

○ 'BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK'

THE LIVING DEAD AND APOCALYPTIC DYSTOPIA

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The zombie genre in contemporary literature and film presents another form of the monstrous as a response to political situations. The undead exhibit apocalyptic fears and anxiety about the future. In the New Testament narratives of the undead, especially the stories of Lazarus and the risen Christ, the undead appear sanctified, holy. But lurking beneath the transformed flesh are apocalyptic possibilities, and zombies make good reading partners of the biblical apocalypse.

INTRODUCTION

The apocalyptic spaces of resurrection in the New Testament – for example, the risen Jesus, Jephthah's daughter waking, Lazarus coming out of the tomb, the Two Witnesses – are embodied apparitions of the spaces between life and death. These posthuman beings haunt the text in different ways, and extend into imaginings of the future in art, apocalyptic fiction, and film. These revenants are what Slavoj Žižek cites as 'neighbors and other monsters;' they appear human among us but bear the weight of the monstrous (2005, 134–35). These immortals stalk our apocalyptic dreams and raise questions about consciousness, identity, hope, and sexuality. Jesus is in this sense the king of the living dead, a revenant, at times a vampire, at other times a zombie roaming the future, gathering his zombie army from the dead for the final earthly battle. There is endless Parousia in the New Testament – a Parousia that is almost, in the form of vivid apocalyptic dreams so real and to some, so desirable. The king of the undead can make us all, including our earth, like him, our subjectivity and uniqueness erased and reconstructed. As I read the New Testament I hope to stay one step (or more) ahead of this danger.

I am interested in exploring the terrain of one line of revenants, zombies, in order to explore the dimensions of the undead in some New Testament texts. These undead, even and especially after rejuvenation or resurrection, provide a bridge between life and death. The undead remind us of the End, both our own certain end and the too near possibility of the end of the world. They hold open possibilities, but they only reveal a partial future, leaving lots of destruction behind.

Zombies and zombie literature provide a peculiar template for reading parts of biblical apocalyptic and stories of the dead, the revived, the waiting souls, and the resurrected deity. Biblical texts hold countless dead who are mostly nameless and faceless; only a few stories are told of specific murders or miracle healings. For the most part, the dead stay dead and do not move out of their appropriate place. But sometimes they do move, in the form of ghosts or spirits or brought back to the living by some healing prophet or deity. My interest here is in two such movements – Lazarus and Jesus – and how as the undead they evoke zombie fantasies, and also what the current craze in zombie literature says not only about politics but about these biblical stalkers.

Furthermore, zombies emerge out of Empire, from imperial injustices, economic inequities, environmental destruction (nuclear, viral), and despair about the future. I also want to investigate the functions of horror in the figures of the undead in the New Testament – in particular through zombie tales in a few contemporary films and literature – as a way to reveal and deconstruct Empire, both in the first century and today. As Edward Ingebreetsen notes, ‘A culture’s main task is to survive its own imaginative demise – when, that is, its long memory ceases to wield any effective power’ (Ingebreetsen 1996, xxii). In the imagining of the zombie hordes ransacking the living, the ultimate fear of the dead and of dying is exposed – in destroying bodies zombies destroy civic society and imperial desires. Imagining the End in stories in which a remnant survives impossible violence is the stuff of Apocalypse and one major story line throughout the New Testament. The message is: The earthly Empire will not last; someone will come back from the dead to defeat these earthly powers and save the true believers.

From the conquest and ongoing genocide of indigenous peoples, slavery, wars, the Cold War, 9/11, etc. narratives of horror and the holy have taken various forms as a way to expose apocalyptic anxiety, nostalgia, and desire. Frank Kermode states that, ‘In fact the mythology of Empire and of Apocalypse are very closely related’ (Kermode 2000, 10). In Apocalypse horror embraces us, locking us in a grip of both the shadows of Empire and fear of its demise. The irony is that in these narratives Empire is replaced by another Empire, although one led by God. In critiquing Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s book *Empire*, Bruce Holsinger observes how closely webbed to apocalyptic rhetoric their take on the political is: ‘...Empire possesses the kind of expansive corpus and massive appetite that has always been at the center of apocalyptic discourse’ (Holsinger 2008, 475). Globalization, 9/11, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, global warming, etc. all have heightened apocalyptic dreaming and speaking.

Apocalyptic tales necessarily include monsters. Hardt and Negri relate, ‘The new world of monsters is where humanity has to grasp its future’ (Hardt and Negri 2000,

196). They point out how monsters are everywhere in contemporary Western culture, moving from the now domesticated Frankenstein to vampires, and I would argue even more, to zombies. Vampires tend to work on a more local level, living part of their lives in normal society, as they create new undead. Zombies can only destroy life to create more zombies; there is no cocktail hour banter with them, no seductive charm. Even so, Hardt and Negri make the link between the creation of human monsters and our emotions about Empire; they point to:

...our ambivalent relation to monsters and for our need to enhance our excessive powers of transformation and attack the monstrous, horrible world that the global political body and capitalist exploitation have made for us. We need to use the monstrous expressions of the multitude to challenge the mutations of artificial life transformed into commodities, the capitalist power to put up for sale the metamorphoses of nature, the new eugenics that support the ruling power. The new world of monsters is where humanity has to grasp its future. (2000, 196)

The instability of global capitalism makes the monstrous determinate on the group doing the naming; for the poor the rich are monsters and vice versa. ‘That is what we owe to monsters: the break with teleology and eugenics opens the problem of what the source of creation is, how it is expressed, and where it will lead’ (Hardt and Negri 2000, 195). Zombies promise total destruction; although they live only a few years in their fictional worlds, eventually they bring total doom. The idea of doomsday always raises the question of creation (and evolution), and thus a creator. The biblical creator has a huge role in birth, life, love, hate, sickness, death, war and afterlife. This creator also guides empires and nations, beginnings and endings.

What does it mean to answer the knock of the risen Jesus at the door? I propose that some evangelical but also scholarly readings of this text are not only bound up in Empire in different ways and in responding to its effects, but also in a perverse desire for the End – of life, of capitalism, of creation.

WELCOME TO ZOMBIELAND

In his preface to D.H. Lawrence’s book *Apocalypse*, Giles Deleuze describes the Apocalypse of John as ‘the book of Zombies’ (Deleuze 2002, 8). With his collaborator Felix Guattari, he proclaims, ‘the only modern myth is the myth of zombies – modified schizos,

good for work, brought back to reason' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004a, 368). They are talking of the drones of the capitalistic system run rampant and destructive. The apocalyptic genre tends to house the weird, the monstrous, the horrifying, and the terrifying, and zombies are just one more addition to the monster ball. The living dead are everywhere, breaching the barriers of heaven and earth. They work hard to reach their goal of residing with God. The biblical undead are single-minded in their quest for the afterlife, or so we are told. They do not join the angel armies to conquer the earth: 'The myth of the zombie, of the living dead, is a work myth and not a war myth' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004b, 470). These biblical undead are portrayed as either victims (innocents and martyrs) or victimizers (the beasts in the abyss and lake of fire). They settle into the unsettling spaces of the text; in fact they help create these spaces as they move between these mythic worlds.

And there is Jesus in the middle of it all. Susan Garrett notes: 'In the Christian account of the world, Jesus has unmasked the principalities and powers, including the last and greatest enemy, the power of death' (Garrett 2008, 21). The principalities and powers have an especially overwhelming feel when placed in the center of apocalyptic discourse. Anything outside of God's territory and control is deemed monstrous, but anything inside God's realm can be monstrous, too. David Gilmore calls this relationship 'the paradoxical closeness of the monstrous and the divine' (Gilmore 2003, 10). The undead in the bible are not full-blown zombies; they are nascent, on the verge, not yet. They don't have much power unless it is conferred on them by the deity, a deity who can die and live forever and be compassionate or attack at will. Or are they at the same time cannibalizing and cannibalized hoards roaming our earth? On this dialectic Terry Eagleton comments:

The sacred is Janus-faced power, at once life-giving and death-dealing, which can be traced all the way from the orgies of Dionysus to the shattering enthrallments of the sublime...This monstrous ambivalence, which for the Judaeo-Christian lineage finds its epitome in the holy terror of God, is also to be found at the root of the modern conception of freedom. The absolute notion of freedom, pressed to an extreme limit, involves a form of terror which turns against the finitude of the flesh in the very act of seeking to serve it. Like the tragic protagonist, it glides through some invisible frontier at which its 'everything' collapses into nothing. Yet even this is not an absolute limit. (Eagleton 2005, 114)

Apocalyptic death has no limits; when its power is unleashed on the world, the destruction and wrath go on and on. There are breaks in the action of course in the Apocalypse of John – the heavenly throne room scenes of worship and the New Jerusalem with their scenes of royal opulence and greenspace – though I would argue that even these spaces are not safe, not immune to the eternal divine rage and may in fact be the most dangerous places of all. To be sure, death is a necessary part of the cycle of life, but only in the natural, not apocalyptic cycle. But the Apocalypse promises eternal life, a resurrection from the dead into a glorious eternity in God’s holy city. Jean-Luc Nancy offers some interesting thoughts on these promises:

Without death there would only be contact, contiguity and contagion, a cancerous propagation of life that would consequently no longer be life . . . Death opens relation, that is, the division [*partage*] of departure... Revelation – this revelation of which the resurrection must be the summit and the last word – reveals that there is nothing to show, nothing to make appear out of the tomb, no apparition, and no theophany or epiphany of a celestial glory. Thus there is no longer a last word. (2008, 45)

Without death there is the possibility of the horrific, as horror writers have shown. There is the hope for something beyond death, eternal life with god, that creates spaces for things in between: ghosts, purgatory, limbo, vampires, et al. – and the comatose-like form of the undead, zombies.

The New Testament is full of the living dead. They haunt the underneath parts of the text: the souls under the altar moaning for release, raising their hands for assistance from above. The two witnesses left for dead in the street only to rise again and hunt for their killers. The beasts of the Apocalypse are thrown into the fiery lake and the abyss that serve as various containment holes. However we are left with the possibility of their return, crawling forth, madder than ever, wrecking more destruction on the universe, breaching New Jerusalem’s walls, chasing down and devouring the holy ones, who have nowhere to run since they are eternally walled in. In the Apocalypse these zombies follow the faithful into the new heaven and earth; they cross over into eternity. This horror has staying power; maybe that is the effect of apocalypse – the horrors spill over and even the comforting safe space is capable of being disrupted at any moment. The battle between good and evil in apocalyptic remains eternal.

What distinguishes a zombie from other monsters? According to Marina Warner (2006), ‘zombies and vampires are all body’ (p. 357); this is how they differ from ghosts or specters. Zombies ‘embody a vision of human existence that was precipitated by a chemical fusion of slavery, its abolition and its reinstatement, excited and fired in the kiln of poisoned power relations... Zombies embody the principal ghostly condition of our time’ (Warner 2006, 357). Zombies are soulless stealers of souls. Zombies are absent souls, absent selves. Or in Žižek’s words, zombies are from the ‘forbidden domain of the Thing’ (Warner 2006, 358; quoting Žižek 2005, 25). Or in Julia Kristeva’s understanding of the abject (and monsters), they are ‘a vortex of summons and repulsion’ (Kristeva 1982, 1). Zombies are monsters. ‘All monsters are undead’, says Tim Beal (2001, 10).

Zombies are dead but not dead enough; they are the problem with the corpse. The corpse will not be still and keep to its proper realm of the dead; it must stalk and haunt its old life, its old self. Zombies are ghost-like, shedding their solidity. They both retain and consume their human hosts. Warner clarifies: ‘The zombie is a spectre still tormented by the carnal condition of being, especially toil’ and has this work in common with the robot’ (Warner 2006, 359). Zombies used to be us and we could become them. These formally humans were confined in jobs and families and societal norms. As zombies they are free to roam, relentlessly roam, let loose on a random, destructive mission.

Zombies also emerge from individual and collective fear. Zombies represent bodily response to political trauma – war, economic depression, genocide. George Romero created his 1968 film, *Night of the Living Dead*, from the angst of the deindustrialization of the steel belt; the zombies are local Pittsburg folks: ‘and wear their own working clothes; they are recognizably the labour force of contemporary industrial America, threatened with unemployment in the decaying capital of steel. They joined this apocalyptic vision, becoming extras in a story of their own destiny and in many senses playing themselves’ (Warner 2006, 366). In Romero’s world, zombies are everywhere, especially the local shopping mall. Romero’s zombies are mute, unable to run yet with an effective shuffle, and are cannibalistic. They set the zombie standard that other writers and directors have continued.

The fictional spaces of zombies have many different representations, like the worlds of vampires. Zombies are not as fortunate as vampires who go on living an elegant life, or the veneer of luxury. Dracula and his legion represented capitalist culture; or as Jeffrey Cohen says, ‘The monstrous body is pure culture’ (1996, 4). Zombies have a more virulent mission, since their days are numbered (from three to five years, according to Max Brooks 2003, 10). Zombies are the ultimate consumers of any living beings; they represent the

destructive capitalist system gone amok, just like capitalism has run rampant and its growth is seemingly boundless. According to Steve Shaviro (2002, 288), ‘In contrast to the inhumanity of vampire-capital, zombies present the “human face” of capitalist monstrosity. This is precisely because they are the dregs of humanity: the zombie is all that remains of “human nature”, or even simply of a human scale, in the immense and unimaginable zombies are part vampire, part slasher, an amalgamation of monstrous death, decaying, rupturing, tearing (albeit slowly and methodically) through our world. They bring us (the living) down with them. Zombies destroy everything, then they decay into nothingness, leaving a rotting, rotten Earth behind. The earth is left in catastrophe and all life is utterly destroyed, as if Hades had left the underworld and set up camp on the ground.’

Zombies are Deleuze and Guattari’s working monsters, never breaking, as vampires are apt to, for sherry hour. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry (2008) expand this thesis: ‘The zombie has thus transitioned from a representation of the laboring, enslaved colonial body, to a dual image of capitalist enslavement: the zombie now represents the new slave, the capitalist worker, but also the consumer, trapped within the ideological construct that assures the survival of the system’ (p. 99).

These zombies evoke nostalgia, which according to Jonathan Boyarin (1992) is ‘a formalized longing for a paradoxically constituted past’ (p. 35). Nostalgia is throughout apocalyptic; it is a proleptic nostalgia for a past that is not yet or that hasn’t been invented yet. There is even a bizarre nostalgia for Empire, the Roman colonizing forces; the Apocalypse just cannot shake its perverse desire and John cannot stop staring at the Whore on the Beast, with all her wealth and splendor. Zombies are also a global threat; a response to the globalization that steals human souls. Lauro and Embry explore the meanings of contemporary zombie films in relation to capitalism: ‘... there is an irreconcilable tension between global capitalism and the theoretical school of posthumanism’ (Lauro and Embry 2008, 86–7). They read ‘the zombie as an onti/hauntic object’ that reveals power relations, what it is to be human, the Other, etc. (p. 87). They see the zombie as the only possible posthuman spectre (p. 88). The body of the zombie takes on many fears and post-traumatic states – of slavery and postslavery and new slavery, of plague, of capitalism, of communism. ‘The zombie is anticatharsis; thus, a “zombie manifesto” is one that cannot call for positive change, it calls only for the destruction of the reigning model’ (p. 91). Or as Claudia Setzer (2004) relates, resurrection is an ‘anti-imperial polemic’ (p. 146). There is no hope in a zombie apocalypse, no new heaven, no new earth. But there is hope in the crash of Empire. The living dead of the bible leave an indeterminate catharsis, or worse, against what mainstream readings of the Apocalypse

of John and other biblical apocalyptic have told us (e.g. Yarbrow Collins 1984, 152–54). In destroying Empire, zombies annihilate the world.

So why use zombies as a lens, a thick, decaying lens, to read apocalyptic? Zombies come out of the ground or directly off their sick beds, they form in infected masses on the earth, they won't go over to the afterlife, they make this world dangerous to navigate, and they threaten our lives. In the Apocalypse of John the undead are in several places throughout the text; they also roam the rest of the New Testament. For the undead believers the ultimate goal is to be contained in the New Jerusalem, yet this cityscape does not hold them for long. The New Jerusalem is a tentative space. Although this story ends the bible, when the reader closes the book and opens it again from the beginning, this eternal city has proven to be provisional; the undead roam the world again.

I find the living dead in the text distracting; I keep an eye on them when I read the text. There is never just one zombie around. Just as I do not find the resurrection of Lazarus liberating, I question the positive spin on the resurrection of the dead in the Apocalypse. And I question the resurrection of Jesus. The biblical revenant live forever; zombies can be smashed in the head and destroyed.

Gayle Baldwin (2007) points out that the zombie in Max Brook's novel, *World War Z*, named Zack, 'is clearly the product of the American imagination' that has its origins in China (p. 413). Baldwin wants to know what the zombie myth tells us about ourselves and about U.S. politics and the current climate that gives rise to this and other zombie tales. Zacks are grey, decaying masses of infected dead people's souls, whose only goal is to devour the living. The only way to kill them is to crush their heads. Baldwin notes that with each new imperialistic war, there is the need for what Richard Slotkin calls the 'American mythogenesis;' that is the idea that there will be a new frontier to conquer and make conform to American values (Baldwin 2007, 416–17). Baldwin continues:

Zack conjures up the final apocalypse, the fight between Good and Evil; yet who can imagine America as we have come to know it and witness it without this Ultimate Enemy? Zack is necessary so that the fight for freedom and democracy can continue, and the final triumph will be when the entire world becomes one as a global and violent community, fully American. (2007, 416)

Zombie fantasy/horror satisfies some American need to invent an Other, to conquer them, to create a New America (or in the case of the bible, a New Jerusalem) from the ruins. This mythology can be seen in the *Left Behind* series, where the enemy (the Anti-

christ and his armies) is defeated by the ‘good guys’ (Christians) and the Temple Mount is reclaimed for the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The Tribulation Force of true believers has to fight back, on the plain of Megiddo: ‘The heroism called for is violent, and so... uniquely American’ (Baldwin 2007, 415). Then there is Woody Harrelson welding a rifle – or a banjo – in a convenience store in the film *Zombieland*. But even more than in the premillennial narrative, in which Satan reappears one last time at the end of this reign of Christ for a final bashing, zombies threaten to lurk on the margins, like terrorists waiting to strike. Baldwin observes that ‘the description of Zack is close to the anonymous Terrorist, and before that, the Indian... The Terrorist must be stopped or you will find “him” at our door. Like the viral zombie, “he” will not stop until the whole world is consumed’ (Baldwin 2007, 418).

This enemy has arrived at the doors of the United States many times in its history (e.g. Pearl Harbor; September 11, 2001; for some on the religious right, gay marriage). Baldwin inquires, ‘Is the viral zombie the “Queer gone wild” who, as the religious right wants us to believe, is driven only by lust, a predator possessing no humanity or reason and homosexuality can strike at any time? Is Zack “karmic justice”, future payment for our lethargy...?’ (p. 418). Zombie fiction provides a space for working out the stress and fears of another attack, from whatever predator lurks. Baldwin continues, ‘The mission of these works of popular culture seems to be to convince readers that fear and destruction of T [Terrorist] is the necessary atonement for lethargy and self-centeredness, *even though we become the non-living in the process of destroying Them*’ (p. 422). Zombie literature tells us we have to take that chance and we have to be prepared for the zombie war, with our Homeland Security Emergency Supply Kits and plans (www.ready.gov), and remnant theology to rebuild America. In order to survive a zombie war we have to be ready to fight in a make-shift military and engage our killer instincts. In this way salvation occurs through destruction (like the Genesis flood), and the few survivors can regroup and make the world whole (and American-centered) again. The New Jerusalem functions in a similar way, with the few chosen believers enclosed in a so-called garden paradise; an ‘oasis’ in the midst of utter devastation and death.

Zombies represent – and bring out – the worst in us. With zombies death is not conquered but becomes a plague of apocalyptic proportions. In zombie fiction religion will not save you. ‘Is this dehumanizing heroism that needs the Other to regenerate itself through violence the true nature of religion?’ (Baldwin 2007, 424). Like the Apocalypse, the evildoer will still do evil, and on and on. This imperialist attitude reaches its height in the Apocalypse of John, but the rest of the bible is infected too. One example that stands out for me is Lazarus in John 11.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

‘Lazarus dig yourself back in that hole’. (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, ‘Dig, Lazarus, Dig’, 2008)

‘I find the politics of necromancy more to my liking’. (Staley 2008, 196)

Among the resurrected bodies in the New Testament, one stands out to me – Lazarus in John 11, rotting in his tomb for three days, stinking to high heaven. In Martin Scorsese’s film *The Last Temptation of Christ* Jesus raises his friend from the dead. Lazarus emerges in a mummy form – a link with mummy horror films – and the corpse staggers slowly out of the tomb into Jesus’s arms. But he is never the same; he is distant, almost comatose, unwell. Jeffrey Staley comments, ‘Scorsese’s Lazarus is a zombie and Jesus is very nearly swallowed up by him/it’ (2008, 213).

Then there’s Jesus in Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. After a brutal execution Jesus is finally buried in a tomb after his body is anointed by the women. In the last scene of the film Jesus emerges from his cave. He smiles in a way that looks to me unstable, as if he was plotting revenge of some sort, or setting out on a plan of world domination (well, that is what the New Testament hopes for). The carpenter become wandering teacher has become an apocalyptic warrior. He has preached about the end time and his role in it and now he is in a position to bring it about. The supernatural has pierced the natural (the incarnation) and is about to return to its heavenly abode. But once the natural has been entered in this way there is a rupture that cannot be repaired. In the first century the stories of the gods on earth are common – the space between the worlds is thinner. Apocalyptic seers have to travel (either physically or in their day or night dreams).

Jean-Luc Nancy would disagree with me. ‘In the Lazarus episode, the dead man leaves the tomb bound in his bandages and wrapped in a shroud. This is not a scene out of a horror movie; it is a parable of the lifted and upright stance in death. Not an erection – either in a phallic or a monumental sense, although these two could be taken up and worked with in this context – but a standing upright before and in death’ (Nancy 2008, 18). Nancy is wrestling with the vanishing Christ – a Christ that does not reincarnate or rejuvenate but remains dead, but in a place of glory, not horror. I think Scorsese is onto something in his interpretation of this scene with this mix of heaven and hell on earth. The possibility of resurrection leaves a near-comatose Lazarus trailing death in his wake.

The prohibitions of touching or being touched by a corpse are there for a reason. Amy Oates (2007) has shown how two artists play with this concept: Caravaggio in his

Raising of Lazarus (1608–09) and Tintoretto’s *Raising of Lazarus* (1558–59). In the Tintoretto painting, people are lifting Lazarus out of his coffin toward Jesus in line with a tradition that shows Lazarus sitting in his coffin (p. 391). Oates points out how Lazarus retains his burial clothes, while the resurrected Jesus leaves his neatly folded in the burial cave (p. 394). On Caravaggio’s cross-like rendition of Lazarus she notes, ‘Caravaggio’s Lazarus seems to be in conflict with himself, as his right arm is lifted and hit by light while his left arm is reaching toward the skull on the ground’ (p. 397). The skull equals ‘sin and spiritual death’ in Caravaggio. Oates interprets this positioning as Lazarus reaching for and being released into full life (p. 397). Maybe so, but I also read this as Lazarus possibly being stuck in between life and death; I find it more ambiguous than Oates.

I think Scorsese plays with the possibilities in some very creative and disturbing ways. In *The Last Temptation of Christ* a hand suddenly appears from the tomb. Jesus grabs the hand in response and it pulls Jesus toward the dark open tomb. There is rotting, scaly flesh – the stench of death. Jesus says to himself: ‘God help me’. He is almost pulled into the tomb, into Sheol, the place of the dead.

Later on in the film the Zealot Saul/Paul seeks out Lazarus and asks him, ‘How do you feel?’ Lazarus replies, ‘I like the light’. Saul pushes further: ‘What was it like? Which is better, death or life?’ The reply: ‘I was surprised; it wasn’t that much difference’.

For the postpunk musician Nick Cave the Lazarus story haunts the imagination. Lazarus is a kind of Houdini. In death the main character, Larry, ‘feasted on their (other dead?) bodies’, but his resurrected life is a downhill dive onto the streets of New York City and drugs, soup lines, insanity and finally death again. Like Scorsese, Cave is uneasy about the living dead and plots a slow, sad path back to the tomb. There are no dancing zombies here (as in Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’). There is only rot and decay.

Zombies refuse the abyss and refuse to go to their proper place – to go away – to be dead bodies in storage for the end of time. Zombies have decided (or it was decided for them) that the end of time should start now. The body is perpetually threatened, even in heaven.

JESUS SAVES?

A current trend is to zombify icons of culture from Jane Austin’s novels to Jesus. Jesus is represented as either a zombie or a zombie killer. As human-divine Jesus at once has flesh that is alive and immortal. He is undead from the beginning, or rather, he has excess life, if John’s gospel of a preexistent Logos is followed.

There are various forms of zombies; many feed on the living and in this act create more of the undead. This feeding frenzy has implications for reading the apocalyptic feasts, and also the violent implications of the Eucharist. ‘Ultimate evil is not doing battle with ultimate good. The walking dead attack churches for one good reason: It’s where the food is’ (Brooks 2003, 82). Churches become slaughterhouses.

Žižek (2005) asks: ‘Does this not mean that Eucharist is like the undead substance of the indestructible eternal life that invades the human body in a horror movie? Are we not, through Eucharist, terrorized by an alien monster which invades our body?’ (p. 173). The zombie Jesus lives in the believer. Becoming one with the savior is the goal. In the eucharist we eat the flesh of the undead – Jesus at the last supper is in-between worlds: eat my flesh, drink my blood – and live forever.

What parts of the flesh do we eat? Flesh is falling off, hold the communion plate under it to catch it. How is this food healing? Christ’s wounds are oozing blood and what else? What do the dead want? To wander heaven and earth? Zombies are the heaven-bound that got tired of waiting. The resurrection did not come soon enough. Or they break through their graves or earth-bound death to draw others and infect them with their terrible state. They’re not natural or supernatural. Do zombies bleed? Have blood? Or just dried blood, rotting flesh?

The Eucharist promises the believer eternal life. Resurrection is liberation – freedom to run amok. The resurrection is like the Redeker Plan in *World War Z*, where only a small number of the world’s population could be evacuated to a safe zone as a way to keep democratic governments stable (Brooks 2006, 108–9). The New Jerusalem becomes the ‘safe zone’ for heavenly zombies.

Apocalyptic can house zombies, or contain them as much as anything can contain them, because of its relation with the uncanny (Todorov) or the unheimlich or the abject (Kristeva). Zombies fit into the apocalyptic discourse (even though they do not speak) of the indictment of the human condition. Those with civilization meet those without civilization and these worlds collide. The threat of the loss of civilization drives apocalyptic narratives. In biblical apocalypses the ruse is that the end is supposed to be *hoped for*, not resisted. In both secular and biblical apocalypses there is the loss of society – either completely (as in films like *On the Beach*) or predominantly (as in *The Road*, *Children of Men*, 2012). What is uncanny is the thought that we could become this very easily. In this way apocalyptic, like zombies, infects the reader. Judging from the proliferation of zombie fiction and film and websites, there are many people who believe or are borderline believers in the existence of these decaying revenants. The natural order is upended

in apocalyptic; the only chance of recovery lies with a hypermasculinist vision of the future.

Or are Jesus's words – as soon as he spoke them – dead, or experience a kind of death? The gospels themselves resurrect these words or some words and put them into the mouth of Jesus, words that perhaps have been reshaped, totally invented, caressed, or butchered? The Word Became Flesh with bits and pieces falling off, forever sloughing?

Are all the biblical texts then apocalyptic? Marching (not in step, but...) toward the end of history? *Heilsgeschichte*, the march of history toward redemption and salvation; apocalyptic devours the masses yearning for heaven. Could the (some) biblical text(s) be (a) zombies? Buried for years in the desert, or hidden in high caves, unearthed only to be revived, given new lives, or the chance for different viruses to infect it/them. Could one such virus be the 'z virus', so that from a few infected texts (interpretations ringing/binding them?) a global infestation occurs causing/a cause of the end of humanity? Does this infection already exist in the form of the violence of patriarchy – the exclusion and wounding of women – or the very institutions of patriarchy (homophobia, xenophobia, wars, genocide, human suffering, ecocide, imperialism and Empire)?

Apocalyptic texts have been infected – they prowl the earth in search of new victims (supportive believers or the damned). What would zombify – make a text a zombie? There's the new panic in all the popular books – does God exist, evolve, etc., is religion inherently bad and those who believe ignorant/unenlightened, etc.

Crowd the books together under one cover/binding – give it authority and watch it explode. There are already too many 'zombie readers of the bible'. But how to avoid the dangers from the undead in the text when by reading we are both consumer and consumed? When zombies are present all it takes is one slip, one careless moment, and you are history.

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