

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ZOMBIE AND ME:  
LABOR AND MEANING FOR THE UNDEAD  
POSTMODERN SUBJECT

by  
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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of English  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
January 2022

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a testament to what an individual is capable of when supported by a loving community. While the intellectual curiosity behind it was built over my twenty-four years, its actual writing was done during some of the most difficult years of my life. Yet here I am, two and a half years later, writing the acknowledgements for the finished product.

First and foremost, I thank God, who has always been my guide, my support, and my provider, especially in the moments where I felt He was far away. His intervention in my life has been extremely palpable over the past three years, and I am extremely grateful that He took me from a place of deep sadness and suffering to a place of peace and happiness.

I am eternally grateful to my nuclear family, especially my father, who has felt the heaviness of each setback I went through sevenfold, and who continues to support and uplift me, despite my sometimes-dismissive attitude. I am thankful to my mother, whose love and kindness have always been a comfort. I am thankful to my sister who, though four years my junior, is years more mature and more understanding than I am.

I am thankful for my family at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, who have gone out of their way to support this thesis by constantly encouraging me, providing endless and insightful discussions, and giving me a workspace that I could use to finish working on my thesis. I am thankful to the leadership at ABTS, whose wise counsel has tempered my outlook on my future.

Last but not least, I am grateful for my friend Hannah and her siblings Hiba and Mohamed, who have been wonderful friends, who have supported me during one of the most difficult transitions in my life, and who continue to be a source of positivity in my life.

I thank the Lord for putting all of these people and others in my life, for empowering and supporting me through them, and for creating a community of love around me. I pray that I can, in turn, empower and support others around me, as I have been empowered and supported.

# ABSTRACT

## OF THE THESIS OF

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for

Master of Arts

Major: English Literature

Title: Zombie and Me: Labor and Meaning for the Undead Postmodern Subject

The zombie figure, emerging out of the colonial legacy of the Caribbean became decontextualized in the wake of the 1915 US occupation of Haiti. Decontextualized and adapted by Western authors, playwrights, and filmmakers, the zombie figure continued to represent a feared fate, but now for the postmodern laborer caught in the capitalist cycle of production and consumption. Simultaneously, economic shifts in the post-World War II years produced a correlation between the ability to consume commodities and social status via the American Dream, thus trapping the postmodern subject in capitalist social relations. Through the postmodern break with the metanarrative of progress that commodifies culture, all time becomes labor time. The postmodern subject becomes the zombie-subject, caught in the endless cycle of laboring to earn wages that they can use to procure and consume commodities, thus creating social status. This thesis explores how the zombie figure becomes the postmodern subject through the movies *I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies*, and how the apocalypse creates the conditions necessary for the rethinking of the postmodern subject and postmodern society through *Stalker* and *Fallout 4*, through a critical lens that is informed by Marx, Jameson, and Deleuze and Guattari. It ends with the conclusion that, while the postmodern subject is caught in the trap of capitalist social relations via Oedipus, its tendency towards crises produces in it the means necessary for self-contained revolution.

**Keywords:** Marx, Capitalism, Jameson, Postmodernism, Deleuze, Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, I am Legend, Warm Bodies, Stalker, Tarkovsky, Fallout 4, Zombie, Apocalypse, Revolution

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

When *I am Legend* released in cinemas in 2007, Lebanon was just coming to terms with the aftermath of the 2006 summer war. Watching a bootleg copy of the movie with my cousins, who lived in an incomplete building, across an entire afternoon because of the power cuts, I remember feeling an eerie sense of curiosity. The apocalypse for Neville felt very similar to the way I perceived Lebanon as a ten-year-old who had lived through a very unnecessary war. The apocalypse and the zombie invasion did not feel very foreign to the destroyed buildings and distraught people I had seen around me. Over the next years, many zombie movies gained popular success and filled Lebanese cinemas, including at least seven *Resident Evil* movies, *Diary of the Dead* (2007), *Day of the Dead* (2008), *Zombieland* (2009), *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2010) and its 2012 parody *Abraham Lincoln Vs. Zombies*, *World War Z* and *Warm Bodies* (2013), *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), *Zombi Child* (2019), and most recently *Army of the Dead* (2021). The video game industry paralleled the increasing popularity of zombie and apocalypse games with the release of the *Resident Evil* series (1996 – present), the *Fallout* series (1997 – present), the *Left for Dead* series (2008 – 2009), the *Dead Space* series (2008 – present), the addition of zombie modes to the popular *Call of Duty* series (2008 – present), *World War Z* (2019), and others. Throughout this time, I always asked myself, “why this fascination with the undead?”. During my two years of coursework for grad school, I was able to contend with this question in different forms. Today, as we live through a pandemic that turned most of us into zombies for at least one year of lockdown, and as we contend with a hyper

computerized economy, this question feels more relevant than ever; why are we fascinated with the figure of the zombie?

This thesis seeks to work through the question of the contemporary fascination with the undead and the apocalypse by carrying out a close reading of the three movies *I am Legend* (2007), *Warm Bodies* (2013), and *Stalker* (1979), and the video game *Fallout 4* (2015). It is divided into two chapters. The first chapter serves as the literature review and includes the history and the theory sections. The second chapter is the analysis, which makes up the bulk of the thesis.

This reading is informed by Marx's study of political economy, Jameson's definition of the postmodern, and Deleuze and Guattari's reading of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism. This reading is further facilitated by a study of the history of the zombie figure from its inception to its decontextualization and popularization in American media. By combining history, theory, and practice, I will seek to show that the postmodern fascination with the undead zombie and the apocalypse is representative of the death of the subject in late-stage capitalism. Though grim-sounding, I will further show, through Deleuze and Guattari, that the socio-economic re-coding that is characteristic of capitalism itself becomes a site of resistance for the laborer, as does the post-apocalyptic wasteland for the survivor.

The figure of the zombie emerges out of the colonial history of the Caribbean. Between 1708 and 1735, European slave traders brought over a million African slaves to the Caribbean Islands where they were put to work farming sugar cane on sugar plantations (Sheller, 150). The Caribbean became a mixing pot of African languages and cultures. Out of the interaction between these different cultures came Vodou, which

became the religion of the Africans brought to Haiti. Emerging in a context of brutal slavery, Vodou practitioners adapted the African superstition of the nzumbe ghost spirit (Brioni, 168) into their understanding of the zombie: a corpse, robbed of consciousness and brought back to life to continue in undeath what led to its death in the first place (Sheller, 145) (Hoermann, 156). After the Haitian revolution, the figure of the zombie became a site of tension between the West and the Haitians. In the West, the zombie was a means of demonizing Haitian culture. For the Haitians, the zombie became a tool confronting colonial brutality, as we will later see with Madiou's "Jean Zombi" (Hoermann, 157). Yet, while used as a means of demonizing native Haitians in the West, the figure of the zombie had not been associated with cannibalism. It wasn't until the American occupation of Haiti in 1915 and the subsequent decontextualization of the zombie figure through movies like *White Zombie* that the zombie figure began to take on an increasingly gothic, horror-centric role in Western media (Fay, 37 – 38).

With the proliferation of zombie stories and zombie movies in the US and the gradual decontextualization of the zombie figure, paralleled by the demonization of the native Haitians, the zombie figure began to change, but it wasn't until Romero's 1968 *Night of the Living Dead* that we see the first cannibal zombie come to the silver screen. By this time almost fully decontextualized, the zombie figure became a means for Romero – and others - to contend with the encroaching spread of hyper-capitalism in both its militaristic and mercantile aspects. After *Night of the Living Dead*, the cannibal zombie became much more popular and began to feature more heavily in popular media, not just in the US, but also in Europe and in the Far East.

Thus, emerging in a colonial setting, the zombie figure has evolved to represent the ails of consumer culture today. Marx helps us understand how we are zombies in

late-stage capitalism by breaking down how capitalism functions. The ultimate goal of capital, he states, is surplus value actualized as profit through the act of consumption (Karatani, 20). But capital can only lead to profit if it is invested into a process of production. Marx sets a basic formula for the cycle of producing surplus value through the cycle of production/consumption. This formula follows the pattern of [Money – Capital – More Money] (Karatani, 154). But capitalism tends to crises, and the investment of money in commodity production does not always guarantee the production of more money at the end since the commodities produced might not sell at the quantity or price expected for profit. Alternatively, it might take time for commodities to sell, leaving capitalists with no money to use as capital. But capitalism operates under the assumption that all commodities will be sold and thus creates a credit system that will provide capitalists with money before the C-M' part of the formula is actualized (Karatani, 153). When the assumption fails, crisis occurs. Herein is the crux of capitalism; it needs to organize the process of production – and thus social relations – around the M-C-M' formula to ensure circulation and thus sustain its existence, which creates a commodity-based economy.

Jameson helps us understand the decontextualization of the zombie figure as well as capital's subsumption of all time as labor time. Jameson defines postmodernism by setting it up against the modern. The modern saw history as progress; it built on the styles of the past and worked within a narrative to create the new. The postmodern instead looks for breaks, not to follow the new, but rather to experience the break as an event (Jameson, ix). Through the incredulity to metanarratives, the postmodern ceased to see the new as progress and instead saw it as cultural production, i.e., commodities to be consumed. Postmodernism is the age of the image and the spectacle (Jameson, 18).

This distance from art as progress and the embracing of art as cultural production creates a “depthlessness” within the postmodern subject (Jameson, 5). Commodity fetishism becomes the cornerstone of postmodernism (Jameson, x). Thus, the break is not just the break with history, but also a break with the subject as the cultural producer of meaning. Socio-economic relations in postmodernism produce the need to constantly work to create meaning, thus effectively turning leisure time into labor time (Jameson, 147). Thus, the postmodern subject is the zombie, lifted from its historical context and forced to labor to create meaning.

Deleuze and Guattari show how the postmodern subject is trapped within capitalist social relations through the manipulation of their desire. They work against the Oedipus complex to show how capitalism traps desire in its socio-economic structures. By carrying out a criticism of psychoanalysis, they introduce their form of analysis that term schizoanalysis. Unlike psychoanalysis, which sees the id as a theater, schizoanalysis sets up the unconscious as a factory of desire (Deleuze and Guattari, 1). One of their major criticisms of psychoanalysis is that it sees desire as a drive towards acquisition and thus basis it on lack rather on production and thus on creation (Buchanan, 48). By basing desire on lack, psychoanalysis traps desire in the Oedipal triangle, either as a structure that codes social relations or as a crisis that needs treatment (Buchanan, 69). As the Oedipal triangle structures social relations, the postmodern subject becomes psychically repressed and subsequently begins to desire social repression (Buchanan, 71). Deleuze and Guattari create a parallel between the psyche and social relations. This allows them to read the socio-economic conditions of capitalism through their understanding of desire. They echo Marx’s M-C-M’ formula to show that capital deletes (deterritorializes) previous social relations not to liberate the

laborer, but to instead alienate them from their labor and thus allow for their exploitation for the sake of creating profit (reterritorialization) (Buchanan, 58).

*I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies* show us how the zombie becomes the site of the decoding and recoding of desire according to capitalist social relations. In *I am Legend*, Robert Neville, the lone survivor, finds the means to continue living – and thus creates meaning – by trapping his desire in the need to reproduce pre-apocalyptic social relations. This is evident in the movie in his attempts to decode his immune DNA and recode it into a vaccine for the infected. But he can only continue to pursue this goal by setting up a pseudo-society with illusory social relations. He does this through setting up a Blockbuster with mannequins where he can engage in a process of exchange. When he realizes that the zombies also have desire and would like to produce their own social relations, he identifies with them, and his desire is no longer trapped in the need to reproduce pre-apocalyptic relations. In the book, with the liberation of his desire, Neville's desire becomes the end of all desire and thus leads to death. In the movie, Neville's liberated desire reterritorializes itself on Anna and Ethan instead and thus on the Oedipal triangle.

*Warm Bodies* creates a parallel between the postmodern subject and the undead zombie throughout its narrative. R's cynicism towards his undead condition is indistinguishable from that of the postmodern laborer; he is stuck in this condition, but he is okay with it because so is everyone else! He identifies the people around him through their pre-zombification occupations. He cannot control his desire to eat, but is okay with it, because it makes him feel "alive". Julie and her friends on the other hand are biologically alive but couldn't be closer to ideological death in their ambivalence towards the apocalypse. While the parent generation has a metanarrative of "us versus

the zombies” that pushes them towards progress and thus finding a cure, the young adults do not believe in a cure. Without a cure, and with dwindling resources, their only fate is death. It is only through R and Julie’s meeting, R’s eating of her boyfriend’s brain, their falling in love, and their work to come together that they are allowed to produce a metanarrative they subscribe to. Yet, the coming together of zombie and human is only achieved through the othering of a mutual foe – the Bonies. As the zombies join the fight for love and against the Bonies, they become increasingly humanized. In the end, the zombies and humans reconcile through the reproduction of pre-apocalyptic social relations.

Where *I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies* focused more on the figure of the zombie, *Stalker* and *Fallout 4* allow us to read more intently the apocalyptic wasteland as a site of resistance against the postmodern condition. In *Stalker*, our three characters Stalker, Writer, and Professor, venture across the Zone to reach the rumored wish-fulfilling Room. Though each attempting the journey for different reasons, their fate is the same; in the Zone, they are confronted with their postmodern subjectivity and its pitfalls. They come to understand that their desires are trapped. They battle with the Zone, through its traps and mazes, and with each other, both verbally and physically, as they attempt to wrestle with their desires. As they wrestle, they come to understand what little agency they have. And, while they return to the industrial world broken and battered, they do not come back empty handed. They come back having struggled against their postmodern subjectivity. But only Stalker walks away with any physical gains. Stalker’s “reward” is the dog from the Zone, who represents the promise of progress. He also walks away with a pouch of money. Even more promising, however, is Stalker’s

daughter Martha/Monkey, who, though physically disadvantaged, has developed the ability to manipulate the physical world through her connection to the Zone.

As a video game, *Fallout 4* bounds the consumer within the limits and the capabilities of its software and game engine but allows them to consume/work within the limitations of the game as they wish. The consumer is provided an apocalyptic wasteland and several communities, including zombie communities, to interact with and influence. These communities, built as representations of contemporary ideologies, allow the consumer, through the replay-able nature of the video game to engage with these ideologies in many different manners. The consumer is also encouraged to add and modify the game through producing files known as mod files. These files, uploaded to the game's network and shared online are then rated and reviewed by players and game developers alike. It is from these player productions that game companies find potential employees and potential commodities to subsume.

Thus, while the zombie apocalypse does represent the death of the postmodern subject, it also shows how the socio-economic conditions enabling the exploitation of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism are the same conditions enabling the resistance to alienating capitalist social relations.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organized into two parts. The first part traces the history of the zombie figure from its emergence out of the colonial legacy of the Caribbean Islands to its appropriation by Western popular culture. It shows how the zombie figure has evolved from being the deepest fear of the African slaves in Haiti to becoming a space where the postmodern individual can contemplate their existence in the capitalist mode of production.

The second part constructs a critical lens that allows a critical unpacking of capitalist ideology as presented in the movies *I am Legend*, *Warm Bodies*, and *Stalker*, and the video game *Fallout 4*. The lens focuses on the human condition in late-stage capitalism and is constructed from a reading of Marx, Jameson, and Deleuze and Guattari.

When put together, the literature review contextualizes the ideological space created in the zombie and allows us to see how the postmodern subject is zombified through capitalist social relations.

#### **A. History of the Undead**

Since its introduction into American popular culture in the 90's, the zombie figure has grown into a tool that is adaptable to different media and that is effective at representing the human condition. Though popularized in American popular culture by American writers and movie makers in the wake of the American occupation of Haiti in

1915, the zombie traces its history to Africa, and subsequently the Caribbean, through a legacy of slavery, labor, and brutality.

The figure of the zombie emerges out of the colonial history of the Caribbean. Between 1708 and 1735, the European colonizers, having exhausted the population of the Caribbean through slavery and foreign disease, and needing laborers for the sugar plantations, brought more than a million slaves from different areas across Africa to the islands in the Caribbean (Sheller, 150). Brought together into slavery through this forced displacement, and over years of interacting with each other's different religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, the African inhabitants of the Caribbean developed Vodou, a religion that they practiced in secret (Olney, 16) (Bishop, 197). The zombie stems from native African beliefs and emerges in Vodou tradition as a reaction to the circumstances the displaced Africans found themselves in upon arriving in the Caribbean. For the Vodou practitioner, the zombie is the reanimated corpse of the slave, "deprived of will", that is brought back to life by a sorcerer through the strength of a potion to serve "its master unthinkingly even in undeath" (Sheller, 145). It represents "the most powerful emblem of apathy, anonymity and loss" (Sheller, 145). Both the zombie and the Haitian slave are brought together through their reduction to "their labor power alone" (Hoermann, 156). The zombie is the slave's ultimate fear; that their fate in the afterlife echoes the total dispossession they experience in life (Sheller, 145).

Throughout its brutal history, the Caribbean never ceases to "occupy the idea of 'heaven on earth' or 'a little bit of paradise' in the collective European imagination" (Sheller, 5). Simultaneously, the figure of the zombie is intertwined with stories of cannibalism, exoticism, and rituals by Western writers who Orientalize and other the

African inhabitants of the Caribbean through travel journals and sensationalized stories (Hoermann, 158). Yet, it is not the Caribbean zombie that does the consuming. Through the colonial slave trade, and by othering and exoticizing the Caribbean inhabitant through the figure of the zombie, Western colonizers and Western audiences begin to consume the African slave in both body and labor (Sheller, 144).

Therefore, the conception of the zombie is directly tied to labor and consumption through the consumption of the bio-power of the African slave. The zombie subject, i.e., the African slave, is distanced from their body through labor. As they become estranged from their own bodies through the dispossession of their labor, and as their bodies become commodities consumed by the colonizer for colonial production, the zombie comes to embody “the slaves’ utter alienation, their total lack of freedom and the loss of all of their rights” (Hoermann 156). Thus, the African slave becomes the object of a consumer cannibalism that totally eradicates the value of their labor power as a means of fueling production (Sheller, 144). This is only possible, however, through the othering, and thus the exploitation of difference between the Western colonizer and the African slave (Sheller, 145).

During the slave revolution in Haiti, the figure of the zombie came to embody a form of resistance. In Haitian literature, the zombie begins to play the role of the non-traditional hero, “the hero [that] always remains dormant in the zombie,” the avatar of the Haitian people and the instrument mirroring the “otherness” of the colonizer back to them (Glover 106, 109). In Thomas Madiou’s *Histoire d’Haïti* (1848), we read about “Jean Zombi,” who has become part of Vodou folklore. Zombi is a mixed-race zombie-like warrior who, under the leadership of General Dessalines, displayed grave brutality

as he executed the French occupiers of Haiti (Hoermann, 157). Because Jean Zombi is of mixed race, he becomes the embodiment of the Caribbean as a product of European colonization. Subsequently, he reflects the brutality that the Western colonizers enacted on the Africans back on them. As a zombie dispossessed of his own will, Jean Zombi comes to embody the collective will of the entire slave population of Haiti. Yet, despite Vodou practitioners reclaiming the zombie as a cultural symbol, in the West, the figure of the zombie continued to function as a tool for demonizing the Caribbean's inhabitants (Hoermann, 158).

After the Haitian slave revolution, the zombie continued to represent the Haitian, but now through the eyes of the colonizer who used the zombie figure to demonize the Haitian for their "violation of the 'sanctity of whiteness'" (Ulysse, as qtd in Hoermann, 158). References to Haiti as a lawless land and to the Haitians as "cannibals of the terrible republic" proliferated in the West (Thomas Jefferson, as qtd in Hoermann, 156). Where Madiou only attributed brutality to a biracial zombie figure, the product of the mixing of colonial violence with the Haitian slaves' revolutionary consciousness, Western writers post-revolution attributed brutality to Haitian leaders (Hoermann, 156). US author Arthur J Burks, for example, writes that the leaders of the Haitian revolution are a "line of ruling monsters" (Burks, as qtd in Hoermann, 158). Furthermore, writings on Vodou tie it fundamentally to cannibalism and sacrificial rituals, and so the Haitians were repeatedly made into savage monsters. In *Hayti, or the Black Republic*, British diplomat Sir Spenser St. John invests a full chapter that depicts images of human sacrifice and cannibalism (Hoermann, 158).

America's relationship with Haiti began in 1681 when trade of wood and molasses began between the Haitian and New England colonies (Pamphile, 2). And, while both colonies struggled to gain their independence from colonial rule, differences in the "interpretations of freedom, slavery, and race proved irreconcilable between the two" (Pamphile, 2). While the newly sovereign US had valued liberty, it had not done away with slavery or racial segregation. Rather, Southern plantations had depended on slavery to continue to make profit. Thus, when Haitian revolutionaries called on support from England and from the US, the US chose to side with the colonial French (Pamphile, 3). This changed during the revolution when the French attempted to turn Louisiana into a French colony (Pamphile, 6). Jefferson, seeing an opportunity, through cooperation with the revolutionary Haitians, to weaken the grip of the French on the Caribbean Islands, decided to support the revolutionaries (Pamphile, 4 – 6). Thus, while collaboration between the US and newly liberated Haiti proved integral for the US, the tone had been set for the relationship between the two countries. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, American interest in the Caribbean began to grow again. American and British travel literature that praised the abundance of resources in the Caribbean isles while denigrating the local inhabitant's ability to manage it began to proliferate (Sheller, 58 – 66). These writings not only encouraged settlement and economic investment in the Caribbean, but also pushed for control over the islands' wealth, all "justified because of the 'stimulus' it will bring to industry" (Sheller, 60). Political actions from the US had also been preparing for the occupation. To circumvent European action that threatened US interest in the Caribbean, the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 had already "claimed the Caribbean as an American sea and promised military intervention to any aggressors in the region" (Pamphile, 14). With a growing navy, the

US had designated Haiti as the optimal island for a fueling station in early 1860, but implementation was halted due to the American Civil War, and subsequent attempts to establish the fueling station failed (Pamphile, 15 - 16). From 1890's, US economic investment in Haiti and the Haitian banking sector began to grow, such that by 1914, the US had put Haitian customs under its control (Pamphile, 17). In 1915, Haitian president Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was assassinated, and violence and chaos broke out again in Haiti (Pamphile, 23). This finally gave the US the excuse it needed to send in its military in order for the "protection of foreign lives and property . . . and to preserve order" (Woodrow Wilson, as qtd in Pamphile, 23). With military presence in Haiti, the US made quick steps to control Haitian finances; the US financial adviser to Haiti opposed the work of the Haitian Ministry of Finance and consolidated financial power under his office in 1916. Control over Haitian finances was then reinforced in 1922 through US imposed loans to Haiti as a republic (Pamphile, 39). The US occupation also revived the corvee law which "required locals to work six days a year on roads" without pay or recompense (Pamphile, 35). And while the law only necessitated work for 6 days, reports began to proliferate about the kidnapping and forced labor of thousands of Haitians at the hands of US Marines (Pamphile, 35).

With the American occupation of Haiti in 1915, stories of zombies and cannibalism began to proliferate heavily in the US and played a dual function; first they continued to Orientalize and exoticize the Caribbean and its stories, and second, they continued to justify the need to civilize the 'savage' inhabitants of the Caribbean (Sheller, 145). Notable among these writings is William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), which is meant to convey his experience as an adventurer travelling through the Caribbean Islands and meeting the Caribbean people. The book is widely acknowledged

as being the first account of zombies popularized in the US. In his book, Seabrook tells many stories, one of which is of a sorcerer who reanimates nine corpses so that they can work for the American sugar company HASCO (Haitian American Sugar Company) (Hoermann, 163). Here we see how in the forced labor regime of the American occupation, the Haitian laborer is again alienated from their bodies through indentured, poorly compensated, and often dangerous labor (Hoermann, 158). Yet, there remains a distinction between the slave as a revolutionary subject who possesses a consciousness and the zombie figure that becomes more and more entrenched in a narrative of unthinking servitude (Hoermann, 156, 159) It is from the mixing of the forced labor regime with tales of zombies and rituals popularized in travel literature that the conception of the zombie as the “laboring undead” is birthed (Hoermann, 158 – 159). Other stories, such as *Salt is Not for Slaves* by Garnett Weston (1931) – who also wrote the screenplay for *White Zombie* - work to actively strip the zombie figure of its revolutionary cultural value by turning it back into an unthinking laborer (Hoermann, 159). The depictions of the zombie figure in Western literature post 1915 turn the zombie into “the ultimate representation of the psychic state of one whose body/spirit is consumed” (Sheller, 145).

The increasing popularity of zombie tales in the US through travel literature like Seabrook’s prompted screenwriters and playwrights to begin including zombies in their movies and plays. These works are most often set in Haiti or the Caribbean and focus on racial discourse. In February 1932, American playwright Kenneth Webb released *Zombie*, the first American play to feature a zombie character. The play was set in a bungalow in Haiti and had a run on the stage of the Baltimore Theatre for 21 nights. The same year, wanting to capitalize on the popularity of zombie narratives, Edward and

Victor Halperin directed and filmed *White Zombie* in two weeks and on a \$60,000 budget (Onlney, 20). Over the years, the movie has played a seminal role in popularizing zombie figures in American cinema. The movie takes place in Haiti and centers on an evil mixed-race Haitian sugar mill owner called ‘Murder Legendre,’ who uses zombie workers to run his mill. Legendre’s aid is enlisted by an aristocrat who has fallen in love with a woman he met on the boat ride to the island. The woman had come to the Island to marry and live with her fiancée Neil who works at a bank in Port-au-Prince. The aristocrat and the sorcerer work together to turn the woman into a zombie, but their plans are foiled, eventually, by the woman’s husband, who enlists the aid of two people: a local Vodou practitioner and a foreign missionary doctor (Onley, 21 – 22). The movie brings Christianity into a direct relationship with Vodou. It also attempts to obfuscate the relationships of antagonism in the movie by making the chief villain a biracial Haitian and setting the foreign aristocrat as a hapless idiot who is later redeemed through sacrifice (Hoermann, 166). Yet, despite all this effort to redeem foreign influence, colonial production cannot be separated from the sugar mill, whether that be the advanced mills of the Haitian American Sugar Company or the primitive mill of Murder Legendre (Hoermann, 165, 166).

In 1943, *I Walked with a Zombie*, another movie that was instrumental in popularizing the zombie figure, is released. Set during the American occupation, it centers on Betsy, a nurse who goes to the Caribbean to take care of Jessica, the ailing wife of Paul Holland, a plantation owner. Paul resides on the island of Saint Sebastian with his brother and missionary mother in a fort known to the locals as Fort Holland. The local driver taking Betsy to the Holland estate tells her that they have the figurehead from a slave ship in the courtyard of the estate. When she speaks to the local

physician, he informs her that Jessica has suffered an illness that has robbed her of her *willpower*. In her efforts to investigate her patient's sickness, Betsy begins to interact increasingly with the culture of the locals. On several occasions, she meets local Haitians practicing Vodou rituals. She is aided in her work by Carrefour, a Caribbean zombie who is seen walking with her on the beach during the prologue of the movie. Betsy's investigations show that Jessica had been zombified, and that a local Vodou priest had cured someone like Jessica before. Betsy brings Jessica to the Vodou priest only to find Paul's mother, Mrs. Rand, performing Vodou rituals with local Haitians to convince them to obey her. When the local Vodou practitioners see Jessica in her zombie state, they grow suspicious and decide to confirm their suspicions by stabbing Jessica with a saber. When she does not bleed, their suspicions are confirmed. Later at the Holland estate, Mrs. Rand confesses she had put a curse on Jessica because she had intended to leave Paul for his brother, Wesley. It is only through the locals' intervention that Betsy comes to know of Jessica's curse, and again through their intervention that Wesley liberates Jessica by piercing her heart with an arrow and drowning himself with her body in the ocean (Olney, 26). In the end, Betsy and Paul are left to live out the happy ending of their melodrama!

While *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie* are seminal productions on the zombie subject, many other zombie movies were being produced during this time in the US. This includes movies like Victor Halperin's *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936) and Jean Yarbrough's *King of the Zombies* (1941) where zombies are portrayed in a more malevolent manner, and where colonial relations are more heavily reinforced (Olney, 31 – 32). In either case, the zombie subject – and thus by extension the Haitian slave – continues to be an object of consumer cannibalism. Simultaneously, through the tie-in to

colonialism and labor, the zombie comes to stand for the brutalized subject under industrial capitalism whose function is reduced to bio-power fueling the assembly line – i.e., the perfect laborer (Olney, 51). Thus, the zombie increasingly comes to represent the global laborer rather than just the Haitian indentured laborer. This is evident in the white zombies in *White Zombie* who are subordinated to a biracial mill (factory) owner, for example, and who are put to work alongside black-faced zombies. And so, bit by bit, the figure of the zombie is gradually decontextualized in Western culture.

However, despite the proliferation of books and movies that prominently feature zombies and Caribbean culture, Western popular media had not yet linked zombies to cannibalism. Cannibalism had remained a ritual practice correlated to Vodou and its living practitioners (Hoermann, 158). While mentions of cannibalism in relation to Haiti had come up very quickly after the Haitian revolution, it had yet to be tied to the zombie figure (Hoermann, 154) It wasn't until Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) that the concept of the cannibal zombie was popularized. Romero, having received a decontextualized understanding of the zombie comes up with the human-eating ghouls of *Night of the Living Dead*, thus shifting the zombie from the (un)conscious slave to the zombie cannibal. Romero's work is influenced by Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, a point to which I will return later (1954) (Nail, 52). The movie starts with a brother and a sister who are visiting a grave. As they begin to bicker, corpses in the graveyard begin to rise from their graves. We find out that the zombies have been reanimated by alien radiation. Once awake, the zombies begin hunting for humans to kill and eat. The people the zombies do not fully cannibalize are infected and rise from the dead to become zombies as well. At the end of the movie, the lone survivor, who is played by an African American actor, is found by security forces coming to rescue whoever is left.

Confusing him for a zombie, the rescue party shoots the lone survivor dead. In *Night of The Living Dead*, Romero has the state in the figure of the army other and eliminate the lone survivor. What remains are the zombies, whose meaning is produced from consuming the living and creating other zombies. In killing the last survivor, the new normal becomes the zombie world (Olney, 52 – 53). Thus, Romero recreates the zombie and uses it to comment on society's increasing emphasis on consumer capitalism by showing that the unthinking laborer is what is normalized, and that the thinking (racial) other is a danger to society (Olney, 53). The lone survivor does, after all, destroy the zombified nuclear, American family, which we will later see with *Anti-Oedipus* is the cornerstone of capitalist society. In recreating the zombie as a cannibal, i.e., as an undead consumer, Romero begins contending with the emergent idea of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism as a subject trapped in an endless cycle of laboring to consume (Olney, 50). Romero's work in subsequent movies in the *Living Dead* series would continue to work with consumer capitalism and provide examples of the shift in the perception of the zombie from antagonism to identification. Though the series now spans 6 released movies and 3 movies in production, as well as 6 spin-offs, I will focus here on the first trilogy as it is considered seminal to the zombie's legacy.

In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), the 2<sup>nd</sup> movie of the trilogy, Romero brings the zombie apocalypse to the mall and thus enhances the correlation Romero comments on in 1968 between mindless consumption and capitalist consumerism. The movie centers on two television employees, Stephen and Fran, who flee a zombie outbreak in Philadelphia alongside two SWAT team members, Peter and Roger, and end up taking shelter in an abandoned mall. Outside of the mall are hordes of the living dead trying to get back in. When Fran asks Stephen why the zombies flock to the mall, Stephen

answers with “Some kind of instinct. Memory. What they used to do. This was an important place in their lives” (Olney, 54). Thus Romero creates a correlation between the mindless consumption of the living carried out by the zombies and the mindless consumption of commodities carried out by the living in the mall. Thus, consumer capitalism is equated with cannibalism and society’s consumption of itself (Olney, 52). Yet, it is not only the zombies who are attracted to the consumption promised by the mall. Once securely inside, the survivors go on a “shopping” spree in the mall, eating, taking, and playing without consequence. As they grow bored of the mindless consumption, they realize they themselves are becoming “zombies!” (Olney, 56). Thus, *Dawn of the Dead* creates a parallel between the zombie’s consumption for consumption’s sake and the postmodern subject’s investment in consumer capitalism (Wood, 374).

In his first two *Living Dead* movies, Romero reinvents the zombie as a flesh-eating ghoul and creates an analogy between the zombie’s labor to feed and the postmodern subject labor to produce meaning through consumption. In *Day of the Dead* (1985), he begins to explore the metaphor of the zombie as the laborer in late-stage capitalism. *Day of the Dead* takes place in an underground military complex where scientists are trying to find a cure for the zombie outbreak. Zombies have largely taken over the world. The project is headed by Dr. Logan, nicknamed Dr. Frankenstein by the soldiers protecting the facility for his gruesome dissections of zombies. When pressed for results, Dr. Logan shows the new officer in charge of the facility his most successful patient, a docile zombie he calls “Bub,” who he had conditioned through a reward-and-punishment system to behave well (much like Taylorism). The indistinct name ‘Bub’ sets Bub up as a representative of the Average Joe. Bub is conditioned by Logan, just as

the factory worker is conditioned through Taylorism and Fordism. But because Bub is a zombie, he is conditioned for controlled consumption rather than optimized production, and thus represents the worker in late-stage capitalism. Bub is able to carry out basic human functions, including listen to music and salute, but is doing so out of conditioning. His reactions are a pastiche; they lack objective or meaning outside of seeking a reward. When the commanding officer kills Logan, Bub reacts in a seemingly emotional way and decides to seek revenge, yet his reaction, arising from Pavlovian conditioning, is ingenuine. This is evident towards the end of the movie, where Bub shoots the commanding officer then mock-salutes. By setting the zombie up as an ally of the movie's protagonists, Romero calls the viewer to further identify with the zombie as a representation of our human condition in late-stage capitalism.

The success of Romero's *Living Dead* series in the US is paralleled by an interest in zombie movies in Europe and the far East. In Italy, Fabrizio De Angelis funded the production of *Zombi 2* (1979). Directed by Lucio Fulci, *Zombi 2* was marketed as the sequel to a European edit of *Dawn of the Dead*. Set between New York and a Caribbean Island called Matul, the movie focuses on a reporter who is investigating the appearance of a ship in the New York harbor. The daughter of a scientist on the ship leads him back to Matul where her father the scientist is trying to find a cure for a disease that reanimates corpses. They ultimately fail in their pursuit and the movie ends with a declaration that the zombies have made it to New York. Fulci uses extremely violent imagery in depicting the zombies and their attacks. This includes worms coming out of the flesh of the zombies and gruesome attacks on the humans (Brioni, 169). Despite being set between the US and the Caribbean, the movie serves as a means of dealing with Italian colonial legacy as it "provides a fictional shape to the

repressed collective fears that might have in turn inspired contemporary racist propaganda against immigrants” (Brioni, 169). One of the ways we see European colonialism come to the fore in the movie is through a group of reanimated Spanish conquistadors who rise up and pursue a *mestizo* human character – someone who comes from European and Indigenous American ancestry (Brioni, 170). We also see the discourse on Italian colonialism and the othering of the immigrant in how the movie revives several tropes from Italian literature about the African individual; that they should be shot in the head as described in Ennio Flaiano’s *Tempo di Uccidere*, that they are animalistic, and that they are cannibals (Brioni, 170). The movie also echoes Fascist concerns against miscegenation as it sets voodoo as a cross between Christianity and “African animism” (Brioni, 171). With the zombie functioning as a means of dealing with Italian colonial legacy, the figure of the zombie ceases to be a representation of American capitalism and becomes a means of representing a global human condition. Consequently, it is pushed farther from its socio-cultural context.

In Japan, the zombie made the leap from the silver screen to the computer. Influenced by Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead*, and the video games *Sweet Home* (1989) and *Alone in the Dark* (1992), Shinji Mikami and Tokuro Fujiwara developed the first *Resident Evil* video game in 1996 (Reed, 628). Since then, *Resident Evil* has grown into a massive multi-billion-dollar multimedia franchise, with 6 live action films starring Mila Jovovich, 4 animated films, 2 television series, 21 novels, 9 comic series, 3 plays, 10 video games, 3 video game remakes, 16 spin-off video games, and a slew of mobile and pachinko (gambling) arcade games. The central story that the franchise is built around stems from the video games. The games are characterized as survival horror movies and heavily employ gothic themes (Reed, 628). Though the game

franchise focuses on Racoon City, a fictional city in the US Midwest, the story later takes the subject consuming the franchise all over the world, including locations in China, Africa, and Europe. In the video games, a pharmaceutical corporation called the “Umbrella Corporation” develops a virus called the “T-virus” that it thinks can be weaponized and sold for profit. By staging outbreaks around the US, the corporation carries out experiments on the virus to improve its efficacy. Throughout the games, the release of the virus turns local citizens into flesh-hungry zombies. Though coming back to life with malicious intent, the zombies remain only test subjects for the “Umbrella Corporation”. Later, as the corporation enhances and improves the virus and creates different strands of it, it gains control over the virus’ effects and thus are able to weaponize it effectively. Consequently, high ranking officials in the “Umbrella Corporation” are given the chance to infect themselves with it when pressed, thus turning into deadly variations of the zombies. In the games, Corporation officials do so to gain the strength needed to fight the characters the player controls. These enhanced zombies are also driven by aggression but retain most aspects of their consciousness and serve as the main antagonists in the video games. The video game consumer throughout the franchise is given control of members of a special forces team called the S.T.A.R.S. (Special Tactics and Rescue Service) team. Thus, the narrative distinguishes between three parties: the subject playing the game, the zombie, and corporate management. It distinguishes the player, i.e., the consumer, through military and security authority figures who serve as the stars – or protagonists – of the series. It distinguishes the postmodern subject under late-stage capitalism as the zombie; they are the inhabitants who social relations are organized by capital – i.e., the T-virus. And it sets up corporate management as the evil sorcerers creating the zombies. Thus, the antagonist in the

franchise is not the zombie. Rather, it is the corporation creating zombies for profit. The first among many, the *Resident Evil* franchise has inspired countless video game series that focus on zombies as antagonists, protagonists, and support characters.

Since *The Magic Island* and *White Zombie*, the zombie figure has continued to prominently feature in different productions of popular culture, serving at different moments as antagonist, anti-hero, and protagonist. In this shift, we see a shift in the postmodern subject's site of identification. First, the subject is pushed to revile and hate the zombie and identify with the hero fleeing or destroying the zombie; the zombie is aggressive and unthinking, seeking only to gorge itself on the humanity of others because it is lacking its own. Then, the viewer is pushed to identify the zombie as an oppressed other who deserves to live and thus deserves the opportunity to labor to create meaning. Finally, the subject is pushed to see the zombie as the protagonist and thus as the figure to be identified with; the zombie-subject that is other in a society of consumption and that seeks to recover its lost humanity. With the zombie's historical ties to production, labor, and revolution, and as the world moves into late-stage capitalism, the zombie continues to represent our postmodern condition; the postmodern subject thus identifies with the unthinking zombie, forced to continually labor to earn wages that allows them to consume and thus create meaning through the social status their ability to consume affords them in society, and the zombie-protagonist, laboring to consume affords them in society, and the protagonist, laboring to create meaning in a world devoid of it. rethink society and the subject in a world devoid of meaning. Thus, the figure of the zombie figure in popular media become an ideological space where the postmodern subject can contend with the tension between the production of ideology and ideology-critique. Thus, in the zombie we find a "safe space" where we

“contemplate our conditions” and “face fears and desires”(Olney 7, 12) through the zombie being represented as “the ultimate foreign other” (Bishop 201).

## **B. Zombie Theory**

This research seeks to show that the change in the perception of the zombie in popular media represents the condition of the postmodern subject within late-stage capitalism. This introduces to the research three key terms that need defining: late-stage capitalism, postmodernism, and the postmodern subject. I will seek to provide a reading for capitalism, relying mainly on Kojin Karatani’s exploration of Marx’s *Kapital* in *Transcritique*, postmodernism through Jameson’s *Postmodernism*, and the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism through Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. I will also use the movies *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie* to illustrate how these theories allow us a better reading of popular culture.

### **1. *Das Kapital***

In *Transcritique* (2003), Karatani carries out parallel readings of Kant through Marx and Marx through Kant to show how our understanding of Kant’s critique of metaphysics can inform our reading of political economy. He unpacks Marx’s study of capitalism by juxtaposing it against the contributions of leading economic and political thinkers of the time, including Proudhon, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Hume, and others.

In *Kapital*, Marx traces the development of the capitalist mode of production through mercantilism and industrial production. Marx’s definitive contribution to the

study of capitalism in *Kapital* is the theory of value form (Karatani, 193). His conception of capitalism hinges on circulation. Circulation is a process of exchanges that encompasses the process of production and that is mediated through money. Classical economists through Ricardo saw that money functioned only as a medium of value rather than an equivalent to it. Marx's theoretical work sought to show that value was inherent in the commodity rather than in money (Karatani, 154). Marx, however, in his study of the crises of capitalism, showed that the commodity loses its use-value when confronted by a market crisis. In a case of crisis, the commodity ceases to be sold and thus "the use-value of commodities becomes valueless, and their value vanishes in the face of their own form of value" (Karatani, 153).

The driving force behind capitalism is the need to continue to accumulate profit. Profit can only be created, however, by trading in different value systems, hence, for an industry to be capitalist, it needs to constantly produce commodities and exploit difference (Karatani, 240, 241). Any form of production that seeks to create profit is then a capitalist mode of production; "capital would end when it can no longer exploit difference... But capital cannot help discovering and/or creating difference, no matter what is at stake" (Karatani, 239). For primitive accumulation to occur, there needs to be a difference in value between the cost of production for a commodity and its exchange value.

Marx provides the basic economic formula of [Money – Commodity – More Money (M-C-M')] to delineate the process of production: the capitalist spends money to produce an item and then sells the item to acquire exchange value that is greater than its cost of production (Karatani, 154). However, there is an inherent asymmetry in the exchange process between the buyer and the seller; "those who have money can buy

things anytime they want, while those who have commodities have to sell them as soon as possible before they depreciate” (Karatani, 201). Money is more advantageous than commodities since it functions as an equivalent value form and thus does not depreciate. This asymmetry impacts the entire production process and skews it in the favor of the capitalist.

Industrial capital today subordinates all other forms of capital and integrates them into its mode of production (Karatani, 251). This includes commodity capital. In industrial production, labor is emphasized as a quintessential factor of production. The industrial commodity is then made up of labor power that is processed through the means of production. The formula for the movement of capital in industrial production is [Money – (labor power + means of production) – Money’] (Karatani, 154). Since labor is a commodity, it too then loses its value in times of crisis.

Furthermore, the rate of profit in capitalist exchange is constantly decreasing. This is due to the nature of the process of production as described in the M-C-M’ formula combined with the capitalist’s need to produce profit. Capital in the capitalist mode of production is tied up at three points: (1) in the purchase of resources, (2) in the maintenance and development of production machines, and (3) in labor wages. Capital that needs to be tied up in resources and production machines is constantly increasing due to scarcity. Since labor laws have set standards for wages, and since scarcity constantly drives the price of resources and machines up, the rate of profit in capitalism is constantly decreasing (Karatani, 242). Capitalism’s end-goal is to make profit. Since the capitalist theoretically has no influence on the cost of the raw resources or the means of production and cannot influence the cost of the item beyond how the market regulates prices, the only way for the capitalist to secure profits is by controlling labor power. The

cost of labor is influenced in one of two ways: (1) the work day is prolonged, even with the prospect of overtime pay that is greater than regular pay, such that the fixed or constant capital expended is made up for more immediately; “the value of the fixed capital, is now reproduced in a shorter series of turnover periods, and the time for which it has to be advanced in order to make a certain profit is reduced” (Karatani, 249); (2) the intensification of labor, through advancements and innovations in technology that require less laborers to produce the same amount of commodities in a set amount of time; “the surplus value in the capitalist mode of production is attained by technological innovation (or improvement of the productivity of labor)” (Karatani, 257). Therefore, the commodification of labor is necessary for maintaining profits. Yet capitalism’s tendency towards crises stems from this constant pursuit of increasing capital through increased profit. Marx breaks down the formula of exchange (M-C-M’) into two main exchanges: M – C and C – M’, whereby the social relations of production between the capitalist, the salesperson, and the consumer are made clear (Karatani, 154). Through this breakdown, Marx shows the absurdity of the capitalist credit system, where it assumes that any commodity produced will be necessarily sold to produce M’ (more money). Marx, on the other hand, saw how this credit system was the fatal leap of capitalism. By accumulating uncashed credit, the market reaches a point of saturation, and crisis occurs (Karatani, 153). In this tendency to crises, Marx finds the evidence for the economy’s reliance on the general equivalent form of money as a representative – i.e. an image – of value.

In short, capitalist A maximizes the amount of labor they can purchase while minimizing labor costs (the intensification of labor) but dreams that capitalist B would pay their laborers enough to purchase the commodities produced by capitalist A’s

company. This produces laborers who are unable to purchase the products they labored on in the factories. With commodities unsold, the capitalist takes out credit to continue producing new commodities until the already existing products are sold. When this does not happen due to the lack of demand, a crisis occurs which forces a shift in the market towards different modes of production. When Ford began production, as we will later see, he deliberately reduced the cost of production and increased wages so that the laborer would be able to purchase what they were producing in the factory, and that is the Model-T.

The commodity economy organizes “objects and their production within its fictitious institution, thus giving them commodity form” (Karatani, 198). Since labor is a commodity, the capitalist commodity economy organizes it through the individual’s social relations. Marx saw that individuals are constructions of social relations (Karatani, 173). Capitalism “incessantly transforms social relations” (Karatani, 175). In dictating the economic development of society and organizing labor, capitalism influences culture; “the drive of capitalism, however, is deeply inscribed in our society and culture; or more to the point, our society and culture are created by it; it will never stop by itself. Neither will it be stopped by any rational control or by state intervention” (Karatani, 11).

The asymmetric value system of capitalism that skews the advantage towards those who have money and against those who have commodities they need to sell, when applied to the laborer, robs them of power when they are selling their labor commodity because it depreciates over time, but gives them power when they engage in purchasing and consumption. This is because it is in consumption that “surplus value is finally realized” (Karatani, 20). Since in the monetary economy, the process of consumption is

separated from the process of production, this creates a “split in the workers’ subject: as workers (the sellers of labor-power commodity) and consumers (the buyers of capitalist commodities)” (Karatani, 20). This split, in turn, creates a division between workers’ movements and consumers’ movements that has allowed for labor movements to go stagnant. But it is also in this split and in this becoming a consumer that the laborer is finally allowed to be a subject (Karatani, 21). The subject, however, is still acted on by market dynamics.

The increasing exploitation of difference, technological advancement, division of labor, and commodification of labor-power that Marx saw happening in the markets of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe continued to evolve through Fordism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and post-Fordism in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The current economic regime, which Shoshana Zuboff dubs ‘Surveillance Capitalism’, and that bases itself on the commodification of information (De Peuter and Dyer-Witford, 38) is post-Fordist.

Fordism is a mode of organizing production that is based on maximizing production through repetitive tasks as was carried out in Taylorism in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jessop, 42). It was established by the Ford Motor Company in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the US but later extended to other industries. It emphasized mass production through the assembly line; its focus was “that production must be unbroken and in long runs to secure economies of scale” (Jessop, 42). The Fordist mode of organizing production was not restricted to the core industry of creating cars; it extended itself to other economic sectors, including marketing and the acquisition and transportation of raw materials and was characterized by the “systematic control” of one firm over all sectors of production (Jessop, 42 – 43). Fordism relied on the mechanization of the assembly line and the employment of “semiskilled labor” who

could carry out the basic functions of assembly and who could be easily replaced (Jessop, 44). Through this model of auto-centric mass production, the Ford Motor Company was able to minimize the cost of production on the one hand and pay its workers enough on the other so that the semiskilled laborer employed by the company could afford to buy the products they were producing (Jessop, 44 – 45). It creates profit through developing a culture of mass consumption. It focuses on a cycle of improving the means of production that leads to increased production, higher salaries, and hence increased consumption. The Fordist economic cycle seeks ever-increasing profits through “rising productivity based on economies of scale in mass production, rising incomes linked to productivity, increased mass demand due to rising wages, increased profits based on full utilization of capacity, increased investment in improved mass production equipment and techniques, and a further rise in productivity” (Jessop, 43). Fordism needed to simultaneously incentivize improved production and increased consumption, a feat that it was not able to do without relying on state intervention.

Fordism as a mode of production extended into the political sphere through the need for the state to function as a means of market regulation. While Ford had initially championed the call to pay laborers well enough that they are able to purchase what they were producing in the factories, during the crisis of the 1930’s, he “reduced wages, fired workers, and tried everything to fight unions and workers’ unrest” (Altveter, 21). Yet, his contribution to US industry had made an impact. In the post-war years, the state worked to extend the increase in salaries to non-Fordist sectors and thus helped maintain the cycle of mass production and mass consumption by generalizing “consumption norms so that most citizens can share in the prosperity generated by rising economies of scale” (Jessop, 45). It also extended into the cultural sphere through

mass media that normalize mass consumption not only as a necessity but also as a measure of success and social/cultural status (Jessop, 45).

By influencing the economic, political, and cultural spheres, Fordism then played a role in reorganizing society. Fordism's need for state regulation led to the expansion of "the local state as the vehicle for socializing consumption" (Jessop, 46). By propagating a culture of mass consumption, it tied ideology to commodities. These commodities then became a necessary means of cultural conformity for individuals participating in communities organized by Fordist industries (Jessop, 46). Fordist industries reorganized the space they occupied by bringing all the elements of production together into one area. Fordist areas were "dominated by the leading Fordist firms and their suppliers; drew in raw materials and, on a growing scale, migrant or foreign labor, from the rest of the world; and churned out mass-produced goods for global markets" (Jessop, 46). With this reorganization of the social, "urban life assumed Fordist characteristics" that centered on the ability to consume commodities (Jessop, 47). Thus, the ideological concept of urban life became tied to the image of consumption.

Fordism's reliance on the constant improvement of consumption and the means of production as a means of creating profits creates in it a tendency towards crises. There is a limit to the amount of profit that can be created through improving production. There is also a limit to raw resources, energy sources, and to the consumer's need (Jessop, 57). Its inability to continue to improve wages through improving the cycle of production and consumption is indicative of the incremental "alienation and resistance of the mass worker", whose life is now consumed by production and consumption. With the saturation of the market with mass-produced goods and the

inability of the laborer outside of the Fordist industrial regime to mass-consume, in the 1930's, the Great Depression began to herald the end of Fordism (Jessop, 55). Post-Fordism comes out in the post-World War II years as a response to the crises of Fordism and creates a new form of organizing production that focuses on the flexibility of production rather than its maximization; the "post-Fordist accumulation regime will be based on the dominance of flexible production in combination with differentiated, non-standardized consumption" (Jessop, 55). Thus, Post-Fordism becomes an evolution of Fordism.

Post-Fordism, as a new model of organizing production, benefitted from the technological advancements created through Fordism's pursuit of improving production. Consequently, computer technology has become part and parcel of post-Fordist industries; "its crucial hardware is microelectronics-based information and communications technologies" (Jessop, 55). The advancement in communication technologies makes the spatial reorganization of Fordism unnecessary as it now occurs through information technologies (Jessop, 55). The "space" for post-Fordism is the cyber space. The focus on flexible production seeks to solve the problems of Fordism, but it also necessitates a shift in the social relations of production. The move towards specialized, flexible production that responds to market trends creates a need for a new form of institutional organization that allows for interdependency between commercial sectors and for a rapid response to customer needs (Jessop, 57). The workforce for post-Fordist production needs to be flexible, both in terms of skill and in terms of working hours to contend with the needed flexibility in production. Hence, this polyvalent workforce works more than the Fordist workforce, but is also better skilled. Thus, it becomes better paid, but the rise in wages does not extend to other workforces. This

distinguishes the flexible post-Fordist workforce from semiskilled Fordist or non-Fordist workforces; “post-Fordist growth need not involve generalizing core workers’ rising incomes to other workers and/or the economically inactive” (Jessop, 56). In relying on a polyvalent workforce, post-Fordism polarizes society and thus reorganizes not only the local workforce but also the labor market abroad. This would then allow for the increased marginalization, and hence exploitation, of “peripheral workers” thus reorganizing the social space (Jessop, 57).

Post-Fordism’s resources have become biological labor-power and human experience. It is hyper-computerized and hyper-specialized. Though post-Fordism attempts to answer the crises inherent in Fordism, in doing so, it creates its own crises. Zuboff’s definition for the modern form of capitalism emphasizes the extent to which its rate of profit is based on the efficiency of its exploitation of the laborer:

1. A new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales;
2. A parasitic economic logic in which the production of goods and services is subordinated to a new global architecture of behavioral modification;
3. A rogue mutation of capitalism marked by concentrations of wealth, knowledge, and power unprecedented in human history;
4. The foundational framework of a surveillance economy;
5. As significant a threat to human nature in the twenty-first century as industrial capitalism was to the natural world in the nineteenth and twentieth;
6. The origin of a new instrumentarian power that asserts dominance over society and presents startling challenges to market democracy;
7. A movement that aims to impose a new collective order

based on total certainty; 8. An expropriation of critical human rights that is best understood as a coup from above: an overthrow of the people's sovereignty. (Zuboff, viii).

No longer capable of improving the rate of profit by improving production or increasing the rate of consumption, late-stage capitalism seizes on its final source of maintaining profit, the laborer-subject, whose commodified labor power through their cognitive abilities becomes, in the digital age, the last variable available to maintain profit through capitalist exchange.

*White Zombie* portrays a violent and grim representation of the commodification of labor in the pursuit of increased capital and the crisis-centric tendency of capitalism. Produced in the early 30's, and set in post-occupation Haiti, the economy in the movie is a Fordist economy. The movie is driven forward through the process of exchange carried out between the two capitalists Beaumont and Legendre, but only Legendre is able to profit by increasing his zombie horde. When Beaumont's assumptions turn out different from reality, he falls into a crisis and seeks to reverse the process of exchange. But this cannot be done, as the credit, represented by Madeline's zombification, has already been advanced and production resumed. This crisis necessitates intervention by an external power – here literally the missionary doctor – that regulates the market. The rest of the cast, save for the missionary Dr. Bruner, are all commodified labor that is moved around by the process of exchange. And the promises that allow for the narrative to move forward are all based on the belief that the process of production/consumption will be actualized.

Neil, who is at first distrustful of Beaumont's sweet talk, becomes sedated when Beaumont mentions that he would employ Neil as his bank agent (00:07:40). Beaumont, having fallen in love with Madeline, contacts Legendre asking for a means of bewitching Madeline out of her love for Neil. Legendre appears to agree to help Beaumont for free, but as we know, for capital, there is no such thing as free labor. Any process of exchange must end up in a profit for *a* capitalist. And while it is not obvious at first, when Legendre shares that the zombies he commands include several ex-government officials who had once been his enemies (the head of the gendarmerie, the minister of the interior, and the high executioner) we come to know that his plan is to continue to grow his zombie horde with influential individuals from all classes of society – including members of the upper class like Beaumont and white collar workers like Neil - and thus continue to fully exploit his laborers (00:29:00). Beaumont on the other hand, does not want exploitable labor. His fixation becomes possessing Madeline. By possessing her “for a month...” he hoped to gain “everything” (00:16:30). When Beaumont realizes how turning Madeline into a zombie did not help him achieve what he had hoped to achieve, he is disillusioned; he falls into a state of crisis and wants to reverse the exchange. But the process has been carried out. Legendre had exploited him, as he had exploited Madeline. Legendre then slips some of the zombification medicine into Beaumont's drink and begins to zombify him. Thus, Legendre profits by adding not one, but two zombies into his fold.

The movie is only ever resolved through the intervention of Dr. Burner, who aids an alcohol-poisoned Neil in his efforts to rescue Madeline. Neil's drunken state is a representation of the white-collar laborer; he knows he has been exploited but cannot do anything to work against his exploitation. Still, the laborer is conscious and thus

attempts to act against his exploiters by looking for Madeline's corpse. Having found out that her body has been stolen from the grave, Neil enlists the aid of Dr. Bruner who tells him that Madeline has been zombified by Legendre. Though toxified, Neil attempts to save Madeline, but it is through Dr. Bruner and the self-sacrifice of Beaumont that Legendre and his zombies are killed, and Madeline is brought back to the land of the living. Thus, it is only through the eradication of capitalist exploitation that the laborers can reclaim their lives.

## **2. *Postmodernity, History, and Capitalism***

With Jessop, we saw how the Great Depression of the 1930's necessitated state intervention to regulate the market and how the end of Fordism in the post-World War II years produced the circumstances out of which post-Fordism emerged. It is out of the economic structure emerging in the 1950's that the "economic preparation of postmodernism or late capitalism began" (Jameson, xx). Thus, the postmodern break of the 60's emerges parallel to the emerging economic structure of post-Fordism (Jameson, xx).

In *Postmodernism*, Jameson defines the postmodern by comparing it to the modern. He introduces us to what he sees as the major problem that characterizes postmodernity; "it is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (Jameson, ix). This break with history, this "uniquely privileged symptom of a loss of historicity", is part of how the postmodern differentiates itself from the modern (Jameson, x). Where the modern looked at the "new and tried to watch its coming into being [...]", thus seeing in change an indicator for progress, postmodernity looks for

breaks and events rather than progress or a 'becoming', as it sees the new as "just more images" (Jameson, ix). Thus, the postmodern has lost its historicity. Furthermore, the new no longer impacts culture but is rather produced out of postmodern culture as a product to be consumed, regardless of its newness or its difference to other cultural products. The break becomes not only the break with the past, but also the break with the subject that had created its meaning out of past cultural forms. Since social status was being defined, in the American dream, through the subject's ability to consume, meaning in the postmodern became tied to consumption and retroactively to labor. Thus, the subject needed to labor to earn wages that they can then use to consume commodities that give them social status in the culture of mass-consumption.

Jameson points out that in Lyotard's work on postmodernism, the "end of master narratives" is itself "couched in narrative form" (Jameson, xi). This is because Lyotard needs to return to the narrative form to claim the end of narratives (Jameson, xii). Jameson attributes the failure to form a theory of the postmodern to the lack of distance from the postmodern, which is characterized by a constant falling back on modern tools to discuss the postmodern (Jameson, xii). Because of the weakening of the relationship between post-modern culture and the historical narrative, Jameson sees that postmodernity is characterized by a "depthlessness" that prevents it from creating its own tools and thus becoming its own cultural form (Jameson, 5). The inability to form a theory of the postmodern shows that it is rather "the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself" (Jameson, xii) and thus is "a reworking and rewriting of an older system" (Jameson, xiv). Here, Jameson ties postmodernism to political economy outright.

In this movement away from historicity and towards the materialization of culture, we are confronted with the breakdown of the distinction between high and low art or culture. Since the high art of modernism becomes an object to be rebelled against, the unique styles of the past become commodities of the present. As there no longer is a continuity between the past and the present, the works of high modernism become “dead styles” that can be replicated and reproduced in an almost industrial manner (Jameson, 17-18). Jameson calls this replication of older unique styles *pastiche* that has come to invade all aspects of postmodern cultural production; “This omnipresence of pastiche is not incompatible with a certain humor, however, nor is it innocent of all passion: it is at the least compatible with addiction—with a whole historically original consumers’ appetite for a world transformed into sheer images of itself and for pseudo-events and ‘spectacles’” (Jameson, 18). While postmodernism is ahistorical, Jameson uses the appetite for images to historically situate postmodernism. The image here becomes the copy, the “neo” version of a past style that has become devoid of its historical value and that is completely invested in its exchange value. Borrowing from Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, Jameson quotes “the image has become the final form of commodity reification”; it prevents the intellectualization of art and turns it into a process of production, and therefore, consumption (Jameson, 125). The commodification and distancing from art then makes it so “the very experience of art itself today is alienated and made ‘other’ and inaccessible to too many people to serve as a useful vehicle for their imaginative experience” (Jameson, 147). Thus, the subject is not only alienated from history and from labor, but also from culture, which furthers their zombification.

According to Jameson, the shift from modernism into postmodernism is due to “an immense dilation of [the cultural] sphere (the sphere of commodities), an immense and historically original acculturation of the Real [...] in postmodern culture” where “‘culture’ has become a product in its own right” (Jameson, x). Commodity fetishism is then part and parcel of the postmodern condition; “Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process” (Jameson, x). The postmodern, having cut ties with the past, is now fascinated by its present, a present that Jameson likens to a “gulag or perhaps a shopping mall” (Jameson, ix). Jameson ties postmodernity directly to capitalism and likens the ultimate image of capitalism – the shopping mall – to a prison. The postmodern individual is historically situated in a world of pastiche that centers on commodity fetishism. With the separation from historicity, the postmodern subject is consequently separated from the cultural value of the object. They are alienated from it and are left with its value as a commodity. Engaging with ahistorical cultural products – i.e., commodities - the postmodern subject is encouraged to create meaning in the very act of consuming images.

Jameson tells us that post-modernism comes out in the wake of the second world war and that its conditions and the conditions of late-stage capitalism are one and the same: "the economic preparation of postmodernism or late capitalism began in the 1950s, after the wartime shortages of consumer goods and spare parts had been made up, and new products and new technologies (not least those of the media) could be pioneered" (Jameson, xx). Here we also see how new technologies, especially those that contribute to modern media production, are part and parcel of postmodernity. The development of these technologies has gone together with developments in economic production. Jameson sees in these technologies “enormous properly human and anti-

natural power of dead human labor stored up in our machinery -- an alienated power [...] which turns back on and against us in unrecognizable forms and seems to constitute the massive dystopian horizon of our collective as well as our individual praxis” (Jameson, 35).

As the “reflex of another systemic modification of capitalism,” postmodernism allows through its rewriting of modern narratives for “coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits with the new forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism —the new global division of labor” (Jameson, xiv). The development of capitalism and the technology involved in industry allows for the creation of a new form of labor. Here again we see the characteristic break of postmodernism, this time through the division in labor. The Postmodern mode of Production, in reacting to the division of labor, produces a new laborer that can work in the new mechanized, polyvalent, and specialized socioeconomic situation (Jameson, xv).

The new, postmodernist subject is also afflicted by the weakening of historicity and the constant search for the break. They are alienated from their history, their labor, and their culture. As culture becomes a fetishized pastiche commodity that oversaturates mass media, and as life increasingly becomes specialized and mechanized, the postmodern subjects themselves become fragmented commodities; “the subject has lost its capacity actively to [...] organize its past and future into coherent experience” which elucidates how “the cultural productions of such a subject could [only result in] ‘heaps of fragments’ and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory” (Jameson, 25). As the fragmentary cultural productions of the postmodern age cease to be a means of expression and become a commodity useful only in the process

of exchange, the postmodern subject begins to suffer from the waning of affect (Jameson, 10). Jameson uses the example of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* (1886) and Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* (1980) to show that where Van Gogh's presented a narrative and a connection to rural farm life, Warhol's presented commodity fetishism (Jameson, 6 – 10).

The commodification of culture and the fragmentation of the subject coupled with the proliferation of media and the movement away from the metanarrative in cultural production force the consumer/viewer/reader to labor to create meaning. Jameson shows how meaning becomes difficult to grasp and so requires labor from the consumer in several examples, one of which is the nouveau roman *Conducting Bodies* (1971). In the novel, it is constantly unclear to the reader who is being talked about and what spaces they occupy; "in Manhattan or a South American City? [...] we are unable to decide [...] We learn to make an inventory of these plot strings and to coordinate them" (Jameson, 132). Here we see how marketplace jargon begins to invade the culture space as it becomes a culture industry. In writing the novel, Simon takes on an impersonal style that Jameson characterizes as "pastiche, a bravura imitation so exact as to include the well-nigh undetectable reproduction of stylistic authenticity itself" (Jameson, 133). Simon's impersonal imitation of writing style is, according to Jameson, "what is postmodern about Simon: the evident emptiness of that subject beyond all phenomenology, its capacity to embrace another style as though it were another world" (Jameson, 133). Simon and *Conducting Bodies*, according to Jameson, are prime examples of cultural production in the postmodern: as Simon detaches himself from historicity to create a pastiche, ahistorical reproduction of a writing style, the book,

often described as an exercise in memory, forces the reader/consumer to labor to literally produce meaning out of the non-linear story.

The division of labor and the hyper specialization of society make it so all experiences are fragmented, commodified, and specialized experiences; “leisure is as commodified as work, free time and vacations as organized and planified as the day in the office, the object of whole new industries of mass diversion of various kinds, outfitted with their own distinct high-tech equipment and commodities and saddled with thoroughgoing and themselves fully organized processes of ideological indoctrination” (Jameson, 147). The fragmentation of the subject then leads to a multiplicity of subjectivities. Jameson finds evidence of this change in the postmodern subject’s psyche through the examples of American celebrities. He first uses the example of Marilyn Monroe, who through the pop-art of Warhol becomes commodified as she becomes “transformed into [her] own image” (Jameson, 10). He also uses the example of film stars who he characterizes as having an “utter absence of ‘personality’” so that the “‘death of the subject’ in the institution of the star now, however, opens up the possibility of a play of historical allusions to much older roles [...] so that the very style of the acting can now also serve as a ‘connotator’ of the past” (Jameson, 20). Herein, the postmodern subject becomes a cultural product of late-stage capitalism. Therefore, the capitalist mode of production influences how the postmodern subject interacts with the real as it forces labor into every aspect of life; “this differentiation and specialization or semi-autonomization of reality is then prior to what happens in the psyche— postmodern **schizo**-fragmentation” (Jameson, 372, emphasis mine).

Though *White Zombie* came out in 1932, well before the Second World War, it invests itself heavily in the activity of erasure (Fay, 83). Its narrative seeks to eliminate

traces of American intervention in the Caribbean through emphasizing the legacies of slavery and zombification coming out of European colonialism in the biracial character of Murder Legendre, thus validating the need for American presence in the Islands. It also turns Vodou into an occult practice that it profits from. It removes the historical and cultural history of zombification so that the practice appears to emanate from Haitian culture rather than as a consequence of colonial intervention. Furthermore, it carries out an inversion of the American invasion and sets up the US as the invaded country that needs to defend itself from Haitian culture (Fay, 84).

The ad campaign for *White Zombie* brought the zombie to US land. The posters for the film quoted heavily from William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* and featured lines that stated that since the occupation, zombification, punishable by death in Haiti, is being practiced in the US today (Fay, 84). It relied on the stories of US citizens claiming to have been affected by voodoo and zombie rituals. The distributing company also encouraged movie theater owners wanting to attract large audiences to

“hire several negroes” to beat “tom toms” while adorned in “tropical garments.” “Every once in a while have them cut loose with a couple of blood-curdling yells. Be sure they simulate the Negro rhythms as heard in the first reel of the picture” (Fay, 84)

This, alongside other racialized actions worked to disengage voodoo and the zombie narrative from its cultural and historical contexts. Within the context of the movie, the zombie lost its colonial and empirical history and was made to emanate from Haitian culture. Thus, voodoo and zombification in the movie were effectively disengaged from

the forced labor that native Haitians were put under during the American occupation of Haiti.

In the movie, this disengagement happens through the character of Murder Legendre, whose ambiguous origins, alongside his mannerisms and gothic mansion, allow him to embody both Haitian and European stereotypes (Phillips, 29, 31). Legendre (played by Bela Lugosi) lives in a gothic mansion, the set for which was used in *Dracula*, another movie featuring Lugosi as the main villain. The gothic style of the mansion and its relation to *Dracula* set Legendre up as being of European descent (Phillips, 31). Furthermore, Dr. Bruner, the missionary doctor, identifies Legendre as being one of the natives (Phillips, 31). Yet, unlike other actors in the film who are portraying black characters, Lugosi is not in blackface, which emphasizes his biracial character. Furthermore, Legendre is a sugar mill and plantation owner who is very well educated in the rituals of Haiti. This ambiguity sets Legendre up as a member of the native capitalist elite (Phillips, 34). Furthermore, the movie does not include any tell of American companies like Seabrook's HASCO, nor does it include any US Marines. This further contributes to Legendre's racial ambiguity. Set as the main antagonist of the movie who tricks one American, zombifies another, and almost leads a third to ruin, Legendre's inevitable death only serves to scrub clean the reputation of the US and justify the hostility towards European presence in the Caribbean through the occupation.

### **3. *The Postmodern Schizoid***

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari delve into the question of the schizo-fragmented subject to show that capitalism constantly decodes and recodes desire so that desire is constantly the object of socio-economic power. They critique the Oedipal complex because it represents the failing of psychoanalysis: it traps desire in the

organizing structure of Oedipus rather than liberating it from repression. At the crux of *Anti-Oedipus* is a reframing of the conception of desire as active and productive of the autopoiesis of the real rather than a passive element in the filling of a lack. In showing that desire is productive, they lay the foundations for their reading of the unconscious as a factory, which they term desiring-production (Deleuze and Guattari, 1, 24). They take the function of the unconscious as a parallel to capitalist process of production to show how capitalism constantly decodes and recodes desire to suit its purposes – what they term deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 33 - 34). This decoding and recoding of desire is part of the ideologic work capitalism carries out on the socius (Deleuze and Guattari, 33). Deleuze and Guattari work through the Freudian Oedipus complex to show how this trap functions (Buchanan, 70) and show how their form of psychoanalysis – which they term schizo-analysis, based on their extrapolation of the schizophrenic experience – is better suited to for critiquing late-stage capitalism.

Deleuze and Guattari introduce schizoanalysis because it does what psychoanalysis could not do: it reads the unconscious as essential to the autopoiesis of the real rather than as repressor and repressed. This is because schizophrenia “enacts a regime change in the mind” of the schizophrenic so that, despite the insistence of the psychoanalyst, they move beyond the Oedipal triangle to a world of constant production (Buchanan, 35). The schizophrenic experience resists the imposition of meaning through psychoanalytic interpretation (Deleuze and Guattari, 14). Deleuze and Guattari liken schizophrenia to literature in that it is “a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression” (Deleuze and Guattari, 133). While they maintain many psychoanalytic concepts as valid – such as the concept of primary and secondary repression – they reassess the function of the unconscious (Buchanan, 27). Deleuze and Guattari

distinguish between schizophrenia as an illness and as a process. Their distinction is that schizophrenia is an involuntary “emotionally overwhelming experience” that brings the subject as close as possible to a full experience of the real (Deleuze and Guattari, 19). The schizophrenic process that is not intervened with, they claim, is responsible for great works of art including the works of Artaud and Kafka (Buchanan, 34). It produces and is fascinated by production. The illness, on the other hand, comes out of attempts to medicate, dispose of, or create meaning out of the schizophrenic experience. The intervention and interruption of the schizophrenic experience is what creates the mortified schizos of the asylums (Deleuze and Guattari, 362). This is done not to romanticize schizophrenia or to say that all people are innately schizophrenic, but rather to show that the unconscious is machinic and thus point towards desiring-production as the production apparatus of the unconscious and towards its production of desiring-machines (Buchanan, 40 - 41).

For Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis fails by setting Oedipus as a universal structure through which it reads all desire (Deleuze and Guattari, 52). In doing so, it misunderstands desire as a need for acquisition rather than as a producer of the real.

From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object. (Deleuze and Guattari, 25)

By tying desire to a process of acquisition rather than a process of production, desire becomes tied to the production of a fantasy rather than the real (Deleuze and Guattari, 26). Thus, instead of seeking to liberate desire, psychoanalysis functions as a means of

sustaining the familial repression of early capitalism during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Deleuze and Guattari, 50). In masking desire behind Oedipal symbols, psychoanalysis separates the social from the real and places the social outside of the reach of desire. This necessitates that desire be processed – that the “libido must be desexualised or even sublimated in order to proceed to the social investments, and inversely that the libido only resexualises these investments during the course of pathological regression,” thus needing mediation before it can be actualized (Deleuze and Guattari, 292). On the contrary, for Deleuze and Guattari, every investment of desire is social (Deleuze and Guattari, 28 - 29). But psychoanalysis represses desiring-production through reading desire according to its structure that seeks to find an Oedipal triangle in every investment of desire. This turns psychoanalysis into a tool of repression (Deleuze and Guattari, 52 – 53). Hence, psychoanalysis traps desire through the construct of the family; the family differentiates the subject and sets laws (for desire and for the social) that the subject must abide by. In this manner, the family itself is Oedipalizing of the subject (Buchanan, 66 - 68).

But the Oedipal structure itself is the product of the ideological framework of capitalism. For Deleuze and Guattari, “desire produces reality, or stated another way, desiring-production is one and the same thing as social production” (Deleuze and Guattari, 30). Thus, desire becomes synonymous with the real, and the parallel between the functions of the unconscious and capitalist social relations becomes a means of showing how capitalism falls back on desire. Herein lies the significance of conceptualizing the function of the unconscious as a factory as desire becomes parallel to capital. In this manner, Deleuze and Guattari carry out their form of ideology critique through “sorting through the inner complexity” of the regime (Buchanan, 73).

For it to exist, the “capitalist machine”, emerging historically out of the “ruins of a despotic state” must decode – or deterritorialize – the social relations created by the feudal system (Deleuze and Guattari, 33). Free flowing capital breaks up feudal social relations that tie the laborer to the land and alienates the laborer from their labor power. Hence, it is “divorcing the producer [“free” labour] from the means of production” (Buchanan, 58). It deterritorializes the social relations of the feudal system not to liberate labor but rather to reterritorialize social relations in a manner that allows for the production of profit (Deleuze and Guattari, 34). Deterritorialization becomes “the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism” because it allows capitalism to “restore” recoded versions of “residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities” that align with its organization of the process of production (Deleuze and Guattari, 34). The recoding of social relations creates the surface for capital to invest, out of which the ideology of capitalism emerges.

Oedipus then organizes desire by reterritorializing it according to the Oedipal triangle. Deleuze and Guattari break down the Oedipal trap into five steps: extrapolation, the double bind, application, fictitious desire, and desiring-production. Extrapolation positions human experience around the phallus. In doing so, it situates desire around lack; the male is afraid of losing the phallus, and the female is driven to acquire the phallus. This occurs as capital reorganizes social relations (Deleuze and Guattari, 59 - 60). Accepting that all desire is driven by lack brings us to the double bind. Since the family is Oedipalizing, and since society is thus effectively Oedipalized, the subject is placed in a situation where they cannot escape Oedipus. The subject must either accept that they are Oedipus and resolve the Oedipal crisis in themselves or allow themselves to fall into Oedipal desires and thus enter the realm of psychosis and

treatment. This is because psychoanalysis makes the Oedipal triangle transcendental (Deleuze and Guattari, 92). In this manner, Oedipus is a double bind; the subject cannot escape it and thus must accept it as personal crisis or as structure (Deleuze and Guattari, 78). Application locks the subject into the Oedipalization of the family from the get-go; it assumes that the Oedipal triangle is the precondition of desire, that it is the fundamental manifestation of desire, and that the subject is an Oedipus from the moment of birth, seeking to sleep with the mother and murder the father (Deleuze and Guattari, 110 - 111). Therefore, the subject cannot escape the oedipal trap. The Oedipal prohibition is where the danger of the Oedipal complex is most apparent. In assuming the existence of fictitious desire, psychoanalysis seeks to retrace desire through the prohibition; it seeks to show that, since incest is prohibited, then the subject must have incestuous desires, while Deleuze and Guattari argue that the incestuous desire does not exist but is rather presupposed through the inhibition of Oedipus to cage desiring-production (Buchanan, 70). According to Deleuze and Guattari,

what really takes place is that the law prohibits something that is perfectly fictitious in the order of desire or of the 'drives', so as to persuade its subjects that they had the intention corresponding to the fiction. This is indeed the only way the law has of getting a grip on intention, of making the unconscious guilty. (Deleuze and Guattari, 119).

The law does this because “no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised” (Deleuze and Guattari, 118). In trapping desire behind the prohibition of incest, desire is “shamed, stupefied, it is placed in a situation without exit, it is easily persuaded to deny itself in the name of the more important interests of civilization” (Deleuze and Guattari,

120). Thus, the subject begins to seek the repression of their own desire for the benefit of the greater good, and so the repression of desire occurs on two levels, the psychic and the social (Deleuze and Guattari, 113 - 114). Psychic repression is an “unconscious operation” that occurs in the subject unknowingly, while social repression is a conscious repression that is applied to desire, and both bear on desiring-production (Buchanan, 71). The family is the agent of psychic repression and teaches the subject to desire social repression through the prohibitions of Oedipus, but Deleuze and Guattari argue that the family isn’t strong enough of an agent to trap desire, which brings them to the fifth element of psychoanalysis’ repression of desiring-production, where the psychoanalyst presupposes that it is desiring-production that desires the repression of desire rather than the Oedipal complex (Deleuze and Guattari, 129).

In presupposing the ending point of desire, psychoanalysis retroactively conforms all readings of desire to this presupposition. It disconnects the subject from one set of social relations – just as it castrates - and reconnects the subject to the social system created in locating desire around lack – i.e., into capitalist social relations (Buchanan, 77). It forces a choice of either/or; “either I am a man or a woman, young or old, alive or dead, and so on” and so forces social identification (Buchanan, 79).

The crux of both movies *I Walked with a Zombie* and *White Zombie* is the trapping of desire. This desire comes to the fore in the characters’ fixations and thus represent the ideologies that the characters identify with and their subjectivities.

In *White Zombie*, Beaumont’s only desire is to possess Madeline. His desiring production is fixated on Madeline, and he is a desiring machine that seeks to possess Madeline. He acts on his desire by entering a process of exchange with Legendre that

allows him to have what he wanted. When he gets what he wants (and it is unclear if what he wants is Madeline or Madeline's body) Beaumont's desire is deterritorialized and liberated from its trap. But there is nothing now for him to fix his desire on, and so his desire becomes the return to pre-satisfied and thus trapped desire. He is so distressed that he drinks the zombification medicine Legendre laces his drink with despite knowing that the zombie master is devious. As Beaumont becomes increasingly zombified, his desire becomes increasingly trapped under Legendre's control. His act of self-sacrifice at the end of the movie becomes the only way for him to liberate his trapped desire.

Neil's desire, on the other hand, is trapped in the promise of increased wages, and thus the increased ability to create meaning. Neil is distrustful of Beaumont at first, but he puts his misgivings away when Beaumont promises him employment that pays better than his current job as a bank clerk at Port-au-Prince. Thus, when Neil finds out that he has not only lost his betrothed but also his promise of better employment, he is crushed and resorts to alcohol. Yet his desire remains trapped in Madeline, and so he continues to see visions of her in his drunken state. His desire is so trapped that it almost leads to his death as he confronts the zombie master and his army of zombies. His desire is redeemed, however, by the American missionary doctor, who represents capitalist social relations, and whose intervention saves Neil and Madeline.

Legendre's desire is tied up in the pursuit of power. He attempts to reorganize social relations in ways that allow him to achieve power. He does this by zombifying individuals of status in the community and bending them to his will. The zombies are the ones whose desire has been almost completely eradicated to the point where their desire has been subjugated to that of Legendre. Still, not all of them have given up their

desires, as Legendre tells us that the German zombie is still resisting his zombification (00:29:40). But the desire that triumphs is that of the American missionary doctor who, representing the ‘democratic’ organization of US capitalism, and who has sacrificed thirty years of his life studying and contributing to the Haitian community, comes to save the day through his intervention and set desire right. The doctor is aided in his quest by a local who provides him with information. Thus, because the success of the doctor happened through the aid of the local, the movie justifies the need for the US occupation as a means of organizing desire and re-coding social relations.

In *I Walked with a Zombie*, we see the Oedipal structure and how it traps desire. In the movie, the family is a broken family. The mother, Mrs. Rand is rarely seen. When she is seen, she is among the natives, either practicing voodoo or medicine. Though she is not a doctor, she runs and stays at the “village dispensary” (00:06:45). There are also two absent fathers; Paul Holland’s father, who is dead, and Wesley Rand’s father, the missionary, with Wesley’s father being the most recent (00:07:20). Thus, the triangle is already disturbed, and the sons Paul and Wesley, are left to complete the mommy-daddy-me triangle. Early on in the movie, we see this disturbance visually as Wesley introduces Betsy to the (absent) family members through their seats at the dinner table (00:06:30). He begins with the “master’s chair” at the head of the table, where Paul sits. He then points out Mrs. Rand’s chair which has been placed in the corner because she rarely visits. Wesley idolizes his mother, saying “mother to both of us and much too good for either of us. Too wise, in fact, to live under the same roof” (00:06:40). He then points out his chair and Betsy’s chair. The fifth chair, also abandoned, is Jessica’s chair (00:07:00). Thus, the remaining family members are organized around the dinner table into a triangle with Paul occupying the head of the table.

Paul, married to Jessica, becomes the father in the family. He is serious and demure for most of the film. Even after finding out his wife is a zombie, he continues to hold his serious form, which shows that his attitude is not one of emotional distress but more of subjectivity. Wesley, on the other hand, acts brashly and brazenly, riding in on a horse to meet Betsy (00:19:15). Throughout the movie, he overindulges in alcohol to the point that he passes out (00:22:20). Wesley refers to Paul as “the master” when he is introducing himself to Betsy (00:06:25). He also refers to Paul as “strong and silent and very sad -- quite the Byronic character. Perhaps I ought to cultivate it” (00:08:10). Therefore, Wesley had already set Paul as a target. This subsequently shows that Wesley has the desire to uproot Paul who has taken the father role in the family, which only cements Wesley as the son. But, since the triangle is disturbed with the unavailability of the mother and Paul replacing the father, Jessica, his wife, comes to take the mother’s position in the triangle for Wesley. Thus, this disturbed Oedipal triangle is made up of Paul (daddy), Jessica (mommy), and Wesley (me!). Wesley wants to sleep with Jessica and dispose of Paul. Paul, occupying the role of the father takes on the demeanor of a father. He is also identified as the authority figure in the family by Mrs. Rand who tries to have him intervene in Wesley’s drinking problem by appealing to Betsy (00:24:45). While he initially refuses to remove the whiskey decanter on the dinner table, when we are taken to the dinner scene to a dissolve, we see that there is no decanter on the table (00:25:50). The conversation that ensues between Wesley and Paul further cements Paul’s role as a father. When Wesley asks about the decanter, Paul answers in a fatherly “I think from now on, Wes, we’ll try serving dinner without it” (00:26:45). When Wesley pushes against this removal and mentions Jessica, Paul answers again in a fatherly manner saying “Let’s drop it, Wes. It isn’t considered polite

to quarrel before ladies” (00:27:06). When Wes continues the attack, Paul shuts him down authoritatively. He then dismisses Betsy from the dinner table, despite beginning to develop feelings for her. Thus, the role of the father is not only something he takes on but is also a social role that is imposed on him by the members of the Oedipal triangle.

Betsy falls into the triangle as well. Initially arriving on the island to take care of Jessica, with Jessica zombified and Mrs. Rand absent, she soon comes to take on the role of the mother herself. Recognizing Paul as the father and Wesley as the son, she repeatedly tries to mediate between the two, as we see by her asking Paul to remove the whiskey decanter from the dinner table for Wes’ sake (00:25:20). Later, at the dinner table, Betsy visually completes the triangle, with Paul occupying the “master’s chair”, as Wesley refers to it (00:06:25). When she hears the calypso singer’s song, she shushes Wesley so she can catch the lyrics (00:20:10). It is also to Betsy that Wes appeals when he wants help to set Jessica “free” (01:03:00).

The more the movie progresses, the more we come to see how this triangle has caught the desires of not only its members, but also the people surrounding the family. As we find out from the singing of the calypso singer, it appears that the disturbed relationship between Paul, Wesley, and Jessica is the talk of the town. The calypso singer sings, in pieces, the family’s story, including the parts about Wesley’s courting of Jessica, and of Paul finding out and forbidding Wesley and Jessica from leaving together (00:20:10). His song goes: “She saw the brother and she stole his heart and that’s how the badness and the trouble start Ah woe, ah me Shame and sorrow for the fam-i-ly” (00:22:35). The calypso singer makes his wages from singing these songs. Thus, the disturbed family triangle here literally organizes social relations of production.

Wesley's desire is trapped in wanting to uproot and replace Paul, both as head of the family and as husband to Jessica. He had already courted Jessica when Mrs. Rand found out and decided to intervene. Mrs. Rand's desire is to preserve her family on one hand and become closer to the native Haitians on the other. She brings both desires together in her intervention by zombifying Jessica and thus destroying her desire. Paul's desire is confused; he knows his wife had been courted by his half-brother, and so he is unsure if he wants her back. Throughout the movie, he gradually falls in love with Betsy, but Jessica is still in the picture, and him occupying the position of the father, he cannot abandon Jessica and follow his desire. Betsy's desire, on the other hand, has become trapped by her love for Paul. Acting upon this love, she begins to work, outside of her working hours, to find out more about Jessica's illness. But Betsy, serving as the mother, is available to both Paul and Wesley. Her completing of the Oedipal triangle in Jessica's place produces a change in Wesley's desire where he now wants to appease Betsy. Since Betsy shows a clear desire to help Jessica, Wesley now actively wants to help Jessica. With Betsy fulfilling the Oedipal triangle, Paul is able to abandon Jessica. It is out of this recoding of desire that Wesley drowns himself and Jessica, thus dissolving the old, disturbed Oedipal triangle and liberating the family.

### **C. Conclusion**

The three theories come together to show how, in the ahistorical postmodern age, where art is commodity rather than progress, the postmodern subject must labor to produce wages so that they are able to consume and thus create meaning for themselves within capitalist social relations. With Marx, we see how capitalist social relations commodify labor and depower the laborer; the exploitation of labor is an important

means of producing profit, and since money gives power to its holder, the laborer is forced to sell their bio-power to finance their ability to spend. But, since capitalism operates on an imperfect credit system that often assumes a liquidity that is not achievable, it must constantly seek ways to ensure the continuous production of surplus value. This pursuit of surplus value pushes capitalist ideology into society through the New Deal reforms that extended the Fordist mass-production/mass-consumption model into all of American industry, thus creating an association between the ability to consume with social status via the American Dream. The reforms of the 1930's also set up the perfect economy for the emergence of post-Fordism, a means of organizing production that focuses on flexible and adaptive production lines rather than mass-production. This comes about as a reaction to the scarcity of resources and the saturation of the market with consumer goods. With Jameson, we see how the atrocities of World War II parallel the economic shift from Fordism to post-Fordism with a cultural break: the postmodern break with history as a metanarrative of progress. In the postmodern world, every aspect of life is commodified and thus requires labor to enable its consumption; art becomes ahistorical pastiche, books require intellectual gymnastics to understand, and labor invades leisure time. Deleuze and Guattari show that the need to labor only invades leisure time because of the trapping of desire through capitalist social relations. Effectively trapped within the Oedipal triangle, the postmodern subject is psychically repressed and begins to desire social repression through social law. In brief, the postmodern subject is trapped in the need to labor to produce meaning within capitalist social relations which commodify not only culture but also the postmodern subject's bio-power.

What all four texts I analyze do is place the postmodern subject in an apocalyptic wasteland, thus removing the conditions that allow capitalist social relations to subsist. In *I am Legend*, despite the collapse of society in the zombie apocalypse, Neville laboriously abides by capitalist social relations that he produces within the wasteland. This is in an effort to continue to produce meaning. When his desire is forcibly liberated by the death of his dog and the collapse of his produced social relations, he sees that his desire has no anchoring point anymore and so he seeks his own death. When Anna and Ethan find him, Neville finds a new anchor point for his desire in the Oedipal triangle, but in doing so, he acknowledges the new social relations that the zombies produce in the wasteland. *Warm Bodies* takes the social relations created by the zombie and elaborates on them, this time from the point of view of the zombie. In the movie, the zombie's ultimate desire is to feel alive, which it achieves through consuming the living. Despite acknowledging the brutality of its need to consume to feel alive, it is ambivalent towards the people it consumes. For the zombie, the hunt for and the consumption of brains is just another day in the office. Here we see the parallel between the postmodern subject and the zombie subject as subjects who need to labor to produce meaning. The undeath of both the postmodern subject and the zombie subject is counteracted through the trapping of desire through the production of new social relations in the wasteland. *Stalker* then, despite being a production of 1970's soviet Russia, explores the wasteland and how it allows the postmodern subject to rethink itself and social relations. But this is a harrowing experience, and the three protagonists of the movie suffer greatly for it. Through the traps and mazes of the Zone, Stalker, Professor, and Writer come face to face with their true desire and realize how destructive it is to society. In the end, none of the three dares to enter the Room and

have their deepest desires fulfilled. Still, when they return from the Zone, battered and bruised, Stalker walks away with the desire-exposing legacy of the Zone in the form of the dog, thus effectively bringing the means of revolution against capitalist social relations into the industrial world. But the true revolutionary postmodern subject in *Stalker* is Stalker's daughter who, despite suffering from physical disability, has a liberated mind that can influence the physical world around her. *Fallout 4* then allows us to see how the world-making inheritance of the wasteland allows the player-producer to enact out contained revolutions against capitalism, which then become subsumed as a means of producing capital. In *Fallout 4*, the player is given almost complete agency (restricted only by the coding of the game's software) over the wasteland. This agency, however, is benign as it asks for hundreds of hours of labor in exchange for virtual meaning that is contained within the game instance and that does not translate to any significant outcome outside of the virtual world. However, the video game allows the player-producer to engage with different real-world ideologies in a controlled virtual setting where they can play out their disparate choices and actions repeatedly and virtually consequence-free. Thus, the player-producer is able to revolt against capitalist ideologies, but only within the confines of the video game. The wasteland becomes a land of latent potential for the rethinking of the postmodern subject and capitalist social relations, but that is also equally capable of becoming a trap for desire in and of itself.

While the colonial background of the zombie figure is extremely significant for the understanding of the zombie's history, I choose to take from it how it ties the zombie figure to labor in the wake of the 1915 US occupation of Haiti. As it is increasingly decontextualized by Western media, the zombie stops being the greatest

fear of the Haitian slave and starts developing into true form of the undead postmodern subject; an individual whose meaning is derived purely from labor.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS

#### A. I am Legend

The main pulsion behind this thesis is ideology critique. The impact Fordism had on society established and promoted an ideology of consumption through the idea of the American Dream. Social status, and thus social identity, became defined by the individual's ability to consume. Consumption is in turn only enabled through exchanging one's labor for wages – the alienated price of individual, broken up labor (Buchanan, 58). Thus, the postmodern subject's ability to produce meaning becomes reliant on the subject's exchanging of labor-power for money, which is then used to purchase commodities and capital that allow the subject to sustain the cycle of production-consumption. The movies I have chosen to analyze represent how society's perception of the zombie – i.e., the subject whose meaning is literally derived from consuming others - has changed over the years. *I Am Legend* represents the ideological journey from perceiving the zombie as the antagonized, dehumanized other in US travel literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to a means of blocking and trapping the postmodern subject's desire and hence their becoming of a thinking, feeling subject in contemporary popular productions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Warm Bodies* then repositions the zombie as the postmodern subject's site of identification. However, this transition to internalized identity is only made through the consumption of the other. By consuming the other, the postmodern subject consumes internalized social relations that bring about the internalization of capitalist ideology. It then completes the blocking of the postmodern subject's "becoming" through humanizing the zombie figure and integrating it into society, which, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the society structured through Oedipus.

*I Am Legend*, (loosely) based on the eponymous 1954 book by Richard Matheson, follows the story of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Neville (played by Will Smith) who is brought to New York by the US military to counteract the spread of a virus that is zombifying the state. The viral pandemic occurs when Dr. Alice Krippin re-engineers the measles virus to treat cancer. New York city is ground zero for the outbreak. The movie is set in 2012, but flashbacks take us back to the beginning of the pandemic in 2009. When the US president announces the decision to isolate New York from the rest of the US, Neville attempts to evacuate his wife and daughter on board a military helicopter. The fighter jets carrying out the president's decision by destroying the bridges connecting New York to the US mainland cause a different helicopter to crash into the one evacuating Neville's wife and daughter. Neville's dog Sam is the only other living being to survive the outbreak in New York. Neville soon becomes fixated on curing the virus and spends the years between 2009 and 2012 running experiments on the zombies in an attempt to develop a vaccine using his blood, which he has found out is immune to the virus.

Neville, the lone survivor who is by no mere chance a virologist, is lost in a land where the 'people' around him are all unthinking entities driven by wants. Being so alone in this land of the undead and needing to create a cure for the zombie-plague from his own DNA, he is simultaneously the subject and the object of ideological power. This is evident in that he must literally deconstruct his own DNA to find a cure for the disease, but he can only find the will to do so by placing himself in the structure of a pseudo-society – a society of his own construction that adheres to the laws of the pre-apocalyptic world – thus reviving capitalist social relations that are held together through him, both as subject and as Body without Organs. Neville's goal is seemingly to

resurrect the pre-apocalyptic subject through his own disease-immune DNA, thus effectively saving the ego from the overwhelming objectification and consumerism of society. Yet, Neville himself never escapes the confines of commodity capitalism. Rather, he increasingly invests in it by taking on the identity of the savior and creating a society – a complex system of economic and social relations - that needs his saving. His desire is effectively trapped by the narrative he labors to produce.

There are several very elaborate scenes that show this struggle to create meaning through creating a pseudo-society. The first is in the early stages of the movie where Neville goes out to run errands (00:19:30). The viewer sees Neville drive up to a store with several figures in front of it. As Neville walks up to the store to open the door, the camera, positioned from inside the store looking up at Neville shows us that the figures are mannequins in clothes. He begins a conversation with the mannequins. Inside the store that we now realize is a DVD shop/Blockbuster, we see more mannequins set up as customers (00:19:50). As he walks through the store, Neville greets several of the mannequins before moving to a rack of DVDs where he returns one DVD and takes out another. While looking at the DVD, Neville coyly looks over to a female mannequin set up in front of the adult section. He takes a second to think it over before deciding that it would be best that he not approach the mannequin and heads to the counter. After taking his time in returning a movie he had ‘rented’ and finding the next one on his list, Neville walks up to the counter where the mannequin/cashier Hank is seated, gives it the DVD for it to process in the store’s rental system, and says “I’m halfway through the G’s”. Neville then asks it about the lady-mannequin he is attracted to. Hank, obviously, doesn’t reply, and, having waited long enough for Hank to finish the ‘transaction’, Neville picks up the DVD and says to the mannequin “I’ll see you in the morning”

(00:20:58). As he exits the store, the viewer is left with the understanding that Neville had set up the store to create a semblance of a society in the land of the dead. Needing to create a routine where he has to come to the store every day to return a DVD and pick up a new one as he works through the store's catalogue in alphabetical order is indicative of his need for meaning and how he labors to create it: first he labored to bring in the mannequins and dress them up. Then he had to labor to give himself the need to come back to the store every day. Finally, he needed to labor to make himself believe in this constructed society. And the linchpin of this society and the elements that give order to the chaos are capitalist social relations and the process of exchange; Neville returns a DVD, picks out a new one, pays for it at the cash register, and leaves. Thus, he has meticulously labored to re-establish the social relations through which he produces meaning. This elaborate production of a society through economic exchange is so deliberate and yet so alien that we are simultaneously made to understand the difficulty the lone survivor has experienced but are also alienated from identifying with him. This necessitates a redemption of the character through the introduction of the woman and her son later on in the movie.

As Neville continues his daily routine of foraging and working through the buildings in the city, Neville's dog Sam runs into a zombie-infested building in pursuit of a deer to hunt (00:26:24). So far, the zombies in the movie are shown as savage animals seeking only to prey on the living. As Neville finally escapes the zombies with Sam by running into the daylight, he hatches a plan. He sets a trap for a zombie at the door of the building and catches a female zombie (00:33:00). A male alpha zombie, whose physique is distinct from the other zombies in the movie, emerges from the building as if to run after the female zombie but is prevented from doing so by the

burning light of the sun. Back in his safehouse, Neville runs tests on the zombie and attempts to heal the zombie-subject by injecting it with a vaccine that he had previously tested on an infected rat. After the experiment fails, he records a video log where he talks about the state of zombies. He says:

Mm. A behavioral note, um: An infected male exposed himself to sunlight today. Now, it's possible decreased brain function or the growing scarcity of food is causing them to ignore their basic survival instincts. Social de-evolution appears complete. Typical human behavior is now entirely absent.

Here we see how the zombie is portrayed as a mindless animal seeking only to feed. Yet, Neville is laboring to restore the humanity of these de-socialized zombie-subjects. This is because his desire is still trapped in capitalist social relations. It is as if he *is* capital, removing the organs – the zombies – from their body – their social relations - to reappropriate them for his own. But he is also the Body without Organs, through whom capitalist social relations are preserved. In the tension between the zombie-subject and Neville as reorganizer of social relations, we see Neville become a rethinker of the subject. We also begin to see glimpses of how the zombie is the holder of a latent ‘human’ – i.e., societal – potential. They can be brought back from being economically unproductive objects to being social subjects whose labor is productive for Neville – and for capitalism.

Later, as Neville is driving with Sam, he spots Fred, one of the mannequins from the storefront in the middle of the open road (00:46:35). Neville is instantly disturbed and begins shouting at the mannequin. He steps out of the car and looks at the

mannequin in disbelief. Neville refuses to believe that Fred is here. His presence disrupts the social order he has labored to re-produce. He goes back to the car, pulls out his weapon, and confronts Fred. “If you are real, you better tell me right now” he screams at the mannequin. He then shoots Fred ‘dead’. And yet he is not relieved when the mannequin dies; he knows that the normalcy has been disturbed irrevocably, and that the social order has been shattered. As he begins to realize that the mannequin was moved by the zombies, Neville panics and moves into a trap the alpha zombie had set up for him using the same tools he used to trap the female zombie, emptying his weapon into the surrounding buildings. His assumption that the zombies had undergone total de-socialization prevents him from considering that they could have set up something so elaborate – that they could have desired and produced. When Neville finally wakes up (00:51:00) and attempts to flee, the alpha zombie emerges and unleashes a pack of infected dogs that bite and infect Sam. The male zombie displays signs of intelligence through premeditated and meticulous planning. We find out that Sam is short for Samantha, and that Sam is a girl. They finally escape, and Neville attempts to heal the dog with the vaccine, but to no avail.

Neville’s inability to comprehend what was happening throughout the scene rests here on the mannequin. The mannequin allows Neville to displace his own alienation. It acts as the unresponsive and powerless receiver of Neville’s anger and the passive experiencer of events within this pseudo-society. Like the viewer, it is the image that represents Neville’s produced society, just as mannequins today function to display an ideal capitalist image. It can only sit there and take it. Neville’s breakdown and his reliance on the constructed social space to produce meaning is not only a sign of a degrading mental state. In a world of unthinking lovers of violence and destruction, the

lone thinker has gone mad and has created for himself a society of inanimate figures that he uses to construct meaning, a society of 'people' that allow him to survive in a land of mindless consumption. However, when an outsider – and the viewer here is put in the position of an outsider – disrupts the routine within this constructed society, The lone survivor is visibly upset at having reality re-imposed on his production of meaning. His process of producing meaning is shattered. The safe place, as we notice for Neville, is not his childhood bedroom, nor is it the house he shared with his wife and daughter but is rather a constructed society where the figures he coexists with share a similar drive, where his attempt at survival in the land of the dead is enhanced through his engagement with 'people' who allow him, through his own labor, to create a socio-economic simulacrum. We see this even further in how Neville enters the DVD store at the beginning of the movie not to scavenge what he needs, but rather to fulfill a capitalist social relation. Neville, as a consumer, abides by the now-nonexistent rules of the DVD store by only taking one DVD at a time. When he does rent a DVD, he 'processes' the DVD with Hank the cashier/mannequin. It is as if by maintaining capitalist social relations, Neville is separating himself from the zombies that – to him - follow no order or law and that eat whatever they want whenever they want – even if that meant eating each other. Through this construction of a pseudo-society, Neville gives himself an opportunity to create meaning. But Neville knows that these mannequins are not real humans, as we see in his panic at Fred being moved. Neville knows that Fred was moved by the zombies whose only objective, it seems, is to fight and eat since they are driven to consume without really needing to. Thus, he knows that he has desired the repression of his desire. The meaning he creates in the land of the undead is jeopardized, and so Neville is outraged. In a world where the normal is

consumption and chaos, Neville finds himself working to create a meaning for survival outside this narrative, which in turn causes a hostile reaction from the zombies. It is as if Neville had never left the capitalist system, only in New York after the cataclysm, there are no Oedipalizing structures that force the zombies to reign in their raw desire. Neville, on the other hand, can still control his aggression, and he uses it to be productive against what he perceives as the mindless consumption of the zombies and against their unrepressed desire by attempting to create a vaccine. By maintaining his 'humanness' Neville attempts to remain a rethinker of the subject, but his very efforts in turn pull him back into the need to consume, though now his consumption is ideological. It hinges on the produced social relations of his pseudo-society and on the identity of the savior he constructs for himself.

We see the fall of Neville's pseudo society more clearly when Neville returns to the store after Sam dies. After burying his dog in anguished silence (00:57:00), Neville drives his jeep down an empty street and stops in the middle of it as the camera pans out and up to take in the dead and desolate street. The shot emphasizes Neville's isolation by making him appear small and alien in comparison to the desolate land he inhabits. Neville then comes back to the store to talk to the lady he had a crush on. "I promised my friend that I would say hello to you today" he says to the mannequin. He had previously promised Sam that he would talk to the mannequin. "Hello. Hello. Please say hello to me. Please say hello to me" he says as he breaks down in tears. Neville's produced reality shattered. He has lost the only other living being in New York city, and yet he comes back to the store, the focal point of his produced meaning, to verify if the illusion is truly broken. As the zombie begins to show signs of evolution, Neville's order falls apart. This creates a crisis for Neville. His desire is liberated from the

ideological trap of his pseudo-society and now has nowhere to go. It is accustomed to repression. Without social repression to validate his psychic repression, and without his constructed social relations, his final desire is the death of all desire.

It is at this point, when Neville has given up and is now working towards his death that he meets his redeemers. After Neville is rescued by Anna and Ethan in the wake of his suicide attempt (01:02:00) and is brought back to his house, there is a scene where life seems to have returned to normal; Anna is making breakfast and Ethan is eating. As Neville awakens, he is not relieved by this momentary return to normalcy but is rather mistrustful and skeptical of it. He sits down to eat and notices that Anna has cooked the last of the bacon. "I'm afraid the eggs are powdered. Obviously, you know that. They're yours. But I did find bacon, which is about the most fantastic thing in history" says Anna as she begins to tell Neville about their plan to go to Vermont where there is a "colony of people who didn't get sick". Neville freaks out at this news, as if it further threatens his sense of meaning. "Shut up! Shut up! Everybody's dead. Everybody is dead. I just need. I need a minute. Okay? Just. I just. I was saving that bacon" he says before he leaves the room. With Anna and Ethan, we see the return of the Oedipal triangle. Neville finds again a trap for his desire, moves to solidify the triangle through aggression, and uses the bacon to justify the irrationality of his actions.

After Neville calms down, he comes back to the living room where Ethan is watching the first *Shrek* movie. As Ethan is watching the movie, Neville begins reciting dialogue that happens between Shrek and Donkey in a scene where Shrek beats up Farquard's soldiers and is then commended by Donkey for fighting against the oppressive authority of the tyrant.

By the order of Lord Farquaad I am authorized to place you both under arrest and transport you to a designated resettlement facility.

Oh, really? You and what army?

[Beating up commences]

(...)

Man, it's good to be free.

Now, why don't you go celebrate your freedom with your own friends?

I don't have any friends. And I'm not going out there by myself. Wait a minute. I got a great idea. I'll stick with you! You a mean, green fighting machine. Together we'll scare the spit out of anybody that crosses us.

I like Shrek.

By reciting here word for word the dialogue between Shrek and Donkey, Neville shows how leisure is also labor. His character is put under the spotlight and Neville is shown to be (1) skeptical of authority, (2) defiant, (3) a loner who doesn't "have any friends", and (4) a rebel who decided to stay in New York despite recommendations he do otherwise. In his defiance and skepticism, Neville attempts to challenge the conditions of existence within a society where consumption – and thus the labor for wages - is meaning. In his identification with Shrek, Neville appears as the loner who creates in his safe zone – his swamp – an area that is free of the consuming other. To reclaim this safe area for himself from the rich, Shrek must save the princess. Similarly, to save the postmodern subject, Neville sees that he needs to save the world. Neville has

created the illusion for himself in the made-up world of mannequins. The fragility of this created world is made manifest in his quickness to deny all of Anna's claims of a possibility of life continuing past this point; there is no return to a meaningful society after the plague. He needs to save the people of New York. "This is ground zero. This is my site. I'm not gonna let this happen. I can still fix this" he says, first to his wife in a flashback and later to Anna. And yet, the most consistent activity we see Neville carry out is sending out a radio broadcast to any potential survivors in the area. Thus, we see the tension in Neville between wanting to re-produce capitalist social relations and wanting to move on to a new social relation. In this sense, Neville is the last post-modernist since his desire remains trapped in capitalist ideology, and he continues to labor in order to re-produce capitalist social relations. So far, the zombie is the enemy for Neville as it represents the de-socialization of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism and its resocialization under a new set of social relations.

Neville's redemption happens through Ethan and Anna – and thus through the Oedipus triangle – in the alternative ending of the movie. After Neville and Anna come to a sort of agreement, the alpha zombie attacks the house with a horde of zombies (01:22:00). As Neville, Anna, and Ethan are driven deeper and deeper into the house looking for shelter, they end up gathering in the containment room with the female zombie Neville was experimenting on. After the latest experiments, she had begun to show signs of being cured. Yet, when the zombies end up cornering them, Neville comes to understand that the alpha zombie wants to save his female companion, and all of his efforts so far, each showing how he has evolved in intelligence, are indicative of his *desire*. When Neville understands this, he exits the experimentation room to go revive the female zombie. "I'm listening" he tells Anna, but not to a divine voice that

tells him to chase rumors, but rather to social relations that are apparent among the zombies. He reverses the treatment on the female zombie and brings her out to the male zombie. The male zombie prevents the other zombies from attacking Neville as he administers an adrenaline shot that awakens the female zombie. In the Novel, after Neville is captured by the half human half zombie group and he gets to see how they are an evolutionary step of humans adapting to the virus, Neville thinks to himself that the undead whose myths he had been researching throughout the book are the new normal and that the social relations he has labored to re-produce are the obsolete leftovers of a different time. In both the book and the movie, after laboring to re-produce capitalist social relations, Neville comes to realize that the antagonized zombie-subject represents a different set of social relations. Thus, Neville comes to accept the zombie as a living, and most critically, a *desiring* and *thinking* entity that carries its own social relations. Thus, the zombie completes the transition into an entity that is to be identified with rather than antagonized, and – at least for Neville - humans become a myth – a legend – to be later passed down by generations of zombies.

The switch in identification in *I Am Legend* is much more evident in the movie *Warm Bodies* (2013), where the zombie is the protagonist and the object of identification, and the human hunting the undead is turned into the antagonist. Of course, the zombie and the human are both redeemed in the end. In *Warm Bodies*, we see the apocalypse – i.e. the postmodern condition in late-stage capitalism - from the perspective of the zombie, and what does it look like? Empty and boring.

## B. Warm Bodies

The movie begins with R, the young adult zombie protagonist, walking around in an airport in the aftermath of the apocalypse. All around him are zombies. Some are walking around while others seem to be working. The opening monologue R beings with perfectly captures the human condition in late-stage capitalism through the use of several cliches. He says:

What am I doing with my life? I'm so pale. I should get out more. I should eat better. My posture is terrible. I should stand up straighter. People would respect me more if I stood up straighter. What's wrong with me? I just want to connect. Why can't I connect with people? Oh, right. It's because I'm dead. I shouldn't be so hard on myself. I mean, we're all dead.

Before knowing that the protagonist is a zombie, the opening monologue seems to describe the life of the postmodern everyman, stuck slouched over a computer screen all day, barely seeing the sun, making no connections with others as he runs from home to work and from work to home, subsisting on self-help cliches – which are in and of themselves a complicated form of consumption. “I’m dead”, then, does not only signify that the protagonist is a zombie, but also that all different aspects of his ‘life’ are also dead, just as the postmodern subject is robbed of their agency through capitalism. *Warm Bodies* describes late-stage capitalism through the eyes of the postmodern subject. It takes the zombie as its protagonist and object of identification so that it can, through the zombie’s biological death of the subject, comment on the social, intellectual, and spiritual disconnect of the laborer in late-stage capitalism. R continues,

I wish I could introduce myself, but I don't remember my name anymore. I mean, I think it started with an "R", but that's all I have left. I can't remember my name, or my parents, or my job. Although my hoodie would suggest I was unemployed. Sometimes I look at the others and try to imagine what they were. You were a janitor. You were the rich son of a corporate CEO. You were a personal trainer. And now you're a Corpse.

As R says this, we see him pass through a security gate where a zombie-TSA agent scans him with a handheld scanner, then we see a zombie-janitor mopping. The movie takes us, through a romanticized sepia flashback, to a time when the zombie janitor was alive, had on a pair of Walkman headphones, and was mopping the floor. It then takes us, as R identifies the rich kid, to a sepia flashback of him getting into an expensive sports car. Finally, it takes us to a flashback of the fitness trainer in a busy gym. R is incapable of introducing himself because he does not have a recollection of himself, and yet, the only way he chooses to identify himself and the zombies is through their previous occupations. Here we see how intertwined the ideology of late-stage capitalism is in the postmodern subject; it survives the subject into death, and identity and meaning are derived from labor.

Walking into a busy part of the airport, he says "This is a typical day for me. I shuffle around occasionally bumping into people, unable to apologize or say much of anything". He is taken to a flashback of the airport during a pre-apocalypse Christmas where people, perpetually on their phones, continue to shuffle and occasionally bump into each other, unable to communicate. He says, "It must have been so much better before, when everyone could express themselves, and communicate their feelings and just enjoy each other's company". Thus, the movie juxtaposes the shuffling and inability

to communicate of the undead with the shuffling and inability to communicate of the postmodern human. But while the zombie is incapable of communicating because of a biological condition, the postmodern human is incapable of communicating because they are caught in a socio-economic condition created through the cycle of production and consumption.

Then, as if to accentuate the absurdity of the similarity between the zombie and postmodern subject, R references *Waiting for Godot* by saying “lot of us have made our home here at this airport. I don't know why. People wait at airports, I guess, but I'm not sure what we're all waiting for”. And so, from the first two minutes of the movie, the postmodern laborer is equated to the postapocalyptic zombie. Throughout the movie, the postmodern subject and the zombie are continually brought together.

The movie accentuates the bringing together of the zombies and humans by introducing a third party, the “Bonies” (00:02:40), into the movie to act as the movie’s ‘true’ antagonists thereby allowing for the redemption of the zombies and their acceptance as part of living society. The Bonies are a group of decayed zombies that “just [gave] up”, according to R. They have let go of the final vestiges of their humanity and now exist solely to consume. “They'll eat anything with a heartbeat” says R, “I mean, I will too, but at least I'm conflicted about it”. And so, R differentiates between types of consumption, as if to legitimate his form of consumption through a moral ideology that is tied to it. Yet, this descent into mindless consumption is the ultimate destiny of all the zombies, and subsequently of all the postmodern subjects, and thus is the ultimate representation of the desire driving them to consume.

As R continues his pursuit of meaning, he eventually returns to his home in an airplane (00:04:10) where he has hoarded a large number of items, including bobble-head figurines, musical instruments, records, and a record player. Though unaware of the value of the items, R still feels compelled to spend time finding and collecting these items in his airplane/room. This is reminiscent of the home of Lulu Massa in *The Working Class Goes to Heaven* (1971), where the workers live to convert their labor-hours into commodities of value. As Lulu goes through a mental breakdown, he sorts through the items he has hoarded in his home and ‘values’ the commodities he has purchased in terms of labor-hours. But the commodities in R’s plane are artifacts of a history that no longer exists. In the plane, R puts on a romantic song, sits back in a reclining airplane seat, and attempts to sleep, despite being biologically incapable of sleep (00:04:32)! Thus, the undead zombie parodies the actions of the living, just like Bub in *Day of the Dead*, and just as the postmodern subject parodies history by attempting to create meaning through consumption and constantly failing to do so. When he introduces us to his best friend (00:05:00) and they attempt to communicate, the only words they can share with each other are those related to their need for consumption. “Hungry” says R, and “city” says his best friend. And so, meaning continues to be created through labor and consumption. Thus, we see the postmodern cynicism and doubting of meaning being brought to parallel the need to create meaning through ahistorical consumption of commodities.

When we are introduced to the young-adult human survivors (00:07:00), their conversations continue the parallel between the zombie and the postmodern subject. As they stand in front of a big brother-like screen listening to a recording of their leader, they doubt the meaning of their forays into the land of the dead; “no one believes in a

cure anymore Jules” says Perry, the boyfriend of the movie’s female protagonist and the daughter of the camp’s leader (00:07:08). When her father warns them about the zombies, saying that “corpses look human, they are not. They do not think. They do not bleed. Whether they were your mother or your best friend, they are beyond your help. They are uncaring, unfeeling, incapable of remorse”, his daughter’s reply is “Sound like anyone you know, Dad?”, implying that the father, and thus by extension the survivors, are more like zombies than they realize. Yet, for the older generation, the generation that still believes in the nationalistic ideologies of the past (“God bless America”), meaning is in the young survivors who they see as “a critical part of what stands between us and extinction” (00:07:48).

As the young survivors enter the no-man’s-land beyond the wall separating the human settlement from the zombie wasteland, we continue to see the parallel between the human survivors and the zombies come to the fore, first through Julie’s friend saying that the apocalyptic wasteland is “sweet” (00:08:10), then through the cuts mirroring the zombie group walking into the city to the group of young adults doing the same. When the survivors arrive at their destination, the first thing one of them does is pull-out a handheld video game console and begin to play a shooting game (00:09:45). Thus, the young survivors are not afraid of the apocalypse, they are ambivalent to it, as are the zombie-workers who continue to go about their daily lives. As the zombie group walks through the city, we come across the last newspaper headline that reads “the end?” (00:09:10). And so, we are placed in a time outside of history. This a-historicity, coupled with the sarcastic tone of the movie so far and the ambivalence of both the main character and the adolescent human survivors to the apocalypse further represents the postmodern condition.

The two groups finally meet when the group of shuffling zombies enters the lab the adolescents are scavenging medicine from (00:11:30). It is in the meeting of the two that R finally succeeds at creating meaning, but he only does so through the consumption of the living other. As soon as R sees Julie in the lab, he becomes instantly attracted to her. This attraction, however, is not strong enough to overcome his hunger. "I'm not proud of this [...] I don't like hurting people, but this is the world now. The new hunger is a very powerful thing" says R as he prepares to eat Perry. The new zombie hunger R mentions, as opposed to the old human hunger, represents desire that is de-socialized and thus liberated from repression. It wants to feed and is fed without inhibition. R's remaining "humanness", however, gives him pause, and so he feels the need to justify the fulfillment of his unadulterated desire. Before beginning his meal, however, he takes a moment to appreciate Perry's watch, which would make a great addition to the commodities he has hoarded in his plane. "If I don't eat all of him, if I spare his brain, he'll rise up and become a Corpse like me. But if I do, I get his memories, his thoughts, his feelings. I'm sorry, I just can't help it. The brain's the best part. The part that makes me feel human again" (00:12:00) says R as he begins eating Perry. Here again we see R attempt to justify his mindless need to consume through an ideology he has constructed that humanizes what he does, however this time, we see it directly link to his desire to be human, "to feel a little less dead", which is only achieved through the consumption of a living individual, and which further solidifies him as the dead postmodern consumer.

R's humanization is enabled by his consuming of Perry's brain and memories, but it is catalyzed by the connection the memories give him to Julie. As R stuffs the rest of Perry's brain in his pockets for later consumption (00:14:20), he is compelled to find

and defend Julie. The zombie, perceiving itself come to life in the memories of the person it consumed, seeks to fulfill the desires in the memories and thus begins to attach value to possessing the deceased man's girlfriend and works towards becoming the object of her affection. The desire, at this point in the movie, is strictly R's desire to possess Julie, and though their relationship develops into a typical romance throughout the movie, it continues to be grounded in commodity fetishism and the desire to consume. R's desires here are literally not his desires, as they come from consuming Perry's brain and subsequently Perry's desires. The desires are produced through the consumption of ideology, and so we see the complete objectification of the subject. At the same time, these foreign desires become the zombie's *raison d'être*, thus allowing him to create meaning out of his desiring-production, which leads to the trapping of his desire. Hence, the humanization of the zombie only occurs in the trapping of desire in a capitalist social relation, and a correlation is formed between consumption, desire, and being human. R only becomes human in the process of moving from a legitimate, inclusive synthesis of disjunction to an illegitimate, and exclusive synthesis of disjunction through the relationship with Julie.

We see R's desire to possess Julie almost instantly; first he covers her in his scent, the scent of the undead (00:15:30), then he takes her to the airplane cabin where he hoards all of his possessions (00:17:10). In the airplane, R tries to communicate with Julie, but since she is still shocked, he tells her that he will not eat her and heads to the cockpit where he decides to continue eating Perry's brain. "Maybe I could have thought this through a little more. But I can tell when a girl needs her space. There's a lot of ways to get to know a person. Eating her dead boyfriend's brains is one of the more unorthodox methods" (00:19:00). Having no other narrative to associate with, R

consumes Perry's identity through an external identifier that is his relationship to Julie. As R comes to acknowledge this desire in himself, his heart begins to beat again (00:24:10). Thus, to live becomes to possess and consume. The next day, when Julie tries to escape and is sniffed out by the roaming zombies, R saves her by again putting his scent on her and asking her to "be dead" (00:27:30). After R saves Julie from her failed escape attempt and brings her back to his airplane, he begins to show her his affection through allowing her to consume the commodities he had hoarded in the plane (00:27:50).

As R and Julie share in the consumption of commodities, the relationship between them, between captive and captor, begins to grow. R lets her drive the BMW sports car he has claimed, then they listen to the vinyl discs he has collected. And why has R collected so much vinyl discs? Because it sounds "more alive" (00:33:10). Yet, vinyl discs are artifacts of an era that is dead and gone. Thus, the fetishization of the past and its ahistorical consumption through fetish commodities further solidifies both R and Julie as the postmodern dead. And so again, R affirms that his feeling of being alive comes from consumption and commodity fetishism. This is further emphasized when Julie finds a *Zombi 2* DVD and puts it up against R's face in comparison.

Up until this point, R has no name. He is just a zombie who, like the other zombies, roams the airport and the city pursuing mindless consumption. As Julie begins to accept that her zombie-captor is not as bad as she thinks, she begins to acknowledge his subjectivity and asks for his name (00:29:40). Failing to give a full name, they both agree on the name R. This new label then acts as an identity marker that functions to acknowledge R's humanness and thus set him apart from the other undead.

When Julie falls asleep after they go on a consumption spree, R again goes back to eating Perry's brain, but this time, he sees Perry's final moments in a nightmare-like vision. R physically recoils as he is disgusted by consuming the final bits of Perry's brain, and he ends up spitting it out (00:39:04). The more time the zombie spends with the girlfriend, the more exclusive their relationship becomes, and so the more human he becomes. When R's best friend M (short for Marcus) finally realizes that Julie is alive, and after R 'explains' the situation, M comes to R and Julie's rescue (00:41:00). Later, when M takes them to the BMW, the couple are confronted by a group of zombies. As the group begins to walk towards Julie, R holds her hand, and so the zombies, looking in stunned silence, understand what is happening and allow them to pass (00:42:30). Thus, as R is humanized through the relationship with Julie, the transformation extends to his fellow zombies whose hearts begin to beat again (00:48:30), and who at the end of the movie begin to re-integrate into human society. Yet, this transformation happens exclusively as a consequence of consumption. The prerequisite for R's humanization is that he eat Perry's brain. And though the relationship with Julie appears to be what humanizes him, it itself is a cultural commodity that allows R to conform to an image of the American dream. This is further emphasized by R's zombie friends who come to realize their humanity by staring at a advertising image of a couple holding hands (00:48:00).

Furthermore, the relationship does not only impact R and his friends. It also changes Julie, who by extension influences her human friends, like R does with his zombie friends. Despite suspecting that it was R who murdered and ate Perry (00:52:00), Julie continues to invest in the relationship with R. Early in the movie, she compares her dad to the zombies (00:07:30). When she returns to her society, she

returns halfheartedly (00:59:00). Back in her house talking to her friend, Julie continues to think about R and the zombies (1:05:30). Here again we see similarity between the human and the zombie; Julie is changed by her consumption of R just as he is changed through his consumption of her – and her boyfriend. Furthermore, when R comes back to see Julie, we see the postmodern incredulity towards history. When Julie talks to her dad about the zombies, his response to her is “what's happening is every day there are more of them and less of us. They are not curing themselves. We're their food source. They are not becoming vegan. Okay? They don't eat broccoli. They eat brains, your mother's, and your boyfriend's included” (01:16:00). But Julie does not acknowledge the violent history between humans and zombies. She is ambivalent to the death of her boyfriend and is not impacted by the death of her mother. She does not subscribe to *this* metanarrative. What she cares about is herself and her enjoyment of consumption.

*Warm Bodies* functions as an effective criticism of capitalist social relations. Society in the movie is striated. The humans are the elite royalty living in a gated community. The zombies are the working class who need to work even in undeath to survive. The Bonies are the lumpen-proletariat, the class that is sacrificed to bring the middle class into solidarity with the elite. During the final fight (01:18:00), the zombies are brought together with the humans through a conflict with the Bonies, the unthinking beings that would eat anything with a heartbeat. By sacrificing the Bonies, the zombies are able to reclaim their socio-economic status, and thus, by the end of the movie, the humans and the zombies re-produce capitalist social relations. This is only possible, however, through the trapping of the new hunger – the zombie's un-Oedipalized desire – through the illegitimate exclusive synthesis of disjunction that R undergoes. This awakens in the zombies a nostalgia for a time when they could labor to produce

meaning. This resocialization is achieved through the bringing down of the wall (01:31:25) separating human society from the zombie wasteland, thus joining the zombies and the humans together as the dead postmodern subject. Through the imagery of the wall, the movie equates the bringing together of the zombies and the humans through a shared antagonization of the Bonies to the bringing together of the West and East Germans through a shared hatred of immigrants. Though late to be a commentary on the state of post-wall German affairs, the usage of wall imagery functions here as a commentary of the state of cultural/economic affairs; the zombie is only humanized through the othering and antagonization of one entity and the consumption of the other, and so the human is only human by virtue of their ability to consume and other.

Between *I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies*, the zombie undergoes a journey of transformation. In *I am Legend*, it starts out as the antagonist; the inhuman, socially devolved consumer that seeks out food only for the sake of mindless consumption. It then becomes the dramatic anti-hero that seeks to create its own set of social relations. It continues the journey in *Warm Bodies* where it becomes the unlikely – and also undead – protagonist that is looking for meaning but not finding it anywhere. Finally, through its pursuit of meaning – meaning that is only achieved through consumption – the zombie is again humanized in the re-production of capitalist social relations. And so, similarly, the viewer goes through a transformation of identification from identifying with the scientist attempting to prevent mindless consumption to identifying with the zombie that satisfies its desires through consumption – both of whom end up Oedipalized under capitalist ideology. Thus, the points of identification in both movies end up at the same place; the ideology of capitalism through capitalist social relations. Neville comes to understand this at the end of the movie (and more accurately at the end

of the book), when he realizes that his quest for meaning is denying meaning to the zombie, who is also creating meaning through consumption. The re-socialization of the zombie is more pronounced in *Warm Bodies* as the humanness of the zombie and its creation of meaning is wholly reliant on its consumption of another. And yet, the process of identification is not hindered by the zombie's consumption of another, which, in today's world would be tantamount to identifying with a murderer. But the zombie is not placed in today's world. It exists in the post-apocalyptic wasteland of late-stage capitalism, where the lack of laws that repress desire allows the postmodern subject to reshape social structure. Despite this, the postmodern subject always ends up in capitalist social relations, as we will see with *Stalker* and *Fallout 4*.

### **C. Stalker**

*I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies* use zombies to show how the postmodern subject has come to accept that, in the conditions of late-stage capitalism, meaning is derived from the cycle of production and consumption. Yet, these two narratives are only able to show this transition by taking place in an apocalyptic wasteland. The wasteland plays an important role in de-socializing the subject and thus creates the conditions for rethinking the relationship between the subject and society. *Stalker* and *Fallout 4* place larger emphasis on the post-apocalyptic wasteland, which allows us to see how futile this attempt is, first through the imposition of power dynamics that restrict and direct, and second through the illusion of choice, both of which are key elements of the ideology of consumer capitalism.

*Stalker*, directed by Tarkovsky in the late 1970's, is the only Russian production that this thesis analyses. And while its Russian origin might set it up as a criticism of life in the USSR – which, to some degree, it is through its reference to gulag imagery – the universality of its themes significantly contributes to this reading of the death of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism. This is due to two things: Tarkovsky's intentionality with the movie, and the de-socialization nature of the apocalyptic wasteland.

Andrei Tarkovsky comes from a literary family; his father and grandfather were both poets, and his mother nurtured his artistic and literary abilities from a young age (Martin, 14 – 15). In 1954, Tarkovsky began to study cinematography at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, where he studied under Mikhail Romm, a member of the communist party and an unorthodox teacher (Martin, 17 – 18). During the time he was studying cinematography, Russia was coming out of the “numbing trauma of Stalinism” (Green, 13). Khrushchev, having denounced Stalinism upon Stalin's death in 1953, had set policies that would create a liberal cultural climate in Russia. This cultural climate, where censorship was less repressive and Russia was more open to the West, would last from the mid-50's to the mid-60's and would come to be known as the Thaw (Martin, 24). While studying cinematography, Tarkovsky was exposed to many of the great productions from outside of the Soviet Union. He also studied many of the great Western filmmakers like Orson Welles, John Ford, Akira Kurosawa, and Jean Renoir, and consequently was exposed to several cinematic movements, including French New Wave, Italian Neorealism, and Japanese new cinema (Martin, 18 – 19). Thus, having studied during “the most liberal cultural climate in the Soviet Union for 30 years” and having developed such a diverse oeuvre allowed Tarkovsky to approach filmmaking as

a universal (Martin, 24). This in turn earned Tarkovsky great success overseas.

Tarkovsky's international success began early in his career, with his first professional piece, *The Steamroller and the Violin* winning first place at the New York Student Film Festival in 1961 (Martin, 19).

While Tarkovsky had begun his career as a filmmaker in the late years of the Thaw, he would make most of his films in the return to repressive, "Neo-Stalinist" censorship under Brezhnev (Pearson, 67). Tarkovsky fought tenaciously against the censorship and recommendations of Goskino, a committee that oversaw all of filmmaking in the USSR (Martin, 22 – 23). His struggle against the restrictive policies of the Brezhnev regime and his "response to the Soviet application of Marxist theory" would influence his productions for the rest of his career (Pearson, 67 – 68).

Tarkovsky was notoriously against interpretation. He saw that films are an "emotional experience", and thus a viewer of a Tarkovsky film did not need to understand his references to understand the movie (Martin, 34). He differentiated between images and symbols and stated that his movies were made up of images (Martin, 35). Symbols, for him, were dangerous since "once a person thinks they have understood or explained a symbol, they cease to have an active relationship with it, and the symbol effectively dies" (Martin, 35). He was also very intentional with his movies. With *Stalker*, for example, while the film was based on the Strugatsky brothers' *Roadside Picnic*, and while the brothers were both hired to write the screenplay, Tarkovsky rewrote the script to such an extent that the Strugatskys said "We are not the scriptwriters, he [Tarkovsky] did it all – alone" (Strugatsky brothers, as qtd in Martin, 151). *Stalker* was also intentionally set in an unknown industrial country, the town in *Stalker* could pass for any number of industrial countries in the world (Martin, 153).

Tarkovsky's resistance to interpretation, his international oeuvre, and his intentionality allow Tarkovsky's movies to represent the universal human condition.

*Stalker* itself becomes a response to the "catastrophic state of the world and the desire to avert the looming apocalypse" (Martin, 152). Yet, the film does not present the viewer with a delusional optimism. The despair and defeat that Tarkovsky captures in the trio of main characters represents Tarkovsky's understanding that "that it would take a colossal effort and the signs for this did not look good" (Martin, 158). Furthermore, the movie presents us with two wastelands – the industrial and the post-apocalyptic – both seemingly produced by man rather than by an alien visitation (Martin, 158). Thus, the film represents an incredulity not only towards narratives of the state through its references to the repression of post-Thaw Soviet regime, but also to the postmodern human condition.

The movie follows three main characters named after their professions - Stalker, Professor, and Writer - as they venture into a post-apocalyptic wasteland known as "the Zone". The Zone is a part of town that was devastated by an extraterrestrial phenomenon that wiped out the town's inhabitants. It is unclear what was in the town, but we find out later through the movie that the Zone hosted science labs (01:55:00) and military personnel (00:50:00). An early screen in the movie tells us that scientists are unsure about what created the zone. Some speculate that it was a meteorite or an alien visit (00:03:45). Still, whatever happened left residue in the Zone that proved fatal to any who would later venture into it unknowingly (Green, 94). After the initial military exploration teams were lost to the Zone, the Zone was cordoned off. Over time, the rumors around the Zone and the scarcity of information about it created a mythical ethos for the Zone that made it attractive to thrill seekers. Rumors began to spread about "the

Room”, a room in the Zone that would grant people’s innermost wishes. People began to hire Stalkers, social outcasts whose profession it was to navigate the Zone, and whose absorption of the Zone’s radiation impacted their health and the health of their loved ones, to help them enter and explore the cordoned area. Herein lies the crux of the movie; the attraction created by the otherness of the Zone. The Zone is so other to industrial society that it forces the characters into an undefined space where they must labor to produce. Given the chance to rethink the subject and remold society, the characters find that they are incapable of overcoming their own socially constructed identities and so cannot come to a new idea of society beyond that which is already engrained in them as objects of socio-economic conditions. As they reach the threshold of the Room, Stalker, Professor, and Writer all decide against entering and so sit at the doorless threshold, framed by it, but always lying outside of it.

In *Stalker*, Tarkovsky creates a clear contrast between the modern industrial world and the apocalyptic wasteland through sound and color. He deprives the industrial world of color and leaves it in sepia. Almost all of the shots taken in the industrial world are dingy, colorless, and depressed. Wetness engulfs most spaces. The bar floor is wet (00:02:00), Stalker’s bedroom floor is wet (00:04:20), and most of the city is wet (00:13:00, 00:16:30, 00:21:45). Lights swell and ultimately die. The sounds of industrial machines are loud and invasive. The sound of the train passing by the family home invades the most private part of the household – the family bedroom (00:05:30). Not only is the bedroom invaded by the noise, but also by the reverberations of the machine engine, the intensity of which moves the glass of water on the bedroom nightstand. Later on, the sounds of the cars, the sirens, and the bullets are all loud. The lights and sounds of the alarm disorient not only the viewer, but also the military personnel

protecting the checkpoint so that their bullets destroy the cargo being carried by their supply train (00:31:00). Wherever we go in the sepia world, things are glum and cold. For our main characters, the refuge in the sepia world is the bar, and they only meet there to plot their entry into the zone (00:15:00) or to regroup after the Zone defeats them (02:24:00). The slimy wetness, the lack of color, and the darkness prevalent in the industrial world create a lethargic and oppressive atmosphere. In the industrial world, our characters are alienated from the land. The socio-economic system weighs on the characters, robbing them of their agency and their subjectivity.

We see this lack of agency in our three characters. In the industrial world, Stalker is a deadbeat and an outcast. He constantly abandons his family. He has spent years in jail, so many years that his daughter is not yet used to him. He refuses to find a regular job (00:10:40). His otherness is such a literal part of him that it has seeped through his DNA into his daughter who is “a mutant, a so-called Zone victim. They say she has no legs” (00:43:00). In the industrial world, everywhere for him is a prison, including the family house (00:11:50). He antagonizes his wife. She does not understand him. She wants him to find a decent job, but he is not of the industrial world. In the industrial world, he is a zombie, and his victim is his wife (00:11:15).

Writer is a drunk, a womanizer, and a cynic. When we first meet him, he is drunkenly chatting to a lady about the mundaneness of life with a bottle and a cigarette in his hands (00:13:20). He is so drunk he slips walking up the bar stairs (00:16:10). He is a writer who thinks there is no sense writing about anything (00:18:00). Thus, he is already living a contradictory, meaning-deprived life. He seldom thinks because thinking is bad for him (00:19:00). Later on, in the Zone, Writer shares that “nobody needs me. I wanted to change them, but they've changed me to fit their own image”

(01:49:12). He tried to impact change but failed and became a subject of social authority rather an author of it. Yet Writer continues to write. “I write about my readers” (00:17:50), he says to scientist. But writer is wealthy and leads an indulgent lifestyle. Thus, Writer becomes the half-schizoid; he is aware his desire is trapped in the process of production but cannot escape it. He must sell his labor for wages that he can use to continue living his indulgent lifestyle.

The last of the trio, Professor, does not share much about himself in the sepia world other than that he is a physicist, someone who, according to Writer, digs for the truth (00:18:10). We find out more about Professor in the Zone when he makes a call to one of the science labs in the industrial Zone. Though Professor seems to be the most agential of the trio, we find out through his conversation with a scientist in “laboratory nine” that he is the most taken advantage of in the industrial world. He is scared of his co-worker, who had slept with his wife 20 years ago (01:55:00). Though he claims he wants to destroy the Room and the Zone to save mankind, his real desire is to hinder his co-worker’s research. And so, his choice is tied directly to his desire for revenge – his agency is trapped by the trapping of his desire. It is external to him.

Furthermore, as all three characters are acted on by the socio-economic conditions they are under, they internalize these conditions and voluntarily reduce themselves to their professions, calling themselves Stalker, Professor, and Writer (00:17:30). In the industrial world, they are nameless. Their meaning comes from their professions, and so they must literally labor to produce meaning. Their desires are trapped by the cycle of production and consumption. Thus, when Writer shares that he has lost his inspiration (00:18:30), or that he is not needed anymore, when Stalker gives up on the Zone (02:32:00), and when Professor is “finished as a scientist” (01:56:10),

they give up their meaning and subsequently their identities. But this disturbance of meaning only comes to the fore in the desire-testing nature of the Zone. This is why Stalker becomes afraid of his wife failing in the Zone “No, no. What if you fail, too?” he says (02:34:00). He is afraid that she too will lose her meaning as she is confronted by the threat of her inner desires.

The largest contrast between the industrial world and the Zone is that the Zone is colored (00:38:50). As we transition into the Zone, we see the ruins of a past society; a dilapidated train track, broken electricity poles, rusted cars, and metal debris (00:40:00). For the most part, there are no sounds of industry or technology, only ruin. It is in this absence of society that we see color, but muted color. And the most prominent feature of the Zone is that it is taken over by nature. In the industrial world, we see very little of nature, but the Zone is full of trees, shrubs, and rivers. When Stalker arrives in the Zone, he stretches and announces, “here we are, home at last” (00:39:45). He is finally able to move unencumbered, and, after talking to Professor and Writer for a short while, decides he needs to take a walk. He moves away from them to a spot that is completely taken over by nature and lies on the ground, as if finally connecting with the world (00:44:40).

This pseudo-connection is the postmodern subject’s attempt at reconnecting with nature, but the land Stalker is connecting with is not a natural piece of nature. Though purportedly caused by an alien visitation, the Zone is an irradiated wasteland that appears to be the product of human intervention and human failure. The irradiation, which effects the Stalker’s DNA, thus literally rewriting their identities, is why the Stalkers and their families are all diseased. And yet, Stalker is ready to brave the consequences of this toxic connection with the land to produce meaning and achieve his

freedom. But the agency acquired through this connection is a false one. Though the rules are different, the system in the Zone alienates the characters in a different way. It creates an illusion of allowing them to rethink the subject, but according to its rules: the need to throw a nut to find the way through, the need to take long detours to make small progress. These new rules work to deterritorialize desire only to reterritorialize it according to the social relations the Zone creates. Still, it does so by exposing the trap that desire falls under and our character's inability to escape the socio-economic conditions of the sepia world. They become the zombies of *I Am Legend* and *Warm Bodies*, stuck in the cycle of production, falling into the inevitable trap of desire.

We continue to see the false agency in our characters in how they relate to the Zone. The Zone is where Stalker escapes to. It is the only place in the world where he is not imprisoned. Here he is not an outcast. He knows the laws of the Zone as he had learned them from Porcupine (00:41:00). He is the authority figure who dictates the actions of Writer and Professor. The Zone is where Stalker is able to work and create his meaning. In the industrial world he is an outcast, but in the Zone, he is needed. He alone can decipher the Zone's rules and so creates meaning for his existence. In the industrial world, he is the subject of exercised authority. Yet, his agency is precarious in the Zone. The Zone does not accept the Stalker unconditionally, but rather places a different type of restrictions on him through its traps and mazes he claims exist. His authority over Writer and Professor is also precarious as they often disregard his instructions. Writer constantly criticizes Stalker's instructions. He attempts to go to the Room directly despite Stalker's attempted dissuasion (00:56:00). Professor disregards his instructions against going back for his rucksack (01:14:30). And so, though Stalker is a needed expert for them to know how to get into the Zone and where the Room lies,

his necessity, and hence the source of his meaning, is limited to the degree to which is labor to produce meaning is effective. Thus, he must constantly labor not only produce meaning but also to maintain it. With his meaning threatened, he resorts to violence, tossing a metal rod at Writer's head when he disobeys his commands (00:54:00). He demands discipline; "The Zone is a very complex maze of traps. All of them are death traps" but he understands the Zone, and so he is needed (1:01:50). When violence and fearmongering fail, he resorts to flattery. "How lucky you are! You're going to live a hundred years!" he tells Writer, after he survives the meat-grinder trap (01:50:00). And so, Stalker constantly alternates between praise and violence to reassert his meaning.

Writer is already in the Zone seeking "inspiration" to continue creating meaning for himself and so he ventures to recreate the rules of the world, first verbally by analyzing society and the self, and then physically, by attempting to break the rules of the Zone. But he is only able to criticize himself and his fellow travelers, and eventually, finding his discourse impotent, resorts to violence to assert his intellectual superiority. Professor is the least agential of the three; through his phone call, we see that his actions have been guided by trapped desire rather than decision; he wants to destroy the Zone purely to get back at his co-worker. His agency only appears when he decides against destroying the zone, breaks apart the explosive device and tosses it into the water of the Zone, thus literally breaking down society through breaking down its product (02:23:00).

Given the chance to rethink their production of meaning and produce different social relations, our characters come face to face with the trap of desire. While there is color in the Zone, it is a muted set of color. Thus, while it appears to represent reclaimed agency, the interactions between the Zone and the characters, and between

the characters themselves show that the color of the Zone itself reimposes a set of rules that regulate desire. Throughout the journey to the Room, they continue to struggle against the trap of desire. Their inability to escape it brings industrial world to the Zone. When they decide to take a break, each lying down for a while, and as Stalker falls asleep, we cut to a sepia close-up of the water under him (01:18:00). The film continues to alternate between color and sepia as Stalker falls asleep and wakes. We next see the sepia of the industrial world overtake the colors of the Zone through a dissolve while Stalker's wife reads a passage from the book of Revelation that speaks about the end of times (Revelation 6:12); (01:24:50). Now, moving in and out of the sepia lens, as the wife reads, the camera shows us a dog and tilts upwards from where Stalker lies sleeping so that we see, submerged in the waters of the Zone, medical trays, syringes, and coins (01:26:20), then a submerged John the Baptist from Van Eyck's Ghent altarpiece, and a pistol (01:26:50). All these artifacts of industrial society and of ideology, submerged in the water of the Zone and reflected in the discussion between Writer and Professor, come together to spotlight their desire to rethink the subject and society and how it has failed so far. This creates a space for them to continue on their journey towards the Room and subsequently towards the rethinking of the self. Furthermore, it shows how the culture of the industrial world becomes an all-encompassing identity that swallows everything in its colorless timbre. When our characters wake up from their rest, they continue to struggle against the confines of the industrial world. Stalker struggles to create a need for himself through his monopolization and romanticization of knowledge about the Zone. Writer struggles to find a need for himself through his long monologues on human nature. Professor struggles to understand his own motives as he works through his desire to destroy the

Zone. We see these conflicting struggles come to the fore as the three characters wrestle at the entrance of the Room (02:11:10). Having reached their destination without having changed or created any change in their surroundings, the characters hesitate to enter the Room. Their conflicting struggles have gotten them nowhere. They stand at the threshold, and with their words having done nothing to create change, they fight. Professor fights because he wants to destroy the Zone. The Zone represents hope for the hopeless of the industrial world, he says. Hope that a miracle can occur in nature (02:09:30). Stalker fights because without the Zone he has nothing (02:13:50). Writer fights to allow Professor to decide his course of action by himself as he bases his entire existence on being needed by others (02:11:35)! As they come face to face with their destructive desires, all three of our characters find themselves stuck at the entrance of the Room.

When they return from the Zone to the sepia bar in the industrial world, they return broken and battered, appearing to have gained nothing in the Zone except the dog that follows Stalker home. Yet, it is their battered bodies that show how they have struggled within and among themselves during the journey. Stalker hands the satchel of money to his wife, carries his daughter on his back, and the family, accompanied by the new dog that Stalker brings back from the Zone, begins the trek back home. Outside the bar, the camera goes back to color for a closeup tracking shot of Monkey being carried by Stalker (02:27:47). We then move to a long take of the family walking home in the foreground while the background is dominated by a large nuclear power plant, thus creating a correlation between the Zone, the family, and nuclear energy. Back in Stalker's home, the world returns to sepia, and as Stalker's wife puts him to bed, we find out that the drugs she keeps next to the bed are to sedate Stalker so he can sleep in

the industrial world (02:31:50). Thus, Stalker becomes more like a zombie, sedated, unthinking, unable to move! Thus, to a certain degree, Stalker becomes Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic. He has had an overwhelming experience of life in the Zone and now longs to constantly be in the Zone. When he is in the industrial world, he can only function by being sedated and *institutionalized*. In the grasp of the institution, Stalker is a prisoner and a zombie; "Prison? I'm imprisoned everywhere" he says to his wife before he leaves on his journey with Writer and Professor (00:11: 50). But Stalker is not the complete schizophrenic, because as we have seen, his overwhelming experience of life in the Zone remains coded by inherited rules. Thus, his desire is never free in the Zone.

We only ever go back to color when the camera returns to Monkey staring out of a window (02:38:40), then telepathically moving 3 glass containers, one full of a dark whiskey-like liquid, one tall and empty, and jar with a cracked eggshell inside it, across a table. The use of color emphasizes the otherness in Monkey whose physical body has been literally recorded by the Zone. Her abilities show us that she is the true schizophrenic and thus is the rethought subject; she is experiencing the colors of the Zone in the industrial world. But, in the industrial world, not even Stalker is like Monkey as he experiences this world in sepia. The glassware that Monkey pushes are meant to symbolize our three characters; the whiskey filled one is Writer. His journey through the Zone brings him close to the edge, but he does not fall off. He continues to create meaning through his indulgences in the industrial world. Stalker is the tall and empty one. The Journey pushes Stalker over the edge. He discovers that his existence is meaningless, but he does not break, and thus he has another chance to labor to produce

meaning. Professor is the jar containing eggshell. His meaning is already broken and empty, and the journey through the Zone does not greatly influence him.

And so, the coming back to color in the sepia world shows that the post-apocalyptic wasteland is not just the Zone but also the industrial world and the nuclear family, where people must labor to produce meaning, just as they do in the Zone, but here under a different set of rules. Through their inability to escape the confines of the socio-economic determination they exist under in the industrial world during their rethinking of the self in the Zone, and thus their need to resort to violence to determine the power dynamic between them, our characters show us how the identity of the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism is rooted in an ideology of production/consumption. Therefore, the postapocalyptic wasteland is not only a space of desolation but also a space of exploring identity-defining ideology.

#### **D. Fallout 4**

In the three movies *I am Legend*, *Warm Bodies*, and *Stalker*, we have come face to face with different iterations of the wasteland as passive consumers of film. While we are able to clearly identify the ideologies presented in each movie, the films spend little time on world-building and invest more into crafting a narrative. This is largely due to the temporally limited nature of film; it has a finite, extremely limited duration of a few hours, and the consumer can only ever interact with it passively through the eye of the camera. Thus, while we are introduced to the colorless industrial world and the vibrant Zone in *Stalker*, the zombie wasteland and the gated human community in *Warm Bodies*, and postapocalyptic New York in *I am Legend*, the viewer/consumer never has the opportunity to engage with the wasteland outside of what the movies allow.

Furthermore, we are only ever allowed to interact with the society that created this world through the characters the films present us with. We are never allowed in *Stalker*, for example, to explore and interact with the faction of militant scientists who have cordoned off the Zone and have imposed their authority on the town Stalker's family resides in. *Fallout 4* as a video game has the opportunity to remake the player-producer's interaction with the wasteland; it brings the consumer into a postapocalyptic world and encourages them to interact with, explore, and influence all of the communities that make up the post-apocalyptic society, within the bounds of the game's software.

In their book *Games of Empire*, De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoff carry out a political analysis of the video game industry by tracing its history and situating it in the empirical legacy of capitalism (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoff, xix). They show how video games create a new form of capitalism they call cognitive capitalism that is based on immaterial labor and discuss its cycle of production and reproduction. They also discuss the components of this new form of capitalism and how it works through the laborer/consumer.

The earliest prototypes of video games, developed in the 50's and 60's in government research labs, were not intended for entertainment. Rather, they were a means of showing the computational power of the equipment the researchers were working with (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoff, 7 – 9). These labs would work on developing simulations for nuclear explosions, military equipment, and other technologies that would benefit US war efforts (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoff, 8). But the computer science world was only just emerging. Consequently, the students and fresh graduates recruited to work at these labs and operate the newly developed

computers would often be the students participating in the anti-war protests of the 60's and early 70's (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 9). It is these students, advocating for the freedom to share information and who were characterized by their "anti-Establishmentarianism" who were behind the development and circulation of the earliest prototypes of video games, the first of which was *Spacewar* (Brand, as qtd in De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 9).

Many social theorists see 1972, the year when *Spacewar* was developed and circulated, as the point where a switch occurred, where the world shifted from "industrial to postindustrial era, from Fordism to post-Fordism" (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 10). Thus, video game development had its grounds in counterculture. However, as De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford note, it is ironic that,

in liberating computers, and games, from the Pentagon, "deterritorializing" them from the realm of nuclear death, hackers inadvertently set the stage for their "reterritorialization" by capital in pure commodity form (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 10).

In 1976, Nolan Bushnell established Atari Inc., the world's first video game development company (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 11 – 12). Continuing the revolutionary impetus of the students who contributed to the widespread circulation of video games, Bushnell founded Atari "with a "work smart, not hard" philosophy ... a legendary lack of bureaucracy, and parties awash in drugs and alcohol, Atari promised "play- as- work"" (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 12). As Atari's success grew, its lack of organization proved problematic, and by 1978 the company was sold, Bushnell was fired, and the company's steady decline cemented (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 13).

When Atari failed to meet its profits for 1983, its stocks declined, and the US largely gave up on the video game industry. In the 80's, Japanese companies that were engaged in the country's rebuilding after WWII picked up the discarded idea of a video game industry, and, by maintaining a mix between creative agency and corporate structure, were able to launch the industry successfully (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 15 – 16).

With the launch of the video game industry, a new form of labor emerged called “immaterial labor” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 23). Immaterial labor extended capitalism's turning of leisure into labor by blurring the boundaries between work and leisure. Video game companies benefitted from fan excitement when fans began using video game code to develop new content for the video games. This created a culture of “free labor” – as in unpaid labor - in the video game industry (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 23). Subsequently, companies began to mainstream fan production by adding tools that facilitated the player-producer's free labor, which would then circulate online (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 24 – 25). Companies would then curate player productions to find potential hires and buy-out successful content. Quickly, however, player-producers became aware of their exploitation and began to take action, either in the virtual world through organizing protests, or in the real world through pursuing legal action (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 26). Still, the game industry had seen how beneficial player productions were and continued to subsume them for profit (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 27).

Shortly after, as companies became more aware of the possibilities of immaterial labor, they started incorporating video games in employee training and preparation. As the process of production became increasingly information-based and the workplace increasingly digital, companies “latched on to games as a means of preparing all kinds

of immaterial labor for the digitized workplace” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 28). De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford use the example of an ice-cream company that developed a game where players had to practice scooping ice-cream as quickly as possible. Other companies added measurement tools in video games that allowed them to assess potential employees’ abilities and psychology (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 29). Thus, video game culture shifted from “work-as-play” to “play-as-work”, and work became indistinguishable from play (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 30).

Out of immaterial labor arose cognitive capitalism which transformed information into a commodity, and which relied on immaterial labor for its production. Cognitive capitalism moved its workplace from the industrial factory to “human subjectivity”, and thus companies began to rely on their workforce’s cognitive abilities (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 37). It secured its revenue through “intellectual property rights (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 38).

De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford quote a video game company executive who sums up the ethos of immaterial labor:

“[Our] machinery . . . is the mind of all these people who . . . come up with these great ideas. Our collateral walks out the door every night... Unlike machinery that stops working at 5:00, ours might be home, [but] they’re thinking of new ideas, and their whole life experience is creating the potential for new ideas” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford, 37).

Thus, there is never time off from work. There is only ever work. This is why cognitive capital is self-sustaining. It relies on the familiar, and thus “the consumption of one

form of entertainment during so-called free time creates the very conditions for the generation of further entertainment commodities” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 45). Cognitive capitalism depends on the “exploitation of an immaterial workforce”. Thus, the capital of cognitive capitalism emanates from the subject. Yet, in emanating from the subject, it remains a site tension between immaterial laborers and video game companies (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 38). But video game companies work against the revolutionary nature of the immaterial labor force’s mind factories by internalizing control structures that overwrite the will; “discipline is not an external voice that dictates our practices . . . but rather something like an inner compulsion indistinguishable from our will” thus seeking to transform the subject (Hardt and Negri, as qtd in De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 57).

Thus, the player is never just a player. They are the player-producer whose play is subsumed by capitalism as a form of surplus value. De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford use Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of machinic surplus value to show how the video game industry exploits its audience/players by consuming the player’s labor and capital (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 78). Just like advertisements exploit human attention at a moment when the viewer is not at work, so does the video game industry extract labor during the player’s leisure time. It does this through creating a virtual socio-economic realm where player-producers need to pay subscription fees as well as the price of video games to participate in feats that grant them status in the virtual world (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 79). To incentivize spending, video game companies have created player profiles that display the player-producers ability and customizable avatars that display creativity. They also create achievement markers that the player can

display on their profile and that show their prowess with video games. Still, these are all immaterial products (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 79 – 80).

Since the products of immaterial labor were virtual games, this gave rise to a new form of accumulation that is termed “futuristic accumulation” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 126). Futuristic accumulation occurred by the player-producer exchanging biopower for in-game commodities and properties through a virtual marketplace. The currency for securing these in-game items is acquired through virtual labor and is regulated, especially in online games, by the game producers (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 127). Access to these games, for example, is often tied to a subscription. Certain items are only purchasable through buying virtual currency with real-world money. And so video game companies are able to regulate virtual labor for revenue. Yet, the top-down regulation of biopower carried out by game developers is met by the bottom-up tension of the “biopolitical production” that regulation creates in the player-base (Hardt and Negri, as qtd in De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 127). Thus, the virtual workspace is itself a site of tension between owner and laborer.

However, this exploitation could not be achieved without an audience to consume. De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford use Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desiring machines to show how video game companies mobilized the desires of a specific stratum of society that they term “the hardcore” who would actively consume video game products (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 80). Video game companies understood what mobilized this stratum made up of adolescent and young adult males with money to spend, and that is identifying with the position of the “*man of action*” (De Peuter and Dyer-Witthford, 81). Still, it is not all exploitation as video game consumers continue to

show signs of resistance through actions in the virtual realm and through pirating games and modifying consoles (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford, 85 – 87).

*Fallout 4* is an action focused role-playing (ARPG) video game. Role playing games, like Dungeons and Dragons, allow the player to craft their own character's appearance, aptitudes, social relations, and social skills. The main premise of role-playing games is the focus on identification with the character the player is in control of. This identification is emphasized through the game's basic mechanics. The game gives the player a lot of choice when it comes to customizing the playable character, including control over the character's physical appearance through race, ethnicity, height, build, gender, face, and hair, and over the character's ethos through their lineage, backstory, tone, tendencies, dialogue choices, and moral decision. RPG's give the player a large amount of choice over their player-characters, over other non-player characters (NPC's), and over the world they inhabit. The choices the game provides are, however, constantly bounded by the game's software. They are also limited by the player-producer's progress, but there are multiple ways that the game provides for the player to work around any action that is gated by player progress. For example, if the player does not choose to invest in their lock-picking skills but need to open a high-level lock, they can find a companion who has a high lock-picking skill and ask them to pick the locks for them. Otherwise, in role-playing video games, the player can resort to cheat codes that allow them to pass a skill-check without needing to invest time or resources. Still, these cheat codes need to be accommodated for by the game; the coding of the game allows for player productions and player intervention. Not only does the game accommodate for player intervention, it incentivizes it by creating a digital marketplace area in the game that allows for these productions to be shared, rated, and modified

online by other player-producers and game developers. Thus, the labor that the player carries out here is subsumed by the game.

Furthermore, interactions with in-game communities are influenced by player choices, but the outcome of player choice is always scripted. Yet, these quests are not impacted by time; if a community is under siege, is under imminent threat, and needs to be saved, but the player chooses to ignore them and tend to other game-related pursuits like fishing, the community remains in a suspended state of limbo until the player decides to tend to their needs. And, if the player does not tend to their needs ever within the instance, they cannot resort to another player-character, and so remain under siege indefinitely. Thus, the player is given an almost atemporal status where they can approach the narrative in nonlinear fashion. And, while most games try to create a moral grey area to increase player immersion, the exclusive nature of narrative-based games and the need for player decisions forces an either/or exclusivity between being a “good” character or a “bad” character. Ultimately, the impetus behind an RPG is to emulate life in a fantasy world for the player to immerse themselves in, interact with, influence, and be influenced by. But the fantasy world can only come into being by the coding carried out by game developers. Thus the fantasy world becomes the BwO where cognitive capital acts to create ideological territory for the player-producer to immerse themselves in.

The *Fallout* series is set in an alternate timeline where world events diverged after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War 2. Where nations in our world have done their best to limit the availability of nuclear weapons, in the *Fallout* world, nations became obsessed with it to the point of incorporating nuclear energy into everyday items like the televisions and robotic home

assistants. In 2052, with dwindling fossil fuel reserves in the world, the oil-rich Middle East increased the price of fossil fuels, upending the economies of several countries and causing the near collapse of the European Union (known as the European commonwealth in the *Fallout* world). While the US remains unaffected by dwindling resources due to the oil reserves it has in Texas, Mexico, and Alaska, the European commonwealth declares war on the Middle East and attempts to take over Middle Eastern oil reserves using all tools at its disposal, including nuclear weapons. This war becomes known as the resource war and would last till 2066 when Middle Eastern oil reserves dry up and, no longer having an enemy to unite against, the European commonwealth falls to infighting and collapses. In the meantime, a pandemic breaks out in the US, which, coupled with news of the resource wars, prompts the government to begin construction of underground vaults that are meant to protect a percentage of the population in case of a nuclear fallout. These vaults begin as fallout shelters but, as development progresses, become loci of social experiments where vault inhabitants are put through different conditions to test how humans reach to different social situations. Some, for example, are given limited resources and are observed to find out how they overcome their obstacles. Others are frozen.

During the resource wars, the Mexico and Texas oil fields dry up, and by 2066, the US moves to secure its last oil reserves in Alaska, putting heavy strain on US – Canadian relations. Simultaneously, the resource wars have reached the Far East and China declares war on the US and moves to take Alaska. The conflict between China and the US lasts 11 years. During this time the US annexes Canada and develops advanced weapons of war. It also creates a virus that turns humans into ‘super mutants’ who have super strength at the cost of reduced mental abilities. In 2077, as both

countries grow desperate, the war reaches its peak. Both countries launch nuclear weapons at each other. Citizens in the US rush to enter the vaults. The world experiences total nuclear fallout. The supermutants, having the ability to withstand nuclear radiation, survive the blast and continue to exist in the US. Many of the people who were caught in the blast or who suffer the radiation afterwards turn into ghouls – zombie like creatures – who are often plagued by deteriorated mental abilities but who have greatly increased lifespans. Years later, our game protagonists come from the inhabitants of these vaults as they exit their time of shelter – having been plucked out of society at the height of the American Dream - and enter the American wasteland.

The world players are immersed in in *Fallout* is retro-futuristic and is heavily inspired by 1950's Americana with an added nuclear twist; rampant consumerism, unethical companies (Nuka-Cola, a carbonated nuclear beverage company is extremely successful in the *Fallout* world), fervent patriotism and anti-communism, a fascination with and distrust of technology, and a dark outlook on the future. While in *Fallout 4* we get to see how this world looked like before the fallout, most of the gameplay in the series is set in this world's post-apocalyptic aftermath. *Fallout 4* is set in the Boston Metropolitan area. In the pre-fallout world, the vibrant colors and the retro designs of cars and household items in 2077 become a pastiche of Fordist America in the 1950's. In the Metro Boston wasteland 210 years later in 2287, the player explores abandoned factories and company museums where they are met by renegade military grade robots endlessly repeating ads or anti-communist slogans. The world is littered with commodities and consumer goods, and the game encourages the player to hoard as many items as possible to use in its intricate crafting and trading systems. By hoarding more items, defeating more enemies, and going on more and more dangerous quests, the

player can access higher-tier equipment and unlock access to more of the game's content and subsequently to more 'fun'. Outside of the city, the flora and fauna caught in the blast or that are exposed to the radiations for a prolonged amount of time mutate and turn into monstrous versions of their older selves. Scorpions, for example, turn into rad-scorpions (irradiated scorpions) that are the size of a large dog.

Society in the *Fallout* world is where the crux of the world-making occurs. It is also where the player choice appears to matter and where the consumption of the video game happens. When vault communities exit their vaults and begin to reclaim the American wasteland, they are given the chance of recreating society and themselves. Yet, when they enter the wasteland, they instantly begin to separate into different factions, each with their own ideologies, allegiances, and systems of authority. And these ideologies and ways of life do not stem from the ways of the wasteland and their need to adapt. Instead, the vault communities work to make the wasteland adapt to their inherited ideologies. While there are 15 main factions/communities throughout the series, there are tens of minor factions, each modeled after a previous culture and ideology. The Great Khans, for example, unironically model themselves on the culture and traditions of the Mongol hordes and who continued the Mongol tradition of raiding and pillaging. Another faction that calls itself Caesar's Legion is modeled on Roman militarism and uses football attire for armor. The Legion is a slaving community that conquers towns and settlements as it works towards conquering the Las Vegas area. In these communities, the player meets pastiche recreations of pre-fallout world cultural stereotypes, like the hard-hitting investigative journalist, the religious and hard-working repressed daughter, the gritty and dark-humored private investigator, the baseball fanatic, and others. There is even a group that calls itself the Kings who are all pastiche

recreations of Elvis! Regardless of the community, the inhabitants of the wasteland all fall back on pre-fallout ideologies to create meaning and identity for themselves, whether that be through religion, consumerism, or war. Some even choose to base their existence on drug trade or prostitution. And so, the postapocalyptic wasteland turns into pockets and microcosms of pre-fallout capitalist society. The postapocalyptic communities even face the same social issues as the pre-fallout world; the Legion, for example, is a pro-division group that shuns robots and forbids medical treatment. The Brotherhood of Steel models itself according to ancient knights and sees technology as a source of evil. Other groups shun sentient ghouls, and yet other groups are led by ghouls and promote equal rights for humans, ghouls, and robots. Still, all their ways of life fail to escape the realities of late-stage capitalism; hierarchies based on purchasing power exist throughout the wasteland, and the individual needs to labor to create a place for themselves in society. And so, when the player is placed into this society, they are placed into a pre-installed system, and regardless of how much they influence the communities they interact with, their interactions are always contained within the limits of late-stage capitalism. Thus, the *Fallout* world, through insisting on bringing capitalism and commodity fetishism to the wasteland, becomes a pastiche of real-world socio-economic dynamics and a means of engaging with capitalist ideology in a virtual setting. It does not, however, create a chance for change; rather, it pushes the player into further investing in world-maintaining rather than world-making practices through encouraging the production/consumption cycle but in a virtual setting.

It is into this world that the player is placed in *Fallout 4*. Emerging from vault 111 where they were cryogenically frozen, the protagonist enters the wasteland wanting to find the vault invaders who kidnapped their son and murdered their significant other.

While all the other inhabitants of vault have died due to cryo-pod failure, the protagonist is somehow spared this fate. They have a military background, and so when they exit the cryo-pod, they are instantly ready to fight for survival. The protagonist's out-of-time and out-of-place background is very important, not because it explains the story or incentivizes the player, but because it gives them special status as agents of change in the wasteland thus creating pseudo-agency. As soon as they enter the Boston Common, the game introduces the player to several side quests that deviate their attention from the main impetus of finding their son's kidnapper, and so the game does not create value in their background but rather what it allows them to do. They are agents from an age past, and so, in their experience of a pre-fallout Boston, they are para-temporal and exist outside the narrative of the wasteland, which allows them to set in motion different actions that influence the wasteland within the limits introduced by the coding of the game.

And so, in entering the wasteland, the player can begin to influence the different factions that make up the inhabitants of Boston and thus begin to labor to create meaning for themselves. Over the average of 85 hours it takes a player to fully experience the game, the player interacts with 4 main factions, wipes out a community, saves settlers, builds settlements (acquires land), strengthens a brigade of minutemen, restores a massive battle mech, resolves a major conflict between a group of scientists creating synthetic lifeforms and a militant anti-technology organization, exposes multiple conspiracies, uses an electronic sofa to travel to a dead man's dreams, and aids a supermutant scientist in his research, all of which add to the player-producer's futuristic accumulation. During this time, the player accumulates massive amounts of loot and in-game currency, invests hours in crafting the best items and building the best

settlements, interacts with hundreds of non-player characters, and grows relationships with up to 10 companions. If the player is playing without modifications, they can unlock up to 84 in-game achievements that take up to 100 hours to unlock and that are displayed on the player-producer's gametag for all of the people on the game network to see. Yet, despite all the labor to create meaning and influence the wasteland, the player is left with very little. The time they spend investing in the game and laboring to access higher levels, gain better equipment, and further the narrative leaves them with no real value. They have achievements that show how much time they've spent in the game but which they cannot use for any real-world exchange. They have high tier equipment that they've spent hours painstakingly finding resources for and that they can only use within the virtual confines of their game. They have memories of quests completed, but no real impact. They do not even have the recognition of the non-player characters they influence, who, after their quests are over, revert back to their scripted interactions, as if the player had not saved their lives or doomed their communities. Thus, after investing hours into attempting to craft a new world in the wasteland, the player is left with virtual achievements that signify status in the virtual world and with trapped desire; the desire to invest more hours into games from the franchise. The game gives the player pseudo agency by creating the illusion of choice through narrative influencing decisions, but these decisions remain firmly confined in the limited agency created through the socio-economic systems tied to the game and its narrative.

Yet it is precisely because of the contained nature of the video game that *Fallout 4* becomes a space for resistance. Given the infinite opportunity to play and replay decisions, the player-producer has the opportunity to engage with different ideologies from different perspectives, at one time approaching the ideology antagonistically, and

at another time engaging with it in an accepting manner. Further, the player-producer can work modify the game to recode certain aspects of it, including characters, loyalties, and communal ideology. In instances where the game is taken online, as with *Fallout 76*, the sequel to *Fallout 4*, the player base can engage communally in the reproduction of social relations. When it first came out, many of the players created communities where access to resources was unrestricted and where collaboration was encouraged. The player-base for *Fallout 76* has in the past taken action against the game company's practices which they identified as greed and has expressed its rejection of this through negative reviews of the game and boycotting the company. And, though still technically contained within the game company's initial software, player productions have made it possible to add, remove, or augment any aspect of the game through modifications that are shared online. Hence, the rethinking of the self and of society remains invested in the pursuit of meaning through labor and the subsequent consumption that labor allows for. But the site of labor becomes a site of tension between owner and laborer, and between ideology and ideology critique.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This research emerged out of my desire to understand the correlation between the popularity of media on the zombie apocalypse and the current human condition. While there are differences between the Haitian zombie and what the zombie has become over the past one hundred years, at its core, the zombie subject is embedded in discourse on exploited labor. While the historical heritage of the Haitian zombie is significant in its own right, its evolution into the postmodern laborer in Western media is what is significant for this research.

The three theories this research focuses on allow a reading of the zombie subject as a parallel for the postmodern subject in late-stage capitalism. Marx shows that capitalism is built around the commodification of labor and the alienation of the laborer from the product of their labor power. Thus, the laborer is reduced to bio-power fueling the capitalist process of production. Jameson's unpacking of postmodernism shows how culture itself has become a commodity to be consumed rather than a metanarrative of progress to be subscribed to. Alongside the shift from mass-production/mass-consumption to a cognitive-based economy, the cultural break with history turns all time, including leisure time, into labor time. Deleuze and Guattari show that the hyper-commodification of society is only possible through the trapping of desire through capitalist social relations. Capitalist social relations they claim produce psychic repression in the postmodern subject. The postmodern subject then subsequently comes to desire social repression through social laws for the benefit of society. In doing so, the

postmodern subject accepts the trapping of desire in the need to labor to produce meaning that is produced through capitalist social relations.

In his article “Figures of terror: The “zombie” and the Haitian Revolution”, Raphael Hoermann challenges our understanding of the zombie figure by placing it within its cultural and folkloric background. He recontextualizes the zombie as parallel to the massively exploited slaves in St. Domingue and shows how the zombie figure emerges from the slave context on the island of St. Domingue (Hoermann, 156). He then shows how the revolutionary Haitians reclaimed the zombie as a folk symbol through the character of Jean Zombi who became a Haitian hero, and how the hero figure was subsequently used to “re-enslave the Haitians” in American travel literature (Hoermann, 155 – 157). But he maintains one distinction between the slave and the zombie, and that is the retention of consciousness. The slave retains their revolutionary consciousness and so it able to work against slavery, either through small acts of resistance on the plantations, or through large-scale revolution, the same revolution that liberated Haiti from colonial rule (Hoermann, 162). The zombie, however, lacked this consciousness, and despite Haitian authors’ attempts are reclaiming the zombie, with the US occupation of Haiti and the literature popularized by writers like Seabrook, remained firmly seated as a mindless slave (Hoermann, 162). Reading the postmodern subject as this type of zombie is deflating. Yet, his article shows that, despite the massive amount of US literature that says otherwise, in native Haitian literature and in Jean Zombi, the zombie figure retains the capacity to act as a revolutionary figure.

In *I am Legend*, the zombie figure begins its life as the thoughtless consumer whose meaning is derived from mindless and chaotic consumption, and thus only serves as the antagonist for Neville as the rethinker of the subject and the reproducer of social

relations. As the movie progresses, however, we begin to see the zombie as a thinking social subject in how the alpha zombie sets up a trap, decides against chasing Neville into the sunlight, and plans to retrieve his mate from Neville's home. At the end of the movie, we come to see the zombies as a group with their own ideologies and desires, including the desire to produce their own social relations.

With *Warm Bodies*, this thinking and feeling zombie-subject has become the protagonist and is now made parallel with the postmodern subject on two levels; first through identification with the viewer, and second by being placed parallel to the young adult survivors. As R searches for a way to become "more alive", and as Julie searches for a narrative – and thus ideology – of her own to subscribe to, the movie brings them together so that they can produce new social relations. In the end of the movie, the antagonism the humans had towards the zombies is replaced by identification. As the zombies come alongside the humans, they become humanized. They are able to move past the "new hunger", i.e., the trap of their desire, and reproduce social relations that bring both subjects together.

This rehumanization, and thus rethinking of the subject, happens only through the virtue of the post-apocalyptic wasteland. The struggles with subjectivities and desires that Stalker, Writer, and Professor struggle with in the Zone can only happen in the Zone. This is because the Zone, by its nature, exposes the trapping of desire in the ideologies and social relations of the industrial world. Their failure to enter the Room, then, is not a failure, but rather works to show how they have come to understand their subjectivities and so are now capable of fighting against them in the industrial world. The bruises they sustain, both to their egos and to their bodies are evidence of this change. Their reward for the change they undergo is the dog, whose dual belonging

represents their ability to evolve. Yet, the greater promise is in Stalker's daughter who not only joins the Zone with the industrial world but has also reconfigured her own subject and thus gains the ability to manipulate the industrial world through the desire-exposing nature of the Zone.

The post-apocalyptic wasteland in *Fallout 4* allows the player/consumer to even more actively engage with ideology through the desire-exposing nature of the wasteland. Furthermore, as a video game, *Fallout 4* allows the player to engage with different ideologies from different perspectives. It also allows the player-producer to modify and impact the social space of the wasteland through labor, the product of which is shared with other players across the game network. In doing so, the player can engage in ideology critique more actively and effectively. Thus, the figure of the zombie and post-apocalypse become the sites of resistance for the postmodern subject against the reterritorialization of capital.

When I first started this research, my assumption was that the postmodern subject is totally caught, that they are either wholly exploited or heading towards their total exploitation through capitalist social relations. However, the critical theory informing the critical lens I used, and the subsequent analysis of the texts I carried out showed that there remains within the capitalist trap an innate potential for revolution. Hoermann repeatedly and intentionally asserts that there is a difference between the zombie on one hand and the slaves and laborers on the other, and that is the possession of consciousness. Though deprived of freedom, the slaves of colonial Haiti still possessed the potential for revolt, potential that eventually led to the liberation of the Island from its colonial suppressors. Likewise, the postmodern subject has the innate ability to revolt against the trap of capitalism. This is evident in how the zombie figure

gains back their consciousness between *I am Legend* and *Warm Bodies*, and how the environment producing the circumstances for the zombie's being becomes an opportunity to rethink the subject and society in *Stalker* and *Fallout 4*.

While my initial assumption was that the postmodern subject is dead in the waters of capitalism, this research showed that there continues to be means for the subject to reclaim their subjectivity within the circumstances of their existence.

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