

# From Voodoo to Viruses: The Evolution of the Zombie in Twentieth Century Popular Culture

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of

Master's of Philosophy in

Popular Literature

Trinity College Dublin

Dublin, Ireland

October 2008

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the evolutionary path the zombie has followed in 20<sup>th</sup> Century popular culture. Additionally, this thesis will examine the defining characteristics of the zombie as they have changed through its history. Over the course of the last century and edging into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the zombie has grown in popularity in film, videogames, and more recently in novels. The zombie genre has become a self-inspiring force in pop culture media today. Films inspired a number of videogames, which in turn, supplied the film industry with a resurgence of inspirations and ideas. Combined, these media have brought the zombie to a position of greater prominence in popular literature. Additionally, within the growing zombie culture today there is an over-arching viral theme associated with the zombie. In many films, games, and novels there is a viral cause for a zombie outbreak. Meanwhile, the growing popularity of zombies and its widening reach throughout popular culture makes the genre somewhat viral-like as well. Filmmakers, authors and game designers are all gathering ideas from one another causing the some amount of self-cannibalisation within the genre.

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## Introduction

There are perhaps few, if any fictional monsters that can rival the versatility of the humble zombie (or zombi)<sup>1</sup>. From its origins in the Caribbean, to film, to videogames, and to its latest media conquest, the popular novel, the zombie has undergone numerous transformations making it somewhat difficult to easily define what is and what is not a zombie. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the path of change zombies have shuffled along from the past to the present and within those changes what makes something (or someone) a zombie. Chapter one will discuss the foundations of the zombie mythos: its origins as well as the first shambling step in its monstrous evolution. Chapter two will examine the zombie's presence in film as well as how films began to change how we define zombiism<sup>2</sup> in popular culture today. Chapter three will examine the use of zombies in games and, in turn, the impact those games have had on the way in which the zombie is depicted in the horror genre. Finally, chapter four will explore growing popularity of zombie novels (both in literary novels and graphic novels).

I will begin by asking what makes something or someone definable as a 'zombie.' Certainly the original definition of the word in Haitian folklore which describes a reanimated corpse used for the purposes of slave-labour (which I will discuss further in chapter one). But since George A. Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy, the definition of zombie has been ever-changing. By the standards set in Romero's films, a zombie *must* be a slow, reanimated, flesh-hungry corpse usually occurring within a mob of other slow, reanimated, flesh-hungry corpses. The zombie typically is a mob-based monster. Where there is one, there are often dozens more. But Romero's zombies are not the absolute. To earn the definition of "zombie" one does not have to eat the flesh of the living, shamble slowly after one's victims, or even be

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<sup>1</sup> Wade Davis opens his book *The Serpent and the Rainbow* with an explanation of his chosen spelling for "voodoo" (vodoun) as well as for "zombie." While "zombie" is the more-commonly spelled version of the word, I will use "zombi" to differentiate between the folklore image of zombies and the popular culture image of zombies.

<sup>2</sup> A word I will use for 'the state of being a zombie.'

defined as dead. As I will discuss in chapter two, cases of zombiism can have a variety of different causes, and not all instances of zombiism are the same. The key aspect to what makes a living person a zombie is mindlessness and a loss of free will. For example, though the infected in the film *28 Days Later* (dir. Danny Boyle) are still alive, the fact that the virus takes over their minds so completely to the point where they no longer capable of recognizing friends and family members or taking care of their basic human needs makes them zombies<sup>3</sup>. Even where there are examples of the Romeroesque undead capable of some amount of thought and rationalisation<sup>4</sup>, the unstoppable craving for the flesh of the living often gets in the way and that same ability to rationalise is turned and used to justify the consumption of the living. In short, zombies, as I will consider them here, do not have to be dead. They *do* have to be driven or controlled by some sort of master beyond the capability to think or act for themselves. This master could be any number of things: the insatiable hunger for human flesh, a virus, a parasite, and so on.

Additionally, this thesis will explore how the growing popularity of the zombie today has turned the zombie itself into a kind of virus which is far-reaching and self-cannibalising, infecting many aspects of popular culture. Each ‘new’ persona of the zombie contains some aspect(s) of a past manifestation<sup>5</sup> and very often combines one or more aspects from more than one manifestation<sup>6</sup>. As I will show in later chapters, many authors and filmmakers cite George A. Romero as a figure they garnered inspiration from. Romero, in return, has offered a few of these authors and filmmakers small parts in his zombie films perpetuating a kind of ‘zombie-creator club<sup>7</sup>.’ Similar to this, a number of authors discussed in chapter four are

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<sup>3</sup> I will go more in-depth with this example chapter two.

<sup>4</sup> Such as the talking zombies in *Return of the Living Dead* capable of voicing their ‘need’ for human flesh and the ‘lich’ zombies in David Wellington’s zombie novels

<sup>5</sup> For example, the emergence of the viral zombie is quite new—but it falls under the category of creating a zombie by some form of contamination.

<sup>6</sup> Such as the new trend of combining slow and fast zombies in zombies novels which I will go more in depth to in chapter four.

<sup>7</sup> I will present these examples within their appropriate chapters.

published by the same publishing company and therefore often supply an introduction to each others' novel and most certainly supply a blurb of praise about the work. These acts demonstrate a certain amount of self-perpetuation within the growing zombie culture.

The zombie became a pop culture icon long ago, but a recent resurgence of the zombie in horror has propelled it further into the popular culture spotlight, creating more demand for new material. A number of filmmakers, authors, and videogame designers have realised this growing demand and are clamouring to fill the niche. Despite the rising saturation of zombies in the pop culture market, the popularity of the zombie only continues to grow. During the course of this dissertation, I will explore the forms this growth has taken as well as examine the ways in which these forms are connected to one another.

## Chapter One: Evolution of the Dead

The zombie's origins are quite unassuming. The humble start of the zombies' long trek to fame in popular culture begins with the superstitious beliefs and religion of the people in Haiti. From there, the zombie slowly shambled forward and eventually landed the first (of so very many) film roles in 1932. Thirty-six years later, one filmmaker imported this tame monster from its 'foreign' and 'exotic' homeland, gave it an appetite for human flesh and turned it loose on American soil<sup>8</sup>. The zombie has literally never been the same since. The constant change found within the zombie niche in horror starts with its origins and its slow transformation into a movie-monster icon as visually recognizable as the likes of Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, and the werewolf. This chapter explores the folklore beginnings of the zombi to its terrifying transformation thanks to George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. This chapter will also begin to demonstrate how the essence of what makes a zombie definable as 'a zombie' is constantly changing.

In *Book of the Dead: The Complete History of Zombie Cinema*, Jamie Russell comments on the potential origins of the word "zombie."

Linguists have claimed that the etymological root of "zombi" might be derived from any (or all) of the following: the French *ombres* (shadows); the West Indian *jumbie* (ghost); the African Bonda *zumbi* and Kongo *nzambi* (dead spirit). It may have also derived from the word *zemis*, a term used by Haiti's indigenous Arawak Indians to describe the soul of a dead person. (Russell, 11)

Speculation regarding the origin of the term offers a window into the complicated past of the zombi in Haitian mythology and folklore. As for a definition of the term, Alfred Métraux describes a zombi in *Voodoo in Haiti* (1959) as a person "whose decease has been duly recorded, and whose burial has been witnessed, but who [is] found a few years later living with a *boko*<sup>9</sup> in a state verging on idiocy" (Métraux, 281).

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<sup>8</sup> Ironically enough, Romero's film also rekindled humanity's appetite for zombies.

<sup>9</sup> Sorcerer, also spelled "bokor"

Origins and definitions of the word aside, the zombie is undeniably linked to much of Haiti's history and culture. There is a paragraph in the Haitian Penal Code<sup>10</sup> relating to the creation of zombis as follows:

Also shall be qualified as attempted murder the employment which may be made against any person of substances which, without causing actual death, produce a lethargic coma more or less prolonged. If, after the administering of such substances, the person had been buried, the act shall be considered murder no matter what result follows. (qtd. in Russell, 14)

The wording of the penal code indicates that a zombi is not actually dead, but in a death-like trance. In Wade Davis' book *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985), Davis travels to Haiti in order to investigate a couple of documented cases of zombis. While researching, Davis attempts to uncover the combination of substances required to make the "poison" and the "antidote" used to create a zombi. And while there undoubtedly are scientific explanations for the zombis in folklore—Métraux points out that

The common people do not trouble themselves with such subtleties. For them the *zombi* are the living dead—**corpses** which a sorcerer has extracted from their tombs and **raised by a process which no one really knows**. (Métraux, 282) [bold mine]

And it is the beliefs and superstitions of these "common people" that really generate the fear associated with zombis in folklore. In order to understand those fears, one must know a little more about the origin of the religious beliefs of those people. The Haitian religion, Voodoo, is "nothing more than a conglomeration of beliefs and rites of African origin, which, having been closely mixed with Catholic practice" (Métraux, 15). The fear involved with the folklore zombi for these "common people" is not of meeting one (or being eaten by one)—but of becoming one. Russell explains that the continued popularity of the zombie "as a figure of superstition" was because it "symbolised the ultimate horror" for a population who descended from slaves. Their hope of respite from the lives of slave labour in a heavenly paradise after

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<sup>10</sup> Jamie Russell and Wade Davis list this as article 249 while Alfred Métraux states it is article 246 (Russell, 14), (Davis, 60), (Métraux, 281).



death is incredibly threatened by the idea of being raised from the dead and forced to serve endlessly. (Russell, 11-12). Davis likewise explains that “given the colonial history, the concept of enslavement implies that the peasant fears and the zombi suffers a fate that is literally worse than death” (Davis, 139). The fear perversely echoes the Catholic belief of a life after death—only rather than getting to spend all of eternity with God in Heaven a zombi is forced to continue toiling on Earth without even the sense to know that something is wrong. As a result of these fears, there are a number of procedures that could be undertaken to prevent a loved one from being turned into a zombi.

Family members concerned that a departed loved one is slated to be turned into a zombi undertook many different rituals to assure the corpse would not rise again. They could “bury the corpse face down, mouth against the earth, with a dagger in his hand so he may stab any sorcerer who troubles his rest.” It was also common practice to sew the mouth shut “since a corpse can only be raised if it answers its name, [so] it is important to prevent it from doing so.” Likewise, “distractions” might have accompanied the corpse into the grave. An eyeless needle for threading or sesame seeds for counting might have been used to distract the corpse from hearing the sorcerer (Métraux, 282). Russell writes that wealthier families could afford to bury their dead in “a proper tomb that was solid enough to deter intruders.” Poorer families could inter the corpse “beneath heavy masonry.” Families could also post a guard at the gravesite “until the body had time to decompose.” It was also common practice to bury the corpse near a busy street in order to prevent enough time and privacy for someone to dig up the body (Russell, 11).

Alternatively, family members believed it was necessary to take stronger precautions with a departed loved one and actually “kill” them again. In these cases, strangulation or administering a poison was common, as was the more-extreme practice of shooting the corpse in the head to render it useless to anyone seeking to raise the corpse (Métraux, 282;

Russell 11). Though Métraux does state that anyone who took the task of “killing” the target a second time must “stand behind [the corpse] in case he is recognized and reported to the sorcerer who, balked of his prey, will try to get his revenge” (Métraux, 282).

Other superstitions include never feeding a zombi any food which contains even a grain of salt. Métraux states that “docility is total provided you never give them salt.” Apparently, once a zombi consumes salt he or she suddenly becomes aware of what is happening. The zombi realizes he or she has been enslaved, and this enrages the zombi. The zombi will then kill the master, destroy his property, and then seek out their abandoned graves (Métraux, 283). The term zombi not only refers to the enslaved, flesh-and-blood corpses. A zombi can also be a wandering soul that died “as the result of an accident and are condemned to haunt the earth as long as God had meant them to live. The same fate is reserved for nubile women who died as virgins” (Métraux, 258).

Another belief is that “a dead person will only harass the living if they neglect him.” There are many variations on what constitutes neglect. Not dressing in mourning, providing an unworthy burial place, etc. The departed will appear in the dreams of living loved ones in order to get them to rectify the problems. If ignored, the spirit will enact vengeance. “Whoever dies as a result of a spirit’s vengeance comes back to tell his relations the cause of his death and to warn them to discharge their obligations lest they too be harried by the divine wrath of the spirit” (Métraux, 258).

This description of some of the post-burial superstitions in Haiti bear a striking resemblance to the folklore vampire Paul Barber explores in *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. He states

There are such creatures everywhere in the world [...]: dead people who, having died before their time, not only **refuse to remain dead but return to bring death to their friends and neighbours.** (Barber, 2) [bold mine]

This idea is not only present in Haitian folklore (as shown), but in many other cultures—including those cultures where vampires originated. Today, the image of the vampire is one of a high-class citizen. Well dressed, well read, articulate, and often of noble blood (as the title of “Count” in “Count Dracula” would indicate).

In his 1985 book, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*, Twitchell repeatedly compares zombies to “their cousin, the vampire” and through every comparison finds the zombie wanting. He flippantly comments “True, life beyond the grave is terrible, but is it horrible?” Perhaps if one is allowed the pleasure of becoming a vampire—a monster that Twitchell finds “crafty, circumspect, and erotic”—then the prospect of a bizarre life after death may not be so horrible. Twitchell goes on to state that “the zombie is an utter cretin, a **vampire with a lobotomy**” (Twitchell, 261-273) [bold mine]. In the opening paragraph of *Book of the Dead*, Jamie Russell states James B. Twitchell’s comments of the living dead are “strangely dismissive” (Russell, 4).

And indeed, Twitchell’s comment is not only “strangely dismissive,” it is completely unfair. Of course, he was writing at a time when the zombie genre in horror was still attempting to find its footing and his accusations do not quite stand up to the contemporary manifestations of zombies (as the next chapter will demonstrate). However, examining the form of the zombie at the time of Twitchell’s writing, his comparisons nevertheless still come up short. Zombies in 1985 and before may not have much in common with the fiction-vampires that have evolved over the decades, but zombies and folklore-vampires have an enormous amount in common with one another. Originally, vampires were not seen as erotic, highly-intelligent beings with noble breeding. Barber points out that the folklore vampire “looks for all the world like a dishevelled peasant” These “crafty, circumspect and erotic” beings Twitchell places high on a pedestal are figures “derived from the vampires of folklore but now bearing precious little resemblance to them” (Barber, 2). The big change from

folklore to fiction (or from anonymous peasantry to aristocrat) occurred with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. One novel marked the way in which vampires are perceived—much in the way that one film (Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*) changed the way in which zombies are perceived (which I will discuss shortly).

Much like victims of zombification, folklore-vampire accounts often begin with the victim apparently healthy who then sickens and quickly dies a few days later. Barber uses the story of Peter Plogojowitz not only to illustrate Europe's fascination with vampires in the early 1700s, but also as an example of a typical folklore story about vampires. One such point is how "Vampirism may cause lingering death" (Barber, 7). He explains that those "visited" by Plogojowitz all died within a day. Barber also notes the comment made on the apparent lack of decomposition when Plogojowitz's body was exhumed. Some of this he attributes to variances in the story: some accounts indicated Plogojowitz's body was exhumed after three weeks, others say after 10 (Barber, 8).

The lack of decomposition in a corpse bears some likeness to the Haitian story about a man named Ti Joseph who worked for the Haitian-American Sugar Company. Supposedly, Ti Joseph used zombis as workers during the 1918 sugar cane crop harvest. According to the story, Ti Joseph's wife accidentally fed the zombis nuts which had been salted. This lifted the spell Ti Joseph had on his workers, and they returned to the cemetery. "There each hurled himself on his grave and tore the stones with his nails...and as their hands touched their tombs **they turned into stinking corpses**" (Métraux, 283) [bold mine]. The story indicates that it is not until the zombis realize what they are, and return to their graves that they show any signs of decomposition or rotting.

When the zombie first appeared in film, it was largely unchanged from the folklore zombi. In 1932 the very first zombie film was released: *White Zombie* (dir. Victor Halperin),

starring Bela Lugosi<sup>11</sup>,. The zombies in the film account for some of the most powerful moments according to Peter Dendle in *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*. There are scenes in the film in which the zombies “[slave] away tirelessly in the sugar mill, themselves indistinguishable from the gears and machinery” (Dendle 190). Another classic early zombie film is the 1943 film *I Walked with a Zombie* (dir. Jacques Tourneur) which is a loose adaptation of the novel *Jane Eyre*, relocated to a West Indies setting. In both films, it is a woman who falls under the spell of a sorcerer and becomes a zombie. While in *White Zombie* the woman (Madeline—played by Madge Bellamy) becomes a zombie during the course of the film, the woman (Jessica—played by Christine Gordon) in *I Walked with a Zombie* is already a zombie when the film begins, “though it’s carefully left ambiguous whether Jessica is actually undead or simply insane” (Dendle, 92). However, both films are American-made examples of American foreigners encountering dangers away from home—and therefore, zombies pre-Romero were very much associated with the foreign, the exotic, and with a colonial context. *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie* also provide the interesting suggestion that the only Westerners susceptible to becoming zombies are women. The implication exists, of course, that women are the weaker gender and therefore as prone to voodoo spells as the black natives<sup>12</sup>. But by 1968, not only have zombies reached American homes and communities, but George A. Romero made sure that zombies would never be seen the same way again.

However, before Romero’s first film, the 1950s provided a slew of Science Fiction films which featured aliens gaining control over their human-victims and turning them into a kind of pseudo-zombie that smacks of the sorcerer-controlled zombies in Haitian folklore. Quite similarly, the 1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (dir. Don Siegel) is set in a

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<sup>11</sup> Who is probably best known for his portrayal of Count Dracula in the 1931 film *Dracula*.

<sup>12</sup> Romero’s films will provide a stark contrast for this as in two of his three original films the women have strong roles in the films and the zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) are almost exclusively white while the lead male character, Ben, is African American.

small town quickly being taken over by alien plants which create an exact replica of a person and replace them while they sleep. These pod-people are exact replicas of their originals in every way except that they are completely devoid of all emotion. Like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, many 1950s body-replacement narratives derive their impact from powerful contemporary fears about the loss of individuality in an age of rapid technological and cultural transformation, as well as fear of an assault from outsiders on the ‘normal’ way of life.

“For most of the 1960s, American zombie productions struggled to re-establish themselves” (Russell, 64). Jamie Russell goes on to describe the trend of “dreadful drive-in movies” masquerading as horror films in the early 1960s. He describes films like *Orgy of the Dead*, *The Horror of Party Beach*, and *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies* to illustrate the ludicrous treatment of the zombie in horror. He rightly asserts that George A. Romero “[changed] the course of the zombie movie forever” with a small-budgeted, independent film (Russell, 64-65). Romero’s budget for *Night of the Living Dead* was around \$114,000 and employed largely unknown actors. Williams explains that “the film’s success took its creators by surprise” (Williams, 21). Consequently, the following two sequels had much larger budgets to work with.

Twitchell points out that Romero “bred zombies with the vampire, and what he got was the hybrid vigor of a ghoulish plague monster” (Twitchell, 267). Romero did get the inspiration for his zombie film from vampires. Dendle calls Richard Matheson’s novel *I Am Legend* the “ultimate inspiration” for *Night of the Living Dead*’s screenplay (Dendle, 99)<sup>13</sup>. In *I Am Legend*, protagonist Robert Neville is the last living man on Earth. Every other man, woman, and child has either become infected by an unknown contaminant which turns them into vampires—or they have been killed by these monsters. The contamination began with

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<sup>13</sup> Romero likewise acknowledges that he originally got the idea for his screenplay from Matheson’s novel

bacterial spores blown around by dust storms. People became infected with a bacterium that Neville names “vampiris.” The plot for *Night of the Living Dead* is fairly similar to the plot in *I Am Legend* in which an unknown contaminant essentially infects the entire planet and causes the dead to reanimate. The reanimated dead in *I Am Legend* also carry the contaminant as a kind of infectious bacteria spread through biting.

Before *Night of the Living Dead*, zombies were largely benign as monsters. Zombies in film shambled a long way from their folklore beginnings, but apart from the fear of being turned into a zombie, there was not much to be afraid of. “*Night of the Living Dead* introduced cannibalistic features into ‘living dead’ representation” creating a new breed of zombie significantly more terrifying than previous depictions (Williams, 12). Since then, zombies have been irrevocably linked to cannibalism. The act of the undead eating the living is an important image in Romero’s films. The book *Eat Thy Neighbour: A History of Cannibalism* by Daniel Diehl and Mark P. Donnelly not only chronicles the lives of many real-life (and often serial-killer) cannibals but it also delves into why a society may turn to cannibalism. Specifically, cannibalism as tribal ritual “meant to honour the dead; as a post-battle celebration” in which the victors of battle “absorb the prowess” of the enemy (Diehl, Donnelly, 19). The idea behind this ritual is that once the enemy is consumed, his fighting skills and strength become a part of the victorious tribe. Cannibalistic zombies are very similar in this way. Survivors attacked by a horde literally find themselves becoming part of the mindless masses as either they will be consumed by the horde entirely or they may get away relatively unscathed only to die and reanimate from being bitten and mindlessly shamble back to become members of the horde themselves.

The zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* largely resemble “normal people.” Originally, the film intended to offer no explanation for the dead returning to life. Dendle explains that “the distributors wouldn’t release the film until the crew tagged on some sort of

explanation for the phenomenon” and so, there is a brief explanation that the newly-dead are returning to life due to a satellite returning to Earth from Venus, contaminated with a mysterious, high-level radiation (Dendle, 121). The first zombie encountered in the graveyard appears to be just an aggressive drunk so that it is not until he begins to grapple with Barbara (Judith O’Dea)’s brother, Johnny (Russell Streiner), that something seems amiss. As the film progresses, the audience learns that these zombies are not entirely mindless. They do not shamble dumbly about awaiting instructions from their creator, and they are capable of simple problem-solving. The zombie in the cemetery that chases Barbara back into the car first tries the door handle to gain entrance. Finding the door locked, he turns about, picks up a large rock that he spots, and attempts to break the window open in order to get at Barbara. Dendle also explains that “some self-preservation instinct remains” as the zombies cringe away from fire and will try to beat out flames if their clothes ignite. They also display “instinctual reflexes” such as “brushing a low-hanging branch or clothes line out of their way as they stumble along” (Dendle, 122). Meanwhile, the zombies are not the only problem the protagonists face in *Night of the Living Dead* or any of Romero’s *Living Dead* films for that matter. Frequently, characters are unable to set aside petty differences and work together in order to fight off the hordes of encroaching zombies. As a result of constant squabbling, power-struggles, and an inability to create a strong united front, people die<sup>14</sup>.

*Night of the Living Dead* certainly begins to blur the definition between the “Self” and the “Other”. A reoccurring theme throughout all of Romero’s films involve the “Us vs. Them” mentality—certainly on the level of living vs. the living dead—but also living vs. the living. In *Night*, Ben (Duane Jones) and Harry Cooper (Karl Hardman) were constantly at odds and squabbling over who knew what was best. It forced the group in the farmhouse to split into two factions: those on the main floor, and those in the cellar. The zombies are a

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<sup>14</sup> There is much more to say and analyze about the living characters in *Night of the Living Dead* than about the zombies in this film—however, in the interests of staying on topic, I will skip most of the character analysis unless it pertains directly to the zombies in the film.



cohesive opposition that do not suffer from power-struggles or dividing factions. The zombies simply act as one entity that seeks to integrate the living into their ranks by killing and consuming (though not necessarily in that order).

This theme continues in Romero's 1978 release of the sequel *Dawn of the Dead*. The film opens in the middle of the story—indicating that this crisis has been occurring for a while and shows absolutely no signs of stopping. The majority of the film takes place in an “abandoned” shopping mall<sup>15</sup> where the four protagonists hole up in attempts to survive the zombie apocalypse. Unfortunately, the mall seemingly serves as a beacon to the zombies, and they soon begin to arrive by the hundreds and mindlessly surround the shopping complex after the survivors successfully barricade themselves inside.

Compared to *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead* is fairly slow-paced yet it features more action-based scenes as well as a higher level of gore. Throughout the film, Romero focused “on the collapse of the social order that had only been hinted at obliquely in *Night of the Living Dead*” (Russell, 91). Another difference between *Dawn of the Dead* and any of Romero's other zombie films is the total lack of “zombie intelligence.” In *Night of the Living Dead*, as mentioned, the zombies were capable of basic problem-solving as well as displaying survival instincts. In *Day of the Dead* and *Land of the Dead*, some of the zombies show themselves to be quite capable of using tools (such as guns). Yet in *Dawn of the Dead* the only acknowledgement of their ability to use tools comes from a television broadcast with the scientist Dr. Millard Rausch (Richard France).

Intelligence? Seemingly little or no reasoning power, but basic skills remain a more remembered behaviours from normal life. There are reports of these creatures using tools. But even these actions are the most primitive [...] These creatures are nothing but pure, motorized instinct. (*Dawn of the Dead* 1978)

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<sup>15</sup> Romero’s use of a shopping mall goes on to become a cliché in the zombie genre. Videogames such as *Dead Rising* take place within a mall. One expansion pack to the board game *ZOMBIES!!!* is titled “Mall Walkers” and introduces a shopping complex into the game.

There is an emphasis on the *mindlessness* of the dead in this film coupled with a scene of the protagonists, armed to the teeth, racing through the mall to fortify it against the zombies attempting to intrude shortly followed by a montage sequence in which the four seek out all the worldly comforts they desire regardless of how useful or necessary the items may be—Romero's obvious comment on America's consumerist appetite shines through.

In each film of his original zombie trilogy, Romero reveals more and more about the nature of the zombies: and they only become more and more terrifying. Sure, they are dead, they are slow, they are not that intelligent—but some are capable of utilizing memories from when they were alive. Despite the many claims during the previous two films that zombies are not human, Dr. Logan (Richard Liberty) claims quite surely and without a doubt that “they are us” (*Day of the Dead*, 1985). By the third film, Romero shows that the United States (if not the world) is completely overrun by zombies. Dr. Logan serves as the (somewhat overly-cheerful) voice of reality explaining that “we are in the minority now, something like 400,000 to one by my calculation” (*Day of the Dead*, 1985). Humans have become an endangered species on their way to extinction. Through *Day of the Dead*, Dr. Logan explores deeper and deeper into what it means to be a zombie. In doing so, he forces a re-evaluation of what it means to be human. He treats the “specimens” with careful respect and curiosity.

Dr. Logan's “pet” zombie, Bub (Howard Sherman), demonstrates the “learning<sup>16</sup>” capabilities that a zombie can have. Bub salutes Captain Rhodes (Joe Pilato), indicating not only that he recognizes him as member of the military, but also as a superior officer. When given a shaving razor, Bub drags it across his face; when he is given a telephone, he picks it up and holds it to his ear and mouth. Dr. Logan also shows that even when a zombie is in pieces, possesses no stomach, and is little more than an intact head on a spinal cord, it *still*

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<sup>16</sup> Or remembering, perhaps.

acts on the impulse to feed on the living. “It wants me! It wants food! But it has no stomach, can take no nourishment from what it ingests. It's acting on instinct” (*Day of the Dead*, 1985). Monsters often cease to terrify as soon as they are completely revealed and explained. However, the opposite is true for zombies. The more Dr. Logan gleefully explains about the workings of the zombie, the more frightening they appear simply because according to his observations nothing about the zombies’ existence makes sense.

In 1990 Special Effects artist, Tom Savini (who previously designed make-up and SFX for Romero during the filming of both *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*), directed a remake of *Night of the Living Dead*. Unlike the two remakes to follow in later years, Romero was actually attached to the project as the screenplay writer and undertook the job of updating the original script. Though much of the plot remains completely intact, a number of changes were implemented. For starters, the female lead, Barbara (here played by stunt woman Patricia Tallman), is no longer a helpless, mostly-catatonic victim who numbly sits back as everyone else attempts to fight off the zombie invasion at the farmhouse. She is also the only character to survive the zombie siege on the farmhouse which coincides with the other female lead-roles in Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*.<sup>17</sup> In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985), and *Night of the Living Dead* (1990), the lead-woman in each film makes it out alive while most (if not all) of the men die. This makes sense as the men in the films often bicker and argue amongst themselves rather than work together, or do not take the dire situation seriously.

George A. Romero took zombies, breathed new life into the genre, and forever changed the way the world views these “flesh-eating ghouls.” He made them cannibals and brought them home to American soil—turning them into friends, neighbours, and loved ones. He made them appear rotting, blood soaked, and irrevocably linked to gore. And in the 20

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<sup>17</sup> Setting the original *Night of the Living Dead* character of Barbara aside it appears as though Romero does not discriminate as regards gender. If anything, the strong women characters in his films quite possibly show that Romero believes women are just as capable than men when it comes to times of crisis (if not more so).

years between the release of *Day of the Dead* and Romero's next zombie film, *Land of the Dead*, the genre became a monstrous creation beyond the hope of ever containing it. New ideas have cropped up that continue to mutate the definition of "zombie" and the question of what the zombie represents remains as relevant now as it did then.

## Chapter Two: Contaminants, Viruses, and Possessions—Oh my!

James B. Twitchell stated that the lack of success for the zombie (at his time of writing, 1985, and in comparison to the vampire) stems from the fact that the zombie has “no family and less prospect of developing one.” He goes on to explain that “unless there is a family circle to breach, there is little hope of long-lasting shivers” (Twitchell, 260). More than 20 years worth of zombie films since the publication of his book have proven his hypothesis wrong. In *The Power of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva comments that “the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. **It is death infecting life**” (Kristeva, 4). In film, zombies are often literally death (or the dead) infecting life (the living).<sup>18</sup> Causes of zombiism spread further from its voodoo roots into a myriad of different explanations. This chapter explores the presence of zombies in film and the various causes of zombiism.

Zombie films over the decades have listed a variety of causes for the zombie outbreak. One such category is the “contamination zombie<sup>19</sup>.” Radiation, viruses, medical procedures or government projects gone awry—there are many, many sub-level categories of zombie created by some form of contamination. For example, Romero’s original trilogy indicates a space probe on its way back to Earth from Venus was destroyed because it was carrying a “mysterious high-level radiation” that causes “mutations” which bring the recently deceased back to life. The radiation is a world-wide contaminant that only really affects the dead. It does not appear to harm the living, and the only “healthy” people at risk are those who have been bitten. Something in the zombie bite causes its victims to quickly grow ill, progress into a coma, and die<sup>20</sup>. Romero’s zombies are not quite viral, just as they are not quite anything else.

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<sup>18</sup> Though, as mentioned in the introduction, a zombie does not have to be dead in order to *be* a zombie.

<sup>19</sup> Which is perhaps the largest category due to just how much one can classify as “contamination.”

<sup>20</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Cooper’s daughter in *Night of the Living Dead*, for example.

*The Return of the Living Dead* (dir. Dan O'Bannon) follows a similar path. Two warehouse employees, Frank (James Karen) and Freddy (Thom Matthews), become “infected” after they breathe in contaminants from a ruptured Army canister containing a zombie. The gas circulates through the warehouse, reanimating a corpse in another room, as well as slowly killing the two hapless employees before they realize it. They dismember and attempt to dispose of one corpse by cremating it at the nearby mortuary. However, the smoke from the crematorium rises into ominous rain clouds. When it begins to rain, whatever pollutant that raises the dead still present in the smoke mixes with the rain and seeps down into the ground in the cemetery causing the corpses to reanimate. The rain has no devastating affect on the living, though teens partying in the graveyard make claims that the rain “is like acid rain” and burns, yet they do not fall ill and die like Frank and Freddy.

Likewise, one very notable pastiche of Romero’s work shuffled into cinemas in 2004: *Shaun of the Dead* (dir. Edgar Wright) starring Simon Pegg<sup>21</sup>. Clearly the title of the film is a pun on *Dawn of the Dead*. The zombies are slow-moving and can be stopped by “removing the head or destroying the brain.” Beyond that, many of the references are extremely subtle. For example, when encouraged to “act like zombies” in order to get past a horde on their way to the Winchester pub, Shaun (Pegg) moves and groans the same way Bub does in *Day of the Dead*. Later, David (Dylan Moran) is pulled apart by a zombie mob much like Captain Rhodes in *Day of the Dead*.

Another common theme with the Romero films is that the undead are never called zombies. This is humorously pointed out in the exchange between Shaun and his best friend Ed when they first discover that the dead have returned to life:

Ed: Any zombies out there?  
 Shaun: Don't say that!  
 Ed: What?

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<sup>21</sup> Wright and Pegg wrote the script for the film after getting the idea from an episode of their television series *Spaced* in which lead character Tim (Pegg) dreams he is being attacked by zombies after falling asleep while playing *Resident Evil* (*Spaced*, 1999)

Shaun: That!  
 Ed: What?  
 Shaun: The zed-word. Don't say it!  
 Ed: Why not?  
 Shaun: Because it's ridiculous!

In all of Romero's films (including the 2005 film *Land of the Dead* and 2007 film *Diary of the Dead*) the term "zombie" is only ever used once—and it is delivered somewhat comically by Dennis Hopper's character in *Land of the Dead*.

*Shaun of the Dead* also takes the zombie outbreak, which has become quintessentially American, and sets it loose in a very British atmosphere. In most American zombie films, panic erupts immediately at the first sign of trouble. Many of the characters in *Shaun of the Dead* are much more reserved and tend to keep a "stiff upper lip" through the whole ordeal—particularly Shaun's mother Barbara (Penelope Wilton). Barbara treats everything as though it is simply a minor inconvenience to her day. She acts like if she ignores the problem, it will just go away on its own.

Barbara: [over the phone] Some men tried to get into the house.  
 Shaun: Well are they still there?  
 Barbara: [over the phone] I'm not sure, we've shut the curtains.

No one actually treats the outbreak as if it is the end of the world. In the end, the zombies become the new grunt workforce useful for tasks such as collecting shopping trolleys in supermarket parking lots—returning to the "zombie as slave labour" dynamic seen in folklore<sup>22</sup>.

David Cronenberg's films *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977) both deal with medical-based contaminants. While the results do not lead to the resurrection of the dead—a form of zombiism does occur. In *Shivers*, residents of an apartment complex are "infected" by parasites. The parasites were supposedly supposed to work as a radical new breakthrough for

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<sup>22</sup> After completion of the project, Pegg and Wright actually sent a copy of the film to Romero before its release to make sure he approved of the "cheeky spoof," (Russell 183). Romero actually enjoyed it so much he offered Pegg and Wright small parts in his fourth zombie film, *Land of the Dead*. Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright play zombies chained up at a photo booth so the living can be photographed with the dead.

organ transplants (using the parasite to replace an organ rather than rely on transplants). However, the doctor conducting research engineered the parasites not to replace organs but as a combination of “aphrodisiac and venereal disease that will hopefully turn the world into one beautiful, mindless orgy” (*Shivers*, 1975). The parasite controls a person much in the way a sorcerer would control a zombi described in Haitian folklore. These people seem to have little to no idea of what they are doing and if they are capable of rationalizing what is happening to them—they do not appear to be interested in doing so. Sex takes precedence above all other social boundaries as clearly evidenced by one man who essentially tries to prostitute his own daughter to Roger (Paul Hampton) before beginning to ardently kiss her himself.

*Rabid* employs a slightly different use of medical contaminant with similar results. In the film, a young woman named Rose (Marilyn Chambers) is critically injured in a motorcycle accident. She is brought to a medical facility for cosmetic surgery where she undergoes an experimental procedure that saves her life but puts her in a coma. As her recovery progresses, it becomes clear that her body responded strangely to the procedure. When she awakens, the only food she can digest is blood through a strange tentacle-like growth near her armpit. She unknowingly infects her victims with a disease similar to rabies when she feeds. These victims, in turn, experience a rapid deterioration in health before reaching a violent stage in which they thirst for blood causing them to lash out and attempt to bite others. If they succeed, the victim of that attack also falls ill and the process repeats itself. The end of the film is reminiscent of Ben’s death scene in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968): the audience sees Rose’s corpse unceremoniously swept with the rubbish as Montreal descends into chaos—just another body for the pile.

Both films resemble Romero’s zombie films in terms of mindless hordes that amalgamate everyone in. However, in Romero’s zombie films the threat is outside of life. As mentioned, the cause of zombiism in Romero’s films is a world-wide contaminant from



space. The contaminant must be in everything and on everyone—but it comes from outside the human race. The contaminants in Cronenberg’s films are essentially man-made. While *Shivers* shows that the slug-like parasites can survive outside a human host as they search for a new host: they *do* come from humans<sup>23</sup>. Nick Tudor (Alan Migicovsky) is one of the first infected and is often shown vomiting up bloody parasites in search of a new victim. Something in the procedure done on Rose causes her to create a virus similar to rabies. She is not infected with it, but she is a carrier and spreads it on to others. The human body becomes a scary, unknown place. Fears of parasites or germs create an easy breeding ground for the zombie genre. Kristeva touches briefly on the squeamishness and horror involved with bodily fluids and wastes. The body rids itself of waste to protect itself from death. “Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver” (Kristeva, 3). In many cases of the inner-contamination (or viral) zombie these fears are used as a means of invoking horror. Kristeva explains that “it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva, 4). She so simply sums up the point that it is not the presence of contamination (whether radioactive, medical, viral, spiritual, etc) that is so horrifying, but the effects these contaminants have on a person or society.

But outside contamination, for a while, was the popular choice in zombie films. The 1980 Spanish-Italian film *Zombie Creeping Flesh*<sup>24</sup>(dir. Bruno Mattei) shows another example of man-made contamination when an accident at a chemical plant releases vapours into the air that reanimate the dead. Ironically, the plant responsible for the accident was working on “Operation Sweet Death,” a project experimenting with ways to deal with third-world overpopulation. Peter Jackson’s 1992 film *Braindead* is another example of an outside

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<sup>23</sup> This is also evidenced by the title the film was given when it was released in the United States: *They Came From Within*.

<sup>24</sup> A film known by multiple titles such as *Night of the Zombies* (USA), *Apocalipsis Canibal* (Spain), and *Inferno Dei Morti Viventi* (Italy).

contaminant brought in by human error. An explorer traps a Sumatran Rat-Monkey<sup>25</sup> and it is shipped to the Wellington zoo on the north island of New Zealand where it eventually bites the mother of protagonist Lionel Cosgrove (Timothy Balme). Lionel's mum, Vera (Elizabeth Moody), quickly grows ill, dies, and reanimates. While the Rat-Monkey's bite does manifest as a strange sort of virus that causes Vera to rot slowly while still alive, once she dies and begins to claim victims, no one else seems to go through the same viral steps that she did before death. The 1994 film *Dellamorte Dellamore* (dir. Michele Soavi) explores a contaminant specific to one location. Corpses buried in a cemetery the Northern Italy town of Buffalora inexplicably reanimate. Caretaker Francesco Dellamorte (Rupert Everett) does not know or care why this happens. He just sees it as his duty to stop these "Returners" and put them back in their graves. The film never explains what causes the reanimations either.

In 2002 *Resident Evil* (dir. Paul W. S. Anderson<sup>26</sup>) and *28 Days Later* were released. While both films are incredibly different from one another, both use a virus to explain the zombiism. *Resident Evil*, of course, is based on the hit videogame franchise.<sup>27</sup> However, the plot of the film is only loosely adapted from the games. Someone gains access to a sample of a deadly virus called the T-virus as well as the antidote. The unidentified perpetrator intentionally shatters a vial of the virus and contaminates the facility, codenamed 'The Hive.' All scientists employed by the Umbrella Corporation stationed at The Hive are infected and die and eventually reanimate. Though the film does not closely follow any of the plots for any of the games in the series, many references and tributes are made to the games as well as to other zombie films.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A fictitious hybrid animal said to have been brought about by plague-infected rats raping tree monkeys.

<sup>26</sup> George A. Romero was originally set to write and direct the film, but left the project due to creative differences in the script.

<sup>27</sup> Which by this point includes not only numerous games in the series, but also novelisations of the games as well as original novels based on the games and (after the release of the films) eventually novelisations of the films as well.

<sup>28</sup> As well as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*

A few months after the release of the first *Resident Evil* film, *28 Days Later* was released in cinemas. *28 Days Later* is not technically a zombie film in the “traditional” sense. People are infected with a highly-contagious virus called “the Rage virus” which causes overwhelming amounts of aggression in its victims—but it does not cause them to die and reanimate. But *28 Days Later* and its sequel *28 Weeks Later* (dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo) still find a comfortable place within the zombie film niche despite director/executive producer Danny Boyle’s protests. He says he “doesn’t see *28 Days Later* as part of some zombie lineage. Zombie films are an entertaining part of the horror genre, but they are rooted in nuclear paranoia” (qtd in Russell, 179). What Boyle does not seem (or want) to realize is that nuclear paranoia has long since been replaced by viral or bacterial paranoia. In the film, once people become infected they lose all sense of who they are. An infected person will no longer recognize friends or family members and in order to stay alive, one needs to be able to understand that once a person is infected, they are no longer your friend or family member—which is a very similar concept to Romero's films mentioned earlier.

Unlike any other viral cause of zombiism shown in films, in *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later* infection is almost instantaneous.

It started as rioting. But right from the beginning you knew this was different. Because it was happening in small villages, market towns. [...] It was a virus. An infection. [...] It was something in the blood. (*28 Days Later*, 2002)

The Rage virus seems to behave in a similar manner to the Ebola virus. In *The Hot Zone*, author Richard Preston describes what happens to someone infected with Ebola “crashes and bleeds out.” Namely, infected blood comes out of every orifice because the virus is “‘trying’ to find a new host” (Preston, 51). In *28 Days Later*, the infected often vomit copious amounts of blood meaning infection for any survivor who may get the blood in their eyes or mouth, or if it happens to get into a cut of any kind.

Post-Romero zombies are most often motivated to feed on the living though they do not need to in order to “survive.” This motivation is mostly mindless instinct—but still a motivation nonetheless. The only motivation the infected from *28 Days Later* appear to possess is to spread the virus. They infected are not cannibals. They do not eat the flesh of their victims. They do often bite their victims but as teeth are one of the most basic weapons a person possesses, this is hardly surprising. Despite being highly contagious and easily passed from one person to another the disease does not last long as it robs its hosts of all basic needs for survival. The infection eventually stops because the infected simply starve to death after a period of time. But there is still a risk of infection. As shown in the opening scenes of the sequel *28 Weeks Later*, the corpses of the infected are still contaminated with the virus and must be removed with care. Most of London is still treated as a hot zone—an area that contains highly infectious organisms.

*28 Weeks Later* also brings in a new element to consider: a mother of two, Alice (Catherine McCormack), originally thought dead by her husband, Don (Robert Carlyle), after she is attacked by a group of infected turns up alive in one of the still-quarantined parts of London and is consequently brought in for testing. Though she is infected, she possesses a kind of natural immunity to the virus. Military doctors involved in the cleanup of Great Britain hope this could lead to immunizations against the disease. However, though she is immune to the disease, she can still spread it (like Rose in *Rabid*). She unknowingly infects her husband through a kiss leading to another outbreak of the Rage virus.

The origin of the virus is never discussed. The outbreak occurred after activists attempt to free chimpanzees that have been infected by the virus. The scientist attempting to stop the activists from opening the cages tells them that the animals are highly contagious, “have been given an inhibitor,” and “in order to cure you must first understand” (*28 Days Later*). Coupled with the scenes at the opening of the film of a chimp hooked up to machines

as it watches numerous television screens all portraying horrific acts of violence one could easily make the assumption that this actually is a viral manifestation of rage created by scientists in order to *cure* violence.

A similar tactic was used on the population of a planet in the film *Serenity*. Joss Whedon's television show *Firefly* and the film, *Serenity*, based on *Firefly* feature an aggressive mob-oriented foe called "Reavers." The origin of Reavers is never properly discussed in the series, but their origin is the main plot point behind the film. As it turns out, the ruling government, the Alliance, added a chemical into the air processors on a terraformed planet named Miranda. Sent to investigate why all communications have ceased from the planet, Dr. Caron reports

It's the Pax. The G-23 Paxilon Hydrochlorate that we added to the air processors. It was supposed to calm the population, weed out aggression. Well, it works. The people here stopped fighting. And then they stopped everything else. [...] There's 30 million people here, and they all just let themselves die.

She goes on to describe how the chemical had the opposite reaction on "about a tenth of a percent of the population" causing "their aggressor response [to] increase beyond madness" (*Serenity*, 2005). Certainly those "positively" affected by the Pax can be classified as zombies. The chemical caused them all to mindlessly give up on life. The Reavers, however, are a bit trickier. Like the infected in *28 Days Later*, Reavers are exceedingly violent. Reavers are cannibals like post-Romero zombies. Yet, despite the similarities—Reavers cannot be classified as zombies. They may be a flesh-eating, dehumanised, aggressive mob, but they still feed and clothe themselves<sup>29</sup>, as well as managing to get themselves from place to place in space ships. They send out raiding parties which indicates some level of organisational skills. They may be aggressive beyond madness—but madness does not necessarily indicate mindlessness.

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<sup>29</sup> Often using the skin of their victims for both purposes.

In 2004, film director Zack Snyder helmed the *Dawn of the Dead* remake—more than 25 years after the release of the original. Snyder’s *Dawn of the Dead* features many of the same elements as Romero’s original film—but the one very noticeable difference is how he changed Romero’s zombies. Clearly inspired by the zombie-like infected of *28 Days Later* as well as a number of best-selling videogames,<sup>30</sup> Snyder’s zombies are fast and quite spry. Not only that, but the film takes a detour from Romero’s zombies and turns the zombie problem into more of a viral outbreak situation: only those who are bitten will die and return as zombies. Those who die naturally (or unnaturally as is the case of one woman who is shot in the mall) stay dead. Though in Romero’s films the zombie bites are infectious as well, it is not just anyone who has been bitten by a zombie will die and become one—anyone who dies at all in Romero’s zombie films will reanimate.

In 2005, Romero released his fourth zombie film *Land of the Dead*. Romero continues to show small amounts of increased intelligence among the zombies. The zombie ring-leader “Big Daddy” is almost a kind of hero-figure. He is more self-aware than the other zombies around him, and through his guidance, more follow in his footsteps. He figures out (or perhaps remembers from life) how to use a gun, and shows another zombie how to point and shoot as well.

*Fido* (dir. Andrew Currie), released in 2006, gives the explanation of “space radiation” engulfing the Earth as the cause of the dead returning to life. Interestingly enough, the 2007 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* titled *The Invasion* (dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel) uses a space-virus as explanation for people becoming emotionless automatons rather than the original space-plant “pod people” from the 1956 version. The 2007 film *Planet Terror* (dir. Robert Rodriguez) involves a bio-weapon gone horribly wrong. Similarly the 2008 film *Zombie Strippers* (dir. Jay Lee) uses a viral strain called the “chemo-virus”

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<sup>30</sup> The introduction of the *Resident Evil* video game series in 1996 and the addition of the *Half-Life* series in 1998 facilitated many of the changes seen in the Romero remakes as well as within the zombie genre. These games and changes (as well as others) will be discussed further in the next chapter.

developed as a bio-weapon to raise soldiers from the dead on the battlefield and keep them fighting as a form of troop replacement. The *Day of the Dead* (dir. Steve Miner) straight-to-video 2008 “remake” shows the zombie epidemic starting as a seemingly harmless flu-like illness. A strange breeding of *28 Days Later* and Snyder’s *Dawn of the Dead*, this *Day of the Dead*<sup>31</sup> begins with a virus that kills those infected, only to reanimate the corpses. A bite from a zombie will also infect a victim, kill them, and cause reanimation.

Perhaps the most confusing viral zombie film is the Spanish film *[Rec]* (dir. Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza) released in 2007. The outbreak initially appears to be some sort of virus. People inside a Barcelona apartment complex (including a film crew, a couple of police officers, and fire-fighters) are sealed in until a health inspector can come and assess the situation. Eventually, after the health inspector arrives, he tells the people in the building that a call was received from a vet about a dog who had an unknown disease. The health inspector goes on to describe the stages the dog went through. First coma and then incredible amounts of aggression once he woke up.

The vast majority of this film points to a viral explanation for the way people are acting. Yet towards the end, Angela (Manuela Velasco) and Pablo (Pablo Rosso) (the reporter and camera man) who are the audiences’ main point of identification discover evidence in the penthouse apartment which may indicate that the zombiism is caused by demonic forces. Pinned to the wall are photos of a girl accompanied by newspaper clippings about the Vatican investigating the possible possession of a Portuguese girl.

The plot becomes a little hazy from that point to the end. The two survivors discover a tape recorder with recordings of a man discussing what is wrong with the supposed possessed girl. During the playback, the reporter and her cameraman learn that an enzyme has mutated, causing whatever is wrong with the girl to mutate into something much more “flu-like” and

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<sup>31</sup> The zombies are very fast, and actually somewhat acrobatic as many of them can crawl along on the ceilings and walls.

therefore potentially contagious. Whether or not the girl was actually possessed is never answered. What seems more likely, however, is that she did have some sort of unknown virus and failing to find a medical explanation or cure people sought to explain the problem through religious means, with terrible consequences.

Though the explanation for the outbreak of zombiism in *[Rec]* is notably vague, even confused, zombies due to demonic possession do occur in films—though it may not be as popular an explanation as a viral outbreak or some other sort of contamination. *The Evil Dead* (dir. Sam Raimi) film starring Bruce Campbell is perhaps the most famous example of demonic possession zombies. Five friends going on holiday to a cabin in the woods discover a book called the Necronomicon<sup>32</sup> and a translated recording of pages from the book. Playing the recording releases demons and “[gives] them licence to possess the living” (*The Evil Dead*, 1981). Once possessed, the host dies while the demon continues to inhabit the body. The only way to get rid of the demon inside the corpse is to completely dismember the dead body to make it useless for the demons to inhabit.

The Japanese film *Versus* (dir. Ryuhei Kitamura), released in 2000, begins with the explanation that there are 666 portals to the other side, and somewhere in Japan is a forest called “The Forest of Resurrection” which is home to the 444<sup>th</sup> portal. The dead begin to rise at the behest of an evil spirit searching to reopen an age-old battle between good and evil. Another example is the 2004 film *Dead and Breakfast* (dir. Matthew Leutwyler). An evil spirit connected to a small wooden box gains the ability to reanimate a corpse after a small piece of the intended victim is collected and placed in the box. The film features a character named Randall Keith Randall (Zach Selwyn) who often narrates plot points of the film in

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<sup>32</sup> The book was first mentioned in some of H. P. Lovecraft’s stories. Lovecraft also eventually wrote a history for the book, explaining its origins and some information on the supposed author. *Evil Dead* uses a book of similar description to Lovecraft’s.



song<sup>33</sup>. In the final stand-off between the survivors and the zombies waiting outside, the scene looks oddly Romeroesque creating links between *Dead and Breakfast* and *Night of the Living Dead*. That is, until the zombies outside break into a choreographed dance routine reminiscent of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* music video (dir. John Landis).

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the countless films released since the publication of Twitchell's book prove his theory about zombies wrong. Family circle, or no family circle—the zombie has survived in horror. While not all zombie films attempt to provide “long-lasting shivers” the frequent film spoofs illustrate the zombie's ability to last in popular culture. The growing number of causes leading to zombiism in films also continues to illustrate the zombie's staying power in popular culture. The adaptability of this monster demonstrates why its popularity continues to grow. The next chapter will examine the zombie's shift from film to videogames—an occurrence which, as shown, served to revitalise the way in which zombies were depicted in film.

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<sup>33</sup> Musical zombies appear to be gaining popularity. In 2006 *Evil Dead* was adapted as a musical for the stage (including songs titled “Look who's Evil Now,” “What the Fuck was that,” “Death is a Bitch,” and “I'm Not a Killer.”) and also in 2006 songwriter and musician Jonathan Coulton recorded and released a song about zombies in the office titled “Re: Your Brains.”

### Chapter Three: Dawn of the (Digital) Dead

The film industry, while solely responsible for the evolution of the zombie in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, cannot claim all the credit for the continuing evolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Many of the post-2000 films took their cues from the rising popularity of zombies in the videogame industry. These games (which I will explore in the next chapter) led the charge for trends now seen in today's zombie films. Zombies in videogames were often inspired by the zombies in films, and newer zombie films have taken some inspirations from videogames. The two are so interconnected that it has become difficult to completely separate the two. I cannot talk about one, without having to reference the other and vice versa. In this chapter I will briefly explore some of these "survival horror"<sup>34</sup> games as well as other games listed for game consoles, computers, and internet play as well as the effect some of these games have had on the identity of the zombie in popular culture.

Before I begin, however, it is important to acknowledge a certain change in demographics for videogames which would help create an audience for zombie-related games. In *Trigger Happy: Video Games and the Entertainment Revolution*, author Steve Poole explains that "in the 1980s videogames were indeed mainly a children's pursuit, but now games cost between 20 and 50 dollars and are targeted at the disposable income of adults." He goes on to list the results of a survey from 2000 which states that "61 percent of all US videogamers are 18 and older." And a big part of this is the Sony Playstation. The target audience for the Playstation game console is adults between the ages of 18 to 25. Poole's book, published in 2000, lists statistics stating that Sony has sold over five million Playstation game consoles in the U.K., and one in four U.S. households has a Playstation. "More and more grownups choose to play videogames rather than watch TV or go to the movies" (Poole, 6-7). Though newer versions of the Playstation have been released, making

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<sup>34</sup> A term coined (and a genre created) by the first *Resident Evil* game released in 1996

the original console obsolete, these newer consoles (the Playstation 2 and Playstation 3) are still big sellers. For example, in October 2007 the N-Europe website published sales figures for all consoles. Worldwide, Sony has sold more than 120 million Playstation 2 consoles since its release in 2000 while the Playstation 3 (released in 2006) has sold over five and a half million. This demographic shift leading to an adult target audience calls for more ‘mature’ games. Many zombie games are not only scary, but violent as well which caters to this older audience much more than to children.

In 1996 the Japanese company Capcom created *Biohazard* (better-known as *Resident Evil* in the United States and Europe) for the newly-released Playstation game console. Shinji Mikami, the lead designer of *Resident Evil* has said he wanted the main feature of the game to be *fear*. He sought to create a game as terrifying as possible, and as a result “instructed his design team to focus on one particular horror monster, the walking dead” (Russell, 171). The Japanese title, *Biohazard*, clearly indicates that the game series involves a biological contaminant—in this case, a virus. One of the biggest fear-factors in the first *Resident Evil* game (as well as the numerous sequels to the franchise) is the sound effects. Steven Poole notes that *Resident Evil*

shows a **superb handling of sound effects that is directly influenced by its movie forebears**. [...] When the moans of zombies suddenly float out of nowhere, or the silence is broken by the piercing sound of a window smashing, you know you had better run. (Poole, 69) [bold mine]

Mikami openly admits he found inspiration in Romero’s films as well as the Italian film *Zombie Flesh Eaters*<sup>35</sup> (dir. Lucio Fulci) which in many ways is a more extreme version of Romero’s zombies. Poole explains that the earlier *Resident Evil* games “cheerfully lift wholesale camera angles and action sequences from Romero’s own classic zombie flicks” (Poole, 66). Likewise, one of the main characters in the first *Resident Evil* game is a strong

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<sup>35</sup> The film was originally released in Italy under the name *Zombi 2* despite the fact that it is not a sequel to any other film.

female character, Jill Valentine, very similar to the proactive female roles in Romero's later films. But Mikami states the majority of his inspiration came from his reaction to the Fulci film.

I thought, "If I was making this movie, I'd do this or that differently." I thought it would be cool to make my own horror movie, but we went one better by making a videogame that captures the same sense of terror. I want *Resident Evil* to give the player the feeling that he's the main character in a horror movie. (qtd in Russell, 171)

This horror movie element is certainly conveyed in a big-budget commercial for *Biohazard 2* (directed by George A. Romero). The commercial was filmed in Tokyo, Japan and aired on television in the weeks before the game's release. However, due to a contract dispute, the commercial was never shown outside of Japan. In the commercial, teenagers dressed as the main characters (Leon S. Kennedy and Claire Redfield) evade zombies and arm themselves for survival inside the Raccoon City Police Department—replace the children with adults and the commercial could easily pass for a movie trailer. And certainly Mikami has gone "one better" by creating a "videogame that captures the same sense of terror as a film." Watching a film is a passive act. The viewer is a fly on the wall—but has no interaction with what is happening in the film. In a videogame, the role becomes an active one. Rather than futilely screaming "don't go in there/down that way/etc" at a film on the screen, people can actually participate in a game and make their own choices on whether or not they would like to avoid the creepy hallway full of zombies for the time being and return to it when they are better prepared, or plunge on wildly ahead and hope for the best.

In the first game, local law enforcement in a small Midwestern American town called Raccoon City sends in S.T.A.R.S. (Special Tactics and Rescue Service) Unit Bravo Team to investigate a rash of cannibalistic murders in the area. After contact is lost, Alpha Team is sent in to find the missing Bravo Team and continue the investigation. Alpha Team locates the downed helicopter from Bravo Team and lands to investigate. While on the ground, the

group is attacked by dogs, which kill one member of the team. The helicopter pilot takes off and abandons the rest of the team forcing the remaining team members (Jill Valentine, Chris Redfield, Barry Burton and Albert Wesker) make a run for the nearby Spencer Mansion. The game takes place inside the Spencer Mansion and the surrounding grounds.

Once inside the mansion, the player begins the investigation<sup>36</sup>. Scattered throughout the mansion are documents, diaries, and other clues that indicate the Umbrella Corporation (a pharmaceutical conglomerate) is involved with highly dangerous and illegal experiments with a biological agent known as the T-Virus. The T-Virus is responsible for infecting, killing, and reanimating the workers involved in the project. Likewise, it becomes clear that the researchers were testing the virus on other plants and animals when the S.T.A.R.S. team members encounters creatures like the Cerberus (dogs which have succumbed to the T-Virus much like the researchers—dying and reanimating), Hunters (half-human/half-reptilian mutants injected with the T-Virus), Chimeras (humans mutated by fly DNA and the T-Virus), as well as a number of other foes which have been experimented on with the T-Virus such as a giant shark (Neptune), giant snake (Yawn), giant plant (Plant 42), giant wasps, and giant spiders (Web Spinners and the Black Tiger)—as well as the aforementioned zombies. There is also a creature called the Tyrant which is a biologically engineered “super soldier” that has many variations and many different appearances throughout the rest of the series.

The first *Resident Evil* game demonstrates many of the common themes found throughout the previous chapter including viral contamination and medical/scientific meddling for the sake of creating a biological weapon. It also fronts the new wave of zombie trends that eventually bleeds into the film industry. While the zombies in the original *Resident Evil* maintain an old-school Romeroesque slowness throughout the game, the other creatures (including the Cerberus) are much quicker requiring a faster reaction time for the

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<sup>36</sup> The player is given the choice to pick Jill or Chris as their character. Both result in a similar game, although Jill's is slightly easier as she often receives help from Barry, and she has the ability to carry more items than Chris.

player to either defeat them or run away from them. However, in 2002 Capcom released a remake of the first *Resident Evil* game for the Nintendo GameCube console featuring a number of new elements—including the introduction of the “Crimson Head Zombie” which is the reanimation of zombies previously “killed” by the player in the game. After a certain amount of time, they will reanimate again unless the player sets them on fire after killing them the first time. After the second reanimation, the zombies take on a reddish tinge, and they are much faster and more agile than ‘normal’ zombies.

As mentioned, one of the main features in any survival horror game is the exploitation of reaction time. A player needs to be able to think and react very quickly in order to get through (or possibly get out of) a situation that threatens the life of the character. In *Resident Evil 1*, the Spencer Mansion is an extremely claustrophobic setting. Small rooms, tight corridors, and a number of locked doors limiting escape routes do not require legions of zombies. When the player first roams through the mansion he or she only encounters zombies a number of Cerberus, and some T-Virus infected crows. After a thorough investigation of the Guesthouse, the player returns to the mansion to discover all the rooms and hallways once infested with zombies are now populated by Hunters, forcing the player to think quicker than before as the Hunters can run and jump. Likewise, while in the underground laboratory, the player encounters Chimeras which can quickly crawl along on the ceilings and often drop down behind the character to attack (a similar trait occurs in the zombies from the 2008 *Day of the Dead*). Yet the *Resident Evil* games do not underestimate the horror value of the regular zombie. In *Resident Evil 2* the game opens in a zombie-choked Raccoon City. The T-Virus was released into the sewer system, infecting rats which then infected the city’s population. The player either chooses Leon S. Kennedy (a rookie police officer for the Raccoon Police Department) or Claire Redfield (a college student and Chris Redfield’s little sister). At the start of the game, the character is armed only with a knife, and has no

immediate place to hide which forces the player to run blindly to safety while avoiding the swarm of zombies that are approaching on all sides.

The immense success of *Resident Evil* led to more than just two or three sequels and updated versions of existing games for newer consoles. Currently there are seven games out in the main series<sup>37</sup> with an eighth due out in 2009 (*Resident Evil 5* which will take place in Africa and star Chris Redfield as the main playable character) as well as two sub-series (the *Survivor Series* with three games and the *Outbreak Series* with two games) and five games for portable consoles (one for the Game Boy Colour, a remake of *Resident Evil 1* for the Nintendo DS (Dual Screen) which incorporates a number of the DS features like the touch screen and microphone, and three different games for mobile phones).

In 2002, Capcom released *Resident Evil Zero*—a prequel to *Resident Evil* which chronicles the events that lead S.T.A.R.S. member Rebecca Chambers to the Spencer Mansion. More importantly, the game also begins to explore the origins of the T-Virus, explaining that a newly discovered virus (called the Progenitor Virus) is experimented with using the Ebola virus, creating an all-new virus which causes rapid mutations. Further experiments with this virus led to the creation of the T-Virus. As a whole, the *Resident Evil* series is steeped with viral zombies. Experiments gone awry with the virus, as well as uncontrolled outbreaks of the virus are a staple of any viral zombie film. Yet the franchise takes an interesting step out of the viral zombie niche with the release of *Resident Evil 4* and explores a parasitic contamination.

The game opens in Spain with Leon S. Kennedy on a mission to find and rescue the President's daughter. Shortly after the opening scene he encounters a "hostile local" which he was "forced to neutralize" (i.e. kill in self-defence). When the player is given the option to examine the corpse, the words "It's not a zombie" appear on the screen. But that is not

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<sup>37</sup> Listed in order of release: *Resident Evil*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*, *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*, *Resident Evil Zero*, *Resident Evil 4*, and *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles*.

entirely true. Like the infected in *28 Days Later*, these people are not traditional zombies: they are not dead, but they are still being controlled. Rather than a virus, the people (called Los Ganados or “The Cattle”) in *Resident Evil 4* are infected by a parasite called Las Plagas. Those infected with the parasite are quite similar to the folklore zombi in the sense that they mindlessly follow the orders their master gives to them.

*Resident Evil* is not the only game series to use parasitic zombies. In the Valve Corporation game Science Fiction/Horror-hybrid *Half-Life* the player takes the role of theoretical physicist, Gordon Freeman, as he starts his first day on the job in the Black Mesa Research Facility. Very quickly an experiment goes wrong, opening a portal between Earth and an alien world called Xen, allowing various hostile aliens to invade the facility including an alien parasite that attaches itself to a human host. These parasites (called headcrabs, headhumpers, or parasitics) attach themselves to the head of a human victim and turn them into zombies. There is the standard headcrab from *Half-Life*, which creates a relatively slow-moving zombie that is of little threat to the player on its own. The fast headcrab (or spider headcrab) debuted in *Half-Life 2*—it turns its host into a much faster and more agile zombie. The third and final headcrab is the poison headcrab which creates zombies that are much slower yet more resistant to damage than the standard headcrab zombie.

Likewise, in the 2006 Capcom game *Dead Rising* (whose main influence was zombie films of the 1960s and 1970s—particularly George A. Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* as the game takes place within a shopping mall<sup>38</sup>) indicates an insect is responsible for the zombie outbreak. Insects simply called “queens” can turn victims into zombies with a single sting. Killing a queen around a group of zombies causes all the zombies within a certain radius to “die” as well—releasing insect larvae. The main villain in the game is a man named Carlito who released the queens into a small Colorado town and intends to blow up the mall (which

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<sup>38</sup> The similarities to the films caused the MKR Group (the group holding the copyrights to the 1978 and 2004 *Dawn of the Dead* films) to claim the game violates the copyright despite Capcom’s inclusion of a “warning label” on the box stating the game has nothing to do with the films.



possesses a high concentration of zombies) in order to blast the queen larvae into the stratosphere in hopes of creating a world-wide zombie pandemic. Yet while videogames have greatly influenced the film industry's treatment of zombies (and vice-versa) the greatest evolution in the gaming medium is not a change from slow into fast zombies or from one form of contamination zombie to another but in the change from the zombie as an enemy to the zombie as a playable protagonist. Prior to these games, the zombie has largely been seen as a terrifying undesirable. Becoming a zombi, being attacked by a zombie—these are not things that are happily portrayed in films. In Romero's films, for example, characters facing the bleak fate of death and reanimation often ask to be shot in the head so they do not have to "live" like that. They do not wish to become a zombie. However, Cholo (John Leguizamo) in Romero's *Land of the Dead* who does not lament or fear his impending death or reanimation and simply shrugs and says he is "always wanted to see how the other half lives" (*Land of the Dead*, 2005). This new curiosity finds its footing in a number of recently-released games.

In 2005, Wideload Games released *Stubbs the Zombie in "Rebel Without a Pulse"* for the Xbox videogame console. The game takes place in the fictional town of Punchbowl, Pennsylvania in 1959. Stubbs (originally a life insurance salesman who was murdered in 1933 by Otis Monday after he got Otis' daughter, Maggie, pregnant) reanimates to avenge his own death by feasting on the brains of the townspeople. The player controls Stubbs, directing him to kill people, eat their brains, and then direct the reanimated corpses. In certain parts of the game, the player can make Stubbs remove his own hand, and then direct the hand to attach itself to a living person's head, and take control of him or her as a sort of pseudo-zombie in order to achieve a task or goal.

There are also a few games which allow the player to choose between playing the game as a survivor, or as a zombie. *Urban Dead* is a MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) which first began in 2005. When creating a character, players are

given the option of picking a living character, or a “victim of the early outbreak” (zombie). If the player chooses a living character, and that character is killed—the character will reanimate as a zombie. However, within the game there are also “revivification syringes” created by the NecroTech laboratories inside the city. The revivification will actually “revive” a zombie and bring it back to a living state as a survivor. The game possesses no ultimate goals or specific ending. As a survivor, the player’s goal is to continue trying to survive by evading zombies, hiding inside barricaded buildings, etc. As a zombie the goal is to kill and create more zombies. Similar to *Urban Dead*, Valve Corporation is currently working on a multi-player cooperative survival horror first-person shooter game called *Left 4 Dead* in which players can choose to fight as a survivor or as a zombie.

In 2008, InLight Entertainment released *Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brian Thingys!* for the Nintendo DS console. In the game, the player controls three different teenage zombies (each zombie has different special abilities and the player must alternate between them in order to progress through the levels in the game). The “alien brain thingys” serve as enemies, as well as a food source. Killing an alien brain thingy gives the player the option to then make the zombie scoop up and eat the remaining brain goo. Both *Stubbs the Zombie* and *Teenage Zombies* lean away from the traditional horror associated with zombies in videogames and instead adopt a whimsical and humorous tone throughout the course of the gameplay. For example, both games integrate the cliché aspect of the brain-loving zombies (which first occurred in the first *Return of the Living Dead* film and quickly became a staple part of the pop culture zombie). Both give a nod to the 1950s: *Stubbs* takes place in 1959 in a futuristic fifties town with flying cars and robots with accompanying soundtrack of popular 1950s songs covered by contemporary artists while *Teenage Zombies* opens with the alien invasion explained in a fifties comic book format.

Yet there is at least one game which explores the horror of playing as a zombie. In the 2007 game *Bioshock* (developed by 2K Boston/2K Australia); the player controls a man named Jack through the failing underwater city of Rapture (another fictional city which harkens back to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century nostalgia). Though Jack appears to possess a free will and ability to make his own choices, a plot-twist revealed in the second half of the game shows that he is actually a genetically-modified fully-grown man (created only two years prior to the events which led him to Rapture) conditioned to respond to certain phrases and code words. If Jack is given an order which starts or ends with the phrase “Would you kindly,” he must immediately obey, no matter what the order is. The player learns of all this in an extended cut scene as Andrew Ryan (the original target Jack has been sent to “stop,” as well as Jack’s biological father) uses the phrase to force the character to kill him while repeatedly proclaiming “a man chooses, a slave obeys!” Even after this specific behavioural conditioning is removed, Jack is still not completely free from the control of his “master,” a man named Frank Fontaine.

Far from simple mind-control tactics, the amount of control Fontaine possesses over Jack is revealed after he discovers that the “would you kindly” phrase has been deactivated. He utters the phrase “Code Yellow” which sends the message to Jack’s brain to shut down his heart. Until the player can locate two specific “antidotes” to the behavioural conditioning (called Lot 192), Jack’s maximum health periodically lowers, injuring him in the process, lowering his remaining health. After drinking one portion of the antidote, Jack is freed from Fontaine’s control, but a lingering side-effect removes the player’s ability to choose which plasmid (genetic modifications allowing the character to have certain abilities such as telekinesis; shooting fire, electricity, ice, or bees from his hands) he or she would like Jack to use. Similar to folklore zombies, Jack has no idea the he is what he is. Once the revelation of

his past is revealed, and Fontaine's control of him broken, Jack—like the zombies who realise what they are—seeks to destroy his master.

The emerging trend of games where the players control a zombie character may only be just beginning. While *Stubbs* and *Teenage Zombies* certainly show the lighter side of a zombie protagonist and *Urban Dead* and *Left for Dead* offer an interesting choice and balance between playing as a survivor and as a zombie showing the very real side that not every person can be a survivor. And in a game taking place during the zombie apocalypse—the game does not simply end when the player's character dies. As Cholo pointed out—there is a curiosity regarding what occurs after death. He refuses the offer of a second death after reanimation based solely on the curiosity of what it must be like to be a zombie. *Stubbs* and *Teenage Zombies* elect to show a happier and more humorous side. The zombies in *Teenage Zombies* are actually fighting off an alien invasion to help the living. *Stubbs* is attacking many of the innocent people of Punchbowl on his ultimate goal of revenge and to recover his lost love—but as he does so with noxious flatulence, throwing out his own organs and detonating them, as well as pulling off his head and bowling it at his enemies—it is hard to find any horror in what he is doing. Jack in *Bioshock* raises a number of questions about free will and whether or not the player is listening to helpful advice on how to advance through the game, or if it is not advice but merely another master to serve. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the popularity of many of these videogames has fed the massive resurgence of zombies in film. Similarly, as we will see in the next chapter, this resurgence has paved the way for the zombie to expand into in the popular novel.

### Chapter Four: Rise of the Literary Zombie

Stephen Jones, editor of *The Giant Book of Zombies*, a multi-author anthology (published in 1995)<sup>39</sup>, writes in his introduction to the collection that “the zombie has rarely made a successful transition to the novel form” (Jones, 1). Though this statement was unquestionably true in the early nineties, the revival of the zombie with the help of videogames such as the *Resident Evil* series and films like *28 Days Later*, *Land of the Dead* and Zack Snyder’s *Dawn of the Dead* paved the way for zombies to take their next big step in popular culture. This chapter will focus on the new wave of zombie novels flooding in. Many of the same trends between the film and gaming medium still apply, as well as a number of new elements currently emerging. Novels tend to mainly focus on some form of the contamination zombie—largely viral, though some novels give a nod to their zombie forefathers and show an outbreak begin as the result of contamination via space radiation. There is also one notable new trend present in many of the novels—naming the zombie as ‘zombie’ rather than finding another word to take its place. But first, author Max Brooks<sup>40</sup> (*The Zombie Survival Guide*, *World War Z*) is worth mentioning as his books helped pave the way for a demand in the market for zombie-based literature.

In 2003, Brooks’ book, *The Zombie Survival Guide*, which claims to provide “complete protection from the undead” was published. The book—often stocked in the humour section of bookstores because it parodies the *Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook* series by Joshua Piven as well as other Survival Guides—is no laughing matter. Brooks compiles everything from zombie “types” (the Voodoo Zombie, the Hollywood Zombie, and the Solanum-virus Zombie—the latter being Brooks’ creation and take on viral zombies and the focus for the guide) to how to kill them, where to hide, and how to turn

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<sup>39</sup> First published as *The Mammoth Book of Zombies* in 1993

<sup>40</sup> Brooks is the son of filmmaker Mel Brooks who directed numerous films spoofs including some on classic horror icons: Frankenstein (*Young Frankenstein*) and Dracula (*Dracula, Dead and Loving it*). Max Brooks also worked as a writer for *Saturday Night Live* from 2001 to 2003.

one's home into a zombie-proof fortress. He also includes an inventive list of "recorded attacks" near the end of the book spanning throughout history and the entire world from Katanda, Central Africa in 60,000 B.C. to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands in 2002. Following the recorded attacks there is an appendix where the book's owner can make his or her own outbreak journal to chronicle "suspicious events that could indicate a possible outbreak" (Brooks, 249). Brooks' *Zombie Survival Guide* had an obvious influence on *Day By Day Armageddon* by J. L. Bourne<sup>41</sup> which first appeared as a blog in 2004 and was later published in book format by Permuted Press in 2007.

The blog chronicles the life of a Navy officer, starting 1 January 2004 as a New Years Resolution. Within a few days the diary begins to hint at the emergence of an influenza-like virus in China. By 10 January there is a reported case of the disease in the U.S. From there, the situation quickly deteriorates. As the protagonist of the story (the supposed author of the blog) is an officer in the military, it stands to reason that he would have a fairly good chance of surviving the outbreak. He has weapons, the means to access proper supplies (such as MREs<sup>42</sup>), as well as a certain amount of training. Because of this, the protagonist's story is fairly believable. He certainly stands a better chance than someone with no experience, training, or stockpile of supplies. Yet the survival story chronicled in *Day By Day Armageddon* does not seem to hold as much interest as the stories presented in Brooks' second book, *World War Z* (published in 2006). The novel takes place after the end of the zombie apocalypse and records a documentary-style story of many different survivors from all over the world. From military personnel to hopelessly inept civilians, Brooks' novel provides a glimpse into numerous lives and describes how each person 'interviewed' managed to survive as well as how those around them survived or perished. Similar to *Day*

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<sup>41</sup> Fans of the blog/novel have compared and contrasted the information Brooks' supplies in his "survival guide" to J. L. Bourne's information on the forum for *Day by Day Armageddon* ([www.tacticalunderground.us](http://www.tacticalunderground.us)) Many of them admit that Brooks' *Zombie Survival Guide* offers surprisingly good advice "for a book classified as 'humor'"

<sup>42</sup> Meals Ready to Eat

*By Day Armageddon*, the outbreak begins in China calling up the recent fears of viruses like SARS (which first appeared around Southern China in 2002) and Bird Flu (first appearing in Asia in 2004). Though these infections and diseases do very often start in places like Africa and Asia—there is still an element present that insinuates these forces are invading the U.S. homeland from far-off ‘foreign’ places. The United States is often the setting for many of these novels, so an outside virus encroaching on American soil tends to victimise U.S. citizens. The problems that occur are the fault of others, not the fault of the U.S. However, in the introduction to *The Morningstar Strain: Plague of the Dead* by Z. A. Recht, author Bowie V. Ibarra examines a theme of United States governmental control in the form of contamination scares. “Whether its [sic] ‘bird flu’, ‘anthrax’, ‘terrorists’, or ‘smallpox’, the government has already put it in our heads that a ‘biological attack’ was inevitable, and we should all be afraid” (Recht, ii). Whether or not his claims of government control are valid—the fear of a biological attack does exist. And it is that fear which propels the horror in many of these novels. Uncontrollable diseases are a staple for many of the novels in this chapter. Many of them are described as “influenza-like” or related to Ebola. Author Joe McKinney goes quite in-depth in his 2006 novel *Dead City*—not only using a viral angle for his zombie outbreak, but a natural disaster angle as well.

The protagonist, Eddie Hudson, is a police officer on duty in San Antonio when the outbreak occurs. Far from the usual biological weapons testing or scientific experiments, the virus in *Dead City* results from a rash of violent hurricanes over a period of three weeks. The hurricane aspect of the novel nods to the recent devastation of New Orleans by hurricane Katrina in 2005. More than half-way through the novel the source of the virus is finally discussed. Originally seen on victims arriving on flights inbound from Houston (one of the cities completely destroyed by the recent hurricanes), the virus is “closely related to the family of hemorrhagic fevers that include Ebola, Marburg, and the Crimean-Congo viruses”

(McKinney, 176). However, the “necrosis filovirus” has an incubation period of just a few hours rather than one similar to Ebola (which is approximately five to 10 days).

Designing a zombie virus off other filoviruses (like Ebola), as previously mentioned, makes a lot of sense. Not only are filoviruses incredibly contagious, but according to Richard Preston author of *The Hot Zone*, the known strains of Ebola have very high mortality rates. The strains of Ebola known as Ebola Sudan and Ebola Zaïre first broke out in 1976. Preston notes that when Ebola Sudan reached a hospital it turned it into “a morgue [...] killing patients left and right.” He goes on to explain that during this process the doctors “began to notice signs of mental derangement, psychosis, depersonalisation [and] zombie-like behaviour” (Preston, 111). The mortality rate for Ebola Sudan is fifty percent.

If the Ebola Sudan virus had managed to spread out of central Africa, it might have entered Khartoum in a few weeks, penetrated Cairo a few weeks after that, and from there [...] it would have gone everywhere on the planet. (Preston, 112)

Two months after the Ebola outbreak in Sudan, another strain of the virus broke in a district of northern Zaïre (leading to naming the strain Ebola Zaïre). Though the new strain of Ebola had a similar list of symptoms, it had a mortality rate of *ninety* percent. *Dead City* is not the only novel to liken the zombie-virus to Ebola. *Plague of the Dead* references both Ebola Sudan and Ebola Zaïre within the opening pages and continuously refers back to those strains throughout the course of the novel. Even the Solanum virus from Brooks’ *Zombie Survival Guide* follows a similar set of symptoms to Ebola, rapidly spreading over the course of a day. Modelling a zombie virus after Ebola or the Influenza viruses only serves to increase the fear because there is no definite cure or vaccine. Ebola has neither a cure nor vaccine for humans, and on top of that—the original host for the disease is still unknown as well as how the virus originally spread to humans. With Influenza viruses, there is a vaccine distributed, but because the virus changes so rapidly one year’s vaccine may prove



completely ineffective against the virus the following year. But apart from many of the novels possessing a viral aspect, many of them share a number of other common themes.

As mentioned in chapter two, many films (most famously George A. Romero's) never specifically name zombies as zombies. For example all of Romero's films (apart from *Land of the Dead*) tiptoe around calling the undead "zombies." They are called ghouls or flesh-eating ghouls in *Night of the Living Dead*, go unnamed in *Dawn of the Dead* (though constantly referred to as "them"), are called "specimens" or "dumb fucks" in *Day of the Dead*, and often called "stenches" in *Land of the Dead*. In *28 Days Later*, the zombies are referred to as "the infected." Many films do not name the zombies at all. Yet in many of the novels, two things are immediately disclosed: that the walking dead *are* zombies and that zombies are an impossible explanation because zombies are the stuff of Hollywood films.

However it comes as no surprise that *Resident Evil: The Umbrella Conspiracy* employs this tactic. The *Resident Evil* games, as mentioned in the last chapter, were heavily influenced by a number of older zombie films so it makes sense for a novelised version of the first game to reference zombie films as well. This novelisation, written by S.D. Perry, was first published in 1998—two years after the release of *Resident Evil* on the Sony Playstation. Perry's novel combines Jill's game and Chris' game to create one large, inter-connected story. When Chris first bumps into a zombie and attempts to kill it only to find that he cannot, he quickly puts together all the information he has been told: cannibalistic murders are taking place in Raccoon city, near the forest where the mansion sits, and strange creatures inside the mansion that cannot be killed by ordinary means:

He'd seen enough late-night movies to know what he was looking at, but he still couldn't believe it.

*Zombies.*

No, no way, that was fiction—but maybe some kind of disease, mimicking the symptoms. (Perry, *The Umbrella Conspiracy*, 62)

Ernie Hudson in *Dead City* expresses similar doubts over the realisation of what he is dealing with:

Were those people really zombies? [...] I had seen horror movies. I watched them and laughed [...] because the zombies in the Hollywood films movies never looked real. [...]The walking disasters I had seen certainly looked worse than anything I had ever seen on film. (McKinney, 42)

Gregory Solis' 2007 novel *Rise and Walk* appears to follow Romero's example of never naming the undead until the final page of the novel a journalist reporting on the efforts of the Oakland police as well as civilians "to make a stand against these, for lack of a better word, Zombies..." (Solis, 222). And in Kim Paffenroth's 2006 novel *Dying to Live* the word "zombie" appears in the first sentence of the novel. The protagonist goes on to discuss that "people had come up with lots of names for the walking dead in the preceding months" (Paffenroth, 3) which nods to the curious lack of the "zed-word" in many films.

These novels openly acknowledge the popular culture zombie, embracing the history these monsters have had on the big screen as well as the continuously adapting present. The constant reminder that "this is not a movie" works on a couple of different levels. There is the immediate use which many TV shows and films employ to suspend disbelief and try to align their characters lives with reality and the notion that "this is real life." But there is also another meaning just behind the first which very clearly indicates that zombies are not just for films and videogames anymore. The zombie has made the transition from film into print—which by all accounts is somewhat backwards for the likes of other famous monsters like Dracula or Frankenstein's creation. Of course, in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* the monsters within the novels function as significant characters with strong personalities in their own right whereas in most zombie novels the zombies are void of any personality. The focus of most zombie novels is not on the *zombie* as a character, but on the survivors in the story trying to cope in a radically changed and dangerous world.

Many of the authors I have mentioned actually reference or openly dedicate their novels to George A. Romero. Stephen King's 2006 novel *Cell* (which I will discuss shortly) is dedicated "for Richard Matheson and George Romero." Kim Paffenroth dedicates *Dying to Live* to "St. Augustine and George A. Romero—two of the greatest philosophers of the dark side of human nature." *The Walking Dead* book one graphic novel (containing volume one and two of the series) created by Robert Kirkman is a black and white comic (which is reminiscent of the cinematic style used in Romero's 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*). In the Afterword of the book, Kirkman opens by stating "I love zombie movies." He goes on to discuss that the inspiration for *The Walking Dead* is to make "a zombie movie that never ends" He references the end of *Dawn of the Dead* when Peter and Fran "hop in that helicopter" just before the credits roll. He then questions what happens to Barbara in *Night of the Living Dead* after her brother, Johnny, pulls her into the waiting zombie mob outside. "Did she survive? Did she get away? It never SHOWED her get eaten." And perhaps the most subtle of all the nods to Romero—Z. A. Recht dedicates *Plague of the Dead* "To Ben. You should have lived. And to Barbara. They are still coming to get you."

Notably, Robert Kirkman's sentiment about creating "a zombie movie that never ends" seems to occur with a number of other authors as well. The zombie novels for Recht, Paffenroth, Solis, and Bourne all have sequels published, or in the works. Likewise the *Resident Evil* novels have a number in the series—not all of them novelised versions of the games or films. Perry's second *Resident Evil* book titled *Caliban Cove* (also published in 1998, shortly after *The Umbrella Chronicles*) takes place within between *Resident Evil 1* and *Resident Evil 2*. Additionally, David Wellington, author of the *Monster* trilogy (*Monster Island*, *Monster Nation*, and *Monster Planet*) let his zombie tale spill over into multiple books while leaving the ending to the third novel open enough to accommodate more to the story should he ever want to write a fourth book.

Additionally, in many zombie novels there is a blending of slow and fast zombies though each author puts his own creative spin on the reasons for it. In Wellington's trilogy as long as someone dies while receiving oxygen to the brain, that person will reanimate with their brain largely undamaged and therefore able to enjoy 'normal' mental health functionality<sup>43</sup>.

“That's why the dead are so stupid—in the time between when they die and when they stand back up there's no oxygen in their brains and the cells just die.” [...] “I put myself on a ventilator and submerged myself in a bathtub full of ice,” Gary explained. “It stopped my heart instantly but oxygen kept flowing to my brain.” (Wellington, *Monster Island*, 61)

Gary goes on to explain that the undead in this condition can think and act for themselves. They have some amount of control over their actions—although as he later demonstrates, they still crave the flesh of the living. Only rather than mindlessly gorging themselves, they rationalise their actions. “She was going to die anyway.” The ability to rationalise might exempt the undead like Gary from the designation of ‘zombie,’ but the self-control only lasts so long. Eventually those like Gary lose control of themselves and give in to that zombie instinct to gorge on the living. Gary also demonstrates that he and his kind can move a lot faster than the usual zombies. “He moved so quickly he could have snapped my neck” (Wellington, *Monster Island*, 86). It is also worth mentioning that the cause of the outbreak in Wellington's novels is a slightly bizarre one. Wellington blends the medicinal and magical in order to create his zombies. As the reader learns in *Monster Nation*, one man obsessed with trying to save his wife from death, accidentally created “the Source.” The Source is responsible for reanimating the dead. Those like Gary can control the source in certain ways—for example; Gary has some amount of control over “normal” zombies. He acts a bit like a zombi master from folklore. Any order he gives to the zombies, they cannot disobey—

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<sup>43</sup> There are, of course, some hiccups. In *Monster Nation* one character, Nilla, accidentally preserves her mind in this manner after she is attacked, but when she reanimates she cannot remember her name or anything else about herself.

even if it means killing a zombie a second time by telling it to “Fuck off and die” (Wellington, *Monster Island*, 32). There are other zombies like Gary (eventually they are given the name ‘lich’ to differentiate them from the normal zombies), but they do not all have the same power he does. Nilla can make herself invisible. Another lich can control time around him—speeding it up, or slowing it down. Another is just ludicrously hairy. The Source affects them all in different ways—though they all maintain the ability to move and think as they did in life.

*Day By Day Armageddon* reintroduces the radiation zombie. After the initial outbreak of the virus gets out of control, President George W. Bush gives the order to use nuclear weapons on the zombies. The nukes fail to eradicate the zombies—but the radiation poisoning actually begins to make some of them faster. The concept is almost reverse-Romero. Romero’s zombies, as mentioned, are created through means of a strange radiation on a satellite returning from Venus what results, of course, is a slow-moving zombie. The remake of Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead* films changes the contaminant to something much more viral, and the zombies are extremely quick. It is interesting that in Bourne’s blog/novel the virus initially kills people and turns them into slow-moving zombies while introducing radiation somehow makes them more limber and able to move quickly.

In *Dead City* the zombies are not actually dead. “[The infected] experience depersonalisation to such a degree that they essentially become a zombie.” The virus not only causes this depersonalisation, it also causes bodily changes that mimic death. “The illusion [that these people are zombies] is all the more complete when you see the clouded pupils, the smell, the rotting skin, and the almost complete lack of sensitivity to pain” (McKinney, 176). While most of the zombies in this novel are the slow-moving variety—occasionally there is a fast zombie in the mix. The explanation for why there is a sporadic appearance of a faster zombie is never divulged, but after learning the way the virus affects people it is easy to

believe that perhaps the virus affects certain infected in a slightly different manner that allows them to move around with more ease.

In *Plague of the Dead* the Morningstar virus affects both the living and the dead. What results is very much *28 Days Later* meets George A. Romero. The living infected by the virus are fast, incredibly aggressive, and cannibalistic. Unless killed by a shot to the head, or unless the body is destroyed after death it will reanimate in a few hours as a slow-moving zombie that is still aggressive and cannibalistic. They earn themselves different nicknames to differentiate between the two: “sprinters” for the still-living infected, and “shamblers” for the reanimated bodies of the dead. This change from fast to slow is also the exact opposite of the Nintendo GameCube remake of *Resident Evil 1*.

The existence of fast and slow zombies within the same story has yet to happen in film. There could be any number of possible explanations for why the author would choose to feature both the classic slow-moving zombies and the newer fast zombies. But it boils down to the question of simply asking “why not?” As shown, the authors have any number of different explanations for why they use both types of zombies in their work. The use of both types attempts to put the pop culture debate of “fast zombies vs. slow zombies” to rest by intertwining the types and creating a situation in which they both occur.

But apart from the inclusion of both slow zombies and fast zombies—many of the novels still follow the same patterns for a zombie outbreak. Many authors (as explored) use viruses as an explanation. In *Rise and Walk* author Gegory Solis returns to the old-school explanation of a space contaminant causing the outbreak after a freak meteor shower sends numerous meteors to Earth which contaminate those who are unfortunate enough to stumble across them. Those people then die, reanimate, and begin to cannibalise their victims which of course contaminates the corpse (or living person—if they manage to escape) which begins the process all over again. David Wellington, as mentioned, took his story a slightly new

route combining medical meddling with magic. Though the contaminant is not from space—it still affects people the same way as Romero’s films. Those who are living are fine. Once they die, they will reanimate. If they are bitten by a zombie—they will fall sick and die shortly thereafter. Though there is an inclusion of fast zombies and strange mutations causing “super powers” of sorts, it is still just a different means of contamination but a very similar tale. However, in 2006 Stephen King published *Cell* which introduces an all-new source responsible for creating zombie-like people.

The culprit is not viral or radioactive. It is not medical or parasitic. It is technology. An unknown person (or persons) has released a kind of weapon through the telephone system—and in an age where most adults and teens carry mobile phones the effects are far-reaching and very, very quick. People who fall victim (quickly dubbed “phone-crazies”) experience absolute aggression and appear to forget who and what they were. After the phone pandemic begins, the first change in the phone-crazies is that they are exceedingly violent towards themselves and others. After a few days, the aggression begins to wind down, and these people begin to mindlessly flock together and follow certain patterns. Alice, a teenager who begins to travel with the protagonist, Clay and another man named Tom makes the connection to birds flocking as well as the zombies in Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead*. Alice figured that if the phone-crazies were flocking to and from public areas such as “in gyms and churches and malls” where they rest for the night, then not only could people chart the patterns (to avoid any problems of running into a group of them) but they could also find out where the phone-crazies “roost” for the night and “machine-gun them by the hundreds” (King, 137-139). The phone-crazies continue to change and eventually start exhibiting psychic abilities such as telekinesis. They speak in absolute gibberish and no longer recognize friends of family members—but they are perfectly capable of exerting some

amount of psychic energy when their aggression begins to rise. They start to link with one another and possess a hive-like mind and mentality. What one knows, they all know.

In some ways, King's phone-crazies are similar to those affected by "Snow Crash" (a computer virus) in Neal Stephenson's novel of the same name. In that novel, the virus attacks not only a person's computer, but their brain if they are connected to the Metaverse (a virtual world somewhat similar to the internet) and "see" the computer virus. Both novels explore the concept of the human brain as a kind of computer that can be rewired, rebooted, and infected by technologically-based viruses. King's phone-crazies represent another evolutionary step forward for zombies. They, like the infected from *28 Days Later* are not dead—but unlike the infected, the zombiism is not caused by a contamination in the traditional sense. There is no fear of viral or radioactive or parasitic contamination. However, it probes at a new and growing fear of over-reliance on technology. In a time of crisis, most people in possession of a mobile phone would immediately reach for it and ring for help, or call a family member or loved one. As soon as this primary source of communication becomes unstable or unreliable, the world appears to fall apart. Communication is no longer instantaneous, and the characters in King's novel begin to question if other devices (such as radios) are also affected by this unexplained occurrence of technological terrorism<sup>44</sup>.

These novels all show the inevitable rise of zombie-based literature. More and more publishing companies are picking up novels in the horror genre that deal with zombies. David Wellington's novel *Zombie Nation* was originally self-published on the Internet in 2004. By 2006 the first two novels in his trilogy were published by Thunder's Mouth Press. Authors Bourne, Paffenroth, and Recht are all published by a small independent American Internet-based publishing company called Permuted Press which started in 2004. Permuted Press specialises in the "apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and zombie fiction market(s)" (Permuted

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<sup>44</sup> Similarly, a horror film released in 2007 called *The Signal* (dir. David Bruckner, Dan Bush, and Jacob Gentry) tells of a mysterious transmission invading TVs, radios, and cell phones which turns people crazy if they hear it.



Press blog). Currently the company has published about 20 titles, 15 of which are zombie-related. They welcome first-time authors and openly advertise when they are accepting novel or anthology submissions on their website. After the revitalisation of the genre thanks to videogames such as *Resident Evil* and a new wave of zombie films like *28 Days Later* and Zach Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* as well as popular novel successes such as Brooks' *Zombie Survival Guide* and *World War Z* and graphic novel series like *The Walking Dead* and *Marvel Zombies* the zombie continues to grow in popularity and become further entwined in today's popular culture. Indeed, the zombie is the most high-profile horror icon of the past decade, and looks set to stay that way for some time yet.

## Conclusion

The zombie's ability to permeate so many aspects of popular culture media is directly connected to its versatility as well as the constant inspiration filmmakers, authors, game designers (and so on) gather from one another. The evolution of the zombie is all about inspiration. As I have shown through the course of this thesis, George A. Romero, initially inspired by Richard Matheson, has in turn inspired numerous others. Some of these filmmakers and game designers have, in a way, re-inspired Romero as well. In his latest zombie film *Diary of the Dead*, Romero included a jab at the fast-zombie trend with a line of dialogue near the opening of the film "dead things don't move fast. If [they] run that fast [their] ankles are gonna snap off" (*Diary of the Dead*, 2007). The changes made to the zombie are by no means linear. Zombies have an ever growing and mutating mass of explanations and causes that continuously feed back into one another and infect today's expanding zombie culture.

The result is a world so familiar with the notion of the "zombie apocalypse" that many individuals choose to debate their plans for survival "if it ever happens." Books such as *The Zombie Survival Guide* encourage these sorts of discussions and what results is the appearance that perhaps zombies would somehow be a *manageable* apocalypse. In recent years there have been a number of zombie-based flash mobs<sup>45</sup> (which have been christened 'zombie walks' or similar<sup>46</sup>). These 'zombie walks' clearly illustrate the how zombies have caught the imagination of innumerable individuals around the world. And it is because of this kind of enthusiasm that the zombie will continue to enjoy a growing popularity and experience new manifestations in the years to come.

People like zombies. For numerous reasons, people like zombies. They may like to talk about the hypothetical zombie apocalypse and while away the hours discussing the best

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<sup>45</sup> A flash mob is a large group of people who assemble very suddenly in a specific public location at a specific time to perform a specific (and often unusual) act.

<sup>46</sup> Such as 'Flesh Mob' as one Flash mob in London was dubbed in 2007 (Current.com).

way to zombie-proof their homes. They want, for lack of a better explanation, to insert themselves into a zombie film, similar to Shinji Mikami's explanations behind the creation of *Resident Evil*. Similar to that, people are now branching out and exploring the idea of becoming a zombie and embracing the Cholo-like curiosity to "see how the other half lives" (*Land of the Dead*, 2005). This fascination is present in David Wellington's zombie novels which often contain chapters which are told from the zombie point of view. Gregory Solis also implements this tactic in his novel *Rise and Walk*.

Twitchell's thoughts on zombies, presented in chapter one, made it appear as though he believed that zombies peaked in popularity with Romero's films. To be fair, at the time of *Dreadful Pleasures*' publication, the zombie may have appeared to have reached the pinnacle of its popularity. But the self-cannibalising nature of the zombie sub-genre within horror (or comedy as the case may be) continues to produce new ideas and treatments on an old monster. Yet these ideas are not so entirely radical that they feel unfamiliar to the generations that have grown up with images of the classic zombie and its more modern manifestations.

Given that causes of zombiism have a tendency to stay current with the times (for example, modelling an outbreak after the Ebola or Influenza viruses or Stephen King's use of technological means) the zombie will continue to mutate as time passes. New filmmakers, authors, and game designers will not only continue to pull inspiration from the older generations of the zombie, but they will find inspiration in today's society and world as well. Zombies have been and always will be a self-infecting sub-genre of horror. Rather than favouring a newer manifestation of the zombie and phasing out the older versions, all adaptations remain and are still often used.

The fusion of the classic, slow-moving zombies with the newer fast-zombie in novels is a clear example of this occurrence. Another example is the film *Zombie Flesh Eaters* which combines Romero's flesh-hungry zombies with voodoo-style resurrection. Nothing is

obsolete. Because of this, what makes someone or something definable as a 'zombie' will continue to change. Even now, filmmakers are still gathering inspiration from each others' work and from the work of game designers as well as beginning to take inspiration from the zombie in popular novels. For example, the Spanish film *[Rec]* has been remade by American filmmakers as *Quarantine* and is scheduled for release in October 2008. *World War Z* is currently in the process of being adapted for a screenplay. New premises (or new treatments of an older premise) for zombie outbreaks are a lot like zombie mobs: they will just keep coming. The zombie has come a long way from its roots in a remarkably short amount of time. It will also continue expanding outward just as it will continue reaching inward in order to create new faces for an old monster.

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