie apocalypse is another Romero theme that has been carried into the 21st century. It is now even more drastic and widespread than ever. With Romero we were never sure if the outbreak got out of United States. More importantly we have never seen a city becoming a ghost town. The shots of post apocalyptic London in *28 Days Later* and Raccoon City in *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (Witt, 2004) were very powerful images. They portrayed metropolises as deserted steel dumpsites.

It might have been *12 Monkeys* (Gilliam, 1995) that inspired such images. *12 Monkeys* depicted a post-apocalyptic Philadelphia in the year 2035, years after a virus was leaked in the city. The city looks really chaotic. It looks like people left in a hurry or as if they disappeared in a single second while they were still trying to get to safe place. This is what James Cole sees when he is sent back to the city. We find the same feeling that this post-apocalyptic city gives in London where Jim wakes up and in Raccoon City that Alice arrives at.

In *12 Monkeys* we know that the virus wiped out most of planet's population and that the survivors are living underground. A destruction at this scale is repeated in recent examples as well. In *Resident Evil: Extinction*, there are times when Alice fears that she is the only human being left alive on the planet. At the beginning of *28 Weeks Later* we see that London is totally deserted and it is being newly repopulated. However at the end of the movie, we are given the hint that the virus got out of Britain as well. There is also rumour that *REC 4: Apocalypse* (Balaguero, 2014) will tell the story of what happens when Angela gets out of the building and that it will depict a deserted and chaotic urban space.

A zombie apocalypse might be originally a Romero idea, however it seems like it realised its potential to its full in the 21st century. These movies depict what happens in big cities and in the world after quite some time and they all foreshadow dark futures where the population is wiped out. Romero does not talk much about world population in the first three movies of the series. His *Living Dead* movies made in the 2000s do not deal with the apocalypse the way in which genre's infection representatives do. Among them only *Land of the Dead* portrays a deserted post-apocalyptic city. And there, unlike its contemporary examples, Romero locks the living in and fills the suburbia with the undead. Other post-apocalyptic movies are in the search of a way to survive only in the nature. They stay away from the cities since they are more crowded with infected people. They only go in when they really have to and most of the time it ends with at least half of the cast is lost. Romero's Pittsburgh on the other hand, is free of zombies and the living look for supplies in suburban stores. Rather than following the contemporary trends, Romero focuses on carrying his story on to the next level. With *Night of the Living Dead*, he starts the story in the countryside, and then he goes on to the suburban mall, underground and finally the city centre. He visits and reinterprets each landscape individually to create a complete story. He comments on different landscapes and environments to reach at a general conclusion about the universe he created.

5.2 ARMIES AND CORPORATIONS

Whether surviving in cities or away from civilisation, all these movies still have common enemies. One of them is big corporations and the other one is the military / armed groups. It is already mentioned in a previous chapter how Ben was killed because he was mistaken for a ghoul in *Night of the Living Dead*. This was not the last case where a group armed with fire arms whether civil or military doing despicable things in the name of protecting the living. When we consider Ben's and armed townsmen's racial profile, the possibility that mistaking Ben for a ghoul may not be an honest mistake comes to mind. George Zimmerman case shows that when an African American is spotted in the neighbourhood, non-African Americans get disturbed, scared or panicked. Even when the president is an African-American, the racial issues are still not eradicated. In 1960s, it was much more hot as an issue. Of course we can not be sure if Ben were to be white, would the ghoul hunters would double check if he was alive or not.

In *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978), again an armed group launches an attack on the mall. While they get nothing out of pillaging the mall, they destroy someone else's shelter and home as well. When there are no more laws to regulate them, guns become even more dangerous. One's right to self-defence and firearms has always been an important issue in the US. States have their own different regulations but there is no consensus on which one is best for both protection and less crime rate. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see what gun owning causes in all these movies, since they provide the perfect laboratory to test how humans would act when there is no jail. It is also important to keep in mind that the test results are only speculations of directors and producers, of course.

Romero does not skip on a chance when he can further his comments on the military forces. In *The Crazies* (Romero, 1973), he points at two threats for the living. One is the "crazies" and the other one is the military who has been ordered to kill everyone on sight whether "crazy" or not. Additionally, one of the tag lines used for the movie is "Why are the good people dying?". Apparently, Romero's answer to that question is the

army and the government. In *Day of the Dead* (Romero, 1985), again he shows how violent, intolerant and ignorant the military is. In *Diary of the Dead* (Romero, 2007) our protagonists' are pulled aside by the military and all their supplies are taken from them. Romero goes as far as to portray the military as pillager bandits. In the sequel, *Survival of the Dead* (Romero, 2010), the leader of the military group confesses that they did looting along the road. It is obvious that they did it because they can get whatever they want when they point their guns at people's face. Romero shows this twice, first time in *Day of the Dead* and the second time in *Survival of the Dead*. By repeating the scene, he really emphasises the power inequality.

Danny Boyle's duo also put emphasis on the military. In *28 Days Later*, the protagonists Jim Selena and Hannah take refuge at a mansion where a group of military men use as base. It seems like a hospitable and protected refuge at the beginning but soon after it is revealed how disturbed these men became. They reveal that their intention was to rape the two women from the start and they prove that each and every one of them has no problem with killing anybody, even their friends.

In *28 Weeks Later*, the army is again on the target. This time "an American-led Nato force enters London" to repopulate the city with survivors and to ensure their security. However when the virus gets out again, they become unable to control the situation. When it is uncontrollable, the "code red" is issued, ordering soldiers to shoot anyone indiscriminately. People who survive the infected, die because the military wants to control the situation. The situation is very similar to the *Crazies*.

The Umbrella Corporation in *Resident Evil* is depicted as a commercial corporation, a very advanced science laboratory and a military power all at the same time. The corporation shows no hesitation of killing, cloning and killing again the clone. In *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, the military locks everyone inside the Raccoon City and shoots anyone who tries to run away just to test what their product could do. *REC* shares the same theme as well. The building gets quarantined and afterwards no one is let in or out even if it means death of innocent and healthy people.

All these movies represent similar ideals. First and foremost, they all show that possession of firearms create a power inequality. They literally use these props as “Chekhov’s gun”. Secondly, they speculate that corporations, governments or military, their priority is to understand and control the situation. Whenever there is something they do not know or they fear of something, they just start put everything and everybody down. The movies do not always pass judgment on their actions but they all agree in the nature of these institutions. Thirdly, they also show how powerful modern institutions become powerless in certain situations and how their actions cause these disasters. In 1968, Romero started a series of provocative attacks on social institutions and years later, these movies produced a second wave of provocative tone in cinema by attacking modern political institutions.

5.3 THE SUPPLIES

Romero’s inspiration is still felt in many aspects other than the mentioned above as well. The one that this chapter covers is related with the concept of apocalypse and it is the supplies, meaning; what is necessary in order to survive. As Ben showed us in *Night of the Living Dead*, radio and guns are the most vital ones. They become prominent more than they do in any genre. On the contrary they do not work at all in a slasher. Radio or TV channels would hear about the events after everyone is dead but the final girl. Those who run from the killer might get hold of a gun, a car or a phone but most of the time these props do not help the chased victims. In the post-apocalyptic genre however, Romero made it work and it got established almost as a rule.

First of all, the telecommunication devices are very crucial. Radio and television are the only source in *Night of the Living Dead* that people can confirm the flesh eating and the necessity to shoot the ghouls in the head. But of course if they are still alive to hear the broadcast and if they have not been attacked yet. Otherwise, the news is a late delivery of what they already know. In *Land of the Dead*, TV broadcast becomes a propaganda tool that produces dreams in the streets. In *Diary of the Dead* and *Survival of the Dead*, internet becomes the only trustful source as people upload raw footage and TV provide fabricated commentary on any footage.

Shooting and documenting itself become very important for characters as well. As they keep on shooting whatever happens in both *REC* series and in *Diary of the Dead*. Both movies are shot with a first person camera and the characters insist on documenting everything.

In *Resident Evil*, radio broadcast is an important way to find survivors. Alice's communication with the main computer is also important. Sometimes she is helpful, sometimes threatening, but still it is important for Alice to keep in touch with the Red Queen.

From *Night of The Living Dead* up until last *Resident Evil* movie, telecommunication, radio signals and documenting the events are very important to characters. However this strong convention is completely ignored in *The Walking Dead*. In this famous TV series, our characters do not have access to any long distance communication device. Only in the third season, Rick starts getting phone calls from somewhere safe where the outbreak did not touch. He talks to the people on the phone to get his people there but later it is revealed that these sequences were Rick's hallucinations. While in the genre conventions, all communication devices are important, in *The Walking Dead*, a communication device rips the main character away from reality. Not only the telephone does not work but also it breaks Rick's last remaining connection with the reality off.

Fire arms are another issue that *The Walking Dead* does not agree with the rest of the genre. Since *Night of the Living Dead*, fire arms are crucial to kill zombies. It gives the survivors to shoot from long distance and run away quickly. In *Resident Evil*, guns almost become Alice's limbs. She can not survive neither zombies nor the Umbrella soldiers without her guns. However, as mentioned many times before, possession of guns triggers other conflicts among the living.

In *The Walking Dead*, the fact that the zombies are stimulated with sound is much more emphasised. The sound that the guns make attracts other zombies and it can attract big

hordes upon our protagonists. Additionally, guns and ammunition are hard to acquire. Therefore, they use their guns as last resort. When possible, they get closer with the zombie and use their knives. Some use crossbows and katana. As in the case of communication devices, fire arms are burden in *The Walking Dead* unlike other cases in the genre. Still, monopoly upon fire arms brings nothing but trouble in almost every zombie movie.

Vehicles are also utilised in significant ways. In *Night of the Living Dead*, a truck becomes their only hope of getting out of the house and going to a rescue station. In *Dawn of the Dead*, they use the delivery trucks outside the mall to bar the entrance doors. In its remake the survivors rebuild and modify the trucks to get a safe passage of the mall as well. In *Land of the Dead*, a modified and fortified truck called “Dead Reckoning” is like a character in the movie. It is the vehicle that provides an easy supply run to the zombie town for the living. Later, Cholo kidnaps it and Kaufman sends Riley to take it back. When Riley and his friends take it back, they use the truck to help the living who are left in the streets without any protection. In *Resident Evil* series, again, cars, motorcycles and trucks are all important transportation vehicles which provide both mobility and protection.

On top of all that, the helicopter seems to be the ultimate vehicle. It is one of the main vehicles in *Dawn of the Dead* and *Resident Evil* series. It provides faster passage without any contact with the zombies. It allows the survivors to pass over the hordes without any danger. Helicopter had significance in *The Walking Dead* as well. During the first season, seeing a helicopter flying created great suspense in the plot. Later, we witnessed how governor got hold of a military helicopter. And yet, it may not be the same helicopter since the former seemed civilian while the latter was definitely military. It would be unfair to comment on the role of the helicopter in the series before there is more revealed.

On the other hand, *The Walking Dead* has another important vehicle which is a military tank. In the first season, Rick finds himself in an apocalyptic big city where zombie hordes occupy the streets. He comes across a tank and hides inside until they pass by. In

the fourth season, a military tank provided a turn point in the plot. After losing everything, governor meets new people, people who have a tank. That tank becomes a trump card since it gives the upper hand to the governor and everything falls apart for Rick's group when governor shows up at their gates with his tank.

Romero emphasises the importance of tools and devices in a post-apocalyptic world. And each movie of the same genre follows this idea by making different comments and bringing other perspectives in. In this genre all these props work in the mechanical sense but they are not always bring salvation to those who use them. As opposed to zombie genre, in slashers all of these props do not work.

6. THE WALKING DEAD

The Walking Dead is a TV show, not a movie, but it has an ongoing influence on the genre. It changed all the topics that the genre has been talking about since 1968. This chapter will discuss which topics that the series opened to discussion. It will also explain how the series deal with these topics.

6.1 RE-CIVILIZATION

The universe of *The Walking Dead* is a post-zombie apocalypse world where there are no governments, no hospitals, no courthouses, no military. All state institutions that modern governments provide do not exist anymore. That already has been pretty much the idea in the genre, and by “the genre” I only mean post-1968, post-apocalyptic part of the genre, the difference with *The Walking Dead* is that the civilisation question is at the centre of the series. It is not just a background, a base to discuss other issues. It is the issue this time. Moreover, the series is hardly about zombies. They are just a giant cast of extras. Unless the characters we know turn into zombies, they have no significance whatsoever.

The show is mostly about the social contract theory. It depicts a world where modern civilisation has ended abruptly. This end starts a period where all the contracts are signed off. The relationship between a providing ruler and the individual is ended. All individuals live in the state of nature now. What the show really speculates about is life in a non-organised society.

At this point it is important that we do not know why there was a zombie breakout. It has been a long time since we did not know how all this started. The show is not pointing any fingers at the modern entities because its intent is not to antagonise them. There is no corporation, government or military to blame because the zombie is not that a big deal to the show. Zombie is just an igniting motif to speculate on the hypothetical state of nature. Therefore the question is not how the humans survive in a post zombie

apocalypse but rather how humans survive without the social contract. The entire discussion is about if we need them in the first place.

The show suggest several answers to its own question. The first answer is that people would move a lot and live a nomadic life not because they prefer it but because they have nothing else. Invasion of a house or a town do not keep them safe for a long time. Settling down is a good dream but a bad idea for them. In the second season after they make camps and move on the roads for some time, the group meets a farmer, Hershel and his daughters. They settle in their ranch even though they were welcomed for a short time period. They have big lands they can work on and some animals. It looks like they can live there forever. However that place get overrun by zombies and they find themselves on the road again.

Then they find a prison which is initially a state institution whose function is to keep the world safe from the ones inside. Rick and his group take over the prison building and settle in to protect themselves from the outside world. They convert a location's purpose to the opposite direction. Converting the locations is really one of genre's trademarks. Therefore, it is inevitable for The Waking Dead to follow the path.

While Rick's group live in a prison, we see another group living in a neighbourhood they call Woodbury. This is a suburban town where there is running water, electricity, gladiatorial games. More importantly they have high gates protected by armed people. They live there like nothing happened to the world. Kids go to school, adults throw backyard parties where they gather around cool lemonade or barbecue. It looks too good to be true. After witnessing every misery Rick's group had to go through, it is quite shocking for the audience to believe such a society is still possible.

While the governor and his people find the civilisation in creating a society as close as they were used to, Rick, Hershel and Darryl go back to the basics of civilisation. The fact that they are no longer nomads and that they are settled in a place of their own is enough of a big step. There, Hershel tries to talk Rick into growing some crops and animals. He tells him that he does not have to be alarmed all the time, now that they

have a safe place he can let go of the tightness, the weariness of the war. Taking Rick's gun away and replacing it with a mattock is Hershel's own way of starting a civilisation. As the elder wise of the group, he canalises the group leader to agriculture.

While the governor finds a way to civilisation in creating a prototype modern society, Rick and his group find civilisation in settling down and in cultivating. These two types of civilisation is juxtaposed in front of the audience long before Rick and the governor meet each other. Until the day their paths cross, the series grant the audience a preview to both of them to be able to build a clear view.

6.2 REGIME

The series depict two different types of leaders with two different types of societies. One is still carrying the habits of the modern societies and the other one is closer to the state of nature. We do not witness the rise of the former. We only know that they live a suburban life in a medieval town. Their town is surrounded by high walls and there are guards on top of the walls. Their town has no relation to any other neighbour town. There is a governor who is really popular among the population. He lives in a guarded big mansion like a feudal lord. These descriptions fit the feudal town.

Inside they live in suburban family houses with two or more story houses with backyards. Kids are walking to the school, everybody is friendly with each other, they have backyard parties for some occasions... Inside they live the perfect American suburban life. Probably because it is the only life they know to live. Here, the writers of the show are repeating a Romero concept. For the sake of security and conformity, people are locking themselves in a paradise-like prison.

Looking from this perspective, the same thing could be said for Rick's group as well. They are also locking themselves in their own shopping mall which is at least a really a prison, not someplace pretending to be the promised land. The real difference between the prison and Woodbury lie in the way in which they are governed.

As far as we witness, the governor keeps a militia-like armed force very close to him. He conveys a great deal of dirty work via them. There is one incident where he approaches friendly to a group of soldiers who have a helicopter and then his men kill the soldiers to capture the helicopter for the governor. Then, the governor gives a public speech where he explains the way in which they captured the helicopter. He tells a story in which they find some survivors but because of some fabricated pretexts they are now dead and the helicopter is now in Woodbury's service. One more popularity point for the governor since nobody knows he lies. Woodbury is governed very much like modern governments. The army doing all the dirty works governments need and politicians tell manipulated and made-up stories about the truth. And the people are not even curious as long as they are provided well. So really, there is nothing original or avant garde in the governor's way of running things.

It is Rick who struggles to find to the "right" way while learning by trial and error. He is really in the state of nature and tries to write a social contract. He is struggling to find the answers to what Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau dedicated their works to formulate a proposition. Moreover, it is not even clear when he became the leader of the group. When he met the group there were already other people who have leadership charisma among them. There has never been an election for the position either. He naturally became the responsible person whom everyone looks up to. He did not even ask for it. Maybe because he was given the governance rather than taking it, he always feels the urge to consult with everyone else before he makes a decision. Every decision making process is like a referendum. He might not think of the political science terms but what he establishes is a non-bureaucratic participatory democracy. With this system, they take a series of decisions along the way and their decisions set a chain of events. These events result in Rick killing Shane; his arch-enemy, the greatest challenge to his authority and decisions. The sound of gunshot attracts many zombies, creating the last link on the chain. In the end a big zombie horde invasion to the farm. They all have to flee the ranch in a hurry. They do not find the time to organise, they are all scattered around. They have no other place to go and no communication between them. Some members of the group are devoured by zombies or they turn into them as well. The survivors hardly find each other and they are left with no supplies, no place to go.

Throughout the season Rick was stressed because he was expected to make all the decisions and with the intention to please everyone, he consulted others. Of course, they were not always in agreement. When Rick chose one opinion over the other, he was questioned and objected. Still, none of them steps up to take responsibility. The one instance where Rick captures a guy from another group who has their eyes on the farm and does not know what to do with him. The guy says that he did not like that group, that he would stay with them and make himself useful. When Rick takes the issue to discussion some think that they should kill him since he might be lying, might run away and tell the others where they are. But others object by arguing that no one should be punished on the possibility that they might commit crime in the future. In the end, the situation gets out of hand and Shane acts on his own. That leads to Rick killing him and that leads to farm's overrun... After they barely survive the ranch, Rick is blamed once again for a number of reasons but in the end he is expected to provide a solution to their current situation.

After Rick calms everybody down, in a close up shot declares that "this is not a democracy anymore". At the beginning of the next season, they take over the prison and it seems like Rick meant what said. He is faster in decision making and acts on instincts rather than thinking what is right and wrong. Additionally, as I mentioned before, he loses himself in his hallucinations, ignoring the rest of the group. Power and death of his wife consume him for some time and then he comes to his sense when there is an outside threat again.

As usual, this big threat does not come from the zombies but rather from another living; the governor. Their first encounter transforms both of them. Before they meet, governor's reign of lies and manipulation makes him a closet dictator. He runs Woodbury as he please and he keeps busy everyone with entertainment. People feel secure and well provided. So they sit back, enjoy the entertainment and do not interfere with any political issue. When governor starts a quest to take the prison from Rick's people, he spreads lies again to recruit a bigger army than his militia. He manages to recruit new soldiers and march to the prison. One thing leads to another and Woodbury

army members want to go back to their town, leaving the people in the prison be. On their way back to Woodbury, governor goes homicidal on each of them and kills them all for leaving the prison. Survivors of the Woodbury take refuge in the prison at the end of the season.

Even though non-democratic Rick who made sever and rigid decisions did not accept new people into his “kingdom”, he opens the gates to the refugees. The encounter brings out the dictator in the governor’s rule whereas it softens Rick. In the following season, Rick is not the person he was in the second season but he is not the guy in the third season either.

The questions about how to establish a natural and organic governance seem to be answered at least at the basis. This is when Hershel asks Rick to replace the gun with the mattock. They trust in their home, each other and they seem to establish a rule that everyone is happy with. And while they play house, more zombies start to force the fences down and somewhere the governor makes revenge plans again. Now that the governor is dead and Rick’s group is taken captive by the Terminus group, we will see what will happen in October, 2014.

6.3 LAW AND ORDER

Crime and punishment are the show’s “trending topics”. The meeting where everybody discusses if they should kill someone because they might have to in the future was mentioned before. Characters who are worried about the ranch’s security want him dead. While others ask the rest of them if it is punish someone who did not commit a crime yet, on the hypothesis that he might.

The rules and regulations on adhesion is vague for a long time. They turn away one group who wants to take refuge in the centre but then they accept Woodbury survivors. The admission seems arbitrary and in direct relation with Rick’s mood on that day. In the fourth season we see that they came up with some questions that works as an application form. That brings at least a criteria and order on the issue.

Another controversial issue is the terms and conditions to kill the living. As in the rest of the genre, most of the times, living is the worst enemy of the living. Our protagonists see no reason not to kill anyone who steals from them or who threatens them. They seem to have an unspoken solidarity pact according to which they are free to kill anyone to protect themselves and people in the group.

The problem with this pact is, when there is threat from within the group, there is a judiciary gap. In the fourth season Carol kills two people just because they are sick. She fears that they might spread the disease. And if people start dying inside the prison, it is known that they will get up and kill before sickness. So she decides to act on her own and kills two people who have the flu. In the next episodes they quarantine sick people and search for the killer. When Tyreese finds out that the woman he loves is murdered and burned, he wants to kill the killer. When Rick finds out that it was Carol, he drives her out, gives her supplies and then expels her from the group without consulting anyone in the group. While someone might find her actions extreme, Rick decides that there were extenuating circumstances and sentence her with exile.

Later towards the end of the season, Carol, Tyreese, Lizzie, Mika and Judith travel together. Lizzie starts to show a compassion towards the dead. She kills them when she has to but when she sees an amputated one, she starts feeding him. She argues that he can no longer walk and bite anyone, therefore there is no reason to kill him. She also argues that they are still human, they are just different and change does not have to be a bad thing. She also befriends a zombie with whom she plays games. Carol talks to her and tells that they are not people anymore, that they are dangerous. This discussion is a very old one in the genre. There is always the dispute where some kill zombies and anyone who is bitten while some others lock zombies away and keep them alive waiting for a solution to bring them back.

The Walking Dead pushes the issue towards the next level by adding a new complication. Lizzie, desperate to prove her point, kills her sister Mika. She thinks that her sister is not dead, that she will be just changed and that she won't hurt her. Tyreese

and Carol evaluate the situation on together and decide that she can not be around other people. The next day, Carol executes the judgement in killing Lizzie. After that Carol confesses Tyreese that she killed the two sick people back in the prison that he might pass the same judgment on her. Unexpectedly, Tyreese forgives her.

These connected events become even more interesting when we consider that Carol could not kill her zombie daughter in the second season. She was unable to kill her zombie daughter, however, she killed Lizzie, a girl around her daughter's age, when she turned her back to Carol. Tyreese's forgiveness is also interesting to observe which acts are considered to be crime and which are not by the characters. It is also keep in mind that the characters transform a lot during the seasons and that their ideas about what is right and wrong vary in time.

One last note about these events should be on Tyreese's racial profile. He is an African-American character. His forgiveness and peacefulness compared to Carol's cold bloodedness is an image that re-invents the African-American protagonist image as well. He is one of the most helpful and self-giving characters in the show. He is not the tough survivalist character we used to see in earlier examples. Michonne's profile is more suited to that image. She is the ultimate expert on survival. She is walking around alone in the woods with a Japanese sword and her zombie pets. She looks very savage at first but as we get to know her, we understand that she was just a tough survivalist. She actually craves for civilisation and a society just as the rest of the group.

7. CONCLUSION

Psychoanalysis may be the most popular body of theories that has been utilised in studies related with the horror genre. The variety of theories, approaches and methods make rich texts possible. For my research I focused on the most prominent zombie movies produced in the Anglo-Saxon culture with a historical perspective. My aim was to contextualise the trends in the political of identity of the zombies and the monstrous. The topics and issues that the genre discusses vary in time but as the social anxieties change, the monsters transform accordingly.

It is no surprise that in the 1930s, the genre was focused on the traumas of late 19th century. Independence was still a discussion for the colonial states and Europe was going through the post-war stress and an upcoming war stress at the same time. Other popular and cult horror movies live on the same issues as the zombie movies. There were already many undeads in theatres such as vampires, Frankensteinian monsters and mummies. Zombies were somewhere in between a mummy and Frankenstein's monster. They did not talk and showed no enthusiasm or feeling towards life. Their difference was that they obeyed orders unlike any other undead because most of the time zombies were not dead yet. They were in a trance like state like their soul was taken from them. They only obeyed as the only thing left to them was their bodies. All the movies from that period depicted a dichotomy between the white man carrying the white burden and oriental knowledge perverting, wrecking and enslaving everyone else.

After the World War II, the world was getting even more polarised on western and eastern blocs. There was an ongoing race in spy technology and space technology. Atom bomb was seen as the ultimate destruction that the scientific development brought. Now, there were new advancements in technology. People were afraid of what was these new advancements will bring on them. United States was using their influential media and cinema as state propaganda tool, like many states do. They were trying to assure people in the necessity of the developments that they were all scared of because there was a threat coming from the east, attacking from the space. Anti-

communism hysteria was the only way to keep everything in control. After all, creating a big and a common enemy is still very influential.

And like that, zombie movies of the Cold War period had their share of popular themes such as invaders from space and nuclear hazards. Sometimes there were warnings from the space as well to the people of the earth. All the nations were advised to work together. Otherwise they would not see the real threat coming because they are fighting with each other all the time. Aliens in the movies were sometimes communism symbols and sometimes this threatening father who urged his kids to pull themselves together.

When Romero decided to make a zombie, he gave them something to make them more scary. He made sure they were dead, not in trance, not invaded, not something else. They were defiantly dead and they ate flesh. He depicted the intestines, limbs and flesh being devoured in close up scenes. It has never been this horrible. And we never even knew the reason for the undead. It is mentioned that a space shuttle was coming back from Venus to earth with mysterious high level of radiation. But it is not something that the director lay stress on. In fact, as Dendle accounts, the film originally was intended to be released without an explanation for the breakout. However “the distributors wouldn’t release the film until the crew tagged on some sort of explanation for the phenomenon” (Dendle 2001, p. 121).

More importantly, Romero was bringing new topics into the genre. He was stressing the idea of the other being among us rather than way over in east or way up in space. His filmography deals with conformism, conservatism, banality of the everyday life, capitalism, xenophobia and social institutions. He uses the post-apocalyptic world as a means to further his comments on the modern American society.

His ideas were re-employed in other genre’s as well. The concept of flesh eating became a political tool in other horror movies such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (Craven, 1977). Two of Cronenberg movies, *Shivers* (Cronenberg, 1975) and *Rabid* (Cronenberg, 1977), provided a passage from Romero to Boyle. These two Cronenberg movies were not zombie movies per se but

like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and its remakes, they carried the genre's connotations. They were both focused on the significances and connotations of certain locations like Romero movies. Through the locations and the socio-economic profile of the people who use them, Cronenberg was also making provocative comments on the society. However he was more focused on the viral diseases as a motif for people to act in a certain way rather than the flesh eating undeads.

The idea that a virus could turn people into zombielike monsters made a come back in *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002), *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) and *REC* (Balaguero and Plaza, 2007). This time the idea got much more widespread and popular. These movies that used virus and biohazard as a motif, attacked on the corporate and governmental institutions rather than social institutions like Romero did. They picked up the pieces where Romero left things and targeted the remaining taboos of the society.

The fact that genre is politically very engaged makes important the genre's iconography as well. The way in which the idea of public and private space is transformed and the connotations they have been charged with provide rich textual material. They deconstruct family, home and neighbourhood in order to survive. They present shopping malls and suburban towns as prison and present agriculture and prison as a cradle of civilisation. This is why they are mostly provocative and political texts rather than scary and gore for the sake of scary and gore.

It was also exemplified throughout this work that the genre deals with modern, capitalist and colonialist Western ideology. Not all zombie movies but the most prominent American zombie movies bring the tools of modernity up for discussion. In early years it is mostly about slavery and colonialism; then it becomes more about political and economic ideologies "other" than capitalism; later it is about consumerism and gun politics; and it recently became all about corporations and bio-weaponry.

Most recently this legacy is taken over by a TV production; *The Walking Dead*. The series changed the game for the genre by opening up new discussions such as the nature of social contract and the state of nature. This issue is the main subject of *The Walking*

Dead. Romero's films and following post-apocalyptic films all brought criticism on the modern society, by deconstructing its values and institutions. However it was *The Walking Dead* that demolished all of them for good. Previously we witnessed what would happen if the modernity has ended but with this TV show, we are going one step forward and asking other questions. The human need for civilisation, the nature of civilisation, legitimacy of leaders and law are all put to questioning. The characters struggle and transform constantly, they find answers by trial and error.

Rather than providing a criticism for the modern era, *The Walking Dead* questions the core of individuality and society. In *The Second Treatise of Government* John Locke (1980, p. 8) states that:

To properly understand political power right and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.

While Hobbes and Rousseau treat the state of nature as a primitive or chaotic state, Locke begs to differ. He believes that in a state of nature, there would still be a law in a more natural way. The series tries to build artificially what these thinkers bring into question in order to grasp a deeper understanding of the nature of the state, hegemony, power and the law. It also questions whether it is possible or not to imagine anymore a pure state of nature.

While still highly politically charged and radical as its predecessors, *The Walking Dead* takes a different route and is after different questions. The series might look like a radical change in the genre, however it is carrying out an intrinsic tradition which is putting the contemporary issues on the operation table.

In recent years, the world has met with new ways of making revolutions and different occupy movements. Utopian and dystopian productions are numerous and very popular within the market such as *District 9* (Blomkamp, 2009), *Hunger Games* (Ross, 2012), *Divergent* (Burger, 2014), *The Purge* (DeMonaco, 2013), *Elysium* (Blomkamp, 2013) and many others. These examples increase as everyday a new one is being announced.

Even a remake of *Twelve Monkeys* (Gilliam, 1995) has been announced to be released in 2014. Another blockbuster movie who dealt with similar issues was *The Dark Night Rises* (Nolan, 2012). It dealt with French Revolution, occupy movements, anarchy and a revolutionary movement. Whether it handled it well or not is another discussion. The important point here, while it may still be early to give the contemporary a retrospective look, it seems like new trends are arising in horror, science fiction and super-hero¹ movies. And it also seems like *The Walking Dead* is following the trends and bringing them into the zombie genre.

¹ I am not claiming that “super-hero” is really a genre. It may or may not be considered as an academical genre however it is still one for the film industry and I mentioned it for the sake of its convenience and usefulness in this case.

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