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Approved by Major Professor(s): Shaun Hughes

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RACE. NATION. ZOMBIE:

IMPERIAL MASCULINITIES GAZING AT THE UNDEAD

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Adryan Glasgow

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

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West Lafayette, Indiana

For my family who can now officially tell people I'm a doctor.

For the many wonderful scholars who inspired me professionally, academically,

intellectually, personally and spiritually.

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ABSTRACT

Glasgow, Adryan. Ph.D., Purdue University, August 2015. Race. Nation. Zombie: Imperial Masculinities Gazing at the Undead. Major Professor: Shaun Hughes.

This dissertation argues that zombie narratives have always been about white masculinity and that colonialism is the true living dead monster. The zombie is not the load-bearing signifier in these stories. It is the white men who act as representatives of empire that embody tropes and evolve. This dissertation examines the survivor masculinity in zombie films over time to see how hegemonic masculinity has adapted to a range of national crises. I argue that the failure of white masculinities in these films and novel is rooted in the limited ways of knowing inherent in the Imperial Gaze. Starting in the 1930s, zombie films have attempted to recruit the double consciousness of black men to assist white men in their domination of colonial subjects. Each chapter thus juxtaposes race conflicts within the nation with our imperial actions on the global scale.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Zombie scholarship is a relatively new field. While zombie narratives have been

in popular circulation since the 1930s, it was not until George Romero's 1968 *Night of*

the Living Dead that the zombie was taken seriously as a monster that can reveal deeper

currents within our culture. After the unrelated, but popularly linked correlation between

the 9/11 attacks and the release of *28 Days Later* (2002), scholars began to take notice,

much to the simultaneous delight and dread of long-time fan communities. However, as

the internet has grown, so have as the horror fan blogosphere, with countless online

publications churning out insights, interview, reviews, theories, and the occasional

screed. With an informal peer review process that occurs after rather than before

publication, these fan communities have generated a considerable body of work. For

scholars looking to work on zombies within the academic publishing industry, the

challenge looms of how to say something new when an enormous horde of hungry fans

have been chewing over the material, comparing notes, and always seeking to outdo one

another in making the next big argument that will redefine how we talk about zombies

going forward.

In an ideal world, what scholars of the zombie have to offer that the fan culture

cannot is disciplinary methodologies, the rigor of peer review, and a culture of

intellectual integrity that values changing an argument based on evidence over the

prestige of winning an argument or the gratification of analyses that affirm our values. However, academic publishing is still a business. Titles that include either "zombies," "undead," "living dead," or "walking dead" are almost guaranteed to enjoy cross-over success as scholars look for new ways to tie their own research to popular interests and the zombie fan blogosphere checks to see if professional intellectuals are as insightful as our degrees claim. As a result, when it comes to scholarship about zombies, and the same is true of many other areas within popular culture studies, publishing an idea first is often prioritized over traditional criteria such as rigorous research, contribution to the field, and even soundness of argument. Cross-over presses are mimicking the undead themselves, consuming any zombie scholarship they can get their hands on. For example, McFarland has published three anthologies, the only broadly conceived single author book, two encyclopedias and Gary Rhodes's *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (2006).

Furthermore, as a new field, zombie scholars have not benefited from a sustained discussion. There is no zombie scholarly cannon, with the possible exception of Kyle Bishop. Because of this, the new insights in the field are not measured against time-tested scholarship. The best zombie scholarship must borrow almost all of its research from other fields. While reducing the zombie to merely a mutation of the vampire has certainly produced wonderful scholarship such as Gregory Waller's *The Living and the Undead* (1986, 2010), each monster taps into a completely different source material. Indeed, for a time in the fall of 2014, the Wikipedia page on zombies was subject to an intense debate over whether the zombie is a uniquely Caribbean monster or the natural evolution of the European ghoul that had been smuggled across the Atlantic under the guise of the vampire and assumed a new identity once here. Furthermore, as the Wikipedia debate has

made quite clear, territorialism within the field of zombies is a significant barrier to meaningful intellectual engagement. Whether it be fans fighting fans for an ideologically pure definition of zombies, or fans and scholars fighting over who gets to control the meaning of zombies, or scholars themselves fighting over the professional accolades of publishing cross-over scholarship, or the vast overlap of fan and scholarly communities that allows such conflicts to occur even within the same writer, the lack of authorities on the subject has created an expert vacuum and the predictable scrambling to be the one to fill that void.

To date, the only single-author book to treat the zombie phenomenon at large is Kyle Bishop's *American Zombie Gothic* (2010). Bishop's approach to zombies is formed by his two-part base assumption: "The two most unique and interesting qualities of the cinematic zombie narrative are, first, the virtual lack of a true literary antecedent and, second, its firm connection with the colonized Americas of the western hemisphere" (*American Zombie Gothic* 38). The first assumption he fails to prove, but more importantly, given the contentiousness of that argument, he fails to show why it matters whether or not the origins of the zombie can be described as "literary." This argument relies on the erasure of the European antecedents of the zombie, and it is such erasure that likely fueled the Wikipedia feud. As for his second point, Bishop participates uncritically in the exotification and appropriation of Haitian culture that occurs in the films he analyses. The book works exceptionally well as a cross-over because it mentions a wide range of topics but never delves into any with particular depth. While not advancing the scholarly field, Bishop has provided an enormous service in creating a primer both for

those new to the field and for fans who wish to contextualize their insights in a larger

conversation.

Despite its limitations, Bishop's book remains the only broad cultural study of the

zombie as a genre. Zombies occur in a much wider range of scholarly books, although

not as the main subject of sustained scholarly inquiry. While not on the zombie tradition

at large, Kim Paffenroth's *Gospel of the Undead* treats Romero's film cycle through the

lens of Dante's *Inferno*. The other zombie monographs discussed below simply use the

zombie as a means of attracting readers to other topics. There are more works of zombie

fiction than would be productive to discuss here. There are also numerous reference

guides that compile appearances of zombies in film and other media, such as Ozzy

Inguanzo's *Zombies on Film: The Definitive Story of Undead Cinema* (2014), Jamie

Russell's *Book of the Dead: Complete History of Zombie Cinema* (2005), Glenn Kay's

Zombie Movies: The Ultimate Guide (2008) and a long list of encyclopedias: Peter

Dendle's *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia Volume I* (2000) and *Volume 2* (2012), and

June Michelle Pulliam and Anthony J. Fonseca's *Encyclopedia of the Zombie: The

Walking Dead in Popular Culture and Myth* (2014). There are also many pseudo-

nonfiction books such as Max Brook's *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection

from the Living Dead* (2003), John Austin's *So Now You're a Zombie: a Handbook for

the Newly Undead* (2010), Matt Mogk's *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About

Zombies* (2011) and Max Brallier's *Can You Survive the Zombie Apocalypse?* (2011).

Academic publishers have discovered that simply adding "and zombies" to the title of

any work significantly expands the book's readership. Scholars such as Daniel Drezner

and Timothy Verstynen have made use of this to invite new thinkers into their fields in

their books *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (2015) and *Do Zombies Dream of Undead Sheep?: a Neuroscientific View of the Zombie Brain* (2014). From a Centers for Disease Control and Preparedness public service comic called *Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic*, to a polemic that takes the strawman argument to new low entitled *Obama Zombies: How the Liberal Machine Brainwashed My Generation* (2010), the zombie has been appropriated as a model for understanding economics, pandemics, questions of identity and consciousness, parasites, survivalism and porn. But when is it about the monster?

In this conspicuous absence of monographs, however, there is a glut of edited collections. Since each chapter is written by a different scholar, these collections function much like the fan blogosphere in that they produce a huge amount of new insights but fail, at least at this early phase in the field's development, to sustain a rigorous, critical conversation. Without a cannon of scholarly sources, the field of zombie studies would benefit immensely for a collection in which contributors read and responded to one another's chapters. The interdisciplinary approaches create exciting opportunities, but as of yet there is no rigorous culture of critique and response within zombie scholarship. So, for example, you can have a both Cynthia Miller and Kyle Bishop using the phrase "The Rise and Fall . . . and Rise" in their titles.

Popular Culture and Philosophy is a series of cross-over anthologies that uses popular culture phenomenon to address entrenched debates within various philosophical fields, such as consciousness, identity, and morality. Even without accounting for the vampire-based volumes, the series has no fewer than three collections that focus on the zombie: *The Undead and Philosophy: Chicken Soup for the Soulless* (2006) and *Zombies,*

Vampires, and Philosophy (2010), both edited by Richard Green and K. Silem

Mohammad, as well as *The Walking Dead and Philosophy* (2012) edited by Wayne

Yuen, with a second Walking Dead collection edited by Yuen forthcoming.

  As for interdisciplinary collections, there are several. The first was Shawn

McIntosh and Marc Leverette's *Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead* (2008).

Four were published in 2011: Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro's *Better Off Dead:*

The Evolution of the Zombies as Post-human, Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz's

Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture, and two companion

volumes edited by Christopher Moreman and Cory James Rushton, *Zombies Are Us:*

Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead and *Race, Oppression and the Zombie:*

Essays on Cross-Cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition. There is a

significant amount of overlap in these collections, which were all published in such rapid

succession that contributors rarely had the chance to consider and respond to the

contributions of others. What distinguishes each collection is the editors' implied answer

to the question of why the zombie genre is experiencing such a renaissance in the the

post-9/11 era.

  The McIntosh and Leverette book seeks its answer in a cultural history of the

genre, compiling in chronological order articles that each address a major work or major

sub-genre. *Better Off Dead* takes up the arguments that Lauro co-wrote in her brilliant

"Zombie Manifesto," discussed below, that zombies can be understood as an alternative

to the cyborg in exploring the new questions opened up by the precedent and limitations

of humanism. Despite the title, Boluk and Lenz's collection does not prioritize more

recent zombie narratives, but instead discusses how each generation of zombie had its

own significance. The Moreman collections are each divided into themes. *Zombies Are Us* considers "us" in the framework of humanity (how zombies represent human desires), the sacred (zombies and an as religion), and the future (meaning both changing genre and ecocritical considerations). *Race Oppression and the Zombie* lumps together Sidney Poitier with Haiti in its first section without sufficiently considering the implications of connecting US blackness to US colonialism in Haiti. The second section sticks to class-based oppression, the third examines white ethnocentricity, and the final section alludes to both post-humanism and philosophy of consciousness as the future of zombie studies. Since 2011, two additional collections have come out that take more specific approaches. Murali Balaji edited *Thinking Dead: What the Zombie Apocalypse Means* (2013) and Shaka McGlotten edited *Zombies and Sexuality: Essays on Desire and the Living Dead* (2014).

The constraints of the article as a format mean that each contributor only has enough space to present a methodology and a specific argument. The politics of publication for edited collections often privileges articles that are distinct rather than showing nuance between scholars with similar fields but divergent insights. For example, the evolution from one moment in the development of the zombie genre to another is not itself the topic of any article and must be deduced from the trajectory of articles in each collection or from broad brushstrokes in the introduction. What these collections lack is the sustained inquiry that is capable of connecting wide-ranging factors, such as the politics of production, colonial ideology, the psychology of masculinity, and US race relations.

Of course there are also independent articles and many of these make outstanding contributions to the field. As I have mentioned above, Lauro co-wrote "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism" with Karen Embry. The article joins Patricia McCormack's "Zombies without Organs: Gender, Flesh, and Fissure" (*Zombie Culture* 2008) and Steven Shaviro's *The Cinematic Body* (1993) in celebrating the posthuman potential of zombies as a model of anti-subjectivity similar to the Body Without Organs developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972). There are also many productive Marxist readings of zombies as a metaphor for labor alienation, mindless consumption, and the exploitation of workers, such as David McNally's *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* (2011). Chris Harman's *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx* (2009) takes up the trope of economists and political scientists referring to obsolete policies and entities that limit development and exacerbate poverty to argue that the zombie trope calls for a resurrection of Marxist approaches.

There are also a handful of scholars who recognize the colonial origins of the zombie are more than an exotic novelty and actually lay the groundwork for a critique of US imperialism. Mimi Sheller uses the zombie only briefly as an example in her *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (2003), but her argument emulates Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) and functions as a powerful critique of exactly the sort of scholarship that often occurs within zombie scholarship, in particular Bishop. Jennifer Fay, in "Dead Subjectivity: *White Zombie*, Black Baghdad" (2008), uses the zombie to demonstrate the ideological structure and rationalizations of US imperialism, arguing that

the occupation of Haiti served as a model for the invasions and occupations of Iraq several decades later. What is lacking this discourse is a connection between US race relations and US imperialism abroad. Chera Kee attempts to address this lack in her article "'They are not men . . . they are dead bodies': From Cannibal to Zombies and Back Again" (2011).

The problem with much zombie scholarship, particularly that which acknowledges Haiti, is that it tends to assume Black agency in the development of the zombie trope. There are two shortcoming to this approach. The first is that it assumes a legitimate coherent Blackness and the second is that it fails to subject whiteness to scrutiny. Both problems arise from the habit of assuming that Black agency produces the Blackness that is consumed by white audiences. While transnational analyses of Blackness are certainly productive, it is a mistake to allow them to develop into an essentialism that lumps all possible US Blacknesses with Haitian or any particular African Blackness. The coherence of global Blackness is a product of global white supremacy. It is the flattening of countless distinct cultures into a colonized Other. This Other only exists as the absence of Whiteness, which is itself the aspiration fantasy of global white supremacy. The Blackness that zombie films reveal only rarely is the product of the creative labor of black agents. Even black actors or other culture creators do influence the Blackness portrayed in zombie narratives, it is always in response to the Blackness created by the white supremacist imagination. Toni Morrision may focus primarily on US texts, but even within that range, her critique in *Playing in the Dark* (1992) reveals that the fantasm of Blackness is a necessary condition to constitute a globally viable Whiteness.

The proof that zombies films are about white masculinities can be seen in the aggressively anti-intellectual responses of some white men. Much of the conflict between the fan blogosphere and zombie scholars comes resembles arguments form the Men's Rights Movement, and anti-feminist and anti-intellectual internet phenomenon that selectively borrows feminist theory to insist that intellectuals are attempting a cultural genocide against white men. Such arguments often also cherry pick from evolutionary biology. For example, Mathias Clasen argues in his article "Vampire Apocalypse: a Biocultural Critique of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*" (2010) that the undead are scary because they can kill us. By Clasens "biocultural" logic, any further inquiry into the question, such as why this thing that can kill us as opposed to any other deadly monstrous form, is solely motivated by partisan identity politics. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

The condition of zombieism is antithetical to US white masculinity, which was able, through the control of cultural productions even prior to Hollywood to declare itself a hyper-subjectivity as the central figure of the drama of history. The 1930s were not the beginning or end of US imperial aggression, but in 1932, as US military forces were preparing to withdraw from Haiti, *White Zombie* acts as witness to the transition in US white identity as the nation adjusted to its new role as a global power. What emerged was an autonomous and industrious masculinity which prided itself on a radical faith in reason and a mystical access to a universal human experience. This masculinity has been an obsession of Hollywood for several generations and scholars have given it several

names.[1] For the sake of this project, I will call it the Enlightened Humanist Subject (EHS). This title, however, should be read in part as a mockery in that, through zombie narratives, I intend to interrogate each of those terms and suggest that the false claim to universality which this subject position makes is at the heart of the most abusive of colonial logics.

The Enlightened Humanist Subject was not a novel cultural technology. However, it brought together aspects of a range of masculine archetypes, reducing them from a colorful cast of possible US masculinities to a rigid form of masculine whiteness. In the next few decades, roughly from the 1930s through the 1960s, the Enlightened Humanist Subject established a hegemonic monopoly on media representations of US white masculinity. This chapter will show how the Enlightened Humanist Subject suffered under the anxiety of influence in the first zombie film.[2] It is not until the 1940s that the ideal masculinity of the zombie film genre congeals into an Enlightened Humanist Subject, but in *White Zombie*, we see how the zombie is established as the

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[1] In her book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, Susan Faludi describes how men who have pursued this ideal have been betrayed by both economic and social systems that, while touting the ideal, fail to value the performance. One of the key components of R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is that the impossibility of this ideal is always already built into any hegemonic system. See Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19.6 (Dec 2005): 829-59.

[2] The phrase "anxiety of Influence" is clearly borrowed from the title of Harold Bloom's book. Both Bloom and my readings borrow heavily from a Freudian family romance and, while Bloom eventually revises his assumption that the anxiety of influence characterizes primarily the modern (post-Enlightenment) literary world, I contend that Bloom's notion of poetic "strength" is deeply coded within the same logics of masculinity that characterize the Enlightened Humanist Subject. The privileging of autonomy as a mark of superior creative output is dependent on the pervasive logic of competition that Nietzsche labels the "will to power." Indeed, when Bloom cites Oscar Wilde to describe poets under the influence, he may as well call them zombie poets: 'Influence is simply a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss. Every disciple takes away something from his master.' This is the anxiety of influencing…. (qtd. in Bloom, 6). Where I break with Bloom is in his omission of colonialism as a foundational influence on the Enlightenment's melancholy.

opposite of this as-of-yet unrealized ideal, which, in turn, highlights the failings of the film's ostensible protagonist. The Enlightened Humanist Subject can be defined by four foundational assumptions, all of which remain with us today, even if they are no longer presented as codependent. While none of these components is the exclusive domain of the Enlightened Humanist Subject, what came to characterize US white masculinity in these films was a radical and exclusive faith in the principles of autonomy, industry, reason and universality. As I will show below, when combined, these four beliefs justify manifest destiny and thus representations of the subaltern, namely the zombie, can predictably be defined by the absence of these traits.

The Enlightened Humanist Subject encompasses masculine iconography from various mythologies in US popular culture history. Like the Cowboy archetype, the Enlightened Humanist Subject is characterized by his autonomy. In a careful erasure of class structure within the white population and radical gaps in educational opportunities amongst various races, the Cowboy is always presented as the man who chose his calling, often against the protests of a more conventional (European) family. He cannot be trapped by narrow communal bonds, be they religious, traditional, or familial. The Cowboy may be a passionate lover, but he will only form a partner bond with a woman who is as unattached as himself and willing to uproot her own life to follow him on his whims. This affective women's work is often represented in Cowboy narratives in one of two archetypes: the saloon whore and the lonely but self-sufficient pioneer woman. Both female archetypes sacrifice themselves to maintain the Cowboy while never expecting any return investment from him. Even the training required for the Cowboy to achieve his independent profession is ideologically cleansed of obligations. He obtains skills in order

to strike out on his own and his mentor is generally either killed off or turned into a villain. Through some miraculous but depersonalized opportunity, the Cowboy is then free to strike out on his own. While Cowboys sometimes do have bosses, they often rebel against them and the Enlightened Humanist Subject is generally presented as more moral, more qualified and generally more competent that any authority figure who presumes to control him. Zombies, on the other hand, blindly engage in whatever task is set before them. By naturalizing the notion of passively-accepted, monotonous labor, the zombie both assures white viewers that they themselves are above such conditions and erases the presence of black-owned business and industry. Zombies do not form communal bonds either, but instead they lack the Cowboy's will-to-power or any personal desire whatsoever.

Another US archetype that helps to construct the Enlightened Humanist Subject is the Self-Made Man, the business tycoon would built an empire from scratch or the farmer who has carved a living out of the soil with only the sweat off his back. In the backlash to the social programs implemented to revive the economy after the Great Depression, the notion that each (white) man should be self-made became central to regaining national economic confidence. Furthermore, depicting financial independence as an essentially white characteristic legitimated the exclusion of minorities and poor (corrupted) whites from financial recovery efforts. Like the Self-Made Man, the Enlightened Humanist Subject is industrious, and a nation full of industrious workers cannot help but succeed, thus suggesting that globalization has occurred on a level playing field. The logic of the Self-Made Man myth can be understood as a series of linked fetish substitutions. Hard work becomes passion and therefore displaces human intimacy, creating an allegiance to

the profession over one's family. Avoiding physical labor becomes ingenuity when achieved by whites but is dismissed as laziness when achieved by women and people of color. Exploitation of the labor of others becomes opportunity both for the capitalist who profits off the work of others and the worker who it is assumed will starve without such benevolent attention. Our obligations to labor are reduced to bare life, thus making the interior lives of workers irrelevant to the national cultural industry.[3] The zombie's labor is involuntary, uninspired, monotonous and contains no promise of social mobility. In contrast to the white man, without enthusiasm, the zombie is incapable of offering quality control or of improving the means of production through applied experience. Because the zombie is radically alienated from its labor, indeed unconscious of the process of production, we as consumers can enjoy the product without any emotive connection to the producer or the production process.[4] When an Enlightened Humanist Subject produces a product, by contrast, he is presented as craftsman who both can see the long-

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[3] Giorgio Agamben uses the phrase "bare life" to describe a person who is reduced to their biological existence and thus denied all rights. In Agamben's framework, the zombie and the slave are only distinguished in that the slave must be kept alive. Foucault's notion of biopolitics, where the sovereign governs populations rather than people and thereby is required to maintain health rather than foster liberty or even ethics, paves the way for understanding how bare life can also describe workers. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998.

[4] Marx first outlines how workers become estranged from their own labor when that labor is objectified into the product of labor and that products transfers hands to the capitalist through the invention of private property in his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (72-73, 79). In "The Grundrisse," Marx establishes the central role of distribution to this alienation as well as how production and consumption become indistinguishable when the worker is understood within the larger system of skills, nutrition, and the means of production, so that object and subject end up producing one another (228-236). The zombie, however, once produced, ceases to consume and thus, by ending the consumption/production cycle, purifies capitalism. In later zombie narratives, the consumption habits of zombies will becomes highlighted, but in the 1930s, the zombie is pure labor, objectified capital, with no pesky worker whose "inner life" is depleted by the process (72). Both texts published in *The Marx-Engles Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed, New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

term benefit of his labors and delights in the pleasure that consumers get from the goods he produces.

As the US recovered from the Great Depression, it was also convenient to project the effects of poverty as causal characteristics of different bodies, thus reassuring US whites that poverty was a disease that could be quarantined into other populations. The zombie has no agency and in the economic ideologies of the US, this lack of agency manifests as a lack of social mobility, a lack of control over one's lot in life. The zombie came to stand in for the bare life of recession-era poverty in which an inability to exercise control over whether or not one's children starve was acceptable for some communities but not for others. At the time of these films, the US popular imagination could not yet conceive of the sort of dehumanization which was visited upon Jews and other groups during the Holocaust. The horror of dehumanization required to legitimate the transatlantic slave trade had not yet been reflected in the mirror of European genocide. Thus when *White Zombie* presents the infamous sugar mill scene in which zombified labor reflects a larger cannibalistic impulse within capitalism, the scene was still understood as fantasy violence, not as the grim reality of US economic practices. Until WWII, whiteness seemed sufficient insulation from such ideological and actual violence. It is horrifyingly perverse that the racial difference described here was soon confronted and disproven in the European theater.

The next of the beliefs which characterize the Enlightened Humanist subject is a radical faith in Reason as the only mode of knowledge that can be best seen in the archetype of the Detective. This is also connected back to autonomy because it rejects the practice of receiving knowledge and instead embraces empirical research as the only

adequate form of knowledge. White men in the colonies must insulate themselves from superstition and instead are highly invested in reason as the only legitimate mode of knowing. The skepticism which is so central to the mythology of the detective, can also be expressed as a cult of reason because it requires the exclusion of so much of the character's experiences in the films. Along with reason come science and technology, which the zombie's very existence refutes.[5] As we will see in the following chapter, however, even this radical faith in Reason relies on received knowledge and is actually just an ethnocentric privileging of knowledge in disguise. What becomes apparent in these films is that indigenous forms of knowledge (coded black) are a corruption of white minds. Even more fascinating is the fact that these "black" forms of knowledge are consistently shown as more effective than "white" forms of knowledge. As a mystical figure, the zombie also represents the limits of reason. Often the Enlightened Humanist Subject is the only character in the film that refuses to believe in the zombie.

Access to and use of technology is often cited as difference between colonizer and colonized, thus it has been used as an indicator of cultural superiority even though such understandings of technology seem always limited to science-based technologies. By placing their faith in reason and ignoring other forms of knowledge, thus other means to power, these characters seem to insulate themselves from the perils of zombieism. The zombie's vulnerability to mental control is also a sign of his lack of mental fortitude. A

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[5] Throughout these films, the technology of the zombie is largely disputed. Zombies can be created by magic, hypnotism, drugs and even just persuasion, with all but magic being a result of the superior rational powers of whites. Magic itself is rarely successfully wielded by whites who instead use reason to achieve the similar results. The failure of magic on white minds secures reason as protective while the failures of Nazi's to use reason to create zombies in films throughout the 1940s serves to assure the audience that reason cannot be used as a tool of evil.

truly Enlightened Humanist Subject is immune to zombieism, thus we have white women and ethnically marked white men who can resist the commands of a zombie master, and even anti-heroes whose Americanness allows them to recover from undeath itself. The zombie is a victim of his own superstitious and impressionable nature, which makes him vulnerable to the mysteries of the colonial setting. The mysticism of the zombie system served to exclude it from the "logic" of capitalism. Such nonsense was both impossible and a legitimate threat. Villains who employed powers beyond the limits of established military and economic tactics were not playing fair. The foreign technologies which were employed by such cheaters, however, is quarantined in the fantasy colonial space, so that it is the mandate of US colonialism to resolve this disorder but the heart of US empire is never at risk. Reason is used as a shield even while the zombie seems to exist beyond its dominion.

The objectivity promised by absolute faith in reason also serves to legitimate colonial dominance by granting whiteness with access to a universal human experience. Colonial systems of knowledge position themselves at the center of the great narrative of history and use technology to insist that this history is linear and always progressing. The cult of reason promises access to knowledge that is not only exclusive but also unlimited. Objectivity is the birthright of white men because they get to declare all other subject positions to be biased. Furthermore, reason is used as an alternative to empathy, allowing the Enlightened Humanist Subject to deduce the relevant factors in the experiences of others without having to imagine himself under such conditions. Only white people's experiences matter. The black film houses of the 1930s had been closed down and therefore only white stories were being presented in the mass media. Cultural productions

of whiteness were working to erase the consciousness raising of the Harlem Renaissance and other related racial pride movements, including the Haitian Negritude movement. The end result is that white people always have a reason for doing something if we just exercise our compassion and listen to their side of the story. Justification becomes white privilege.

This assumed universality is then applied to culturally relative convictions, such as the simultaneous privileging of both Christianity and capitalism as both more rational and more true than other systems. By depicting his cultural specificity as universally human, the Enlightened Humanist Subject can claim to provide leadership for others, to liberate them from the bondage of their biases. Like Christianity and democracy, modernity declares itself superior and then offers to convert others as a form of charity, despite the frequent injustices woven into the deal. In the world of film this universalizing logic is represented in the gaze of the camera, which is one and the same as the male, scientific and colonial gazes. Each gaze seeks to fix its object, reducing it to a circumspect and knowable totality. The zombie, as Steven Shaviro has pointed out, is a primarily visual monster and thus conforms perfectly to the desires of such a gaze. In short, the zombie confirms the colonial assumption that some people can be reduced to objects, while other will always remain subjects. Stories can only be told about subjects. The contextual details of objects, such as zombies, colonial subjects and women, only serve to elaborate the spectacle. Thus throughout the zombie film tradition, the tension between story and spectacle is always at play. It is both this insistence on viewing the

stories of others as spectacle and the need to quarantine zombieism safely away from rational subjects that forces all zombie stories to be set in colonial spaces.[6]

All of these characteristics can be combined in a sort of colonial arithmetic to create the notion of manifest destiny. In a dreadful resurgence of grateful slave rhetoric, the US depicts itself as a natural leader and liberator, which the colony fails to embrace due solely to ignorance and ingratitude. Colonial expansion uses evangelical logic to justify itself as a civilizing mission. In the process, whiteness itself is homogenized, idealized and then erased. The erasure both emphasizes racial division and allows the cultural production of specific subject positions, often along national boundaries. Thus US whiteness is naturalized and German whiteness is pathologized. The Enlightened Humanist Subject becomes authentic while ethnically marked whitenesses are alienated. Finally, by setting up a nationally specific whiteness as the model of the universal, a line can be drawn between those US blacknesses which identify with the Enlightened Humanist Subject and those Haitian blacknesses which seek to resist it.

Faith in autonomy marks the Enlightened Humanist subject as white. Faith in the American dream of the meritocracy marks him as a uniquely US ethnicity. It is industry which distinguishes US whiteness from European whitenesses. Autonomy and industry

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[6] While there are arguable exceptions to this rule, each exception serves to prove the rule when examined more closely. *Revenge of the Zombies* is set in rural Louisiana, but it is a remake of a film set in an island off the coast of Haiti. The rural setting is also established as an area outside the rule of law, where the hyper-rational hero, a federal agent, and a German spy all vie for control. *Bowery at Midnight* also feature zombies within the US, but the zombies are located in a secret room, which is located beneath a secret room where murder victims are disposed of, which is itself found within a secret basement room which serves as a mad scientist's lab. While technically existing in US soil, the space the zombies occupy could not be further disavowed. Finally, the entire plot of *Zombies on Broadway* revolves around the impossibly of brining a zombie to the US. In the end, zombieism is achieved through a drug treatment which the evil Nazi scientist (played by Bela Lugosi), acknowledges, with much frustration, is a cheap imitation of the true practice which local are able to perform authentically.

combined produce the logic of the bootstraps success story, which is one of the

foundational myths of modern US culture and is an essential cornerstone of fiscally

conservative ideologies.

The ideological shift in zombie films from the 1930s to the 1940s is between two

understandings of capitalism itself. In one, so authoritatively described by Karl Marx,

capitalism relies on the ability of some to purchase the labor of others and therefore

alienate the proletariat from the profit of its labor.[7] Workers are reduced to bodies, as is

beautifully depicted in the sugar mill scene in *White Zombie*. In the other conception of

capitalism, which came to dominate in the patriotic war-driven cultural industry of the

1940s, the free market creates a meritocracy wherein a man's potential is limited only by

his capacity for industry, as opposed to his social station. In all of these early zombie

films, the Enlightened Humanist Subjects are liberated from old class-based economic

systems, unlike the zombies whose potential is determined by their identity as zombies.

Quite tellingly, the zombies in these films are "employed" as manual labor while the

Enlightened Humanist Subjects are all participating in new systems of economics of

information, in this way the Enlightened Humanist Subjects can be distinguished from

other forms of whiteness, represented by the landowning class to which each film's

villain belongs. The Enlightened Humanist Subject is employed in an economy of

services instead of goods, of information instead of production. These characters are all

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[7] In "The Grundrisse," Marx explains how distribution intercedes between worker and product: "the producer's relation to the product, once the latter is finished, is an external one, and its return to the subject depends on his relations to other individuals. He does not come into possession of it directly. Nor is it immediate appropriation his purpose when he produces in society. *Distribution* steps between the producers and the products, hence between production and consumption, to determine in accordance with social laws what the product's share will be in the world of products" (232).

employed as various forms of researchers. They are information brokers in the form of spies and private detectives, they are financiers who negotiate the transition from property-based to capital-based economic dominance, and even, in *Zombies on Broadway,* they take on the role of advertising agents. These are post-racial professions in which the exploitation of blackness is conducted primarily through rendering black subjectivity invisible. Profiting off of the bodies of (black) others is the structure of the old order, the territory of the film's anachronistic villains. In contracts, profiting off of one's own intelligence is the work of the Enlightened Humanist Subject.

When looking at zombie films from these two decades, we must recognize this stage in the development of the zombie as a cultural technology. It was at this time that the zombie moved from being an obscure mystery of the tropics to playing a supporting role in the drama of US whiteness. The zombie was cast specifically as the outsider of history and in the space between the extremes of the zombie and US white masculinity, these narratives were able to negotiate other subject positions. I argue that the zombie was used as a means of domesticating the colonial, and specifically the Haitian, other. It was used to conscript white women into the violent logics of colonialism. It was used as a foil against which the developing US white masculinity could project and test itself. Finally, throughout the 1940s, the zombie was used to domesticate black masculinity, inscribing a patriotic norm for black masculinity that was both loyal and distinct from the transnational blackness which the Harlem Renaissance had used to threaten imperial power. As with any cultural production, however, the zombie was also used to resist or reformulate each of these logics.

This period of the 1930s and 1940s covers an enormous ideological shift in the US, from 1930s colonialism and hemispheric manifest destiny through the Great Depression and New Deal and into our new role as the most powerful military on the planet through our domination of the European and Pacific theaters. While each of these major events required the US to rethink our position in global politics, they were consistent in privileging a specific mythology of US nationalism as the central subject in the grand narrative of history. Whether he was the bearer of Enlightenment; the tragic, hard-working poor or the valiant soldier who withstood the Third Reich, white US masculinity had the symbolic capital and hegemonic power to not only naturalize itself, but also to define any other subject position primarily through contrast. As European powers receded from the emerging global power structures, US hegemonic masculinity gained control over its Others, and the cultural productions of that era needed to articulate ways of constraining and domesticating those others which posed the most salient threats to that hegemony, specifically white women, colonial subject and US black men.

In the face of the vast need for governmental support and communal action which characterized the 1930s, a fully autonomous hero archetype would not have appealed to the average film-goer, who could no longer related to the excess of the Jim Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's archetype of the Self-Made man. In the zombie films of the 1930s, including *White Zombie* and *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), autonomy is a characteristic of villains and the lack of autonomous agency prevents the protagonists of the films from becoming true heroes. As the genre of the zombie film develops, there is an increasing distinction between those men who cooperate with others (racially and ethnically marked identities) and those who miraculously succeed in a state of independence (the

Enlightened Humanist Subject).[8] In *White Zombie* this exploitation of labor is not yet

rendered invisible and is instead projected onto the film's villain. The successful

performances of whiteness in the film are insulated from the labor system that generates

colonial wealth but the exploitation of the local population in the form of zombies, who

function as a contrast to the industriousness assumed in the Enlightened Humanist

Subject, remains visible as part of the colonial apparatus so long as such evils can be

projected on other colonial stakeholders and do not reflect a moral failing of the US or its

ideal masculinity.

The early Hollywood zombie was developed as a response to changes in US white

masculinity and the historic shifts and race relations that framed it. As Chera Kee has

usefully pointed out, the zombie was a distillation of the othering necessary to justify US

colonialism and participation in the transatlantic slave trade.[9] Unfortunately, in her

analysis Kee limits her claims to merely noting consistencies in stereotypes which

reemerged over and over again in US popular conceptions of Haiti. I take the analysis a

bit further to claim that these stereotypes are actually a form of cultural technology which

allowed for widespread and institutional violence by isolating the humanity of whites

from that blacks. This technology, as I will continue to argue, had to adapt to the national

needs of various racial institutions, from colonialism during the US occupation of Haiti to

pacification of black war veterans who had experienced radically different ideas about

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[8] In the 1940s, however, autonomy is claimed by the hero. The ideological battle is not complete, because autonomy does not yet lead to heroic agency. As will be explored in the next chapter, the pattern emerges of the zombie buddy film in which the hero's success is attributed to the accidental assistance of a side-kick who is generally black.

[9] See Kee, "'They are not men … they are dead bodies': From Cannibals to Zombies and Back Again." *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human.* New York: Fordham UP, 2001. 9-23.

miscegenation during their service in France. What the cultural technology of the zombie

has consistently achieved is the hegemonic dominance of a specific whitening of US

national (male) identity, from slavery through today, which I have characterized above as

the Enlightened Humanist Subject. Although martial and economic policies have

succeeded in removing Haiti as an alternate model of black empowerment in more recent

times, at the time of these films, Haiti, The Black Republic built on the same Jacobean

principles which drove the US and French Revolutions, was still very much an enticing

alternative model of black community, culture, spirituality, agency, and power.[10]

The differences needed in order to legitimate dehumanizing other human beings

were compiled to create a specific myth of infantilized blackness which dominated, and

perhaps, in a new form, continues to dominate, US culture. This infantilized myth of

blackness was necessary to legitimate the consolidation of power in white hand and the

condescending care ethic which dominated white/black relations beginning in slavery,

but continuing consistently through Reconstruction, sharecropping and throughout the

Jim Crow South. That mythical blackness was itself justified through the cultural

production of a myth of Haitian barbarism and cannibalism.[11] As place of the only

successful slave revolt in Caribbean history, Haiti threatened white global hegemony as a

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[10] The Harlem Renaissance and Haitian resistance to the US occupation formed an early articulation of a transnational black cultural consciousness. Haitian intellectual and activist Jean Price-Mars explicitly reached out to Langston Hughes and others to create internal pressure in the US to end the occupation. For Harlem's part, the French language had become synonymous with black empowerment ever since the return of black servicemen from the first World War. See Mark Whalan. This fetishization of the French language along with over a decade of US political control in Haiti created a mutual bilingualism which was necessary for the formation of cross cultural understanding.

[11] It is also worth noting, as will be discussed below, that the Haitian race-caste system was a fundamental threat to the logics of the one-drop rule in the Jim Crow South, a contradiction which set the stage for many cultural clashes during the occupation and no doubt unsettled many of the all-white Marines stationed in Haiti throughout the occupation.

utopian myth of democratic Black self-governance. In reality, the nation was plagued by

consistent militarism and political instability. US business interests there managed to

emphasize and sensationalize that instability in order to legitimate US intervention and

counteract that symbolic power. Finally, the myth of Haiti which dominated US culture

was itself legitimated by this cultural invention of the zombie, which naturalized and

projected the practice of slavery.[12] The intentionally limited and ignorant interpretation of

the *zonbi* as a form of slavery beyond death was emphasize to show that the institution of

slavery existed within West African culture and thus was foundation to Afro-Caribbean

culture as well, which served ironically both to justify US oppression and legitimate

Protestantism as a morally and economically superior religion. As the slavery apologists

of previous generations had argued, white folk could hardly be blamed for putting blacks

in chains if blacks were going to be doing the same or worse each other anyway. The

zombie, as a cultural technology serves as both a fanciful figure of horror and a "real"

artifact of blackness, legitimated by the testimonies, in the form of ethnographies and

travel writing, of Haitian barbarity.[13] In other words, the zombie even more than other

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[12] Furthermore, as the zombie continued to adapt to changing needs in US race relations, we also see the return of colonial myths of cannibalism, which similarly naturalizes and projects global consumerism onto the zombie/Haitian/black body.

[13] Popular writings on Haiti fell into three general categories: memoirs from Marines who had served there, exoticist travel writing, and US blacks who went to Haiti to affirm the cultural ties which served as the foundation for the *négritude/noirisme* movement. Of these memoirs, those written by occupying Marines are notable for casually documenting and sometimes celebrating the political outrages of the occupation. William Seabrook had already founded a career on exoticist depictions of other cultures even before he went to Haiti, having published on a range of Arabian cultures, including the Bedouin. He had also fostered a connection with the notorious occultist Aleister Crowley, and therefore, despite a lack of credentials and rigor, was a self-appointed expert on "witchcraft". Seabrook's stay in Haiti was followed by a trip to West Africa where he claimed to have eaten human flesh. Despite his hunger for scandal, Seabrook's *The Magic Island* is notably affectionate in its treatment of Vodoun, which he insisted, as he did of all the rituals he observed, had a solid scientific basis. The other notable texts published on Haiti were not published until a few years after *White Zombie*. However, Zora Neal Hurston's books *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse* are significant illustrations of how US black intellectuals were attempting to construct their own conceptions of a transnational blackness. Unlike Seabrook, Hurston was a trained anthropologist. Her humility in

monsters, straddles the line between what Baudrillard calls the "panic stricken production of the real," and more psychoanalytic notions of phantom projections of our inner conflicts.[14] In short, the zombie is a spiritually othered Haitian, the Haitian is a politically othered black and blacks were socially and economically othered humans. The remaining question, which has not been subject to scholarly scrutiny, is "other" compared to what?

This dissertation argues that zombie narratives have always been about white masculinity and that colonialism is the true living dead monster. The general trend in monster theory is to ask what ideological alternatives the monster represents. While there have certainly been impressive readings of zombies as anti-subjects within capitalism, postcolonial readings of the zombie as a metaphor for the subaltern tend to merely remind us that the subaltern cannot speak. This is because the monster is not the load-bearing signifier in these stories. It is the white men who act as representatives of empire that embody tropes and evolve. Taking the strategy of survivor resource analysis from Gregory Waller's *The Living and the Undead* and applying it to R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, my dissertation examines the survivor masculinity in zombie films over time to see how hegemonic masculinity has adapted to a range of national

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confessing the limits of her own knowledge, along with her refusal to indulge in overly fantastic speculation certainly makes for a more credible representation of the folk beliefs of Haiti. However, like Seabrook, Hurston's books rely heavily on her informants who were often unable to provide explanations and sometimes were more interested in impressing their foreign guest than in communicating their culture.

[14] Jean Baudrillard discusses the role of popular culture in reassuring us that our nostalgia is legitimate. "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production" (169). This moment of panic is brought on by the realization that what we have idealized does not exist and thus we generate ideological structures and cultural institutions that make the fantasy appear real. See Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 166-184.

crises. I argue that the failure of white masculinities in these films and novel is rooted in the limited ways of knowing inherent in the Imperial Gaze. W.E.B. Dubois' theory of double consciousness has been developed into critical whiteness studies through visual metaphors of blackness and whiteness by scholars such as Toni Morrison and into a postcolonial theory of visuality by Nicholas Mirzoeff. I distinguish between a colonial gaze and Mirzoeff's "right to look," a way of knowing that is pragmatic rather than visionary, situated rather than objective, and collaborative rather than acquisitive. Starting in the 1930s, zombie films have attempted to recruit the double consciousness of black men to assist white men in their domination of colonial subjects. Each chapter thus juxtaposes race conflicts within the nation with our imperial actions on the global scale.

The first zombie film was produced in Haiti during the US occupation (1915-1934). *White Zombie* (1932) presents US masculinity as an apprentice to the colonial legacies of the European empires. The hero in this film has no agency and therefore remains pure and blameless despite the overwhelming and endemic corruption of Haiti as a fantasy colonial space. This naivety serves as a disavowal of colonialist aggression, placing the legacy of colonial violence squarely on the shoulders of the French creole and the *mulâtre* ruling class that emerged in Haiti's first postcolonial period. The film's climax proves to be a contest between Haitian characters with the protagonist functioning purely as a witness. I demonstrate that the explicit reference to race in the title of the first zombie film is no coincidence. It sets the stage for the zombie genre to be continually obsessed with race, even though the specificity of US colonial whiteness is often obscured. Many audiences assume the white zombie of the title is the film's romantic object, I argue that it is instead the French creole who redeems himself from

zombification in a dramatic murder-suicide that leaves the regenerative US couple to take over the nation's means of production.

In the 1940s, the collapse of the black-audience film industry coincided with the national need to solicit black audience's support for the war effort. Most zombie films of this time thus went to great lengths to establish US black men as both patriotic and subordinate. *King of the Zombies* (1943) achieves this goal by maintaining nearly segregated plot lines. As with *White Zombie*, the film has two title characters, an Irish-American turned zombie who kills the villain and an African-American who literally rules the zombies. Each of these heroes establishes his own code of survival, suggesting parallel developments of US masculinity that cannot be reduced to Connell's hegemonic and subordinated masculinities but must instead be understood through DuBois's veil. Thus the black masculinity in the film must both survive the explicit danger of the living dead and the implicit danger of conflicting racial codes of conduct from the film's three white masculinities. Mantan Moreland, the film's black lead actor, was an established vaudeville artist who had developed his signature character while performing for black audiences. In this film, Moreland had considerable creative freedom and thus, while his character lives up to racist stereotypes, he also deconstructs the blindness of his white colleagues. For the sake of length, this chapter has been omitted from this iteration of the project but will be a crucial component of the argument as the project develops further.

During the 1950s, the Civil Rights movement at home corresponded with the Cold War abroad, prompting the dominant white American male to hunker down against the threat of both nuclear war and "the minority element." While explicitly a vampire novel, Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) is the most influential zombie text of all

time. Scholars have well established that the novel traces the narrator's realization of his own monstrosity. I argue this monstrosity is rooted in race and imperial aggression. The zombie tropes of the undead swarm and the lone survivalist that are established in this novel will always be haunted by the dual erasure of both black Americans and the global supply chains that support US suburbanism. This chapter then addresses two of the film adaptations of the novel. I argue that the reason Matheson refused to be credited under his own name was because lead actor Vincent Price, who was already known to audiences as a villain, wasn't Aryan-looking enough and thus he failed to evoke the film's critique of idealized whiteness. This problem was solved when Charlton Heston played the same character in *Omega Man* (1974). However, that film, like others I have examined, seemed to straddle two impulses: martyring and canonizing Heston's hegemonic masculinity on the one hand, and taking seriously the other possible futures represented by the film's black characters on the other.

Unlike the previous chapters, chapter three centers on a film around which there is a substantial body of scholarship, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). To the wider critique of hegemonic whiteness, I contribute an analysis of the various technologies of visuality throughout the film, including windows, media, television, and, of course, race and gender. *Night* differs from previous zombie texts in that the assumed clash of cultures is located symbolically within the nation in this film. I argue that the difference between the competent Ben and the sniveling Mr. Cooper consistently breaks down to the difference between the gaze and the glance addressed above. Yet even as the film challenges the racialized gaze, it leaves the gendering of women as objects intact. Women who assert their right to look in this film are consistently punished. I conclude this chapter with a

comparison to the 1990 feminist reimagining of the film. When the film's survivor is a white woman, she is able to strategically align herself with the lynch mob and survive where the 1968 black male survivor was shot on sight.

My fourth chapter leaps forward a few decades but returns to the disavowal of colonial aggression with which the project began. In yet another adaptation of *I Am Legend* (2007), Matheson's iconic white character is played by black actor Will Smith and the monsters in the film visually evoke pre-9/11 fantasies of white criminality. In my reading this postracial logic links the film's three contexts of the War on Drugs, the War on Terror and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The masculinity Smith performs in this film is that of a neoliberal witch doctor: an imperial fantasy of the "magical negro" raising US global hegemony from the dead, through his masculine strength of will and his patriotic strength of heart.

CHAPTER 2. DOMESTICATING THE HORRORS OF COLONIALISM:
WHITE ZOMBIE (1932)

The first film zombies were quite different than the cannibal corpses of the 1980s

or the swarming horde found in today's popular culture. Although more closely related to

Haitian Vodoun beliefs, the zombie of 1930s Hollywood was manufactured as a foil to

the dominant form of US whiteness that was being demarcated and naturalized at that

time.[15] The most significant characteristics of the early Hollywood zombie are its

mysterious, quasi-spiritual origins, social immobility, lack of autonomy, and lack of

subjectivity. Zombies were haunting figures whose souls had been removed but who

nonetheless continued to function as manual labor for an evil sorcerer. Jennifer Fay

describes them as the uncanny return of slavery.[16] Since the zombie had no will, it was

also incapable of malice. The moral repugnancy of the zombie system was centered on

the zombie master. Since they posed no direct threat, zombies inspired mostly pity. As

the title of the first zombie film, *White Zombie* (1932), so clearly indicates, the true horror

of the zombie tale lies in the possibility that such a condition could be visited on a white

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[15] In 1986 Wade Davis challenged the veracity of the monster Hollywood had called the "zombie," in his travel narrative *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. While evoking a return the "authentic" traditions of Haitian Voudon, Davis's zombie mythology should also be read as the appropriation of a cultural technology in the service of white racial anxieties. As this chapter progresses and I develop a more specific definition of just what it is that constitutes this anxious white identity, we can see how charges of hubris levied against Davis are precisely in line with objections which should be levied against this naturalized US whiteness, and this white masculinity in particular.

[16] See Fay, "Dead Subjectivity: *White Zombie*, Black Baghdad," *CR: The New Critical Review* 8.1 (2008): 81-101.

body. The base assumption of zombie films in this early era was that zombieism was unfortunate when it happened to black bodies in the Caribbean, but it was horrifying when it affected a white US citizen.

This chapter will progress in three movements. The first will trace and name the white masculinity defined through contrast with the zombie in these films. Unlike the hegemonic white masculinity performed in zombie narratives after World War II, the Enlightened Humanist Subject in Hollywood zombies films of the 1930s is innocent, with all of the violence implied by the term as Donna Haraway describes in her highly-influential "A Cyborg Manifesto."[17] The second section of this chapter will explore how Haiti is constructed as a discursive space in *White Zombie*, primarily as a fantasy colonial space, but with the capacity to interrogate white innocence. Because this fantasy Haiti is based roughly on the very real US Occupation of Haiti (1915-1932), *White Zombie* confounds US racial categories, drawing attention to constructions of race itself as a fantasy of white identity formation. The third section of this chapter will explore the various white masculinities represented in *White Zombie*. The film's convoluted plot undermines the main character's whiteness as an ideal masculinity, thus divorcing the

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[17] For Haraway, innocence cannot be redeemed from the ideological combination of purity and teleology wherein Man is alienated from the Garden of Eden or Mother Nature or some other symbolic representation of a feminine wholeness that approximates the womb. "Every story that begins with original innocence and privileges the return to wholeness imagines the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of the self, the tragedy of autonomy, the fall into writing, alienation; that is, war, tempered by imaginary respite in the bosom of the Other" (313). When those who fight oppression accept this alienation as the yardstick by which we can measure our knowledge (297), they are condemned to build an individualistic, salvational movement that can only ever hope to substitute one form or fetishized purity for another. "Feminisms and Marxisms have run aground on Western epistemological imperatives to construct a revolutionary subject from the perspective of a hierarchy of oppressions and/or a latent position of moral superiority, innocence, and greater closeness to nature" (312). An emphasis on innocent victimhood both reduces power/knowledge relations to a competitive order of oppressions and refuses to take responsibility for the partial blindness that our intersecting identities, which confound simplistic categories of oppressed and privileged, necessitate.

typical Hollywood marriage of audience identification to the protagonist and creating room for yet more ideological play within the film's message.

Zombie scholars are quick to cite *White Zombie* as the first zombie film. When referencing the origin of the US zombie myth, they make a general gesture towards Voodoo coming out of Haiti, express general condemnation of Hollywood's depiction of race/colonialism in *White Zombie* and move on to later films. Scholars with more than a passing interest in the origins of the Hollywood zombie may even reference *I Walked with a Zombie* as a haunting or even thought-provoking early text. For the most part however, with some noteworthy exceptions such as Fay, Kee and Chris Vials, zombie scholars remain blissfully ignorant of the tradition's formative years in the 1930s and 1940s. This chapter seeks to correct this oversight by insisting, along with Fay, Kee and Vials, that the preoccupations with race which dominated the zombie films of the 30s and 40s are essential to understanding the significance of the zombie myth and its perpetual return. In 1932, director Victor Halperin and his brother, producer Edward Halperin, inspired by the success of William Seabrook's sensationalized best-selling travelogue *The Magical Island* (1929), created a film that presented US audiences with a digestible representation of their nation's complex colonial endeavor in Haiti. *White Zombie*'s function as the first zombie film cannot be divorced from its setting in Haiti and the nuanced translations that had to be made between the racial and economic systems of the colony versus those familiar to the film's US audience. In short, as is demonstrated in the film's opening scene, *White Zombie* rendered colonized Haiti intelligible and thus visible to the colonial gaze.

The fact that the first zombie film's title designates it as a race film should not be overlooked. The film is based loosely on a stage play that achieved little success in the late 1920s, simply called "Zombie." In making the film, the Halperin brothers chose to add an explicit reference to race to the title. The film has a dual-structured plot in which there are two white zombies, representing different aspects of white ideological purity within the colonial system: Madeline the virtuous white virgin, and Monsieur Beaumont, the wealthy white aristocrat. The central conflict of the film is first the undead enslavement of Madeline, a newly wed bride who is poisoned and then brought back into an undeath of sexual slavery. However, Madeline's enslavement was contracts by Beaumont, who, when he changes his mind about his proverbial deal with the devil, then becomes enslaved himself. Madeline and Beaumont are far from the only zombies in the film. Indeed, the most famous scene in the film is set in a sugar mill where a seemingly endless supply of zombie slave labor grinds sugar cane, completely unaffected by the occasional fatal accident. However, those zombies are sufficiently distanced, being presented as a Haitian problem far from the narrative focus of Madeline and her new husband Neal, or the power struggle between Beaumont and the film's ultimate villain, Murder Legendre. The film's opening scene juxtaposes the familiarity of this US couple against the mysterious rites of Haitians who are so ravaged by the practice of zombieism that they must bury their dead in the road.[18] Against a backdrop of such horror and

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[18] The opening credits are overlaid on footage of a group of people shoveling dirt at night. Poor lighting, figures moving in and out of the frame and a presumably diegetic soundtrack all contribute to a sense of realism. Against this backdrop of seemingly documentary footage, edits to shows us the inside of the carriage seem almost comical. The view changes from a wide shot full of nearly two dozen faceless mourners in bright outfits to a medium shot of a seated couple, both of whom are made-up, lit and expressing themselves according to the dramatic conventions of surrealist silent films. The inner mental states of the couple in the carriage are indicated by layers of filmcraft while the black bodies outside the

misery, however, the title and plot of the film demand that we focus our sympathies on Madeline and Neal. The horror of the film lies in the fact that Madeline is both the only female zombie and, as the title both entices and warns us, the only "white" zombie.

Only in the opening sequence is Haiti presented as anything other than a possession to be wrestled over amongst the colonial powers. This sequence promises the audience exotic mysteries and insight into Haitian culture which remain unfulfilled throughout the Eurocentric film. The opening credits are overlay upon documentary footage of a Haitian roadside funeral, including a soundtrack of singing and chanting. As the credits fade, a carriage approaches the blocked road and the opening sequences serves to edit together three entirely different diegetic worlds: the roadside filled by a faceless Haitian crowd, the carriage interior occupied by the romantic pair of Neal and Madeline, and the space of the carriage driver, which floats both spatially and symbolically through the sequence. The end of this opening sequence is marked by Neal turning to Madeline and proclaiming "Well, that's a cheerful introduction for you to our West Indies." Like Madeline, the film audience is being introduced to an unfamiliar colonial space and the three part structuring of this space, while not entirely significant for the film's plot, is crucial to understanding the symbolic role that the zombie fills both in this film and throughout the 1940s.

The first of these three parallel worlds is the documentary footage of the Haitians outside the carriage, in the open, dimly lit, and filmed from afar. While they are enacting a sacred rite as well as a pragmatic necessity, the genre conventions of documentary and

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carriage are left incomprehensible.

narrative uses of film rub against one another quite uncomfortably here. The camera functions in a documentary as a witness, asserting a reality which should inspire curiosity and awareness in the audience of the limits of their own powers of explanation. The generic expectation is that such curiosity and ignorance will be met with an explanation. However, as a narrative film, *White Zombie* presents the audience with all of the interpretive tools necessary to understand character motivation and plot relevance. The Haitians at the roadside receive neither the contextual clues expected from a narrative film nor the extra-diegetic explanations which accompany documentary footage.

As the only documentary footage in the film, these clips are presented as part of a narrative, thus suggesting that the mystery itself is the contextual clue required to interpret the role of these background extra in the film. That this footage is not staged then confirms the audience's imperial privilege to appropriate anonymous Haitians into their own systems of meaning. Indeed, unlike any other scene in this film, the camera at this point occupies the position of the colonial gaze: distanced, sedentary, presumably objective. Because these figures are not constructed through the stylistic augmentation of narrative film, such an appropriation is far more violent than even an exceptionally racist fictional representation, such as is presented in *Zombies on Broadway* some dozen years later. These figures do not have faces and can only be distinguished from one another by the clear gendering of their dress. Likewise their voices function as a unit with gender divisions but no distinct individuals. The spectacle of the funeral is presented as an unknowable mystery, prone to whatever assumptions and speculation the audience chooses to project upon it. Even more problematically, this spectacle is presented as the

backdrop for the opening credits, thus assuring the audience that these unknowable colonial subjects are merely props in the telling of a different story.

By contrast, the interior of the carriage is a highly determined narrative construct. The interior of the carriage contrasts the exoticism outside by presenting us with the most familiar of scenarios: the heteronormative romantic couple, complete with an active male desiring gaze taking pleasure in the passive female object. Madeline gazes off camera while Neal asserts himself as the focal point of audience identification by being the first face on camera to present us with a mental state. Madeline and Neal are also centered as characters rather than scenery through the highly constructed nature of the shot. They are centered, in focus, and shot at mid-range. The lighting, make-up and exaggerated facial expression all work to set these two as idealized characters. Video quality, camera stability and the absence of a backdrop establish this space as the fantasy created space of narrative, in high contrast with the witnessing documentary scene outside. In addition to all the stylistic markers, the audience is further invited to identify with Madeline as she is not only the first character to speak, but also she seems to be speaking for the audience, as she articulate the inquiry which has framed the spectator position into which the film has already conscripted the audience. As a passenger in the carriage, Madeline is safely insulated from the spectacle around her.[19] An additional privilege of this white imperial

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[19] The space of the carriage is in fact constructed along much the same lines as the modernist consumer subjectivity of the *flanuer* as described by Walter Benjamin. The *flanuer* is the archetype of colonial urban privilege in that the wealth of the colonies have been brought to the colonial center and as a masculine colonizing figure, he is free to wandering amongst staged representations of the world, a privileged audience for whom the spectacle is made readily available and digestible. While Madeline has left the colonial center, the highly stylized interior space of the carriage marks it as an imperial home away from home. From this domesticated space she is able to gaze upon all the spectacles available in the colony. See Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

space is the presence just outside the carriage of the driver, who acts as Madeline's personal guide, satisfying the desire of her colonial gaze by providing the explanation promised alongside the documentary footage which Madeline witnesses along with the audience. As the focal point for audience identification, Neal appears to be the one who would express the audience's curiosity. However, cultural sensitivity and the attempt to understand cultural difference are excluded from a neoliberal colonial agenda which is focused on the management of abstracted quantities of labor, materials and capital. Curiosity is the dominion of the angel of the household.

The third space constructed in this sequence foretells a great deal of the zombie tradition in the coming decades. The carriage driver is, like Neal and Madeline in the interior, a knowable convention. The carriage driver is played by Clarence Muse, a recognizable US black actor of the day. In answering Madeline's question, Muse depicts familiar visual and auditory cues of domesticated US blackness, including wide eyes, and a slightly trembling and exaggerated voice. The carriage driver answers her question and includes a tantalizing allusion to grave robbery, thus emphasizing the unthinkable nature of Haitian living. The carriage driver could easily be dismissed as a Haitian native informant, and indeed addresses her as "Mamzelle," thus establishing his credentials as a creole speaker. However, it is worth noting that the casting of a US actor who used familiar racial cues nuances the already problematic figure of the native informant. In 1932, protest movements in Haiti, led in part by Jean Price-Mars, campaigned to create a transnational black consciousness which would establish common goals with other black political, intellectual and cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance. The success of this campaign is evident in the numerous projects by both Langston Hughes

and Zora Neal Hurston, which featured explicitly Haitian content and concerns. The floating signification of Muse as a black character whose nationality is over determined and contradictory represents imperial appropriation of this transnational consciousness.

As I will explore in more depth below, Muse is the first of several characters in the film to represent the play between the economies of race in the US and in Haiti. The translation from a black-white dualism in the US to the colonial logic of elite *mulâtres, noir* peasants, creole *gran blancs* and the labor class of *petite blancs* muddles the film's symbolism and has led to range of readings. However, I argue that this play constitutes the essential erotic investments in the film, including the question of sexual access to white femininity, the even more pressing tension between the two villains in the film, and, quite tellingly, the ambiguity of the film's title and resulting ambiguity of the film's protagonist. The use of Muse alludes in the 1930s to a trend that will dominate the 1940s and resonate throughout the history of the genre. By incorporating black creative labor, zombie films appeal to multiple audiences, allowing each to read the film as befits their ideological investments. It is not likely that the average film viewer in 1932 would know about Price-Mars' transnational Negritude movement, but the positioning of Muse as simultaneously American and Haitian is just one of many examples of the extensive cultural contexts that the Halperins incorporated into their mass-market film. In this way, film producers such as the Helperins could monetize the code-switching capabilities of black audiences and performers.

Domesticated and familiar forms of blackness could be expected to translate, on demand, the unfamiliar that existed within the colonial context. As would happen quite explicitly in the 1940s zombie films, US blackness was conscripted to support white

colonial expansion on behalf of the US. This conscription would come to be defined quite

differently in the 1940s however, as nationalism was prioritized over transnational racial

identity. In 1932, however, it was safe to assume that US blacks would not only

understand but also willingly demystify the strangeness of blacks in the colonies. Despite

the appropriation of such transnational networks by white colonial aspirants, Muse's

position in the film may have read quite differently to black audiences at that time.

Madeline was unable to engage with the Haitian both because of the new Hayes code

which would soon define an era of Hollywood films and severely limited cross-racial

contact, and because, more pragmatically, she simply would not have spoken the same

language.[20] The carriage driver is a linguistic translator as well as a cultural/racial

translator. Haitian Creole is closely related to French and fluency in French in the years

following World War I was a marker of racial consciousness amongst blacks in the US.

While white audience would likely have viewed the carriage driver as a loyal and

obedient servant eager to see to the needs of his white mistress, black audiences may

have been able to take pride in the superior literacy of the black character who, like black

soldiers serving in France, demonstrated an awareness of race relations independent of

the specific US codes of propriety.

  The three spaces of the opening sequence are immediately followed by the

creation of a fourth space, which like the previous three is stylistically and symbolically

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[20] The Hayes code was a mode of self-censoring adopted by Hollywood in the 1930s to encourage theaters in more conservative regions to continue playing the films of major theaters. It was never legally enforced, but the Hayes code did manage to significantly impact the ways that Hollywood represented both race and sexuality. With the expectation of providing moral education for the general population, the Hayes code demanded that segregation be maintained on-screen and that bad behavior, including sexual looseness, always led to personal downfall or a faith-based redemption.

distinct. Immediately upon leaving the funeral and tales of grave robbing, footage of the carriage is then superimposed by an image of Bela Lugosi's eyes, which, surrounded by blackness, establish the space of magic and fantasy which frames the remainder of the film.[21] As the image of the eyes fade, the camera cuts to a hillside on which zombies lumber and suddenly Legendre is aside the carriage, reaching in to grasp Madeline's scarf. While Madeline's space of colonial privilege within the carriage was safe from intrusion by the Haitian space of the funeral, she is quite abruptly vulnerable to the sinister plotting of the zombie master. This distinction is perhaps an extension of the difficulty in translating between the two racial systems. The funeral attendees can be read in the incomplete translation process which defines the film, as peasants and therefore as *noir* Haitians. Legendre, as discussed below, instead occupies the more incomprehensible position of the *mulâtre*. As a representative of the ruling class in Haiti, his power and authority are threats to the emerging colonial administration. While the previous three worlds within the film were necessary to provide context for the horrors of an uncontrollable and corrupting colonial space, the film is primarily concerned with the resolution of this power structure as presented in the mystical fourth Haitian space which the zombies occupy.

As Neal's metadiscourse proclaims, the opening sequence and this second sequence that introduces the film's villain combine to introduce the West Indies for both

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[21] This image of Lugosi's quickly became iconic and the Halperins even reused this footage for their 1936 film *Revolt of the Zombies*. In a publicity poster, the image of Lugosi's eyes is conjoined with the image of his hands locked in a magic gesture form later in the film. The copy on the image claims "With these zombie eyes he rendered her powerless. With this zombie grip he made her perform his every desire." The second claim is imply untrue as the only command Lugosi's character issues Madeline is to kill Neal, a command which she resists. The conflation of zombie and zombie master only further underscores the threat that the zombie represents to the Enlightened Humanist Subject.

Madeline and the audience. What these two sequences teach is that when it comes to the

Haiti, white stories are the ones that matter. Furthermore, whiteness is a highly staged

construction which must be performed and maintained through all the stylistic and

discursive powers the film industry could muster. Gender divisions exist in Haitian

culture, but unlike colonial whiteness, Haitians in this film do not become subjects

through their gender play.[22] Instead, colonizer gender play in fact serves as a lens through

which the audience is able to encounter international racial difference. The nature of

narrative is such that the romantic plot establishes audience identification, centering Neal

and Madeline as the film's subjects, despite their ultimate lack of agency in the course of

the film. The import of Haitian figures within the narrative is reduced to a function of the

romantic plot. They serve as a warning about the perils the white, heteronormative

characters are soon to face and yet, despite the horrors of the sugar mill, their plight is not

itself sufficient to justify the telling of Haitian stories.[23] Instead, the true drama of the

film is enacted between conflicting colonial regimes. The agency of Haiti is erased to

legitimate colonialism while the agency of the romantic hero is erased in order to

preserve the innocence of the audience who remained for the most part blissfully unaware

of their nation's aggression in the Caribbean.

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[22] In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Judith Butler locates sexual difference as "a set of enforced criteria of intelligibility" that "produce the bodies that they regulate" (7). For the sake of this film, gender and sex are conflated. However, colonial power relations constitute a separate "set of enforced criteria of intelligibility" so that the bodies produced within the field of the film are "animated" first by race and then, if white, by sex. All of the bodies in the film are produced by the colonial logic of oppression but for colonized bodies, the difference of race is sufficient to determine their intelligibility while white bodies must be brought into full subjectivity through sex as well.

[23] All popular culture depictions of Haiti follow this pattern, even today the devastation of Katrina was depicted both as a warning for US coastal communities and as the backdrop upon which the drama of US private charity and public aid programs could be enacted.

White Zombie was released near the end of the US occupation of Haiti, when our continued presence had lost what little popular support it may have had. The film is based on a stage play, so it can hardly claim to have invented the zombie, but since the stage play was a flop and, by the 1930s, books were not as well distributed as film, *White Zombie* can claim to have introduced the US to this particular monster.[24] The film enjoys cult status amongst zombie aficionados and therefore a smattering of scholarly attention, most notably Gary Rhode's book length treatment. Most of this attention has been paid to the racist treatment of black characters in the film and to the film's unique and frequently anachronistic stylistic characteristics, which borrow from earlier surrealist silent film tropes. With the exception of Fay, most scholars have ignored the surprising degree of historical literacy the film demonstrates. I argue that the film is primarily concerned with the role of the white masculinities within the colony.

Haiti has long held a special space in US understandings of democracy and the Age of Revolution that birthed both the modern French democracy and the US. That special space is, specifically, a conspicuous absence.[25] When Haiti declared its independence and drafted a constitution on which to base its democracy in 1804, it became the third founding sister in the grand experiment of democracy.[26] But the US

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[24] Rhode's book documents the various sources from which *White Zombie* is adapted, as well as the resulting lawsuit which was waged over the copyright for the word "zombie." It is worth noting that the main distinction between the various sources and the film was that *White Zombie* removed the zombie from an explicitly Haitian context. Previous descriptions of zombies had served as examples of the exotic beliefs of this exotic nation. In *White Zombie*, however, the monster's meaning making capacity becomes appropriated and the zombie transitions from an artifact which was understood through the lens of a mythical Haiti to itself being a lens through which Haiti was rendered mythical. By unanchoring the monster from its context, the monster becomes a fantasy which legitimates a fantasy, allowing the Haiti of public imagination to be constructed entirely through imagination.

[25] For more on how Haiti Revolution was excluded from history, see Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63.4 (Oct., 2006): 643-674.

[26] The specific violence of this exclusion is best described by historian C.L.R. James in *The Black Jacobins*

steadfastly refused to embrace Haiti as fellow emancipated colony for fear that such

acknowledgement would necessitate the emancipation of slaves within the US. This

paranoia was confirmed by Haiti's early political maneuvers, including sending troops to

assist other slave revolts in the region and otherwise resisting European dominance in the

Caribbean, Central and parts of South America. It was not until 1862, when the Southern

states seceded that the US even officially recognized Haiti. Instead of a fellow liberated

colony, the US has regarded Haiti as the epicenter of blackness in the western

hemisphere. Thus, even outside the fictional account in *White Zombie*, Haiti has always

been a site for US imperial fantasies. These fantasies include the association of blackness

with violence, an association that was strengthened in 1804 when the newly formed

Haitian government slaughtered the French Creoles remaining on the island. While this

association relies on the erasure of white violence against slaves that led to the

revolution, it remained pervasive enough to later, in 1915, legitimate a US invasion of

Haiti.

Ostensibly the reason for the invasion of Haiti was a bloody riot in which the pro-

American President Jean Vilburn Guillaume Sam was murdered in retaliation for a

massacre he had ordered of anti-American political prisoners. However, US, French, and

German business interests in Haiti had long been struggling for dominance and the

invasion allowed the US to assert control of a key economic and strategic resource in the

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(1932), although more recently, Suzanne Buck-Moss has written about the conspicuous absence of Haiti in history of the Enlightenment in her book *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009). For a more specific examination of how US politicians responded to the Haitian war for independence, see Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic*2.4 (Winter 1982): 361-379.

wake of the Great War.[27] When As the US grappled with isolationism in the Inter-War era and attempted to balance that impulse with the increasing importance that colonialism was playing in establishing our own global dominance, autonomy became a useful concept in justifying US manifest destiny. Under President Woodrow Wilson, from 1912-1920, the US invaded Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico and Cuba. The myth of US imperial superiority was built in part through the projection of global interdependence onto other nations, such as Haiti. As a phenomenon of a foreign cultural landscape, the zombie's enslavement to a sorcerer master made a convenient analogy with which to dismiss the notion of the Black Republic's legitimacy and instead see them merely a pawn in the epic battle between European powers.

White Zombie is informed by the political realities of the occupation. The competition of masculinities that drives the film's plot is a coded reference to the various groups struggling for power in the nation. The film's two villains, Monsieur Beaumont and Murder Legendre, represent that French and *mulâtre* ruling classes. Beaumont is the film's bad colonialist whose French name indicts him with all the cruelties and injustice that necessitated the invasion. Legendre, as I will argue below, represents the nation's native industry leaders. His power is presented as cruel and supernaturally corrupt, thus

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[27] These maneuverings included a 1910 consolidation loan from US and French banks to the Haitian government in an effort to liberate the nation from debt to Germany. This resulted in international ownership of Haiti's treasury, thus creating a large storehouse of gold on the island that could be stolen. National City Bank of New York then refused to pay government salaries and ordered that gold reserves in Haiti be transferred to New York. See United States, Congress, Senate, Selected Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo. *Inquiry Into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo*, Washington: GPO, 1922. Peter James Hudson details the financial interests of National City, which has since renamed itself as Citibank, in Haiti before, during, and after the occupation. However, his article does not incorporate any of the governmental or military actions taken during the occupation and how they benefitted National City. See Hudson, "Where Does Haiti Fit in Citigroup's Corporate History?" *Bloomberg View* (June 13 2012): n.p. Web.

demanding US intervention to save the Haitian people form themselves. The film's two heroes, Dr. Bruner and Neal, represent German and US business interests. Dr. Bruner has gone native, reflecting the German political strategy of using intermarriage to subvert a clause in the Haitian constitution that forbids foreigners from owning property on the island. Neal is an innocent, incompetent and at the mercy of Beaumont and Legendre. I will explore the significance of these various nationalist masculinities in the next section. For the remainder of this section, I will flesh-out the ideological role that zombies play in legitimating the US occupation of Haiti, thus setting the precedent for the zombie genre to support the nation-building agenda.

Even though the US would not officially acknowledge Haiti, the two nations nonetheless exerted significant influence over one another. At the start of the Revolution, there was a mass exodus of French Creoles from Haiti to New Orleans. Those Creoles brought many of their slaves, whose unique Caribbean culture merged with that of the populations already in New Orleans, significantly influencing the city's culture and, as New Orleans became known as epicenter of US black culture, spreading throughout the US. Both W.E.B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson linked the fate of the Haitian people with that of black Americans.[28] Johnson was sent by the NAACP to investigate the US occupation and his report turned up an alarming rate of corruption and ulterior motives by many in the occupation's administration.

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[28] These Creoles, as former plantation owners, were also recipients of reparations from a 1825 agreement in which a nation of former slaves who fought a bloody war to free themselves then had to pay reparations in order ensure that France would not re-invade the island. Even before the US invaded in 1915, it was financially benefitting from the pillaging of Haiti.

Johnson published extensively on his findings in Haiti. "The Truth about Haiti: An NAACP Investigation" (1920) refuted the most common justifications of the occupation. However, his series of four articles in *The Nation*, "Self-Determining Haiti" (August and September 1920), received far wider distribution. Thus *White Zombie*'s "fine introduction" should be understood as a popular representation of the more damning portrait that Johnson painted. The occupation of Haiti was characterized blatant corruption. To begin with, the US had sent a diplomat to propose a convention that was unilaterally rejected by the previous Haitian president. A later agreement was reached with Sam, but when Sam was killed and the Marines invaded, new terms were reached. In Johnson's words,

> The Occupation convention is really the same convention which the Haitian government peremptorily refused to discuss in December, 1914, except that in addition to American control of Haitian finances it also provides for American control of the Haitian military forces. The Fuller convention contained neither of these provisions. When the United States found itself in a position to take what it had not even dared to ask, it used brute force and took it. ("Self-Determining Haiti: I." n.p.)[29]

Eventually the occupation would lead to the repeal of the Haitian Constitution, a document modeled on the US Constitution. In place of this sovereign document, US forces presented a US-authored constitution, which was first rejected and then accept

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[29] More specifically, some of the concessions in Fuller convention include the appointment of a US High Commissioner to advise the Haitian President as well as US nationals occupying newly established offices of financial adviser, public works and public health services and the previously unconstitutional transfer of land to the US but no other nation.

quite literally at gun point. The occupying forces were exclusively recruited from the Jim

Crow South, where white supremacy was socially and institutionally enforced and these

Marines expected all of Haitian society, from government leaders to land-owning

peasants to obey the same rules of racial segregation and degradation that were accepted

in the US. The Vice-President of the National City Bank of New York Robert Farnham

not only had control over the National Bank of Haiti, he was also appointed receiver of

the National Railroad of Haiti, meaning that, in addition to using a $5 million project to

pilfer money from the Haitian government, Farnham also received territorial concessions,

which led to him personally owning many of the fruit plantations that the railroad linked

to the capital.

In addition to financial violence, the occupation excelled at rationalizing military

violence. The leaders of the occupation, many of whom were openly racist, discovered a

Haitian law of communal labor from the early days of independence. Under the law,

known as the *corvée* system, citizens were required to donate either labor or money to

build and maintain the national road system. According to Johnson, this labor never

exceeded three days a year. Under the US occupation, however, this labor reinstituted a

temporary form of slavery. The *corvée* system may have built a highway, but it did not

build local roads, and it therefore most benefited US interests. Furthermore, most

Haitians, including top government officials, did not have cars while US nationals who

occupied government positions were given official vehicles. Those who fled the forced

labor under the *corvée* system were called *cacos* and were treated worse than enemy

combatants with occupying Marines encouraged to hunt them down and medals of valor given for slaughters and assassination.[30]

The reality of the *corvée* system is reflected in *White Zombie* in the sugar mill scene, which is, quite rightly, the most famous scene in the film. With an obtrusive soundtrack of creaks and groans punctuating utter silence, surrealist use of shadows and the sackcloth clothes of blank staring zombie workers, the scene enacts a perfect colonial fantasy of the crudeness of Haitian industry.[31] The inhuman treatment of labor is attributed to Legendre instead of to colonialism and there is no mention of the rest of the chain of production and distribution. By disavowing the logic of the sugar mill, the film is able to isolate US colonial practices form the exploitation which is attributed to Legendre. Like US colonial practices which were used to build Haitian infrastructure, the mindless, slow moving despair of the zombie workers was evoked the *corvée* system, which is a perfect example of the film's logic in which the violence of colonialism is projected on to Haitian technologies, be they historic or folkloric, and therefore legitimated. Since the film was produced at the end of the occupation, when public awareness had been influenced by the transnational solidarity between Haitian and Harlem black intellectuals, the film's role in establishing an appropriate white masculinity also necessitated an apologetics for colonial practices.

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[30] This may appear to be hyperbole, but the historical record is unapologetically clear. Rebel leader Charlemagne Peralte was assassinated by Herman H. Hanneken, who was promoted for the success and awarded the Medal of Honor. The Battle of Fort Rivière (1915), US Marines killed over 50 Haitian rebels. Because the Marines had guns and the Haitians didn't, the "battle" lasted less than 15 minutes and did not cost a single Marine life. Three Medals of Honor were given for this glorious feat.

[31] The Haitian American Sugar Company (HASCO) was founded in 1912 and actually featured cutting-edge, primarily steel technology, so the wooden structures of this factory are a surrealist rather than a realist image for the film. The wooden primitivism of the factory is therefore further evidence that Lugosi is a stand-in for the *mulâtre* class.

In addition to locating the cruelty of this system in Legendre rather than any of the colonial white characters, the film also legitimated such oppression by presenting the zombies as particularly vulnerable to this exploitation. Perhaps the most horrific moment in the film is when one of the zombies falls into the mill along with the sugar canes he has been carrying. The other zombies, deprived of their empathy, offer no assistance and never hesitate in the continued grinding of the mill. They are not only bystanders, but are actually complicit in the destruction of one of their own.[32] Yet the sugar mill scene is narratively isolated. It is not essential to the plot and serves merely to position a white man who is complicit in this system. The film is, instead, about a white zombie. The suffering in the colony could be brushed off as a foreign mystery and it was only the transference of such a system onto a white subject that made the story worth telling.

The figure of the zombie has seen tremendous change since the 1930s. These films represent a specific stage in the development of the zombie tradition which is hardly recognizable both to the Haitian folklore from which it claims roots and to the cannibal corpse tradition which has overtaken the genre since George Romero. The early

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[32] It is no wonder that such a film cannot be repeated in the zombies films of the 1940s. Such dehumanizing horror was far too resonant with rising US awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust. Indeed, as many scholars have noted, after the horrors of the concentration camps came to light, the concept of the living dead shifted from an exotic colonial curiosity to the all-too-real and yet unspeakable state of dehumanization which Agamben describes as "bare life" in his *Remembering Auschwitz*. The central assumption of *White Zombie*, that zombieism was scary when it was perpetrated across class bounds amongst racial others in an abstract colonial fantasy space but was terrifying once whites were implicated turned out to be more true than the Halperin brothers could have fathomed. In the 1930s the US scientific and political eugenics movement found an international champion in Adolf Hitler, who was named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1938. As the US became involved in the war overseas, however, disavowing Nazi racism became essential to the war effort. Zombie films of the 1940s were still committed to defining a benevolent US white colonialism, but in the 1940s that benevolence could not be asserted without the endorsement of a racial other. Films such as *King of the Zombie* concentrated on depicting patriotic black men whose sentimental bonds to white masculine heroes made them effective allies against both the unknowable colonial subject, in the form of the zombie, and the evil Nazi. By the mid-1940s, as the extent and monstrosity of the European Holocaust came to light, genocide replaced colonialism as the foil against which US imagined its superior national character.

Hollywood zombie was already a uniquely US invention in that it represented specifically

US notions of metaphysics, labor and race. Unlike the Haitian folklore *zonbi*, the early

zombie possessed no spiritual powers. Because the *zonbi* evolved within Haitian notions

of what constitutes an individual, the zonbi cannot be translated to the US spiritual

framework in which the individual consists of a simple dualism between body and soul.[33]

The *zonbi* takes many forms, only a fraction of which are corporeal and, while it is

certainly used for its labor, this labor is more often described as harnessed spiritual power

than a servant who is assigned specific tasks.[34] In contrast, the early zombie in

Hollywood was primarily a physical laborer. In Haitian folklore, the *zonbi* was feared for

the spiritual havoc it could wreak. In reports of zombies which came to the US through

travel narratives and ethnographies, notably William Seabrook, Zora Neal Hurston and

Wade Davis, the zombie was to be pitied since it had been denied a peaceful rest. Early

Hollywood zombies were feared for their ability to physically enact the will of an evil

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[33] As an example of the difficulty in translating between these radical different metaphysics, Karen McCarthy Brown describes the Haitian "soul" as consisting of at least five separate components, including a *nam*, which animates the body; a *gwo bonanj*, which contains the consciousness and essential personality of the individual; a *ti bonanj*, "an erngy presence within a person that is dimmer or deeper than consciousness"; a *zetwal* which is not unlike the person's star sign in US horoscopes and the *kor kadav* which is the physical materials which these spiritual forces animate, similar to US notions of the body (8-10). Leslie Desmangles, on the other hand, reduces these five to two essentials, the *gros-bon-anj*, which he describes as the spiritual counterpart of blood as an animating flow, and the *ti-bon-anj*, which is the "ego-soul," thus linking Vodou and Catholic metaphysics (67). Even in the limited over lap between these two scholars, they seem to be arguing opposing understanding of the relationship between *ti* and *gros bon anj*, frequently but misleadingly translated as the little and big guardian angels.

[34] Elizabeth McAlister, in her article "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: the Race and Religion of Zombies," describes her accidental purchase of a zombie while researching with a bokor in Haiti. Upon realizing that she had entered into a contract to purchase a fraction of enslaved spiritual power from an anoymous deceased donor, she chose to accept her role as a slaveholder and conscientiously respect the spiritual economy of Vodou by presenting the clay jar which contained the zombie with the requisite tribute and gifts. In her case, the *zonbi* was only fracture of a whole and could only be expected to respond to her general desires while a bokor may in fact harness *zonbis* which are more complete and capable of far more complicated tasks, including critical thinking and waging sustained spiritual battles as described in Erna Brodber's novel *Myal*.

master, often in connection with military concerns and in the 1940s, Nazis.[35] With the exception of Samantha's passing remark and the recurring theme of violent overthrow of their masters, there is no indication that the zombie in the 1940s had any drive to kill, much less consume, the living.[36]

White Zombie is also unique in this list for being the only film which treats zombieism as a legitimate threat to the inhabitants of its fictional Caribbean island. Later films would pick up on the threat posed to whites in the US but would entirely discard any direct concern for the ways in which zombieism affected the local economy, politics and people. Zombieism was treated as a fact of life for those living on Caribbean islands. The threat is only a threat if it is a threat to white people. A charitable interpretation may claim that such erasure of Caribbean subjects is an act of humility wherein Hollywood filmmakers avoid making assumptions about the political and social dynamics of a little-understood culture. However, as we will see when we turn to the final film in this chapter, *I Walked with a Zombie,* such respect is a delicate balance which requires not simply omission, but a nuanced denial of the audience's gaze, achieved through partial glimpses, half-articulated explanations and the sequestering of white bodies on the screen.

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[35] As I will argue in the next chapter, the film zombie arose as a technology which could be used to recruit black soldiers within the US. The militarization of zombie in Burma in *Revolt of the Zombies*, however, is perhaps a result of a rising awareness of the importance of colonial troops as European wars became "world wars." The recruiting of US blacks can be read as a subset of this colonial militarization.

[36] This connection between the zombie and consumption only comes about after Richard Matheson and George Romero resurrected the zombie within the body of vampire literature in 1954 and 1968, respectively. In the 1950s, zombie films sometimes alluded to an evangelical drive within the zombie which sought to recruit the living into their utopian undeath, although these narratives were often closely linked to the alien trope which was so essential to Cold War monster technologies.

Unlike most of the films discussed in this chapter, *White Zombie* does not attempt to medicalize and therefore scientifically or pseudo-scientifically justify zombiism. In this way, this first zombie film is content to allow for the spiritual power of Vodoun practices, which remain hazily beyond the knowing colonial gaze, as perhaps can only happen in the psychological metaphors of a surrealist film. The only Vodoun practice which the audience witnesses is the spiritual enslavement of Madeline, achieved through a combination of poison, wax carving, and Madeline's scarf, which serves as personal talisman. In keeping with the film's pattern of revealing familiarity with Haiti while not actually debunking myths, these ritual tools approximate the Vodoun practice in which the victim is severed from their communal life through poison and has a portion of their spiritual self captured into an inanimate object. That such a ritual did not require explanation in the film is a tribute to the atmosphere of mystery which allowed audiences to intuit the causal relationships between symbolic acts and spiritual consequences. Unlike later films, Vodoun and zombies themselves are not presented as an object of knowledge.

The film presents three characters who wield this purportedly Voodoo spiritual power: Ledot, the zombie; Pierre, a potential ally who declines to assist Neal and Dr. Brüner; and finally, Murder Legendre, the main villain. Each of these characters is explicitly identified as a "witch doctor." Both Pierre and Ledot are performed in blackface and the modern assumption that blackface represents not blackness, but a white phantom of otherness projected onto blackness is quite appropriate to the reading of these two characters. The audience is alienated by these characters' difference, as contrasted with the familiarity of Muse's carriage driver. Ledot and Pierre both exist in the surreal

fantasy space of the colony that is characterized by visual symbolism rather than the knowable and relatable characters who act as the audience's proxy in this fantasy land. In 1932, blackface was already outmoded in most Hollywood productions. Rather than reading it as lazy default to an outdated racist trope, I see blackface as a symbol of the colonial gaze and its blind spots. Blackface functions as a conspicuous shroud to inform the audience that no matter how much attention we pay to this exoticized rendition of the Haitian spiritual economy, we are only seeing the surrealist space of colonial fantasy.

The zombie Ledot has no spoken lines or character development, but he is, nonetheless, one of the most visually striking characters in the film. His wizard's robe is laughable, reminiscent of a European Merlin with its random glyphs. When Legendre introduces his small troupe of zombies to Beaumont, he introduces Ledot as a witch doctor: "In their lifetime[s] they were my enemies. Ledot, the witch doctor, once my master. Secrets, I tortured out of him." Whether we read Legendre as white or *mulâtre*, it is clear that he has stolen this spiritual technology and that his maleficent intent is not inherent to the technology when it remains in black Haitian hands. The sensationalism of a *white* zombie is a corruption unique to Legendre's ambition. The medicalizing of zombiism in later films is the first step in the erasure of first Caribbean and the black subjectivity because it removes the Pierre and Ledot characters entirely from the story, a gesture which both erases Caribbean power and refutes the long-denied reality of Haitian self-rule.[37]

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[37] Throughout the 1940s, German mad scientists continually fail to create true zombies and rely on hypnotism, drugs, and Haitian collaborators/native informants to achieve their nefarious goals. In both the 1930s Halperin films, white villains succeed in mastering Black magic. See Heather Hicks. In all of the 1940s zombie films, however, zombieism is an unattainable mystery.

Pierre is described as a witch doctor, but unlike Legendre, he is presented as benevolent. Like Dr. Brüner, Pierre is presented in a brightly lit scene, suggesting he too is invested with the knowledge to see things clearly. Dr. Brüner is presented within his study, a space in the film which personifies its primary occupant. The space which personifies Pierre, however, is not a stable indoor setting, but rather a crossroads where Pierre is bound to appear at some point.[38] Despite the lighting's insistence that Pierre is a wise man, the soundtrack for this scene features conspicuous drums, thus suggesting that Pierre's knowledge derives from a system quite outside the audience's familiar milieu of orchestral compositions. In terms of lighting, Pierre is associated with Dr. Brüner and, arguably, Beaumont whose mansion is brightly candle lit and prone to shadows. In terms of sound, Pierre is associated with the mourning songs of a funeral ritual from the opening scene and the interior of the sugar mill, which will be discussed later.

No one in the film questions the racial politics of Legendre's use of Haitian spiritual technologies. Pierre's indifference to Legendre's race suggests that Legendre's

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[38] Again the film alludes to a deeper understanding of Vodoun than is expected of the audience. The crossroads are sacred within Vodoun and the *loa* who appears at the crossroads is either the Rada Papa Legba or his Petra counterpart Kalfur (also transcribed as Carrefour). Both *loa* can cross between worlds and thus are necessary to translate between mutually incomprehensible systems of meaning. For example, if one wishes to evoke a *loa* who exists through fire and one who exists through water, either Papa Legba or Kalfur must first be evoked in order for either *loa* to comprehend the human world or one another. In this light, Pierre is a stand-in for Papa Legba. Like the *loa*, Pierre offers insight and facilitates action, but refuses to participate directly. Pierre is thus paired with Dr. Brüner much as Papa Legba and Kalfur are paired. In the Haitian tradition, the Rada *loa* crossed the ocean from Africa to the Caribbean to be with their people they are considered "cool" *loa* because their gifts to humanity are based in healing and balance. The Petra *loa*, by contrast, either suffered through the middle passage themselves, or were born of the Carribean. Their gifts are more strategic, meant to influence circumstances as well as others. They are considered "hot" *loa* because they are unpredictable and extract graver consequences in their exchanges with humanity. Pierre and Dr. Brüner cannot be labeled hot or cool, but the explicit acknowledgement of how history changes the spiritual world in Vodoun does allow for a consideration of how the benevolent German expatriate and the Haitian healer can each only assist the hero in ways that are historically predetermined. Setting this scene at the crossroads further emphasizes the limited potential for spiritual intervention for an audience versed in Vodoun cosmology. See Kenaz Filan *The Haitian Vodou Handbook: Protocols for Riding the Lwa,* Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 2007.

character is not to be read as white. For a black man to call a white man "an evil spirit man," as Pierre does to Legendre, would have caught the attention of a Hayes' code-minded editor. Were Legendre a white character, both Beaumont and Dr. Brüner would surely have remarked on the dangerous of his wielding a form of power that is established as the Haitian counterpart of colonial industry and business. But the character of Legendre is able to experience a pan-racial exposure to the culture of this fictionalized Haiti. He apprenticed under the witch doctor Ledot, practices potent magic and owns both a castle and a sugar plantation. He practices the religion of the masses in Haiti and yet enjoys the financial and cultural capital of the elite. He enjoys both forms of power and it is not Vodoun or industry that is depicted as evil in the film, but the mixing of the two.

Legendre fulfills the leaky, unclassifiable monster role that horror scholars have long identified as a key component of the genre. Noel Carroll terms this role of the monster as *category jamming*. He argues that monsters "breach the norms of ontological propriety assumed by the positive human characters in the story" (16). The zombie jams the categories of living and dead but it also, as discussed above, affirms the categorical difference between black and white labor assumed by the film. Legendre, however, jams categories of race and colonialism, which I argue are the primary symbolic investments that generate both the erotic and the horrific tensions of the film. That this film is obsessed with race would seemingly be obvious from the title. However, perhaps due to the fact that we are unaccustomed to whiteness being explicitly interrogated as a raced identity, many of the film's racial subtexts are either ignored or merely mentioned in passing.

Scholars disagree on the racial position of Lugosi's Murder Legendre. Because Lugosi himself is European, his character is clearly in a position of colonial authority and he deals directly with the explicitly white characters in the film, many viewers consider him white. On the other hand, some scholars read Legendre as black because he has mastered the spiritual technology of the zombie and the sugar mill he owns is the very image of antiquated industrial technology and labor practices. Gyllian Phillips addresses this contrast in her article "*White Zombie* and the Creole: William Seabrook's *The Magical Island* and American Imperialism in Haiti."[39] Phillips cites Fay, who interprets Legendre as white, and Bishop who interprets him as black. She argues that "the ambivalence of creole culture is implicitly drawn and then erased in *White Zombie*" (30).

By situating her argument in the Creole, a US racial dynamic that was significantly altered with the arrival of refugees from Saint Domingue in 1804, Phillips neglects two more contemporary historical influences on the reception and racial coding of Legendre. The first is the racial dynamics of the US Occupation of Haiti, which is the film's direct historical context. The US invading force consisted of working class white men from the US South who whose racial system was determined by the Jim Crow One-Drop rule. For these marines, all Haitians fell into the same black racial category. However, in the Haitian system, the *mulâtre* were the ruling class. The marines were generally unable to adapt to a racial system in which blacks had higher social status than

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[39] In this context the use of the words creole and *mulâtre* are a bit confusing. In the US racial lexicon, creole signifies the multi-racial culture which emerged in Louisiana after refugees from the Haitian Revolution immigrated there. Thus in English it is fairly equivalent to *mulâtre*. However, in the Haitian context, creole means the colonial ruling class and functions as a distinction between Haitians of European descent and the whites who came to Haiti while remaining citizens in the US or Europe. To avoid this slippage, I will focus my discussion on the term *mulâtre*.

whites, and with the power that accompanies a military mission, these marines were able to impose their vision of race relations onto the pre-existing racial system. In casting Murder Legendre with a white actor, the filmmakers clarified a major conflict which had underscored much of the violence of the Occupation. Furthermore, in the days of the enforcement of the Hayes code, Lugosi's Eastern European accent and wolfish expressions were able to stand in for a wide range of racialized, or ethnically marked white villains without resorting to blackface or risking giving a black actor a position of power in a film. Legendre's social status is also marked by his profession. While Beaumont is of the white landowning class and is only ever shown entertaining, Legendre owns the sugar mill and is unwelcome in the high society of Beaumont's estate.[40] During a scene in which the two men discuss the terms of their villainous contract, Legendre positively simmers with resentment.

William Seabrook, who wrote a travelogue from which much of the film's material is drawn, staked his career on his ability to translate between colonized and colonizer, thus offering his audiences tales of exotic mysteries. As a white man his liminality was celebrated. However the necessary function of a ruling class of and within the colony, a function which the *mulâtre* served in Haiti, was such a threat to the logics of colonialism that they had to be disavowed. In contrast to Seabrook who translated cultural practices of the colonized into commodities to be consumed by the colonizer,

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[40] In the murder sequence, as Madeline is poisoned, Legendre lurks in the Beaumont garden, never quite stepping away from the gate as he performs his magic ritual. This scene establishes him as a typical liminal monster because he never enters Beaumont's mansion, the site of creole decadence, yet he also is not condemned to the unknowable darkness beyond the gate, which is the primary location of most of the Haitians in the film. As Fay points out, with the exception of the opening scene, black Haitians only appear in this film as servants and literal shadows on the wall.

Legendre represents the threat that colonized technologies, be they cultural, spiritual, or

even economic, could translate into legitimate power in dealing with the colonizer. In the

film the erasure of *mulâtre* power is achieved through the ambiguous positioning of both

Lugosi as an actor and Legendre as a character. Lugosi's career consisted of playing

ethnically marked characters and it is possible that for film audiences in 1932 who were

unfamiliar with any other racial codes, much less the Haitian one in particular, his

foreignness, in marking him as ambiguously other, could pass for a Haitian *mulâtre*.[41] By

making Legendre possibly white but also implicitly black, the possibility that he is

both/neither can be ignored.

   As Phillips argues, Legendre's status as *mulâtre* is essential to understanding the

political positioning of whiteness within the colony. Those who read him as having

power can read him white and thus validate their assumptions that only whites can wield

power in the colonial setting. Those who read him as evil can read him as black and

therefore reassure themselves that such barbarism is beyond the capacity of whites.

Legendre the mulâtre functions not merely as the film's villain, but as the hyper-villain

who betrays the white villain. Furthermore, as a representative of the Haitian ruling class,

the film presents Legendre as a direct threat to his countrymen. Legendre represents the

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[41] In 1940s Hollywood, Bela Lugosi was synonymous with the exotic and monstrous other. His colleague William Henry Pratt changed his very British-sounding name to Boris Karloff which allowed him to also play a range of ethnically ambiguous villains. This simultaneous fear and fascination directed toward Eastern European immigrants would also prove fuel for the creative genius of Val Lewton, the producer of *I Walked with a Zombie* and a handful of other intelligent, atmospheric horror films in the late 40s. *White Zombie* is the only pre-code film discussed in this chapter, meaning that it was released after the advent and widespread use of sound but before the rigorous enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code, which forbade, among other things, physical contact across perceived racial lines. Nonetheless, *White Zombie* clearly avoided casting black actors in any powerful roles or even any roles with extended screen time. Pierre the witch doctor and Ledot the witchdoctor-turned-zombie are both played by white actors in blackface. Lugosi's casting as a *mulâtre* suggests that the racial dynamics of Haiti are essential to the plot of the film even though they did not translate to the US popular imagination.

worst of the colonial mimic man who envies whites and subjugates his own people. His

exploitation, represented here as a core evilness, legitimates US colonial intervention.[42]

As a character that is neither fully black nor fully white he becomes a universal canvas

onto which we can project our fears of moral failure in both races. Narratively,

positioning Legendre as a *mulâtre* is also a necessary function of the plot. In a film which

is strangely accurate and strangely insistent on its accuracy, the position of economic

power deprived of social standing which Legendre occupies is essential to the tension of

the film. Half way through *White Zombie*, the all-white romantic triangle plot is replaced

by a different sort of jealousy as Legendre seeks to assert his social and political power

by enslaving his rival as a zombie. Indeed, the climax of the film combines both of these

plots as the lovers are reunited, through a final confrontation between Legendre and his

rival. Learning to be white in a colonial context requires not only being able to harness

the economic potential of the lower classes, but also to manage the political potential of

the bureaucratic class. The colonial presence in Haiti, represented by both the hero and

the white villain, are dependent on the managerial labor of Legendre, who runs the local

sugar mill.

In addition to being of a lower social standing than his European client, the

sorcerer is also represented as more closely linked to Haitian culture. Legendre is both of

Haiti and outside of it. The funeral scene which begins the film ends with the introduction

of Legendre whose eyes appear as a haunting malevolent presence in the very landscape

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[42] The US is still intervening in Haiti and still using demonized "witch doctor" characters to legitimate this neo-colonialism. The Clintons, for example, have made Haitian politics a significnat concern of US foreign policy and recent Haitian politics have been profoundly unsettled by the rise, fall and re-emergence of Clinton political power in the US.

of Haiti. However, when he emerges from the countryside and approaches Madeline and Neal's carriage, the Haitian carriage driver does not flee at the sight of Legendre himself, but instead at the sight of the zombies which accompany him. This early sequence makes clear that zombies are a Haitian problem but Legendre, as a transition character between Haiti and the colonial governing class, is the true threat to the title character and thus the vicarious filmgoer. To a US audience, to whom race was a bipolar biological fact, the character that blurs such lines is far more threatening than a character that can safely be located as a foreign problem. Colonialism, however, tends to be instrumental in creating subjects who cannot be neatly placed into singular subject positions. Just as the Haitian zombies serve as a visual horror but fail to carry their own plot line, Legendre's role as the enslaver of Haitians marks him as evil but it is his attempt to extend this villainy to white victims which proves his downfall.

While Legendre's racial ambiguity is the primary monstrous slippage of the film, supporting characters such as the zombies, Pierre, and the two maids who attend to Madeline are also productive sites of tension. There are no black women in the film. However, white femininity is divided by class and the strategic, discursive glances of the maids function to denaturalize the centrality of white, middle-class femininity in the racial economy of the colony. More than any other character in the film, the maids stand in for the audience in their horror at the zombification of Madeline and their detached puzzlement over the power struggles waged around them.[43] Like Legendre, the maids

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[43] In the 1940s, black women will replace the maids as the film's most knowing glances and most resilient characters. *King of the Zombies* (1941) and *Revenge of the Zombies* (1943), black women understand the zombie system and have accommodated themselves to it. In both films, there is a black woman who is coded as American and who serves as helpmate to the main black male character. There is also a crone who is coded as foreign and who assists the German villains in harnessing Afro-Caribbean spiritual

present slippage between the racial economies of colonial Haiti and Hayes-era

Hollywood. As servants, they are excluded from the sexual economy of the other whites

in the film and can, as black women will throughout the zombie genre, fill in the

blindspots of the patriarchal colonial gaze. Black women have been treated as colonized

bodies to flesh-out the economy of the fantasy colonial or racially segregated domestic

space in films such as *Zombies on Broadway* (1945) and *Zombies of Mora Tau* (1957).

However, they have also risen to the heights of counter-hegemonic power as zombie

masters in films such as *Sugar Hill* (1974) and, in rare cases, a film like *The Ghost*

Breakers (1943) can imagine black women in both roles.[44] In *White Zombie*, the maid

characters function as witness to the dangers that await the pure white woman in the

corrupting colonial landscape. The two maids who help Madeline dress in two separate

scenes and express their discomfort at her change from a lively and friendly young

woman to a vacant shell are the closest the audiences comes to an on-screen proxy.

In *White Zombie,* the maids appear in both Beaumont and Legendre's mansions,

both times tending to Madeline. In the first of these twin scenes, the maids are helping

Madeline get into her wedding dress and the three share confidences warmly. In the

second scene, pictured above, the maids find the zombified Madeline unsettling and

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technologies. In *Ouagna* (1936), a black woman wields the power of the zombie master and, as with Legendre, this power is linked to her interracial ambitions. When the zombie master is a woman, however, her motivations are primarily romantic, with a class subtext. This formula is revived in *Sugar Hill* (1974) when Marki Bey plays Diana Hill, a black woman whose grief at the murder of her boyfriend is transformed into a zombie-powered murder spree that has the added bonus of liberating her community from a white slum lord and union-buster.

[44] I deal with the 1970s trope of the Powerful Black Woman as it shows up in *Omega Man* in Chapter 3 and I am developing a future chapter for this book project that will address the economy of spiritual power and racial signifiers in *Sugar Hill*. Much has been made of Robert Kirkman's character Michonne from *The Walking Dead* graphic novel and its subsequent television adaptation. However, even an archetypal Strong Female Character such as Michonne is prone to gender and racial systems that complicate her meaning. See Sparky, "Walking Dead: The Problem with Michonne." On *Fangs for the Fantasy* for a sample critique.

complain about having to care for a dead woman. The look captured here is only possible by someone who has been excluded from the power dynamics of sexual objectification, although these women clearly experience alienation from their labor whether or not any object is produced. When not the object of the gaze herself, the maid can recognize that Madeline's zombification is the disastrous logical extension of sexual objectification: the beautiful woman has been rendered pure surface. Madeline is deprived of agency and personality, rendered as nothing but a pliable body. Meanwhile the maid, whose class standing saves her from this fate but also excludes her from so many other class trappings that Madeline recieves, is forced to take on responsibility for the maintenance of object's beauty, continuing to serve a phantom based on the expectations of custom but without any possible connection between the two women. When the two scenes are contrasted, they highlight the dehumanized price that white women must play for their complicity in colonialism.

The importance of gender in the creation of the colonial racial economy cannot be emphasized enough. This particular examination focuses on the development of masculine gender positions, but it is worthwhile to examine the positioning of Madeline's white femininity both as a model for other white women in colonial spaces, and as a contrast to the relationship between the zombie and a proper US white colonial masculinity. The most essential role that white women play in the colonial fantasy is that of potential victim. In 1932 when this film was released, whether or not to make lynching a federal crime was still being negotiated in the US Congress. Lynching is perhaps the most salient example of the assumption of white women's sexual vulnerability to a racialized and villainized other and how it was used to justify the most brutal of race-

based violence. Madeline's conversion into a zombie is delicately connected in the film to sexual slavery. When this slavery is in the service of Beaumont, it is not a sufficient outrage to inspire the heroic journey. It is only when Dr. Brüner informs Neal that his beloved is in the hands of "natives," which corresponds to the audience's witnessing of Madeline under the control of Legendre, that the heroic gents are set into action.

On the other hand, the ideal of white femininity can also protect against corruption. Madeline is the first zombie shown to resist Legendre's will. She is the voice which calls to Neal in his delirium when he is incapacitated by a tropical fever, yet another symbol of the corrupting pollutants of the colonial scene. While Madeline's vulnerability demands that she remain safely in the carriage, escorted by intermediaries who include both the native informant figure and her mate, her feminine high mindedness also positions her in contrast to white masculinity as curious, and engaged. In the carriage, he can't take his eyes of her because his attention is entirely consumed within the racially exclusive reproductive economy. Her gaze, however, is cast out of the insular colonial space of the carriage. This gender coding acts as catch-safe for the enculturation of the colonial enterprise. The curiosity of the audience is voiced and thus acknowledged by Madeline, but as a woman cloistered from the dirty world of colonial politics, any insight or empathy she may have gained through the exchange can be safely dismissed as trivial. Thus the oppression of one group, in this case white women, is used to naturalize the oppression of another group, colonial subjects. It's no wonder that the zombified Madeline has such a far-reaching gaze and yet remains mute.

While Madeline may in fact be the white zombie from the film's title and one could argue that her white femininity is more explicitly constructed than Beaumont's

foreign white masculinity, Madeline's whiteness is only distinct from the racial positions

of other characters if whiteness is defined as a nationalist privilege of US citizens. There

are many racially ambiguous characters throughout the film, including several zombies

who, while living, had occupied various positions of power within the colonial system,

such as Minister of the Interior, high executioner and brigand chief.[45] Madeline is unique

primarily in that she is female and she is a US citizen. By presenting her as an innocent,

dragged into a corrupt colonial system and in this way, the film implies that the US was

equally pure of intention in its occupation of Haiti and that the horrors of the occupation

were the result not of US intervention, but of a land irredeemable from the combination

of its barbaric customs and the corruption of its colonial past.

    The nominal hero of the film is Neal, a young US white man who is seeking to

establish himself with the colonial governmental business network. The plot of the film

begins with the arrival of Neal's fiancée Madeline, who has travel from the US to join

him so the two can be married. Unfortunately, Madeline falls victim to Voodoo (the

Hollywood caricature of Vodoun), and is made into a zombie. To win back his bride,

Neal must negotiate the power structure of the colonial space, from the French plantation

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[45] Reading race in this film is made difficult by a few factors. First, the US filmmakers were translating between racial systems which, as discussed in the previous chapter, defined racialized subject positions based on different criteria. This is compounded by the fact that the US racial system in which this text is written amounts to a third layer of translation. The make-up effects of the film also contribute to this difficulty because some black characters are played by black actors and some by white actors in blackface. Furthermore, even in this early film, the visual cues of the zombie include a lightened face. A zombie could potentially be a mulâtre character translated into a black character played by a white actor in blackface whose skin has then been lightened to mimic undeath. In the case of the zombie Chauvin, overacting compounds the problem since overly wide eyes was not only a convention of silent film acting, but also a visual cue both of a minstrel character and of a mindless automaton. Names are not particularly helpful in clarifying this problem because Germany, France and the US all had strong colonial presences which exerted influence over the names of Haitians, especially mulâtre. Hence one cannot assume that the zombie Von Gelder is intended to be white any more than Chauvin or Ledot the witch doctor. Thus, the only characteristic which confirms Madeline's singular whiteness among the zombies is her US citizenship.

owner who attempts to seduce Madeline to the black(face) witch doctor who refuses to

assist him in confronting the film's villain. *White Zombie* is an analogy for a relatively

young US colonial force which must claim its place in an older colonial economy. What

is perhaps most interesting about the plot of this film is that Neal himself is insulated

from the violence of the colonial system as other white masculinities, coded either French

or German, perform much of "dirty work" of colonialism for him. Indeed, Neal proves an

entirely ineffectual hero who agency produces no results.[46] Yet in being in the right place

at the right time, he manages to get the girl and, presumably, inherit the dominant

position of authority within the colony.

Neal can be read as prototype of the Enlightened Humanist Subject discussed

above, which emerged as a consolidated US white masculinity during and after the

Second World War[47] In this film, as well as in the Halerpin's other zombie film *Revolt of*

the Zombies (1936), set in Cambodia, and Bob Hope's horror-comedy *The Ghost*

Breakers (1941), which was set in Cuba, the protagonist is struggling to learn and adopt

the traits and behaviors of success which characterize the Enlightened Humanist Subject,

namely autonomy, industry, rationality, and objectivity. Each of these traits was

challenged by recent events in US history, thus creating a brief historical moment when

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[46] Even in the 1940s the incredulity of meritocracy ideologies prevented many film "heroes" from exercising effective agency. However, the contrast between white male characters and zombies continued to emphasize the whiteness of not only Enlightened Humanist Subject characteristics, but also of their attendant success.

[47] It would perhaps be more accurate to say that this masculinity reemerged after WWII because it closely resembles the frontiersman masculinity of previous generations, including Davy Crocket's pioneer soldier persona and President Theodore Roosevelt's' rather theatrical cowboy drag. As this connection makes clear, the consolidation of this masculinity was not only a defense against the humanity of US and colonial black. It also served to legitimate the persecution of native peoples and immigrants. That, however, is another book entirely.

they could be projected as an ideal-in-formation before the Second World War again

necessitated coherent, heroic masculinities.[48] Just as Neal must appropriate and resist the

influence of European colonial characters, specifically Beaumont, the French plantation

owner and Dr. Brüner, the German minister-scientist, so the US had to respond to the

presence and practices of both French and German colonial influence in Haiti. Like

Beaumont, the French had historically assumed a position of economic and cultural

dominance in Haiti which was understood as too decadent and out of touch to remain

sustainable. Like Dr. Brüner, the Germans had taken a more integrated approach,

preferring to learn about local culture, intermarry, and cooperate with Haitian authorities.

In the film, Beaumont is presented as an over-libidinous sexual rival who is complicit in

the horrors of a violent colonial labor systems, most salient in the sugar mill scene. Dr.

Brüner, on the other hand, is presented as an absent minded, bumbling but well-

intentioned fatherly figure. While the figure of the white woman Madeline, the mulâtre

villain Legendre, and of course the zombies themselves, are also important to

understanding the film's symbolic justification of US colonialism, Brüner and Beaumont

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[48] The dominant masculinity in any time and culture is always in a perpetual moment of crisis. The manufacture of such crises is essential to the consolidation of hegemony because it allows the hegemonic ideal to adapt without ever losing its cultural centrality. However, in discussing the Enlightened Humanist Subject as detailed above, the crises that prompted this consolidation of multiple masculine-coded attributes into this particular coherent US masculinity include the Great Depression and the ongoing collapse of the banking industry; the emerging controversy around both eugenics and Darwinism; the immense death tolls of the Great War and the growing realization that it was not the war to end all wars; the full entrance of women into the political sphere in the wake of the Nineteenth Amendment; the failure of Prohibition and the proliferation of violence in the informal economy; the founding of the Soviet Union as a Communist state and the attendant suspicion of unionized labor; the Great Migration of blacks out of the South revealing a different breed of racial conflicts in the North that could not be blamed solely on Jim Crow policies; and the conflict between isolationism, as evidenced by the refusal of the US to join the League of Nations, and continued national ambitions to control politics and economies throughout the Western Hemisphere.

are the best opportunities to understand the uniqueness of the Enlightened Humanist Subject.

None of the iconic white men in this film actually achieved this ideal of white masculinity, but we can see how the film works towards consolidating this ideal as a response to the criticisms of colonialism that each white male character represents. The plot of *White Zombie* reveals a sexual and spiritual economy which mirrors the plantation economy of occupied Haiti. The male characters each represent one of the groups vying for power at that time. The female character is reduced to merely one of the goods over which these colonial power struggles are played out. This power struggle is further mapped upon the uniquely Haitian setting where zombieism changes the familiar rules of engagement. The film functions to assuage the fears of an evolving US whiteness which was confronted with the US's competition in the global economic stage where the European powers had ceased to expand and had returned to waging war upon one another. Beaumont and Legendre both represent competing colonial forces. Beaumont is the known threat of a decadent Europe. He threatens Neal's domestic bliss but ultimately plays by similar rules. Legendre, on the other hand, is a new breed of threat, the Creole businessman who is both competitive in the financial sector and better informed to make use of unknown local resources unique to the colony.

In his book-length analysis of *White Zombie,* Gary Rhodes suggests that Freud is a useful source for understanding this film (14). While Rhodes is interested in the film's surrealist aesthetics and argues for their interpretation through Freud's discussion of dreams and the genre of the fairytale, I find *Totem and Taboo* to be a better text for illuminating the character relationships in this film. Freud's myth of the primal horde has

no anthropological basis. It can be read, however, as an attempt to articulate the frustrations of any aspiring power in a system of hierarchy, whether the horde is a metaphor for the competition of brothers against their father in a system of patriarchy where women's sexual availability is commodified, or of a young nation challenging the global dominance of older empires in a system of white supremacist colonialism where the subjectivity of peoples outside of Europe was also simply ignored. The US of the 1930s was suffering from an anxiety of influence, seeking to replace the European empires as a leader in the global economy. The character of Neal is a colonial everyman. However, unlike the archetypal US hero, Neal is not a story of success by the strength and length of one's own bootstraps. Instead, Neal begins the film seeking assistance from the wealthy Beaumont.

In a proliferation of oedipal triangles, with the young protagonist competing against a range of older men for access to both the sole female character and various modes of power, be they economic or spiritual. The primary and most traditional oedipal triangle centers on Madeline, the white zombie of the title. Madeline comes to Haiti to wed her betrothed Neal, who works in finance in Port -Au-Prince. She catches the eye of Mr. Beaumont, a wealthy local man who befriends Neal in an effort to win Madeline for himself. Beaumont promises to send Neal back to New York on business in the hopes he can have Madeline to himself. Beyond a simple love triangle, this conflict becomes oedipal because Neal is financially indebted to Beaumont, who promises to, as Dr. Brüner phrases it, "take the trouble to play fairy godfather to [the] young couple." Neal must simultaneously compete with Beaumont for the film's only female and depend on

Beaumont as the source of his livelihood. Thus the defeat of Beaumont appears to be the reasonable resolution of this plot.

In *Totem and Taboo,* Freud imagines this scenario, in which the young man must eliminate his older competition, as the foundational violence upon which all societies are founded. To find an oedipal triangle in a film is not a particularly surprising discovery as Freud's theories were deeply influential in the articulation of the Enlightened Humanist Subject and most dominant constructions of US masculinity assume much of Freud's claims about gender formation and the violence inherent in all men's infantile relationships with their parents. However, in this film the violence visited upon the primitive father is deflected to an exoticized, racially ambiguous arch villain, the aptly named Murder Legendre, played by an already famous Bela Lugosi. Furthermore, in Freud's telling the significance of this foundational act of violence is that it creates a bond amongst the various younger men who conspire to break their father's sexual monopoly and then establish the rules of society to prevent any further monopolies and murders. However, in this film, the homicidal pact is also deferred, first to Dr. Brüner and then to the zombies themselves. Such positioning of various masculine roles against one another is a central concern for this chapter. *White Zombie* does not simply enact Freud's parricide plot, but instead embeds this drama within a small series of connected patriarchal conflicts.

The other characters of *White Zombie* each represent a nationality operating in Haiti at that time. While certainly privileging the US perspective, the film must be credited for its political awareness. Mr. Beaumont, the plantation owner who first contracts a sorcerer to poison and enslave Madeline, represents France, the former

colonial power. Mr. Beaumont is a doubly flawed character, both insulated from his surroundings by a legacy of wealth and privilege and so decadent as to assume that he can simply woo the bride of another man, or buy her servitude should she prove unwilling. To the US audience, whose colonial aspirations were still in their infancy, the French role in Haiti could easily be dismissed as overly aristocratic, being both out-of-touch and overly privileged. Beaumont is a plantation owner. He represents the old-guard European colonial order which has been corrupted by its own privilege, which is best exemplified as he attempts to seduce away Madeline even as he escorts her down the aisle at her wedding. Beaumont's position within the colony is defined by relationships. He has a loyal butler who is willing to plot and deceive on his account. He colludes with Legendre but it is clear that such interactions primarily occur in Beaumont's home turf and when Legendre sends a zombie carriage driver to fetch Beaumont later in the film, it is clear that the change in location from the plantation owner's mansion to the business man's sugar mill is a power play in which Legendre is demanding that Beaumont lower himself from a nobility of property to the pragmatic power structures of business exchange. Beaumont also maintains a tense relationship with the other European power in the film, the scholarly missionary Dr. Brüner, who is pressed into his service despite clear distrust between the two men.

Beaumont is introduced to the audience first through his mansion which, when contrasted with the roadside funeral of the opening scene, is presented as not only conspicuous wealth and decadence, but also as an entirely separate world from the Haitian jungle that surrounds it. Neal and Madeline are made to wait outside the mansion, which is where they first encounter Dr. Brüner emerging from the surrounding jungle.

This liminal space that surrounds the mansion is also where Legendre performs his ritual to enslave Madeline. The settings in this film are symbolically laden and Beaumont's mansion is presented primarily as a site of false comfort. Like Beaumont, the mansion is neither true to the civility it purports to represent nor is it imbricated in its surroundings.

When Beaumont leaves his mansion, he seems to travel from one locus of Legendre's power to the next. We see Beaumont in the sugar mill, in a cemetery and finally, in the climactic sequences, in Legendre's gothic castle.[49] Each of these settings witnesses a successive retraction of Beaumont's authority and power. In the exploitive business world of the sugar mill, Beaumont is clearly horrified by the atrocities he witnesses, but on both the symbolic and pragmatic level, Beaumont's privileged requires Legendre's villainy to support it. On a plot level, this is clearly foreshadowing Beaumont's pending zombification. However, on a symbolic level, where the notion of white man becoming one of the enslaved undead would not have been an intuitive leap, Beaumont is trapped by the labor system which his demand for privilege created. His horror is not only of the potential for dehumanization within the colonial system, but also of his own complicity in that system.

In many ways, Beaumont is more of a hero/protagonist in this film than Neal. While it is Neal who undertakes the heroic journey to confront evil and save the girl, Beaumont is the only character who appears to learn and change in the course of the film. He is the villain's true rival, as Legendre demonstrates virtually no interest in Neal. Most

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[49] Legendre's castle is a gothic version of the Citadelle Laferrière, built by Henry Christophe. The fortress became a symbol of the folly of Haitian self-rule during the occupation because, ironically, it was built to defend against an invasion that, until the landing of US troops in 1915, had not been military. The Citadelle was deemed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982.

importantly, the conflict of the film, Legendre's magic, is resolved through the actions of

Beaumont and not Neal. In the film's final sequences, Legendre begins the process of

turning Beaumont into a zombie and, despite a creeping muscle failure which continues

to influence zombie transition scenes to this day, Beaumont's last autonomous action is

plunge both himself and the sorcerer over a cliff. Indeed, Beaumont is arguable as much

the white zombie from the film's title as is Madeline.[50] US masculinity in this film is still

merely an apprentice learning form the example of the European father figure who went

before.

To aid him in his pursuit of Madeline, Beaumont seeks the help of Legendre, who

in turn constitutes the second villain of the film. Legendre is the owner of the local sugar

mill who is excluded from the white society which forms the basis for Beaumont's

identity. While the camera has witnessed Lugosi's striking appearance in an earlier scene,

his introduction as a character is accomplished entirely through his hands. When

Beaumont enters Legendre's office, an anonymous hand is thrust into the frame.

Beaumont refuses this friendly overture and the film cuts to focus on Legendre's rejected

hand twisting in upon itself, followed by an upwardly angled midshot of Lugosi whose

eyes betray the ease with which such a slight can inspire his murderous intent. In this

early scene, Legendre encourages Beaumont to enjoy the economic privileges of a white

man who can exploit the local labor force: "You. You could make good use of men like

mine on your plantation." But Beaumont's corruption is not economic, or at least not

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[50] Beaumont's gradual transition into a zombie is markedly different from Madeline's dramatic swoon and glamorous coffin-laying. On a plot level this is because Legendre is drawing out the zombification ritual, enjoying his conquest of his former rival. However, on the symbolic level, as I will discuss below, the differential presentation of white femininity's vulnerability to spiritual attack is an important component of the zombie film tradition.

primarily. Instead, he proposes that Legendre grant him a month to seduce Madeline, a

plan which Legendre scoffs at, instead commanding, again from that dominant position

looking down at the camera, that Beaumont satisfy his desire for Madeline through a

form of sexual slavery. When Beaumont vows to "find another way," Legendre assures

him, with all the authority of a Freudian patriarch: "There is no other way."

Predictably, the virtuous Madeline rejects Beaumont's final, desperate advances.

He slips her the poison, thus accepting Legendre's contract. Madeline's death scene is

intercut with a scene of Legendre in the garden, first wrapping Madeline's stolen scarf

around a candle, then carving a vaguely female form into it and finally melting the effigy.

This ritual appears to have most potent effect on Madeline who at first appeared to be

unaffected by the poison. Madeline is buried and Beaumont and Legendre steal her from

her crypt with the help of a small band of Legendre's zombies.

As villains, neither Legendre nor Beaumont ever shares the camera with a living

Haitian.[51] Neither French creoles nor the mulâtre ruling class are represented as the

natural stewards of Haiti. Both characters are too involved in their petty power struggles

to provide any sort of positive influence in the colony.[52] However, the film includes a

third nation/character against which the protagonist US/Neal must position himself. Dr.

Brüner represents Germany and is perhaps the most interesting of the nation/characters in

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[51] Both characters are in scenes with zombies, all of whom operate as servants of Legendre. Beaumont also appears on camera alongside his butler, who, while of the servant class, is marked both racially and by his willingness to cooperate with Beaumont's seduction schemes as a different type of character than the maids, pallbearers and other service workers who constitute the general Haitian population in the film.

[52] My choice to call Haiti a colony at this point in its history may be contentious. Haitians had won their war of independence against France. However, the US Marines occupied their country and US politicians were authoring their constitution. This label will not be appropriate by the time of the next film because, while the US maintained financial control of Haiti well into the 1940s, by 1936 we had removed our occupying force.

the film. US perceptions of German influence in Haiti are wrought with complications,

since Germans had succeeded in overcoming the Haitian law against foreign land

ownership through a system of intermarriage. For the US, such an economic and political

coup required both and invasion and a rewriting of the Haitian constitution. In the

interwar period, German influence in the Western Hemisphere was considered a threat to

US isolationist policy, thus at least in part motivating the 1915 invasion.

It falls upon the kindly Dr. Brüner to realize what has happened to Madeline,

rouse Neal from his grief and plan a rescue. This third oedipal triangle represents an

idealized coordination of masculinities, as Dr. Brüner guides Neal into his appointed role

as hero. Unfortunately, as can be observed in other tales of the undead,[53] Neal is the hero

of this tale in name only. While Dr. Brüner is able to disrupt Legendre's power and trick

the zombies into walking off a cliff, the final defeat of the villain comes at the hands of

Beaumont who, as he struggles to maintain control over his own body, plunges both

Legendre and himself into the crashing waves below. Neal's role in this climax is merely

to be present. His face does cause the zombified Madeline to hesitate when Legendre

commands her to kill Neal, but ultimately, Neal exercises no direct agency throughout the

film. Instead, the idealized masculinity represented in Neal is a passive masculinity which

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[53] My oedipal reading of this plot structure is indebted both to Rhodes and to Gregory Waller. Waller's book *The Living and the Undead* gives an important reading of the original *Dracula* novel by Bram Stoker. In Waller's reading, retellings of the Dracula myth represent revisions of the ideal relationship between the developing communities of young people, such as Neal and Madeline, and the male authority figures from whom they must achieve recognition. From this perspective, the relationship between Neal and Dr. Brüner is quite similar to the relationship between Jonathan Harker and Dr. Van Helsing. In both relationships, the doctor has knowledge which is not authorized by the institutions of knowledge but which is essential in order to rescue the woman in question from the master of the undead. In both tales the young man proves less a hero than the prompt for the successful resistance of others. In both tales the villain is conquered by one whom he seeks to enslave, even though it is the combination of the young man and the doctor that prompts the act of resistance. While it is Nina who resists in *Dracula,* both Madeline and Beaumont demonstrate the incomplete control of Murder Legendre in *White Zombie*.

obeys benevolent authority, such as Dr. Brüner. It is this passive capacity to accept other men's contributions to his success that instigates Neal's problems. As a young, naïve and financially vulnerable man, Neal accepts Beaumont's hospitality, thus putting Madeline in the impossible position of having to reject the advances of her host, man who has promised to arrange the success of her new husband. However, the same passivity becomes Neal's redeeming virtue once Dr. Brüner steps in, rescuing Neal from the self-destructive path of drowning his sorrows in alcohol. It appears that the best an idealized man can do in his youth, according to this film, is be a good judge of character, and wisely select which authority figure to obey.

Dr. Brüner seems a modified version of the Renaissance man, educated, compassionate, curious and surprisingly capable despite his tendency to misplace objects. The ideal relationship between these two forms of white masculinity is depicted most attentively in a scene set in Dr. Brunner's study. The room is presented from the camera's view to consist of primarily a wall of windows with an enormous desk and plenty of books. This is one of only two brightly lit scenes in the whole film. Dr. Brüner's office is an enlightenment space, with an unobstructed view of the exoticized and colonized landscape the fantasy Haiti. The observation bubble is full of the instruments of knowledge, establishing Dr. Brüner as a satellite of white knowledge in the superstition-clouded foreignness. Indeed, when we first see Dr. Brunner, he emerges from the darkness surrounding Beaumont's estate. Neal and Madeline's relief that Dr. Brüner turns out to be an English-speaking white man is clear. His first line is to ask for a match, and the conversation quickly illustrates that Dr. Brüner is a competent cultural translator who can guide the young couple:

"Surely you don't believe it, do you?"

"No." Pause "I don't know. Haiti is full of nonsense and superstition. They're always mixed up with a lot of mysteries that'll turn your hair gray."

In 1932, Dr. Brüner is a role model for the often clueless Neal and that his familiarity with Haitian culture marks him as a benevolent character and a model for Colonial relationship with Haiti. The film locates Dr. Brüner temporally between Legendre, who stalks the night landscape and Beaumont who rests in his isolated, brightly lit mansion. As Neal and Madeline wait at Beaumont's doorstep, having just left the terrifying presence of Legendre, Dr. Brüner emerges from the shadows of the jungle. All three characters remark that Madeline and Neal had mistaken him for the terrors of the zombies they witnessed on the road. In this way, the film focuses us on Dr. Brüner's integration into Haiti.

Dr. Brüner is a lovable, absent minded character that loses his glasses on the top of his head. On a plot level, however, he manages to achieve more agency than the protagonist himself. After Madeline's death, Neal is lost in grief and it is Dr. Brüner who shakes him out of ineffectual self-destruction and demands that Neal recognize the true dangers and villainy afoot. This characterization of German presence in the Caribbean can be sharply contrasted with the presentation of German characters in later zombie films, as Germany shifted from being the paradigm of colonial racial integration into the home of European history's most infamous genocide. As a role model Dr. Brüner offers several admirable characteristics, which primarily revolve around his superior use of reason. Neither a believer nor willing to dismiss his the empirical data of his own experiences, Dr. Brüner manages to ride the line between compassionate understanding

of the Haitian people and "going native" in a way that would disavow his European claims to colonial authority. Unfortunately, despite his idealized position within the film, Dr. Brüner is far from a colonial role model. Unlike any other character in any of the zombie films form this era, he expresses concern for the threat that zombieism presents to the local Haitian population. He even coordinates his efforts to save Madeline with a local "witchdoctor" Pierre, presumably a *hougan*, a Vodoun priest, who us unfortunately performed in blackface and overacted as a racial stereotype rather than the local power and social order which he presumably could have represented. However, Dr. Brüner never coordinates effort with Pierre and his ineffectual bumbling seems to characterize his inability or unwillingness to become an active member of the local community.

Between these two models of colonial involvement, we find Neal, the romantic lead and US everyman of the film. Professionally, Neal is a cog in the machine of colonial bureaucracy. He is beginning his career on the lower levels of either the colonial administration or the opening financial sector. He represents both the US as a fresh and naïve face on the colonial scene and the emergent middle class as an alternative to the exploitive plantation system which Beaumont and Legendre constitute. Neal's primary characteristic is his nonspecificity, making him emotively available for the audience to project their colonial expectations and anxieties onto him. As a proxy for the film's audience back in the US, Neal's naivety is essential. He is not implicated in the violence that surrounds him and instead presented as a potential victim. More threatening than the power plays between Beaumont and Legendre, however, are the temptations of the corrupting colonial environment. Neal's defining scene, the only time in the film when we see this character demonstrate any will beyond the expectations of the marriage plot, is

after Madeline's death when he slouches in a dancehall, drowning his grief and

hallucinating Madeline's loving embrace. Dr. Brüner's interjection saves Neal from the

temptation of loose morals and slovenly living. Neal never again asserts agency and is

instead saved three more times in the course of the film. First, the zombie Madeline calls

out to Neal, rousing him from a fever dream and potentially saving him from dying.

Then, in Legendre's castle, zombie Madeline resists the command to murder Neal,

demonstrating white femininity's endorsement of his campaign for a place in the colonial

order. Finally, in killing Legendre, Beaumont both insulates Neal form the dirty work

necessary to displace the institutionalize mulâtre ruling class and, in killing himself,

endorses Neal as his replacement in the colonial administration. Despite his failure to

demonstrate a single redeeming quality, Neal, and thus US imperialism itself, is clearly

presented as the only remaining option to fill the power vacuum created by the rivalry

between Beaumont's French decadence and Legendre's sinister exploitation.

Neal hardly amounts to a true hero. In fact, his actions do next to nothing to affect

the plot. What makes Neal the focus of the narrative, however, is that he is presented as a

more enlightened and benevolent form of colonialism, which was more sympathetic for

film's audience. In order for his society to be restored, Neal must not only survive the

supernatural powers of Murder Legendre, but he must also prove himself better suited

than the deceptive Monsieur Beaumont. Rather than own a decadent planation like

Beaumont or a dangerous, soulless sugar mill like Legendre, Neal works in a desk job

either in the financial sector or with the US colonial administration, thus representing the

velvet glove of the colonial system.[54] Neal learns from Bruner to respect the beliefs of the

natives without attempting to exploit them as Beaumont had. Neal makes use of the older

man's wisdom, but there is also an unspoken distinction between the mentee's activity

within society and his mentor's esoteric outsider position. To emphasize Neal's virtue and

his isolation from the violence of colonialism, he is even buffered from the wild work,

which is instead performed by Beaumont, the more traditional colonial figure.[55] As a

model of a uniquely US, white, colonial masculinity, Neal illustrates what Chris Vials

calls "the politics of disavowal," in which the US reaps the rewards of colonialism while

disavowing its violence by placing such violence firmly in the behavior of either a

European or Creole exploiter, such as Legendre.[56]

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[54] The US invaded Haiti in 1915. *White Zombie* was based roughly on a travelogue from the occupation called *The Magic Island.* By 1932, when the film was released, the racist justifications of the occupation were wearing thin as a historically divided Haitian society united in solidarity against the imposition of US Jim Crow laws and a form of conscripted labor that was far too reminiscent of the slavery Haiti had revolted against. Haitian intellectuals were also reaching out to form political and cultural coalitions with blacks in the US, western Africa, and throughout the Caribbean.

[55] There has been some great work done on the colonial politics of *White Zombie*, specifically Jennifer Fay's "*White Zombie,* Black Baghdad,*"* but much of this work fails to acknowledge a singular important gesture the film makes, namely that the villain, Murder Legendre is neither white nor black, but mulatto. This racial ambiguity was necessary in pre-Code Hollywood when an explicit reference to miscegenation was enough to ban a film in many states. As Gyllian Phillips argues, Legendre is a not only a threat to the racial segregation that was enforced within the US, but he is also a threat to US white purity because he is a remnant of the European-style colonialism.

56 The term creole has developed a weighty theoretical import in scholarship about colonialism published in English. However, in the Haitian context, the proper term is *mulâtre*. In the Haitian racial lexicon, *créole* indicates European settlers who had made their homes and fortunes in Haiti but still claimed cultural allegiance to France or Germany.

CHAPTER 3. 'WILD WORK' AND THE MONSTROSITY OF WHITENESS IN
MATHESON'S *I AM LEGEND*

Zombie representations typically fall into two distinct traditions. The first grew

out of US interpretations of Haitian folklore and functions as an uncanny supernatural

return of slavery and other colonial labor systems, such as the US used during its

occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934.[57] In this tradition, zombies are characterized as

mindless automatons, harmless in themselves, but generally used as tools to enact the

nefarious will of a master who has taken control either by raising them from the dead or

by using drugs or hypnotism. The other zombie tradition features cannibal corpses,

equally mindless but governed instead by an insatiable desire to consume human flesh or

brains. This second tradition is often described as beginning with George A. Romero's

Night of the Living Dead (1968)*.* It must be noted, however that Romero-style zombies

actually predate that film. In fact, *Night of the Living Dead* borrows so much from

Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) that Matheson seems a far more formative

forefather of the genre.[58] Interestingly, neither Matheson nor Romero use the term zombie

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[57] Jennifer Fay traces the emergence of US colonial guilt and rationalization in Hollywood's first zombie film White Zombie (1932) in her article "Dead Subjectivity: White Zombie, Black Baghdad." She uses the idea of the uncanny return of slavery to describe US labor policy during the occupation of Haiti.

[58] The connection between Matheson and Romero is both widely acknowledged and frequently ignored within zombie scholarship. Kyle Bishop, for example, in his earlier work, states that "traditional zombie movies have no direct antecedent in novels and short fiction" (196), but then proceeds to discuss Matheson's novel at the end of his whirlwind overview of US interpretations of the Haitian zombie (199). I share Bishop's insistence that the zombie is a uniquely modern, US trope. However, Bishop's enthusiasm to force this point without seriously leads to countless underdeveloped claims, selective readings and general blindness.

to refer to their undead monsters, and it is only in retrospect that these two traditions were linked.[59] The use of the word zombie to describe the undead tradition that grew out of Matheson's work demands that we take seriously the connection between Matheson and these earlier colonial narratives.[60]

The undead monsters in *I Am Legend* are referred to as vampires, and as such they evoke a long tradition involving themes of seduction, sunlight, and the sanctity of the home. Yet Matheson's monsters also took on new traits that became the foundation for the modern zombie, including the deterioration of conscious thought and the threat of an

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[59] Although a minority opinion within scholarship, some argue that the modern "Romero" zombie owes more to European ghoul traditions than to the colonial zombie films that came before. As of the date of this writing, despite much debate on the associated discussion pages, this position of anglicizing the zombie frames the root Wikipedia page for the word zombie. As a result, unless users search specifically for the colonial roots of the modern zombie, they will find no such connections. Since Wikipedia is perhaps the most influential knowledge bank of the current generation, this oversight amounts to a significant erasure of US cultural history and promotes ethnocentric thinking.

[60] The linking of these two traditions is often casually assumed and many scholars make brief note of the Haitian tradition before devoting their examinations to the Euro-centric tradition. However, even this general acknowledgement serves to obfuscate the importance of cultural plurality in the development of the zombie tradition. In early zombie films of the 1930s, the monstrous figure of the zombie is clearly linked to the mythological figure of the Haitian zonbi, which came to the US in reports of exotic beliefs and practices in travel writing and memoirs from US tourists and Marines who had been posted in Haiti. By the 1940s, as I argue in chapter 2, the focus on zombies as a colonial technology transitioned towards zombies as a technology of domestic racism. Since Matheson's novel, the Romero-style "zombie" is not only dominant, but has succeeded in nearly erasing the previous tradition. Scholars such as myself are committed to taking this connection seriously. Anthropologist Elizabeth McAlister recently published a study which grounds the 2007 *I Am Legend* film in the this colonial history and then applies those lessons to the iconography of Barack Obama, the US's first black president. McAlister argues that making zombies white and the hero-survivor black is one of a whole web of inversions, including an inversion of slavery, the substitution of the corpse for the soul in Haitian Vodoun traditions, and the inversion of regenerative power of the Christian apocalypse tradition. This system of inversions invites the viewer to see herself as a potential zombie and invert her understanding of her own consumerist privilege. Unfortunately, McAlister neglects the importance of Matheson as Romero's source material, thus seeing the Romero zombie as a postmodern monster based on Haitian tradition rather than an adaptation of the European vampire tradition which has since been linked. In short, in an attempt to undo the erasure of the Haitian roots of zombie traditions, McAlister instead erases the vampire. However, one of McAlister's base assumptions, that zombies are a stand for hyper-whiteness rather than continued colonial blackness, is an important and convincing line of reasoning. See Bakke. In the end, McAlister's analysis reaches much the same conclusion as my own. She also sees Will Smith's character as a reconciliation of white guilt and a symbol of postracial fantasies. She then extends this logic, along with the sacrificial logic which is assumed to follow, to President Obama. Quite conveniently, her article was published just as Obama was running for re-election.

apocalyptic horde. One of the themes of vampire literature that Matheson's novel

critically engages is the notion of "wild work," which is first described by the Van

Helsing character in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and is carefully examined in Gregory

Waller's *The Living and the Undead: Slaying Vampires, Exterminating Zombies*

(1986/2010).[61] Summarized briefly, wild work is the slaying/exterminating labor that is

required to protect human society from the undead threat.[62] Wild work is violent and

unsettling. In the gendered division of labor that dominated vampire literature from

Stoker to Matheson, female responsibility is to create polite society and male

responsibility is to protect that society even if the execution of wild work demands that

such men forsake their civility. Waller argues the assumed moral authority that justifies

wild work has come under scrutiny in many of the retellings of *Dracula.* The retelling in

I Am Legend ends with the rejection of this moral authority but not an end to the wild

work imperative. In an apocalyptic scenario, humanity must destroy the undead in order

to survive. Even given this violent necessity, Matheson questions the moral justification

of doing so.

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[61] Waller's book was originally published in 1986, but a recent surge in zombie scholarship has consistently found his idea valuable, so a new edition was printed in 2009. With the exception of an expanded introduction, very few changes were needed.

[62] This phenomenon has been identified by other scholars, such as Eric Kwan-Wai Yu in "Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 48.2 (Summer 2006): 145-170, who refers to it as a version of the Protestant work ethic, the "calling," "the quasi-religious sense of high duty and ascetic hard work" (146). I stick with Waller's description because, while Yu's focus on "reaffirming Enlightenment reason and scientific progressivism while, at the same time, betraying the very unreason in reason and the profound anxieties underneath the confidence in progress and empire" are certainly in keeping with my previously developed notion of the Enlightened Humanist Subject, he does not address the power of ritual and sacrificial logic which sublimates the violence of empire into a spiritual battle. From Yu's analysis, the banality of Neville's evil does not seem as striking of a departure. Yu's analysis, however does an excellent job of positioning Nina Harker both as the single woman amongst a team of men and in opposition to the New Woman.

Prior to Matheson, zombie narratives centered on US colonial exploits and were part of a larger project that attempted to define what the emergent US white colonial identity would be and how it might differ from European colonialisms that came before.[63] The appropriation of Matheson's novel into the zombie tradition suggests that this concept of wild work from vampire stories can be applied to the project of US colonialism. Wild work is a matter of preserving one's culture from an external threat. Colonialism also requires violent and unsettling practices intended to benefit the polite society of the colonist's domestic sphere. In order to legitimate such violence, colonized peoples were systematically dehumanized and cast as monstrous. However, as Matheson's novel demonstrates, wild work cannot be morally legitimated once it is understood as a competition between two social orders, each of which must preserve itself from the violence of the other.[64] By presenting us with a protagonist who eventually acknowledges the moral legitimacy of his undead rivals, Matheson introduces the possibility that, regardless of the specific boundaries between self and Other, we are just as monstrous as they are. When Matheson's legacy is claimed for the zombie genre, it opens the door for reading the white racial identity of US colonialism as monstrous.

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[63] US colonialism differed from European colonialism both because it came later, after centuries of broken treaties and slavery had proven the colonial project to be morally bankrupt, and because US seats of power were far less removed from the daily violence of colonialism, in particular the abuses of slavery in the US South. This increased moral scrutiny required a more sophisticated system of rationalization, which can be seen as a prototype for the logics of US-dominated globalization that developed later. The complexities of this process of cultural disassociation are explored by Chris Vial (2011) in "The Origin of the Zombie in American Radio and Film: B-Horror, U.S. Empire, and the Politics of Disavowal."

[64] See Deborah Christie (2011) "A Dead New World: Richard Matheson and Modern Zombie" and Sean Moreland (2011) "Shambling Towards Mount Improbably to be Born: American Evolutionary Anxiety and the Hopeful Monsters of Matheson's *I Am Legend*" for recent examples of a trend in zombie scholarship that casts the zombie resurgence after World War II as an expression of evolutionary anxieties in which zombies represent the limits of humanity's fitness for survival.

Robert Neville is a suburban Everyman who, after the societal slate has been wiped clean by biological warfare, struggles to preserve and hopefully revive the world he once knew. However, rather than an undead menace that must be exterminated, the vampires he has fought against have evolved to constitute a new society. The power of Matheson's tale lies in the fact that, by story's end, Neville realizes that rather than the champion of a dying world, he is actually the sacrifice that must be made in order for a new world to be born. After spending the majority of the novel struggling against the undead, Neville is hit with the realization that he himself is the monster. "He was an invisible specter who had left for evidence of his existence the bloodless bodies of their loved ones. And he understood what they felt and did not hate them" (148). The end of the novel strikes a balance between Neville's righteous indignation about the necessary violence of his execution and his calm acceptance that the emergent society is justified in their own wild work.

By labeling the undead masses as vampires in his novel, Matheson has drawn our attention to the ways in which Neville, in the end, resembles Dracula far more than the surviving human community of the Harkers and Van Helsing. Wild work looks much the same whether performed by a human or the undead. Matheson's contribution to the vampire tradition is to interrogate our assumptions about who counts as a victim and who counts as a monster. While he bears the burden of humanity's continued survival, Neville remains accountable to his distinctly human traits, such as his reason and a persistent conscience, which he debates throughout the book. In the end, even acting "as his own ethic" (48), Neville concludes that his fight to keep vigil for his fallen society is stubborn vanity and must submit to the superior moral claim of those vampires who have

determined to build a new society. He still fights for his life, but he acknowledges the legitimacy of the vampires who must make a sacrifice of him.

While Matheson clearly participates in a vampire tradition that ritualizes wild work as a means of renewing society, he is highly critical of that tradition. In later chapters, Waller offers a fascinating read on how Matheson "does not so much offhandedly dismiss *Dracula* as he consciously demythologizes certain assumptions about the violence, heroism, faith, and ritual that informs Stoker's novel and other vampire stories that precede *I Am Legend*" (257-258). Previous Dracula stories had, as Waller points out, "take[n] completely for granted the fact that the living *must* kill the undead"(258 emphasis in the original). In *I Am Legend*, however, Neville is by turns resigned to the drudgery of extermination and highly self-critical of his own tendency towards violence. Extermination in *I Am Legend* is far from wild work, and Neville often has difficulty remembering just how many of the undead he has killed from one day to the next. He is generally unquestioning in his violence, justifying it as a necessity of survival, even though the vampires are easily eluded. The only time Neville appears vulnerable to the vampires is early in the novel when he forgets the time because he is caught up in "the first excitement he'd felt in months," his morbid curiosity to discover new methods of extermination. This moment demonstrates that Neville's emotional detachment is carefully contrived and self-enforced:

> His throat moved. It wouldn't last, the feeling of callous brutality. He bit his lips as he watched her. All right, she's suffering, he argued with himself, but she's one of them and she'd kill me gladly if she got the chance. You've got to look at it that way, it's the only way. Teeth clenched, he stood there and watched her die. (27)

Neville copes with his guilt about heartlessly and painfully killing another being by casting his violence as a necessary defensive gesture. It is worth noting, however, that he tracked down and killed this woman specifically because she is a living vampire-human hybrid and he wants to know if she is as vulnerable as the living dead. This distinction, between those who are living infected and those who were killed and then reanimated by the plague makes little difference to Neville throughout the novel, despite his acknowledgement that the living vampires are more likely to experience conscious thought.[65]

The rejection of Neville's assumption of social legitimacy is an essential component of the modern zombie genre. The wild work of slaying vampires is morally righteous, but the tedium of exterminating zombies is Sisyphean at best and genocidal at worst. Furthermore, zombie films now frequently pose the question of determining whether or not a culture is worth preserving. Like Neville, survivor communities in zombie films are unable to maintain societal standards after the apocalypse. Wild work continues to be performed, despite having lost its redemptive capacity. While Neville cannot justify his violence, he exonerates himself by appealing to the violent standards of the new apocalyptic world, saying, "You can't abide by Robert's Rules of Order in the jungle" (125). This contextual legitimation of violence in which survivors use the threat of violence from the undead to wage a genocidal campaign against them is seen throughout modern zombie films. Even the choice of the word "jungle" is telling. The

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[65] As Waller argues, Neville's apocalyptic surroundings radically changed the moral stakes of the undead tale, and this innovation is perhaps one of *I Am Legend*'s most influential contributions to the genre. From food to art to hardware, Neville is entitled to amass all the comforts his civilization developed. He is liberated from the complex web of social obligations and needs only to answer to his own simple logic of himself versus his enemy. "Morality, after all, had fallen with society. He was his own ethic." (48)

novel clearly depicts Neville's neighborhood as near desert-like wasteland and yet he chooses a word which has historically been used to indicate the dangers and mysteries of a homogenized colonial space. The colonial context of earlier zombie films can be useful in understanding how Matheson's critique of the sacrificial logic of vampire narratives became the binding trope of zombie narratives.

In monster narratives, and hence in Waller's examination, the survivor community constitutes society. However, as postcolonial theory has taught us, interrogating the boundaries of the society at the center of a narrative can uncover the various hidden violences required to sustain that centrality. This shift in theoretical focus can undo the process of what Gayatri Spivak calls "worlding" of "the West as world" (1, 5) in which US and European cultures render themselves the protagonists of global history and relegate others to supporting roles or transhistoric abstractions. In this postcolonial spirit, the justifications of wild work as paraphrased by Waller become quite sinister:

> In the stories [Waller] will discuss, the undead come to threaten not only the solitary woman or man or child: when the sun sets, the family, the society, even *the entire world* can and do have their *lifeblood* drained. And so *the living* must also do work – to challenge, mutilate and destroy *an often ancient adversary* to defend themselves, to survive, to protect and even perhaps to redeem that which they deem most valuable in the world. (21; emphasis mine)

The world spoken of in this quote is really quite limited since it encompasses only a specific white, middle class, heteronormative possibility within the global, industrialized north. Indeed, the "lifeblood" that these vampire hunters fight to preserve can be read as

the flow of goods, labor, capital, and selective culture from developing nations, which

constantly "restores or revitalizes [colonial] society." Indeed, when "the living" is

substituted for vampire hunters in the second sentence, it provides a glimpse of the sort of

anti-subjectivity that remains for those who are not "living" by the standards and norms

of the society at the narration's center. Claiming Matheson for the zombie tradition

allows the sacrificial logic to be read through the lens of colonial themes from earlier

zombie films. In the colonial context, the wild work of destruction encompasses both

physical violence and symbolic violence. The colonized other must be systematically

dehumanized and constructed as a threat to the colonial power. The colonial self, on the

other hand, must be constructed as heroic.

While Europe has a long tradition of undead ghoul stories, the vampire as we

know it has been roughly contemporaneous to the rise of capitalism, which was made

possible by colonial endeavors. The vampire is, in fact, merely a foil for the Victorian

ideal of the "angel in the household." Victorian femininity was constructed not only to be

submissive to the patriarchal order, but also be function as a moral legitimation of the

colonial enterprise. This legitimation functioned primarily through a process of erasure.

The barbarism of colonialism was ignored as Western European, specifically British

culture worlded itself as the moral center of the global community. Both colonial

dominance and the "angel in the house" figure were used as evidence of moral superiority

despite the fact that both of these were the result of an immoral system of oppression. As

the United States emerged as an international power in the late 19th and early 20th

century, its origin as a colony and its own history of slavery, amounting to a pretense of

moral consensus hard-won through a bloody civil war, made simplistic adoption of the old colonial order impossible.

The central project of zombie films prior to the 1950s had been to draw a distinction between the monstrosity of European colonial whiteness and the role that the US would assume in implementing its own colonial agenda. In the first zombie films of the 1930s, white characters are corrupted by the magic they encountered in the colonial setting. 1932's *White Zombie* features a white woman's sexual vulnerability in the unfamiliar politics of the colonial social and political landscapes. The plot of 1935's *Ouanga* revolves around containing the threat of miscegenation. by constructing racial passing as a form of black magic, complete with zombie slaves. Finally, *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936) tells the story of a US colonial operative who is corrupted by the temptation of colonial privilege in Burma. In each of these films, the question is not how to fight the zombies. These films are instead deeply concerned with the question of how to preserve the moral sanctity of whiteness in a corrupting colonial environment. Many zombie scholars have acknowledged the link between race and zombies in early films. Unfortunately, by focusing on constructions of blackness in these films, such scholars are often limited to an over-simplified story of static racism in which zombies are metaphors for a universal blackness and whiteness does not change. This invisibility of whiteness and the lack of a critical vocabulary for it as a racial category severely limit the ways that we can talk about race in early films.[66] What such scholars often miss is the role these

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[66] Chera Kee is an excellent example of a scholar who explores the evolution of tropes such as the cannibal and zombie, creating a narrative of blackness that is constructed as a foil for colonial whiteness. Unfortunately, Kee's focus on US race relations fails to acknowledge the ways that domestic and foreign blacknesses are constructed in contrast to one another in the films of the 1940s, particularly *King of the Zombies.*

films play in the ongoing project of defining whiteness and naturalizing its colonial dominance.

Because *I Am Legend* has been claimed for the zombie tradition, Neville can be read as a Cold War counterpart to Neil's earlier defining of US masculinity and whiteness. While Neil is a representative of US aspirations to take over the colonial project from European powers, Neville represents an ethnocentric orientation that is central to the logic of globalization. In the system of globalization, white privilege is still dependent on the labor of racialized Others but the liberal values of the US cannot acknowledge such inequalities and must create a myth of whiteness that is self-sufficient and in which dominance and cultural centrality is naturalized.[67] Neville's performance of US white masculinity is a perfect example of this myth. The natural identification that readers often feel toward narrators makes his self-justifications appear more logical. Furthermore, while it is unlikely that any reader actually shares Neville's gender performance, all readers, both male and female, can recognize his as the dominant masculinity of their culture. Neville represents the American dream. He is hard working, versatile, clever, and, prior to the plague, he had been a committed family man and ideal provider. As an Everyman, he is simultaneously handyman, scientist, and cultural connoisseur, embodying all of the masculine virtues that the US values. As Erik Kwan-Wai Yu points out, the survivor community in *Dracula* models the professionalization and division of labor which was defining a new society in nineteenth century England. In

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[67] The vampire tale also serves as an outlet for the tensions built-up around the repression of non-reproductive sexual desire. Heteronormativity is also a function of capitalism and the erasure of all of other sexualities requires similar disavowels. As Jamil Khader has argued, Neville's frustrated homosocial bond to his neighbor Robert Cortman can be read as repressed homoerotic desire. The heavily coded but persistent presence of this desire in the novel is lost in the film adaptations.

this light, Neville's ability to take on multiple professions emphasizes the individualistic US ideology which forms much of our libertarian ideals. However, this novel is also highly critical of the value system that Neville represents. Neville's masculinity is presented as necessary for an apocalyptic world, but it is also only possible in this fantasy world. Neville's character flaws mostly derive from his despair and loneliness, which are Matheson's critiques of both US exceptionalism and suburban masculine individualism.

Identifying with this character requires that the audience compare their own environmental context with his. For those who accept his masculinity as ideal and ignore the problematic moral codes that attend it, the apocalypse can become fetishized as the circumstance in which proper masculinity can be performed authentically.[68] For others, an undead uprising instead serves to destabilize artificial cultural logics by dismantling the various structures that support them. One example is the use of an almost inexhaustible supply of inexpensive goods and services, made possible by aggressive diplomacy and militarism, to facilitate a national narrative in which the US is harder working and more ingenious than other nations. Another example is the way a system in which women had few professional options outside of the home can lend credibility to assumptions that women have a biologically-determined predilection for staying in the home to nurturing children.[69] Most zombie narratives use both of these impulses,

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[68] In Media Res hosted a week on *The Walking Dead* television show during the week of March 5-9, 2012. The discussion curated by Paul Boshears, Justin Owen Rawlins, myself and Tavia Nyongo all explore the series' habit of treating the zombie apocalypse a form of fantasy fulfillment. For Boshears, the series fulfill the fantasy of white flight from urban areas. Rawlins asks just how much this fantasy retains and reinvents Southern culture. My contribution draws attention to discrepancies between the amount of imagined liberation experienced by men and women in the series. Finally, Nyongo points out that even this fantasy space is incapable of imagining our culture without racism. The week can be accessed at the In Media Res site by searching the archives. http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr

[69] This is the lens most often used to interpret Romero's zombie film cycle. As Steven Shaviro (1993) suggests, the Romero films each choose an institution that naturalizes US consumerism and, through the

employing the apocalypse both to liberate their characters and to interrogate the ideals to which those characters revert. Matheson's work in *I Am Legend* introduced these uses of the apocalypse, which have become a generic staple. Neville continues the promise of *White Zombie*'s Neil to explore US masculinity in zombie films, but rather than glorifying his protagonist as previous zombie narratives had done, Matheson follows the vampire tradition and forces Neville to dirty his hands with the wild work.

Neville performs all necessary work to preserve his way of life, be it fixing a broken generator, maintaining a car, soundproofing a house, or exterminating the undead. If *I Am Legend* is to be believed, postapocalyptic suburbs are overflowing with material goods including cars, food, fuel, and, quite conveniently, garlic. This myth of self-sufficiency is only believable in an apocalyptic scenario where an alteration in demand forestalls curiosity about the supply of such goods. In the case of Neville, both goods and services are depicted as unlimited resources to which all sufficiently masculine suburbanites are entitled, thus suggesting that a failure to secure such luxuries is a failing of character rather than circumstance. The inference is that hard work, persistence, and dogged time management can provide the cornucopia that US global dominance has afforded. In *White Zombie*, the colonial system that creates US wealth is presented as a creaking archaic sugar mill where enslaved zombie labor provides this surplus of goods.[70]

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attack of the undead, shows just how fragile that illusion of power really is. Each film features a building that represents an ideological given in US culture: a house and the family in *Night of the Living Dead,* a shopping mall and consumerism in *Dawn of the Dead,* a bunker and the military-industrial complex in *Day of the Dead*, and a skyscraper and capitalism in *Land of the Dead.* In his most recent zombie films, Romero has played with this formula slightly, giving us a mobile home and hand-held technology to stand in for spectatorship in *Diary of the Dead* and an island to stand in for tribalism in *Survival of the Dead.* In these films, the institutions don't actually fail, but instead become oppressive caricatures of their original purposes. The survivors of Romero zombie films are often more threatened by institutions than they are by the undead.

[70] Scholarly analyses of this scene abound, see Gary Rhodes (2006) *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror*

Conversely, Neville is insulated from the global politics that facilitate his accumulation of goods. However, while Neville is an expert provider with a wide range of skills at his disposal, not once in *White Zombie* does Neil demonstrate knowledge, skills, or judgment.[71] As far as heroes go, Neville's mature 1950s competency is far more compelling than the blind luck and willingness to be mentored that characterize Neil's success on the colonial stage.

While Matheson does not directly question the myth of US independence, he does set limits to the ideal of Neville's self-sufficiency. To escape his isolation, a loneliness that manifests as violent sexual urges, and the psychic torture of having a small mob of vampires gather around his house and demand his blood all night, Neville drinks heavily. He knows the solution is to soundproof the house, and despite having the power to significantly improve his living conditions, he continually postpones doing so with his fabricated need to spend the day performing vampire maintenance, which includes hunting, killing, and burning corpses. Like the real life suburban malaise of so many workers, Neville is aware that the ways in which he occupies his time are not ultimately productive. He is alienated from the wild work and yet allows it to distract him from the more crucial project of protecting his mental health: "Better do this and better do that, he thought morosely. There were so many damned things to do, he'd never get to the real problem" (11). Like any working man, Neville is exhausted at the end of each day because they seem to flow in an unending parade of monotony. He loses motivation, gets

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Film as well as the earlier chapter in this project.

[71] The absence of redeeming qualities that defines Neil is developed even further in zombie films in the 1940s, where the white protagonists rarely demonstrate distinct characteristics, much less any virtues. For example, in *The Ghostbreakers,* Bob Hope's character beats the villain, gets the girl, and discovers a diamond mine all through a series of accidents.

sidetracked, delays the start of new projects, and struggles to maintain a regular work schedule. Ultimately, however, Neville is the American Dream. He maintains his home effectively, never wants for material goods, and, once he adds scientific research to his method, he pursues his self-appointed wild work passionately.

In teaching himself science, Neville testifies to the ingenuity and superior rational capacities of the white US man. He also uses scientific knowledge as a means of asserting control over the chaos of a vampire-infested world. He even names the germ that causes vampirism: "I dub thee vampiris" (73). He spends much of the book obsessed with proving that the vampires are biological and not supernatural. This obsession serves a few purposes. First, it distracts him from self-destructive drinking and thus acts as self-preservation. It also grants him a sense of control despite the fact that he never develops any significant advantage over the undead through his knowledge.[72] Third, by emphasizing his intellect, this pseudo-scientific quest allows him to draw a distinction between himself and the monsters that plague him. Science not only replaces base physical labor for Neville; it also provides him with release from near-constant sexual tension. Once he begins experiments in earnest, he seems to entirely lose interest in the female vampires who had previously been his primary weakness. Science is able to replace sexual desire because the desire is not about sex but is instead about his loneliness and the lack of control he felt in being unable to save his wife or manifest a new mate. In science, Neville finds a way to escape his own thoughts, treating the data as

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[72] This theme of the futility of knowledge in the face of the undead is further emphasized in Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. This theme has not become synonymous to the genre like the apocalypse, but it nonetheless maintains a strong presence within the zombie tradition.

a companion and finally questioning his assumptions without having to talk to himself. Science also grants him hope for the future. It is highly unlikely that his limited access to science, even given the almost endless time he has to develop his skills, will allow him to cure vampires, but that glimmer of actually recruiting a companion and rebuilding society is enough to convince Neville to continue living.

As the last man on earth, Neville also bears the burden of being the last purveyor of culture. He takes great pride in his appreciation of classical music, but his other artistic preferences seem limited to landscape paintings. Neville is not an artist himself, and he has no patience for great works of literature. In the realm of art, as in the realm of science, he is a dilettante who was promoted to authoritative expert by the forces of the apocalypse. These details in *I Am Legend* do more than simply round out Neville's character. They also establish his cultural monopoly. As the last human available to appreciate art, he gets the sole privilege of determining what art survives and what is forgotten. Such a combination of assumed self-sufficiency, a rabid desire to know and the pride of cultural monopoly all combine to obscure Neville's capacity for empathy.

When he encounters others, in the form of his neighbor returned from the grave, a stray dog, and eventually a liaison from the emergent vampire society, Neville's only strategy for interaction is to project his own desires and needs onto them. He is incapable of comprehending the legitimacy of their needs, the power of their motivations, or the depth of their experiences. He needs to be the center of the story and the house, as an extension of his ego, becomes the center of the world. He tries to capture both a dog and a vampire woman in the house, imposing his ideal of a new society onto them. Even his relationship to his undead neighbor, Ben Cortman, is governed by this logic. By stalking

Neville and calling his name night after night, Cortman reassures Neville that he is the

center of all noteworthy happenings, all emotional life, all competitions, and all moral

dilemmas.[73] The new vampire society decides to exterminate Cortman before they

sacrifice Neville. In watching the banal violence of Cortman's second death, Neville

realizes how important Cortman was as both a symbol of the continuity between

Neville's pre- and post-trauma identities and as a reassurance that Neville was indeed the

hero of his own story.

Neville represents what sociologist R.W. Connell calls the hegemonic masculinity

of the US at that time.[74] Hegemonic masculinity is a relational concept, not a descriptive

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[73] Khader argues that Cortman is the object of Neville's homoerotic desire and that Cortman's harassment of Neville amounts to an insistent invitation to "come out" in terms of their shared queer desire. While this reading is compelling and Khader makes a good case, Khader's arguments often require the disavowal of racist and misogynist violence to privilege the cultural erasure of queerness and the political oppression of homosexuals in the 1950s as the only oppression of note. The importance of the homosocial bond between Neville and Cortman is important and repressed homoerotic feelings do explain much of Neville's misogyny. However, to use homoerotic desire as a means to dismiss the other oppressions echoed in the text is myopic. Furthermore, Khader's tidy reduction of "queer" to the male homosocial-homoeroticism continuum also reduces the vast capacity of human connections to male sexual and repressed sexual desires. Khader's reading is ultimately complicit in Neville's erasure of female agency and excuses Neville's misogynist violence as collateral damage in an economy of exclusively male homosocial subject misidentification and recognition. In particular, Khader's dismissal of Patterson's argument that Neville is perpetuating the historical violence against Black women itself lacks justification since Neville's treatment of vampire females fits precisely the conditions that Khader establishes; namely that their bodies have been so undervalued that their targeting as a site for violence is taken for granted. Neville barely notices that he targets exclusively female victims. When he experiences conflict between his humanity and the ideology that permits such violence, it is in the recognition of (human) suffering, not, as Khader would have us believe, proof that the female vampires are a proxy for homoerotic experimentation. Despite the clear use of race and gender in the division of labor throughout the history of capitalism, Khader is also willing to simply replace these oppressions in an inversion of the causal relations that Foucault notes between capitalism and codified sexualities. Khader even goes so far as to suggest that Neville's ultimate acceptance of his own sacrifice is homosexual self-hate. Such a reading requires both that Khader ignore the fact that he himself has argued that the vampires represent queer alternatives and that the reader accept that the symbolic violence of sexual oppression is more salient for Neville and the vampires than the physical violence of the serial killer. Khader seems far too eager to accept the homophobic arguments of early slasher films that align serial misogynist violence with homosexual desire.

74 Connell first popularized the concept of hegemonic masculinity in a short section of *Gender and Power* (1987). However, the term's popularity led to diffusion, prompting Connell to revisit and refocus the term along with her colleague James Messerschmidt in "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005): 829-59. At the time of writing Messerschmidt is working on yet another project tentatively entitled "Hegemonic Masculinity: The Use and Misuse of the Concept." Connell and

gender role. What qualifies as the hegemonic masculinity of any particular community depends on the power relations and cites of resistance within that community. "Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messerschmidt 836). This chapter traces how Neville, as a hegemonic masculinity that has been theoretically removed from his relational configuration, can illuminate how the ideal of masculine behavior has adapted over time within the project of US imperialism.[75] The living dead can function to flatten the relational configuration of a given moral order, or, in other words, erase the subordinate masculinities and other identity formations, such as those most readily available to women, that a given hegemonic masculinity is designed to dominate. Part of the popularity of the living dead genre is due to the entertainment value of such an erasure. When systemic oppressions such as patriarchy, racism, or classism are erased, the

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Messerschmidt note a tendency amongst their critics and many of those who use the concept to attempt to either essentialize hegemonic masculinity through the male body or codify it as transhistorical or even global.

[75] In the disciplinary disputes between sociology and psychology, it makes sense for one to object to the structural emphasis of a concept like hegemonic masculinity which presumably erases the individual volitions that inform any given man's negotiation of the male subject position. However, in the study of fiction, these two views are not at odds. The primary function of creative works is to build both the individual character and the structure, and much of the pleasure of the consumption of such works is derived from discovering, challenging, or validating the logic that connects the two. Some readers may be looking for recognizable patterns that can then validate their own sense of belonging within a similar moral order. On the other hand, some readers may be looking for the tensions and fissures. While an appeal to authorial intent is clearly naïve, Connell and Messerschmidt frame it in more nuanced sociological language of "social agents" when discussing film production: "This is not just a matter of the characters written into the scripts. Practice at the local level—that is, the actual face-to-face interaction of shooting the film as an actor—ultimately constructs hegemonic masculine fantasy models at the society-wide or regional level" (839). Matheson may not have consulted Price, Heston, or Smith (or Cash for that matter) while writing his novel, but he certainly encountered other social agents throughout his creative process who altered his characters, the structures within the novel, and the logic by which they relate.

lingering dominance of a given identity performance can be read as the result of individual merit.[76] It is important to note that while any given hegemonic masculinity will be used to legitimate domination, it does not follow that hegemonic masculinity is principally characterized by dominance. As Connell and Messerschmidt explain:

> Most accounts of hegemonic masculinity do include such "positive" actions as bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the concept of hegemony would be relevant if the only characteristics of the dominant group were violence, aggression, and self-centeredness. Such characteristics may mean domination but hardly would constitute hegemony – an idea that embeds certain notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups. (840-841).

The key of any hegemonic power is that it establishes a moral order around itself and it is that moral order that distributes power. If a masculinity fails to recruit subordinated identities into this moral order, it will not be able to acquire power. All societies, according to Connell, are comprised of multiple masculinities, and the subordinate masculinities in any given society are complicit in the dominance of the hegemonic masculinity. Cortman, though undead, is complicit in Neville's assertion of his own

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[76] As Connell has developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity over the course of more than three decades, she has increasingly focused on linking this description of power relations to the neoliberal logics that govern globalization. Because the US and its allies exert economic, military, and a great deal of cultural force within the global community, a US national hegemonic masculinity is positioned as the global ideal. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt note, "one of the most effective ways of "being a man" in certain local contexts may be to demonstrate one's distance from a regional hegemonic masculinity" (840). Thus individual men from rural Indiana to Nairobi may construct their masculinities in opposition to the global hegemonic ideal.

primacy and cultural centrality. Indeed, Cortman, functions as an over-simplified

subordinate masculinity because he does not appropriate or contest components of

Neville's gender performance, which would, in a more realistic scenario, force Neville to

adapt.

The complicity of subordinate masculinities reifies a hegemonic performance by

masking the possibility for a true alternative. Cortman's inexplicable postmortem

obsession with Neville distracts both of them from the evolution and emerging

dominance of a new vampire society. Like the colonial racism of US global politics,

Neville has dismissed vampire Others as being incapable of development. When he does

consider them as a race, he can only overcome his revulsion and hate by taking a

hypothetical stance of righteous pity. In his own mock argument for vampire rights,

Neville refers to them as "a minority element if there ever was one" (19) and notes that

throughout history "he was anathema and still remains anathema. Society hates him

without ration." Neville's vampire rights treatise lists plenty of other elements of society

that are just as likely to victimize and exploit, but he ends the mental exercise with a gruff

grunt: "Sure, sure, he thought, but would you let your sister marry one? He shrugged. You

got me there, buddy" (20). This moment in the text is an explicit invitation for the reader

to draw political conclusion about the implication of Neville's hostility towards the

vampires. It also returns to the question of Neville's violent sexual impulses. Neville's

sexuality is constructed around the base assumption that he, as the dominant form of

masculinity, has exclusive sexual rights to any woman who may have survived the

plague. Since the possibility of other survivors is merely theoretical, his fantasies of

heterosexual cohabitation do not need to account for the expectations, plans, emotional needs, or even the consent of this hypothetical woman.

An additional component of this entitlement is the self-appointed responsibility of protecting said hypothetical woman from the hunger of the vampires. [77] These assumptions do not leave room for the free agency of any women over whom Neville claims sexual dominion. Furthermore, even if one were to accept the moral authority of this imperative to maintain sexual separation of human and vampires, Neville's conception of his own sexuality fails even that criterion. He also believes himself to have sexual rights to vampire women, whom he refers to as "lewd puppets" and whose behavior he always interprets as an attempt to seduce or manipulate him (8). Despite sublimating his sexual desires with scientific curiosity, the moment a living woman appears, Neville immediately reverts to a potential rapist. The fact that this woman's status as either human or vampire is undetermined for most of their interaction only underline's Neville assumptions that he is entitled to both classes of female and that the particulars of her situation are less relevant than his assumed dominion over her. All women, regardless of status, exist to confirm his sexual entitlement. [78]

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[77] While protecting another human from death at the hands of a monster may seem morally unproblematic, an undead monster complicates the imperative. For an undead monster, killing may not be an act of violence so much as an act of conversion. In traditional vampire narratives that include a charismatic undead, it is easier to see how the vampire's victims may actually benefit from their own deaths, particularly as characters such as Dracula came to represent liberation from specific forms of patriarchal sexual repression. While this is not a common approach to reading zombie narratives, the possibility has inspired many stories that are told from a zombie perspective, often turning on a romantic plotline, including a short but prolific burst of films starting in 2006: *Fido* (2006), *Zombies Anonymous* (2006), *American Zombie* (2007), *Wasting Away* (2007), *Colin* (2008), *Dead Girl* (2008). In particular, *Otto; Or Up with Dead People* (2008) presents death followed by reanimation as a zombie as a metaphor for sexual liberation which the film's gay characters actively pursue.

[78] Shannon Winnubst, in her article "Vampires, Anxieties, and Dreams: Race and Sex in the Contemporary United States," *Hypatia* 18.3 (Summer 2003): 1-20, argues that all vampire narratives are an enactment of white male anxieties about black rapists. As she points out, however, this nightmare fantasy of interracial

When Neville's construction of his own sexuality is combined with his use of the intermarriage litmus test to determine his ability to accept the vampires as a valid social order, Neville draws a connection between his antagonism with vampires and the history of racial discrimination within the US. White plantation owners systematically raped black slaves both as a privilege and a reminder of their dominance. Even more horrifying, however, is that this intentional strategy was designed to decimate black family structures and to create competing interest groups within the slave population so that mixed-race, fair-skinned slaves could be pitted against their darker peers. After the US abolition of slavery, this logic of sexual entitlement transitioned into a logic sexual vulnerability. The fear of black men raping white women was used to justify extensive race-based violence. Neville is deeply invested in the racialized sense of sexual entitlement, and his reflection on whether or not a vampire should be permitted to intermarry with a human encourages readers to see his treatment of vampires as a metaphor for US race relations.

This association of interracial relations may have encouraged the appropriation of *I Am Legend* into the zombie legacy because it evokes the racial preoccupation of earlier zombie films.[79] In the 1940s, race replaced colonialism as the dominant theme of zombie narratives. The US colonial project became less salient in the popular imagination, replaced by anxieties of the Great Depression, WWII, and the racial tensions that boiled

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rape closely scripts bodies which are gendered or raced, and allows the white male to be abstracted, invisible and universal (2-3), however, "if forced to choose (or to admit), the white straight male identifies with the rapist in this violent scene – he identifies with the body who instills fear in the white female and thereby controls her" (10). Winnbust's uses Donna Harraway to reclaim vampirism as a means of challenging patriarchal assumptions about race, kinship and purity.

[79] Even though the relationship between Ben and Barbara is never explicitly sexual, he is far more protective of her than any of the white men in *Night of The Living Dead,* a detail that may have alarmed those audience members who were still invested in the protective prerogative of white men.

over during the Great Migration. Blacks had suffered disproportionate losses in the Dust

Bowl droughts of the mid-1930s and the attendant economic downturn. Many left their

homes in the Deep South and migrated to Northern cities throughout the early 20th

century and the influx of new black communities into these Northern cities often led to

clashes that raised public awareness of racial unrest throughout the nation. Furthermore,

as black soldiers, seamen and pilots proved essential in the war effort, the hypocrisy of

denying full citizenship was more difficult to ignore. Indeed, such race-based prejudice

was quite unjustifiable as the war efforts were being marketed to the US public on the

grounds of standing up to European racism. The struggle by blacks to be treated as full

citizens and to end legal tolerance of race-based violence was picked up by many

filmmakers who began to experiment with patriotic depictions of black men.

The unique US whiteness explored in 1930s zombie films now had to face the

hard facts of racial dynamics within the US, not just in the colonies. US colonial

whiteness was still contrasted with the racism of Germany in the case of the Nazi party,

but now those claims of greater racial benevolence required a consenting US black

presence to lend them credence. Each white hero was now accompanied by a black valet

who was both profoundly loyal and unquestionably submissive, such as Alex, a college-

educated athlete turned servant in *The Ghost Breakers* (1940) and Jeff, who, despite not

being in the military or working for the government, is nonetheless sent out on

assignment with a CIA operative in *King of the Zombies* (1941).[80] These valet characters

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[80] Like subordinate masculinities benefitting from the patriarchal logic of a hegemonic masculinity, these
black valet characters are comfortable traveling to different countries under the protection of their white
counterparts.

enact a bizarre post-racial fantasy by filling many of the menial caretaking duties of a

servant but explicitly occupying the position of friend, with implications of consent and

equality.[81] While neither Jeff nor Alex are treated as heroes in the these films, both men

actually save the lives of the heroes and serve to run interference so that the white hero is

not obligated to directly encounter the zombies themselves. Replacing Beaumont with

Alex, 1940s zombie films insist on the patriotic duty of US blacks to perform wild work

and preserve white purity whenever they encounter the colonial system.

In these early zombie films, the wild work required to preserve and revive US

colonial white society is clearly enacted against a colonial Other. However, it is not the

colonized subject who must be exterminated, but rather the competing colonial master, in

the form of an often-vampiric zombie master.[82] In the 1940s, these zombie masters

became bizarre amalgamations of Nazi scientists and Voodoo witch doctors, or, in the

case of *King of the Zombies* (1943), a Nazi scientist using the magic of a Haitian crone

whose compliance with the Nazi agenda is never explained. Some of these films contrast

a domesticated US blackness with the violence of blacks in the Caribbean, such as the

unapologetically racist *Zombies on Broadway* (1945).[83] Zombies in these films are both

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[81] There is a bizarre moment in *King of the Zombies* in which the Nazi villain offers brandy to two white men and then denies the brandy to the valet. This gesture is part of a larger pattern of ongoing racial slights to which Jeff vocally draws attention, including forcing him to sleep in the kitchen so as not to upset the household servants. The two white US characters treat this pattern of racism quite differently. Mac, the Irish-American pilot condones the racism and is irritated with Jeff's refusal to accept it. On the other hand, the film's romantic lead, Bill, is not ethnically marked in the film, and he reacts sympathetically towards Jeff's frustrations but never objects to the racist slights for fear of offending their host.

[82] Murder Legendre in *White Zombie* was the first zombie master to appear in film and was played by Bela Lugosi, the year after his genre-defining portrayal of Count Dracula. In the years that followed, Lugosi also played a zombie master in *Bowery at Midnight* and *Zombies on Broadway*. He had been scripted to play the zombie master in *King of the Zombies* but was taken ill and replaced by Henry Victor. Zombie masters in these films are often Nazi scientists or criminal masterminds.

[83] The only US black in the film, an actor in New York, is presented as dignified and business savvy as he balances the demands for authenticity from his powerful and wealthy employer against the paycheck

the products of nefarious German racism and a potential threat if such powers were to fall

into Nazi hands. [84] US colonialism, by contrast, is somehow pure, no longer dependent on

the racism, violence, and exploitation that characterized the European colonial legacy.

Matheson's novel echoes the critical construction of whiteness from earlier

zombie narratives, but instead of pitting Neville's US whiteness against other possible

colonial whitenesses, Matheson pits Neville against the undead and the infected

themselves.[85] By changing the target of his violence from a master to the undead masses,

Matheson illustrates one of the crucial differences between the European model of

colonialism and US-dominated globalization. European empires competed with one

another for control over colonies, but the logic of US colonialism acknowledges that

colonial subjects themselves are the targets of systemic violence. This violence is then

legitimated with claims of self-defense and social Darwinism. This shift in the logic of

violence from healthy competition amongst competing orders to a struggle for survival

amongst mutually exclusive communities is likely a result of the fact that the US colonial

power existed alongside the colonized labor. European colonialism was administered

from cultural seats far removed from the horrors of slavery, but the violence required to

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offered by seedy promoters if he is willing to perform cultural stereotypes. This fairly respectful depiction is unfortunately contrasted with the various caricatures which populate the film's fictional Caribbean island, including locals who wear grass skirts and leis, as well as the "hill negroes," a reprehensible distillation of colonial fantasies about Africa, who wear animal skins and bones, carry spears, and are characterized primarily by their senseless violence.

[84] While all of the films treated in this essay are concerned with defending US colonial practices, 1943's *I Walked with a Zombie* is a noteworthy exception. In that film US colonial whiteness, as well as the colonial gaze of the audience, are roundly criticized. See Gwendolyn Aurey Foster (2008).

[85] While the undead continue as legitimate targets of violence, the infected living exist as a hybrid subject position to whom Neville is morally accountable even though he is never truly morally obligated. Even though Matheson was not likely evoking colonial politics, the creation of intermediary classes between the survivors and the monsters foreshadows the sort of nuanced questions with which colonially aware monster narratives struggle.

maintain a racist system was undeniable to the US colonial powers and thus had to be rationalized in popular culture. By introducing the apocalyptic threat of the undead, *I Am Legend* allowed zombie narratives to shift their focus from accepting colonialism as a reality to negotiating the moral legitimacy of competing social orders.

It is important to note that *I Am Legend* does not present Neville as a moral authority. His wild work is divorced from the redemptive qualities of sacrificial ritual. Instead it is explicitly challenged and depicted as at least equally monstrous to the undead that are exterminated. Zombie narratives that borrow genre conventions from Matheson, which all zombie films since *Night of the Living Dead* are obligated to do, combine this interrogation of the monstrosity of wild work with the racial logics of earlier zombie stories. Not every zombie film concerns itself with constructions of US blackness or US colonialism, but as a genre zombie films are almost always interested in the construction of white masculinity and, eventually, global privilege. Matheson certainly leaves open the possibility that *I Am Legend* is about race, but since the novel's publication, the story of Neville and the undead horde has been retold along two very different lines.

When Romero used the novel as inspiration for his iconic film, he chose a black actor to play the protagonist. In doing so he committed himself and all those who would claim him as an influence to a line of race-based criticisms of US institutions. Oddly, however, the casting of a black actor to play Robert Neville in 2007 had nearly the opposite effect. While Romero's film series continually seeks to explore the moral gray area, the filmic remakes of *I Am Legend* have progressively exonerated Neville and progressively dehumanized the human-vampire hybrids in the story. The dominant reason for the divergence in message amongst these two trajectories has to do with creative

control. Romero is an auteur in the sense that he writes and directs his films, not only

maintaining a general creative control, but also manufacturing a public persona to act as

the author function of his films. The various creators of the more direct filmic remakes,

The Last Man on Earth (1964), *Omega Man* (1971) and *I Am Legend* (2007), have all

operated within the dominant industry model of large creative teams. Furthermore, as an

independent film maker, Romero was free to make race-based and other critical

commentary which would never have made it past the review process of white-

controlled, fiscally motivated studios and production companies. It should also be noted

that, with the exception of the 1964 film, Matheson was not part of these creative teams.

3.1   Last Man on Earth

In all there are four film versions of *I am Legend,* although only three are

sufficiently connected to provide useful comparisons.[86] The first appeared in 1964 under

the title, *The Last Man on Earth, and* starred Vincent Price and the 1971 film starred

Charlton Heston. Both men are marked as icons of specific forms of masculinity.

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[86] Mathias Clasen claims in a footnote that there is also a parody entitled *I Am Virgin* (2010), but at the time of this writing I could find no other reference to this film. The final film in this tally is *I Am Omega* (2007), a knock-off by The Asylum. This production company specializes in releasing quickly produced films with titles and premises that mimic blockbuster releases. *I Am Omega* is an action film that focuses primarily on the mixed martial arts performances by lead Mark Dacascos. On a rough sketch, the film resembles *I Am Legend* in that the Neville character (in this case named Renchard) is attempting to survive in a hostile, post-apocalyptic world overrun by cannibal mutants until he discovers that other human beings pose a greater threat to his life. However, this film lacks a conflicting moral order. There is a distant survivor community called Antioch, but it is only alluded to in the film and never represented. The main human conflict that Renchard faces is with two power-hungry former soldiers who, while initially claiming to be agents of Antioch, explicitly do not represent Antioch's interests. Where the other tales question Neville's place in the new world order, *I Am Omega* reduces all conflicts to the level of individuals, presenting Renchard's only possible moral flaw in his initial failure to perform the normative masculine function of saving the girl regardless of the immense risk to his own life. The films ends with heteronormativity restored as the ambiguously gay but also rapist villains are killed and the hero takes the girl off into the sunset. I will not be treating the film here because it is an exercise in adolescent male power fantasy fulfillment rather than a mediation on the conflicting demands of ethically accountable masculinity.

Matheson did not approve of the choice to cast Price, however. In his interview with

Cemetery Dance magazine, he states that he very much respects Price as an actor and

while he doesn't elaborate on why Price was not right for the part of Neville, I believe

there are two likely reasons. The first is that Price doesn't look like Neville. While Price

has the striking blue eyes necessary and is sufficiently tall, his build is long, thin and

slouched. As noted above, Neville is of "English and German stock" (4) and should have

the stalwart build expected of a man who tends to eat steak and perform his own

carpentry. Furthermore, Price is characterized by his dark hair, pronounced widow's

peak, and arched eyebrows has the stereotypical appearance of an intellectual, a role

which Neville only adapts after he has exhausted the potential of his physicality. The

second potential reason that Matheson may have seen Price as miscast was the fact that

Price was already typecast as a villain. Price's masculinity was somewhat effeminate and

he enhanced this alienation from American hegemonic masculinity by cultivating a

vaguely European accent for much of his career. By casting Price to play Neville, the

makers of *The Last Man on Earth* reduced the power of Matheson's tale to interrogate

this hegemonic masculinity.

The specificity of Price's masculinity is further underscored by the appearance of

Ben Cortman, played by Giacomo Rossi-Stuart, who, while shorter, is blond and has

proportionally broader shoulders, a square jaw, and a more conventionally attractive face.

The appearance of the two men side-by-by side evokes the contrast of Neil and Murder

Legendre, the all-American hero and vaguely foreign villain of *White Zombie*. The living

Cortman in *Last Man on Earth* is presented to the camera first as a competitive

masculinity who receives effusive affection from Morgan's daughter and a warm

welcome from Virginia. However, when Cortman presents a theory about the virus, Morgan dismisses the theory as insufficiently scientific. Flashbacks later in the film will prove the theory to be true, thus marking Morgan's superior rationality as alienating specificity rather than universally acceptable superiority. When the two men are shown working together in the lab, Morgan is clearly the senior. Cortman, who we soon discover is nursing a sick wife, just as Morgan is nursing a sick daughter, mocks their boss, "the great man of science" as ineffectual, suggesting a more imaginative approach in the face of so much mass suffering. Morgan defends the "plodding" of proper scientific inquiry and ridicules Cortman for his willingness to believe in vampires. When Cortman counters that "to show me germs does not dispute these stories," he is logically correct and thus suggests that Morgan's commitment to science is myopic. Thus, Cortman's contrasting masculinity also serves to highlight the at times self-defeating commitment to scientific inquiry that marks Morgan as both humanity's last hold-out and insufficiently human. Since Price was also already associated with horror villains, his casting reduced the effectiveness of the film's ethical turn by foreshadowing the possibility that story's protagonist would be at the least a problematic hero.

The 1964 production also took liberties with the plot of the film. For the most part these embellishments serve to simplify and emphasize aspects of the story, adapting it to the nature of film as a medium, both in terms of time limits and its visual nature. However, these changes have a serious impact on the critical power of the narrative. It is perhaps for this reason that Matheson insisted on being credited under the pseudonym Logan Swanson rather than acknowledge the film as an adaptation of his novel. For example, rather than having the Neville character teach himself science, *Last Man on*

Earth creates a history for Neville, here Robert Morgan, in which he was already a pathologist. In addition to avoiding a science-learning montage, this alteration also simplifies the need for flashbacks that serve to explain the plague by uniting the micro level tragedies of the Neville family with the macro level devastation. As explored above, the cost of this slight change is that it reduces the Everyman status of Morgan, both making him less relatable to the majority of viewers and disrupting the eurocentric Enlightenment subtext of the film.

The film also gives Morgan's dead wife Virginia far more character development, dwelling on Morgan's pre-plague domesticity. In the novel, the lack of development of Virginia combined with the near erasure of Morgan's daughter serve to emphasize Morgan's loneliness as a characteristic of his post-apocalyptic dystopia. By making Virginia a character and placing the scene in which she returns from the dead and attempts to murder him at the beginning rather than the end of the story, the film makes the specificity of her as a spouse and partner an additional factor in his loneliness, again making his experience less universal. *Last Man on Earth* lacks the interrogation of masculinity that Matheson penned. Heterosexuality in this film is a partnership between two spouses who, while conforming to distinct and rigid gender roles, nevertheless demonstrate mutual respect. By contrast, in the novel male heterosexuality is depicted as predatory and Neville values his wife primarily as an object that serves domestic functions. Price's Morgan is a loving father but Matheson's Neville seems to regard his daughter only as property. Neville's longing for companionship, even from a dog, is undermined by his inability to establish ethical relationships beyond patriarchal logics of domination. For Morgan, on the other hand, the ethical relationship is possible. Morgan is

a specific possibility for masculinity, while Neville embodies an abstract hegemonic ideal. Thus even though Morgan is still criticized, it is only his individual choices that come under fire while Neville's shortcomings can be read as critiques of a large value system. Reducing Morgan's function as an Everyman reduces Matheson's critiques of dominant discourses by turning the story into a drama of one man's struggle rather than a metaphor for the struggle of an entire culture.[87]

The character of Morgan may be less universal in the 1964 film, but he is also more ethical. In particular, Morgan is better able to encounter others, as seen in his relationships with the dog, Cortman, and Ruth. In the novel, Neville's relationship with the dog is a colossal failure. It takes months for Neville to redomesticated the animal, and his insistence on bringing it into the house is ironically the most violent moment in the book. Neville's confidence that he can save the dog and that this creature which had already survived years in the post-apocalyptic landscape is somehow his to save only leads to a clearly traumatic experience of terror for the dog, which dies within a week. After using the dog to demonstrate the pathology of Neville's domesticating agenda, his

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[87] Clasen has attempted to refute Patterson's reading of this novel as a race allegory. His argument replaces the specificity of the white, heterosexual, middle-class, US man with biologically-determined "universal human fears." His effort at a scathing refutation follows the logic that since Patterson is interested in subtext and ideology, "[i]t is not clear why the novel has captured the attention of a single reader beyond Patterson herself" (318). By erasing the specificity of hegemonic masculinity, Clasen attempts to trivialize Patterson's analysis of the foundations of white, heterosexual, middle-class US masculinity. Instead he only succeeds in revealing that only white, heterosexual, middle-class US men qualify in his assumptions of "universal" humanity. In place of Patterson's analysis, Clasen posits that vampires are scary because human beings are afraid of things that can kill us. While Clasen's effort to reduce all of human culture to a direct manifestation of our biology amounts to a hysterical disavowal of the novel's critical value, had he instead been writing about *Last Man on Earth*, his argument may have been somewhat less reductive. However, given both the significance of Ruth's effort to "pass" as uninfected and the heavily Christian symbolism of Morgan's death scene, perhaps Clasen should limit his talk of "universal human fears" to films like *Arachnophobia* or *Four Legged Freaks*, since there is at least a healthy scholarly debate over whether the fear of spiders is rooted in biology or learned in infancy.

kidnapping of Ruth and their subsequent battle of wills and wit take on a more sinister tone. In the film, by contrast, the dog is quite content to be adopted. The violence of Morgan's domestication agenda is erased and even when Ruth appears, she requires far less coercion. What little coercion Morgan requires to bring Ruth into the house is also dismissed in the film as a result of her inner conflict rather than his failure of empathy and respect. The Neville of the novel is an unreliable narrator who rationalizes his violence and is incapable of representing the motivations of others. In the film, however, Morgan's narration is reliable and presumed to not only be accurate, but also complete. Where Matheson invited a critical reader to experience Neville's very human limitations, the filmmakers granted Morgan a superhuman level of insight and knowledge, thus elevating his struggle above much of the moral ambiguity of the original tale.

The Last Man on Earth also reduces the symbolic bite of Matheson's story by changing the nature of the undead threat. It is this film where the threat of a cannibalistic undead swarm is combined with the visual of stumbling, mumbling zombies. While Romero has expressed his respect for Matheson, this film also clearly influences his aesthetics, including the way that the undead look, sound and move. In the novel the vampires are capable of varying degrees of speech, they also have the muscle coordination to throw rocks and even leap from the roof of one house to the next, which forces Neville to burn down the houses adjacent to his own. The vampires in this film are far more shambling, clearly incapable of rallying the coordination necessary to attempt such feats. Morgan is shown frequently fighting off not just individuals, but even small crowds of the undead in the film. The monstrous appearance of the undead bears so much meaning in the film that Morgan is showing exterminating them even before the film

depicts them as a threat. Indeed, the first montage of exterminations comes even after

Morgan himself has asserted that they are killing each other off. If, as a scientist, he

recognized that these vampires function less as a corruption of humanity and more as

hemocytes whose population is inherently unstable, he could, conceivably, simply stop

his wild work, focus his efforts on fortification, and wait for them to feed off of one

another, doing his work for him. These are not the aristocratic undead of Stoker. While

Dracula represents the threat of a different world order, the undead in *Last Man on Earth*

pose no alternate possibilities that humanity, at least in the form of Morgan, can

recognize.[88] Unlike vampires, who behave as enhanced but immoral human beings, these

undead behave like zombies, amoral and inefficient organic machines. Though not yet the

shambling corpses made popular by Romero, the visual signs of undeath in the cowering

vampires of *Last Man on Earth* initiate the return of the visual horror of the zombie.

This dehumanizing of the undead vampires serves to draw a more clear moral line

between their actions and those of the infected living hybrids. The exact nature of the

monster varies quite a bit amongst the novel and films. In 1964, the undead are ghastly

primarily through old-fashioned monster make-up. While prosthetic teeth may have been

used in the film's production, the characteristic elongated canines of the vampire are

never displayed for the camera. Instead, we can tell the undead are undead because they

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[88] In light of the larger legacy of zombie narratives, the qualification of human recognition is important. Later zombie films such as Romero's *Land of the Dead* (2005) and Bruce La Bruce's *Otto; Or Up With Dead People* (2008) posit the radical potential of zombies as an alternative societal mode. Since they were evoked as a metaphor of choice in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, zombies have also been used by scholars to articulate posthuman modes of subjectivity beyond Freudian identity formation, most effectively in LAuro and Embry's "A Zombie Manifesto." As will be discussed below, the human capacity to recognize alternative societal formations will become central in the film *I Am Legend* (2007) where the living infected society is replaced by a utopian gated community and a brutal alternate society of infected monsters replaces the disposable undead of the novel.

are gaunt with sunk-in eyes. The overall effect is humans who have been turned feral by

hunger and exhaustion. The infected community is a different matter, however. While

Ruth's gaze in the mirror suggests that her appearance might degrade, neither the infected

militia nor the infected women and children who flood the church in the final scene show

any visual sign of monstrosity. Instead, the signifier of the infected is their black

clothing.[89] But early in the film, in a montage of one of Morgan's killing sprees, all of the

victims have the make-up effects of the undead. Thus, while Morgan is sacrificed for his

indiscriminate killing of the infected, the visual codes of the film make clear that he could

have not have known that they were alive. He only killed those that looked monstrous. In

contrast, in the novel, Neville clearly acknowledges the difference between the infected

and the undead. He has no reason to believe that the infected mean him any harm and

thus his extermination regime is clearly murder. Morgan, by contrast, does not

comprehend the difference.

The exchange in which Morgan learns of his crimes provides the film's

philosophical exegesis. It begins when he catches Ruth with her injection. He is at first

delighted at the possibility of a cure but when Ruth lets slip that she comes from a larger

community, Morgan feels that Ruth has not only betrayed him by failing to conform to

his fantasy of the regenerative couple, but that she has somehow cuckolded him. He

viciously interprets her presence as a form of mockery: "And I thought you were alone! I

was going to cure you! Does that amuse you?" The relationship at this moment is a

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[89] As will be discussed below, the racial codes of this film are difficult to map onto US racial codes. This is an Italian film and so the black sweaters combined with the clear military training and martial coordination of the infected militia are a direct allusion to the Blackshirts, a paramilitary volunteer group that promoted the interests of Italian fascism in the interwar period.

perfect example of Margaret Atwood's famous observation that men fear that women will laugh at them while women fear that men will kill them (413). [90] While Morgan is busy defending himself against Ruth's sexual rejection, Ruth is negotiating the life-and-death ethical debate of facing a serial killer and discovering him to be more human than monster. The error of Morgan's myopic focus on his own victimization is emphasized when he then assumes that she has come to recruit him in the rebuilding of society. Even when she informs him that her infiltration mission was pointless since he knows far less than her community does, he continues to believe that he is entitled to be a member of the dominant culture.

In only a few short lines, Ruth flips the script of the entire film from a focus on Morgan's victimization to his monstrosity.

> You can't join us. You're a monster to them. Why do you think I ran when I saw you? … Because I was so terrified from what I'd heard about you. Because you're a legend in the city: moving by day instead of night, leaving as evidence of your existence bloodless corpses. Many of the people you destroyed were still alive! Many of them were the loved ones of the people in my group.

He then immediately recognizes his crimes and offers his only defense "I didn't know." Yet when Ruth reveals that she was sent to help capture and kill him, Morgan says that her "new society sounds charming." He both recognizes his crimes and immediately

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[90] Margaret Atwood is often paraphrased as having said that "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them." The actual quote is much longer and can be found in "Writing the Male Character," *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose,1960-1982,*House of Anansi Press, 2000.

refutes society's legitimacy in punishing him for them. Interestingly, while this speech delivered by Ruth is presented as a key for the audience's interpretation of the film, her next line is the film's most political and yet the least actualized. She asserts that "the beginning of any new society is never charming or gentle," but as I will read below, the film undermines this legitimation of violence by insisting on the injustice of Morgan's death and thus villainizing the new society.

The exact meaning of the Neville character's legendary status is also a variable amongst the films, albeit a more subtle one. The novel mentions the cure only briefly and pushes the fact of vampiric blood consumption into the background in order to foreground Neville's internal struggle to maintain his sanity. In the film, however, the vampire's thirst for blood is emphasized, most notable in the drug that Ruth must take in order to suppress her thirst and maintain her capacity for conscious thought. In the novel, she takes a pill which contains blood but which is laced with enough drugs that she gives it to Morgan as an anesthetic before he is sacrificed. By contrast, the needle Ruth uses in the film seems far more like an addict's fix and its status as a liquid instead of a solid emphasizes the visual association with blood instead of medicine. After his exchange with Ruth, Morgan considers one of his freshly-crafted stakes. The next image is of Ruth lying on the couch as Morgan infuses her with his own blood. The effect is to suggest that Morgan has shifted modes of engaging the other, going from monster to savior. However, both images are phallic and sexual. The stake emphasizes penetration and the injection

suggests insemination. The cure is a direct blood infusion from Neville. In short, the

white male is so pure that his bodily fluids can cleanse the "minority element" woman.[91]

The vampire human hybrids in the novel are more human-like, but in the film

their dependence on blood, and thus their need to harvest it from humans, is emphasized

as a factor in the post-apocalypse economy of blood. The question of a cure rather than a

suppressive drug regiment is taken more seriously in the film, which leaves open the

possibility that Morgan, if given sufficient time and resources, may have cured all of the

infected. Such a possibility is dismissed as yet another of Neville's fantasies in the novel.

The Last Man on Earth thus presents the hybrids as active agents in their violent

disassociation from Morgan, while Matheson's novel instead presents them as victims of

the plagues who only kill Neville in response to this violence. This shift of blame

constitutes a slight shift in way the story presents wild work. In the vampire tradition,

blood is eroticized and the stakes for the survivor community are as much their souls as

their lives. While the vampire economy of blood is certainly economic and colonial, it is

also, and perhaps primarily, libidinal. But in Matheson's retelling, sexual tension is a

product of human and not undead longing.[92] Furthermore, the threat to the soul, if we are

to read the novel in such a way, comes from Neville's failure to recognize the humanity

of his victims. The community in peril is not the human, but the infected. In *The Last*

Man on Earth, the economy of blood is even further secularized. Morgan does not desire

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[91] The eugenicist use of white "blood" to dilute the bloodlines of "minority elements" has a long violent history and has been used to justify white rape of women of color. The other side of this ideology is a hysteria over the protection of white women from rapists of color, as explored by Winnubst. Miscegenation is clearly less about reproduction and more about controlling wombs and justifying racialized violence.

[92] One could choose to read Ruth as sexually drawn to Neville, but only *The Omega Man* presents direct and active female desire. In the other versions of this story, female desire is only ever presented as a projection by the male lead.

the undead women and at the most treats them with pity. Confronted with Ruth, he seeks

to exchange knowledge and offers her hospitality rather than attempting to recruit her into

a mating couple. In the novel, Ruth is a threat because she violates his monastic isolation

and its attendant ideological purity. In the film, Ruth is only a threat as an extension of

the infected community that plans to kill him. This difference in the economy of blood

also significantly alters Neville's death.

In the novel, sacrificing Neville is a form of somewhat redemptive wild work but

in this film, the rights of the hybrids to kill him is just as questionable as his right to kill

them. In the novel, Neville is killed in a ritualized lynching. However, in the film,

Morgan is hunted like an animal. The militia exterminates the undead but as they shift

their focus to the new prey, it is clear that the work of extermination has once again

gained the heroic aspiration to wild work.[93] The ensuing chase ends in a church. Women

and children arrive at the church just moments before Morgan's death, but whether they

somehow knew to arrive to witness the sacrifice or whether they just happened to have

arrived for a regular worship service is unclear. Finally cornered at the alter in front of

not only the male militia responsible for the violence of the community, but also the

women and children who represent the domestic sphere that the men are required to

protect, Morgan immediately begins accusing them of being freaks and mutations. To be

a freak is to be excluded from the moral order, beyond society's protection, and to be a

mutation is to be excluded from the natural order, both threatening and disposable.

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[93] In his efforts to escape, Morgan makes frequent and ineffectual use of smoke bombs, again evoking the typecasting of Price as a villain. The image works to create a secularize and technological version of Dracula disappearing in a cloud of smoke or becoming fog.

Neville's contempt is clear, but his moral authority to interpolate the infected community is questionable. This burst of desperate bigotry sharply contrasts Morgan's previous interactions with Ruth, although it confirms the self-consciousness Ruth herself displays. This incongruity can be read two ways, and is perhaps left open in order to appeal to different audiences. The infected community is clad exclusively in black, with the exception of Ruth, whose black shirt is borrowed from Virginia's wardrobe. Audiences in both the US and Italy in 1964 would undoubtedly have connected this attire with the radical counterculture. The most poplar countercultures of the day in the US were typically opposed to the sorts of values Morgan embodied. In a US context, the black sweaters suggest a subtle connection to the Civil Rights movement of the time, a racial allusion enforced by the fact that Ruth is played by Franca Bettoia, an Italian actress whose dark hair and large eyes may have marked her as vaguely foreign.[94] For audience members who felt threatened by the progressive politics of racial equality, open sexuality, and acceptance of drug use, this attire would certainly mark the infected community as freaks. Such an audience might read Morgan's claim to be the last man as the horrific culmination of the story, seeing his death as the end of the world. For audience members who recognized the tyranny of postwar white-supremacist patriarchy, however, Morgan's final declaration would instead read as a hysterical and cowardly lashing-out.

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[94] The film was made a decade after Brown v. Board, in the midst of a flurry of anti-discrimination court cases, non-violent demonstrations and quite violent retaliations. It is impossible that the film was not viewed with an eye to the changing race dynamics of the country. With this in mind, it is even more sinister that Morgan's violence is white-washed with a simple plea of ignorance.

In the midst of this speech, Morgan is speared by the infected militia and collapses at the altar. Because Morgan dies at the altar and is pierced with a spear, just like Christ, this is a clear allusion to the Christian economy of blood wherein it is the sacrificed blood of Christ that establishes a new sacred covenant for the emergent community. However, the Christian Church is called into being as a community by a loving savior and in the symbolic or transubstantiated drinking of his blood, they recommit to that community. If the infected community were to transubstantiate Morgan's blood, it would conceivably cure them and thus alienate them form the community. However, since the film is clearly evoking the Christ image, it warrants an exploration of how the final moments of Christ can help us to better understand the final moments of Morgan.

The final seven words of Christ on the cross is a popular topic for sermons delivered on or around Lent. The quotes are taken from the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John and, despite being quoted in different languages, have become accepted in a specific order that seeks to harmonize these separate Gospels. The first of Christ's seven words on the cross is a call for forgiveness: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).[95] This quote marks a stark contrast to Morgan's outburst in which he condemns the infected community. Furthermore, the second of

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[95] The final seven words of Christ on the cross is a popular topic for sermons delivered on or around Lent. The quotes are taken from the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John and, despite being quoted in different languages, have become accepted in a specific order that seeks to harmonize these separate Gospels. For an example of how the last words are used in bible study, see Warren W. Wiersbe *The Cross of Jesus: What His Words from Calvary Mean for Us*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1997. This was also the subject for a book-length treatment by H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church *The Seven Words of Our Lord on the Cross.* Translated by St. Mary and St. Bishoy Church Los Angeles, Los Angles: Dar El Tebaa El Kawmia, 1991.

Christ's seven words on the cross is the offer of salvation to one of the two thieves with whom he was crucified (Luke 23:43). Neville's second speech act is to declare himself the last man, thus emphasizing the difference of the infected community and barring them from inclusion within the norm. Rather than see his legacy adapt, he condemns it to die with him. This speech act also serves as a foil to Christ's third and fourth speech acts in which he establishes relationship with his mother (John 19:26-27) and asks why God has abandoned him (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34). Morgan, as the center of his own moral and spiritual universe, cannot be abandoned by God and will not extend kinship to the infected. In this private audience, Morgan's final words are to marvel that the infected community had been afraid of him.

He repeats the phrase "They were afraid of me" three times. The famous three fold speech act of Christ's crucifixion is when he is denied by Peter. Reading Morgan's final words through Peter suggests that the fear of the infected community amounts to a disavowal. Clearly, communities do not organize militias and send spies to hunt down and kill that which they refuse to acknowledge. However, if we combine the denial of Peter with the remaining words of Christ on the cross, the contrast between Christ's and Morgan's sacrifices again becomes clear. The last three words of Christ are distress, triumph and reunion.[96] Morgan is clearly distressed by the fact that the only other rational beings left on earth cannot form community with him. This fear functions on both sides to deny one another's humanity. Christ's distress is answered with a hyssop sponge dipped in sour wine but Morgan's needs go unanswered because only Ruth sees him as

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[96] Respectively, "I thirst" (John 19:28, "It is finished" (John 19:29-30) and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

human. While we could certainly imagine "they fear me" as a proclamation of triumph, the look on Morgan's face during his second utterance is unmistakably one of distress. The triumph of having exerted his will over a community would only appeal to Morgan if he were in fact the monster that the infected community believes him to be. Morgan's horror at his own fearfulness denies his role as legendary monster, although unlike the novel, there is no other legend status to which he can aspire. For Morgan's final utterance, the infected community's fear denies him reunion with their community and instead reunites him with his wife and all the other dead from his old human world. When Morgan has uttered his last and he looks upon Ruth's face, searching for meaning, however, she offers him union. She tells them that they didn't know, the same words Morgan had used to defend himself when she accused him of killing the loved ones of her community.

By both making Morgan ignorant of his crimes and presenting the cure as a legitimate possibility that only Morgan can realize, *The Last Man on Earth* suggests that the new society's sacrifice of the old is brutal and self-defeating, if inevitable. In the end, the white hegemonic man is innocent, well-intentioned, and ultimately victimized. The film dismisses Morgan's violence. While Ruth may argue for the legitimacy of foundational violence, the apocalyptic nature of the film forecloses the possibility of reform and instead demands revolution. *I Am Legend* locates the refusal to coexist in Neville, but in *The Last Man*, Morgan is presumably willing. The argument suggest that the "minority element" could or even should forgive, forget, and embrace the erstwhile father figure who can make everything better only through inseminating the new with his bodily fluids. Indeed, by killing off the old world, the new world destroys it's only

chance for a cure. In the middle of the Civil Rights Era, this argument prioritizes the comfort of white Americans over the basic rights of People of Color. The counter culture was already racially diverse and multi-cultural and the infected had already developed their own treatment for their disease. Morgan, his cure, and the old order he stood for were not needed, just as accommodating the white supremacist status quo was only ever a means to an end for the pragmatic strategists of the 1950s Civil Rights Movement. Just as the quest for racial equality has mutated over time, this economy of blood, cure, agency and sacrifice will continue to mutate in the filmic remakes of Matheson's tale.

3.2   Omega Man

The next filmic interpretation of Matheson's novel is so loosely connected that Matheson himself didn't feel any attribution was necessary. Indeed, *Omega Man* takes quite a bit of liberty with the original plot of *I Am Legend*, but it also returns the focus of the story to the psychosis that surviving the end of the world must surely imply for a man like Neville. *Omega Man* may abandon the importance of undeath in the tale, but it far better honors the potential of the lone survivor narrative. The striking lack of either zombies or vampires in this film may at first seem to place it outside the zombie cannon. However, as an interpretation of *I Am Legend*, the film highlights the importance of race both in Neville's psychology and in the construction of undead Others. By making race central to the story, this film sets the expectations that all subsequent tellings of this story must address the issue. The film also returns to the older tradition of zombie whiteface

wherein the race of an actor is both hidden and highlighted by the whitened appearance

of the monster.[97]

The plot of the film has undergone drastic changes not only to keep up with the

gender politics of the day but also to reflect the immense racial difficulties which had

been defining US politics since the 1950s but which were finally receiving the media

recognition they warranted in the late 60s and early 70s. Rather than undead vampires,

the monsters of the film are rabid albino luddites, white-haired and white-eyed fanatics

who eat food instead of blood, and seek to return the world to a time before the

technology and culture which they see as the cause of the apocalypse. This monstrous

mob is called The Family and the film allows the dubious nature of their disease to fuse

ideology and biology so that they function as a cult that recruits through the physiological

deterioration of infected humans. As a surviving med student explains, "tertiary" cases

are characterized by "blindness in light, albinism, psychotic illusions, occasional stages

of torpor." Somehow these physical afflictions lead automatically to a dangerous and

violent allegiance to The Family.[98] The term "tertiary" serves multiple functions.

Primarily, it is used by infected survivors who are still in the first two stages of infection

to emotionally distance themselves from the inevitable transition that will eventually

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[97] Subramanian notes that the whiteface in *Omega Man* actually serves to highlight the ermgent trope of the undead as hyperwhites, explored in my discussion of *I Am Legend* (2007) below, More importantly, it aslo emphasizes the racial difference of both Brother Zachary and, later in the film, Lisa. "[*Omega Man*'s] emphasis on the zombies' white skin and eyes, rather than any other determining feature, explicitly associates whiteness with disease (and loss of individuality). At the same time, Heston brings an almost otherworldly whiteness to the film" (47).

[98] In one of many examples of the film's inconsistencies, this survivor recounts to Neville a time when an infected friend passed over into the tertiary stage, immediately attacking him and forcing him to kill in self-defense and yet other survivors within this same community report living among The Family peacefully for months.

make them members of The Family. Using such a medical rather than ideological term also allows the survivors community to see The Family as victims of the disease. However, the term also has a long religious history, where it refers to lay people who take up the lifestyle of religious order but who are not of the politically active first order of the Catholic Church or the various monastic traditions, nor of the second contemplative order of nuns and other support structures for the first order. In the context of both this film and the term's historical development, the tertiary can be seen as those who observe and enforce religious asceticism without access to legitimate religious authority.[99]

In addition to this transhistoric religious association, the disease has chronologically specific political associations. The plague that brings about *Omega Man*'s apocalypse is the result of biological warfare between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. It is important to note that neither of these communist superpowers directly attacks the US. However, the film contains allusions to Vietnam, where global capitalism and global communism had displaced their violence. Vietnam was also the catalyst that allowed a portion of the Civil Rights Movement to break off and develop into, among other things, the Black Panthers. *Omega Man* strikes an uneasy balance of race-based cultural critique in which The Family includes both white conservatives and Black militants, while the militancy, back-to-nature communism, gender-equality and racial diversity, specifically including empowered Black pride, of the film's survivor community is celebrated.[100] Echoing *The Last Man*, *Omega Man*'s main

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[99] Originally, the tertiary order of lay people was formed in the thirteenth century as an effort to reform the first order of politically and financially powerful priests and Church leadership. Their lack of guided study led to inconsistent dogmas and so tertiary preachers were often accused of heresy. For examples and more information, see Jarret Bede, et all, "Third Order," *The Catholic Encyclopedia.*

[100] While the film is at pains to emphasize the autonomy of leading lady Lisa, this gender equality

political message seems to be that reform is acceptable, so long as traditionally privileged white men are central to that effort. Therefor much of the film's ideological work comes in distinguishing both Neville and the surviving infected community from The Family while allowing both groups to cross the race line and otherwise appeal to the progressive values of the day's counter culture.

With such a specific political agenda, *Omega Man* needed a monster far more articulate than the polymorphous undead swarm. Rather than an unruly mob feeding on itself, The Family is a hierarchical community, led by Matthias. Brother Zachary is the only other member of The Family who is named, which, given that Brother Zachary was clearly Black before he succumbed to the plague and given that Brother Zachary is the only member of The Family to demonstrate any significant ideological differences from Brother Matthias, adds substantial nuance to the film's racial messages. When we are first introduced to Brother Zachary, he refers to Neville's nest, a fantasy bachelor pad of cutting edge technology, a fully functional science lab, and walls cluttered with great works of western art, as a "honkey paradise." Brother Matthias warmly reprimands Brother Zachary, reminding him that race is no longer a meaningful category and that "those are the old ways." This postracial message is not an anti-racist gesture, however. Instead, it marks Matthias as a charismatic leader who, later in the film, will display homicidal bigotry when it comes to distinguishing between those who have been "marked" by the plague and those who still have their melatonin. Brother Zachary's

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generally conforms to more traditional gender segregation. Lisa herself is not empowered with the same scientific background as the two surviving adult men. Additionally, when Neville is first introduced to the infected survivor community, the boys all come from the surround hillside, while all but one of the girls come from out of the house.

disagreements with Matthias also extend to technology. While Matthias shuns all technology, Brother Zachary is willing to make an exception in order to achieve his goal of eliminating Neville. Thus, while Brother Zachary never openly rebels against Matthias's leadership, he does disobey. Brother Zachary hates Neville's whiteness but is willing to overlook Matthias's.

The Family's sole agenda is to purge the world of any cultural remnants and all but the most primitive of technology. However, rather fleeing the city and living off of the land, The Family remains, waging warfare against Neville, burning books, and eating all the packaged foods they can get their hands on. While *Omega Man* is sure to cast The Family as irrational, they are still decidedly human, speaking coherently, expressing tensions within their own hierarchical structure and using organizational strategies to achieve their goals. This strategy allows the film to present to a more literal interpretation of Matheson's science fiction premise, since only the extremity of their light-sensitive albinism and its psychosomatic connection to paranoid violence are outside the realm of historic human experience. While the metaphor of vampirism is left flexible in Matheson's novel, the 1971 film makes it clear that ideology is contagious and that a flawed but nonetheless heroic white man must defend culture as we know it from radical ideologues.

Lead actor Heston was well already established as an icon of US cinema and therefore had considerable creative control over this film from the beginning. He had read Matheson's novel and, along with Walter Seltzer, pitched the film to Warner Brothers before he learned of the Price film. In contrast to Vincent Price, Charlton Heston was an ideal casting choice to play Neville in the 1971 film *Omega Man*. Heston's square jaw,

wide mouth and pronounced brow combined with his characteristically hairy and

muscular body are much easier to imagine as the unshaven, wild-eyed man who chased

down Ruth upon first seeing her in the novel (Matheson 105-07). Furthermore, Heston

had already made a career playing culturally foundational historic characters, including

Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, Moses, John the Baptist, Ben-Hur, Michaelangelo,

Marc Anthony and eleventh century folk hero El Cid who drove the Moors out of Spain.

He also starred as archetypes of US masculinity such as a football player, cowboy, and

numerous military ranks, including a knight. Finally, he had recently embarked on his

science-fiction career playing the sole-survivor of a wrecked star-ship in the first two

films in the Planet of the Apes franchise, *Planet of the Apes* (1968) and *Beneath the*

Planet of the Apes (1970). In short, audiences were used to identifying Heston with the

essence of US hegemonic identity.

However, Heston's public persona was nuanced and thus represents a more

multicultural need of US audiences at that time. Of particular interest for this film was his

association with both earlier civil rights protests and later gun advocacy. Heston's

autobiography *In the Arena* (1995) makes frequent and proud reference to his

participation in the Civil Rights movement up until the passage of the Civil Rights Act in

1965. However, he makes no direct reference to the black power movements of the 1970s

and speaks with contempt of the "tangle of entitlements and reverse discrimination the

bill has spawned over the years" (336). As a public figure, he advocated racial equality

and this ethos for the male lead complemented the edginess of the interracial coupling in

Omega Man. However, Heston distinguished between a righteous fight for equality and

what he considered excessive racial obsession. A similar ambivalence can be seen

throughout *Omega Man* where the legitimacy of violence is rarely questioned, but the distinction between heroes and villains is frequently muddled. Black Pride is celebrated in the film, but the central white man is clearly presented as the victim of misdirected prejudice. While he does not demand dominion over the female lead as Matheson's Neville had, Heston's Neville never compromises his autonomy.

The use of violence in *Omega Man* must be understood within the context of an increasingly weaponized race conflict in the US in the late 1960s. According to Adam Winkler's social history of gun legislation *Gunfight: The Battle Over The Right to Bear Arms in America* (2011), gun regulation had been used to distinguish between different levels of citizenship since the widespread adoption of the Uniform Firearms Act in the 1920s and 30s (208-09). Under that and similar acts, citizenship was juxtaposed with criminality. However, in 1956, when Martin Luther King Jr. was denied a conceal carry permit, gun rights became an explicitly racialized issue (235). In 1967 Huey Newton translated his law school studies into a pragmatic model of resistance to police brutality and abuse, making a functional knowledge of gun rights and police procedural regulations part of the core of a Black Panther's education (231-37). In 1968, Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act and the Gun Control Act, with the specific intent of limiting gun access for dissenting political organizations. Black Power organizations across the nation were raising serious questions about the legitimacy of national and local authorities who enforced white supremacist policies on Black communities. At the time this film was made, race riots and armed conflicts with police forces were a shocking reality. When, in a promotional video, Heston refers to Neville's arsenal as "the ultimate extension of man as killer ape," he isn't being hyperbolic. For

Heston and the other filmmakers, the threat of armed conflict between competing moral

orders on the streets of LA was not hypothetical but merely the logical extension of many

of the real conflicts on their evening news programs.

Omega Man begins with several shots of Neville driving on empty streets,

listening to soothing jazz and running red lights without concern.[101] While the city streets

are strewn with trash, the impression is one of relaxing leisure. The hegemonic ideal of

masculinity is liberated from the constraints of rules and regulations is, in Heston words,

> a familiar but evergreen concept, a universal fantasy that seems to have
>
> invaded everyone's imagination and launched a thousand speculations:
>
> What would you do if you were the last man on earth? It's the dark side of
>
> the Genesis story of the creation of Adam, the first man – the end instead
>
> of the beginning. (434)

Heston's easy ability to overlook the gender-specificity of this "universal fantasy"

suggests that his image of Adam is also similarly self-reflecting. Such an Adam,

according to *Omega Man* would not have dominion over the animals, but over the city

streets and in place of a helpmate produced from his own rib, he would have a car he

himself maintained. This idyllic snapshot of the classic American love story between a

man and his car is interrupted, however, when Neville screeches to a halt and fires his

automatic rifle after a retreating shadow in the windows of a nearby building. The film's

opening thus serves to invite the audience's identification with Neville's masculinity

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[101] There is no explanation for why, three years after the apocalypse, there should still be electricity
powering traffic lights. This inconsistency only underscores the red light's importance as a contrast to
Neville's masculine agency.

while at the same time warning us that this post-industrial pastoral scene is precarious and dependent on violence for its maintenance. Neville's excess, from the bullets wasted to his reckless driving and unending reserve of gasoline to his rampant consumerism would, any other context, represent a morally reprehensible pattern of destruction and looting.

This is the primary appeal of postapocalyptic narratives, the liberation of masculine excess that is presumably repressed within civilization. Such liberation comes at a price, however, both in the lack of protection within the law and also access to companionship. In *The Last Man on Earth* this companionship is reduced to heterosexual coupling, but each of the other retellings of the story seek to extend. In the novel, Neville retains a corrupted comradery with Cortman and develops a partially split personality to give himself companionship. In *Omega Man*, Neville talks to himself, to mannequins in stores, to his own image on his surveillance screen and to a bust of Julius Caesar with whom he pretend to play chess. The act of collecting art in the 1964 film serves as a soothing reassurance and proof of the aesthetic sophistication of Price's Morgan. In the 1971 film, however, the act of post-apocalyptic art collection is shown as a hysterical attempt to maintain culture, resulting in the gaudy excess of unquestioned cultural entitlement. It's not that Heston's Neville is anymore excessive than the Neville in the book who destroys art while on drunken binges; it's only that the audience's attention is drawn to the unsustainability of his lifestyle in the 1971 film. Heston, it seems, is truer to the Neville in the novel, but the codes by which such a character was read had changed drastically.

In a promotional video included on the *Omega Man* DVD, "Last Man Alive: The Omega Man" (1971), Heston interviews noted anthropologist and anti-racist public intellectual Ashely Montagu. In addition to his work on the social construction of race, at the time of filming, Montagu was working on his second book about the significance of isolation, arguing that a sustained lack of touch leads to violent tendencies. The strategy of this promotional video is conflicted. In the conversation between Heston and Montagu, it encourages the audience to see the film as insightful and critical art rather than escapist fantasy. However, the voice-over narration is sensationalist, emphasizing the hyper-masculine violent aspects of the film. In both ways, the video serves the rhetorical purpose of positing Heston's Neville as the hegemonic ideal to which to aspire. While Heston clearly distances himself as an actor from Neville's mental illness using the language of character study, he and Montagu simultaneously posit Neville as a semi-universal subject. Montagu is careful to frame Neville's psychology within "the Western World," and yet the race, gender, and class specificity of the character goes unremarked.[102] In the feature film, Neville is contrasted against a woman, a range of people of color, and even a younger white man with similar medical training. In the promotional video, Montagu makes the claim that "[Neville's paranoia is] the model and the pattern and the image of the condition of contemporary man. Neville really exhibits the psychosis that most people in the Western world are suffering from at the present time. They're all suffering from the psychology of the survivor." This comment ends a

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[102] The term "man" is used in place of "humankind." However, contextually, it is clear that both men are merely falling victim to the casual sexism of language usage, rather than making any critical claims about gender, as can be seen by Montagu's conflation of "man" and "people". A similar myopia occurs with the conflation of "contemporary man" with "western world."

shot of Heston and Montagu at Neville's chessboard, which is edited to a shot of a man in hardhat welding a piece of the set. While the conversation does not explicitly mention Neville's class standing, the editing choice to use the dialog to bridge those two images draws a stark class-based contrast. The tension between universalizing a specific masculinity and drawing attention to its specificity runs throughout the film and promotional materials.

Both in the original promotional video and in a more recent promotional cut "The Beginning of the End" (2003), also included on the DVD, Neville's duality as a scientist and a poet are emphasized. In the film, the survivor community that interrupts Neville's wild work presents additional considerations for what makes us human, specifically community and the exchange of care work. But Neville, as the iconic last man, is consistently characterized by solely this binary of art and science. In "The Beginning of the End," Joyce Carrington, half of the original screenwriting team, says of her late husband and co-writer, ""He was the poet . . . I was the engineer . . . So our two sides made up Neville's character." This binary thinking is also established in "The Last Man Alive" where Heston and Montagu step back and forth between sections of the studio lot where Neville's lab and chessboard are set-up, both emphasizing a binary positioning of these two components of "contemporary Man" and presenting Neville as the totality of US society.

In prioritizing the tension between the poet and the engineer within Neville, the video suggests that this is a primary tension of the film. This is an over-simplification, however because the tension between Neville's isolation and the film's two communities is more central to the film itself. By emphasizing Neville's bifurcated nature, there is a

temptation to equate his artistic side with his communal impulse and contrast that with his scientific side, which is closely associated with his violence. These associations are emphasized in the "The Last Man Alive." As he and Heston sit across the chessboard, Montagu emphasizes the human need for contact: "To be healthy, to maintain your sanity, means to be involved in the others." Heston replies that this explains why Neville stayed in the city despite eminent physical danger and Montagu elaborates that "It's better for him, or for any creature, to even be surrounded by enemies than to be surrounded by nobody." In contrast, as they step across a partial wall to the other set, Heston observes: "Over in the laboratory section of Neville's nest we can see how much his life and how much of the civilization of which he is the end product is spent in essentially the pursuit of naked truth." In this quote lies the implicit acknowledgement that scientific curiosity can manifest as violence. Indeed the colloquial use of "naked" aligns "truth" with the Other. While the film is more nuanced, in the promotional video the Other is Lisa, a Black woman survivor played by Rosalind Cash. In other words, both of the promotional videos would have us believe that the naked truth that Heston's Neville wants to pursue is the Black woman. The reductive nature of this formula is perhaps best summarized by Carrington who twice describes the significance of casting a Black woman to play the female lead as adding "racial pizazz" to the film.

Dividing Neville's nature into the artist and the scientist is a false binary that assumes a false dichotomy in his choices for how to deal with the Other. Fortunately, the film is more nuanced than the promotional videos suggest. The most important difference between this film and the many other retelling's of Matheson's novel is that *Omega Man* has several developed characters other than just Neville. Lisa, her brother Richie,

Matthias, and Brother Zachary, all have conflicting priorities they must negotiate. While

Brother Zachary's agency is deflected, each of these characters as well as fellow

survivor-doctor Dutch is invested with agency to alter the story. While the promotional

videos would have us focused on the moral development of Neville, in the film, his

function is primarily reactive, with the fate of civilization instead determined by the

attitudes of the two infected communities. The film does not prioritize Neville's moral

conflict but instead focuses on the desperation of his isolation.

Into that isolation, *Omega Man* introduces Lisa. Like Ruth, Lisa is an envoy of an

infected survivor community. Like Ruth, she distrusts Neville's quick violence. However,

the character of Lisa is a significant change in the potential of Neville's story, in no small

part because her conflicts and purpose threaten to replace Neville as the central character.

Masculine codes had shifted drastically in the wake of the sexual revolution. In the

1950s, when Matheson was writing, masculinity like Heston's was unquestioned as the

sort of man responsible for replacing women who had been forced out of factory work in

the wake of World War II. Soldiers in those days were still heroes. By 1971, however,

women were demanding their rights to be part of the workforce and controversies over

the Vietnam War had robbed the military of much of its once iconic status and privilege.

Heston's assertive heterosexuality was no longer met with feminine docility and had

evolved to seek out free love with a presumably empowered sexual equal.

Lisa is played by Rosalind Cash, a then little-known actor who would go on to

build a quite successful television career playing powerful Black characters who resisted

the "tits and ass" character type (7, 8).[103] Even in the promotional videos, much is made

of Lisa's race, but while the shorts present her as an exotic whose sole purpose is to be

sexually available to Neville, the film presents Lisa as a community organizer, a sexual

equal, and a competent soldier with sufficient understanding of urban warfare to protect

her loved ones. Lisa is not a colorblind character. Each of these roles is complemented by

her race. In her dealings with Neville, Lisa is never submissive. After rescuing him from

a murderous mob, Lisa holds Neville at gunpoint. When he attempts to rationally control

the situation, she asserts her own power: "When I want you to turn I'll turn you. On or

off, up or around, I'll turn you. Now Cool it!" This aggression on Lisa's part is a

powerful contrast to the ending of *The Last Man on Earth*. Neville may have committed

no crime against her community, but she still has reason to establish her own autonomy.

As she explicitly states later, Neville's "shootin' at anything that moves" gives her cause

to be cautious. He may in fact turn violent.

However, Lisa's initial treatment of Neville has two further functions. First, when

he attempts to introduce himself civilly, she pistol whips him and insists "your name is

mud." In denying Neville the opportunity to name himself, she is denying his assumption

that her humanity is an open invitation to re-establish the old cultural order in which his

name meant something. Had she allowed this man whose apartment is filled with the

artistic greatest hits from the old world, including a bust of Caesar, to set the tone of their

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[103] Heston claims to have chosen Cash over the studio's recommendation of Diahann Carroll (438).Cash had only made one film prior to *Omega Man*. She was, however, a dedicated feminist and promoter of Black pride whose careful selection of roles likely limited her success but also created a powerful ethos that infused all of her characters. She discusses both the costs and necessity of this professional integrity in an interview with Irma McClaurin-Allen "Working: The Black Actress in the Twentieth Century," *Contributions in Black Studies: A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies* 8.6 (1986): 1-10.

relationship, he may have assumed that the old rules still applied and that his race and gender entitled him to dominance, sexual access, and a monopoly on violence. When they return to Lisa's small commune of orphans, she introduces his as "the man. And I mean The Man." Second, she denies him the ability to name her. When he recognizes her as the only other person he's seen in the past three years who wasn't a rabid albino, she preemptively rejects the simple binary of that logic. She instead supplies "your living Playtex doll" as a label by which he is permitted to recognize her. While this phrasing is technically accurate, since she had pretended to be a mannequin at their first encounter, it alludes to the previous sexual order in which women of color were fetishized by white men. By calling out this dehumanizing and hypersexualizing logic of the old world, Lisa lets Neville know that she won't fall for the false empowerment of objectification. She is not a mannequin for him to dress up in his Adam and Eve fantasies.

Indeed, Lisa's role in the story also undermines Neville's positioning of himself as the embattled hero. We are never told the origin of the violence between Neville and The Family, although his reputation as the scientist who very publicly failed to save humanity by delivering a vaccine could have made him a clear target as the last holdout of society's faith in technology before the apocalypse. But when we have the chance to see The Family from Lisa's perspective, they become much more than a murderous mob. For Lisa, who survived the collapse of society in hiding with her brother Richie, The Family initially represented the hope of regeneration. They were the ones to clear the bodies and reestablish order. In the early stages of this rebuilding, Lisa and Richie joined them. However, as the first phase of cleaning-up was taken care of, Lisa felt that "they started to know our skin was different." Lisa and Richie had not yet turned to the third

stage of the disease, characterized by lesions and albinism, and thus, like all the surviving children, appeared to live in a state of biological grace. The second phase of The Family's agenda is to purge their world of the temptations of technology. Lisa and Richie are suddenly a reminder of life before the plague and, seen as unpunished, were assumed to have not yet been cleansed of their sin, making them subject to communal violence.

After fleeing The Family, Lisa and Richie form a commune on a defensible suburban hillside where they collect children who have not yet entered the third stage of the disease. This survivor community lives day to day in the dual hopes that none of their community will succumb to the ideological disease and that the radical cult will not decide to extend their crusade and to exterminate the infected who are not yet converted. This dual threat would have resonated with white audiences who, like Heston, valued the multicultural ideals represented by Martin Luther King Jr. and feared the radical messages of the more militant Black Power organizations. In other words, most white audience members may have distanced themselves from individual acts of race-based violence, but would be loath to acknowledge any systemic oppression that might draw attention to white-skin privilege or demand a more ethical reconfiguration of the system within which they were comfortable. The children of the commune are specifically multi-racial and they appear to be living a subsistence lifestyle that resembles the hippie communes popular at that time. Lisa and Richie's uneasy cohabitation with The Family is a sharp contrast to the previous versions of this story in which coexistence is impossible. It also decenters Neville as the final member of humanity. Lisa and her infected survivor community are distinctly human. They are also distinct from Neville's cultural legacy. They do not horde great works of art or music. They do not rely on advanced technology

other than motor vehicles and the guns and explosives they use to defend themselves. In

light of the infected community, calling Neville the last man imbues the concept of

"man" with either a sense of specific cultural legacy or the purity of uninfected blood that

can only be a metaphor for segregated whiteness.

But Lisa's infected community even further displaces Neville as the last man by

including Dutch, who is also a white man with advanced medical training. Lisa refers to

Neville and Dutch as the mad scientist and the mad bomber, but Dutch and Neville bond

most over their shared medical backgrounds and scientific outlooks, theatrically calling

one another Doctor. Lisa, is clearly essential to the survival of human kind, both as a

woman and as a cultural alternative to Neville and yet she is clearly an outsider when

Dutch and Neville engage one another. When she interrupts their "Masonic rites," the

productive collaboration between scientists is replaced with the interracial tensions of

Lisa and Neville's mutual attraction. [104] Lisa is Othered throughout the film even though

she is clearly presented as a relatable character, thus allowing the audience to reject the

supposedly universal position of Neville.

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[104] Lisa makes several sexual advances toward Neville, but despite her clear sexual agency, their
relationship is not consummated until Neville initiates. In their big romantic scene, Neville makes his
clumsy sexual advance by citing a song whose relevant lyrics are "If you were the only girl in the world
and I were the only boy, okay. Until then, don't bother me." This line is presented in the film as somehow
seductive despite the fact that Neville is informing Lisa that he would never look at her twice if society
hadn't collapsed. Furthermore, Neville is not the only boy. The film provides no reason for why Lisa
decides to seduce Neville almost immediately while insisting that there is no romantic connection between
herself and Dutch. The film's refusal to take Dutch seriously as a suitor while presenting a coupling with
Neville as inevitable may have no explanation other than the sheer star power of Heston. Either that or Lisa
is attracted not to his position as the only man, but specifically to his position as the last remnant of the
previous order, an order where an interracial couple was still taboo. Given how often Neville and Lisa joke
about their cultural or racial differences, this is certainly possible. However, it still doesn't account for the
effectual neutering of Dutch unless it is specifically his comfort with integration that makes him unworthy
as a partner. Perhaps Dutch is intended to lack Neville's poetic side, but given that the film ends with Dutch
taking the children to Eden, this explanation is unlikely.

The limits of Neville as an Everyman are specifically articulated by Richie, who suggests that Neville's isolation is self-imposed: "You know what, Mister? You're hostile. You just don't belong." Indeed, Neville does not belong, but does Richie or anyone else? This proclamation follows an exchange in which he implores Neville to offer the cure to The Family. When Neville refuses, Richie immediately suggests that he kill them instead. "Either kill 'em or cure 'em, damn it." For Richie, Neville's hostility is apparently rooted in his willingness to live and let live. Neville's refusal to cure The Family can be read as a failure of his inner scientist who has the means to fix the problem but does not. On the other hand, his refusal to kill can be read as an inhibition on his inner poet because his relationship with Lisa seems to have replaced his passion for killing The Family with an idyllic fantasy of escaping into the countryside. Richie's line at first seems naïve but it also echoes Neville's relationship to Cortman in the novel. Neville's sense of himself as the last man, requires a nemesis and some form of victimization, or, to return to Montagu, it's better "to be surrounded by enemies than to be surrounded by nobody." Thus, while Montagu refers to Neville's psychology of the survivor as a universal condition, it is the psychosis itself that constructs Neville's experience as universal. Psychology of the survivor requires the conviction that others did not survive. It is a psychosis because it cannot recognize other survivors. Neville is hostile because he needs The Family to affirm that he is last man, especially in the face of a new survivor community that embraces him. The Family is not obsessed with the ritual sacrifice of Dutch in part because Dutch is not associated with the cure, even though they do not yet know that the cure is in Neville's blood.

The Family are dying from their disease and yet Matthias is hysterically hostile to any suggestion of a cure. Their whole system of faith and community is bound up in their shared suffering. Richie cannot accept that The Family may prefer to live within the integrity of their infected status and may find the cure to be ruinous. But Neville doesn't make this argument. Rather, he says that The Family are "vermin" and are already "half-dead." This language echoes the language that Matthias uses when referring to Neville. When Neville is captured by The Family, interrogated and put on trial, Matthias is given a platform to spread his own gospel. He describes Neville as "the last of the bankers, of businessmen, the users of the wheel," "part of the dead," "obsolete," "discarded," and "refuse of the past." Both Neville and Matthias use the term "dead" to legitimate their violence against one another, thus creating a sense that it is only the infected survivor community in the film who are not metaphorically undead. The nemesis relationship that Neville and Matthias enjoy empowers both of them. Matthias has an enemy towards whom to direct the psychotic violence that the tertiary phase of the disease brings on. Neville, both in *Omega Man* and in Matheson's novel, get to be reassured of his significance. Not only has he taken it upon himself to be the final man, but he has a murderous mob's obsession to confirm that assumption. If they burn art and technology, it only affirms his entitlement to those artifacts. For Lisa, Richie, and Dutch, survival prior to the events in the film had consisted in avoiding this obsessive rivalry. The events of the film, however, drag these innocents into the clash between moral orders.

In the logic of undeath as Waller traces it, the survivor community must eliminate the undead in order to assure their future. In Matheson's novel, this logic is flipped, but mostly retained. The living man becomes the lone monster and the undead become the

survivor community. Matthias continues this narrative logic when he tells Neville

"You're the Angle of Death, Doctor. Not us." Narratively, the community's slaying of

the monster can resolve the story but a happy ending for the monster would prove

difficult to conclude because extermination is, by its nature, methodical and anti-

climactic. Of course *Omega Man* must end with Neville's death. Like Morgan, Neville is

speared. Instead of collapsing at an altar, he collapses in a fountain which colors with his

"160 proof Anglo-Saxon" purifying blood. Heston throws out his arms, and crosses his

legs, striking a Christ-like repose. The Family is now free to rebuild their perfect society

within the ruins of the old. However, by creating a viable third community that resists

both Neville and Matthias's moral orders, the film extends beyond their obsessive rivalry

and thus contains additional narrative threads that need to be resolved.

The film ends not when Matthias kills Neville, but when Dutch takes the children

out of the city. The fountain of blood suggests both the wasted cure and the slim

possibility that members of The Family, in drinking the water, will be cured. However,

the community that is rejuvenated by Neville's blood escapes and the blood in the

fountain has little meaning to them next to the very concrete flask of serum Neville

passes over to Dutch in his exceptionally stoic and masculine last moments. The serum is

symbolically conflated with another legacy that Neville leaves with the infected children:

it is his idea that they leave the city to start their civilization anew. The film ends with a

dual promise that the multiracial hippie commune of children led by Dutch will both be

able to cure the disease and be able to return to nature in the creation of a new Eden. Yet

the new community is led by a white patriarch who was inspired by a white patriarch.

Neville sells Dutch on the idea by describing their destination as "someplace nobody ever

bothered with. A river nobody ever damned, a mountain nobody built any blood freeway to, where everything we do will be the first time it happened." Paradoxically, Neville bestows this legacy by selling Dutch on its originality. The land itself bears the burden of Neville's expectations and the new society begins as a fantasy of the old.

Neither of the film's remaining Black characters make it to this promised idyllic end. Lisa has transitioned to the tertiary phase and thus can only join the new society as the first test subject on whom Dutch will initiate Neville's cure legacy. Richie has been killed and, even worse, cheated of the individuality of his death. Matthias kills him because of his association with Neville. He is not sacrificed as an enemy of the Family or even exterminated as an impersonal threat to their existence. He is killed only as a means of provoking Neville. Symbolically, however, his death is presented as a result of his refusal to accept Neville's "hostile" relationship with Matthias. Richie does not understand that for Neville, the rivalry with Matthias lost centrality once Lisa arrived and ended his isolation. For Neville to be part of the regenerative new society, he has to reject the obsessive rivalry. Richie's "cure 'em or kill'em" ultimatum demands that Neville seek a resolution, after which Neville would have to find meaning in Lisa and the rest of the survivor community. Richie believes that The Family and Neville are in pragmatic conflict and thus the conflict can be resolved. However, Neville and Matthias are locked in a mutually-constitutive narcissistic loop. Neville's status as the good-guy requires The Family, much in the way whiteness can only be prioritized when there are other bodies that can be raced and have privileges denied based upon those racial labels. Neville would rather be killed than be deprived his nemesis and the demands of the film's

narrative tension and closure ensure that the audience share this drive. Richie must be killed because he, like Lisa, threatens Neville's centrality to the film.

The film also contains Lisa's threat to Neville's centrality. At the end of the film, she is fully infected and yet she stays by Neville's side. Dutch and the children bring her with them, where presumably she will be purified with Neville's blood and only then, as the bearer of his legacy, will she be able to fully join their community and transfer the purity of his blood to others. In this way, the power of the Black characters is neutered. Richie will not threaten the clash of civilizations that justifies white supremacy and Lisa's disavowals of Neville's authority will be invalidated by her need of his blood and by the need of the community to rehabilitate her. Neville death is ultimately the only way that he is able to retain a central role within the narrative.

CHAPTER 4. RACE, GENDER, AND THE DEADLY LOGIC OF LOOKING IN
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

4.1   Introduction

Night of the Living Dead (1968), here after referred to as *Night*, is widely

accepted as the foundational moment of the modern movie zombie. While the film

prefers the term "ghoul" to zombie in describing the living dead, it is this film that

compiled the various mutations of zombies in the past three decades into a form that has

become the industry standard ever since.[105] After *Night*, zombies would be driven only by

hunger, cannibalistic, and shambling. The film's director, editor and author of the short

story on which the original screenplay was based, George A. Romero has been clear in

interviews that his tale was based on the vision of the undead presented in *Last Man on*

Earth (1964), the first film version of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend.* Even in the

beginning, Romero knew that the potential of the genre was not in the development of the

monster itself, but in the play of power relations involved in the response to the

disruption the monster caused: *"I thought I Am Legend* was about revolution. I said if

you're going to do something about revolution you should start at the beginning. I mean,

Richard starts his book with one man left; everybody in the world has become a vampire.

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[105] The zombie had been steadily moving away from the defining characteristics of Vodoun *zonbi* even in
the genre's first film *White Zombie* (1932). That Romero's ghouls and Matheson's vampires quickly
replaced the enslaved undead only serves to underscore the fact that zombie narratives have always been
about the privileged subjectivities of the norm more than the polymorphous possibilities of the Other for
which the monster is a pro

I said we got to start at the beginning and tweak it up a little bit" (quoted in McConnell). Where Matheson's tale focuses on the solitary figure of Robert Neville, an instance of hegemonic masculinity struggling to adapt to a hostile world, *Night* returns the undead genre to a tale of the survivor community, where hegemonic identity must be negotiated amongst multiple subject positions.

Night is not simply complicit in the reinscription of hegemonic identities, however. Instead, the plot develops as a progressive rejection of each potential survivor identity culminating in the film's only potential hero's death. Not only can a survivable identity not be discovered, but the dynamics of the community that negotiate survival proves toxic, self-defeating, and ultimately deadly. The cast of characters in *Night* reads as a summary of genre conventions. The film opens with Barbara and Johnny, the virginal beautiful white woman and the hegemonic white man. Johnny is quickly killed and the film introduces Ben, the potential replacement of Johnny as a radically different masculine ideal. As the film progresses, we are also introduced to a nuclear family of Harry, Helen and Karen Cooper, along with the regenerative romantic couple Tom and Judy. Not only is each character systematically killed off, the plot develops in such a way that each character is killed seemingly as punishment specifically for conforming to these tropes. The survivor community of this film lacks mentorship, it lacks comprehension of available resources, and it lacks a unifying masculine identity to either serve a leader or even an ideal to aspire to. In short, it lacks patriarchy. This chapter will explore the ways in which *Night* interprets each of these characters' roles within hegemony and why it ultimately rejects them. In particular, I will discuss the development of Ben and Barbara, the two characters who most challenge genre conventions.

Clearly, *Night* is not the first narrative to address the many subordinate subject positions required to sustain the hegemonic masculinity of US Empire. What makes this film unique and I believe a major factor in the film's ongoing popularity and seminal cult status is the film's interrogation of the assumed complicity of two of these subordinated subjectivities: the white woman and the black man. *Night* introduces a black male lead at a time in US history when representations of black men were still primarily accommodating, submissive and focused on being nonthreatening. But the film also ends with its more powerful, fully developed black male lead being lynched. That singular fact may not account for the cult classic status of the film, but it certainly demands that any examination of the film must grapple with race and with the peculiar racial history of the United States. Ben's death functions less as a critique of the strategic masculinity that he develops throughout the film and more as a reject the violence required to sustain hegemony in the face of a crisis. This is why he dies at the hands of a human militia rather than at the hands of the undead. Barbara may die at the hands of the undead, but the subject position she represents throughout the film participates in a much larger conversation about female spectatorship. Barbara is punished more than any other character and when Romero produced a remake of the film in 1990, the character of Barbara was completely reinvented in response to two decades of feminist scholarship on tropes within horror.

It is difficult to argue that a Hollywood film is ever truly oppositional to hegemony because the politics of production severely limit what sorts of films can be produced and distributed. However, *Night* is definitively not a Hollywood film. The film was conceived, self-funded and executed by a group of entrepreneurs whose primary

experience consisted of producing local commercial campaigns in Pittsburgh. Only the

two leads were even semi-professional actors. Judith O'Dea, who plays Barbara, did

television commercials and Duane Jones, who plays Ben, was teaching drama at NYC as

part of his postdoctoral program. The tale of both the film's budget limitations and the

enthusiasm of community volunteers who donated their time and many of the film's

props are the stuff of internet fandom legends. Even more so is the tale of the film's

distribution by Continental, a boundary pushing underdog company whose careless

regard for copyright left the film functionally public domain once Continental folded. Yet

the legendary status of Romero as a self-made auteur-genius who was cheated by the

system is a self-serving fiction that privileges exactly the sort of hegemonic masculinity

myths that the film so effectively critiques.[106] *Night* was a collaborative project that

managed to tap into a range of social tensions and coalesced into a stark, nihilistic artifact

that resonated strongly both with its initial dual audiences in suburban drive-ins and

inner-city second-run theaters and with the artistic community at large, taking European

art houses by storm and eventually dragging Romero into the avant garde cinema circuit

upon its return to the US.

     In previous chapters, I have argued that zombie films serve as pedagogies that aid

in the production of imperial subjectivities. I have primarily focused on the forms of

masculinity produced because the films are androcentric. In each film, multiple

discourses negotiate, using the zombies as a litmus test to determine the form of

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[106] While the limits of this narrative cannot be overstated, it is also important to acknowledge the benefits of thinking of Romero as the isolated creative genius. Through Romero, the politics of horror film production have become much more widely understood and consumer demand has become more sophisticated in pursuing projects that may not otherwise get sufficient production or distribution budgets.

masculinity best suited to leadership in a time of crisis. Forms of femininity in these films, with the notable exception of *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) and *Sugar Hill* (1974), have been presented not as models for the women in the audience to emulate, but as examples of what appropriately masculine subjects can expect of their imperial feminine counterparts in the form of a reward. Beginning in the 1960s, and in no small part informed by the critique of hegemonic masculinity in Matheson's *I Am Legend,* some zombie narratives begin to articulate other possible subject positions and even non-Imperial masculinities. While Ed Guerrero only devotes a single paragraph of his *Framing Blackness: The African American image in Film* to *Night*, his reading of the film as critical of whiteness serves as a good starting point for this argument: "In *Night*, the black protagonist battles a multitude of white zombies that, in contrast to his energetic, heroic struggle for survival, signify an infectious, suffocating sense of culturally dead whiteness" (57). In this chapter, I will flesh-out why exactly it is that whiteness in *Night* is culturally dead.

By my reading, Romero's film challenges the tradition of white masculinity established in previous zombie narratives in two interconnected ways: first, it sets the stage for the development of the trope of the Final Girl which came to dominate the horror genre in the 1970s and 1980s. Second, it illustrates the repercussions of a hegemonic white masculinity that is constructed primarily through an ideology of visuality. In feminist film theory and popular culture criticism, this ideology of visuality has been called the male gaze. Nicholas Mirzoeff connects the long history of visuality directly to race-based colonialism, and locates its beginning in the formation of the slave plantation. In his book *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (2011), Mirzoeff

opposes the totalizing authority created by visuality with "the right to look," the capacity to independently pursue and interpret daily experience, including the intersubjective gaze. In this chapter, I want to examine how Barbara and Ben, the dual protagonists of *Night,* struggle to claim the right to look and in doing so, challenge the ideological regime of hegemonic masculinity as partially manifest in the white male gaze.

This chapter argues that nation-building is tied-up in visuality and thus when *Night* rejects the white-supremacist model of US nationalism, it does so by rejecting the visual authority of the white male gaze. This rejection comes in two parts. First, it comes through Ben, the black man whose heroism is structured around rejecting visuality and asserting his own Right to Look. The second part is Barbara, whose victimhood demonstrates the violence of visuality. Ben is recognizable as an early iteration of the empowered black man who would become a pervasive trope in the films of the 1970s. I will also argue that Barbara's troubled relationship with the male gaze, and thus with the white woman's role in nation-building, represents a stage in the development of Hollywood representations of women that in the coming decades of the 1970s and 80s would emerge as the trope of the Final Girl. Indeed, in 1990, Romero participated in the remaking of *Night* and the new film, while lacking much of the craft and force of the original, invites the audience to re-read the original film, and in particular, the character of Barbara who, in 1990, has developed into a mature, competent Final Girl, complete with gun and explicitly symbolic pants.

Night (1968) has a fairly straightforward plot. We open with two siblings, Johnny and Barbara, visiting their father's grave at dusk. A ghoul attacks, killing Johnny, and Barbara flees to a nearby farmhouse where she hopes to hide. Upon discovering partially

consumed human remains, she attempts to flee the house, only to encounter a black man, Ben, who is also seeking shelter in the house. He protects her, attempts to coax her out of her traumatized catatonic state, and fortifies the house. Only then does he seek out the media for advice and an explanation. At the sound of the television, two men emerge from the basement, Harry and Tom. Ben discovers that despite listening to him fighting to save Barbara's life, Tom and Harry have been cowering in the basement with Tom's girlfriend Judy and Harry's wife and child. Harry seeks to claim the fruits of Ben's labor by hording food and the television. A crisis of leadership ensues for the rest of the film, with Harry continually advocating a full retreat to the basement and Ben refusing. Gradually, through failed plans, conflicting advice from the authorities in the media, and group conflict, everyone dies except Ben who is ultimately forced to hide out in the basement. The film ends the following morning when the local militia mistakes Ben for a ghoul, kill him, and dispose of his body. This final scene is *Night*'s most infamous because a posse of white men unceremoniously burning a black man's corpse is clearly an explosive commentary on race relations in the U.S. The 1990 remade makes only two significant changes to this formula: Barbara survives and Ben is killed by Harry.

In addition to killing off all of its characters, *Night* also stylistically challenges the audience's impulse to find a hegemonic masculinity with which to identity. After the death of Johnny, the beautiful white woman is no longer simply an object of the gaze, but now must become the one through whom we witness the terrors to come. Later in the film, through a marvelous testament to the craft of filmmaking, the audience will be invited to identify instead with Ben, quickly abandoning Barbara almost as soon as Ben appears on screen. With Barbara, the audience has to consider what it means for the

object to require agency when she has no precedent for claiming subjectivity. With Ben, the audience is presented with DuBois's old question: when a black man is forced to know himself as he is reflected in the mirror of white supremacy, how can he distinguish what part of him is rejected through that standard and what part is American?[107] This chapter will argue for the Americanness of Ben, reading *Night*'s iconic final scene as simultaneously an acknowledgment of the violent reality of white supremacy yet also a rejection of that ideology as properly American. Barbara's story is a bit more complicated, however. Unlike Ben, she does not show us a possible American identity that might just be best suited for survival. It won't be until a 1990 remake of the film that *Night* provides us with a beautiful white woman with whom we can identify and in whom we can find a pedagogy for nation-building subjects.

This film lacks a clear protagonist and thus I will examine multiple possible protagonists with whom the audience can identify, assuming that screen-time and audience identification are connected. I will consider death order and the means by which each character dies as statement about each subject position's value to the creation of national hegemonic ideals and vulnerability in a state of emergency. I will then explore how the competing masculinities in the film succeed or fail in utilizing available resources, both physical and psychological. One of these resources, in both the physical

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[107] DuBois's actual words are: "What part of him is a nigger and what part American." At no point in the film does Ben ever allow white supremacy to interpolate him into the designator of "nigger" and it would be ridiculous to ask what part of Ben is black and what part is American, since his Americaness and blackness can only be set in opposition within the framework of white supremacy. Yet the question remains because, historically, in Ben's specific case, and as has been explored in this larger project, the gaze at play continues to be white and continues to threaten to slip into white supremacy at any moment. The image of blackness reflected in such a funhouse mirror cannot be called black, nor can a black character or any audience member who wishes to identify with him ignore that distorted apparition.

and psychological senses, is the farmhouse in which the film is predominantly set. The house in this film operates as a metaphor for the ideological family and, through the individualist logic of capitalism, also as a metonymy for the nation. One of the advantages of the house as a metaphor for the nation is that the living dead's assault draws attention to the distinction between interior and exterior. In order to understand the importance of an undead uprising as a crisis of the nation, we must also understand the function of windows within the film's regime of visuality. Windows are a tool of the gaze, and when those windows are mobilized, as they are in the instance of an automobile, then the ideology of the nation is also mobilized, naturalizing colonialism. While *Night* (1968) is indisputably a product of the Vietnam War, the film's critique of imperialist nationalism is interested not in our actions overseas, but in our conscription of subordinated masculinities within our borders into the nationalist project.[108] I will end this chapter by turning to the character of Barbara and how two decades of feminist film criticism contributed to the vastly different treatment she receives in the two versions of the film. By 1990, Barbara has replaced Ben as the film's endorsed alternative to hegemonic masculinity.

I'm certainly not the first person to say that the zombie stands in for alterity. However, I believe that the zombie stands in for a specific kind of alterity – the zombie is the Other who is produced by the white male gaze. The zombie is a monster because the universality and objectivity assumed by the white male gaze results in visuality itself being the product of colonial and patriarchal entitlement. This is a serious and sweeping

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[108] Tom Savini, who directed the 1990 *Night* was part of the original creative team in 1968 but ended up serving in Vietnam during the production of the original film.

accusation. We live in a visual age. Our subjectivities, our technologies and how we relate to the world around us are defined, in large part, by our immersion in visuality. To declare that visuality itself is a product of white male privilege, as I am demands that social institutions, technologies and subject positions, all of which have changed radically under the reign of visuality, be called into question. This is precisely why I think the zombie is important. The zombie, which I have argued elsewhere was invented as a means for hegemonic masculinity to reify itself, is defined by visuality and often presents a threat in precisely the degree to which it either legitimates white male authority or, conversely, undermines visuality as a regime.

4.2 Review of Scholarship

I will be bringing together two general groups of scholarship. The first is the portion of zombie scholars who treat *Night s*pecifically. While most zombie scholars are interested in *Night*'s influence on the legacy of zombies as a monster, I will highlight the aspects of this body of work that addresses the survivor community. Many scholars who treat *Night* are also deeply interested in the film's unique politics of production. Unfortunately, the independence of the film is often translated into an overstated emphasis on Romero as an auteur. As primary writer, director and editor, Romero certainly can be credited for the film's exquisite and consistent tone. However, the creative labor or the rest of the film crew is overlooked by many scholars. Other scholars, such as Ben Hervey maintain a distinction between the fan-fiction persona of Romero and what he calls "The Image Ten," meaning the film's ten principle financial investors. Even Hervey's more inclusive term erases a good deal of labor, however, because it

excludes the actors, volunteers, and off-camera talent who joined the project. Given the film's radical racial politics, the erasure of black labor in the making of *Night*, posits Romero as a larger-than-life hero of US race relations. To sufficiently discuss race in this film, this chapter must first devote a section to demythologizing Romero as a solitary creative genius.

The second group of scholars covers a broad range interested in practices of looking. This group can itself be divided into those interested in visuality and those who instead critique the gaze. Feminist film scholars have developed a rich psychoanalytic tradition around the notion the gaze and its gendered uses in horror, while scholars of visual culture have demonstrated that our understanding of vision since the mid nineteenth century has been tied up with Eurocentric notions of knowledge production and the corresponding power relations of colonialism. Given the radical position of Ben as a subversive masculinity, I want to examine how his relationship to the gaze differs from that of other masculinities within the film. However, in order to give due consideration to *Night*'s treatment of race, I will explore the ways that the film attempts to forge an alliance between the white woman and the black man, and between the groups of scholars who address them. Why does that alliance fail, both in the films and in the separate schools of scholarship? Ultimately, I want to argue that these two schools of scholarship can be reunited by turning our focus back onto the ideology of visuality and not how it oppresses us individually, but how it serves to construct a limited possibility of

"imperial white supremacist capitalist hetero-patriarchy," one that is not sufficiently stable enough to withstand the onslaught of the undead. [109]

My interest in the pedagogy of a properly nationalist masculinity within the survivor community is uncommon. The majority of scholars who treat *Night* have shown more interest in the ghouls than in the survivors. The most influential treatment of *Night* can be found in Steve Shaviro's *The Cinematic Body.* For Shaviro, the zombie is a bodily critic of capitalism and Romero is a prophet of the postcapitalist future. In a Freudian reading, the zombie is uncanny because it has the surface appearance of a person yet it lacks interior states. For Shaviro, this lack of interior states liberates the zombie from individualist political ideologies necessary to support capitalism. Heavily indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the The Body Without Organs, Shaviro's treatment of zombies has itself inspired Lauro and Embry to write their call to a post-identity subjectivity in "A Zombie Manifesto." Taken together these scholars form a community of zombie theorists who are interested in the revolutionary possibilities of the swarming undead. The zombie addressed within this critical frame is pure labor, pure revolt, pure surface, or in Shaviro's terms, "quintessential media images" (84), the result of the postmodern process much bemoaned by Fredrick Jameson, of flattening things to their surface in the postmodern aesthetic. The zombie is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the "only modern myth" (355). Yet it takes Lauro and Embry to connect the zombie back to its roots as an aftershock of colonial slavery in the Caribbean. Zombie

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[109] The masculinities I trace in zombie films often subscribe to what bell hooks calls "imperial white-supremacist, capitalist hetero-patriarchy." Both the imperial and hetero modifiers have been added in her lectures, but the original spirit of the phrase, and the power of naming this value system and the political system it supports, remains the same since she published it in "Understanding Patriarchy," *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 200, pg 28.

narratives since *Night* have certainly coincided with the schizophrenic model set out in

Anti-Oedipus. Given that *Night* toured art houses in Europe and that *Anti-Oedipus* was

published within four years of the film's release, it is highly likely that Romero's ghouls

contributed in some small way to the formation of Deleuze and Guattari's theory.

While such theories are certainly entertaining and can challenge their readers to

consider alternate means of subject formation or other modes of becoming that exist

beyond the narrow confines of a subject, this line of analysis is not ultimately useful for

the project at hand. Shaviro claims that "[t]he zombie does not . . . stand for a threat to

social order from without. Rather, they resonate with, and reconfigure, the very processes

that produce and enforce social order" (86). Thus in Shaviro's frame, "social order"

conflates the nation and the survivor community, making undeath the only alternative to

hegemony. Such analyses do not address the formation of power relations within the

survivor community or between the survivor community and the nation and its agents,

thus do not address the concerns that have informed the previous chapters. This is not to

say that the Deleuzian framework fails to suggest a course of action, as such abstractions

are often accused. In the face of a swarm of Bodies Without Organs, certainly the best

option would simply be to join them. Unfortunately, joining the ranks of the undead is

only an option in the event of an actual zombie-lead apocalypse. *Night* ends with the re-

assertion of the state apparatus represented not by the government or military, but by a

local militia.[110] Even in such seemingly hopeless conditions as *Night* depicts, to embrace

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[110] The other films in Romero's *Dead* sequence depict far greater success for the zombie revolution, but this chapter is treating *Night* specifically. It could be argued that the other films succeed in imagining possible social orders beyond the nation and thus would require a more sustained engagement with Shaviro and a greater distinction between the significations of the nation and the state.

a state of becoming zombie would only result in having one's carcass thrown into a bonfire once the mob reasserts the power of the nation. The power relation that one must negotiate remains with the nation, either through obedience to the state or through joining the mob. Both of those options return the survivor to a state of identification with the hegemonic subjectivity of the nation. The survivor community in *Night* is still learning how to manifest the abstraction of the nation into a functional/survivable community.

The other two most widely read Romero scholars who treat *Night* are Robin Wood and Annalee Newitz. While Wood only treats *Night* briefly, his book *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* is hugely influential in establishing the methodology and theoretical framework that underlies most scholarship on the film. Wood's methodology relies heavily on psychoanalysis and is interested in the tension between the monster and normalcy as well as the wish fulfillment function of horror films after the 1960s. Newitz writes for a more general audience and therefore privileges her overall frameworks and their relevance to contemporary race relations and class politics over close readings of specific texts. In *Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture* she includes *Night* in a longer history of race policing that includes the legacy of H.P. Lovecraft's xenophobia as well as the infamous film *Birth of a Nation* (1914). Newitz argues that "*Night* is in many ways an updated version of *Birth,* except this time around the upwardly mobile black man is the film's hero, rather than its locus of evil and terror. Ben, the level-headed black protagonist of *Night*, is clearly marked as both middle-class and a leader" (109). Newitz's emphasis on Ben's middle-class status contrasts sharply with Hervey's reading of the film, which emphasizes the critique of the middle class. Newitz argues that racism is presented as low-class in the film, and thus the ideology of

the film prioritizes capitalism over colonialism (111). However, Hervey's reading emphasizes the changes in Ben between the original script and the film production. Ben was initially written as a working-class white character. What stays consistent between the script and the film is the less sympathetic depiction of Harry, Ben's primary rival and the film's representative of hegemonic middle-class masculinity. If we read Harry's moral failings as rooted in unconscious white-supremacy, as Newitz argues, then the film claims moral legitimacy for the race-blind middle-class values of contemporary capitalism, as embodied in Ben's superior performance of middle-class masculinity. If, however, we see in Harry the hysteria of a gender performance deprived of its scripts, as Hervey's reading suggests, then the film instead privileges Ben's adaptability and thus critiques the false stability of an American middle-class sustained by the economic, political, and military violence of an enduring colonial order.

I strongly favor this second reading and find it is compatible with critiques of the gaze and visuality that I will argue are essential to understanding the enduring popularity of the zombie genre. What unites feminist scholars of the gaze and scholars of visuality is a suspicion of the assumed nature of the observer in modern visual theory and practice. To summarize briefly, scholars of visuality are concerned with what Martin Jay calls the "scopic regimes of modernity," or the different conceptions of sight as the "master sense of the modern era," as compared to, for example, hearing in a culture that prioritizes verbal communication as the primary mode of transferring knowledge (3). In *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (1990), Jonathan Crary plumbs the histories of philosophy, technology, and art to demonstrate that "beginning in the early nineteenth century, a new set of relations between the body on

one hand and forms of institutional and discursive power on the other redefined the status of an observing subject" (3). Writing on the cusp of a digital media revolution, Crary is particularly concerned with the relationship between the embodied observer and networks of knowledge, and what he sees as the "ongoing abstraction of vision" (3). For Jay, it is important to distinguish between multiple competing visual subcultures. The most widely recognized is Cartesian perspectivalism, a theory of vision with corresponding practices of both data collection and representation that assumes continuity between science and nature, that is to say between observation and a stable, independent, external reality. It also allows for the representation of three dimensional images in a two dimensional space, such as both the use of perspective in painting and the creation of visual representations of limited data set to convey presumably sufficient and relevant information. Critiques of Cartesian perspectivalism claim it assumes a singular eye capable of "producing a visual take that was eternalized, reduced to one 'point of view,' and disembodied" (Crary 7). This disembodied eye has become the focus of a great deal of feminist film criticism because such objectivity has traditionally been ascribed to a male observer, whose gaze empowers him to rendered women as mere objects of his gaze.

In *The Right to Look*, Mirzoeff recontextualizes Cartesian perspectivalism from Crary's vision of philosophy and art to far less gentile sites of production for this new regime of vision: the plantation and the battlefield. For Mirzoeff, visuality must be understood not merely as a matter of who can know and how such knowledge calls them into a specifically embodied subjectivity. Any regime of visuality also includes assumptions about who can be known through looking and thus, how the gaze is formed

within existing power relationships and then in turn forms those power relationships. While both approaches are interested in the ways that techniques of visualizing became naturalized, for Mirzoeff, this process is far more political: "Visuality supplemented the violence of authority and its separations, forming a complex that came to seem natural by virtue of its investment in 'history'" (Mirzoeff 3). In the plantation model, the role of the overseer is primarily visual, thus reducing the enslaved to their function within a system of production. The violence of the plantation house is similar to that of Foucault's panopticon. Mirzoeff then combines the disciplinary mode of the plantation with the epistemological model of the battlefield in which partial reports are combed and combined until a coherent vision of the battlefield emerges. While this vision is only ever an approximate representation, it is granted truth value and informs crucial strategic decisions. While Mirzoeff does not detail an explicit postcolonial critique of this scopic regime or viable alternatives, he answer's Jay's call to recognize the contested ground of an visual practice and traces the historical emergence of resistant scopic regimes employed by enslaved peoples.

The Male Gaze is a well-established institution in feminist film theory, which notes that the ways films and other visual media frame women's bodies, encourages viewers to objectify and gradually dehumanize women. In *Night*, the gaze rarely functions to objectify or sexualize women. Instead, the film is in constant conflict with a gaze that is identified with national ideology broadly rather than patriarchy specifically. In order to understand how this nationalist gaze functions and how the film challenges that gaze, we can add to feminist film theory the postcolonial work of visual theorist. For Mirzoeff, visuality assumes that top-down direction is needed in order to stimulate the

desired effects. It privileges a singular world view as a unifying vision and by making that vision manifests in the community, it creates a singular gaze through which the community must engage the world. Under such a gaze, even members of the community can become alienated, seeing themselves through the gaze rather than asserting their right to look upon the community. In effect, when the gaze is imposed as an epistemology onto the community, it generates community members as looking subjects. In order to orient themselves to the gaze, they must occupy the social space from which the gaze originated, forsaking their own position. Thus a film that presents the female body as an object of the gaze forces female viewers to take that stance against their own subject position. Likewise, when a justice system sees a black citizen first as black and as citizen only second, that citizen must always remain cognizant of their race as an alienation from national community membership and the justice such membership is supposed to ensure. The gaze imposes meaning and requires that community members accept those meanings. The gaze tells us what is significant and what is beneath our notice.

For Mirzoeff, visuality can be countered by the right to look, a concept that seems to echo bell hooks' oppositional gaze of the black female spectator.[111] What these concepts share is the notion, familiar from feminist film theory, that we can reject the subject position to which visuality calls us. Both Laura Mulvey and Carol Clover argue that film viewers can experience a transsexual identification[112] with the male gaze of popular cinema, but what hooks and Mirzoeff suggest is that we assert our right to gaze at

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[111] See hooks, bell, Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies, New York: Routledge, 1996.

[112] In abstract discussions of audience identification and the gaze, the idea of transsexual identification has become completely divorced from actual transsexual rights and the related social and political battles.

the gaze itself. In the former example, feminist film critics are arguing for the possibility of visual pleasure for audience members who must adopt the subject position of the camera. Hooks instead proposes that those who are represented can turn the gaze back onto the representation rather than accommodate themselves. Mirzoeff, while not addressing media representation and narrative pleasure, also argues that we can reclaim our own capacity to generate meaning and we don't have to limit ourselves to the possibilities delineated by the authority of visuality.

Often films identify protagonists not only as anchors of the plot, but as those who share with the audience the artificial subject position identified with the camera. In my discussion below of death order and audience identification, I will explore *Night* on the level of character development and plot. But the challenges this film poses to the normative subject position of the citizen also engages with the basic functioning of visuality itself through the relationship of the two main characters to the gaze. Ben and Barbara are not looking subjects. Within the national myth, both the black man and the white woman are constructed as objects of the gaze, while black women and most people of other races are excluded from even that position. However, in this film Ben and Barbara both become subjects who look and thus have to negotiate the logics of looking, which, in this case, turn deadly. To better understand these deadly logics, I borrow from Linda Williams who "examine[s] the various ways the woman is punished for looking" in horror (18). According to Williams, the horror genre does not simple accept the position of the woman as object:

> The female look—a look given preeminent position in the horror film—
>
> shares the male fear of the monster's freakishness, but also recognizes the

> sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference. For she
>
> too has been constituted as an exhibitionist-object of desire and an object
>
> of horror as far as the male look is concerned. (20-21)

I claim the dynamic described here continues when the audience of *Night* transfers its identification from Barbara to Ben. Like Barbara, Ben has been reduced to an exhibitionist-object of desire. Throughout the film, both Ben and Barbara are punished for looking, although Barbara is certainly more vulnerable to the horror of the ghouls. This paper will also address how both these protagonists interact with technologies that underscore visual authority, including windows, cars, and the media. Part of what makes this film so transgressive is that the audience is alienated from the gaze as these technologies fail Barbara and are repurposed by Ben. As subjects who assert their own right to look, both Ben and Barbara are punished but what I am positing for Ben in 1968 and for Barbara in the film's 1990 remake is that each at one point wields a look that, in the words of Williams, "both sees and understands the structure of seeing that would entrap" (27).

4.3   Politics of Production

There are two important contexts in which to understand *Night* as an artifact. First, is of course the fact that the film was produced in the late 1960s. Second, one must understand the status of Romero and his team within the larger televisual industry. Both of these contexts are well treated in Hervey's short overview for the BFI Film Classics series. This small monograph roughly follows the plot of the film with interludes of contextual insights. In Hervey's treatment, both the grassroots production strategies and

the politics of the period loom large. However, Hervey's approach is limited. By focusing on the immediate culture context, Hervey's treatment of the film can only account for the experiences of audience members during the film's initial release. For audience members who, like Romero and the other members of the filmmaking crew, came of age in the era of nuclear panic, Hervey's focus on bomb shelters may be quite telling. But *Night*'s impact extends far beyond its initial release, and even beyond its revival in European art houses. Hervey does not address the film, as I do, in terms of its role in the larger legacy of zombie films. Certainly, many of Hervey's points continue to resonate for audiences, including the middle-class patriarchal tyranny of Harry Cooper and the racial positioning of Ben. Yet audience members who cannot comprehend the fear mongering of the nuclear panic can still appreciate the importance of windows as site of vulnerability, as a weakness in the defenses, to give just one example. The continued resonances of this film suggests, as I have argued throughout this project, that the issues at the heart of the zombie film's popularity are resurgent.

Authorship and the cult of Romero's personality also present a bit of trouble for Hervey. Even after insisting on addressing the collective of filmmakers who produced *Night* as Image Ten, Hervey nonetheless falls into the general auteural trend within scholarship on the film.

> At this distance, it's impossible to disentangle who did what or had which idea, so I will speak of 'the Image Ten' or 'the film-makers' when a decision wasn't clearly Romero's. Indeed Romero wasn't even chosen to direct until pre-production was well under way. Nonetheless, *Night* is his

> film more than anyone else's, and he ended up doing more than most
>
> "auteurs." (Hervey 12)

Romero edited, directed, co-wrote and most actively rewrote the film during production.

Certainly, of the original creative team, Romero was the only one to persist in making

successful films.[113] Films are never the sole product of their directors, yet Romero's

extensive control over the film is perhaps more justification for an auteur interpretation of

the film than many of the commonly accepted auteurs of film history.

Night is often read in terms of its positioning of its black male character Ben, as

well as the film's role in the larger story of representations of blacks in film. Black film

scholars are not particularly enamored with the film. Indeed, *From Sambo to Superspade:*

The Black Experience in Motion Pictures by Daniel J. Leab excludes the film even

though the book is often concerned with the difference between black-created and black-

acted films.[114] Such dismissals of this film would be understandable if Romero were its

sole creator. However, black actor Duane Jones made crucial revisions to the film's

original concept and thus is also responsible for much of the film's messages about race

and the racialized male body. As black film historian Thomas Cripps as shown

exhaustively in his books *Slow Fade to Black* (1977), *Black Film as Genre* (1978), and

Making Movies Black (1993), there are precious few films that have allowed full creative

control to black filmmakers. We can usefully distinguish between films that were

targeted at black audiences and films that attempted to present a different experience for

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[113] Russo did continue to write for films and direct, but never managed to rival the success of *Night*.

[114] It is worth noting, however, that Leab wrote *From Sambo to Superspade* in 1973, quite early in the Blaxploitation cycle, and, while after *Night*'s release, this was nevertheless prior to *Night*'s more widespread popularity, which Hervey dates around

different audiences. In seeking films that are the result of unfettered black creative work,

scholars risk getting lost in the minutest gradations. Cripps warns that in our efforts to

isolate purely black creative work in the history of film "we should argue forever over

who has the right to dance on the head of a pin" (Cripps, *Genre* 11). [115]

Robin Means Coleman explanation provides a rubric more useful than Leab's

exclusive standards regarding creative control or even Cripp's defense of ambiguity. As

Means Coleman explains, "Black film is about Black experiences and Black cultural

traditions — a Black cultural milieu and history swirling around and impacting Blacks'

lives in America" (7). While Jones may have had considerable influence over how

blackness is represented in *Night*, he was still performing a black character in a story

about white communities and white culture. Means Coleman squarely locates *Night* in the

"blacks in film" category as opposed to the "black films" category. *Night* may have been

released to predominantly black theaters but it is not a black film.

In *Framing Blackness*, Guerrero argues that "no Hollywood film of any Black

image is the result of a single individual's inspiration or effort, but is a collaborative

venture in which aesthetics, economics and politics share (sometimes antagonistically)

influences." *Night* is not a Hollywood film, but this statement still applies. All films are

collaborative projects and in the case of *Night*, the collaboration brings together the fight

for dignified representations of blackness in films and the legacy of white masculine

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[115] Of course, there are films that can be safely declared "black films" by Means Coleman's standards, such as the films of Oscar Micheaux and another film starring Jones, Bill Gunn's spectacular vampire horror *Ganja and Hess* (1973). While Gunn faced much of the same oversight from white studio executives that contributed to the Blaxploitation movement in general, like Val Lewton before him, Gunn was able to take the funding and requirements the studio provided him and manipulate those constraints to create a truly innovative, provocative, and deeply human film.

pedagogy in undead narratives. The film also demonstrates the erasure of such

collaborations within the auteur tradition of film criticism. Romero has made a career out

of being the father of the modern zombie and yet anyone who has compared *Night* with

any of his other films, including any other entry in the Dead sequence, knows that this

film is quite unique.[116] Thanks to Romero's embrace of his cult status, there is a wealth of

interviews available in which he discusses his filmmaking. Perhaps because of this, there

is also fine scholarship, such as Hervey's, addressing the various politics of production

for the film. Many aspects of the production are the stuff of internet chatroom legend,

including the fated timing in which Romero learned of the assassination of Robert

Kennedy as he drove the film to the distributor. In the end, while all of this

mythologizing ensures that the film will remain in circulation for decades to come, it also

serves to erase the rest of the film's creative labor force without which Romero's first

film could not have hoped to strike such resonance with its assorted audiences.

It is difficult to discuss *Night* without conflating it with Romero himself, but there

are significant advantages to justify the effort. First, because this film, like all texts, exists

far beyond the limits of authorial intent. While Romero has been generous, and famously

coy, about his intent in interviews over the past several decades, the cult status of this

film is not a result of his self-promotion or even his larger oeuvre. Romero and the Image

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[116] On occasion a film scholar will try to locate *Night*'s racial significance in Romero's personal racial identification. This is a precarious claim, however. Romero has been frank in interviews about his own racial identification:

"I grew up in New York with a Spanish Dad right in the days of West Side Story, where you know the Puerto Rican gangs and shit? My Dad is telling me Puerto Ricans are shit. I have a Latino Dad who's telling me that Puerto Ricans are shit.(laughs) I mean this is a very confusing situation…anyway" (quoted in Karr). Romero's own racial identification was formed far more ambivalently than is suggested by a narrative that privileges his "half-Latino" identity as a cypher for Ben's outsider-inside status.

Ten team may have implanted any number of symbolically weighted images and hidden meanings, but they could not control how audiences responded. The cult status of the film speaks less to the insights of the filmmakers and more to broader cultural resonances. What critics, audiences, other filmmakers, and scholars have done with the film since is more important. The division between Romero's craft and the film's success can be most appreciated when we consider the difference between *Night* and Romero's other zombie films. To date, Romero has helmed five sequels: *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985), *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Diary of the Dead* (2007), and *Survival of the Dead* (2009). While the films are each entertaining and critically insightful, none has captured the power and tonal precision of *Night*. *Dawn* has also garnered critical acclaim and at the time of this writing, was tied with *Night*'s metascore on the Internet Movie Database. *Dawn* and *Night* are quite different films and likely appeal to slightly different audiences. In *Night*, the nihilism is dark and frustrated. That film's critical bite is somewhat inarticulate, pervasive and irreconcilable. However, in *Dawn* as well as the rest of the Dead series, the criticisms are pointed, even overly determined. While *Night* was a releasing of long pent-up tensions, and the violence appears to be rooted in the filmmaker's enjoyment of their craft, the other films are performative and explicitly focused on evoking audience expectations and reactions.

From conception, to production, and including distribution, *Night* is not a typical film and the unorthodox production of *Night* has been incorporated into the larger mythology of the film.. Indeed, it breaks most of the rules. It was not funded by any major studio. No one pitched the concept to producers. Instead, a group of young filmmakers who had the collective experience of shooting commercials and a short for

the popular children's TV show *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*, decided they wanted to make a film. The Image Ten team was a local commercial production team at a time when local commercials were only beginning to be imagined. Romero and his colleagues funded the film from their own pockets, renting a farmhouse as company office, main set and living quarters. They did their own make-up and used nonprofessional actors. But they also received an enormous amount of community support. Real local newscasters agreed to write their own copy for the film's newscasts. Many of the zombies were clients, business owners for whom the filmmakers had made commercials. Even the car that Barbara crashes into a tree was borrowed. The film, in Hervey's description, was a carnivalesque acting out for a community hard hit by economic setbacks and unemployment. Recruiting volunteers and soliciting donations succeeded in no small part because it appealed to the local community's sense of exclusion from the hegemonic ideals of Hollywood. This deeply localized model of filmmaking has only recently, with the proliferation of digital technologies at the millennial turn, become imaginable as a business model, or even as a strategy for infiltrating the Hollywood system.

Of course, the production of films is quite a different accomplishment than securing a distribution contract. *Night* was taken up in part because it featured a black lead and could be shown in the small neighborhood theaters that at the time constituted both black and working class white audience's access to the segregated Hollywood system. Casting Duane Jones as the lead is often interpretted by Romero fans as a race-blind meritocracy and it is certainly plausible that Jones' acting ability caught the attention of the filmmakers. But this myth also serves to erase the race politics of film distribution at the time. Black-audience films were immensely popular and the Image Ten

likely recognized the increased exposure Jones' race would bring. There had not been a resurgence of black filmmaking, yet the black audience film was still a major subsection of the industry. Unfortunately, this sub-industry was not taken seriously by the major film producers. They were not given large budgets at the production stage. They were not considered for wider distribution. "Val Lewton once tried to win an argument with Charles Koerner by pointing out that *Cat People* (1942) had been a hit; his boss retorted: 'The only people who saw that film were Negroes and defense workers'" (Hervey 45). This segregation within the industry afforded creative control for filmmakers, but even while making films were specifically targeted to black audiences, the filmmakers themselves were rarely black.

When it came time for distribution, the film simply could not be forced into the traditional channels. In *Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold*, Kevin Heffernan explains the unique politics of *Night*'s distribution and the importance of Continental as the film's distribution company. Continental head Walter Reade was challenging industry standard in two ways. First, he was fighting censorship and age classification and therefore specifically sought films whose edgy subject matter could be linked to political messages (Heffernan 210). Second, because he was predicting major shifts in the distribution industry: "Throughout the sixties, Reade asserted that the days were over for the movie with universal appeal and that distributors and exhibitors now had to tailor their product to one of a number of possible audiences" (204).

According to Heffernan, *Night* perfectly fit Reade's sense of the industry to come and was an easy sell to the inner-city theaters to which it was primarily marketed due to five favorable factors: First, it was a horror film released near Halloween. Second, it was

simultaneously released in suburban drive-thrus. Third, Continental went for saturation print marketing, filling newspapers and producing gimmicky posters. Fourth it combined "the proven success of horror in the inner-city market" with "a film with an intelligent and resourceful African American protagonist" (215). Finally, that protagonist was met with "the fidgety, balding middle-class patriarch Harry" is a villain inner-city audiences were pretty much guaranteed to love-to-hate (215). Unfortunately, many of these theaters attempted to balance the film between two distinct audiences: the day crowd of mostly children eager for science fiction-inspired horror and the grittier evening crowd that came for exploitation films and was eager to see racial critiques in their films. The day audience was famously traumatized, causing traumatized Roger Ebert to write a scathing review which was then picked up by Reader's Digest and other media outlets eager for examples of the damage uncensored film posed to child viewers.

When the distributor went bankrupt, Romero and his colleagues lost their copyright and the film began to be reproduced and distributed in a sort of grassroots distribution that both denied the filmmaker's any profit, and ensured that the film was pervasively available. In short, *Night* was not a product of the Hollywood machine. It cannot be read as product of hegemonic cultural authorities. This does not mean that it was not produced under the pressures of hegemony, merely that it was not required to reproduce the hegemonic ideals. The film's independence provides an opportunity to see how cultural consumers were adopting and adapting dominant cultural messages. The darkness of *Night*, including its nihilist ending, demonstrates just how little the big-budget Hollywood films were connecting with Pittsburgh audiences. Clearly, many films of the time were dark and Hollywood was not merely producing happy fluff pieces. Yet

in *Night* we can recognize a rejection of so much of the nation-building ideological work of the larger film industry. As the archetype of the young white hero, Johnny must die first, if for no other reason than because we're sick of every story being his story. Instead we have Barbara, a woman so enfeebled by the dominant gender system that she spends most of the film swooning. We have the Coopers, the married couple who, it seems, can barely stand one another on a good day. We had the regenerative couple who are so busy being good wholesome kids that they end up being pretty much useless. Most importantly, we have a government that can't be bothered to offer any assistance to its public and a local militia who are effective in suppressing the threat, certainly, but who are also shown to be trigger-happy murderers.

Romero and his colleagues knew that if they got distribution, their film would be shown in the black and working class market, but they did not set out to make a race film. The lead character was not written with a black actor in mind. When Jones, a black NYU graduate student, presented an impressive audition, however, they knew the film had taken on a new dimension. In *Birth of the Living Dead* (2013), a documentary on the film's production, Romero claims that in 1968 having the audacity to keep the original script despite changing the lead character's race seemed to constitute radical political commentary. The character of Ben would be self-assured. He would take shelter in the farmhouse and he would fight for his position as a leader within the survivor community. Most importantly, no one in the film would mention his race, even in the most heated of arguments. *Night* had the audacity to present an empowered black man to audiences without presenting his blackness as his single most defining feature.

What *Birth of the Living Dead* does not convey, in keeping with Romero's long history of self-mythologizing, was the important contributions to the film's racial politics made by Jones, the only black contributor to the film. "[W]hile Romero and Russo didn't rewrite to make Ben more 'black', Jones *did* change the character, totally overhauling the dialogue. If anything, he shifted Ben further from potential stereotypes: originally Ben was a slang-talking, roughly physical truck driver . . . Jones's version, like Jones himself, was softer-spoken, more cerebral and sensitive"" (Hervey 43). This insight provokes two important readings of the film. First, because Ben was written to be a working class hero, so much of the mapping of race politics onto the film is less a result of accident, as Hervey entertains, but more a result of the collusion between race and class oppressions in the US.

Second, knowing how much of a hand Jones had in adapting the script also shows us that Jones's Ben avoids being a caricature not because the character was written to be white but because the character was rewritten according to a lived black experience. Ben was initially written to be working class, hyper-masculine, and a bit of a loner. He was Pittsburgh's native son and, in contrast to Johnny, he would have been an almost predictable competing masculinity. Hegemony only functions as a push-and-pull between multiple competing dominant groups, as we saw in *White Zombie*. As originally scripted, Ben would have served to make hegemonic masculinity appear complete while continuing the long legacy of only considering white men for full manhood within US dominant culture. In casting a black man to fulfill the role of most successful masculinity, the film both became far more culturally significant in terms of race and far less culturally significant in terms of questioning authority. If all the men in the film had been

white men, then the difference in power between Ben and the posse would have been a matter of politics and collective action rather than race. We can only speculate how the script's original dialog would have affected the impact of the film, but it seems clear that it was Jones's Ben, sensitive to racial tensions and yet unwilling to allow them to limit his behavior or threaten his survival, who made the film's racial politics feel real. Jones's Ben is black but that fact does not limit his potential for heroism, violence, or even cruelty, as it might have had Romero altered the script. Ben's race is not referred to in any of the film's dialog despite the crisis of leadership. For some audiences this may have seemed a fantasy of a post-race world, but for audience members viewing in the era of "post-race" rhetoric, the stark contrast between the visual importance of Ben's race and the verbal unwillingness to acknowledge it demonstrates the persistence of racism despite its official condemnation.

There was one change to the original script that indisputably contributed to the cult status of this film and that, quite importantly, can be credited to Jones: it was Jones who insisted that Ben could not survive the film. Jones is able to present us with a character who is not defined by his blackness but who nonetheless is market by race as an acceptable victim of communal violence. In the original script, Barbara wakes from her comma and saves Ben. He knew that black audiences would not believe it. While this change is certainly to be credited with much of the film's success, it also excludes Barbara from any agency she had the original plot, thus condemning the film to a misogynist take on women as passive and expendable, good for nothing but to be looked at, and in the case of the film's married woman, Helen, aggravating harpies who pick on men's weaknesses as well. Thanks to the creative input of its only black filmmaker, *Night*

lost much of its class criticism, gained race criticism and forgot entirely about its women. What it got in return was a grim nihilism, status as a ground-breaking film and a lasting cultural impact. While Romero's auteur status may apply to the other films in the Dead series, much of what made *Night* such a successful film can be attributed to the collaboration of Jones. Romero and Russo, after all, wrote the film to be a comedy. This is not to claim that Jones is the reason for *Night*'s enduring cultural impact, it is merely to show just how much the cult of personality that has developed around Romero has functioned to appropriate Jone's contribution to the collaboration.

The power of *Night*'s commentary is not the result of any one man's genius. It is the result of allowing multiple world views to coincide without attempting to impose a coherent narrative onto them. As Kendall Phillips writes *Projected Fears* "[Audiences] emerged knowing that somehow what they saw upon the screen was an accurate, if allegorical, depiction of their own collective fears and concerns" (5). No single creative force could have encompassed the range of fears and concerns that made this film successful. As Wood argues, incoherence is a hallmark of films of the Vietnam to Reagan era, which he characterizes as "works in which the drive toward ordering of experience has been visibly defeated" (47). The capacity of a film to convey meaning in that historical moment was not limited to clear symbolism. Nor did films require a plot that affirmed the audience's intuitive sense of justice or some other transcendent organizing principle. Instead, films of this era, and *Night* in particular, generated meaning through their capacity to challenge the presumed natural order to which narrative was expected to conform. "The reason why any work of art will reveal—somewhere—areas or levels of incoherence is that so many things feed into it which are beyond the artists' conscious

control—not only his personal unconscious, but the cultural assumptions of his society"

(Woods 47). Films like *Night* appeal to that portion of their viewers that is excluded from

coherent narratives, that portion that is unrecognized by the official narrative of nation

and is overlooked by the gaze of authority, what Wood calls "enslavement by the illusory

order of the dominant ideology" (46). Thus a black professor of drama was able to meet a

group of struggling white entrepreneurs and an enthusiastic collection of non-professional

actors. Even as many of the actors portrayed in the scenes of a militia that strongly

resembled a lynch mob, this collaboration created a horror that resonated with their

shared anxieties.

4.4   Visuality, Masculinity, and Nation Building

As a metaphor for evil, the zombie is quite flexible. While all monsters stand in

for alterity of some sort, the zombie is the Other who is produced by the hegemonic force

of the nation myth, a force that is imagined as a white, male normative subjectivity. The

zombie is a monster because the universality and objectivity assumed by the imperial

white male gaze results in visuality itself being the product of colonial and patriarchal

entitlement. The zombie, a monster that consists of only visual surface, a monster that is

uncannily us and yet unknowable, draws attention to the limitations and vulnerability of

the gaze. Because the zombie is such a flexible marker, it can represent alterity generally

or any particular form of alterity specifically. The limitation of the zombie is that it

always represents the difference that allows for a person to be reduced to object status.

The zombie is the human who is not empowered to be the subject of the gaze, who is not allowed to narrate their own stories.[117]

This is a serious and sweeping accusation. We live in a visual age. Our subjectivities, our technologies and how we relate to the world around us are defined, in large part, by our immersion in visuality. To declare that visuality itself is a product of white male privilege, as I am, demands that social institutions, technologies and subject positions, all of which have changed radically under the reign of visuality, be called into question. This is precisely why I think the zombie is important. The zombie was invented as a means for hegemonic masculinity to reify itself. It is defined by visuality and often presents a threat in precisely the degree to which it either legitimates white male authority or, conversely, undermines visuality as a regime.

As was discussed in a previous chapter, neither Matheson nor Romero refers to their monsters as "zombies." For Matheson they are vampires and for Romero they are ghouls. Matheson's monster likely owes more to European myths of murderous ghouls than it does to the zombie mythology that fluttered at the periphery of US national consciousness in the wake of our occupation of Haiti. One might argue that Romero's Caribbean roots may have somehow subconsciously implanted the monster, but there's simply no evidence for it. Far more reasonable is to read Romero's ghouls as a

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[117] When stories attempt to be told through the perspective of the zombie, it is either the human becoming zombie, such as Ryan Mecum's poetry collection *Zombie Haiku* and the film *Contracted* (2013), or a zombie whose ability to narrate is determined by its difference from the other undead, such as the webseries *Xombie* and the novel-turned film *Warm Bodies*. There is, however, a subgenre of zombies-as-disenfranchised in which zombies stand in for an identity that is denied full civic life, inviting the audience to identity with their struggle. Film in this genre include *Homecoming* (2005, veterans)*, American Zombie* (2007, alternative religious communities)*, Otto; Or Up with Dead People* (2008, sexually active gay men), *The Returned* (2013, the chronically ill denied healthcare). Romero's Dead film cycle does not allow the ghouls subjectivity but it does frequently conflate the struggles of the undead with the living, to suggest a continuum in which the limits of identification are circumstantial rather than inherent.

reimagining of Matheson's vampires. The prime difference being that in Matheson, the vampires retain, to a limited extent, their previous social location. They can't be argued to retain their identities, but they remember their relationship to Neville and use it to attempt to lure him from hiding. From the dead neighbor Ben Cortman with whom Neville retains a rivalry even after Cortman's death, to Neville's own wife who uses his tender feelings for her to infiltrate the house and attempt to kill him, to the "lewd puppets" who Neville assumes are trying to use their previous status as women to seduce him from hiding, all the undead vampires are too weak and lack the cunning to break into the house. They only remain individuated to the degree that they ensnare Neville in the previous social order. In *Night* none of the characters, with the possible exception of Tom and Judy, are from the local community. Ben, Barbara, and the Coopers are all travelers who get stuck in that farmhouse. If the ghouls that attack them had retained the same degree of social location as the vampires in *I Am Legend*, we wouldn't know. With the exception of Johnny, who doesn't need to speak to ensnare Barbara in a monstrous filial piety, there are no social bonds to exploit. So instead Romero's film is filled with voiceless monsters whose social location is unknown by the strangers in their midst. For Neville, it was the lingering social order that made him vulnerable. For Ben and company, it is the inherent structural weakness of the home.

 Night's critique of authority is made possible by the inclusion of multiple degrees of survivor community. There is the community of people within the farmhouse, who rely on one another's labor to support and defend them. There is also the larger local community represented by the militia. On this level, survival is dependent on organized violence similar to what we've seen at work in previous chapters as "wild work." This

wild work requires the tools of violence and a hierarchical structure in order to distribute those resources and coordinate that violence. As R.H.W. Dillard has argued, the film derives its power from this capacity to render the violence of wild work ordinary.

> The film is. . . the story of everyday people in an ordinary landscape, played by everyday people who are, for the most part, from that ordinary locale. The way in which *Night of the Living Dead* transforms that familiar and ordinary world into a landscape of unrelenting horror reveals the film's moral nature and the deep and terrible fear at its heart. (20)

For Dillard, the dead cease to be terrifying the moment that Ben kills one. The fear of death is then replaced by a fear of the violence that sustains US white-supremacist empire, a violence only precariously contained and directed toward the Other. Dillard argues that the fear of *Night* is that wild work can so easily be turned to target the citizen, should they be declared Other by those who execute the wild work, who themselves are above reproach. If any character in this film represents the position of unquestioned authority that Van Helsing established, it is Sheriff McClelland. On the top level, we have the explicit national community, which consists of politicians, military leaders, and scientists. That level is incoherent and inaccessible, comprehensible only through the efforts of the local newscasters who function as its agents.

The farmhouse community is entirely alienated from these other two levels of survival, just as the subject positions within the farmhouse are alienated from the ideological supremacy of the nation and from the localized institutions by which the nation sustains itself. *White Zombie*'s (1932) Neil was a representative of the national norm and served as a pedagogy of hegemonic masculinity in the service of empire. *King*

of the Zombies' (1941) Jeff functioned to recruit subordinated masculinities in to the national project. Neville was not a patriot but instead showed how the national myth can appropriate individualist masculinities, creating the impression that the nation is merely a projection of the hegemonic ideal and that the two share the same interests. In *Night,* however, we have a community of survivors and none of them can be conflated with the subjectivity to which that the national myth interpolates us. Instead, this community represents the real people who make-up the nation, those whose difference is erased in the myth of national unity that privileges the model subjectivity of the gaze. *Night* presents us with an alternate model of the nation, one based on consent-based coalition building amongst those with shared interests. The Utopian potential of this focus is undercut by the continual reassertion through media that the survival of the national myth takes priority over the survival of the farmhouse community. The ending of the film, however, privileges the survival of those who control violence. Sheriff McClelland may or may not be fighting to preserve the nation. He may, like Neville, conflate the national myth with his own ego. Either way, he is clearly the fittest masculinity in the film in no small part because of his role within the national myth as both idealized subject and pragmatic enforcer.

Race is a technology that functions, like gender, to divide humans into groups that can then more easily have labor, resources, and loyalty divide amongst them. In a racially segregated economy, one can simply look at a person's skin color to determine the appropriate labor, behavior, and community for that person. To be clear, race itself is an invention that allows the logic of the gaze to be substituted for more time and energy consuming ways of knowing about others, self, and the ever-so-important barriers

between. The divisions within human society lacked justification and race became a metonymic substitute that foreclosed inquiry by making oppression a mere fact of the gaze rather than rational distribution of tasks. In return, the ideology of race served to further construct the subjects generated by the logic of looking.

Ben and Barbara reject US national myths of normative race and gender. She demonstrates that the sacred space of the home/nation is not safe when women are stripped of agency. He, despite being excluded from the home/nation, proves to be its best defender. Normative scripts of race and gender in the US have long pitted white women and black men against one another in order to legitimate a white supremacist heteropatriarchy. As presented in *The Birth of the Nation* (1914), the foundational argument of white supremacy groups like the KKK is that white men's first duty is to protect the white woman from the black man. Women are taught to seek protection from their white patriarchs and black men are taught to fetishize white women as forbidden fruit. This system relies on compulsory heterosexuality and the dual constructions of passive white women's sexuality and black male sexuality as uncontrollably aggressive. *Night* plays with these constructions, presenting both Barbara and Ben with the stereotypical scripts but then using the presence of zombies to force each character out of their respective script. The breaking point for each character is a significant shift in the trajectory of the film.

When Romero presents us with a horror film in which the conflict occurs within the house even more so than without, he is participating in a larger conversation of how the nation is already unstable and multi-voiced. Even within the house, there is conflict and oppression. When Romero and his fellow film producers decided to cast a black actor

to play Ben, they knew they were transgressing the dominant racial paradigm.

Throughout the film Ben performs race in a way that Hollywood has not been prepared

for. While Sidney Pointier and Harry Belafonte had been pushing the envelope of black

men's roles in film for two decades, their roles were often diluted through one of two

strategies: either their characters were displaced to African or Caribbean locales, thus

rendering their rebellions abstract and outside the national community or, more so for

Pointier than for Belafonte, their characters were primarily solicitous to their white

companions.[118] The one exception to this rule is a film that Belafonte, a lifelong civil

rights and later black power activist funded and helped to produce. *Odds Against*

Tomorrow (1959) came out nearly a decade prior to *Night* and chronicles black and white

thieves who, on the run after a bank robbery, turn on one another and both die in an

explosion that leaves their bodies indistinguishable. *Night* was produced the same year

that Pointier's character in the film *In the Heat of the Night* (1967) slapped a white

superior and proclaimed a new era of black masculinity in Hollywood. However, *Night*

was released three years before the genre of Blaxploitation action films was established

with the release of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971). While Ben misses the

mark of being the first black man presented as justified in striking a white man, he is still

among the first black main characters to make use of violence for purposes that are

endorsed by the narrative. He predates the careers of such pioneering actors as Fred

Williamson, Carl Weathers and Bernie Casey. What's more, Ben doesn't merely strike a

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[118] In *Black Hollywood: The Black Performer in Motion Pictures,* Gary Null notes that Pointier's roles as the accommodating consummate professional marked as significant improvement from the roles for black actors in the 1940s. Previous decades had only imagined black characters in poverty and it was largely Pointier who led the movement to create fully relatable human characters rather than simply black stereotypes enacted (158).

white man. He, like Belafonte's Johnny Ingram, shoots one and, unlike Johnny, outlives his antagonist. Unlike the Blaxploitation films to come out over the next decade, *Night* was not targeted to a black audience. Audiences are encouraged to cheer on Ben's violence not because of racial solidarity, but because it is the best chance for survival for the rapidly depleting survivor community. Having a black actor play the role of the character who best defends and longest survives was a radical act in 1968.

Whether Ben is a working class white trucker or a middle-class black man, both models of subordinated masculinity are in a position to question visuality as a logic of domination and as a means of survival. In the terms of Gregory Waller, the Van Helsing style Renaissance man leads through visuality, his authority legitimated by his wide knowledge base. This breadth of knowledge participates in the regime of visuality because it functions as a mental map that can comprehend both science and the supernatural. Like any other map, Van Helsing's knowledge base functions by reducing an over-abundance of information to a spatial relation that can miraculously be understood from an external, objective position. Van Helsing originally represented hegemonic masculinity, and in the various remakes of *Last Man on Earth*, Neville is always some form of critique of the Van Helsing model. Both were manifestations of the ideal citizen, the white masculinity in whose interest the nation functions and on whose privilege the nation is assumed to depend. What *Night* adds to the equation is recognition that subordinate masculinities have their own capacities for survival. At its best, *Night* disproves that the nation is contingent on the privileging of hegemonic masculinity and the erasure of alterity within the national community. *Night* argues that other subject positions are part of the survivor community and to ignore or disempower them weakens

the community as a whole. But *Night* is clearly not a utopian vision. Instead, the film cannot imagine a community beyond the normative authority of the national myth. The representatives of hegemonic masculinity in this film cannot imagine the agency of other subject positions and therefore cannot value the labor of subordinated groups. Ultimately, hegemonic masculinity in *Night* fails to see the difference between fellow citizens and foes.

To determine what ways that *Night* innovates the genre, we must trace the precedents set in Matheson's novel. What Romero's film retains generally are the monster and the setting, although the updates of the cast of characters will certainly require more attention. Ben cannot be read as reimagining of Matheson's protagonist and narrator Neville. I believe Johnny is a far better successor to that legacy. Ben is an escape from the narrow range of masculinities considered in previous zombie narratives. Like all other successful critiques of the hegemonic order, he is appropriated back into that order. But for his dialectic moment, he reveals the blind spots of the order against which he fought.

4.5   Home, Nation, and the Survivor Community

As we saw in the previous chapter, for Matheson, the home functions as a microcosm of the nation. Not only does *Night* honor this precedent, but it has become a defining characteristic in scholarship on *Night*. Thus we should compare the ways that the novel and film construct the space of the home/nation. For Matheson, the home is clearly the property of the patriarch. Even the women of the novel, the dead wife and Ruth the vampire, as well as the novel's only child, his dead daughter, are all treated as potential extension of the home and thus merely additional forms of property. Ruth's insists on

asserting her own agency and cannot be governed by Neville's myopic sense of moral order which, in his solitude, he has come to mistake for an external cosmic principle. This is the central disruption of the plot which Neville must resolve. Matheson's solution to Ruth's alterity is to have Neville realize his own solipsism. Unfortunately, rather than have Neville survive in a universe that extends beyond the confines of his own ego, Matheson instead chooses to end the novel with Neville's death. *I Am Legend* acknowledges the validity of multiple social orders, but it fails to imagine a world in which such conflicting social orders are able to coexist.

But Matheson's critique of isolationism as an ethical standard is embedded in a second essential aspect of Neville's story. Not only is Neville lord of his castle. His experience includes both complete sovereignty and complete responsibility for all maintenance. Essentially he must perform all services and procure all goods for his nation of one. In the 1950s ideology of a jack-of-all trades working man, Neville had the necessary skills to bear this responsibility. As such, in the fictional universe of *I Am Legend*, it remains possible that one could be morally legitimate as an isolationist. Neville, however, fails even on this level because he rationalizes the murder of other ethical beings as if it were an essential aspect of his maintenance duty. The wild work of exterminating the living dead, for Neville, becomes as mundane as paying taxes. Like a taxpayer, Neville's commitment to his duty is based on his faith in the moral legitimacy of the system that sustains him, in his case, the murderous competition between the undead masses and the self-sufficient, isolated living. Upon realizing that the ethically accountable vampires are agents who also deserve moral consideration, Neville is placed much in the same position as many tax payers when they realize the true costs and unjust

motivations of military actions committed in their names and with their money. Writing in the 1950s, during the Korean War, Matheson imagines Neville's redemption through sacrifice rather than through political resistance and the development of a moral order that can include both Neville and the vampires.

Romero explains that his rewriting of Matheson was inspired by the need to go back to the initial outbreak and witness the deterioration of society, where *I Am Legend* began *in media res*. However, Romero's version returns us to the claustrophobic house, to the mourning of familial cohesion, and to the competition between masculinities for the right to establish the moral order. What sparked Romero's curiosity, it seems, was the question of how society deteriorates, specifically, how we fail to work together. Matheson asked what kind of man is a good man. Romero asks how a good man can function in a hostile world. These are two very different questions that come from two very different positions. Matheson was an insider. Despite his radical politics, critical thinking and spiritual beliefs untethered to Christianity, he was a part of the Hollywood system and he was a successful writer in his own regard. Both men were 28 when they produced their text. For Matheson, living in the midst of the Cold War, questioning the centrality of his own subject position was a racial act. For Romero, writing just 14 years later and in the face of the Vietnam War, the centrality of US white masculinity was already hotly contested. Both texts end with the execution of the protagonist because while Matheson could not imagine what it might take for Robert Neville to adapt to cohabitation with an alternate moral order, the combined creative power of Romero's team could not imagine a world in which a new masculinity could escape the repressive violence of the old order.

But the ghouls that attack Ben are functionally difficult to distinguish from the vampires in Matheson's novel. As with Matheson, the monster in *Night* can be read as a metaphor within itself, but I believe it is more effective to read it as primarily an excuse to apply pressure to the survivor community. Instead, I read *Night* as engaged specifically with the questions of masculinity that I have argued characterize Matheson's work. As I have extended Matheson's critiques to explicitly address race, Jones' contributions to *Night* also centered the film in the question of where cinema places the black man in relation to the nation and what possible masculinities it imagines for him. Zombie narratives have not only been preoccupied with identifying the most competitive masculinity. They have specifically located white masculinities within the demands of US imperial nationalism. *Night* kills off Johnny and sets up Ben as masculinity with which the audience must identify. When Ben shifts from a working class white man to a middle class black man, this signals a rupture in the white supremacy of hegemonic masculinity. The critiques of masculinity that were written into the script were imagined as class-based but they were easily adapted to a race-based critique because both subordinated masculinities view hegemonic masculinity from the outside and must adopt a duboisian double-sight to comprehend their position outside of it. Ben was always imagined as a subordinated masculinity, unlike Neville who amounted to a compassionate satire of the dominant norms or *White Zombie*'s Neil, who was a hegemonic masculinity in training. Ben is able to see himself and see other men while Neville could not see other men and Neil could not see himself.

Night was produced in 1968, when the responsibility of citizens to protest the wars that their taxes fund was a salient issue. It comes as no surprise, then, that Romero's

home-as-nation is structured quite differently than Matheson's. Within the farmhouse

where the majority of *Night* takes place, there are multiple ethical orders competing and

attempting to coexists. Perhaps even more interesting, the representatives of the state in

the film, including the national media, scientists, and the posse that ultimately performs

the wild work of extermination, all function outside of the home. Thus, the relationship of

the individual to the state is entirely different. One could certainly choose to read

Matheson's novel as a tale of the individual in competition with the state, and thus the

home as an ethical order in opposition to the nation. However, in keeping with my

argument in the previous chapter, I choose to read Matheson's home as a microcosm of

the nation because it reflects the ideologies of the state during the 1950s far more than the

vampires. While these two readings may appear to conflict with one another, they can be

instead be read as a playing out of a conflict over the exact ownership or control over the

nation. Either the nation is constituted by the dominant ideology (Neville's nostalgic

ethical order within the house) or the nation is constituted by the State (the contested

ground between Neville's old order and the emergent vampire order). This conflict is

essential to the novel. Does Neville represent a McCarthy-style effort to protect that

nation from its enemies, or is he merely a hegemon who seeks to exclude other voices

from his political and ethical community? Looking back today, the tension between these

two interpretations seems to collapse upon itself.

Often in horror films the home is read as a metaphor for the family, encouraging a

psychoanalytic reading that privileges the development of the individual and the

patriarchal repression of both women and children as the primary act of symbolic

violence. This is the starting point of Wood's analysis, which acknowledges the

expansion of these micro-level oppressions into a logic of domination that justifies

macro-level oppressions such as systematic racism. Thus the nation and the family can be

conflated in a narrative like *I Am Legend*, where the house is reduced to the embodiment

not even of a family, but just of the patriarch. But in *Night*, the Coopers are a literal

family within the survivor community, thus refusing the substitution of psychological

logics of domination for sociological logics of domination. For scholars like Woods,

decentering the patriarch within the family is essential to radical liberatory politics. In

Night, Harry is an aspiring tyrant, but he is also a loving father and his tyrannical

tendencies are somewhat excused by his imperative to protect his child. The film is able

to maintain the link between the masculine domination of a patriarchal family and the

competition of masculinities in the larger public sphere. At the same time, by showing

Harry's paternal imperative as a threat to the survivor community, *Night* is able to

challenge the primacy of the family as the foundational social unit in US national

ideology.

White supremacy in the US has traditionally legitimated itself on the grounds of

the family, specifically of the property rights of white fathers over the bodies and

sexualities of white women and children. Political, economic, social, and physical

oppression of other races has always been excused as necessary to ensure the sexual and

property rights of white men. *Night* does not challenge Harry's right to protect his child

and shows Helen as critical yet submissive. But by identifying with Ben, who shows no

romantic or sexual interest in any of the film's white women, and by refusing to

sentimentalize the dying child Karen, the film establishes a moral order outside of the

family. Harry's need to protect his family is presented as legitimate but it not given

primacy over the needs of the other survivors. *Night* rejects the false unity demanded by the conflation of family and nation. Instead, Harry presents the moral possibility of conflicting legitimate loyalties. Ben refuses to prioritize Harry's fatherhood as a claim to leadership, thus demanding that the community's survival is not defined in terms of the survival of the family unit. The importance of this distinction between the interests of the family and the interests of the nation can be illustrated by the debate over corporate citizenship. The moral legitimacy of fatherhood is not unlike the moral legitimacy of a CEO charged with protecting stockholder interests. Both demonstrate moral character and within a simplified deontological moral code so that moral legitimacy can be universalized. Loyalty to the specific interests of one's family or stockholders makes one loyal and thus moral. However, privileging loyalty to subgroups within the large community can threaten the cohesion and safety of the nation because it excuses immoral behavior. Harry's attempt to overpower Ben, like a CEO attempting to skirt regulations, risks the safety of the larger group.

4.6   Audience Identification, Social Scripts, and Death Order

Like *White Zombie*, *Night* also features a range of competing masculinities. Ben is no Neil, to be sure, and he is not merely sampling from the other men in the film to determine what sorts of masculinity he wants to perform. Ben is somewhat like Matheson's Neville in that he is in direct competition with a competing social order and its masculine avatars. Comparing Ben to Jeff Jefferson of *King of the Zombies* may seem laughable if we accept a white supremacist reading of *King*, however, both films present a heroic black masculinity that is ultimately more suited for survival and more successful

at saving others than any of the film's white masculinities. Like Jeff, Ben must exercise a duboisian double sight that allows him to see himself as the dominant order sees him, such as when he first appears on camera and must invade the white woman's home, but also as a man who must exercise all options to fight for his right to live. Ben, like Jeff, distrusts the official story fed to him by authority figures. Both men forge alliances and both men are made to suffer at the hands of authority while everyone else suffers under the logic of undeath. While both Neil and Neville operate as the heirs apparent in their nationalist ambitions, the heir in *Night,* Johnny, is killed off. Ben is more like Jeff in that both are excluded from hegemonic masculinity and must instead select the masculine performance that best ensures their personal survival. While Jeff's masculine performance can be mined by a black audience for redeeming and even admirable qualities, Ben is unequivocally, at least for the second half of the film, the focus for audience identification.

For Ben, the script is quite different than it is for Barbara. While the moment of Barbara breaking with the script might be overlooked as simply a pacing technique, the moment in which Ben breaks his script is carefully crafted. The audience is, in fact, introduced to Ben at the moment when he is thrust into a script, which he must break out of almost immediately. The first quarter of the film presents Barbara as a narrative focal point. In fact, once Johnny is killed, Barbara is the only character for quite some time. It is through her that the audience comes to realize the horror of her situation. She is the one to seek refuge in the house which remains the film's setting for its duration. She is also the one who first introduces the audience to the gore of the film, discovering a partly-consumed body within. This horror, the confrontation with a human body turned to meat

is so incomprehensible, that Barbara flees the house. Upon fleeing, however, she runs into Ben. The camera is behind her and her abrupt stop at first seems like her coming to her senses and not running directly into the grasp of the zombies that have gathered around the house while she was exploring it. Instead, Barbara's abrupt stop signals her ambivalence about returning to the script.

The camera cuts to show us that what she sees is a black man standing at the house's threshold. In the white supremacist tradition that followed the abolition of slavery and carried through the legal impunity of white men's attack on black bodies into the Jim Crow era, a white woman's horror at the invasion of a home, which should otherwise be a safe space, is scripted to come at the appearance of a sexually aggressive black man. For a moment, both Ben and Barbara are caught in the old script. She sees a recognizable danger and waffles between her fear of the incomprehensible danger of the ghouls, the body terror of the gore upstairs, and the scripted fear of a black man invading the home. The previous scene, in which Barbara was confronted with a violated human face serves to alienate the audience from her as a point of identification. Romero's editing speed increases, not allowing the audience the opportunity to interpret Barbara's motivations, and the visual continuity that normally characterizes cinematic editing is ruptured, making it difficult for the audience to locate themselves within the filmic world.

This frenzy is resolved in the moment we are shown Ben's face. The editing slows with shots alternating between his face, what he sees, and wider establishing shots that allow the audience to locate themselves through Ben's line of sight. After being denied access to Barbara's traumatized inner thoughts, we are presented with Ben's face and then the shots works through his thought process. He must choose between battling a

group of ghouls and fulfilling the script by shoving past the white woman and into the

home. He enters the home and immediately sets out to establish himself as the home's

protector rather than an invader. The rest of the film, however, continues to play with this

tension as multiple characters attempt to return him to that script. Ultimately he is killed,

not for being the black man who invaded the white woman's sanctum, but for being

mistaken for a ghoul. When Ben refuses to be roped back into the narrative of the black

invader, rather than adapt a new role for him within the community, the gaze, as

embodied by the militia, casts him among the incomprehensible threat.

In inviting the audience to identify with Ben, the film returns the to a more

traditional genre convention in which a character's fate within the film can stand-in for

the film's judgment on the subject position that character performs. In other words, with

Ben, the audience is presented with a survivable masculinity with which to identify and

hopefully emulate. In horror storytelling, death order necessarily organizes audience

identification.[119] Often the first characters to die are those with whom the audience has

not been permitted to bond. Early deaths tend to primarily serve the purpose of

introducing the villain and setting up the kill pattern. Survival rates have always assured

the audience which characters are most significant and which resources or survival tactics

are most effective. As such, the death order of a horror film makes two convergent

arguments: first, that the longer a character survives, the more sympathetic they are. The

second however is a bit more complicated. The horror scenario is a rupture in societal

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[119] Many scholars have noted that often in contemporary horror, black characters are the first to die. This trope allows filmmakers to include black characters without bothering to represent them sympathetically or as fully developed. See Means Coleman and Cripps.

order, in a watered down version of Lacan's orders, the monster is a rupture of the real

into the symbolic.[120] Those who are successful in other narratives genres are succeeding

within the realm of the symbolic. But those who survive in the horror genre are posited as

those whose fitness extends beyond the symbolic order and into the real.

Night inverts the industry standard for audience identification but it does not do so

as an attack on white men. Johnny is not killed first because his masculinity is lacking.

Instead, he dies because a simplistic reliance on a hegemonic masculinity that will unite

and fortify the nation is itself obsolete. Johnny dies just as so many good young men died

in the Vietnam War. In the late 1960s, *Night* must invert the logic of identification in

order to usher in a nationalist subject formation that is capable of identifying suitable

subjects rather than passively identifying with the subject positions currently in power.

This inversion of identification prefigures two trends in films of the 1970s. One is the

final girl who took over much of horror in the coming two decades, and the other is the

strong black man of Blaxploitation films. While I will not go so far as to argue that

Romero's characters laid the foundation of these emerging tropes, it is clear that the U.S.

film industry was shifting away from a narrow conception of white masculinity as the

primary mode of nationalism. Both Ben and Barbara still eventually die, of course, but

this chapter considers both of them, both in the film and in terms of the legacies in which

they participate, to learn what constitutes a subject worthy of survival.

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[120] It is fairly common for horror scholars to use the concepts of symbolic order and the real to distinguish between these two functions of horror films. While this is not true to Lacan's original insights, it is certainly true of a function of storytelling that is relevant to the horror genre. The Lacanian real may not be accessible, but there is clearly a distinction to be made between the ordering of society and the ordering of the natural or supernatural world which the monster generally inhabits. Since many scholars in the field use Lacanian terminology to discuss these distinct registers, I will continue to use this language, with the knowledge that this is not a thorough understanding of Lacan's argument.

The first victim in the film is the iconic white man. Johnny is a cynical yet dutiful son who is presented as young, hip, energetic, and playful. He would have been an acceptable, even predictable update of hegemonic masculinity as explored in previous chapters, increasingly secular, increasingly independent minded, but still attached to the nuclear family and unhesitating in his masculine-coded need to protect his sister against her assailant. But in the first scene of the film when the first ghoul attacks, toppling Johnny over, Johnny does not get back up. This is not Johnny's story. Hegemonic masculinity has been removed from the equation, forcing the audience to consider the survivability of other possible subjects. Johnny's death constitutes a rupture for the audience. We have been trained to identify with the male gaze, to see the white man as our avatar within the film. But without Johnny, the audience is challenged to rethink our easy identification. Later in the film, we will be presented with two more white men with whom we could potentially identify, but neither is a sympathetic. Tom lacks agency and Harry is clearly marked as an antagonist. As Hervey notes, Harry is a stand-in for "The Man," in his slavish obedience to national institutions of authority, his suburban shirt-and-tie uniform and his patriarchal authority within his family. Had Johnny survived, he and Harry would also have likely come to blows. More importantly, neither Tom nor Harry will appear on screen for many scenes, leaving the audience without a white male to anchor their identification.

The superiority of Ben's masculinity aligns more closely with the vampire tradition than the zombie tradition because Ben's masculinity is being judged on its capacity to sustain the survivor community like Van Helsing rather than merely establish

his individual success as a proxy for the nation, such as Neil.[121] After *Night,* the zombie

tradition joins the vampire tradition in focusing on the community. Ben's superior

masculinity brings the zombie narrative from a narrow focus on individual success and

into the more important work of community maintenance. While the hegemonic

masculinity endorsed by zombie narratives will often be a patriarchal one, starting with

Ben, and perhaps more accurately, after learning from the solipsism of Neville,

masculinities in zombie narratives will be judged on their capacity to secure the

community rather than merely their capacity to survive alone. The individual survivor

will return in the coming decade in the form of the Final Female trope and much of Ben's

superior masculinity will inform the gendering of the Final Female, but in between

Neville and Ben, masculinity as taught by the zombie narrative learned to locate itself

within community. Thus Ben is not only in conversation with Jeff Jefferson and Neil

from *King of the Zombies* and *White Zombie*; he is also in conversation with Van Helsing

and Jonathan Harker. In shifting the burden of masculinity from self to community, the

relationship between masculinity and purity also shifts. Ben, like Van Helsing, must

contaminate himself with wild work in order to preserve the community. For Neville,

there was no community, for Ben, the community itself is not pure.

In order to survive, however, Ben must negotiate power with the other

masculinities of the film. Most notably, is, of course, Harry, with whom Ben is locked in

struggle, but these other masculinities also include Johnny and Tom. To understand how

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[121] None of the masculinities in *King of the Zombies* or other films of the 1940s cannot be read for their metaphorical connection to the nation because WWII looms in the film's subtext and their relationship to the success of the nation is made explicit. The exception to this rule is *I Walked with a Zombie*, a film with a heroine rather than hero. She is positioned like Neil, as a representative of the nation attempting to navigate an alien moral order abroad.

Ben's masculinity operates, we must also understand how he differs from these other men.[122] Johnny is killed before his masculinity can present a challenge to any of the other masculinities in the film and Tom's role is clearly one of follower rather than potential leader. Yet both Johnny and Tom have dominion over the women in the film. Barbara resents Johnny in the first scene at the graveyard, but her pleading never amounts to rebellion. In the end, when the undead Johnny shows up at the farmhouse, Barbara does not resist. Tom's authority extends only to Judy, the only character in the film even more submissive than Tom. Thus, while there is a wide range of authority distributed amongst the men in the film, in the end, they all are dominant over their respective women and, like a Victorian novel, all the women are appropriately assigned to a man, with the narrative crisis beginning the moment Barbara is no longer safely governed by a man. In this sense, Ben's ability to assume control of Barbara constitutes the film's first test of his masculinity. But before we examine Ben's masculinity, let's take a moment to consider why Johnny, Tom, and Harry are not embraced as the appropriate dominant masculinity in this narrative.

As discussed above, Johnny is presented as the film's hegemonic masculinity. When he is killed in the first scene, the audience is set up to seek out a new focus of our identification. Barbara suffices for a time, but without much agency, she is incapable of moving the plot forward. When Ben appears, we accept him as a replacement for Johnny despite significant difference between the two masculinities and the social positioning of

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[122] There are other men in the film, and thus, hypothetically different possible masculinities, but it only within the survivor community that masculinities are sent to compete. Thus, while we can discuss the masculinity of the local militia or even of the various other authorities, as I have above, these are not functional possible subject positions for individual men and thus must be discussed separately.

both men. Where Johnny had been ironically detached and thus ill-prepared for the physical struggle to save his sister, Ben literally physically grapples with the situation from his first moment on camera. Johnny positioned himself as an observer and commentator who was only drawn into action, both in fighting the ghoul and even in simply visiting his father's grave, when Barbara required it of him. Johnny's running commentary from the car and as they stroll in the graveyard establishes him as the gaze personified, capable of comprehending and imposing meaning on all that surrounds him. He narrates the scene at the cemetery. He invents an interpretation of the man in the distance shambling toward them. While race is clearly a noteworthy distinction between Ben and Johnny, the trucker Ben of Romero's original script would still have been quite different. Where Johnny's relationship to Barbara is structured by the institution of family, Ben's relationship to each character is structured based on their plans for survival.

Another potential heir for the legacy of masculinity is Tom, the male part of the film's only potentially regenerative couple. Unfortunately, Tom is clearly a follower rather than a leader and, while he retains far more agency than Barbara or even his girlfriend Judy, Tom does not drive the narrative sufficiently to become a possible locus of identification for the audience. However, of the entire survivor community, it is Tom and Judy who seem to most belong in the home. Indeed, when the film was remade in 1990, Tom is presented as a relative of the home's owners. Tom seems at home in the rural setting and is eager to engage in whatever physical task Ben assigns him. Yet in the crucial moments of his daring escape, Tom doesn't have enough sense to refuel a truck without setting the whole thing on fire. In Hervey's reading, the ridiculous helplessness of Tom and Judy is a direct rejection of the regenerative couple tradition in older undead

tales. Tom and Judy do not appear to be ethically flawed. They are willing to grant authority to whomever barks orders at them. They are hard workers and, while limited in their agency, seem to display a base level of compassion for Barbara and Karen. But ultimately the two appear pretty much helpless, unable to help generate any solution.

Ultimately, only Harry is presented as a legitimate alternative masculine authority. As discussed above, Harry's conflicts with Ben cannot simply be dismissed as evidence of his villainy. Harry's response to the extraordinary crisis he finds himself in is not reducible to illegible evil. But Ben is nonetheless presented as a superior masculinity. As Hervey details, Harry is the middle-class, (early) middle-aged company man. *Night* makes Harry Ben's foil and thus focuses its discussion of masculinity in specific class- and generation-based tensions. In Wood's reading, these tensions are rooted in the Oedipal Complex, thus centering the family in *Night*'s critique. While Harry's position as father is certainly significant and the film clearly skewers all filial bonds, I think Wood, who elsewhere in his book argues that the two are inseparable, misses the ways that Harry's patriarchal position is inextricable from his class position. When Helen ridicules Harry's petty vindictiveness, she indicates that his masculinity is routinely challenged and he consistently fails to respond appropriately. The film does not describe any of the previous incidents that have placed such a strain on Harry and Helen's marriage but at this point in the film, Helen has not seen Ben and since no one mentions his race throughout the film, it is possible that she is completely unaware of the racial component of this tension. Racism is only one of many motivations for Harry's hysterical response to the threat to his authority over the survivor community. As I will explore below, the claustrophobic but ideologically expansive setting of the farmhouse under assault

increases the tension between Ben and Harry because the house collapses the false binary

between public and private established in patriarchal capitalism.

Ben is not just a rival for Harry. Ben's leadership style challenges the

foundational assumptions of Harry's legitimacy as an authority figure. When Harry is

first presented as a potential leader he is also simultaneously presented as a coward who

ignored Barbara's screams. Ben does not challenge Harry's authority but instead

challenges his morality, thus setting up the terms of their rivalry: the two men are to be

judged on their merits rather than on their entitlement. Imposing this standard

immediately draws into question Harry's dominance over Tom who immediately shifts

spatial position to share the frame with Ben, signaling his shifted allegiance. Ben helps

others to survive and Harry merely preserves himself. Furthermore, Ben requires the

assistance of others. While Harry bars the door and leaves the survivors to stew in their

building horror, Ben gives everyone tasks, demonstrating that the entire community, even

the otherwise catatonic Barbara, can contribute to the group's survival. He is able to

remain a leader while encouraging agency in others. Harry's authority, on the other hand,

requires passivity in others, which enfeebles others, is an inefficient use of resources, and

creates the illusion that Harry's vision alone is sufficient to ensure survival, thus

legitimating his authority.

Ben is unlike Harry in that he doesn't have faith that things will work out if they

just keep their heads down. Harry trusts that the authorities will arrive and reestablish

order. While filmcraft and acting are unequivocal in establishing Ben as sympathetic and

Harry as his antagonist, on a plot level, it is Harry who is diegeticly validated. Harry is

right to protect his daughter. He is right to retreat to the basement. He is right to trust that

the authorities are coming. So what do we make of the conflict between Ben's

sympathetic depiction and Harry's ultimate validation? First, we can acknowledge that

Harry's validation comes from the power of the posse. Harry is a true believer in his

moral order and it is the enforcers of that moral order who ultimately prove him right and

kill Ben in the process. Harry is wrong in his antagonism against Ben, specifically when

he attempts to lock Ben out of the house, justifying Ben in beating him, and when he

attempts to wrest the gun from Ben, sparking a brawl that ends in his own death. Harry is

wrong because he is not Ben, does not support Ben, and plots to overthrow Ben's

authority. In short, Harry is the villain because Ben is the hero.

Harry is not the only authority position that the film dismisses. Through the

television, the survivor community witnesses four distinct forms of authority: the local

militia, representatives of the national government, scientists, and the newscasters who

attempt to compile and interpret the messages from these other authorities. While the

militia is largely villainized in the film and amongst the film's critics, the leadership style

displayed by the lawman who leads the militia is quite distinct from the other authorities

in the film. As his posse takes action, the sheriff gathers and distributes data. Even though

we are never shown the posse actually saving anyone, this willingness to distribute

information demonstrates the sheriff's willingness to disseminate power for the greater

good, a stark contrast to the military and politicians in the film. Hervey provides an

excellent reading of the US national leadership in the film who are only glimpsed through

the television and whose response to the crisis is to assign blame and retreat to bunkers,

in a mirror of Harry's attempt to hole-up in the cellar. Like Harry, national authorities

retreat from responsibility and seek to distribute blame, prioritizing their position in the

historical narrative of the event over any the lives they can save. The film's scientists are not authoritarian and do not shirk responsibility, but their desperate need to visualize the situation leads to a proliferation of useless, inaccurate, and sometimes harmful information. Whether the ghouls are caused by a meteorite or Soviet bioterrorism makes no difference to the audience at home who are desperately seeking resources to increase their survival rates. Of course we can't blame the scientists for attempting to understand the situation. In the national division of crisis management labor, that is their role. Instead, we should shift that blame to the newscasters who, in an attempt to fill airtime, present all available information. Rather than exercising their judgment and filtering the available data, the media in the film turn into a sieve for information from traditional authorities and a barricade for localized knowledge. They forward all officially sanctioned information indiscriminately and barely acknowledge when the advice they distribute is contradictory. In contrast, when the newscaster alludes to calls received, he dismisses them as contradictory even though it appears the information received from callers is more helpful than that received through authorized channels.

Yet for all of the inefficacy of the film's various authority figures, *Night* ends with a reassertion of the previous order. The militia sweeps through the countryside, shooting ghouls and burning bodies. Newscasters remain the hub of communication. No alternate forms of national governance are proposed. Despite the scientists' labor to understand their source, extermination is the only option considered for dealing with the ghoul problem. This ending, where the old order reasserts itself is actually more nihilist than the ending of *I Am Legend.* There is no possible alternative. While Neville may have sacrificed himself rather than adapt to a new world in which his moral order as no longer

dominant, the elimination of Ben as just another ghoul proves that, even in the face of its inadequacies, the old order would rather eliminate alternatives than adapt. For *White Zombie*'s Neil and *Dracula*'s Jonathan Harker, the goal had been to learn a new form of masculinity. In the 1950s, Neville refused that task and instead chose to die with the old order. In the late 1960s, Ben isn't asked to adapt. He is already an alternative. The undead have returned to their role as external pressure exerted against an unstable system. But all those who could have borne witness to the efficacy of Ben's subordinated masculinity are eliminated. Only the audience survives the story to tell the tale. Initially the undead represented an alternative too foreign to comprehend. For Matheson, this inability to comprehend is rejected as a moral failing. In *Night*, the ghouls no longer represent a rejected alternative order. Instead the alternatives are present within the survivor community itself. Ben dies not because he is obsolete, but because 1968 was a time when the meritocracy was disproven.

4.7   Women amongst the Undead

The 1968 film does not present audiences with competent, survivable female characters. Women are not, in this film, qualified to participate in the national project. On the one hand, this means that women are not villainized for being complicit in the competition amongst masculinities or in the larger imperial project. On the other hand, it also means that the film does not grant its female characters agency. None of the women in the film are effective in pursuing survival. Instead, they let the men care for them. This, too, however, represents a progression of gender roles in the longer history of undead narratives. For Waller, *Night* is a descendant of the Dracula legacy and borrowing

this line of reasoning, we can subject the treatment of its female characters to a genealogical analysis. Within the Stoker novel, Mina and Lucy fall into a typical Madonna/whore dual trope. In Matheson, Ruth functions much like Eve. In Romero's first zombie film, we find three women who, far from Judeo-Christian saints and sinners, lend themselves more to the neo-pagan three sisters archetypes, who appear in *Dracula* as the Count's vampire brides. This mythologizing of the female characters in undead narratives is a persistent tradition, in no small part due to the microcosmic nature of survival communities, but also due to lingering patriarchal tendencies in narrative which resist three-dimensional representations of women.

In *Dracula* and many of its remakes, Mina and Lucy represent the two poles of racial panic inherent in the construction of white women's sexuality. Mina is the perfect Victorian woman. She is a devoted fiancée and then wife: chaste, a caretaker and helpmate. Her sexuality is closely policed by her male guardians in a male-governed marriage market over which the women had only circumspect influence. This lack of women's agency in regard to their highly fetishized sexual chastity provided the crisis to which most Victorian novels of manners respond. Lucy is also a response to this crisis. Like the heroine of any Victorian novel, she represents the free agent in the marriage market, simultaneously a threat to male dominance and the essential agency required for any female character to prove her character rather than merely her circumstance. Lucy's power to make choices, like Mary Magdalene's, results in her interpretation as a whore despite the lack of textual evidence of any sexual activity, much less deviance. In the virgin/whore dichotomy, Lucy represents the ultimate vulnerability in Victorian society. As a free sexual agent she runs the risk of investing her portion of the marriage economy

in a foreigner. Many have argued that this threat of miscegenation, both sexual and financial, is an important subtext in *Dracula*.[123] Mina legitimates the moral integrity of the survivor community, and specifically its white supremacist and patriarchal leadership. Lucy legitimates the violence required to defend it.

In Neville's post-apocalyptic fantasy, Ruth is cast as a new Eve. In their limited time together, he attempts to force her into the role of helpmate and primal mother. His sin of impurity, of corruption, becomes his obsession and, like the Edenic tale, he projects all sin upon her, configuring her as embodied temptation who threatens his ascetic self-sufficiency. As he reconciles himself to death, rather than liberate her from this quasi-mythical position, Neville instead revises his version of the myth. Rather than see her as a woman whose husband he had murdered and who nonetheless extended him her compassion, Neville imagines Ruth as the mother of a new race. It would be foolish to declare her race as white, since Matheson's obsession with her skin and blood clearly marks her as a passing racialized other and the allusion to the black power movement is clear. Yet, for Neville, her role as an agent of a militaristic civilian defense is subsumed by her function as the only member of this new social order to whom he was willing to grant full moral legitimacy. It is only through her that the vampire community becomes real to him.

In *Night*, we are presented with three female characters. There is also a girl child, but she only gains agency upon transitioning from an invalid into a zombie. The human females are Judy, the submissive and soft-spoken lover; Mrs. Cooper, the bitter and

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[123] See Eric Kwan-Wai Yu, "Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 48.2 (Summer 2206): 145-70.

antagonistic wife; and Barbara, whose position in the film, while defined by her relationships to men, is neither romantic nor sexual. The Neopagan mythology of the Maiden, Mother and Crone was made popular by Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* (1955) so it is reasonable to believe that this archetypal vocabulary would have been available to Romero and his fellow filmmakers. While there is clearly not a direct symbolic link, Graves' slippery association between the ancient European Three Sisters and his own triple goddess would have left plenty of play in which to imagine three distinct mythological positions for female characters in the late 60s. As such, we can see how Barbara, Judy and Mrs. Cooper combine to define the life phases of women through their relationships to men. Barbara, like Mina, is the virgin Maiden with whose protection the patriarchy is charged. She is scripted as a perfect Victorian heroine in that her father is dead and she must therefore rely on her indecorous brother for protection. Judy is the sexually active partner and helpmate, thus roughly fulfilling the Mother role. Mrs. Cooper, who early on reminds her husband that she wants to leave him but cannot, is the Crone who no longer requires men. This association of the film's mother with the Crone instead of the Mother archetype is a result of an objectifying androcentrism in which a woman's life is defined not by her larger social function, but by her specifically sexual one.

The three women in *Night* each die in a way that emphasizes their archetypal positions. Judy dies first because she foolishly refuses to be separated from her lover when he opts to go on a doomed suicide mission. The zombies render her body indistinguishable bits of flesh. As such, she literalizes the objectification of the beautiful woman into interchangeable bodies which can easily be reduced to a collection of

consumable parts. Mrs. Cooper puts up no fight when she is killed and eaten by her own daughter, thus reducing the adult woman's body to mere nourishment for the next generation. Barbara's death is even more subversive as she dies because of her desire to return to the script of Victorian virginity wherein the male caretaker protects her. Worse than her failure of self-preservation is the fact that in returning herself to the corrupted familial script, Barbara also endangers the lives of the remaining survivor community. She tears down the defenses Ben has constructed so that she can reunite with Johnny, thus giving Ben no alternative but to hide himself in the basement as the Coopers had planned to do all along.

Above I have presented the farmhouse in *Night* as a modification of how the house functions in *I Am Legend*; as a microcosm of the nation. When discussing such a house in the context of a singular patriarchal ego, as in the case of Neville's home, the political and psychological function of the house can be conflated. However, in *Night*, the house is occupied by a wide range of characters and thus the political/communal and psychological/individual functions of the film's setting must be reconciled. In part because *Night* is a visual text while *I Am Legend* at least began as a novel, the house in *Night* functions in more nuanced ways. The farmhouse in *Night* is the location of community, defining who is included (the survivors) and who is excluded (the ghouls) as well as functioning as the interface between the two and amongst the survivors. The house also functions as the locus of identification for the audience. While we are presented with first Barbara and then Ben as appropriate identification proxies, the house as a metaphor for the community itself is ultimately the location in the film that we occupy.

Much is made of the psychoanalytic potential of the family in film criticism. Wood's treatment of *Night*, for example, is focused on the power dynamics of the Freudian family unit. While I agree that the positioning of hegemonic white masculinity as it's ideal citizen allows the national myth to map itself onto the family structure, I think this film fundamentally challenges that mapping, rejecting the family as the ideological center of the home, and thus of the nation. By Wood's reading, the audience will always already identify with the child in the oedipal family drama but in *Night,* the child is a non-character, only becoming a functional locus of identification after she turns into a ghoul, when we can celebrate her rejection of the previous social order when she murders her mother. While identifying with the zombies is certainly a valuable reading of the film, Karen is not significant enough of a character to privilege as the proxy for the audience, although her symbolic function in the film should not be overlooked. In my reading, a psychoanalytic reading of *Night* must necessarily sacrifice the film's political potential. The family is certainly a significant ideological function, but to impose Freudian sexual power dynamics distracts from the more pressing political messages.

As the title suggests, Fredrick Engle's *The Origin of the Family, the State, and Private Property,* argues that the family is tied into the basic foundations of capitalist ideology. While Engle's argument itself is teleological and Eurocentric, the connection is clear and has led to a history of ambivalence toward the family in the horror genre, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. For Wood, "alienated labor and the patriarchal family" are inseparable and they are supported by the same system of repression (71). The violence of repression required to sustain the nuclear family is inseparable from the violence of oppression required to sustain capitalism. Both establish systems of

domination and substitute competition with external groups to justify that hierarchy as being in the best interest of the subordinated. Yet the ideological power of the nuclear family also serves capitalism by structuring economic incentives that ultimately stabilize the labor force. Nuclear families demand an isolated physical location in which to perform their private sphere functions, thus privileging home ownership with all of its stabilizing functions. The home becomes an expression of each family's private sphere, thus establishing a competitive cycle of ever larger and more elaborate homes filled with the latest conveniences and luxuries, which require more and more distance from urban centers. This distance insulates families from participation in larger, more diverse communities, thus preserving the sanctity of the individual family's private sphere. Children become property to the same extent that they are conscripted to bear the future potential of the family. In a nuclear family, the child bears the sublimated burden of the family's sacrifices as well as the fiscally eminent burden of caring for her parents in their old age. The child's potential trumps the family's external ethical obligations. Crucial to this bargain process is the concept of innocence: the child is insulated from any ethical compromises the family makes. In this way, absolute control over the child is fetishized as good parenting instead of acknowledged as another form of private property rights.

The nuclear family manages inheritance on the micro level and the perpetuation of the labor force on the macro level. As Heidi Hartman argues,

> From the capitalist's point of view, the reproduction of the working class
> may "safely be left to itself." At the same time, capital creates an ideology,
> which grows up alongside it, of individualism, competitiveness,
> domination, and in our time, consumption of a particular kind. (173)

As a technology, the family reconciles these seemingly conflicting functions of capitalism. The family unit bears the responsibility of reproducing the labor pool, both training and sustaining workers. The gendered division of labor between the domestic and economic spheres (public and private) liberates employers from these responsibilities. Thus the collaboration required to reproduce the working class can be contained within the home while the competition that drives consumption can occur between family units, in the spaces outside of the home. Harry's competition with Ben is coded as virtuous because it both defends and acquires goods for the family unit even though it sabotages the efforts of the larger community and eventually sacrifices all members of the survival community for the sanctity of the child. Harry's near hysterical grasping at authority is merely his need to live up to the ideological burden of fatherhood. That Karen has herself become monstrous by film's end and cannibalizes her parents only further establishes the critique of a nuclear family ideology.[124]

While the role of the house as a center of family is well established, I submit that the house is coded within visuality to function as a body. As such, the house is subject to the same ideological resignifications as the body. The body is no longer an autonomous unit defined by specific boundaries. The individual can no longer be seen to exist in a vacuum of independent choice. Instead we must see the body as an interface. The body is not a bag constituted by the distinction between inside and out, but a tube that is always both within the external and contains the external within itself. Skin in this paradigm is

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[124] Vivian Sobchak has written on the demonic child not as a function of anxieties about children's vulnerability, but as the fantasy of a frustrated patriarchal order that bear radical responsibility for the child but is no longer assured the privileges of obedience, private-property, and legacy that once made such responsibilities possible.

also radically resignified, just as the walls of a home in zombie films stop being the
boundaries of internal and external space and instead become a contested, semi-porous
interface. In *The Railway* Journey, Wolfgang Schivelbush argues that the invention of the
railroad not only changed urban planning and business distribution practices, but actually
changed the ways that we understand space and our relations to others. Along with the
railroad, Schivelbusch analyses how the incorporation of steel in architecture created the
idea of inside space and shifted our perceptions of walls from objects in themselves to
primarily membranes between the indoors and out. His argument demonstrates how even
this most bodily of readings of a house is still linked to visuality and the development of
technologies which allowed autonomy to develop in the first place. By demarcating the
boundary between us and them, windows establish the perimeter of self/community. The
door of the home is an orifice that exchanges with the external world, but, in the sense
that they are the primary interface and operate as a semi-permeable membrane, windows
are the skin of a house. Interestingly, despite this function of the house as a metaphor for
the nuclear family, in *Night*, the film's literal family is instead limited to the sightless,
claustrophobic basement. As a metaphor for the family, the basement emphasizes
isolation, myopia, and internal conflict.

As much as *Night* has a reputation for being an iconoclast film, it presents Harry,
and all of the other possible models of authority, room for some legitimacy. This is
perhaps darker than a simple dismissal of all authority as corrupt. In films where
authority is unequivocally bad, there is the narrative potential for a benign authority
figure to assert power. But in a narrative like *Night*, where authority is layered and each
layer is presented with at least some value while being ultimately rejected, it becomes the

institution of authority itself that must be reconsidered. Harry's patriarchal role as

provider and protector requires that he have control over the entire survivor community.

It is not his desire to stay in the cellar that is demonized, as it represents the best chance

of survival for his immobilized daughter. Instead, Harry is villainized for his assumption

that in order to ensure his daughter's safety, he must have undisputed authority over the

other survivors. He and Ben get into a turf dispute where Harry's control of the cellar

threatens Ben's survival but is perceived as necessary for Karen's. Had these two men

conceived of mutually beneficial cooperation rather than masculine territory disputes, the

death toll would certainly have been lower. It must be remembered, after all, that Harry is

right in his assertion that the cellar is safe, with the exception of the undead Karen

herself. So in the end, it is the all-or-nothing model of leadership and domination that

puts these two legitimate positions in opposition to one another.

4.8   Windows and Cellars

Harry won't let Ben into the cellar once he closes the door because he won't be

able to see what is happening. He will have to deduce whether it is safe to open the door

without being able to survey the situation. Harry does not want to negotiate uncertainty.

He wants to make a decision and stick to it. He wants to assess the situation, come to a

conclusion and rely on that conclusion. As Ben says, "we'll be blind down there."

Harry's reliance on visual data, his need to gather data before making decisions, and his

assumption that decisions made in this manner are authoritative combine into the logic of

visuality, as described by Mirzoeff. Mirzoeff argues that this logic is an ideology first

developed in the plantation system of slave oversight and since applied as the dominant

logic of authority in the context of war. Visuality is linked to sight as a means of

collecting data, but it is more linked to vision, as a set of ideological beliefs that govern

how the information available is processed. Visuality conflates authority and vision, both

granting authority to those who have coherent vision and demanding that vision conform

to the authorized ideology. Mirzoeff uses the example of the general who sits far from the

battlefield collecting data from his subordinates and creating a mental map of the

battlefield. The general's ability to create such a mental map out of the disparate accounts

he receives is interpreted as a leadership quality and thus justifies his authority. But it

also limits his ability to process incoming data, which may or may not conform to the

mental model he has created. In the fog of war as in the brutal repression required of

slavery, consistent authority that governs from a distance through the generation of

mental maps provides consistency in an otherwise unnavigable field. This is the model of

leadership that Harry wants to replicate. He wants to remove himself from the situation

by retreating to the cellar, gather data through the television and radio reports and make

command decisions that will not be questioned by those who do not share his vision. His

violent anger at Ben is a result not of having his authority challenged, but of having his

entire conception of leadership dismissed. Harry has been taught only one way to protect

his family and Ben's methods of survival do not conform to that logic.

The initial conflict between Ben and Harry is over the basement and, as I have

argued, the basement in this case is a metaphor for the authority of visuality. Harry feels

most secure when he is bunkered in and he trusts the authorities speaking over the radio

and television to keep him sufficiently informed. Ben insists on having access to

windows. It may at first seem contradictory to argue that Ben's insistence on windows is

a divergence from the ideology of visuality. However, the ideology of visuality is centered on the capacity of authority to provide a totalizing vision while the alternative, according to Mirzoeff, is the right to look, the ability to process data independently from the totalizing vision. To accomplish this goal, one must have visual access. One must be able to see for one's self. This is the importance of the farmhouse's windows and the possibility denied by the basement. In the sealed-off basement, safety becomes defined in opposition to contamination. In the logic of the Cold War, ideological purity is the best defense against Communist indoctrination. For Ben, however, safety is found through adaptation and empowerment. He gathers tools, weighs the merits of various plans, and inventories his resources, including his fellow survivors. This metaphor of contamination, which will become a characteristic of the zombie genre, is further complicated by Karen, the child who is secured in the basement but who, as Ben assess early on, is already contaminated. Harry's commitment to Karen's safety is misguided on every level. Harry suspects Ben of making the survivor community vulnerable and thus contaminating his insular world. Yet it is not Ben, the one who grapples with the ghouls in hand-to hand combat who threatens the community, but Karen, who is sealed in at both the metaphorical and literal center of the home.

In addition to its function as the archetypal setting for the family drama, the farmhouse in *Night* also functions as a central illustration of the logic of visuality. Ben and Harry also differ significantly in their investments in the various technologies of visuality in the film. To fully appreciate the visual significance of the farmhouse, we must first contextualize it within the film's larger treatment of the regime of visuality. *Night* makes use of visual technologies to establish the best chance of survival of its

survivor community. Framed in Waller's terms, the resources of survival at play in this film are often visual in nature. While the film begins in a graveyard where Barbara, Johnny, and the camera can see the first ghoul coming, once normalcy is disrupted, Barbara flees to a house. I do not want to underplay the importance of the house-as-nation and house-as-family metaphors at play in the film, but to date, most scholarship, with the exception of Hervey, has overlooked the importance of windows in the function of the house both as a metaphor and as a resource for survival. Furthermore, I will argue that the ideological importance of windows is also a significant force in the US automotive fetish. Cars function as a mobile gaze in our national imaginary and thus the inefficiency of cars as a survival resource in *Night* is an important component of film's social critique. The media also functions as a form of mobile gaze in the film and thus the film's presentation of the television warrants a close reading. Finally, the ideological structures of race in the US rely on visuality, as proven by the fact that Ben's race can be such an important function of the film despite the fact that no character explicitly acknowledges it.

To understand the difference between the gaze and the Right to Look, we can contrast Harry's need to visualize with the resources Ben uses in his attempt to survive, including data collection, leadership style, and, perhaps most importantly, Ben's preference for pragmatic adaptation over commitment to any one course of action. Ben only wants to use the cellar as a back-up because it will prevent him from continually assessing the situation and changing his plans accordingly. For Ben, authority cannot improve the group's chances of survival because it cannot adapt. It makes decisions, imposes them on the group, and maintains them consistently. This method of decision

making is not best suited for survival. Ben prefers to respond directly to each new bit of information, rather than map it: improvisation over vision. Ben's leadership style is also more consensuses based. He does not command the others but instead presents his intent and requests their assistance.

So what is it exactly that makes Ben so heroic? Where Harry is limited to visual authority, dependent on comprehending the entire situation and unable to distinguish between different qualities of data, Ben presents a model of masculinity that insists on the Right to Look. For Ben, looking as a technology of imperial white supremacy is used against him. At the moment the audience first meets him (see figures 1 and 2), we see him standing at the threshold. He is seeing himself through Barbara's eyes. He has a double consciousness that allows him a triple sight: he sees the situation, the situation (including himself) as it looks to the gaze, and he sees the subject employing the gaze. Thus he must negotiate these three sights. Through the ghoul attack, he is able to assert his sight over the sight of the gaze. Ultimately he dies because during the terror he is able to assert his agency over the logic of the gaze, but when the (white supremacist) human order reestablishes itself through the sheriff's posse, the gaze is re-established and Ben has failed to return to his mimicry of the gaze's expectations. He fails to again see himself through the gaze. From the first moment Ben is presented on screen, he must reject the power of the gaze that totalizes him and instead insist on an intersubjective look. His superior survival skills can similarly be understood as a different relationship to visuality, and specifically to the technologies of visuality in the film.

What the basement lacks is windows and thus it is the ideological function of windows that is at the core of the conflict between Ben and Harry. Windows demarcate

an indoor/outdoor line. The indoor is us, safe, and privileged. The outdoor is other, dangerous, and alienated. Windows allow for communication between these two spaces. In this film, the windows mark the semi-permeable boundaries of the house. Ben is conflicted because he both wants to board-up the windows and because he doesn't want to retreat to the cellar where there are no windows for him to monitor the situation. Ben understands the semi-permeable nature of windows and is willing to enter into a continually negotiated relationship with them and their utility. It is Ben's adaptability that makes him a valuable survival resource for the community. He survives and successfully kills ghouls outside the house, but he is also more skilled at keeping the ghouls out of the house once he decides to take shelter there. He is able to kill ghouls or hide from them, judging the best course of action as he goes.

The window is both a membrane that maintains the separation between inside and outside, and semi-permeable because it allows some flow between, in this case, the flow of the gaze. Parties on either side of the window can look upon one another yet gazing out of a window gives the illusion of surveying the scene while gazing into a window can only ever give incomplete knowledge. As is shown over and over again in *Night*, the comprehension of the outside world gained by looking at the outside world is never adequate and the vulnerability of being seen by those outside can be deadly. Windows combine with visuality to reinforce privilege by making us apart but aware. Like privilege, they function to cage us in while making us comfortable. If the window succeeds as a physical barrier, it is assumed those inside have been protected. However, we can be visually injured or traumatized as well. The information that flows in through the window can be damaging, as we see with Barbara.

Of course, windows can be broken, although characters often seem to forget this. Odd that one of the most striking differences between Romero's film and the many zombie films that follow is that the ghoul that attacks Barbara and Johnny in the cemetery uses a rock to smash her car window. Zombies using tools is not common, and, post-Romero, cars are usually fairly safe spaces with shatter-proof windows that zombies may pound on, but rarely are able to break. The logic of looking through a window is deadly because we have faith in the window as a barrier even though it can break. However, it can also be deadly because we think that physical protection is sufficient and we don't realize how much trauma can endanger us. Every time they look outside the house seems less secure. The visual evidence leads to panic or hopelessness or Barbara's catatonic state.

4.9   Car Culture and the Mobile Gaze

Early in the film, when Barbara is attacked, she seeks refuge in a car, only to discover that her brother, who has just been murdered before her eyes, still has the keys. Later in the film the single largest loss of life results from a failed attempt to refuel a truck and use it as a getaway vehicle. Both Ben and Barbara have troubled relationships with vehicles as well. For Ben, the vehicle's dependence on gas makes him vulnerable, forcing him to stop at the farmhouse when he has previously been successful in defending himself. Barbara doesn't have the keys. Even worse, the ghouls do not respect the distinction between inside and out that the car is supposed to establish. Automobiles are ubiquitous in US culture not only because they provide transportation, but also because they function to maintain our logics of looking. A car functions as a mobile gaze. It

provides the semi-permeable membrane of windows, but those windows are now mobilized. The car becomes camera in the sense that it can be directed and, like the camera, it functions as a prosthetic that allows us to identify selves that extend beyond our bodies. The exoskeleton of the car has been seen throughout the history of horror films to lull characters into forgetting the vulnerabilities of their bodies. A car can be used to run a monster down, but like a home, a car's windows can be broken. In *Night*, the vehicles never travel much faster than a person can walk or jog, which is to say faster than any individual ghoul but not fast enough to escape. Instead, in this film, the vehicles consistently function as semi-permeable membrane that characters mistake as protection. The bicycle is more pragmatic both in terms of fuel, accessibility, and adaptability, but it does not function as an exoskeleton.[125]

The car is prerequisite technology for suburbs, which have traditionally functioned as a means of segregating along race and class lines. Only those who can afford reliable transportation and fuel are able to live in manufactured communities beyond the reach of multicultural, continually adaptive urban spaces. In short, the car helps to maintain middle-class space, which has historically been enforced as white space through both formal and informal housing segregation policies, as a space apart but, unlike rural spaces, with ready access to all the benefits of communal urban space. This racially implicated function of private vehicles is further imbued in with power through the car windows by which the space within the vehicle is empowered to gaze upon those who are not in mobile private spaces. Often cars function as mobile homes in that they

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[125] Or, as is evident early in both the graphic novel and television versions of *The Walking Dead*, a horse is also a possible alternative.

include the whole family in an enclosed shared space, thus reinforcing the idea of the

family as the core social and economic unit and setting it up in opposition to broader

coalition building. The car creates private space within public space, giving its driver and

passenger's access to shared resources as well as the vicarious thrill of the gaze without

requiring that they interact with the Other. In horror films, the Other is presented as a

threat and so the car represents the possibility of escape. In recent zombie narratives,

urban spaces are often deadly and overrun with the undead.[126] Survivor communities

must flee the city. While not all zombies can be mapped onto racial anxieties, Paul

Boshears has demonstrated that the fictional Atlanta of *The Walking Dead* reflects the

racial anxieties around public transit in the real Atlanta's suburbs.

A great deal of the appeal of car culture is that we think we can escape instead of

being besieged. In a post-apocalyptic fantasy, one has the car without the traffic.

Survivors are able to take possession of the largest or fanciest vehicles, expressing their

individuality in a way that the class distinctions of consumer culture had not previously

allowed. A telling example is in Charlton Heston's Neville in *Omega Man* (1971) where

he routinely takes vehicles from luxury dealerships and simply drives them until he's

either run out the gas or severely damaged them. In a rather humorous logical loop, it is

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[126] As housing patterns vacillate between white flight and urban gentrification, so too do the politics of place in zombie narratives. In Max Brook's novel *World War Z,* urban spaces are not only forfeit to the undead, they even more threateningly function as ground zero for immense waves of roaming undead that then threaten to overwhelm suburban and rural spaces. The most detailed description of life after the reassertion of human global dominance that Brooks gives is a section describing the design of new zombie-proof suburban neighborhoods. In contrast, we can compare the evolving politics of place within the other films in Romero's Dead sequence. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the suburban space of the mall not only proves to be vulnerable to undead infiltration, but also serves to corrupt the human survivor community, blurring the distinction between living and undead. In *Land of the Dead*, the dead invade the city from the suburbs, although it must be noted that foragers in that film have flipped the flow of goods by living in the city and venturing out into the dead suburbs to obtain luxury items.

only with the collapse of consumer cultures that the post-apocalyptic survivor can truly express himself through his consumption practices. However, in *Omega Man*, this all-consuming appetite of Neville's is contextualized with his shooting machine guns off into storefronts and empty apartment buildings, his manic collecting of luxury goods and his love affair with store mannequins. Thoughtless consumption is part of what Neville must transcend before becoming a hero. In becoming a hero, he exchanges the fast sports car for a van that can secure and transport the entire community. Neville is still very much the patriarch of this make-shift family unit, and the hopeful note the film ends with is contingent on the ability of one of the children to drive. The individualist car is replaced with a communal van, but the survivor community is still dependent on the skill of their leader who is, necessarily, in the driver's seat.

Contemporary zombie narratives interrogate this simplification and reassert the significance of the masses by depicting the apocalyptic traffic jam as a death trap. The ideal man is defined by his distinction from the consuming masses rather than by his excessive desire to consume. Often images of highways leaving cities are shown to be packed with abandoned cars, which read clearly as empty shells and call attention to the conspicuous absence of the humans who should be driving them. Yet even in such scenes, the cars often represent the failure of the masses to think critically. In one of the publicity shots for the television show *The Walking Dead* a jammed highway is contrasted with several open lanes going into the city.

The image can be read both in terms of the individual virtue of this one man who is brave enough to enter the city as well as the stupidity of all those people who failed to break the law in service of saving their lives. Abandoned cars represent death and

absence while the city looms as threat, unknowable and full of unseen dangers. The man on horseback is the rugged individual, the hegemonic masculinity of cowboy fables. Being on horseback also liberates him from the false security of the vehicle and presents him, like Ben, as more versatile and adaptable than those who presumably perished in the traffic.[127]

From Matheson's Neville (1954) through Heston's and up to this image, we can trace the ways that hegemonic masculinity adapts. Matheson's Neville was his own mechanic and fuel was an inexhaustible resource. He was the rugged self-reliant individual who was forced to take others into account. But in the late 1960s, the US appetite for fossil fuels became publicly linked to US imperial aggression, first through Vietnam and later through increasing US involvement in the Middle East. By the time Heston played Neville in the early 1970s, the national car fetish was challenged and so Neville's relationship with a vehicle is depicted as inherently wasteful, although the film never goes quite so far as to depict the car as antisocial in and of itself. *Omega Man* does juxtapose the desire to consume against the desire for community. By the time we get to *The Walking Dead*, the rugged individual has again asserted himself as the dominant masculinity. Rather than admit to being dependent on the US imperial machine, however, this revised masculinity proves his worthiness through his rejection of both the cars that he cannot maintain and fuel, and the highly organized rules imposed on drivers to maintain civil society.

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[127] This still shot is also interesting in the literal parallel of the derailed train, representing a systemic failure so that rather than the car being simply a failure of mindless consumption, it is one facet of the failures of our national infrastructure. Rick, the man on horseback from the still, is a law man who throughout the larger narrative must negotiate the authority his badge lends with the fact that the old system of order it represents is no longer tenable.

Even considering this long evolution of cars as ideological tools in zombie narratives, however, the use of cars in *Night* is groundbreaking. First, gas is a limited resource. This complication primarily affects Ben, who arrives at the farmhouse in a truck nearly out of gas. He initially does not intend to stay in the farmhouse, only to find a key to the farm's gas pump and refuel before driving off. The shortage of gas serves as a reminder that cars are a luxury and that the surplus of gas that Matheson's Neville enjoyed was an entitlement of empire. Within the logic of American exceptionalism, the violence required to secure fossil fuels is ignored and the access to those fuels is naturalized as an indication of superiority within the meritocracy. In contrast, *Night* knows the value of gas and acknowledges the violence and danger necessary to procure it. Yet this danger is ultimately employed by the film in much the same way cars are used in the publicity image from *The Walking Dead* above. Both Ben and the cowboy Rick are depicted as better suited to survival because they appreciate the limitations of fossil fuels. In *Night*, it is Tom and Judy who die while attempting to refuel the truck. As observed by Hervey, Tom and Judy are scripted to be the redemptive couple, surviving to repopulate the world with their wholesome values (82). Instead, they are unable to control the truck, careless with gas and fire, and too committed to the hope that the truck will save them to save themselves from an extremely preventable death. Like the missing masses represented by the gridlocked cars, Tom and Judy place so much trust in the system that they are incapable of surviving when that system fails.

Barbara also has a vexing relationship with cars. At the cemetery when Johnny is killed, she retreats to the car, first as transportation, but quickly resorts to using it as an exoskeleton. The car is the only available enclosed space and Barbara believes she will

be safe there. But the car is a collection of windows and the ghouls who attacks her does not recognize the distinction between her interior familial space and the public space where he had previously attacked. There follows a profound moment in the film during which the ghoul is attempting to get at Barbara through the glass while Barbara is pressing her hands against the glass, perhaps in support or perhaps to ward off physically what is attacking her visually. For a moment the contested nature of the window as a semi-permeable membrane is clear. Even as she is physically protected, the trauma of the attack continues through her visual vulnerability. At last the ghoul goes around to the passenger side and Barbara manages to lock that door just in time, asserting ownership of the space within.

Barbara has the right to the space within the car, but she does not have the keys and therefore does not have the agency to control the car. Once the window is broken, she again becomes vulnerable. When the semi-permeable membrane that allows her attacker to psychically harm her is ruptured and the physical dangers of the attack reassert themselves, Barbara doesn't so much act, such as putting the car in gear and driving away, as she does react, releasing the break that was preventing the car from moving. Due to the technology of private property ownership manifest in the form of a key, cars are not simply transferable. Johnny dies, but despite being the intuitive heir of his property, Barbara lacks the physical equipment to inherit the car. Meanwhile, Ben drives a stolen truck and no one cares, because he has mastery over that technology.[128]

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[128] It is also worth noting that the truck for which Tom and Judy risk their lives is a two-seater. While the regenerative couple could ride in the truck together, everyone else would be in the bed of the truck, a contested space that is not even enclosed.

The successful zombie-hunting posse at the end of the film is not motorized. They stalk the land on foot in order to more thoroughly sweep for the undead. It is necessary to do this on foot because the experience of space is different in a case of automobiles. On foot, each step is an equal space and must be encountered just as the others. In a car, however, space is divided between point of origin, destination, means of transportation (such as the freeway), and scenery. Thus, the car is able to generate what Margaret Morse calls a "fiction effect," "a partial loss of touch with the here and now" (192). Scenery is reduced to spectacle, "the plane of the absent or nonperson in another time, elsewhere, or *story*" which is distinct from the space that the posse must traverse, "the plane of the subject in a here and now, or *discourse*" (194, emphasis in original). This territorialization of space marks the suburb as an experience of reality and the city as a spectacle. In essence, city folk, country folk and suburbanites literally each occupy a different relationship between space and time. The crisis of the undead requires the rural zombie hunters to share the space relationship of city dwellers, but perhaps more importantly, with the exception of the car trip that brings Johnny and Barbara to the cemetery, no vehicle in the film ever achieves sufficient speed to transfer into the mobilized plane of Morse's *story*. The film rejects vehicular reterritorialization and demands that the car interact within the space-plane of foot traffic. In this plane, the window of a car can be broken. A car can run out of gas and a zombie can catch-up. Both *The Walking Dead* and *Night* reject suburbanity as a failed reality. The zompocalypse occasions the return of the white body to the urban landscape. It removes the possibility of automotive visuality as a subject position.

As described above, cars are not an egalitarian technology. The collapse of space they simulate can be a survival resource only if the monster is not similarly mobile. When a suburbanite uses a car to collapse the distance between their home and city, much of the import of that collapse lies in the inability of the supposedly undesirable elements of the urban landscape to cross that distance. A car allows the normative nationalist subject to distance themselves from those who are not extended full ideological citizenship while maintaining hegemonic visual authority over them. The visual technology of media can be similarly racialized and put to service in reifying the suburbs as the ideal nation space. Like cars, the media collapses the distance between suburbs and urban spaces but unlike cars, the media functions as one-way glass. The other can be gazed upon by watching the news without the suburbanite risking their own exposure to the Other. As Williams argues and as Barbara illustrates, however, even a one-way visual exchange can do psychic damage to the subject who gazes. When combined with cars as a means of extracting the products of the Other's labor, we can start to see parallels to the plantation regime of visuality that Mirzoeff locates as a foundation of contemporary colonial ideology within national borders. News media establish the ideologies through which the nationalist subject interprets the Other and then the same news media translates those ideologies into political campaigns on which the viewer votes. Those political campaigns then contribute to the laws of the land which govern the Other. The logic of looking persuades the viewer to identify with the subject position of the newscaster and to see the Other as an object of the gaze, thus creating affinity with policymakers rather than those affected by the policy. While the Other need not be defined through perceived racial differences, the current prison-industrial complex as described by Michelle Alexander in

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (2010) provides good evidence that the laws of the land still serve to disproportionately incarcerate US blacks, whose labor is then exploited in conditions distinct from and yet startlingly similar to slavery. While the news media is a mediated message, most viewers treat it as merely a safer form of window, accepting the images and their interpretations as self-evident.

The role of the media in *Night* fundamentally challenges that regime of visuality, however. As Hervey describes in detail, the film craft helps to alienate the audience from the media by always presenting news reports as a frame within the frame (97). The newscasts are only ever presented with the entire television in the frame, reminding the audience that the news media is not a substitute for the camera's gaze, but instead is just one more characters within the story. The newscaster is presented to the audience of the film as a character who is just as flawed as the other characters in the film. While the survivor community clings to the hope that the news media will provide them with information to ensure their survival, the newscast only offer confused and contradictory accounts. For Ben, the media is a potential resource but he remains the only person in the house who weighs the information he has gathered himself against the information given by the news reports. For Barbara, the newscasts are worse than useless because they antagonize her traumatized state, causing her to return to her nearly comatose state of petrified hopelessness. Throughout the film, the news reports provide conflicting information and ultimately get people killed. Meanwhile, looking out the window provides information that must be interpreted. Barbara looks out the window and dies because of a failed interpretation. Ben looks out the window and lives because he can

process the information. Harry looks at the TV and gets people killed because the media claims to be already (pre)interpreted.

4.10   Barbara and the Revenge of Barbara

Barbara is presented in this film as incapable of enacting the gaze. Whatever she looks at overwhelms her. In keeping with William's summary of women in horror, Barbara is consistently punished for looking, first with traumatizing fear, and finally, when the ghoul of Johnny appears, she is killed. Barbara thus represents a problem in the logic of looking within the horror genre, in the 1970s and 80s; this problem is dealt with by the creation of the Final Girl, a trope which allows the audience to identify with a character's terror, objectify her as a sexual object, and value her as a gender performance that survives. While I would not argue that Barbara is in any way a Final Girl, I will argue here that her character negotiates the tensions that inspired the development of the trope in later horror films. Indeed, I think it could be argued that the Final Girl trope is what happens when Barbara and Ben are combined into a hybrid character. Perhaps the best evidence of this assertion is the1990 remake of *Night*, produced by Romero and directed by Image Ten investor Tom Savini. In that film, Barbara is played by Patricia Tallman, and is a clear Final Girl. The character of Ben, while still compelling, is less central to the plot and less endowed with wisdom. I will explore the differences incorporated into the 1990 film, but first, I want to address the ways that the audience's relationship to Barbara is constructed in the first film.

When *Night* (1968) begins, the audience is encouraged to identify with Barbara. The camera introduces her in a medium shot before we are given a glimpse of Johnny.

The two are having a minor spat and so the audience is required early on to choose a character with whom to sympathize. Barbara is presented to the audience as the beautiful white maiden. She begins the film on an outing, not with a romantic partner, but with her brother. We quickly learn that the pair is performing their filial duty to honor the gravesite of their father. While Johnny scoffs at superstition and chafes against these expectations, Barbara insists on loyalty to the family, thus positioning herself as not only beautiful, but also conventionally virtuous. Barbara is clearly a good girl. Her fear when Johnny teases her marks her as vulnerable. Furthermore, the camerawork, editing and score have already established this as a horror film, indicating that Barbara's fear is an appropriate response. *Night* early on suggests that Barbara is more competent than her brother despite his condescension. She is also clearly designated as the damsel in distress or designated victim. Unlike her brother, she blindly follows tradition, which her child-like fear aligns with superstition, in contrast to Johnny whose glasses, both as a metaphor for sight and as a cultural marker of intellectualized youth rebellion, draw attention to his insistence on his own ability to see clearly through the lens of his cynicism.

The typical androcentric film would expect us to instantly identify with Johnny. He is young, hip, white, middle-class, and, as I mentioned earlier, a plausible heir to the legacy of masculinity established in previous zombie narratives. But in this film Johnny's cynicism and liberal spirit do not equip him for survival. He sees the first ghoul approaching and misinterprets the image, in part because his confidence in his position as superior to Barbara blinds him to the signs that something is wrong. The camera, and thus the audience, notices the shambling progress of the ghoul. Something is amiss. Perhaps Barbara, too, might have noticed were she not so cowed by her brother. Instead, she only

chances a glance at the ghoul once it is nearly upon her. In terms of cinematic tension, this is the moment when the attack is most startling and horrifying. In terms of how the film constructs the gaze, it is the first of many times that Barbara is punished for looking.

Johnny leaps to protect his sister and a deadly struggle ensues. When Johnny is killed, Romero employs his characteristic fast editing to constantly switch back and forth between the life and death struggle between Johnny and the ghoul and Barbara who looks on in terror. At times she attempts to hide behind a tombstone, or look away as if blocking her sight could somehow protect her form the reality of what was occurring. This editing serves two functions. First, by matching the camera's gaze with Barbara's line of sight, we are forced to identify with her. But at this moment of identification, as Barbara watches her brother murdered, the audience is also watching as Barbara is thrust out of her script. She can no longer be the damsel in distress because her knight protector has proved to be inadequate to the task, or, as the film progresses, it becomes more accurate to say the task at hand proves to be simply too unmanageable. For the rest of the film, we find Barbara lost without a script to obey. She faces not only the terrifying rising of the dead, but also the terrifying freedom of having no role to play. Her return to the home as a safe place and her search for a male protector both demonstrate the futility with which she attempts to resurrect the damsel script as well as the film's critique of the powerlessness ascribed to women in traditional Hollywood scripts. In some ways, Barbara is a perfect leading lady. She is beautiful, passive, and helpless. She needs to be saved. *Night,* as I have argued for early zombie films, has taken a previously celebrated gender role and displayed it as ill-suited for survival.

The rest of the first half of the film consists of moment after moment in which the audience is encouraged to share Barbara's terror and thus, share the punishments she endures for looking. I have discussed the terror of the car window above. After she abandons the car, there is an extended tracking shot in which she runs down a dirt road. The scene is powerful in part because of Judith's O'Dea's physical acting and in part because in a film characterized by fast edits, the audience is subjected to sustained look at her terror. A shorter shot would have served the film's plot, but in forcing his audience to mediate on this moment, Romero is both intensifying his viewer's investment in that terror and presenting Barbara's terror as a suitable image for our viewing pleasure, which serves to conflate her fear and her beauty. It is the only erotic moment in the film and it does not occur between characters nor does it include the monster. The erotics of the film, as will be true in horror films in the decades to come, can be found in the negotiations of audience and character identification. Of course audiences of horror are also enticed into identifying with the monster. In this film, the monsters are not presented as appropriate sites of identification. First, the monster is a composite of multiple faces, thus discouraging our investment in any one ghoul. Second, the attractiveness of the actors playing the ghouls are not acknowledged by the camera, which treats them all as equals. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the camera treats the ghouls as a spectacle. There are no moments when we are viewing the survivor community through the eyes of the ghouls. When the ghouls do get as close to the characters as the camera, the camera moves back. We are only shown one inter-subjective looks between ghouls and humans, and that is in the moment that Barbara see Johnny's ghoul, which immediately leads to her death.

Once in the farmhouse, Barbara peeps out windows, knowing that she might be seen by the ghoul at any moment. The audience shares this knowledge, which builds the dramatic tension. However, it also reveals the limits of Barbara's presumed safety in the interior of the home as contrasted with the exterior. However, the trauma that results in Barbara's psychic breaks does not come from outside the home. Once she is satisfied that the ghoul cannot enter the house, she attempts to relax. A drop of blood interrupts her respite. It is important to note that Barbara does not go exploring the house as a survival resource. She is not seeking to visualize her situation. She is intruded upon by the horror within the house. Bidden by the blood, Barbara, like most horror heroines both before and after her, must investigate. As she climbs the stairs, she stumbles across a mostly-devoured corpse in the farmhouse. In that moment, when the filmmakers attack the audience with the film's first graphically disturbing frame, an image if non-descript gore with teeth and an eyeball, Barbara suffers a psychic break. She runs outside and the film presents us with a new character with whom we can identify. It is that moment that we meet Ben on the threshold of the house and we are immediately conscripted, again through rapid back-and-forth editing into his dilemma of whether or not to push past the white woman and into the house. When Barbara's trauma can no longer be communicated, we are then transferred from Barbara's story to Ben's. From then on, Barbara is no longer available as a site for audience identification. Instead, her traumatized mindset is presented as spectacle. The rest of the film emphasizes Barbara's inability to master the gaze by showing her transfixed on meaningless objects, such a table cloth and a music box while failing to see very real dangers as ghouls creep up

behind her. In one scene, she even seems to be hallucinating as she recounts to Ben the horrors of her encounter at the cemetery.

It could not be clearer that women like Barbara are relegated to the position of object, incapable of bearing the responsibility to interpret that is required of a gazing subject. In Mirzoeff's terms, Barbara does not have the right to look. With Judy lacking any personality and Mrs. Cooper too committed to her own misery to save herself, this first film fails to create a survivable femininity. But it nonetheless presents critiques of the feminine roles available to its characters in 1968 and thus calls for the development of a new identifiable subject position for women. However, the feminine nihilism of *Night* proved to be a sticking point with Romero so much so that when he produced a remake of the film twenty years later, he completely changed the role of Barbara, giving us a heroine who is inspired by the final girls, but who manages to side-step many of the final girl gender troubles that have caused scholars so much trouble.[129] The revised script allows Barbara to become a full subject, and ultimately not only a survivor, but also a chameleon who is able to do as DuBois requires of black men: to negotiate a community that does not have her best interests at heart and yet nonetheless offers her best hope for survival.

The Final Girl trend of the 70s and 80s established a trope which combined the agency and practicality of Ben with the insider status of Barbara. The Final Girl is strong,

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[129] The ambiguities of gender in horror have produced fantastic scholarship but the question of audience identification, visual pleasure, and the gender of the protagonist has proven particularly troublesome. Carol Clover, Barbara Creed, Linda Williams, and Vivian Sobchok have all contributed highly influential essays, all of which were compiled for the collection *The Dread of Difference,* edited by Grant. As I will explore below, the 1990 remake of *Night* includes a version of Barbara who manages to appeal to a female audience as a female protagonists rather than as an object of desire or as a pseudo-male in a sort of transsexual gaze.

competent, self-composed and mostly self-reliant, like Ben and Neville. But she is also

the center of the community and her virtue (which primarily consists of her virginity) is

essential to the community's continued survival, like Nina Harker and like the subject

position that Neville attempted to conscript Ruth into. In the 1990 remake of *Night*, we

are presented with a Barbara who is competent, sympathetic, dynamic, adaptable, and

even capable of bossing around the men in the house. Like other Final Girls, Tallman's

Barbara is established as a virgin in the opening sequence as her brother Johnny

complains that their mother had almost driven Barbara into a convent. When Barbara

objects to that claim, Johnny simply asks when she last went on a date, thus establishing

her sexual unavailability. Barbara is more moral than her brother, as shown by her

insistence that he visit their mother's grave. Barbara's shared history with the killer is

rather loose, particularly in this film because the ghoul of Johnny is only shown after he

has been killed by the vigilante mob. But Barbara certainly continues to be the

investigative consciousness of the film, both as we learn more about the ghouls and we

observe the disintegration of the survivor community. She also ends the film by

appropriating phallic power both in the form of the gun and in claiming the capacity to

pass judgment and generate meaning. When a still living Harry Cooper attempts to thank

her for returning with the mob to clean out the house and look for survivors, Barbara

shoots him in the face and when confronted with the quizzical looks of other mob

members, she responds that he is "another one for the fire." It is unclear whether the two

onlookers believe that Harry Cooper was undead and are impressed with Barbara's ability

to efficiently wield violence or if they saw that he was human and are accepting her

phallic authority to name him as Other.

Barbara is not simply masculinized in this film. Her position outside the pecking order of disputed masculine dominance is perhaps her most remarkable trait in the film. Indeed, unlike the original film, this plot facilitates the growth of Barbara as she learns to claim power, to avoid the trappings of a logic of dominance, and to demonstrate her worth as a leader beyond the logics of visuality. As with the original film, Barbara is the first site of identification offered to the audience, but only after a lengthy voiceover exchange between her and Johnny. In addition to trying to scare her, Johnny projects a sexual motive onto the rising dead, calling attention to the supposedly increased vulnerability of her gender. This sexual allusion is quite isolated in the film, which is markedly less erotic than the earlier film. Barbara is presented as vulnerable and superstitious and helpless in preventing Johnny from torturing her. But even in this early conversation, Tallman's Barbara demonstrates more power than her predecessor. When she demands to know why Johnny is teasing her, he offers her a rational explanation, suggesting that their relationship is considerable more equitable than in the original film, where Johnny's concern for Barbara seems more patronizing.

When Barbara exits the car, she is also wearing conspicuous glasses, thus aligning her capacity for sight with Johnny's. But rather than the ignorant but ironically true sight of the original Johnny, this Johnny misidentifies a living man for a ghoul, thus distracting both himself and Barbara from the advance of the real threat. She loses her glasses immediately upon being attacked and the rest of the film features moments in which her gaze is endowed with the capacity to interpret for the audience. When the ghouls first attack her in the car, she uses the windows as a temporary measure. In the original film, O'Dea's Barbara and the ghoul contested the status of the window, thus emphasizing

Barbara's vulnerability through vision. The sight of the ghoul hurts her even before it can physically reach her. But for Tallman's Barbara, the window is merely a barrier to keep her safe while she looks for the car keys.

Unlike in the original film, once the camera enters the house in the remake, images of the ghouls are always aligned with either Ben's or Barbara's gaze, following a shot of one of them looking out the window. Each time we see the gathering ghouls from Barbara's perspective, she then interprets the sight, commenting on how easy it should be to escape. This film is quite conscious of its status as a remake and Barbara's appraisal of the ghouls is a reflection of two decades in which audiences have speculated on survival tactics as well as their own abilities to adapt and survive such a clumsy and predictable threat. [130] The emphasis on Barbara's vision is most obvious in the closing credits, where still images of the mob burning corpses are intercut three times with a close-up of her eyes, suggesting that the audience's ability to evaluate these closing images is made possible through Barbara's Right to Look. Of all the characters in the film, it is Barbara's sight that is most endorsed by the camera, although, importantly, she is not the only character to represent truth in the course of the film. In so far as visuality can be defined as a phallic authority, however, she is clearly the most competent phallus wielder.

When the first ghoul attacks, Barbara fights back immediately; both delivering effective kicks and stabbing it repeatedly with the floral cross she brought to leave at her

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[130] Throughout the film there are plenty of distinct recreations of moment from the original, including the only nude ghoul resembling the infamous naked woman from the original, the eating of grubs, the opening tracking shot of the car and the first misidentified attacker who looks similar to the first ghoul of the first film, but who turns out to be human. As with the first film, the TV is only ever presented as an object within the film, but the broadcasts in this film are not as alienated from the camera's eye. Even Sheriff McClelland's famous line "they're all messed up" is given a cameo. The film also uses some of the original actors, such including Bill Cardille, who plays a news reporter conducting interviews in both films.

mother's grave. Had the ghoul been a living attacker, her assault would have been quite effective. Unlike the original Barbara, she does not assume the house to be safe. As she investigates the house, she maintains a clear line of sight with her escape route. She share's O'Dea's Barbara's moment of shock as blood drips on her from upstairs. However, in this film, she is not traumatized by the sight of gore. Tallman's Barbara is traumatized by a physical threat as a particularly large ghoul crashes through the banister and almost falls onto her. She first flees, but is dragged back in when Ben arrives. While Ben fights off a ghoul in the kitchen, Barbara arms herself in anticipation of the second ghoul she knows to be in the house. When the ghoul emerges behind her, Barbara pauses before turning around. In this moment we can see her reconciling with her dual phallic powers of sight and violence. She knows it is there, but she also knows that she has a moment to prepare herself before she must confront her assailant both visually and physically. Her attack on the ghoul is ferocious and she kills it, the largest and most intimidating of the ghouls in the film, without assistance, beating it about the head multiple times before she succeeds in sufficiently impacting the brain.

Despite her mastery of both visuality and violence, however, Tallman's Barbara shares her predecessor's initial inability to communicate. While O'Dea's Barbara is depicted as traumatically caged within herself, Tallman's Barbara's silence is a result of the combination not only of her trauma but also of Ben's insistence on interpolating her into the subject position he projects onto her. Like with the first film, there is moment on the house's threshold where the black man must fulfill the role of home invader by pushing past the white woman. Ben throughout the film is conscious of his role as outsider within, as he is explicitly labeled by Harry, whose own tuxedo marks him further

outside the "neighbor" category than Ben. In the moment after they have both dealt with

ghouls and thus claimed the house, Ben again attempts to talk with Barbara, asking the

wrong questions because he is assuming that she, unlike him, is not an invader. As a

white woman, he keeps interpolating her into the position of traumatized family member.

Her ability to appropriate available resources, including invading a private sphere on

which she has no claim, further empowers her in the gendered logic of separate spheres

on which the ideology of wild work is based. However, Barbara's phallic authority in this

moment undermines Ben's hope for complementary claims to power. Had Barbara lived

in that house, she would have known how to access the gas pump. She would have been

able to tell him about the surrounding landscape and the resources within the house.

Perhaps he is also realizing in this exchange that by saving another intruder he has not

won a culturally valid claim on the house, only a pragmatic one and once order is

restored, he will be returned to the script of intruder that so often looms over black

men.[131]

Like *King of the Zombies*, the remake of *Night* allows for the possibility of

multiple and even competing sources of power that are each effective as a survival

resource. This remade version of *Night* invests significant power in the private sphere.

Throughout the film, modes of power are gender coded, but those gendered lines are

frequently crossed. Even Judy Rose, a far more active and compelling character than the

1968 Judy, is able to assert her mastery of the domestic sphere as a means of overcoming

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[131] In this version of the film, Ben is played by Tony Todd, whose career consists primarily of horror and military films. Todd is most famous for his role in *Candy Man* (1992), in which he plays the vengeful ghost of a black man lynched for loving a white woman.

the competition for masculine dominance between Ben and Harry. After the television, a tool of the domestic, is broken, Ben and Harry start fighting again. Judy Rose not only ridicules them for "playing rooster," but she asserts her property rights as a relative of the homeowners. Harry is there as a guest and Ben, who technically operated as an uninvited invader through his mistaking Barbara as one of the home's residents, is also there by the leave of Judy Rose and Tom, the home's rightful owners. While the idea of either Tom or Judy Rose kicking out Harry or Ben is ridiculous in the circumstances of the crisis, in this moment, *Night* draws attention back to the tension between the family, the state, and private property. It is the young woman, part of the regenerative couple, who reasserts the national ideology of private property through her claim on the domestic. She reminds the men that while they have wild work to do, ultimately, that work is to be performed in service of the civilizing force of the domestic sphere.

CHAPTER 5. WILL SMITH IS LEGEND: THE POSTRACIAL, NEOLIBERAL HERO
OF THE WAR ON TERROR AND THE WAR ON DRUGS

Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) does not declare its narrator

Robert Neville to be legendary. He is not a man who has achieved success to a mythical

level. He is Legend, he is myth incarnate. As I argued in chapter 3, this Legend is the

hegemonic ideal, a white masculine performance that legitimates white supremacy,

patriarchy, and US global hegemony. In this chapter I will argue that the unique

postracial brand of Will Smith's film career conforms to the same hegemonic ideal,

although Smith's position as a black actor establishes just how much this ideal has

adapted to the multicultural sentiments of globalized, post-Civil Rights US culture. This

adaptation, while on the surface a sign of increased opportunities for people of color

within the US, also serves to obscure the functioning of structural racism domestically

and US imperialism abroad. As a black action hero, Smith is able to play characters who

symbolically fight the racialized War on Terror while also affirming the race-blind

pretenses of the earlier War on Drugs.

Like Nevilles before him, the casting of Smith to play Neville in *I Am Legend*

(2007) should be read in the context of his branding as an actor. Smith first came to fame

by playing the title character in the 1990s TV series *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air,* which

focused on cultural tensions between an upper-middle class black family and their lower-

middle class nephew who leaves a rough neighborhood in West Philadelphia to move in

with them. Most of the comedy in the series drives from the various tensions between class passing and racial pride amongst the unique forms of blackness embodied by the major characters. Most of Smith's roles since can be categorized in clusters of patriotic ideology. Several have explored the constraints on blacks who achieve success without forfeiting their cultural specificity, often in the context of cultural passing among the wealthy, who tend to be white (*Six Degrees of Separation* 1993*, The Legend of Bagger Vance* 2000*, Pursuit of Happyness* 2006). Even in *Hitch* (2005) where class is not directly addressed, Smith applies his brand of blackness as a solution to the perpetual crisis of white masculinity. He is often cast into roles of authority that defend national ideals, including a police officer (*Bad Boys* 1995), a corruption-fighting lawyer (*Enemy of the State* 1998) and a superhero suffering from a branding crisis (*Hancock* 2008). This function becomes even more interesting when he acts in an official capacity to battle non-humans, including aliens (*Independence Day* 1996*, Men in Black* 1997, *After Earth* 2013) and robots (*I, Robot* and arguably *Wild Wild West* 1999).

It is worth noting that even as a border agent of humanity, Smith's characters have often treated the non-human with a pragmatic sympathy which does not go so far as to question structures of power and systems of exclusion, but which does nonetheless, attempt to assist the nonhuman in accommodating itself to the human world. In *After Earth*, Smith's character Cypher Raige encounters an irredeemably evil alien species and must negotiate the perils of raising children into a hostile world. Even in rejecting the masculinity embodied by Cypher, the film suggests that young black men must conquer their own shortcomings because structural violence is inevitable. As with many of his

other films, Smith's masculinity is marketed to black audiences as a model of successful accommodation while appealing to white audiences as a magical negro figure.[132]

By 2007, Smith had established himself as a black actor with whom white audience were willing to identify in the context of action films. His characters are rarely strongly black-identified. There are minor indications throughout the films that the color of Smith's skin is not irrelevant, but he generally presented as a lone black individual in a white or multiethnic world as opposed to a member of a black community. Thus while his characters challenge racist assumptions about inherent black inferiority, they do not threaten to empower a larger black community and thus do not challenge the systemic logic of white supremacy or the escapism of postracial ideology. Even before the election of Barak Obama as the US President in 2008, Smith had built a career on a postracial optimism in US culture, which was perhaps epitomized when he played a universal organ donor in *Seven Pounds* (2008), declaring an end to the "one-drop" economy of blood that has long undergirded US racist policies about segregation and miscegenation.

Since *I Am Legend* was released, there has been a burst of scholarship analyzing race in science fiction, often focusing on Smith's brand as the postracial, neoliberal black hero. The consensus appears to be that Smith functions as an ideologically whitened blackness.

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[132] While most of Smith's characters are super-human in some capacity, the magical negro trope is more specific in that a magical negro, as described by Nnedi Okorafor, "seems to have nothing better to do than help the white protagonist." Thus, the nearly inhuman masculine discipline of Cypher both is and is not a magical negro. In the sense that he is protecting his family and the film is not centered on the stories of white characters, Cypher's character is too developed to be simply dismissed as an instance of the trope. However, in a metatextual analysis, Cypher's role in the diegetic world is to be the savior of humanity since he is the one who developed the battle technique required to fight the aliens. That the secret to his success lies in controlling his own fear and this discipline is shown to have alienated him from his family, suggests that Cypher can be read as a commentary on the magical negro trope.

Many of the critics of Smith's role in promoting the neoliberal agenda frame his

participating in the nation-building project through different national crises. Like

hegemonic masculinity, nationalism is constantly emphasizing its own crises as a means

of reifying ideological dominance. Each of these cultural moments can be seen as a

possible fracture of the imaginary unity of the nation but specifically through

performances of nationalist identities like Smith's, the ideology of the nation emerges

stronger. Much like carnival, the nation utilizes a very real crisis to release tensions,

identify dissent, and encourage those whose subject positions are subordinated to instead

identify with the best interests of those who occupy more privileged positions. Thus, as

each of these scholars seeks to reject the unifying neoliberal subject position that Smith

represents, it is worthwhile to consider what national crisis they each identify as

dangerous in its ideological reification.

In the case of *I Am Legend*, the possible sites of national crisis are the attacks of

9/11 and the resulting War on Terror, Hurricane Katrina and the racial disparities that

characterized the failed response of the federal government and NGOs. I would add a

more amorphous crisis of national race relations bridging from Regan's War on Drugs,

through the election of Barak Obama and culminating in the simultaneous rise of "race-

blind" racism and more explicit racism in the resurgence of race-based hate groups.[133] In

each of these cultural moments, the ideological constructions of race and citizenship are

challenged and redefined in relation to one another.

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[133] Public awareness of systemic police brutality did not hit the current boiling point until several years
after the release of *I Am Legend*, but it is worth noting that the collision between systemic violence against
people of color and the will to deny or disavow that violence in the media and amongst many whites
manifests the tensions noted by scholars in their analyses of Smith's role in science fiction films and his
appeal to white audiences.

The War on Terror was an immediate racialized response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as the actions of extremists was quickly assumed to be the fantasy of all Muslims and in particular anyone who is visibly Arabic or Persian. The wedding of religion, race and national security facilitated a white-washing of Christianity, which was then quickly claimed as the only authentic "American" identity. The War on Drugs took longer to develop. In the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement, as race problems in the US proved resilient despite the successes of the previous generation's activists, drugs became a politically effective means of recriminalizing black bodies and thus delegitimating the demands of black activists for a rethinking of the social contract to include racial equality. The importance of the War on Drugs is that it increased the play between racism and racialized signifiers, thus allowing for the possibility of a "postracial" racism wherein the fear of criminality can be used to legitimate structural racism without acknowledging that race remains a relevant category. This new function does not necessitate an end to overt racism. Rather it both establishes acceptable codes for the expression of racist beliefs so long as they couched in terms of criminality and classism while simultaneously making the accusation of racism more offensive than racism itself.

White audiences do not cheer on Smith as a black man. They cheer on Smith as a post-racial avatar who, through their identification, becomes white while retaining the cool implied by his blackness. In her article "Dead White Men: An Essay on the Changing Dynamics of Race in US Action Cinema," Gretchen Bakke traces what it might be that white audience gain from identifying with a black character rather than a white one. Bakke's analysis is clearly informed by Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* which traces the horror of whiteness as an imaginary emptiness. Bakke points out that

"whiteness, deadness, and maleness are all under strident attack," suggesting that the imaginary lack identified by Morrison has transformed into audience's overt hostility (402). In Morrison's reading, black characters in white-authored narratives primarily function to assist the white characters in overcoming the symbolic paralysis that whiteness entails. What Bakke calls hyperwhites are unique monsters that only the hyper-signification of black cool can destroy. Part of the reason that blackness has become so over signified in our culture is that whiteness is so under-signified and blackness has been scripted to fulfill often contradictory roles in order to define whiteness in relief. In many films across the science fiction and horror spectrum, the avatar through whom we kill this primordial father figure is a black man.[134]

Bakke locates the burgeoning of scenes in which men of color kill white men in the 1980s. As I showed in the previous chapter, this potentially explosive Hollywood trope began in the 1950s. However, Bakke is correct in so far as the images of black men killing white men were primarily provocative through the end of the 1960s and in much of the 1970s. While white audiences also celebrated Blaxploitation films, it was only in the 1980s that white audiences were expected to identify with black men who kill white men. In Bakke's framing of the issue with the specific terms of dead, white, and male, she evokes the familiar mantra that students have been increasingly exposed to as a criticism of traditional definitions of scholastically noteworthy texts. In Lacanian terms, dead, white, maleness has become the real father of castration that must be killed in the

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[134] There are also many examples of white women killing dead white men, including, as discussed in the previous chapter, Barbara from the 1990 remake of *Night of the Living Dead*. More recently, both the Resident Evil and the Walking Dead franchises have even featured women of color.

name of the father in order to fully enter the academic symbolic order. In short, enough of us have internalized the need to expand our influences beyond "dead white men" that our popular culture now celebrates their resurrection and systematic rejection. If whiteness is a pathology, as many scholars like Morrison stop just short of declaring, then Bakke has argued that the elimination of dead white men is its symptom and any popular culture that courts white audiences is doomed to repeat that communal trauma over and over. Postracial blackness has had its Otherness stripped in order to conscript it into the ongoing battle to continually remystify whiteness.

But the Otherness that blackness represented in white-audience productions prior to the War on Drugs remains monstrous. In *I Am Legend*, the monsters are Darkseekers: over-racialized and dehumanized cannibal mutants whose allergy to sunlight and swarming social structure allow them to simultaneously represent the hyperwhite primordial father from Bakke's analysis and the infectious horde of earlier racial fantasies. As we saw in *White Zombie* and a long history of anti-miscegenation and segregation laws, whites can be infected by blackness. In a postracial fantasy such as both the War on Drugs and *I Am Legend*, blackness can still be the primary evil against which the social order must be defended even when the only character throughout most of the film, and thus the representative of the social order, is played by a black actor. Postracial logic allows Robert Neville to remain a white character even when played by an actor whose postracial blackness is needed to perform the labor that Morrison diagnosed of simultaneously conquering and remystifying whiteness.[135] So Smith is acting as an agent

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[135] The neoliberal subject must be postracial because whiteness alone cannot sustain a monopoly on power. It goes back to DuBois' double sight. Those excluded from power have a unique capacity to see power structures. There is an intimacy to oppression that, while never amounting to a shift in power, nevertheless

of biopower protecting whiteness from those whites who have been corrupted by the criminality of blackness.

In response to Bakke, Elizabeth McAlister explores the implications of the hyperwhite trope when applied to the 2004 presidential race. What makes McAlisters' contribution most interesting is that, rather than locating undeath in the patriarchal figure of the vampires as Bakke does, McAlister explores the ways in which the legacy of slavery haunts the zombie. McAlister argues that Obama's blackness was coded as cool for many voters while McCain's whiteness was coded as a lumbering undeath. She summarizes the hyperwhite-as-zombie thus: "They are not commodified but they consume; they are hyper-consuming" (474). McAlister's argument ultimately leads to a white audience cheering on the elimination of whiteness by cool black messiah characters. In the case of Romero films, she may be right. However, *I Am Legend* is partaking in a different tradition of cozy apocalypse novels from the early Cold War era. Matheson's novel certainly challenged this genre from within, but the 2007 film is less the descendant of Romero than a reclamation of survival masculinity for empire.

The zombie film as a genre was revived by Romero in 1969. *Night of the Living Dead* applied the genre's capacity to juxtapose imperial impulses against domestic race relations to the cultural moment of Vietnam. More importantly, as Harvey demonstrates, the film is haunted by the imagery of Cold War paranoia. In a similar way, *I Am Legend* is deeply rooted in the overlapping cultural moments of Post-9/11 xenophobic nationalism

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makes the oppressor feel vulnerable. In earlier eras, Hollywood attempted to shore-up this insecurity by depicting blackness as helpless, childish, or otherwise inept. But in our post-Civil Rights era, black power has fought its way to political legitimacy and thus the fear of critical insights of those previously excluded from the nationalist fantasy cannot be so easily assuaged.

and the tragic aftermath of governmental incompetence in the aftermath of Hurricane

Katrina. Yet the film is also haunted by images of 1980s War on Drugs fear mongering.

As many scholars, most popularly, Melissa Alexander, have noted, the War on Drugs was

a system of oppression that allowed the US to continue implementing structural

discrimination against communities of color while avoiding explicitly racist rhetoric. *I

Am Legend* presents us with a wealthy, highly educated and politically powerful black

protagonist who fights off a swarm of hyperwhites that evoke the imagery of heroine

abusing punks and neo-Nazis with their bald heads and emaciated bodies and by

squatting in large numbers in rundown buildings no longer connected to the grid of public

utilities that now characterize US expectations of domestic spaces. In this way the film

completes the promise began by President Nixon and most effectively executed by

President Reagan to punish the societal degradation projected onto black communities

without the guilt of disciplining black bodies.

The significance of the film's whitewashing, however, relies on the scholar's

interpretation of the film's antagonists, the mutant Darkseekers.[136] The debate can be

boiled down to whether the undead represent "the abject entity of the state" (72), as Sean

Brayton argues by paralleling the plague in *I Am Legend* with the real life disastrous

administration of Hurricane Katrina relief, or Bakke and McAlister's hyperwhites.

Brayton models the postcolonial approach to this issue by prioritizing the ethical

accountability of the state in his reading: "the 'dark seekers' remain 'monstrous' and are

ontologically positioned beyond the state's (and perhaps the audience's) purview of

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[136] There is not a standardized way of writing Darkseeker. I will capitalize the term in an effort to parallel my treatment of The Family, but I had not altered the capitalization and other variations in my sources.

moral responsibility. […] As such, alterity is declared 'subhuman' and disposable by the state" (72).

Both as subaltern and as hyperwhite, the Darkseekers represent the limits of the state. However, the two possibilities illustrate a distinction made by Kirk Boyle in "*Children of Men* and *I Am Legend*: the Disaster-Capitalism Complex Hits Hollywood." According to Boyle, "Instead of acknowledging what Leftists call the "class struggle," Rightists displace the fundamental antagonism inherent within society to an antagonism between homeland and foreign intruder." In this framework, the tension I've traced in earlier chapters between viewing US blacks as Africans within the US or as essentially American with an African heritage continues to determine how zombie films generate political meaning. At stake in each scholar's argument is both the boundaries and function of the nation in the face of the horde in the homeland. Under the hyperwhite reading, the darkseekers constitute a corruption of the imperial subject that serves to invalidate the claims of citizenship, and therefore a proper citizen, or neoimperial subject, must battle for the survival of the uncorrupted nation.[137] While Boyle reads the film as Rightist, McAlister's reading troubles this rigid distinction.

However, rather than read the Darkseekers as a manifestation of white audience's self-hatred, I propose that we read them as decontextualized blackness. White audiences, whether they read the film according to Boyle's Leftist or Rightist lens, continue to identify with Neville. He remains the uber-citizen. He is whiteness without white bodies

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[137] This tension between the imperial and neoimperial models of citizenship reflects the central conflict in *White Zombie* where naïve US imperialism is contrasted with corrupted French imperialism, lending weight to McAlister's reading of *I Am Legend*, while refuting her reading of the zombie film tradition prior to *Night of the Living Dead*.

and the Darkseekers are blackness without black bodies. Thus his inability to accept the Darkseekers into the nation establishes him as a neoimperial subject.[138]

Boyle is not concerned with the nation as an ideological figure and instead focuses on the collusion between Big Government and Big Business that constitutes corporatism. For Boyle, following the work of Naomi Klein, the national trauma of disasters is displaced by the profit that can be made from responding to these disasters. The ugly economic logic that Boyle outlines is an essential context to understanding *I Am Legend*, but Boyle stops short of drawing out the ideological play of nationalist masculinity that generates necessary consent within the globally gated green zones. Instead, Boyle falls back to Žižek's distinction between Leftist and Rightist political world views: "Instead of acknowledging what Leftists call the "class struggle," Rightists displace the fundamental antagonism inherent within society to an antagonism between homeland and foreign intruder." While *I Am Legend* clearly contributes to the latter view, the importance of hegemonic recruitment in this process cannot be ignored, particularly when the film in question is attempting to redefine the imagined "foreign intruder" so that black audiences are enlisted in defense of the homeland. By contrasting the presentations of the Darkseekers in *Legend* with the refugees in *Children of Men*, Boyle illustrates why Agamben's notion of the *homo sacer* is so popular in zombie studies. When the swarming horde of zombie films is reframed as "those whom the state refuses to recognize as political subjects," the subversive political power of the genre begins to take

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[138] As Boyle argues quite convincingly, whiteness as it is fetishized in *I Am Legend*, is always already Christian, although the Christianity in the film is limited to allegorical allusions and cultural assumption. Just as whiteness and blackness are liberated from raced bodies in the film, so is Christianity as a cultural marker liberated from metaphysical beliefs.

form. Rather than focus on the threat that the monster poses to the protagonist, who is a stand in for the mainstream status quo, a critical reading will examine how the state fails to fully enfranchise the monster, or as Boyle describes the process in *Children of Men*, "the state strips them of their rights and reduces them to their biological existence (what Agamben calls "bare life"). Thus, by crossing the pond and conflating both US and British popular culture, Boyle establishes the ideological states of this line of inquiry.

Clearly the two possible readings of the Darkseekers as subalterns or hyperwhites are not mutually exclusive, but whether a given scholar identifies with the survivors against the Darkseekers or with the Darkseekers against the State can have enormous impact on how that scholar reads the role of Smith, who is both the representative of the state's failed efforts to respond to a global pandemic and the black hero whose immune blood and pathological work ethic allows him to eventually develop a cure. This project is concerned with the question of what sorts of masculine performance are promoted in these various tellings of Neville's story. While the audience is free to identify with humans or monsters, the Neville protagonist is always participating in the dialectic that will modify the hegemonic ideal.

Were this debate a matter of scholars of various disciplinary and ethnic backgrounds policing the racial performance of Will Smith, it would be difficult to justify. However, what is at stake in this debate over the exact nature of the Darkseekers is the degree to which blackness has been appropriated by the neoliberal state in contemporary pop culture. As Brayton explains, "So *Legend* is able to articulate an improved relationship between 'blackness' and the state, but only through a masculine vernacular that downplays if not excludes women from the narrative of national

recovery" (73). Janani Subramanian argues that Smith's role in *I Am Legend* sacrifices

black cultural specificity to affirm anti-Muslim racism in the post 9/11 cultural moment.

"His star image combines contrary qualities that simultaneously mark his blackness while

foreclosing its narrative significance and, more precisely, the potential political

significance of blackness after 9/11" (45).[139] In both cases, the inclusion of a specific

postracial black masculinity into the nation as an uber-citizen underscores the

disenfranchisement of other groups. Subramanian goes a step further, however, to

illustrate how the inclusion of Neville's white-washed blackness liquidates US racial

markers, "Smith's flickering blackness, supposedly incidental, is central to the film's

apocalytptic narrative and annihilated New York City mise-en-scène, and since the film's

part of the mainstream machinery of Hollywood, its black hero is unable to resolve the

contradictions to which he gives rise" (45). Ultimately, Smith's Neville fails to recreate

the nation in a way that includes blackness or even, for that matter, his own postracial

subjectivity.

In the theatrical ending of the film, Neville sacrifices himself in order to ensure

that the cure he has created can make it to the outpost of immune humans in Vermont.

This ending is quite troubling for several reasons. The Vermont outpost is purported to

both occupied by immune humans who have survived the plague and mutant attacks and

it is clearly, in the theatrical release, presented as the surviving alcove of the nation,

which, as I will argue below, is manifest as an ideologically purified whiteness. Neville's

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[139] If one accepts both Subramanian's reading of *I Am Legend* and my reading of *King of the Zombies* in a previous chapter, there appears to be a continuity from the earliest to the most recent of zombie films in recruiting black men into the imperialist project.

exclusion from that space belies the postracial fantasy offered throughout the film. Ximena Gallardo focuses on this irony, and thus the magical negro problem that has plagued Smith's career. Neville's daily existence throughout the film is defined by his strict discipline. He replaces the Darkseekers as the film's *homo sacer* in that his sole purpose is to develop the cure for which is sacrificed. As Gallardo explains, "finding a cure has replaced his former life, and once he has found it there is nothing else to live for. In the end, Smith's Neville will not father the rebirth of the human race" (248). As with *Omega Man*, Neville is martyred before he can biologically inseminate and thus the survivor community, freed of their Primordial Father, can enshrine him as the Name of the Father. Yet unlike *Omega* Man, where Neville is known and loved as a member of the community, Smith's Neville is not permitted direct contact with the community and his legacy must be entrusted to the Latina prophet whose care of a young boy establishes her as the most patriarchal of spiritual sages, the virgin mother. Even worse than a magical negro who sacrifices himself for a whiteness he can never join, Smith's Neville ends the film as a holy crusader in the fanatic tradition. Boyle, in one of several playful yet astute captions within his article, claims that "When Neville 'listens [to the voice of God],' he becomes a suicide bomber." In a film produced at the height of the War on Terror rhetoric, it is surprising how few scholars have noted the similarities between Neville's choice to sacrifice himself by killing others with the logic of the terrorists who drove planes in to the Twin Towers.

The radical patriotism of the film is best unpacked by the argument of Eric Smith in *Globalization, Utopia and Postcolonial Science Fiction* (2012) that *I Am Legend* "tentatively articulates but ultimately mystifies the deep structural relations undergirding

the simultaneous rise of the slum city and the gated community in the evacuated space of

the post-national" (128). Eric Smith levies his analysis along two postcolonial signifiers

in the film: the "post-millennial *polis*" (129) and the appropriation of Bob Marley

throughout the film. For Boyle, the post-millennial *polis* is equivalent to the "green zone"

as defined in the US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The logic of a "green

zone" relegates everything outside of the gated community of a neocolonial outpost to a

"red zone." The necessity of the red zone in order to sustain the green zone is erased

through a logic of defense, thus excluding the red zone from the protections of the rule of

law and legitimating death beyond the walls of the green zone. Eric Smith explains,

"Eroding the very conditions of possibility for an authentic *politics*, the

compartmentalizing logic of the post-millennial *polis* disorganizes social space itself,

circumscribing discrete, seemingly autonomous special monads, the deep structural

correlations and interdependencies of which become increasingly and intentionally

difficult to map" (129). Those who occupy the red zone are viewed solely as a threat to

the green zone and such a feat of dehumanization can be difficult to establish, even in the

realm of fiction where the red zone occupants can be cast as monstrous.[140]

Reprising the role of Robert Neville is a further extension of this branding

because Smith is playing the Everyman of US empire. This is, however, a very different

empire than that epitomized by Heston or Matheson's Nevilles. Like the real world

centers of economic, cultural, and diplomatic power, *I Am Legend* tells a global story

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[140] Eric Smith also addresses Neville's refusal to acknowledge the social order of the Darkseekers and his insistence on dismissing their higher-order thinking as a failure of self-preservation: "We can perceive in Neville's consistent misrecognition of the seekers' purpose and nature the *fetishistic disavowal* that sustains his symbolic universe" (Smith 137). Like any fanatic, were Smith to acknowledge the humanity of his adversary, his belief system would collapse.

through the limited perspective and exaggerated agency of a US masculine ideal. US

dominance of global capitalism is a privatized enterprise, wherein US diplomatic and

military strength is often at the disposal of transnational corporations. The current era of

global relations in some ways reflects race relations in the 1970s where White America

had learned that people of color within the nation not only had all the rights of

citizenship, but were essential to the health of the nation, yet the US remained locked in a

struggle to recognize the value of inclusive multiculturalism rather than mere tokenism

and assimilation. Popular notions of global citizenship are on the rise. Economic growth

and political stability amongst the wealthiest nations require the convergence of

globalized factors, including the spread of democracy, the development of consumer

markets outside the US, and ecological preservation. Yet US interests continue to assume

the prerogative to control these factors, short-circuiting the autonomy of other nations as

well as communities whose interests are not national-bound. In *Omega Man*, Cash had

crafted a character who was unapologetically Black and whose ability to fight along side

of "The Man" and even engage him in a romantic relationship in no way required her to

compromise her own identity or submit to his presumed domination. In 2007, the efforts

of actors like Cash has created a media environment where Smith's brand does not need

to compromise his racial identity in order for him to be an icon of nationalist masculinity.

Instead, Smith's race testifies to the cultural legitimacy of the American dream,

encouraging audience both within the US and abroad to trust that our empire is in

everyone's best interest.

However, in 2007, the centrality of the nation as a cultural unity, and even as a

legitimate moral order, was being challenged on all fronts. The film was clearly made in

the cultural moment popularly referred to as "post 9/11," where the notion of a "clash of

civilizations" had regained sway and, not unlike the effort to recruit Black patriotism in

World War II, racial differences within the US were smoothed over by the popular

projection of a common enemy to be found in Muslim fundamentalists. However, as Sean

Brayton discusses in "The Racial Politics of Disaster and Dystopia in *I Am Legend*," the

film is also deeply impacted by the failure of the US government to protect our citizens in

the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As a Black character in 2007, Neville is positioned to

fight for a nation that does not offer him the full protections of citizenship.[141] Yet *I Am*

Legend, while not an explicitly post-global film, manages to situate Neville's microcosm

into a limited global imaginary. As with many representations of "global" topics, *I Am*

Legend focuses on the US as the center of humanity, tracing the shockwaves of US-based

plotlines as they ripple around the globe rather than providing characters outside of the

US with whom the audience can identify. The plague that wipes out humanity in this

telling originates in medical research, which, as the British accent of the lead researcher

played by Emma Thompson suggests, is a transnational collaboration. The film does not

directly state that this research would have a significantly larger impact on wealthy

populations first and across the global North second before such research would

eventually trickle down to benefit those who exist outside the power centers of global

empire. A plague that results from mutated medical research would emanate out from the

US, Europe, and a handful of global mega-cities. Thus, when Neville continually states

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[141] Brayton also points out that when Neville is shown to return his DVDs on time everyday, it stands in sharp contrast to the "looting" narrative that characterized many depictions of Black communities after Katrina (71).

that New York City is "Ground Zero" for the virus, he is following in Matheson's

footsteps by reversing the germ-culture expectations established in 1950s science fiction.

New York City is the iconic US global mega-city. As the center of our financial

infrastructure, the symbolic point of origin for a tokenized Black culture,[142] and the most

diverse and historically recognized of our immigration entry points, it represents both the

most elite and the most disenfranchised in our nation. All of the previous versions of this

story were set in Los Angeles, a city that represents US global cultural hegemony,

through Hollywood, but which is not often presented in the public imagination as a site of

the diversity so characteristic of the US national image, despite the history of

immigration and multiculturalism that has gone into forming the city. New York is

geographically isolated on Manhattan. As a population center, it relies on a system of

public transit. For generations, New Yorkers have fled the city to other parts of the

Eastern seaboard. There is no similar pattern of seasonal urban flight in Los Angeles, a

city that is far less centralized, with more porous boundaries, an extensive system of

suburbs and a quite limited public transit system. The shift from Los Angeles to New

York City therefore evokes a very different idea of the national body, its integrity, and its

interface with its global environment. Los Angeles can be white-washed, assimilating the

city's diversity into a generic white US hegemony. Much as Neville can erase the

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[142] Heston's Neville casually refers to Cash's Lisa as being from Harlem despite the fact that *Omega Man* is set in Los Angeles. While Harlem is clearly a significant cultural center, it cannot be made to stand-in for the diverse range of Black communities throughout the US. New Orleans is often presented as a counter-point to New York City in that it offers a contrasting history of both slavery and post-slavery migrations. However, post-slavery migration patterns created a wide range of Black communities throughout the US. Los Angeles had its own Black community that cannot be reduced to a colony of Harlem, as did Cash's hometown Baltimore. For more information on the Great Migration out of the Jim Crow South, see Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

complexity of US masculinities by casting himself as the last surviving human being, Los Angeles can be reduced to a white semi-suburban consumerist fantasy of a paradoxically totalizing purity. New York, however, is always already polluted with alterity and achieves its cultural force from its adaptability and inclusiveness.

Thus Smith's Neville mirrors the evolution of scientific understanding of disease as described by Laura Diehl in "American Germ Culture: Richard Matheson, Octavia Butler, and the (Political) Science of Individualism." Diehl traces a correlation between rhetoric of a healthy national body and the paradigm by which disease is understood. In the Red Scares of the 1920s and the 1950s, Diehl notes the importance of bodily integrity as a means of preventing infection in scientific, science fiction, and immigration writings, with an emphasis in the 1950s on unmasking the Other that attempts to pass as the self. However, more recent scientific understandings of disease have noted that human biology cannot be comprehended through a self/other binary. Rather, we are symbiotic. Both our health and our evolution as a species are better understood through a paradigm of dialectic and exogenetic adaptation. Previous versions of Neville had focused on immunity, with the integrity of Neville's blood marking his superiority over the infected. Price's Morgan, like Matheson's Neville, earned his immunity while serving US imperial interests abroad. In the novel, he is bitten by a bat while serving in Panama. Heston's Neville carries the cure in his fetishized white blood, but the cure is the end result of a massive military research effort of which Heston is tragically the only benefactor. Smith's Neville, on the other hand, must invent a cure through his own scientific inquiry rather than through his innate traits or as his inheritance as the sole survivor of the empire. He is naturally immune, but he is not the only human who is resistant to the virus and while the

virus itself is responsible for a global state of emergency, it is the failure of emergency

protocols to sufficiently respond to the disease that lead humanity to the brink of

extinction.

The survivor community in *I Am Legend* is, like Neville, immune to the airborne

mutation of the plague. They are driven to Vermont by the surviving infected, a breed of

cannibalistic, pre-linguistic and presumably mindless mutants whose allergy to light

earns them the label "Darkseekers." Vermont is cold and thus hostile to the Darkseekers,

but the film is imprecise in whether the cold weather protects the survivors from the

violence of the Darkseekers or from infection by disease itself. By locating the safeguard

in Vermont, the film threatens to fall back into the racist assumptions about disease that

developed when the eugenicist movement incorporated the germ theory of disease in the

early 1900s. As described by Diehl, revelations about the potentially insidious nature of

microbes was immediately incorporated into the rhetoric of eugenics and anti-immigrant

movements, further naturalizing nativist arguments about the superiority of Nordic blood,

such as Neville's "160 proof Anglo-Saxon." Professional germ hunters of the 1920s and

1930s fetishized Africa, India, Cuba, and presumably all tropical climates, as microbial

cesspools teaming with potential threats to be captured, analyzed, and conquered, in the

microbial equivalent to a safari (Diehl 89-91). Thus the language of germs was used to

naturalize empire, demonstrating that those from northern climes were pure while those

from southern climes were always already infected.

In Vermont, the fear of germs can be conflated with the fear of racial difference

and urban population centers. After all, if Vermont is safe, would it not follow that the

entire nation of Canada has also survived, including such chilly multicultural urban

centers as Toronto and Montreal? Would not Iceland have become the new UN

headquarters? Vermont is not only cold; it is also a predominantly rural state whose

ideological role can best be described as idyllic whiteness nostalgia.[143] Thus when

Smith's Neville refuses to go to Vermont, he is refusing to retreat to the safety of

whiteness, to the purity of Anglo-Saxon blood. Instead, he insists that New York City, the

ideological epicenter of immigration, miscegenation and US multiculturalism, is where

the disease must be fought. In Vermont, US culture can cling to its white rural heritage

and claim a purity to then defend against infection. New York City, on the other hand,

proclaims that US culture is always already global, multicultural, and symbiotic. The

health of our nation, when centered in New York City requires that we incorporate and

adapt, seeing each new infusion not as a trail to be endured, but as the new conditions

within which we must thrive.

I Am Legend has two endings. In the original ending, Neville's final confrontation

with the Darkseekers is resolved peacefully. He concedes New York City to the new

social order and retreats to Vermont. This ending did not fare well when test marketed

and so can only be seen by audiences who seek it out as an "alternative ending" on select

DVD releases or online fan sites. Instead, the film's theatrical release included a new

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[143] Brayton claims that in films like *I Am Legend*, "'whiteness' is equated with disease, 'blackness' stands for national recovery" (74). Bakke and McAlister both rely heavily on the concept of "hyperwhites." While this argument about the monstrosity of whiteness is crucial to a developed understanding of many films about the undead, the importance of Vermont as an alternative, human whiteness in *I Am Legend*, cannot be overlooked. Brayton struggles with conflict: "While this 'utopia' is perhaps multicultural with the inclusion of the Brazilian migratns, it reflects a revival of Christianity and American patriotism housed in a fortified rural community. It is a neoconservative rendering that relies on the very military-state apparatus largely responsible for the collapse of American society in the film" (74). For Brayton, the film is ultimately neoconservative, even though it is multicultural. Thus the hyperwhite darkseekers can simultaneously represent neo-Nazis and the Occupy Wall Street movement because both groups are alien to idyllic rural whiteness and hostile to Smith's black global-capital nationalism.

ending in which Neville sacrifices himself and several Darkseekers to ensure that the cure

reaches the Vermont outpost. In both endings, Neville gradually realizes that the

Darkseekers are not animalistic, but in fact have a social order and can even

communicate and reason. Neville survives in the film's original ending. In online

comment threads, this is often cited as the factor that causes audiences to prefer the

"alternate" ending despite the fact that Neville's survival obfuscates the film's title.[144]

The other significant factor noted by online commenters is the extent to which the

Darkseekers are further humanized. These two factors would seem to be at odds. The

more humanized the Darkseekers becomes, the more Neville's research, which has

claimed enough Darkseeker lives to fill a wall with their autopsy photos, begins to look

like serial murder.

The two endings diverge shortly after a Darkseeker alpha male approaches the

glass cage to which Neville, two other survivors and a nearly-cured Darkseeker female

have retreated. Neville tries to reason with his attackers despite insisting throughout the

film that they are animalistic and cannot maintain basic social order. In his plea at this

climactic moment, Neville attempts to justify his moral order without realizing how

limited that ethical view is. He claims, "I can save you. I can help you. You are sick and I

can help you. I can fix this. I can save everybody." His first claim, and some muddled

confusion between whether he wants to say "save" or "help," make room for the

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[144] Some online commenters refer to the theatrical ending as the "original," despite the fact that the "alternate" ending was market tested and the theatrical ending was a last-minute adjustment. Others use "original" to describe the "alternate" ending. For audience opinions of the two endings, see the comments on Alex Billington's "Must Watch: *I Am Legend*'s Original Ending – This is Amazing," *First Showing: Connecting Hollywood with its Audience,*First Showing LLC. Posted March 5 2008. Accessed August 17 2014 and Tasha Robinson "*I Am Legend* alternate ending: Better or Worse?" *AV Club,* Onion, Inc, posted March 5 2008, Accessed August 17 2014.

possibility that even as he says these words, he is realizing that they may not want to be saved and that his help is not, in fact, in their best interest. So then he clarifies, in an echo of Morgan's "freaks," that they are sick. In the final two statements of his pleas, he reveals the core value of his character –his desire to fix the plague as if the world were merely broken rather than fundamentally altered. This Neville may be more adaptable than his predecessors, but whereas Matheson's Neville and Price's Morgan sought to create their own worlds and Heston's Neville sustains himself with his desire to eradicate The Family, Smith's Neville draws his will to survive from some aspiration that his development of a cure will somehow return the old world. Each of these characters is tied to a sisyphusian task and perhaps their most consistent character trait is the way that they derive meaning from their work, both wild and scientific. Matheson's Neville and Price's Morgan are self-sufficient laborers. Heston's Neville is the sole heir of a great cultural legacy and he must work to maintain that legacy. Smith's Neville, while also inheriting the fruit of empire, has also inherited the white man's burden of converting the Other.

In both endings, Neville receives a revelation in his final moments in the form of a butterfly tattoo. In the theatrical ending, the butterfly is formed by cracks in the glass wall that protects the humans and that the Darkseeker is breaking with his own body. Neville sees the same butterfly shape in one of Anna's tattoos and takes this as a sign that she is the destined savior of humanity. This revelation is divine and indicates that Neville's role in the rebuilding of society was completed when he developed the cure. His only remaining duty is to embrace his status as legend through martyrdom. The ideological implications of the theatrical ending are disturbing. The legendary hero, upon recognizing his enemy's humanity proceeds to kill as many of them as possible to ensure

that his empire has the tools with which to eliminate its enemy. In this ending, the film promises that the Vermont colony will grow as it captures and cures Darkseekers, eventually restoring the old social order, but this time with a significantly reduced population that has been purified by this plague. Thus the theatrical ending follows up the violence of Neville with the promise of expansionist violence from the Vermont community and ultimately the implication that the plague is a form of divine violence after which humanity will be better off or at least returned to God's grace.[145]

In the film's original ending, the butterfly revelation is formed intentionally by the alpha Darkseeker, who draws the image on the glass in an effort to communicate. The tattoo is on the nearly-cured female and Neville realizes that he is tearing apart this social bond by removing the female from her community. Neville recognizes the social order and emotional attachments of the Darkseekers and releases his captive, thus attaining safe passage for himself and fellow survivors to the Vermont colony. The status of the cure is left ambiguous in this film, which is an additional point of frustration for those online commenters who fail to see that the humanization of the Darkseekers necessitates that their existence be granted not just a stay of violence, but actual legitimacy as a self-sustained moral order. This ending does not provide a hope for coexistence. Humans are still cloistered in Vermont and there is no indication that the Darkseekers will be less violent now that the hostage exchange is complete. In one ending of the film, Neville realizes that he must be sacrificed for the future of humanity. In the other, he realizes that

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[145] As will be discussed below, Neville's seeming divine mandate results in the combination of fellow survivor Anna's comment that it is easier to hear God when there are fewer people with the motif of the butterfly. While the film is not explicitly religious, the coincidence that one of the chief researchers of the plague is also immune to the plague requires some explanation.

the Darkseekers are a future, if not necessarily of humanity. The film *I Am Legend* makes

you choose, whereas Matheson's novel combined both, unable to imagine Neville

displaced to the periphery of the infected moral order. Death, for all versions of Neville,

is a way of remaining at the center of a moral order, even if only as legend. The original

ending of *I Am Legend* offers Neville's survival at the price of his central importance.

In each version of this story, the Neville character presents the hegemonic ideal

and in all but the most recent, this ideal can only survive in isolation. He cannot imagine

the compromise required to join the new moral order. Where the early scenes in *The Last*

Man on Earth featured Morgan's self-sufficiency, through his ability to perform all

necessary maintenance, and *Omega Man*'s opening focused on Neville's autonomy,

through his recklessness and cultural accumulation, *I Am Legend* establishes Neville's

hegemonic masculinity by featuring his ability to adapt to the post-apocalyptic landscape.

As Diehl argues, adaptation has replaced integrity as the ideological framework of

survival. However, adaptation is also a hallmark of advanced capitalism. In her

introduction to a biopolitics special issue of *Science Fiction Film and Television*, Sherryl

Vint makes an argument quite similar to that of Diehl. Where Diehl focused on race and

germ culture, however, Vint focuses on technology and economics. Vint connects theories

of biopower found in Deleuze, Agamben and Foucault with the tangible business models

of the biotech industry, demonstrating that ideological shifts in science are connected to

policy. "This emphasis on change and flexibility aligned with market shifts toward

speculative capital, just-in-time production and financial instruments linked not to

material goods but rather to market calculations such as derivatives" (167). However,

Diehl is enthusiastic about the multicultural possibilities of hegemonic privileging of

adaptability but Vint is concerned that this adaptability can lead to a "monstrous surplus of biocapital, a crisis of overproduction (of life)" in which we can no longer distinguish between "tuning humans as cogs of the economy and tuning them as posthuman bodies" (170, 168). Vint insists that in an era of such adaptability, where speculative forces determine much of the economy, science fiction is essential to mapping out future possibilities and thus guiding present economic and technological realities. Neville's tuning as a cog of empire causes him to tune the bodies of the Darkseekers and his other research subjects. He does not kill to protect humanity or to punish (the power of the sovereign). He instead kills in an effort to control these posthuman bodies and return the health of the national body (the power of modern governments). In the previous films and novel, science loomed as a justification for nefarious power relations but in this film, science itself is monstrous.

As the sole representative of US culture Smith's Neville can tell us much about how the nature of power has shifted since the 1950s. The original Neville had to teach himself science. Price's Morgan was a trained scientist, but he was still very much an everyman. Heston and Smith's Nevilles combine the scientist and the military man and both were personally invested with the public trust to develop a cure before society collapsed. Both Price's Morgan and Matheson's Neville were witnesses to the demise of their families while Heston's Neville is unique in that he is presented as the confirmed bachelor. Smith's Neville, however, is shown as an agent in the fate of his family. In one tense scene he is able to use his military rank to demand an exception be made for his family so that they are not trapped in the quarantine. While the other versions of Neville were witnesses, including Heston's Neville who was shown as quite isolated in his lab,

Smith's Neville was a player in the game. Previous generations of Americans were able to view global happenings, such as early stages of the Cold War, as something being done to them. However, increasingly since the Vietnam War and especially in the new millennium, Americans are aware that it is our choices as consumers that drive the agenda of our empire even if our votes themselves cannot determine the policy of corporations. We are far more aware of our complicity in global hegemony than we once were. Ultimately, however, despite doing everything in his power to protect his family, Neville's effort proves fruitless when his wife and child are almost immediately killed in an accidental collision. In order to build narrative tension and develop Neville's character, the flashbacks in which Neville's family escapes and the scene in which they are killed are quite far apart in the film. This pause in the narrative allows the film to focus on Neville's hunger for community and his continuing sense of connection to humanity. When we later see his family die, the audience is encouraged to see that Neville's loneliness is also a symptom of his guilt, thus setting the stage for his monstrosity. The death of his family shifts him from centrality in the human moral order to a liminal character whose positon in the moral order can be contested.

Throughout *I Am Legend*, Neville struggles to establish his place within a community. He replays pre-recorded television news, he stages mannequins to recreate casual encounters one would experience in daily life, and he broadcasts a mixed plea and offer of sanctuary every day in the hopes of attracting other survivors. This sense of belonging is also a lens through which to read the early hunting scene where Neville is trying to establish his place within the post-apocalyptic ecosystem. He is a failed hunter despite advanced technology and the assistance of his dog Sam. When he finally does

have the chance to kill a deer, he is thwarted by a lion, thus demonstrating that he is not

merely struggling, but actually an outsider of this predator-prey relationship. Even as an

outsider, Neville could have asserted the superiority of his own social order by using his

gun but, upon seeing that the lion has cubs, he decides that the claim of her social order

trumps his needs regardless of his superior agency. This acknowledgement of the lion's

legitimacy only underscores the cognitive dissonance that Neville displays toward the

Darkseekers who he does not grant the respect he shows to this animal. Instead, the

Darkseekers are equivalent to rats for Neville, appropriate test subjects, excluded from

moral consideration presumably only because they don't organize in family units. In this

way, while subtle, the film establishes reproductive units as the core criteria for a moral

order, when he recognizes the relationship between the male and female Darkseekers in

the film's climax, it becomes the heterosexual reproductive couple that establishes a

moral order as legitimate.

I Am Legend features a hegemonic masculinity that is more relational than in any

of the previous tellings. Matheson's Neville and Price's Morgan both discovered a dog

and by forcing the dog to join their community, were able to validate their centrality as

the last remaining patriarchs of civilization. Heston's Neville never gets a dog. He has a

bust of Cesar with whom he maintains a friendly rivalry but it isn't until he becomes

erotically engaged with Lisa, whose alterity is irreducible, that he imagines himself

within community. For Smith's Neville, the dog Sam is essential to survival. When she

succumbs to the plague he undertakes a suicidal last stand. Sam plays a strikingly

different role in this film than had the nameless dog in either the novel or *Last Man on

Earth*. In those tales, the dog is merely a subject of Neville's dominion, recruited in an

effort to rebuild a community with Neville at its center. Sam, however was a member of Neville's family before the collapse. She is his last remaining connection to his loved ones, his partner in survival, and his last remaining charge to protect. By keeping him connected to the old social order, she keeps him loyal to the old moral order. But Sam's relationship with Neville is one of mutual care. He has the authority to chastise her when she recklessly risks her life, but his relationship to her is far more egalitarian that that imagined by Morgan or Matheson's Neville. When Sam is revealed as a shortened version of Samantha and the dog is gendered female, the film again emphasizes the heteronormative couple as the center of regenerative possibility, thus returning us to early Dracula narratives described in Waller. A male dog can be subsumed in a masculine pecking order and thus reduced to an object of hegemonic masculinity's dominance. But the revelation of Sam's gendering is only significant if her gender suggest alterity. Thus *I Am Legend* reveals another core component of the tale – that the alternity required for the ego to develop into a self is grounded in gender difference.[146] The last man on earth, in other words, is a status that remains unaffected by the presence of other men. Until a woman is introduced, there can be no community and no meaning. If we consider the apocalypse as a metaphor for the alienation of modern masculinity, or, in the words of Montagu, accept that the psychology of the survivor is endemic, this seemingly privilege

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[146] While a heterosexual coupling may be required in order for a surviving couple to be regenerative, the requirement for a heterosocial connection to end a survivor's isolation is ideologically heteronormative. As Khader has argued, Matheson's novel certainly leaves room for the possibility that Neville would have been comforted by a homosocial bond, whether or not that bond developed into a homoerotic connection. Khader argues a strong case for Neville's closeted desire but even if Neville's hysterical heterosexuality is taken at face value, the novel allows for any human companionship disrupting Neville's self-destructive cycle. Each of the films, however, presumes a heteronormative agenda of regeneration, presenting Neville's loneliness only within an ideology of the heterosexual couple as the foundational social unit. Lisa's humored reference to birth control is in fact the only moment in the earlier films where reproductive heterosexuality is presented as anything other than compulsory, with Neville as a primary enforcer.

position of women in the narratives becomes a dehumanizing obligation wherein men believe that it is a woman's role or even duty to complete them in a way that other men cannot, namely in a heteronormative coupling.

Matheson's Neville and Price's Morgan treat Ruth's alterity as a call to conquest and her role as spy reinforces this antagonistic structure. However, for Heston and Smith's Nevilles, the women they encounter are not subsumed within the conflicting moral order. Lisa and Anna are both representatives of a community that Neville may conceivably join. They are also more fully developed characters who exist within the narrative as more than merely the objects of desire. Lisa is the founder of an entire commune. Anna is a survivor who has traveled in a hostile postapocalyptic landscape from Brazil to New York City while protecting the life of a young boy. All of the women in these tales know more than Neville, thus jeopardizing his self-image as the man of knowledge. With the exception of Lisa, all of the women have also suffered deep personal loss as a result of the wider loss of social and moral orders. While the Ruths address Neville as a legendary monster, Lisa and Anna interpolate Neville into his failure as a public figure. Both Lisa and Anna know Neville by name before meeting him. For Lisa, this interpolation allows her to reject his claims to authority. For Anna, however, the recognition of Neville's legendary status is fused to his isolation and loneliness. He is the military doctor who stayed never gave-up, but he is also the man who calls to other survivors over the radio at midday each day. By interpolating Neville, both Lisa and Anna establish themselves as existing beyond the limits of his story. Both women have their own stories to tell and it is only the market forces of Hollywood that present the audience with Neville's story rather than theirs. Audiences are never asked to identify with Lisa's

version of the US, infused as it would be with her racial and gender identities. The filmmakers are satisfied with merely reminding the audience that such stories do exist. With Anna, however, the allusion to stories other than Neville's takes on an intertextual dimension that locates the film in a larger tradition of undead apocalyptic narratives.[147]

Anna is Brazilian and her story is harrowing. She and other survivors were evacuated to a barge where they could be isolated. However, the plague made it onto the boat, killing most, mutating many, with only two of the immune escaping the resultant Darkseekers. She takes it upon herself to protect the other survivor, a young boy to whom she presumably had no other connection. Anna is the archetypal brown woman who is supposed to be rescued from vague race, gender, and class-based threats by US interventions in global crises. She was at the right place at the right time and went along with the plan. The plan didn't work but she managed to survive anyway and decided to take a leap of faith in traveling to a hypothetical survivor economy a continent away. In many ways, she is fulfills the masculine requirements of other post-apocalyptic narratives better than Neville. She drives into New York City after dark. While it is not depicted, there is no doubt that Anna's survival has required resourcefulness beyond that which Neville has demonstrated. Like Lisa, Anna doesn't need Neville. She saves him. Unlike Heston's Neville who instantly starts in with the come-ons, Smith's Neville is overwhelmed by the presence of another person whose will exists outside of him. He cannot accept that her plans do not conform to his expectation that he will be her refuge.

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[147] The DVD release of *I Am Legend* includes several animated comics where still images are augmented with sound effects and minimal animation effects. Each of these stories shows the apocalypse from a different perspective, including a survivor in Hong Kong, an Indian family in hiding, and a massacred treatment facility "somewhere in Central America."

But unlike Matheson's Neville, Smith's Neville makes no effort to coerce. He can't imagine that he is not central to her survival, but he makes no effort to bring that state about.

Many online commenters assume that the boy who accompanies her is Anna's son, despite the fact that there is no evidence in the film for this relationship. There is no also no hint of a romantic relationship developing between Anna and Neville. The family unit is something that Neville carries inside himself in this film. It is an artifact of the old order, rather than the promise of what lays ahead in Vermont. In this way, *I Am Legend* liberates the post-apocalyptic desire to rebuild society from the economics of individual reproduction that had taken precedent in the two earlier films, but was located specifically in the ideological commitment of Neville himself in the novel. In Matheson's version, Neville's commitment to heterosexuality makes him into a predator and a victim in a world that doesn't value his sexual desire. Smith's Neville, however, does not privilege sexual desire in his broader desire for companionship. Even Neville's bashful crush on a mannequin he has placed at the video store is only one of many fantasy mannequin relationships. For Smith's Neville, heterosexual desire is not a requisite of masculinity, even though the need for community is essential to the human condition. Thus, Anna is not presented as an appropriate object of desire or potential mate. The little boy who accompanies her presents her as part of a larger community rather than as an available half of a reproductive coupling. His presence does not cast her as a mother, but as a survivor capable of caring for others. Anna, like Lisa, cannot be reduced to the helpmate that Ruth represented.

Like Vermont and New York City, Brazil carries ideologically weight in the US imagination. Brazil is one of the major emerging economies of globalization that promises to break the "clash of civilization" binaries, not only of Islam/Judeo-Christian, but also the earlier and recurring Cold War division between Communism/Democracy. Popular images of Brazil ignore deep racialized class divides within the country and promote a post-racial fantasy based not on white hegemony, appropriation, and assimilation, but on full integration. Brazil is a mythical home of Carnival and siestas; where Afro-Caribbean religious tradition, Catholicism, and modernization all coexist; and one of the custodians of the Amazon rainforest, which is still depicted as an exotic cesspool for germ hunters, but now that germs are no longer seen as intrinsically dangerous, it has become a hopeful site of research and ecological preservation rather than a battleground for disease. In short, because Brazil is imagined to have resolved so many of the tensions with which the US struggles, its rise to global power is seen sometimes as a threat but more often as the fulfillment of the US's aspirations to be a global torchbearer. Whether or not any of these fantasies of Brazil correspond with the realms of global politics and economics, or within Brazil itself, is irrelevant. The film has to use the common symbolic vocabulary that will register with its audience.

Because Anna is from a fantasy space of globalization rather than merely another part of the US, she is empowered to sit in judgment of Neville, who stands in for the entire US military industrial complex. Her horror at the wall of pictures of dead Darkseekers in his lab is the narrative alternative to Neville's perspective, although the audience has been invited to recognize Neville's cognitive dissonance when the

Darkseekers prove far more mentally developed than he is willing to acknowledge.[148] The

perspective Anna presents, while insufficiently developed, provides many opportunities

for reading the story differently. When Anna claims that the world is quieter since the

plague and that it is now easier to hear the voice of God, she appeals both to the religious

undertones that have been exploited in the previous films and to the secular ecosystemic

understanding of human populations that sees our global culture as unsustainable. To the

postnational sensibilities of a millennial audience, Anna's new found clarity appeals to an

increasingly popular microcommunity political orientation that can be organized through

religion, region or even global citizenship. Under such an ideology, shared interests and

sustainability are prioritized over larger allegiances.[149] It is important to note that Anna

does not appeal to Christian community or teachings. She merely evokes a post-secular

spirituality that is responsive to direct contact with the divine rather than mired in ritual.

This adaptability to the will of God, while couched in the language of monotheism, is

compatible with the symbiogenesis paradigm of human biological coexistence. For Anna,

it can be extrapolated, the Darkseekers, no matter how horrifying, are also God's children

and must be accepted as a component of the human condition. Anna's ambivalence

toward the Darkseekers resembles a trend that Diehl traces in the fiction of Octavia

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[148] There are several moments throughout the film in which the events on screen do not neatly fit into Neville's narration. For example, he interprets that the alpha darkseeker exposed himself to sunlight is a sign of devolution and lack of self-perseverance, rather than evidence of a social bond to the abducted female. His inability to recognize a trap set for him However, the film identifies with Neville's gaze and his interpretation of events goes unchallenged until Anna's arrival.

[149] This millennial ideology can be seen in many manifestation, from the locavore movement that focuses on sourcing all consumed goods locally in an effort to make a smaller ecological footprint, and the return to regional literary communities among millennial writer to internet-enabled subcultures such as the feminist or Men's Rights blogospheres or the emergence of aesthetic niches such as Afro-Punk, or the immense popularity of localized art projects such as the Humans of New York collection.

Butler: "there is a fine line, Butler suggests, between a liberatory posthumanism that visualizes personhood in alien terms and an amnesiac posthumanism that ignores historical and juridical forms of power that have used people's bodies against them" (114). Neville's deadly experiments cannot be discussed as if there were not a long history of racist scientific exploration that disregarded the lives of its test subjects.[150] Likewise, the wall of photographs of the dead evokes a history of geneocidal violence in multiple past of the globe. But in New York City, this wall of photos is directly linked to the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11.[151]

In the post 9/11 moment, Neville's masculinity is able to be both heroic and monstrous, but *I Am Legend* goes a step further in allowing Neville to be conflicts, scared, even suffer from severe social anxiety. In order to celebrate adaptability as the new masculine virtue, the centrality of control to masculinity must be disrupted. Smith's Neville is shown to exceed at self-control but his helplessness within a hostile world is highlighted throughout the film. For example, his rituals, such as covering his smell with poured chemicals every evening as he returns home, succeeds at masking his location from the Darkseekers, but when Anna saves his life, she doesn't magically intuit this necessity and the house is inundated that very evening. He exercises regularly, exhibiting

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[150] Clearly Nazi medical experiments during the Holocaust are an important context, but the wall of photos can also be traced to social experiments such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

[151] Kevin Wetmore traces this visual motif among other in *Post 9/11 Horror*. As Wetmore demonstrates, the wall of pictures evokes several characteristics of horror in the new millennium: that death can be anonymous and impersonal, that the missing are not acknowledged as dead in events of mass tragedy, and that memorializing the dead becomes a collective rather than personal endeavor. Some other excellent examples of this trope of walls of photographs are the ones in the television series *Battlestar Gallactica* (2004-09) and in the film *War of the World*, both of which, interestingly, are remakes. Unfortunately, Wetmore's book primarily focuses on identifying and compiling tropes and makes little effort toward analyzing them. It is worth noting, however, that all of Wetmore's examples present the wall of photos from the perspective of the victim memorializing and it is only *I Am Legend* that uses the wall of photos to implicate guilt, which has historically been a more prominent use of this visual tactic.

a commitment to self-discipline, but his physicality does not seem to improve his survival chances. We never see him fight or outrun either predator or prey. His monstrous experiments are made possible through his mastery of technology, not through his physical competence. There are no scenes in *I Am Legend* in which Neville demonstrates mechanical competency or performs any sort of maintenance on anything other than his own body. Instead, there are visual elements that allude to the work he has performed off-screen, such as the fortified black-out doors in his home and stalks of corn that he presumably planted. In short, the film highlights Neville's determination to control himself as its own heroic end while his control of the external world is mostly left off-screen or rendered as a monstrous disregard for Darkseeker life.

In 2007, the role of Neville demands far more emotive versatility of the lead, indicating that hegemonic masculinity has developed a richer vocabulary of emotional states in which a man can demonstrate his power. Even crying is no longer depicted as a failure of masculinity. However, both instances in the film in which Neville cries are centered on his relationship with Sam. Since Sam is a stand-in for Neville's dead family, the take-away depiction of masculinity is that the role of provider and care-giver are essential to his masculinity. When Sam runs into a dark building, risking attack from the Darkseekers, Neville struggles to overcome his fear and retrieve her. As he explores the building, the camera spends more time gazing upon Neville's fear than the surroundings that cause it. After they escape unharmed, Neville chastises Sam, but it is clear that her obedience to his wishes is a matter of voluntary partnership rather than control. The other moment in which we see Neville cry is, of course, when Sam mutates and he is forced to

kill her.[152] In this moment, all of the self-discipline he had previous cultivated comes to fruition as he is forced to sever his one remaining relationship. The fruit of his masculinity proves unsatisfactory and he spends the day getting his limited affairs in order before attempting a suicidal assault on the city's Darkseekers. Ultimately, masculinity only retains value when it can be used to provide care for others. All of the other Nevilles are able to maintain themselves in the absence of any other living thing. Smith's Neville is only willing to survive if he can do so in community and in the pursuit of community. Even in an apocalyptic narrative, this Neville is never completely self-sufficient.
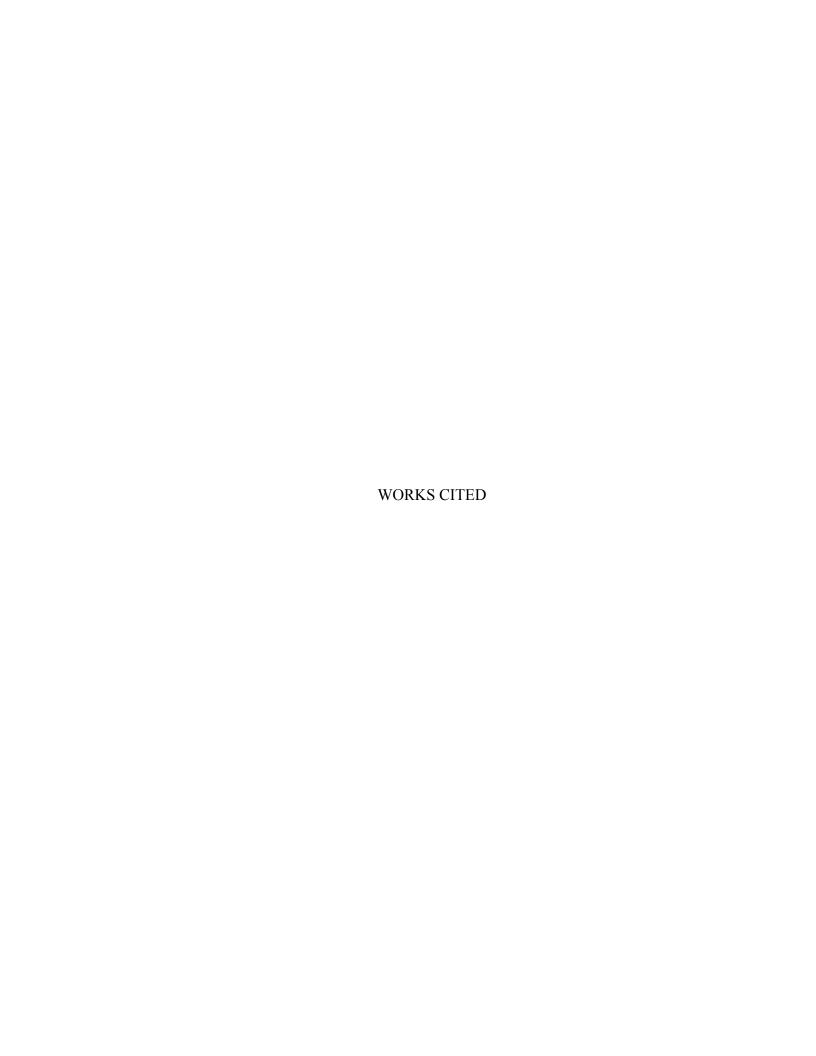
As with previous versions of this story, the hegemonic masculinity that Smith's Neville presents is ambivalently treated within the film. His scientific experimentation is both heroic and monstrous, balanced along a continuum between his lab rats and his Darkseeker victims. He is still a representative of the state, but the exact nature of the state is quite dubious, including British scientists and Brazilian rescue missions. The new global state is centered in the US and it would seem has only one Other: the Darkseekers. As with the other versions of Neville's story, the state is a failure, although in *I Am Legend,* the Vermont colony may be proof that this failure is not complete. Smith's Neville continues to act as an agent of the state even after the state has ceased to function. Not only does *I Am Legend* present the state and the Darkseekers as oppositional moral order, it also includes survivors who are not agents of the state, such as Anna, and the

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[152] Releasing Sam, who knows where he is, is not an option. The only other possibility would be to keep her in the lab as a test subject. His inability to consider that option only further underscores the violence that hides behind his scientific mandate to disregard Darkseeker life.

question of divine intentionality. In 1964 the survivor community is hostile. In 1971 the survivor community was resistant to assimilation, but not hostile. In 2007, the survivor community is unavailable but presumed to be friendly. Lisa's group is disease resistant. Vermont is immune. The vampires, The Family, and the Darkseekers thus function quite differently as political metaphors. Each constructs the binary ideology of a clash of cultures differently, branching out from Matheson's tale where the heroic and monstrous allowed for a third term to *I Am Legend* where Neville must locate himself in a complex economics of blood where several moral orders are locked in negotiation.

At the end of Matheson's *I Am Legend*, Neville, as the archetypal white man, sees himself through the eyes of his victims. To a degree he absolves them of the wild work they must perform by killing him. With this ending, Matheson does not suggest a racially peaceful future. He does, however, posit that other social orders will eventually replace ours, a conclusion that can be read positively in a postcolonial light. Unlike any of the novel's remakes, coexistence is a possibility in Matheson's work and the removed original ending of *I Am Legend*. The economy of blood and violence originates in a white-victim mentality that reduces the broad spectrum of alterity to a monolithic Other, which must always be monstrous and competitive. The blindness of xenophobia and privilege instigate a sacrificial logic that can only allow for one dominant social order. As US global dominance continues to define modernity, focusing on Neville's sacrifice can only promote a logic of violence. Matheson's tale can provide alternatives to this logic if we are only willing to question Neville's US white masculinity as an objective position of narrative authority.

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VITA

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EDUCATION
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PUBLICATIONS
Book Chapters
"'Wild Work': The Monstrosity of Whiteness in Matheson's *I Am Legend*." *Reading Richard Matheson: A Critical Survey.* Eds. Janet Haedicke and Cheyenne Matthews. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2014.
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"419 as Affective Labor: Profiting off the White Savior Complex in Okorafor, Adichie
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CONFERENCE ACTIVITY
Panels Organized
"America the Beautiful (White Woman): White Female Beauty in the Service of the
Nation." National Women's Studies Association. November 2013.
Presentations
"Criminality and Charity Porn: Representing 419 Crimes as Resistance in Adichie and
Okorafor." Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the United States (MELUS) conference,
March 2015.
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"Race, Gender, and the Deadly Logic of Looking: *Night of the Living Dead*," National
Women's Studies Association, November 2013.
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Histories of Violence Conference. May 2013.
"The Zombie Trope in Afro-Caribbean Women's Fiction," Multi-Ethnic Literatures of
the United States (MELUS) Conference, March 2013.
"Domesticating Blackness in Early Zombie Films," Louisville Conference on Literature
and Culture since 1900, February 2013.
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Media Studies Conference, March 2011.
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American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, March 2009.
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on Literature and Culture since 1900, February 2009.
"The Oral Aesthetic and the Ethics of Narrative Desire in Erna Brodber's *Louisiana*,
Maryse Condé's *Who Slashed Celanire's Throat?*, and Edwidge Danticat's *The
Dew Breaker*," Midwest Modern Language Association Conference, November
2007.
Discussant
"Blood on the Books, Blood on the Screen: New Horror Scholarship." PCA/ACA
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"'Oh Yes, There Will Be Blood': A Roundtable on Contemporary American Horror
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(PCA/ACA) National Conference, Chicago, IL, April 2014.

CAMPUS TALKS
"Queer Politics in Bruce LaBruce's *Otto, Or Up with Dead People*." Queer Horror Film
Series. Purdue February 2015
"Challenges and Barriers in Trans Identity." Guest Lecture, Human Diversity Course. Ivy
Tech Community College. February 2015.

"Blackface, Minstrelsy and the Hollywood Indian in 2013?" Difficult Dialogs on Race and the White Gaze. Black Cultural Center, Purdue. October 2013.

"From Exotic to Patriotic: Representing Blackness in Early Zombie Films," American Studies Symposium, Purdue April 2012.

"Ghosts and Zombies: Undeath and Trauma in the Black Atlantic," American Studies Symposium, Purdue April 2010.

COURSES TAUGHT

Graduate Instructor - Self-designed and sole-taught. All courses at Purdue University.

"Introduction to LGBT Studies." (Spring 2015).

"Introduction to Women's Studies." (Fall 2012 through Spring 2014). Including honors section.

"Purdue Promise Facilitation Course." (Spring and Fall 2012) Practicum for undergraduate instructors.

"Great Narrative Works: Epics About Exile." (Spring 2011).

"Gender and Literature." (Fall 2010) Cross listed with Women's Studies and English.

"Introduction to Poetry." (Spring 2010).

"Introduction to Composition" (Fall 2004 through 2011) Including an honors section and a Learning Community section coordinated with Global Cultures.

Teaching Assistant

"Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders: Purpose and Connection." (Spring and Fall 2012). Sophomore professionalization course for first generation students.

"The Movies." (Fall 2008 and 2009) Teaching assistant to Dr. Lance Duerfahrd.

SERVICE

Purdue University

Organizer, Queer Horror Film Series, February 2015.

Newsletter Editor, Department of Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Contract Content Developer, Purdue Online Writing Lab. Supervisor Josh Paiz. Summer 2012.

Graduate Assistant, Purdue Promise, Students Access, Transitions and Success Office. Supervisor Jenna Seabold. October 2011-June 2012.

President, ModCon: Modern and Contemporary Graduate Literature Scholars at Purdue, 2010-2011.

Panel Chair, Graphic Engagements: the Politics of Comics and Animation Conference presented by Purdue University's Comparative Literature Program, September 2010.

Graduate Students of English Association (GradSEA) committee representative, Job Search committee 2009-2010; Theory and Cultural Studies committee 2004-2005.

President, GradSEA: Graduate Students of English Association, 2008-2009.

Secretary GradSEA: Graduate Students of English Association 2007-2008.

Professional

Co-editor, H-Film listserve, since December 2014

Moderator, Midwest Modern Language Association Conference, November 2007.

Moderator, North American Levinas Association Annual Meeting, West Lafayette, Indiana, June 2007.

Audio/Visual Support, North American Levinas Association Annual Meeting, West Lafayette, Indiana, May 2006.

OUTREACH and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Steering Committee, Conversation Circles, Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's Diversity Roundtable, February to June 2015.

Volunteer Driver, Lafayette Urban Ministry's Shelter Winter Contingency Plan.

Volunteer Grant Recipient Evaluator, Multi-ethnic Efforts to end Sexual Assault (MESA)

Apprentice Trainer, SafeZone LGBTQ Ally Workshops, LGBTQ Center, Purdue University. 2014-2015

"Feminist," Krannert School of Management's Human Library Project, November 2014.

Co-Organizer, Difficult Dialogs on Race and the White Gaze. Part of an annual Difficult Dialogs on Race series hosted by Purdue's Black Cultural Center. October and November 2013.

Instructor, "Reinventing the Fairytale" Writing workshop at the Tippecanoe Public Library in Lafayette, Indiana, April 2005 and April 2006.

Performer, The Vagina Monologues, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, 2004-7, 2009.

Member, Purdue Organization for Women's Equality and Rights, 2003-2007.

EDITORIAL SERVICE

Copy Editor, Artifice Magazine. 2009-2012. Edited by Rebekah Silverman and James Tadd Adcox. Unaffiliated. Literary magazine.

Board member, Words on the Go Public Poetry. 2006-2010. Collaboration with CityBus, Tippecanoe County public transit.

http://www.gocitybus.com/About/News/ArticleID/11/Words-on-the-Go-Fall-2010.