

10-22-2010

From Night to Dawn: The Cultural Criticism of George A. Romero

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From *Night to Dawn*:
The Cultural Criticism of George A. Romero

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Humanities and Cultural Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of approval
October 22, 2010

Keywords: Horror, Film, Zombie, Psychosocial, Cultural Hegemony

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad: Charlotte Irene Wagenheim RN, MSN, GNP, and George Dewey Wagenheim, Ph.D. My passion for education and the opportunity to pursue it would not have been possible without you both. I am forever in your debt. You will be forever in my thoughts and in my heart.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their unflagging support and encouragement throughout my time writing this thesis: Dr. Amy Rust, Jay Lawrence, Alaina Tackitt, Dr. Matt Wagenheim, and Magnus H. Tinti.

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Abstract

Analyzing George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) in relation to the early works of Marshal McLuhan, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse reveals an ideological parallel that can be explicated using Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. While McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm observe, in order to critique, social manifestations of power in a consumerist system, Romero presents a model of hegemony in his films that he exposes to extreme stress thereby allowing viewers to observe such manifestations of power for themselves. These analyses are significant because although Marcuse, McLuhan, Fromm, and Romero present congruous ideologies, scholars of *Dawn of the Dead* and *Night of the Living Dead* have failed to recognize cultural hegemony as the source of the psychosocial criticism within each film.

Introduction

Although the scholarship on George Romero has been significant in its scope, it has often been limited in its aim. Academics have largely latched on to conspicuous social themes (race, gender, consumerism) present in Romero's films but have failed to recognize the work as part of a larger, more significant cultural-critical movement. Romero's first film, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and his follow-up in his *Dead* series, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), are not simply vehicles for social concern but contributions to a discourse of cultural critique that began to gain momentum in the academic community during the middle of the 20th century. Shortly after World War II, academics began to voice concerns with the distribution and exercise of power in western consumer society, particularly in the United States; despite its roots in academia, this concern was also voiced, however unwittingly, in outlets of popular culture with no academic ties, such as comic books and horror films. Romero has often been quoted as consuming such popular culture as a youth, namely EC horror comics of the 1950s and the re-release of Universal monster films such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

Scholars concerned with Romero have collected and analyzed the social criticisms present in his films but have made no attempt to collect such criticism under a single, logical, psychosocial umbrella. By psychosocial, I am referring to the effects that cultural

environment has on the human psyche. I intend to show that Romero's critiques of gender, race, and consumerism are part of a discourse of psychosocial critique that is currently comprehended in the term cultural hegemony. It becomes clear that the worlds depicted in Romero's films are vivid models of systems of cultural hegemony under extreme stress and that the issues of race, gender, and consumerism, addressed in both films, are linked to the fate of hegemonic structures.

I will draw comparisons between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* and the ideologies of three significant figures in the postwar discourse of psychosocial criticism: Marshall McLuhan, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse. I do not suggest that Romero consciously consumed or even encountered McLuhan, Fromm, and Marcuse, but all four men, and their works, express similar concerns in the same time period: the mechanism of power in a mass-consuming society and its effect on cultural mores such as race, gender, and commodity consumption. It will become clear that the works of McLuhan, Fromm, and Marcuse, especially their early works toward the end of the 1950s, articulate specific themes present in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*. These four men may have started from different points and taken disparate paths, but their ideological conclusions were congruous.

Although not fully explored until the late 1970s, cultural hegemony is the subtle exercise of control through discrete channels.¹ Perhaps the most salient articulation of how a mass consumer society maintains class division, cultural hegemony is a theory that insists a ruling class will retain power through subtle influence not brute force. Explained in greater detail in the following chapters, cultural hegemony relies upon subordinate

social classes believing that the ruling class and its mores are legitimate and beneficial to society as a whole. According to Antonio Gramsci, this is how a capitalist system maintains such an uneven distribution of wealth and labor.

This theory becomes a vital tool in examining Romero's approach to film. By looking through the lens of cultural hegemony, it is apparent that issues of gender, race, and consumerism in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* become increasingly significant after the collapse of hegemonic structures that regulate and propagate them. Because of cultural hegemony gender, race, and consumerism are gateways or obstacles to survival within Romero's films, depending on the characters' relationship to hegemonic structures before their collapse. Although it is never directly addressed as cultural hegemony by McLuhan, Marcuse, Fromm, or Romero, all of them are clearly concerned with power structures in a mass-consumption society. Marcuse and Fromm both belong to the Frankfurt School of thought and, according to Paul Grosswiler, "Although contemporaries, the Frankfurt School theorists and McLuhan apparently never made reference to each other. Yet as dialectical theorists, McLuhan, Adorno, and Benjamin share central comments in their seminal works on the media."² Romero, McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm were undoubtedly concerned with control in a capitalist society and its unique influence on race, gender, and consumption. The first chapter will introduce McLuhan, Marcuse, Fromm, and their ideologies as well as Romero's formative pop culture influences, through which he came to participate in psychosocial discourse.

I will be exploring just two films from Romero's expansive body of work: *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*. *Night of the Living Dead* is Romero's first film and has been credited with changing the landscape of not only American horror but international horror as well.³ After *Night of the Living Dead* Romero decided to reserve zombies and zombie films for cultural issues he felt strongly about; this decree has spawned Romero's *Dead* series which now spans six films.⁴ As for only choosing the first two installments in the *Dead* series, *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* are bookends to a tumultuous, empowering, and significantly important era in American culture. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights movement, the apex of second wave feminism, and Vietnam, all contributed to my selection of these films.

Instead of analyzing these films in chronological order, I will be exploring them in order of hegemonic narrative. *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* follow a distinct pattern in terms of cultural hegemony — zombies rise up and overwhelm mankind, hegemonic structures collapse under the weight of the epidemic, a diverse group of characters try to survive the epidemic together in the absence of a dominant hegemonic structures, dominant hegemonic structures attempt to reassert control. Although *Dawn of the Dead* illustrates the entire pattern, it places more emphasis on the collapse of hegemonic structures and the absence of dominant hegemonic values. It will be discussed on its own in the second chapter. *Night of the Living Dead* does not explore the collapse (it only acknowledges that it happens), and instead focuses on the diversity of the group of survivors and the reassertion of control by dominant hegemonic structures. It will be discussed in comparison to *Dawn of the Dead* in the third chapter.

Chapter One:

Literature Review and Cultural Criticism

The scholarship on Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *Dawn of the Dead* predominantly falls into four categories: race, gender, consumerism and psychosocial analysis. All of the scholarship is contemporary in nature. The following section will outline each category of scholarship. While these scholars do an excellent job of extracting social criticism from the films, I intend to unite their critiques under a single banner of cultural hegemony. This is important because issues of race, gender, and consumerism within *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* are mediated by hegemonic systems present in both films.

Literature concerning Romero and race highlight one of two events — Ben’s (Duane Jones) assassination in *Night of the Living Dead* or Peter’s (Ken Foree) actions in the housing projects in *Dawn of the Dead*.⁵ Ben survives the night only to be shot at dawn by a rural militia who seem to mistake him for a zombie. Peter and his fellow SWAT members are charged with expelling the predominantly black residents of an inner-city housing project and collecting their dead. Simon Hobbs writes that the scene in the housing project exemplifies “Romero’s overall attitudes to race in *Dawn [of the Dead]*.”⁶

Dawn of the Dead, not unlike the *Night of the Living Dead*, calls attention to racial inequality and purports that such inequality may try to be corrected through violent action in a time of chaos as evidenced by the scene in which Peter murders a fellow SWAT member, Wooly, after he breaches the housing project and begins shooting non-white tenants. Likewise, Ben murders Harry Cooper (Karl Hardman) in *Night of the Living Dead* after Cooper attempts to lock Ben out of the house amid the zombie horde. Scholars who have discussed the housing project scene in detail agree that those moments are racially charged and accurately situated in historical context: “the scene becomes a metaphor for the racial discrimination that exists in America,” according to Hobbs.⁷ Not only is this scene a metaphor for racial discrimination, it is also an example of the hegemonic structure of race and the resulting behavior when that structure collapses. Wooly, in his own brutal way, attempts to maintain the imbalance of power within the racial hegemonic structure. The tenants and Peter himself, however, have lost faith in the dominant hegemonic systems and act out violently to try and correct the imbalance of power and stop discrimination through armed resistance.

Some scholars have chosen to approach the issue of race by historically charting the evolution of the zombie film in terms of blackness. Jennifer Dotson and Margaret Twohy both undertake such a project and start from Haiti. Growing out of a pseudo-sociological novel on voodoo mysticism called *The Magic Island*⁸ Jennifer Dotson writes that early zombie films, “following the lead of *White Zombie* in 1932, would depict blackness in a very specific way: to signal exoticism, to serve the mise-en-scene and occasionally as comic relief.”⁹ *The Magic Island* described a practice in which Haitian

mystics would raise the recently deceased en masse to work plantations as free labor. The earliest depiction of the zombie was that of slave labor serving as nothing more than a backdrop to signal an exotic Haitian locale. Although both Twohy and Dotson trace the history of the zombie, it is Dotson who acknowledges the transformation of blackness-as-slave-zombies in the early films to blackness-as-hero in *Night of the Living Dead* as significant. Neither author goes beyond nodding toward Romero in approval after explaining such a transformation in the representation of blackness. Without ever drawing attention to it, the work done by Twohy and Dotson outlines the hegemonic structure of race of the 1930s and 1940s in comparison to that of the 1960s and 1970s. Because African-Americans were an afterthought in the early 20th century with relatively little power, they were portrayed as slave zombies in the early films; however, once they begin to gain a modicum of equality they begin taking on the role of hero as seen in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*. Ben, however, does not assert power in *Night of the Living Dead* until dominant hegemonic structures have collapsed and he is killed once those dominant structures regain control; this a bleak outlook on racial equality and the oppressive power of cultural hegemony.

Some scholars recognize the changing racial landscape of the mid 20th century but move away from overt examples such as those mentioned above.¹⁰ Gregory Waller has suggested that Ben and Harry's arguments are racially and patriarchally motivated.¹¹ He compares their attempt to control both material goods in the house and their fellow occupants to rival businessmen in the work force attempting to climb the corporate ladder. Williams writes that Ben's monologue about how he originally escaped the

zombies is a veiled reference to Southern sit-ins, and lynchings. Describing Ben's confidence in handling the growing mob of zombies, Williams writes

Ben immediately takes charge of the situation, 'Don't worry about them. I can handle them,' as if familiar with dealing with lynch mobs. When he later tells Barbara (Judith O'Dea) about witnessing zombies pursue a gas truck and fleeing from a besieged diner, his narrative evokes African-American experience of post-Reconstruction days in the American south... Also, Ben's decision to take control (although initially from a hysterical white female), resembles the Vietnam experience of working-class, ethnic groups bearing an over-proportionate share of the conflict going on at the time of the film's production and release.¹²

Once again it is only in a time of crisis that Ben has the opportunity to assert power: a power that seems to be fueled by memories and experiences of pre-collapse inequalities. Ben does not assert control because he is a heroic anti-establishment figure; he asserts control because there has been a disruption in hegemonic systems that had previously prevented him from doing so.

Gender has made up a small percentage of relevant scholarship concerning Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *Dawn of the Dead*. While Tony Williams and Waller mention it in their books, Stephen Harper and Barry Keith Grant are the only ones who have dedicated entire articles to the topic.¹³ Noting the scarcity of scholars that have approached this topic, Harper feels that *Dawn of the Dead* in particular is a film "whose feminist aspects have been too seldom discussed."¹⁴ Harper illustrates the difference between the female characters in *Night of the Living Dead* and those in *Dawn of the Dead*. In *Night of the Living Dead* the female characters are little more than extensions of their male counterparts. Each woman in *Night of the Living Dead* is paired with a man and either does what he does or follows his instructions. For example, the only time two

survivors Tom (Keith Wayne) and Judy (Judith Ridley) separate is when Tom instructs her to tend to something and she disobeys only once so she can be by his side in a moment of danger. This dynamic changes in *Dawn of the Dead* when Fran (Gaylen Ross) is the only woman in the film and bucks the submissive role in favor of active participation in the group's survival.

While Harper notes that Fran is more active in *Dawn of the Dead*, he also points out that she does not lose qualities socially associated with women such as empathy and caring. "*Dawn of the Dead*, then, presents a multi-faceted heroine. Fran is not only, as Grant claims, a professional, but also a nurturing and maternal figure; and even — albeit temporarily — a brainless cultural dupe of the fashion industry."¹⁵ Harper makes a compelling argument that Fran, associated with empathy and caring because of her gender, empathizes with the zombies and, in turn, makes them more empathetic characters. The change in attitudes between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* mark a crucial change in hegemonic structures due in part to second-wave feminism. Despite the collapse of dominant hegemonic structures, Judy will not abandon values associated with those structures. She will not separate herself from Tom even if that means that she puts herself in danger. The marked difference in the attitude of women between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* can be attributed to the rise of second-wave feminism between the production of the films. Fran is an autonomous actor within the world of the film which can be read as a reflection of the altered real-world hegemonic systems in place.

While the scholarship on gender may be scant, the work done on Romero's consumerist critiques is anything but. *Dawn of the Dead* and its shopping mall setting serve as focal points for scholars wishing to talk about Romero's consumerist commentary, but *Night of the Living Dead* and the zombies themselves are also discussed. The list of scholars that have explored consumerism within the films is extensive and include the aforementioned Waller and Williams.¹⁶ In their articles A. Loudermilk, and Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry choose to juxtapose the zombies in *Dawn of the Dead* to the survivors' roles as consumers. Loudermilk suggests that "Romero's satire really aims for the brain of the capitalist identity. The runners, empowered with the kingdom's keys [master keys to the shopping mall], now manipulate the zombies in such a way that the roles of zombie consumer and human consumable take on darkly comedic proportions."¹⁷ She is referring to a scene in which the survivors acting as consumers take advantage of their position as consumables (zombies want to eat them) to lure the zombies away from an escape route they use to move items they have acquired in a department store.

Loudermilk also goes outside the film and examines its unrated and independent release, subsequent advertising boycott by some outlets, and eventual financial success. Loudermilk contends that "as a sort of anti-commodity, this underdog film's refusal to conform to norms of commodification did pay off... Credit is due, then, to the innovative and stubborn Romero whose apocalyptic vision of consumer society was successful in subverting consumer norms."¹⁸ Other authors that touch upon this subject agree —

Romero is simultaneously critiquing the consumer culture of the 70s and predicting the commodified opulence of the 80s.

The last popular topic for Romero scholars is the issue of psychoanalysis. Lauro and Embry seem to blend a number of approaches. Calling upon historiography, psychoanalysis, philosophy and post-humanist theory, Lauro and Embry attempt to ascertain why the public is infatuated with the undead. Citing binaries of subject/object, master/slave, and ontic/hauntic, they propose that the underlying infatuation with zombies is the fact that they simultaneously occupy both sides of the binary and neither side. While raising more questions than answers, Lauro and Embry position the zombie as a creature able to reflect societal anxieties no matter the time period due to its unique position as both alive and dead.

What we see in examining the historical trajectory of the zombie evolution is that our fears, the mediating impulses that translate our psychological makeup, are narratives informed by the material conditions of society. If the zombie articulates anxiety about the division of body and mind/soul, through history this narrative takes on various trappings of political and social crises.¹⁹

Lauro and Embry are but a few in a growing line of authors that rely on psychoanalysis to explore fear. Steven Schneider surmises that “what makes horror film monsters at least potentially horrifying (what makes them monsters to begin with) is the fact that they metaphorically embody surmounted beliefs.”²⁰ Building upon the Freudian theory of the uncanny many authors attempt to explain why Romero’s zombies in particular are highly adaptable vehicles for fear: “Romero’s living dead located evil within the repressed impulses of a flawed humanity rather than in some other tyrannical agent or supernatural beyond,” write Joshua Gunn and Shaun Treat.²¹ Words often implemented in the analysis

of fear and Romero's zombies are uncanny and grotesque, both of which find their roots in psychoanalysis.²² What rises to the top in these psychoanalytical studies are two things: zombies and the zombie horde as metaphors for humans and humanity, and zombie films serve as sociocultural mirrors reflecting the fears of the time in which they were produced. It happens that a lot of these fears that are being mirrored are fears concerning dominant hegemonic structures. Being one of the zombie horde is not so dissimilar from being a member of a dominant hegemony: both involve running around and instinctually consuming.

As World War II ended and global annihilation became a tangible possibility many people took a long hard look at who had power, how they came to possess it, and why they managed to maintain it. Using psychosocial critical analysis scholars, writers, and filmmakers began exploring race, gender, and consumption to examine power structures in the United States. Often critical, these academics and auteurs, Romero among them, picked apart what they perceived as flaws and injustices in the system. Authors involved in the discussion of Romero have done a thorough job of identifying and articulating his social criticisms yet he is only a part of the whole. Romero is one in a long line of critics who can be identified with a discourse of psychosocial criticism. This line can be traced from early horror films to EC comics to McLuhan, Marcuse and Fromm. Unique to Romero's formative years was EC comics and early horror films, both of which have been established by comic book scholars and horror film scholars as psychosocially critical mediums.

McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm

McLuhan, often considered one of the pioneers of media theory, was interested in the way in which media influenced the people in a consumer society. His interest led him to newspapers, magazines, advertising and entertainment. He wrote that

ours is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained individual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now. And to generate heat not light is the intention. To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and much entertainment alike.²³

McLuhan also looked at gender through a mechanical or industrial eye. He comments that “the most peculiar features of our world [is] the interfusion of sex and technology.”²⁴ Throughout his publications are examples of women streamlining their lives like an efficient factory might. From advertisements that offer a more automated way of ironing shirts to girdles that give a woman proper lines the intent was control.²⁵

McLuhan asserts that large business entities, ad agencies, and other hegemonic support systems create realities based on their assumptions of what it is people want, in effect mass producing a vision of the world that eventually becomes the accepted vision of the world. McLuhan writes that

Striving constantly, however, to watch, anticipate and control events on the inner, invisible, stage of the collective dream, the ad agencies and Hollywood turn themselves unwittingly into a sort of collective novelist, whose characters, imagery, and situations are an intimate revelation of the passions of the age.²⁶

A constant target for these dispensaries are women who McLuhan explains are always subjects to the men in their lives and thus in need of constant control. This is a recurring

theme in EC comics and *Night of the Living Dead*. Explained in greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis, women in *Night of the Living Dead* are presented as nothing more than extensions of their male counterparts never acting independently or autonomously.

Less concerned with the macro-effects of cultural hegemony Fromm was interested in the individual. A concern of Fromm's was that "man has become an adjunct to the machine, a part of it which cannot (yet) be replaced by a mechanical part, and that does not rule the machine, but it and the whole economic system rule him."²⁷ This could serve as a reasonable explanation of cultural hegemony and how it works — people are but cogs in the machine of dominant hegemonies. Arguably the most classical marxist of the trio, Fromm was very concerned about the alienating effect of capitalism and mass consumption on the individual writing that the individual is "experiencing oneself as a commodity, and one's value not as use value but as exchange value."²⁸ Following this line of thought, Fromm uses an economic metaphor to describe the power of cultural hegemony in a capitalist system. Fromm writes, "One can say that most people turn out to be as society wishes them so that they can be successful. Society fabricates types of people just as it fabricates styles of shoes or of clothes or of automobiles, that is, as goods that are in demand. A person learns already as a child what type is in demand."²⁹ Through subtle manipulation on a (as McLuhan points out) naive populace the dominant social group cannot only produce commodities, but they can also commodify identity by controlling modes of thought and action as if they were cars coming off of the line. Essential features of these commodified identities, Fromm says, are an overwhelming need to consume and mistaking that consumption for satisfaction. Fromm writes, "Man is

in the process of becoming a homo consumens, a total consumer. This image of man almost has the character of a new religious vision in which heaven is just a big warehouse where everyone can buy something new every day, indeed, where he can buy everything that he wants and even a little more than his neighbor.”³⁰ Fromm contends that patriarchal power had rooted itself so firmly that “the very idea of women as center of a social and religious structure seemed unthinkable and absurd.”³¹ He asserts that debates concerning gender center around the nexus of political power and means of control. Fromm writes that from the early 19th century in France when equal rights for women were a subject of debate to the 1960s and the feminist movement the patriarchy has been losing authority. Fromm envisions a world in which “we shall eventually arrive at a point where no desire, not even the ever newly created ones, remains unfulfilled; fulfillment will be instant and without the need to exert any effort. In this vision, technique assumes the characteristics of the Great Mother, a technical instead of natural one, who nurses her children and pacifies them with a never-ceasing lullaby (in the form of radio and television).”³² Brought on by what he calls “the vision of the consumer’s paradise,” Fromm sees women asserting control while maintaining their nurturing tendencies.³³

Marcuse, not unlike Romero himself, took an interdisciplinary approach to exploring mass consumption, social thought and hegemonic value. John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb write “Marcuse refused to confine his thought within disciplinary boundaries.”³⁴ Often blending styles and approaches, Marcuse seemed able to grasp a broader picture of cultural hegemony and its power

Societies produced false needs while dramatically reducing the capacity for critical thought and resistance. Thus Marcuse offered a

theoretical explanation for the alienation and frustration many felt but found difficult to articulate in a society in which even language itself had been distorted to serve the interests of the ruling powers.³⁵

Despite his multiplicity, Marcuse's seminal work and lasting impact has been *One Dimensional Man* and his theory that consumerism is a method of social control. Marcuse writes that "under the rule of a repressive whole, liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination."³⁶ If the populace truly believes that the actions of the majority are not only legitimate but also acted upon with free will then liberty is nothing but a guise for complete control. What Marcuse is detailing is cultural hegemony. And Marcuse like McLuhan believes that burgeoning technology of the mid 20th century cements dominant hegemonic structures and makes it nearly impossible to uproot. He writes that "The technological controls appear to be the very embodiment of reason for the benefit of all social groups and interests — to such an extent that all contradiction seems irrational and all counteraction impossible."³⁷ This is a rather dystopic view, but it is a view shared by Romero in *Night of the Living Dead* only four years after Marcuse's publication.

Just like McLuhan, Fromm, and Marcuse, Romero expresses concerns of consumerist control. Not only does Romero participate in the examination of consumerism and gender, but he goes beyond the three theorists and incorporates race into his paradigm of hegemonic systems. Romero was able to create a model of dominant hegemonies in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*: a model that he could submit to intense pressure — a model he could poke and prod in order to produce reactions.

Romero like McLuhan was able to reveal to his viewers the “social landscape,” controlled by “the tyrant [who] rules not by club or fist, but, [is] disguised as a market researcher, [who] shepherds his flocks in the ways of utility and comfort.”³⁸ These remarks by McLuhan become all too familiar with those that have seen *Dawn of the Dead* in its entirety. From the early scenes at the chaotic television station where active commitment to dominant hegemony is revoked to the ending credits of zombies strolling the promenade of the suburban mall after breaching the entrance it is apparent that the tyrants McLuhan speaks of did such a thorough job that not even a flesh-eating insurgence of the undead could keep people away from the products they have been sold. McLuhan and Romero both express through their work that the dominant social group is not only selling products but social value. McLuhan writes that, “The family circle has widened. The world-pool of information fathered by electric media — movies telestar, flight — far surpasses any possible influence mom and dad can now bring to bear. Character no longer is shaped by two earnest, fumbling experts. Now all the world’s a sage.”³⁹ Both Romero and McLuhan understood the media as a dispensary of value; they also understood that consumerism shaped that dispensary. Romero and McLuhan expressed their concerns in different ways: one through academic texts the other through popular film.

Romero and Fromm also appeared congruent in their concerns. From Ben and Harry arguing about who gets to control the items in the farmhouse in *Night of the Living Dead* to the runners in *Dawn of the Dead* treating the mall like a paradise Romero and his films explicitly show the power of not only consumerism but also hegemonic structures

that prop it up and advocate for it. Romero clearly frames his characters as cogs in a massive machine much in the same way Fromm expresses his concerns for individuals under consumerist control. Their critiques of gender also run parallel. Much like Fromm's theory on mother right, a transformation can be seen between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* in which the female characters go from dependent and submissive to assertive. *Dawn of the Dead* is especially telling because the female protagonists bucks the role of submissive housewife yet maintains a nurturing tendency.

Formative Influences

Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm are all recognized as major contributors to psychosocial criticism but are not the only ones to explore mass consumption, gender, and technology in terms of influence and control. Psychosocial criticism is also found beyond the walls of academia amidst mediums of popular culture. Among the pop culture outlets for psychosocial criticism was EC comics and early horror films such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Blending entertainment with cultural critique, these two outlets appear to be a conceivable introduction into sociocultural awareness, and psychosocial criticism for Romero. Despite his ideological similarity to Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm, Romero never fully separates from a gory, popular aesthetic seen in the panels of EC comics. It is this unique position, ideologically psychosocial yet aesthetically explicit and popular that positions Romero within the transition of post 1960s modern horror.⁴⁰ This transition in horror moves away from macro social concerns and instead focuses on micro social narratives that are more intimately tied with the home, the family, the neighborhood, and a normative populace.

Night of the Living Dead and *Dawn of the Dead* share sociocultural content and insights similar to works by McLuhan, Fromm, and Marcuse but maintain a popular shock aesthetic. Early horror comics and horror films responsible for such an aesthetic in Romero's work also share narratives that introduce him to psychosocial criticism. Although the psychosocial criticism present in the comics and films that Romero consumed is similar to that found in the works of Marcuse, McLuhan and Fromm they are not without their deviations. This distinction is important because while each sphere of influence (Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm and EC comics and early horror films) overlap, they are not identical. Romero plants a foot firmly in each sphere, and thus *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* retain attributes of both while not belonging to either one entirely. This unique position is partly responsible for producing two films that are ideologically charged yet aesthetically popular and gruesome.

The pop culture sphere that Romero never fully separates from can be principally traced back to EC comics. In 1950 after forays into westerns, romances and crime stories, EC comics owner Bill Gaines and writer/editor Al Feldstein debuted *The Haunt of Fear*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *The Crypt of Terror*, a trio of horror themed titles. Fashioning themselves after the serialized radio programs of their childhood, Gaines and Feldstein began filling the pages of EC with ghouls, vampires, blood, guts, and death. Not only was this decision to go macabre lucrative it was socially and culturally reflective. Well established in horror film theory, it has been suggested by Digby Diehl that

Frankenstein, Dracula and the Phantom of the Opera had sprung from the nightmare conditions of the early days of the Industrial Revolution, horror comics of the 1950s appealed to teens and young adults who were trying to cope with the aftermath of even

greater terrors — Nazi death camps and the explosion of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Fifties kids came of age in a booming, button-down America during an era punctuated by outbursts of national paranoia. School duck-and-cover drills nourished the fear that at any moment a nuclear attack could send us into shelters.⁴¹

Romero himself was born in 1940 to the turbulence of the mid 20th century and has said that he “always loved horror. You know, the old EC comic books, the ones that got banned by the Comics Code, were very moral. There was always something to take home from one of those stories, always something to think about. And I think a combination of that and growing up with the threat of an atom bomb hitting New York and all that shit... I don't know, maybe that's a lethal combination.”⁴² Romero has more than once attributed his style of narrative and filmmaking to both the pop culture of his childhood and the very real fears of the middle 20th century. Like the EC founders, Romero grew up in a culture of paranoia and fear that influenced artistic license, and like the early horror film genre the social instability of the middle 20th century was reflected in the pages of EC.

It should be noted that Romero not only seemed to learn his style of satire and irony from the pages of EC where, “however grisly it became, was always written with tongue firmly planted in cheek,” his aesthetics were also influenced by the same pages.⁴³ Tony Williams, for one, likens Romero’s “stylistic choices” to the panels of EC horror narratives.⁴⁴ Romero’s cinematography has also been attributed, in part, to the panels of EC. Ultimately, it was through this combination of extreme violence, sadism, masochism, bodily fluids, and satirical irony that Romero like EC comics almost two decades before him was able to, as Williams writes, “provide culturally satirical antidotes to the hypocritical conformism of an era.”⁴⁵

Justice was often heavy-handed within the pages of EC, but it wasn't always the white American male that dispensed it. Often times it was the white American male that would be on the receiving end of punishment — a theme present in both *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*. And although all the horror titles under the EC flag partook in social criticism in some way, Feldstein and Gaines introduced two new comics in February of '52 called *Shock SuspenStories* and *Crime SuspenStories* that quickly became vehicles for even more overt social criticism. Diehl writes that “Increasingly Gaines and Feldstein used these two venues to take on some of the most explosive issues of the day. They called their tales preachies and used *Shock* in particular to tackle themes such as racism, addiction, and anti-semitism.”⁴⁶ With the advent of *Shock SuspenStories* and *Crime SuspenStories*, Feldstein and Gaines actively and consciously took part in cultural criticism. They let the prominent issues of their time guide their narratives and their aesthetics.

One such story debuted in the summer of 1952. The third issue of *Shock SuspenStories* ran a story called ‘The Guilty’ about a black man named Aubrey Collins accused by a white man named Hank Barker of killing a white woman. Eerily similar to Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* some eight years later the story opens with Collins being taken through an angry, hateful crowd to the local jail. His guilt is immediately in question after it is discovered that Barker claims to have seen him in the vicinity of the crime but not actually perpetrating it. Although both the sheriff and the district attorney are convinced of Collins’ guilt, the DA insists on a fair trial and suggests that Collins be moved to the county jail out of the reach of the angry mob. On the day of the trial the

sheriff picks Collins up only to let him out in the woods under the guise that he is setting him free. Once Collins begins to run the sheriff shoots him down. The sheriff continues to the courthouse and tells the DA that Collins was killed attempting to flee. The DA informs the sheriff that Barker, the accuser, has admitted to the crime and framing Collins. And so the story ends with a message simply signed “editors” that reads, “Whether Aubrey Collins was innocent or guilty was not important! But for any American to have so little regard for the life and rights of any other American is a debasement of the principles of the constitution upon which our country is founded.”⁴⁷ EC often challenged their readers to think beyond the blood, guts, death, and decay within the pages of their publication. With tales of morality and direct pleas from editors readers were often confronted with cultural critique — a style of cultural critique that Romero conceivably learned from the pages of EC.

It is important to note that these critiques are a reflection of the environment in which Gaines and Feldstein were situated. 1952 was the year that the Supreme Court first heard arguments in the case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*.⁴⁸ Additionally in 1953 the Tuskegee Institute reported that 1952 was the first year since the institution began keeping records in the late 19th century that there had not been a lynching in the United States. They were quick to point out, however, that “other forms of anti-Negro violence have not declined.”⁴⁹ Because of such prominence in society at the time, race was a prominent topic of discourse in the pages of EC. Race, however, was not the only topic of discourse.

The editors and writers, not only commented on the treatment of black citizens but also native Americans, patriotic prejudice, and the Ku Klux Klan: “Safe behind their masks of prejudice, these hooded peddlers of racial, religious, and political hatred operate today! Mind you, they are shrewd and ruthless men such as those in our story! How long can we stay ‘cool’ and indifferent to this threat to our democratic way of life? It is time to unveil these usurpers of our constitutionally guaranteed freedoms!”⁵⁰⁻⁵¹⁻⁵² Romero himself never comes on-screen in his films to deliver a morally charged monologue, but such messages come through in his narrative, nonetheless.

Women too saw their dignity and rights defended by EC which often had female characters enact revenge or justice on men that had wronged them.⁵³ Women were often portrayed as independent, educated and capable of taking on an authoritative, albeit violently authoritative, role when pushed into such a position. Women were not merely victims in need of rescue but often rescuers themselves or victims capable of extreme actions in pursuit of justice — this is a theme visited in *Dawn of the Dead* in the visage of Fran who learns to shoot a gun and fly a helicopter after almost being eaten early in the film. She expresses to her fellow male survivors that she wants to be able to defend herself without their help. Gender critiques can also be grounded in psychosocial reaction. The 1950s can be seen as a ramp-up to second wave feminism that emerges in conflict to the post-WWII attempt to re-normalize gender roles in the United States. This was a time in which the gender roles accepted before the war came in conflict with progressive gender ideologies after the war. This led to a new concept of women and their roles and abilities and thus a conflict that appeared in the pages of EC comics.⁵⁴

And so EC comics continued to push the envelope until 1954 when a governmental committee and tough self-policing by other comic book editors gutted Gaines' publication by banning words like horror, terror, and weird. They also banned bloodshed, ghouls, vampires, werewolves and the undead.⁵⁵ In the midst of the end of EC Gaines and Feldstein attempted to publish a story in their publication *Incredible Science Fiction* (formerly *Weird Science*) about a planet of orange and blue aliens that are in a constant state of war.⁵⁶ Sent to the planet to evaluate its admission into a galactic union, an astronaut concludes that the aliens' prejudices are too severe and their relationships with one another too savage to enter the union. Once the decision is made, the astronaut removes his helmet and it is revealed that he is a black man. With no gore or violence of any kind and no mention of the taboo words set fourth by the code office this comic was set to be censored unless the astronaut was not black. In the end the story ran unchanged, but it was clear that EC comics had struck a sensitive nerve with the American public. Even with their aesthetic gutted, EC comics was feared as much for its social commentary as it was for their depiction of blood, guts, and murder.

The themes present in EC comics are not only social but psychosocial as well. Character motivation in many *ShockSuspensstories* narratives come from an extreme desire for commodities, money, or both.⁵⁷ Said characters usually get what they are after but at the expense of something more important to them; this importance is only realized after it is too late to reverse the decision. One such example is the alcoholic journalist – recently sober and newly in love with a need to prove his affection through gifts — given a second chance to break a story. With his deadline rapidly approaching, the journalist

happens upon a murder, gets the diner shop owner to confess, and phones in the story before calling the police. The only problem for the journalist, however, is that the woman he just reported dead is actually still alive. He decides to strangle her rather than compromise his story only to discover that the woman he just murdered was the new love for whom he turned his life around.⁵⁸ The EC stories are able to forcefully reveal the psychic manipulation of social institutions by making the characters' desired result in the given tale a simultaneous punishment. In the case of the journalist, it was money and gender norms; gender norms convinced him that the woman he loved could not love him in return without gifts and money while the desire for that money drove him to do things he would not have done without such a system of consumerism in place.

One of the best examples of psychosocial criticism can be found in *Shock Suspense Stories*, issue 18, entitled "Cadillac Fever." The story is about a rural family of tobacco farmers whose patriarch Clyde is obsessed with saving enough money to rent and drive a Cadillac, if only just once. Although his daughter Ruthie is firmly on his side, Clyde's wife Effie would find his savings no matter where he hid them and spend them on herself. Clyde and Effie's strained relationship throughout the narrative culminates in Effie's death. When her body is found in the house, Ruthie accuses her father Clyde and as a result he is convicted and put to death. Although her father is dead, Ruthie is overjoyed on the day of the funeral because his body is being carried to the cemetery in a Cadillac hearse. Ruthie soon confesses to killing her mother so that her father would be blamed and finally get a ride in a Cadillac; she too is then convicted and sentenced to death. The last panel of the story is of Ruthie saying, "An' now they are comin' for me

an' I'll be followin' Pa shortly. Funny thing! Ah'm lookin forward to it! I sorta caught Pa's Cadillac fever."⁵⁹ All three characters were psychologically affected by money, but it was Clyde and especially Ruthie who were warped by the Cadillac and its status. In the narrative, Ruthie seems to determine that satisfying the urge for commodity in death is better than not being able to satisfy the urge in life. The perception, then, is that commodity is the essence of life or that commodity supersedes death. Either way, this EC story and the many like it are psychosocially critical of consumer society and the institutions that are responsible for commodity worship. Once again, this criticism is revealed through the punishment of characters by the very thing they seek; this is an effective tactic that puts the very thing being criticized at the very center of the narrative from beginning to end.

In conjunction with EC, Romero was influenced by classic horror films and the science fiction of the 1950s: "I was always attracted to the horror genre, and when I was old enough to got to movies by myself, they were re-releasing Universal's famous monsters. The original *Frankenstein*, the original *Dracula*. As a kid I got to see those films on the big screen and they were beautiful. And then came 50's sci-fi things — *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and the original version of *The Thing*. Those were the films that influenced me when I was at that really formative stage."⁶⁰ Such films come out of a tradition of socio-cultural criticism. Narrative tropes present in the horror genre can be unproblematically linked to a timeline of real world social fears and cultural concerns.⁶¹ Social and cultural concerns are present from the earliest horror films. From mad scientists playing God in the early 20th century to radioactive monsters dominating the

genre after the advent of the nuclear bomb, the horror film is a vehicle for contemporary socio-cultural concerns.⁶² The violence, too, has its place in such social criticism.

Jonathan Lake Crane writes that, “Living in a violent time has not diminished our taste for blood. Instead of seeking relief from a surfeit of violence, many of us have opted to celebrate entertainment that makes a virtue of attempting to surpass any crazed act of real everyday slaughter.”⁶³ Increased violence in horror films is therefore a reaction to the violence outside of them. Like EC comics, however, the violence and social criticism present in the horror genre are also psychosocial; they call into question the presence of systems that control modes of thought and behavior.

Paul Wells writes that, “[the horror] genre has been used to explore modes of social ‘revolution’ in which naturalized ideas about bourgeois orthodoxy are transgressed, exposing how the ‘working class’ in Weimar Germany, Depression-era America, Franco’s Spain and so on have been oppressed and socially manipulated to maintain those advantaged by the late capitalist status quo.”⁶⁴ Horror films critique the methods and mechanisms that instill certain behaviors or social tropes. Robin Wood offers that the horror genre, “is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its re-emergence dramatized, as in our nightmares, as an object of horror, a matter for terror, and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression.” Horror cinema, then, is a critique of the cultural and social repression that Wood states is cultivated from infancy and all throughout adulthood. Because such repression goes predominantly unnoticed, the horror genre attempts to recall it in order to expose it. This exposition is psychosocial.

With four years of unchecked, gruesome commentary from EC comics, early exposure to classic horror films, and a tumultuous social environment all affecting his psychosocial development, Romero becomes situated in a unique position that straddles the academic and the popular. Romero also belongs to a transition in the horror film genre that focuses more on family, neighborhoods, the psyche of the individual, and small social group interaction — a transition that runs parallel, ideologically, to the concerns expressed by McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm. Neither wholly within the realm of academic scholarship or wholly within the realm of EC comics and early horror films Romero expresses complex social and cultural criticisms through a gory popular medium. This position allows *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* to be unique visual manifestations of ideologues expressed in the psychosocial discourse of the middle 20th century particularly by Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm.

Chapter Two: Media, Consumerism, and Cultural Hegemony

George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and his follow-up *Dawn of the Dead* not only participated in a transitional phase within the horror genre they also commented on a vast array of social and cultural concerns. I will explore the second of these two films through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Where some authors have seen commentary on capitalism, mass consumption, and mass communication in *Dawn of the Dead* as autonomous motifs they are in fact symptoms of a broader, unified theme: the power of cultural hegemony.

The zombie horde in *Dawn of the Dead* simply by its presence subvert dominant hegemonies to such a point that it causes a tectonic shift in power structures and cultural mores. Death is no longer the end of life, home is no longer a place of safety, and the standards of morality have been rendered invalid. This shift causes a crisis in dominant hegemonies in which institutions that have been actively committed to the established order resist the new cultural and physical realities brought on by a zombie apocalypse.⁶⁵ Without commitment from subordinate institutions, however, power cannot be consolidated into a dominant hegemony which causes massive social instabilities such as a breakdown in mass media, police enforcement, and long held social values.

This chapter will serve two functions. The first is to thoroughly define cultural hegemony and explore the collapse in its subordinate structures as presented in *Dawn of the Dead*: the collapse of these structures is a sign of a hegemonic crisis which results in a power vacuum haphazardly filled with old hegemonic values and newly adopted mores. The second function is to highlight consumerism as a hegemonic value not easily abandoned which in turn becomes a root cause for the demise of several characters in *Dawn of the Dead*.

Cultural Hegemony and Subordinate Groups

Cultural hegemony is simply a set of naturalized standards people use to reflexively act in given situations. Gramsci explains cultural hegemony as the “spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.”⁶⁶ It is important to note that this consent is not given under duress but willingly and often unwittingly: “Consent is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production,” Gramsci writes.⁶⁷ In order to maintain hegemonic structures, however, the dominant group must have the consent of subordinate groups. Jackson Lears writing on Gramsci suggests that,

to resort to the concept of cultural hegemony is to take a banal question — “who has power?” — and deepen it at both ends. The “who” includes parents, preachers, teachers, journalists, literati, “experts” of all sorts, as well as advertising executives, entertainment promoters, popular musicians, sports figures, and celebrities — all of whom are involved (albeit often unwittingly) in shaping the values and attitudes of society.⁶⁸

By their very nature subordinate social and cultural institutions support and disseminate a vast array of dominant hegemonic values. Without these subordinate institutions cultural hegemony becomes ineffectual in perpetuating power.

Daniel C. Hallin writes in his article “We Keep America on Top of the World” that “one of the things that is most distinctive about TV news is the extent to which it is an ideological medium, providing not just information or entertainment, but ‘packages for consciousness’ — frameworks for interpreting and cues for reacting to social and political reality.”⁶⁹ The mass media, then, is a structure meant to uphold and propagate hegemonic value. Independently McLuhan, Fromm, Marcuse, and Romero all stress the intimate connection between the media and cultural hegemony. For Marcuse the media is simply a tool of cultural hegemony used to obscure the imbalance within the modes of production, an obscurity that “makes the very notion of alienation questionable.”⁷⁰ Marcuse writes that

If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program, and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they read the same newspaper, then this assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population.⁷¹

The media, for its part, effectively creates the illusion that both rich and poor, low class and high class, benefit from cultural hegemony; to nurture and prolong the establishment is in everyone’s best interest. McLuhan, who made his life’s work exploring the effect of the media, echoes Marcuse, writing that “all media work us over completely. They are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical,

and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered.”⁷²

Fromm, too, sees little division between media and the agenda of cultural hegemony. His concerns rests on the commodification of the person, or personality. He writes that people in a consumer hegemony are merely an extension of their possessions and that possessions and appearance create “models” of people and personality not unlike models of cars. People learn of the most recent personality models, Fromm states, “In movies, in the liquor ads, in the clothing ads, in the indications of the ways that important people dress and talk.”⁷³ Romero himself chooses to illustrate the seamless nature of the media and cultural hegemony before a collapse, in part, through his cinematography. The opening scene of *Dawn of the Dead* is a slow disclosure of a television newsroom in disarray; the camera cuts to a bank of television monitors in the editing room of the news station. The camera focuses on one of the monitors which shows an interview between interviewer Mr. Berman (David Early) and government spokesman Dr. Foster (David Crawford). A series of shot/reverse shots of Dr. Foster and Mr. Berman takes place on the monitor. The shot/reverse shot series goes from Mr. Berman to Dr. Foster only once. However, the shot/reverse shot series continues after a suture shot from the monitor to the studio — effectively switching between the television and real life. The series of shots serves to accentuate the intimate nature of hegemonic order and subordinate groups of the hegemonic order.



FIGURE 1. Frame One of Shot/Reverse Shot Sequence.⁷⁴ Dr. Foster is pictured on the television monitor.



FIGURE 2. Frame Two of Shot/Reverse Shot Sequence.⁷⁵ Mr. Berman is pictured on the television monitor.



FIGURE 3. Frame Three of Shot/Reverse Shot Sequence.⁷⁶ Notice that it is the very same shot from **FIGURE 1** except that Dr. Foster is no longer pictured on the television monitor, but in the actual television studio.



FIGURE 4. Frame Four of Shot/Reverse Shot Sequence.⁷⁷ Like Dr. Foster, Mr. Berman is now also shot in the studio.

Noting the interlaced relationship of cultural hegemony and the media, if this structure was to collapse or become separated from hegemonic structures in any way it would be a definitive sign that dominant hegemonic structures are in turmoil. Likewise, without the media people would partly lose their ability to interpret reality. Therefore, it would seem quite purposeful that the opening scene of *Dawn of the Dead* is a newsroom on the verge of collapse. During the separation series mentioned above, Dr. Foster is being lambasted not only by his interviewer on camera but also by employees off camera.

Dr. Foster: Do you believe the dead are returning to life and attacking the living?

Mr. Berman: I am not so sure what to believe Doctor, all we get is what you people tell us.

Dr. Foster: You are not running a talk show here Mr. Berman, you can forget about pitching the audience the moral bullshit they want to hear

Mr. Berman: You are asking us to abandon every human code!

This dialogue is evidence that the reality of the world has shifted. Dr. Foster is asking the public to alter its perception and work with a new set of values the zombies have forced on it such as foregoing human burial rights and using excessive violence to ensure the dead are in fact dead (decapitation, bludgeoning of the brain, and cremation). Berman's

reaction and that of the other employees is one of dismay. This dismay signals the first of many refusals to abandon long-held cultural mores despite the dangers of doing so.

Refusal to listen to the expert not only highlights the difficulty of adaptation but signals a hegemonic crisis: there is no consensus and, showcased by the media's reaction to a government representative, no support.

The hegemonic support system of mass media has lost confidence in the dominant hegemonic institutions; they have pulled their active commitment. Hegemonic crisis is further illustrated by infighting among the production team. After the initial confrontation with Dr. Foster, the camera cuts back to Fran trying in vain to maintain control and stop the station's broadcasting of abandoned government shelters set up to take in refugees from high population areas most affected by the zombie epidemic. The station manager, however, insists that they stay up. He is afraid that viewers will "tune out" if the listings are not kept on the air. Fran asks him if he is "willing to murder people by sending them to stations that have closed down?" to which he replies, "I want those up every minute we are on the air." In response station employees begin abandoning their posts and telling the manager to "fuck off." Once some semblance of order is restored Mr. Berman and Dr. Foster continue their dialogue.

Mr. Berman: We need facts. The public needs facts. What do you have to give us?

Dr. Foster: They kill for one reason and for one reason only, for food. They eat their victims. Do you understand that Mr. Berman? That's what keeps them going. If we had listened, if we had dealt with this phenomena properly without emotion, it wouldn't have come to this.

At this point an employee steps out from behind the camera and throws papers at Dr. Foster which draws cheers of support from his remaining colleagues. This scene only adds to the growing instability of the hegemonic order. The newsroom refuses to listen to the doctor, the station manager refuses to stop running outdated rescue locations, and everyone opposes the station manager. Amid the chaos of the newsroom survivors are picking and choosing which cultural values to follow creating further disorder within what is left of the dominant hegemonies: with no consensus there is no dominant hegemonic structures only fractured remnants of ideology and value. The news team doesn't believe in its own manager anymore; the interviewer and the employees have no faith in the government representative who has come to the station and an employee exodus takes place. The mass media is not the only support structure to rescind its active commitment from the dominant hegemonies. Religion, law enforcement, and familial supports are also shaken in the cataclysmic events of the zombie epidemic. Following the scene in the news room Roger (Scott H. Reiniger) and Peter, members of a SWAT team, are instructed to raid a housing project in order to remove the dead bodies that the residents refuse to turn over. The residents object because according to Peter "they still believe there is respect in dying." It is clearly a Christian respect that he refers to: another SWAT member crosses himself before entering the project, and it is a Catholic priest who relinquishes the moral authority of the project after he administers the last rites to the dead. In these scenes religion comes into direct conflict with any attempt to enforce adaptive hegemonic values signaling further erosion of dominant hegemonic structures.

Once the former dominant hegemonic structures have collapsed residual loyalty to its value systems are maladaptive and dangerous. The first victims to employ ineffectual hegemonic values are the residents of the housing project who steadfastly cling to family and religion in a society that seems to have discarded them. The residents of the complex forcefully attempt to stop authorities from removing them from the premises and disposing of their dead. The tenants rely upon the values of kinship and religion to dictate their behavior despite the fact that both are ineffective in a new zombie-infested world. In the chaos of the SWAT raid tenants seek the shelter of family members only to be eaten by them because they have become zombies.⁷⁸ The employment of religious values also causes death. Roger and Peter encounter an old Catholic priest who informs them that those who have died in the past weeks have been stored in the basement of the complex. The scene then cuts to other SWAT members breaking down the basement barrier only to be engulfed by a swarm of zombies. The priest is portrayed as a frail, sickly amputee: all characteristics which can be used to describe the hegemonic values attempting to be applied in the world of the film. Peter and Roger dispose of the zombies in the housing project and thus attempt to enforce the values of the tenuous dominant hegemony but soon revoke their active commitment and abandon their roles. Roger says to Peter in what seems to be neither a statement or a question, “Think it’s right to run.” Fran and her station pilot/boyfriend Stephen (David Emge) also abandon their respective roles, and when the four protagonists meet to escape they come face to face with more law enforcement fleeing the city.

This mass exodus of personnel responsible for either enforcing or disseminating hegemonic values represents the revocation of active commitment from the support systems responsible for holding up and supporting the dominant hegemonies. This revocation of commitment causes a collapse in the dominant hegemonic structures. Romero seems to insinuate that without a structure to disseminate and enforce hegemonic values a power vacuum will occur.

Consumerism and Cultural Hegemony

Like the entanglement of the media and dominant hegemonies, Marcuse, McLuhan, Fromm, and Romero also intersect at the role of consumerism within hegemonic structures. The consensus is that consumerism is at the very heart of hegemonic control. The consumption of goods and the reification of those goods is essential to creating an environment in which people give their consent to the dominant group willingly. Upon landing at the shopping mall *Dawn of the Dead's* survivors come face to face with a consumerist utopia: unlimited free choice without the limitation of currency. Often cited as capitalism's essential freedom Marcuse writes that "free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear — that is, if they sustain alienation."⁷⁹ And Marcuse does think that this false freedom does indeed sustain alienation:

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life — much

better than before and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change.⁸⁰

Consumption and the goods consumed are quickly cemented as a way of life; a necessity that is immune to any challenge by the very nature of its creation. And consumption is easy. Fromm writes that “Cooking, driving a car, taking pictures, almost all acts of consumption can be accomplished with little skill, effort or concentration, provided you follow the simple rules of instruction.”⁸¹ Couple the created necessity to consume with the ease of that consumption and a voracious personality emerges among a consumerist society. McLuhan writes that “American G.I. abroad puzzled foreigners by endless insistence on having something in his mouth most of the time. Gum, candy, cokes.”⁸² Romero touches upon each of these characteristics of consumption throughout *Dawn of the Dead*. Romero, however, goes beyond merely bringing to light the magnetism of consumption; he outlines the dangers that such an intense urge to consume can present once the system that created that urge collapses.

In both *Dawn of the Dead* and *Night of the Living Dead*, values that concern the taking of life are abandoned while consumer values go mostly unquestioned by the films’ characters. Even one of the most sacred mores of not killing children is abandoned when Peter is forced to shoot kid-zombies that attack him while Stephen is filling up the chopper with fuel. And while a vast array of hegemonic values are responsible for death, none are as catastrophic to hold onto in *Dawn of the Dead* as those of consumerism, wealth, and property.

The four survivors who have sought shelter in the confines of a shopping mall continue to employ outdated values: a mortally dangerous risk. But as Roberta Sassatelli

points out, abandoning consumer values is difficult due to the level of their saturation on our culture. Sassatelli writes, “There is ample evidence that no matter how much market exchanges try to shut themselves off from other spheres of life, they are, as Polanyi said, ‘embedded’ in social networks; likewise, we witness daily to what extent the instrumental picture of the consumer is institutionally reinforced and frankly hegemonic in a number of key institutional contexts.”⁸³ With that in mind it is easy to see why Romero places mass consumption at the very center of *Dawn of the Dead* and repeatedly draws parallels between masses under the influence of the consumerist hegemony and the zombie horde itself.

Setting *Dawn of the Dead* in a zombie-infested Cleveland shopping mall is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the power of hegemonic values specifically consumerist values that are indubitably present in many other hegemonic spheres. Loudermilk writes that “The shift in setting [from *Night of the Living Dead* 10 years earlier] serves Romero’s shift in sociocritical focus” from race and gender (although present) to consumerism.⁸⁴ While Romero, within the context of his film, appears fully conscious of the power and magnetism of cultural hegemony his characters are only partially conscious of it. Upon landing on top of the shopping mall in their helicopter the survivors peer into the skylights to observe the inside of the mall filled with zombies; Fran asks Stephen, “What are they doing? Why have they come here?” to which he replies, “Some kind of instinct, memory of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives.” It isn’t until she is almost killed by a Hare Krishna zombie while the men are looting the mall that Fran understands the power and subsequent dangers of the mall and

its consumerist values. She warns Stephen that “You’re hypnotized by this place, all of you. It’s so bright and neatly wrapped you don’t see that it’s a prison, too.” However, she too, eventually succumbs, in part, to the pull of consumer hegemony and participates in commodity excess because “on the cognitive front, the appropriation of psychic space by marketers means that an individual’s sense of self increasingly reflects the values, assumptions, and beliefs of consumer culture,” according to Joseph D. Rumbo.⁸⁵

Why is it that the survivors cannot or do not realize the futility of their actions in the shopping mall which include looting the bank and taking the useless currency? They approach the mall post-zombie apocalypse the same way they would have approached the mall before the epidemic. One rationale is that the survivors see tangible value in the shopping mall and the contents within; a concept Stephen Harper explains in his article *Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate: George Romero’s Dawn of the Dead*. Harper writes, “Consumers should not be despised as ‘the cultural dupes’ of capitalist producers; consumers are instead ‘secondary producers,’ finding value in their consumption and making use of capitalist products for their own ends.”⁸⁶ This is indeed the initial intention of the survivors but need quickly transforms into want. Once inside the shopping mall Peter and Roger make their way from the safety of the rooftop maintenance room across the concourse full of zombies and into a department store. Several long shots feature Peter and Roger in the center of the frame with the goods of the store all around them. Both men, who have not appeared in a long shot up to this point (about halfway through the film), appear minuscule and lost in a sea of manufactured product. Peter says to Roger, “Let’s get what we need. I will get a

television and radio.” Roger responds with “lighter fluid and ooh, ooh chocolate.” What begins as a search for commodities necessary to survive almost instantaneously dissolves into desire.

It is not without a certain sense of irony that during these initial long shots where the protagonists get consumed by their surroundings the zombie horde is still outside on the concourse waiting to consume them too. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry posit that the

zombie horde is a swarm where no trace of the individual remains... There is the primary fear of being devoured by a zombie, a threat posed mainly to the physical body, and the secondary fear that one will, in losing one’s consciousness, become part of the monstrous horde.⁸⁷

The fear of the zombie is twofold. One-half of the fear is bodily harm (eaten) while the other half is the more abstract idea of losing one’s own autonomy. It is clear in *Dawn of the Dead* that the second half of the zombie threat (becoming one of the horde) not only comes from the zombies themselves but also the mall and its vast array of commodities. The zombies, like the insatiable need to consume, constantly threaten to engulf the survivors.

The connection between the consumerist hegemony and the zombie horde is unmistakable. Gunn and Treat write that “unlike vampires or werewolves, zombies present the ‘human face’ of capitalist monstrosity.”⁸⁸ The zombie horde at the shopping mall seems to behave no differently from their living counterparts both in intention (consumption) and drive (an instinctive hunger). So if the fear is rooted not only in being eaten but becoming one of the undead horde it could be argued that there are two paths to

realizing that fear — physically being turned by a zombie bite or participating in mass consumption until there is no distinguishing between zombie and human.

The first of the four protagonists to die is Roger. Despite Fran's warnings Stephen, Roger, and Peter are convinced that the mall is an ideal place to hole up. Stephen says to Fran after her close scrape with the Hare Krishna zombie, "You should see all the great stuff we got, Frannie. All kinds of stuff. This place is terrific. It really is; it's perfect. All kinds of things. We've really got it made here, Frannie. Frannie?" Stephen's monologue is delivered in a childlike fashion accented by an odd twinkling piano on the soundtrack. The scene is foreboding and has an almost perverse *mise-en-scène*. Romero it seems wanted to show how in the face of danger treating the mall like an enormous Christmas tree seems a bit peculiar if not entirely perverse. Because they are going to stay at the mall, the men have decided to block the entrances with delivery trucks from a nearby lot. Successfully blocking one door, Peter ferries Roger to another truck. As he is hot-wiring the truck, zombies sneak up on him and almost kill him. This experience clearly changes Roger from enthusiastic but professional to reckless. He instantly becomes obsessed with "whipping them" and barring them from the mall: he works himself into a frenzied bloodlust. This bloodlust is spurred not only by his growing underestimation of the zombies but also by his need to secure his property: the mall and the contents within it. Peter recognizes Roger's changed state and attempts to talk him down, telling him, "You're not playing with just your life, but mine, too." Roger seems to level off but has forgotten his tools in the previous truck during his heightened state, and the pair go back to retrieve them. Roger dives into the other truck but drops his satchel

between the trucks on the way back. As he goes to retrieve them, he is overwhelmed and bitten but escapes. The defense of his and his counterparts new property and the retrieval of tools stolen from the mall eventually costs Roger his life — he is infected by the bite and slowly dies over the course of a few days at which point he turns into a zombie and is killed by Peter per his request. Despite his imminent demise, the protagonists continue to purge the mall of the zombies.

Successfully blocked from the outside and free of zombies on the inside, the survivors slip into a pattern of capitalist excess. Romero uses little dialogue as he presents striking images of the survivors reveling in their consumer paradise and conforming to outdated capitalistic values. Fran is seen strolling (with purse in hand) across the concourse of the mall while Peter and Stephen are seen withdrawing money from bank drawers before politely exiting through the rope line in front of the counter. All four are separately shown perusing clothes admiring themselves in mirrors and stocking up on candy, they even weigh it. Romero also makes a show of them scanning food items through the register in the supermarket in what is a clear sign that the survivors are having difficulty abandoning the consumer values they have been taught since childhood. Additionally, Fran and Stephen appear in the next shot lazily walking up the staircase with brown bags full of groceries just as they may have in an earlier time and place. The capitalist montage concludes with the foursome, donned in fur coats, walking to the edge of the balcony that overlooks the inside of the shopping mall. Responding to the scratching from the zombies stuck between the trucks and the doors, Peter says, “They are after the place. They don’t know why, they just remember. They

remember that they want to be in here.” Fran asks, “What the hell are they?” To which Peter replies, “They’re us; that’s all.” Fran pulls the fur coat tighter around herself in an apparent attempt to ward off the chilling thought. Despite the enthusiastic reveling in their consumerist paradise Peter and Fran both seem somewhat aware of the dangers of being one of the masses, of becoming a literal and/or figurative zombie, and of placing importance on the things that they have acquired and the property they have claimed. This sentiment is lost on Stephen who meets his end trying to protect the mall from a biker gang that also suffers from the strong pull of consumerism.

The biker gang (a group of well-armed raiders) hail Peter, Fran and Stephen on a shortwave radio. Peter urges the others not to respond and when they don’t answer the bikers become hostile: “We don’t like people who don’t share. You just fucked up real bad.” Upon reaching the mall the bikers remove the trucks from the entrance, break the locks on the doors, and flood into the mall looting anything regardless of practical value. Their level of consumption surpasses that of the protagonists. They are seen taking bowling balls, handfuls of shoes, perfume, bolts of cloth, designer hats, footballs — Romero seems to make it a point to show the bikers taking items with no value in terms of surviving. This recalls Peter and Roger’s first foray into the mall and the initial mistake of frivolity in favor of necessity. A biker even takes hold of several televisions to which his friend says to him, “What are you going to plug those into?” The biker ponders the question for a moment and then replies, “I don’t know” and smashes them on the ground.

Peter tries to convince Stephen that they should lay low and let the zombies and raiders “fight it out,” but Stephen says under his breath before firing his weapon at the gang, “It’s ours; we took it. It’s ours.” Stephen attempts to escape to the roof, but the biker gang manages to corner him in an elevator and wound him. Sensing that the zombies are coming back into the mall in overwhelming numbers the gang decides to retreat, leaving Stephen to be bitten and turned by the zombies. The biker gang because of their reckless consumerism suffers a high number of casualties as the zombies themselves recklessly consume. It is only Peter and Fran who survive the chaos, escaping in the chopper that brought them there thanks to Fran’s insistence that she learn to fly the machine. The zombies that are back in the mall are now shown fighting over the human remains of the bikers in what is a clear mirror image of the frenzied consumption of their living counterparts. Now back in the mall with the all of the doors to the stores open the zombies, including a zombie Stephen, traipse through all of the familiar locations the survivors had been; this is again another mirror image linking the humans and the undead.

The biker gang represents a unique hegemonic position. Often associated with counter culture, the gang at the end of *Dawn of the Dead* is, in this particular situation, an expression of dominant hegemonic structures: namely white male patriarchy. Because they neither wholly belong to the dominant hegemonic systems of white male patriarchy before its collapse, nor are they totally excluded from it, they find themselves as conduits for coercive force. Lears on Gramsci suggests that coercive force is possible in the case of hegemonic disruption.⁸⁹ They are the conduits because they have, thanks to their

counterculture nomadic lifestyle, successfully escaped the chaos that has left the dominant expressions of white male patriarchy before its collapse ineffective. Peter even says in the film that he believes the only reason the bikers have survived is because they are constantly moving in a pack. But because they are not wholly excluded from white male patriarchy, nor do they wholly dismiss it, the biker gang becomes the only conduit reassertion in *Dawn of the Dead*, similar to the posse in *Night of the Living Dead*. But like all members in hegemonic structures the biker gang seems to be unwitting participants. They consciously raid the mall to loot its contents, but because of the subtle influence of cultural hegemony they wind up being an expression of white male hegemonic structures attempting to reassert control.

Conclusion

Intended to preserve the imbalance within the mode of production, hegemonic systems are reliant upon subordinate institutions in order to function effectively. In *Dawn of the Dead* Romero uses a zombie epidemic to put strain on dominant hegemonies. This unique strain creates social chaos and forces hegemonic systems to reconsider a number of established values; values that subordinate institutions and individuals alike are unwilling to abandon. Without consent, subordinate institutions revoke their active commitment and dominant hegemonies collapse and their associated values become ineffectual.

In *Dawn of the Dead* the mass media is the subordinate institution upon which Romero focuses. Step by step the viewer is shown dissent a lack of consensus and ultimately revocation of consent. A fellow colleague urges Fran to leave saying, “our job

here is done.” Intimately tied to hegemonic structures the media’s revocation of consent adds to the growing chaos and sparks an exodus. The exodus in *Dawn of the Dead* is not relegated only to the media but law enforcement and conceivably other institutions. The mass exodus signals the total collapse of dominant hegemonies which force survivors to shape their own set of values.

Clearly intended to make a statement concerning the growing consumer culture in the late 1970’s *Dawn of the Dead*’s survivors have difficulty abandoning consumerist values. These values constantly put the four protagonists at risk and cost two of them their lives: only the two characters that are cognizant of the powerful consumerist pull survive. A number of bikers at the end of the film also perish as a result of consumerism. Not only does Romero make consumerism a monster in the film, the film’s real monsters, the zombies, are constantly associated with consumerists, consumerism, commodities, and consumption. In short, being overtaken by zombies and being overtaken by consumerism are interchangeable within *Dawn of the Dead*.

Like theory in action Romero collapses dominant hegemonies in *Dawn of the Dead* and the result is a reaffirmation of McLuhan, Fromm, and Marcuse. Predominantly, Romero’s characters are cogs in the machine and act out of instinct; instinct that the dominant hegemonies have created and nurtured. Even with a mortal threat shambling toward them on all sides, the survivors consume for pleasure. The survivors in *Dawn of the Dead* fall victim to a hegemony that has done such a thorough job of saturating culture with its own self-propagating values that some characters would rather die than let their conquests of commodity be taken from them.

Clearly some survivors find it easier to recognize the pitfalls of residual hegemonic values but what separates them from their less intuitive counterparts? Using a core-periphery theory usually reserved for discussions on the global economy I will explain in the next chapter how it is that subjugated members of stable hegemonies rise to power when those hegemonies collapse and how they are less prone to hold on to dangerous values that compromise their survival.

Chapter Three:

Race, Gender, and Cultural Hegemony

Proven in previous chapters, Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* depict a shattered dominant hegemony and the resulting chaos, which leaves survivors in a state of uncertainty. Accustomed to having dominant discourses guide their behaviors, survivors of the zombie apocalypse find themselves in a state of turmoil in which they are forced to create their own set of values. Characters who are able to abandon ineffectual values (consumerism, violence, theft, etc.) in the face of the chaos stand a greater chance of survival than their less adaptive counterparts. A character's ability to abandon long-held social values rests upon his or her position within the hegemonic order before its collapse. In both *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*, this position and the characters' subsequent length of survival are entwined with issues of race and gender. This chapter will focus on race as evidenced by the two black protagonists in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* and gender as presented by the three women in *Night of the Living Dead* and the single female survivor in *Dawn of the Dead*. In both *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*, the ability to assert power and survive the epidemic rests on the ability to abandon values associated with pre-collapse hegemonic systems. In order to be in a position to abandon pre-collapse

hegemonic values, a character cannot be too invested in such systems; he or she must instead reside on the periphery of those systems. Gender and race largely determine such a position. In order to explain how a character can be positioned in a hegemonic system, I will introduce a theory positing dominant hegemonic structures as a sphere of influence that weakens at the edges. I apply Immanuel Wallerstein's core-periphery theory usually reserved for nation states in a global economic structure, to illustrate. This theory will support the claim that the further one is from the center of the dominant hegemonic systems (less invested in the structures of power), the easier it is to relinquish old hegemonic values once dominant hegemonic systems collapse. Illustrated in subsequent sections, race and gender play a role in determining whether a character is at the center or on the periphery of a hegemonic system(s).

Cultural Hegemony Revisited, in Brief

As explained in the previous chapter, cultural hegemony is a value system in which the dominant group (in the case of a capitalist system, the owners of the means of production) propagates social and cultural values that benefit them. This system is not one of coercion but synergistic cooperation between the dominant group and consenting subordinate institutions that can include the family, the church, the mass media, and/or educational institutions.⁹⁰ The function of hegemonic systems is to encourage an "active commitment to the established order based on a deeply held belief that the rulers are legitimate," according to Lears.⁹¹ This aspect of cultural hegemony is crucial because active participants must believe (even if it or is not true) that they benefit from the leaders

in control. These beliefs, which can dictate all aspects of life, are held so deeply that even in the event that dominant hegemonies collapse, such values are not easily abandoned.

While some authors who have analyzed Romero and his films have seen “servitude to global capitalism”⁹² or the “context of normal patriarchal society,”⁹³ they are actually seeing hegemonic values: ingrained social behaviors that benefit the leaders of the dominant power structure. I illustrated in the previous chapter that being unable to abandon such values can be fatal. Why then, are some characters more or less likely to abandon or hold onto certain values in the face of a cataclysmic hegemonic splintering? I turn now to core-periphery theory to explain.

Core and Periphery

In order to adapt core-periphery theory for my discourse, it must be explained in its primary function. A capitalist world system is one that is politically diverse but economically uniform; this becomes significant because regardless of political or cultural affiliation, every nation is tethered to the global capitalist system. This system of economy has a division of labor which is

not merely functional — that is, occupational — but geographical. That is to say, the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world system. In part this is the consequence of ecological considerations, to be sure. But for the most part, it is a function of the social organization of work, one which magnifies and legitimizes the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labor of others.⁹⁴

This system allows one group to exploit another for profit, but in order for that to happen, the group(s) being exploited must be controlled on a cultural level. Wallerstein writes that within the world-economy structure, “the first point of political pressure available to

groups is the local (national) state structure.”⁹⁵ Additionally, Wallerstein writes that because “cultural homogenization tends to serve the interests of key groups. . . the world-economy political structure tends to link culture with spatial location.”⁹⁶ In other words, core-periphery theory is inextricably linked to culture and the control of culture. Intended to bring all cultures under a single banner, cultural homogenization can easily be seen as a global version of cultural hegemony. Both function as a tool to propagate a capitalist system through social and cultural channels.

Because the world-economic system is reliant upon a division of labor, and a division of labor creates exploitation that requires a social control, concentrated centers of power — both economic and cultural — exist. In addition, subordinate areas outside of the center also exist. Wallerstein writes: “World economies then are divided into core-states and peripheral areas.”⁹⁷ While the core-periphery theory is primarily used as a designator in the global economy to differentiate between countries with the means of production and countries that are exploited and are responsible for the bulk of production, there is an abstract application embedded within the theory. Stated simply, the further one is from the center, the less invested he or she is in the overall group and thus less invested in the rules and values of the group. It is, however, important to note that all groups and actors do belong to the greater whole and are not capable of entirely acting outside of that system. Additionally, as the system expands, the core grows richer and more powerful while the peripheries become poorer and more disenfranchised.

In order to apply core-periphery theory to cultural hegemony and *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* in particular, the center of hegemonic value systems

must be determined. It is best to consider that cultural homogenization tends to serve the interests of key groups and that a dominant group is dominant “because of its position and function in the world of production,” writes Lears.⁹⁸ The center of hegemonic systems, then, is people and institutions who benefit the most from propagating cultural norms that effectively maintain a divisional world of labor. Likewise, the periphery is made up of those who do not benefit from such a division — those who are exploited by the center. Who then does or does not benefit from the hegemonic systems in the middle of the 20th century? One factor to consider in answering that question is gender.

Gender, Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm

McLuhan approaches gender through the lens of the media, specifically print advertising. The ads he examined revealed a culture that attempted to commodify women and their bodies and portrayed them as tethered to male figures, usually husbands or prospective husbands. Citing newspaper and magazine ads, McLuhan illustrates the perception of women as automatons meant to put the concerns of others in front of their own, specifically men. In one ad for detergent, McLuhan suggests that the implication is that “It is a duty for a woman to love her husband and also to love that soap that will make her husband love her.”⁹⁹ The common theme throughout the ads featuring women and McLuhan’s critique of them is that the happiness of women rests on the happiness of the man or men in their lives. Though McLuhan cites a disparate collection of ads, Janine Marchessault suggests that he “is not simply proposing a conspiracy imposed upon the mind of innocent citizens. Rather he is concerned to understand these ads as public displays, models of behavior and social situations that will tell us something profound

about the society from which they emerge.”¹⁰⁰ McLuhan is positing that society at large has taken the ideology present within the ads he studied as a sort of natural truth. These companies were not just selling commodity but a culture — a culture that commodified women and propagated male dominance and control.

Inextricably linked to their male counterparts, women are sold products through fear of isolation from those men. McLuhan writes: “Too late, when love has gone, for a wife to plead that no one warned her of danger. Because a wise, considerate wife makes it her business to find out how to safeguard her daintiness in order to protect her precious married love and happiness.”¹⁰¹ McLuhan suggests, regarding the Lysol disinfectant ad and others like it, “When lovely woman stoops to B.O., she is a Medusa freezing every male within sniff.”¹⁰² This ad implies that women are only happy when they are married and that hygiene through commodities is the only way to stay married. The product is intended to be used by women, but in reality, it is for men and mediated through other men.

Another recurring theme within the ads McLuhan studies, once again tied to ownership, is that women and their looks are commodified and compared to objects that men desire. McLuhan writes, “The present ad [for a weight loss program] as it were; ‘You are 39 and nothing ever happens? Natch. But leave it to us to put your old jalopy back on the road to romance.’”¹⁰³ The ad continues drawing comparisons between women and cars. This forms a connection between a woman's body and appearance and the manufactured items predominantly consumed by men. McLuhan is intrigued by this intersection of the human body, specifically the female form, and commodities.

Marchessault writes, “Gender forms the central category in [McLuhan’s] critique of post-war America and its conflation of knowledge with new forms of consumer culture.”¹⁰⁴ McLuhan, according to Marchessault, “Discerns patterns of gender construction organized along the lines of consumption. He is particularly sensitive to the way women’s bodies are not simply objectified but instrumentalized and rationalized to mirror the ‘dynamo of abstract finance and engineering.’”¹⁰⁵ Women are, through advertisement, transformed into another product to be sold, updated, tuned, repaired, and put on display.

The ads McLuhan studies invoke images of ownership, dependency, and commodification — all of which, Fromm argues, are historically developed tools of a patricentric society that is beginning to decline for exactly those reasons. Fromm charts the development of how gender was defined by society from the emancipated ideas of gender during the Enlightenment (autonomy from man) to the rise of the bourgeoisie and their conservative ideologies (men were innately superior to women) to what he calls present-day “patricentric” society. Compiling from a number of essays between 1933 through 1970, Fromm writes, in *Love, Sexuality and Matriarchy*, “Basically, this society only knows about courage and heroism on the part of the man (in whom the qualities are tinged with a large dose of narcissism). The image of the mother, on the other hand, has been a distorted one of sentimentality and weakness.”¹⁰⁶ Fromm contends that patriarchal control and the subjugation of women can be traced back to a woman’s ability to give birth: “Women were more helpless than man, due to the fact that they had to bear and care for children.”¹⁰⁷ This became a distinct disadvantage, and Fromm writes, that “men

used this fact very much to their advantage and then began to enslave women at the moment when there was generally a greater surplus and when it became possible to have another person work for one.”¹⁰⁸ Comparing men to a victorious army, Fromm writes that they “invented an ideology, as do all victorious groups. They declared that their victory was entirely logical, entirely natural, since women were just weaker, more vain, more irrational, more dependent, and whatever other descriptions that came from the mouths of men during the age of patriarchy.”¹⁰⁹ Douglas Kellner also sees male insecurity as a source of female subjugation in the work of Fromm: “Fromm also argues that the social system as a whole encourages male competition and vanity, as well as power and domination over women to assuage fear of ridicule and to gain prestige to combat insecurity.”¹¹⁰ Inextricably linked to control, domination, patriarchy, Fromm contends, “is actually the prototype of all exploitation, not only of a class, but of one-half of humanity by another. I believe that one can confidently say that exploitation in general will not be stopped until patriarchy is stopped.”¹¹¹ Fromm, then, serves as an appropriate tether between McLuhan and Marcuse. While McLuhan establishes a male-dominated world in which women are subjugated and commodified, Marcuse calls for the eradication of such behavior and contends that the second wave feminist movement has the potential to go beyond female autonomy and create a broader sense of equality. Marcuse said at a lecture in 1974 that “the women’s liberation movement today is perhaps the most important and potentially the most radical political movement that we have, even if the consciousness of this fact has not yet penetrated the movement as a whole.”¹¹² A supporter of counter-culture movements, Marcuse, according to Margaret Cerullo, “saw the women’s

movement at its most radical as announcing precisely a rupture with the performance principle, the reality principle of industrial capitalism and of a socialism which continued and even extended the performance principle and its values.”¹¹³ Marcuse said in a subsequent interview: “I hate society in its present form because I feel that this society is imposed upon human beings,” and that the women’s movement had the potential to move beyond an opportunity for what he was called equal exploitation.¹¹⁴ Marcuse felt that all of society, both men and women alike, were subjects of an unjust consumer system and that, “equality with men is not yet freedom.”¹¹⁵ Despite this universal injustice, however, men were still held in greater esteem and that, for women, the first objective was to get equal footing under the same repression. Most importantly, Marcuse desired that women be free of what McLuhan revealed in advertising: their constructed dependence on men. Concluding a lecture at Stanford in 1974, Marcuse said that “Women must become free to determine their own life, not as a wife, not as a mother, not as a mistress, not as a girlfriend, but as an individual human being.”¹¹⁶

Gender, Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *Dawn of the Dead*

Night of the Living Dead and *Dawn of the Dead* both parallel the critiques of McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm. Women in *Night of the Living Dead* are all involved in dependent relationships with male counterparts, whether it be husband and wife, girlfriend and boyfriend, or brother and sister. And because these women are subjugated to the point of losing their autonomy, their position within hegemonic structures is the same as their male partners; it is almost as if they are so far on the periphery that they lose all status and are instead attached to men and brought into the center with them.

These couples are at the very centers of dominant hegemonies before the collapse and after the collapse because a symptom of being at the center before the fall is the inability to abandon values after the fall. Because of their tethers to men, women at the center position experience all of the pitfalls of being centered (inability to abandon pre-collapse hegemonic values), and none of the benefits because they are subjugated by their male counterparts.

For the women in *Night of the Living Dead*, this unwitting position at the center of dominant hegemonies hinders their ability to abandon ineffectual pre-collapse hegemonic values thereby hindering their chances of survival — consequently all three women die. Their fate is avoided by Fran in *Dawn of the Dead*, because she is an autonomous character within the hegemonic gender structures of the film. She resides on the periphery of gender norms because of her simultaneous autonomy (no longer entirely subjugated by a man after the peak of second wave feminism) and marginalization (the men in the film continually attempt to keep her out of the center). Because of her peripheral position, Fran is less invested in the pre-collapse hegemonic structures and, therefore, more apt to abandon their values. This progression from subjugated and centered to autonomous and peripheral is noted by Harper who writes that “The heroines of Romero’s living dead series, like his zombies, show increasing independence and resourcefulness as the series of films progresses.”¹¹⁷ He continues by saying that “Romero’s living dead series is progressive in its increasing emphasis on female activity.”¹¹⁸ The women in *Night of the Living Dead* and Fran in *Dawn of the Dead* are all physically active, but it is only Fran’s activity that is effectual. The subjugation of the women in *Night of the Living Dead*

prevent them from productive action and they become, in relation to Fran, largely passive characters.¹¹⁹ As established, characters who employ values from hegemonic structures before their collapse — in other words centered characters — unwittingly tend to make poor decisions. Characters who abandon outmoded values, peripheral characters, tend to make decisions that prolong their survival. This trend continues with the women in both films. The women of *Night of the Living Dead* make poor decisions in terms of activity, while Fran makes wise ones: the women in *Night of the Living Dead* are caressing doilies or sitting idle. Fran, however, is learning how to shoot and fly a helicopter.

In *Night of the Living Dead*, patriarchy is immediately brought to the attention of the viewers. From the very first scenes, Barbara is illustrated as a subject of patriarchy and therefore a centered character without autonomy. In the first scene of the film, Barbara and her brother Johnny arrive in a rural cemetery outside of Pittsburgh to pay their annual respects to their long-dead father. In the first shots of Barbara and Johnny, the camera predominantly films over Barbara's shoulder, thereby filming the back of her head, while Johnny's face is in plain view. When the camera is repositioned over Johnny's shoulder, it is at the moment that Barbara gets out of the car, leaving only the back of her head visible while Johnny is shot in profile. This theme of marginalizing Barbara in favor of Johnny continues as the pair head toward the grave. While Barbara initially leads Johnny, she stops and waits for him to catch up and then lets him lead her. The viewer also gets the sense from the dialogue that Johnny and Barbara's relationship is imbalanced. Johnny is talkative and authoritative (speaks in declarative statements) while Barbara is meek. Additionally, Johnny is frequently shot at the very center of the

frame with Barbara in a flanking position; this is indicative of center and periphery. Johnny, however, is not the only male figure to whom Barbara is subjected. While her brother complains that they did not even know their father all that well (it is explained that he died when they were very young), Barbara drops to her knees and diligently prays in front of her father's grave; she is shot from a high angle while Johnny is shot from a low angle; giving the impression that Johnny lords over Barbara. Further, the seemingly simple gesture of prayer illustrates Barbara's ties to both her father, an unseen patriarchal figure, and God, the ultimate unseen patriarchal figure.

The graveyard scene invokes Barbara's dependence on the patriarchal figures of the father (one she does not even remember yet continues to visit), the son (her brother Johnny who drives her to the father), and the holy spirit (the unseen God she prays to in the presence of her unseen father). Williams argues that "*Night of the Living Dead* is a film dealing with domination and possession on many levels."¹²⁰ He contends that it is Barbara and Johnny's unseen mother, who annually sends the pair to her dead husband's grave, who exercises the most control in the graveyard scene. While I agree with Williams that control is a common theme in this scene and the film as a whole, the evidence better supports that the unseen patriarch (both Barbara and Johnny's father and God) is the most coercive figure. Not only does the deceased father exert control over the mother from beyond the grave, illustrated by sending Johnny and Barbara to the grave marker every year to pay respects to him, Barbara will not leave her father's grave until she has prayed to God; yet she cuts her prayer short at Johnny's request, which although fulfilled by Barbara, is met with a thunderous clap on the score and a wash to white:

possibly an ominous reminder that God is an omniscient and omnipresent patriarchal figure. In one short scene, Barbara is controlled by three paternal figures, two unseen and one seen, while her mother is controlled by her husband long past his death. Before the zombies even attack, Barbara is a subject of multiple male figures, all of whom, by all appearances, are white and above poverty and thus at the center of hegemonic structures. This positions Barbara at the center of white, heterosexual patriarchy: a position that seals her fate well before the end of the film. Once Johnny is killed by a zombie and Barbara flees on foot, she finds herself at a seemingly unoccupied farmhouse. Barbara is effectively separated from her brother, her father, and, with the appearance of zombies, God. By being in the graveyard and praying to her father, it is illustrated that Barbara believes in the rules of life and death put forth by an unseen God. The appearance of zombies disrupts that belief and thus separates Barbara from God. These three separations have a tremendously negative effect on Barbara, who slips into a catatonic haze for the rest of the film as evidenced by the representation of Barbara throughout the rest of the film — solo shots of Barbara are often canted, suggesting her state of mental health. The appearance of Ben (Duane Jones), who finds Barbara alone in the house and attempts to protect her, has only a slightly calming effect, but any attempts to become her surrogate male figure ultimately fail.

Once Barbara has made it to the farmhouse, she is often associated with domesticity: another sign of her male-dependant and thus central position in the hegemonic gender structure. Throughout the film, Barbara attempts to explore her surroundings but often runs into unwelcome sights such as the half-eaten body of the

former resident and a room full of mounted animals. After these unsuccessful forays in the house, Barbara always returns to the dining room, often sitting in a chair caressing the lace arm cover. The caressing of lace and other fabrics, something that Barbara does throughout the film, demonstrates her attachment to the aesthetic, commodified world.¹²¹ Like a figure from one of the ads in McLuhan's critiques on media, "The women — in particular Barbara — draw comfort from domestic goods," writes Harper.¹²² This connection once again subjugates her and positions her at the center. As already explained, domesticity and domestic commodity is only a means to an end. That end is attracting or keeping a man. By illustrating Barbara as clinging to domesticity and commodity, Romero has effectively positioned her as a subjugated character at the center of gender roles because of her attachment to a man. At one point, Barbara is even relegated to the status of property, once again echoing McLuhan. Soon after she and Ben arrive at the farmhouse, four more survivors emerge from the basement, one of whom is Harry Cooper. Harry, insisting that the basement is the safest place to hide, looks around as if he is searching for something to take, settles his gaze on Barbara and declares that he is going to take her with him to which Ben replies, "Keep your hands off her and everything else up here too." Barbara's status of property is just another illustration of her subjugation, which tethers her to a male figure, in this case Johnny. This tether centers Barbara, because Johnny is male, white, and centered himself. Her centeredness makes her ineffective in the repudiation of hegemonic value, which in turn makes her less effective at surviving: the inability to abandon pre-collapse hegemonic values, specifically gender values, leads to her death. Barbara fittingly meets her end when

Johnny arrives at the house as a zombie and she puts up little resistance as he reaches out to her. In what can be seen as an embrace, Johnny wraps his arms around Barbara who is pulled into a crowd of zombies and disappears.

Conformity to hegemonic gender roles is not relegated to Barbara alone. Harper writes, “The patriarchal domination of the house is unremitting.”¹²³ And indeed, the other women in the house, Judy and Helen (Marilyn Eastman), illustrate the same attachment by way of interaction with their male counterparts, Tom and Harry, who are also in the house. During the initial scenes at the farmhouse, it appears as though Ben and Barbara are the only ones inside. Soon after, however, Tom and Harry emerge from the basement. Once they come up from the basement, an argument ensues over what is safer; staying in the basement or staying on the first floor. Judy, Helen, and Harry and Helen’s daughter, Karen (Kyra Schon), are still in the basement, and their presence is only discovered when Helen yells up from the basement to ask what is happening; Harry brushes her off with a quick yell. None of the women is consulted in the decision making concerning the safest place to stay, including Barbara who is sitting on the couch immediately among the men. Judy emerges only when beckoned by Tom. Like Barbara, who is lorded over by unseen figures, Tom and Harry control Judy and Helen even before they appear on screen. Interestingly, neither Tom nor Harry ever looks in the direction of the basement once they come up stairs, showing little concern for their female counterparts. All of these instances illustrate the patriarchal dominance present in the film.

Although Judy and Helen both kowtow to their respective partners throughout the film, Judy does it willingly, while Helen does not. This shows that Helen is the closest to

being an autonomous and peripheral female character in *Night of the Living Dead* — a precursor to Fran ten years later. She is, however, irrevocably tethered to Harry, who “attempts to dominate his wife like a 1950s authoritarian patriarch in a manner both forced and ridiculous,” according to Williams.¹²⁴ He writes that although clearly in opposition to such subjugation, Helen “mostly submits to male control except when it explicitly appears futile.”¹²⁵ This is but a glimmer of Fran’s behavior in *Dawn of the Dead*: a fully autonomous, yet marginalized female figure relegated to the periphery of gender norms. In Harry and Helen’s only scene alone with their daughter in the basement, Helen remains seated up until the point when Harry begrudgingly acknowledges that there is a radio and TV upstairs. Furious she was not told earlier, Helen stands up level with Harry who forces her back down with a stern gaze. Even the cinematography in this scene offers Helen fleeting autonomy, anytime she confronts Harry, the camera zooms in on her and leaves him out of the frame. With only passing moments of peripheral position, Helen is relegated to the basement of the house for the majority of the film in a clear metaphor for control and submission. The only time she emerges is when she is asked to tend to Barbara, in another illustration of traditional gender roles. Helen’s position at the center of the gender hegemony with Harry, a position supported by her relative inaction, is complicated by her role as mother. All of Helen’s behavior can be attributed to her duties as a mother, such as staying in the basement with her sick daughter, and putting up with an arrogant and verbally abusive husband who is logically the only source of income for her and her daughter. As the film begins to close and Ben shoots Harry in the stomach with a rifle after he attempts to threaten Ben with the very

same gun, Helen merely watches him get shot and runs to her daughter who has turned into a zombie. Helen falls to the floor and does nothing to prevent Karen from stabbing her with a garden trowel — clearly at the very center of hegemonic gender roles, Helen is unable to abandon her values as a mother. Interestingly, Karen does not consume her mother until she has killed her in a phallic way. Her failure to achieve an existence of her own, to live as an autonomous actor on the periphery of the hegemonic gender system, ultimately leads her death much like Barbara.

Like Helen and Barbara, Judy also dies as a result of her lack of autonomy within the hegemonic structure of gender. Judy, the seemingly willing submissive, constantly seeks Tom's approval before making a decision or stirring to action. Additionally, Tom's requests are never denied by Judy, with one exception: he asks her to stay in the house while he and Ben attempt to fill up the truck with fuel from a pump in the backyard. With separation anxiety overriding submission, Judy runs to Tom right before he takes the truck to the backyard and expresses her desire not to be apart from him. Tom complies (it should not be forgotten that he, too, is at the center of gender roles and therefore apt to make bad decisions), which costs both of them their lives. The truck is accidentally set on fire, but before they can get out, Judy gets caught on the truck and cannot get away; Tom stays to try and help her and they both wind up being incinerated.

From *Night of the Living Dead* to *Dawn of the Dead* the presentation of women shifts. Fran — *Dawn of the Dead's* only female protagonist — is marginalized by men within the film; nevertheless, she acts autonomously. One subtle reference to her autonomy is when Peter asks Fran if she is leaving anyone behind; she tells him that she

is leaving an ex-husband. Fran's divorce is a literal representation of her autonomy. Additionally, the very first frame of the film is a slow disclosure of Fran by herself in the newsroom — a nod to her autonomy in the film. Fran's placement in hegemonic structures is not dependent on a male figure, yet she is not treated as an equal by the male figures in *Dawn of the Dead*, positioning her on the periphery. Fran's autonomy, shown to be unavailable to the women in *Night of the Living Dead*, allows her to act and make decisions on her own. Combined with her marginalization by male figures in the film, Fran is placed on the periphery of hegemonic structures. Her peripheral position allows her to abandon ineffectual values easily, which in turn, helps her survive the film's conclusion. Williams states, that "Unlike her predecessor(s), Fran will experience a more liberating sense of personal development and eventual freedom no matter how insecure its future may be."¹²⁶ Due in part to her own resistance, and in part to Peter's intermittent support (he too is a peripheral character), gender norms shift toward a more progressive form as the film moves toward a conclusion. Fran matures from a severely marginalized, but autonomous, character in the beginning of the film to a slightly marginalized and entirely autonomous figure at the end.

Fran initially appears within a newsroom in a position of power (some sort of undefined producer), which is a stark contrast to her counterparts in *Night of the Living Dead* who appear to be, on a professional level, housewives. Not only is she consulted in decision-making within the confines of the station, unlike the women in *Night of the Living Dead*, she also makes decisions without consulting others: in similar fashion to the men in *Night of the Living Dead*. Professionally, Fran resides at the center of a

hegemonic system, but it soon becomes apparent that once outside of her domain (the newsroom), she is marginalized and relegated back to the periphery of gender norms. The first sign of this treatment is when her boyfriend, Stephen, comes to inform her that he is planning to flee the city in a commandeered station helicopter. As if he has watched too many John Wayne movies, Stephen, dressed in a leather bomber jacket, struts across the newsroom toward her, roughly pulls her close and explains that he will be waiting for her on the roof at nine o'clock that night. When she protests, he cuts her off and says, "You be upstairs by nine o'clock and don't make me come looking for you." He then turns his back and exits the station as quickly as he entered it. His blocking, body language, and dialogue suggest a masculinity similar to that seen from the men in *Night of the Living Dead*. Up to this point, visually, Fran often enjoys the very center of the frame when the camera is on her. It is only when Stephen enters the newsroom that Fran is relegated to the edges of the frame. It is on this border, between her professional life and her personal life, that Fran begins to lose the central position she enjoys in her newsroom, despite her gender. This transition arguably saves her life by allowing her to be less invested in collapsed hegemonic structures — in a certain sense, gender norms outside the newsroom wake her up to the reality of her situation. The gender norms in *Dawn of the Dead* are illustrated by Fran's three male counterparts and appear as toned-down versions of the masculinity presented in *Night of the Living Dead*. As the film progresses, Peter and Roger do participate in masculine behavior similar to the men in *Night of the Living Dead*, but Stephen is the major culprit. Although Fran wavers between open resistance, which defies male attempts at marginalization, and a quiet compliance that reinforces it, it

never threatens her autonomy. And unlike her counterparts in *Night of the Living Dead*, Fran's position within hegemonic structures is not fully dependent on a male figure. Her position may be influenced by a male figure but is not determined by it.

Fran's acknowledgement of marginalization by the men with her is similar to Helen's in regard to Harry in *Night of the Living Dead*, but Fran does not acquiesce to her male counterparts. Several visual examples of Fran not backing down the way Helen did in *Night of the Living Dead* come toward the end of the film when she is less and less influenced by Stephen. One such instance is when Stephen is slumped on a couch fiddling with a camera. Fran is standing and looking down on him. The very next scene is a slow disclosure that first reveals Stephen in bed in what appears to be a very uncomfortable supine position. The second reveal is that Fran is sitting, and therefore far above him. There are several instances when Fran "is consummately articulate and aware of the men's sexist assumptions about her."¹²⁷ At one point, Fran tells the men that she is not to be left alone without a gun, glares at Stephen, and says, "I might just figure out how to use it." The statement is a two-fold slight to Stephen. He almost killed Peter with his poor marksmanship while they were refueling the chopper; Peter punched him in the jaw and told him not to aim a weapon if he did not know how to use it. Additionally, Stephen took the rifle that Roger and Peter left with Fran and chased after them, leaving Fran defenseless. She was subsequently attacked by the Hare Krishna zombie, but she escaped unscathed. This the turning point at which Fran declares, soon after, that she is to be regarded as a full member of the group. After Fran's close call, she goes off by herself and the three men remain together. Stephen reveals that Fran is pregnant. The men

discuss what to do with this new information and Peter asks Stephen if he wants to “get rid of it.” Fran hears the entire conversation. Stephen goes to Fran unaware that she has heard their conversation and she asks him, “Are all your decisions made?” The scene discussing her pregnancy is reminiscent of the discussion in *Night of the Living Dead* when the men are arguing the merits of the basement versus the ground floor; the major difference is that Fran resists their attempts to exclude her. The next morning she voices her resistance: “I am sorry you found out that I am pregnant, but I don’t want you treating me any different than you treat each other. And I am not going to play den mother for you guys. I want to know what’s going on, and I want to have something to say about the plans. There are four of us.” Stephen attempts to resist her, but Peter stifles him and agrees; however, Peter does not allow Fran to participate in blocking the mall from the outside. He tells her she will not be going with them until she learns how to handle herself — a double standard considering Stephen has already proven himself quite inept. This is yet another instance of marginalization and further proof of Fran’s peripheral position.

Fran is the only female to survive in *Night of the Living Dead* or *Dawn of the Dead* because all of the previous women suffered the same fate as their centered male counterparts. Because Fran was autonomous and peripheral, she was able to let go of Stephen (unlike Judy), did not run to Stephen when he appeared as a zombie (unlike Barbara), and insisted that she learn to fly the helicopter and not rely on Stephen’s survival for her own (unlike Helen).

Race, Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*, and *Dawn of the Dead*

In both *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* core-periphery theory is extended to race, a subject McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm seemingly care little about.

With 1968 being a tragic hallmark of the civil rights movement, the presentation of race continues to transform between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*.

Although there are vast differences between the black protagonists between the two films they both share a startling number of characteristics with Fran such as marginalization, insistence on inclusion, and a hegemonic structure that they are at the center of. Upon further inspection this similarity is not unexpected due to their shared position on the periphery of dominant hegemonic structures.

Race in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* primarily revolves around a character's ability to lead other survivors and those survivors' reaction to such attempts at control. *Night of the Living Dead* follows Ben as he attempts to survive the night in a farmhouse under attack by the zombie horde. He arrives at the farmhouse shortly after Barbara escapes from the graveyard. When Ben enters the house Barbara is already catatonic and he treats her roughly; both physically and verbally — Ben at one point strikes Barbara with a closed fist. Ben's first appearance on camera is out of focus and white-washed with a dissonant squealing sound on the score which leads Barbara and the viewers in a disoriented state; this disorientation makes it difficult to initially identify Peter as something other than a zombie. This trope reemerges at the end of the film when he is indeed mistaken for a zombie and killed by the white patriarchy. Ben, "from the first

moment he appears, attempts to control events and to learn as much as he can about his situation,”¹²⁸ according to Gregory Waller. From his first moment on screen, Ben assumes authority over Barbara and becomes, figuratively and literally, the man of the house. In his work on *Night of the Living Dead*, Waller writes that Ben is “able to act with ingenuity and purpose” and that “once he has unluckily been thrust into this predicament, he is defined less by his knowledge and by the depth of his beliefs than by his own actions.”¹²⁹ I argue that this ingenuity and purpose come from being on the periphery of hegemonic systems. Like Fran, Ben ignores ineffectual hegemonic value like his verbal and physical handling of Barbara in an attempt to take control of both Barbara and the farmhouse: a traditional setting for a white patriarchal family not an interracial pair.

Like Fran in the newsroom, Ben is at the center of the farmhouse, a position which is afforded him due to his gender, but challenged and diminished by the appearance of Harry. As soon as Ben and Harry meet, both are ardently opposed to the other’s attempts at seizing control and Harry persistently tries to position Ben on the periphery of dominant hegemonies — Harry attempts to undermine Ben’s choices attempts to assume control of Barbara, and they constantly argue over the safest place to hide. Immediately losing his centered position in the house once Harry shows up, Ben must continually fight attempts at marginalization: a struggle he most likely has been facing far before the appearance of Harry. For Ben and Harry, it is no longer a matter of right and wrong but pride and adhering to values associated with their hegemonic positions.¹³⁰ Ben is on the periphery and attempts to disregard racial norms while Harry is trying to propagate them. Although Ben has boarded up the house, found a television,

radio, rifle, and garnered the confidence of the rest of the survivors, his authority is constantly challenged by Harry both of whom share the same patriarchal values; they both attempt to control their female counterparts, Barbara and Helen. Because Ben and Harry share similar values in terms of gender it only leaves race as a point of contention between the characters.

Ben's peripheral position within the racial hegemonic structure, a position illustrated by Harry's behavior toward him, equips him with the foresight and clear mind to survive the night. His survival includes subverting the dominant black/white hegemony by killing Harry: an action that may have saved lives if done earlier. If Ben had killed Harry early in the film, cohesion among the group may have been possible and deaths may have been avoided. Ben's anger may stem from racial discrimination that appears subtly throughout the film. At one point Ben recalls his escape from a mob of zombies in a diner. Ben says of the incident: "I stood there with 50 or 60 of those things staring at me. I wanted to crush them."¹³¹ Reminiscent of a civil rights sit-in, this anger seems to be directed at Harry throughout the film. When retelling his story to Barbara, Ben displays an anger and confusion only seen again when he is in conflict with Harry. Never showing such unbridled rage when facing the zombies — Ben kills zombies void of emotion and with his lips closed — Ben, more than once, verbally and physically lashes out at Harry with teeth bared and eyebrows arched. It is interesting to note that Ben is the only one of the survivors to actually kill a zombie which illustrates his willingness to adapt to new hegemonic values; due in part to his peripheral but autonomous position, like Fran. The only peripheral character in the house, Ben is the only character that partakes in killing:

one of the first taboos from the pre-collapse hegemonic structures that must be abandoned in order to survive zombies. In one specific clash, after the failed attempt to gas up the truck, Ben comes back to the front door which Harry has locked. Possibly a reference to keeping Ben outside the main house, Harry tries to keep Ben locked out, but Ben kicks in the door, boards it back up and then turns on Harry, savagely beating him to the ground. In their final clash Harry steals the rifle from Ben but is disarmed by him and intentionally shot and killed. Ben not only abandons outmoded values concerning white patriarchy but also murders a human being as opposed to a zombie. Ben, however, was pushed so far onto the periphery that it appears nothing in the pre-collapse hegemonic structures were worth holding onto.

Ben's adaptation is rendered useless in the morning when the white patriarchal hegemony retakes control and kills him as he emerges from the basement. It is unclear whether the country militia (of which one can easily see Harry a part) investigating the farmhouse believes him to be a zombie or uses it as an opportunity to get away with murder. Ben is seen in the window of the farmhouse armed with a rifle, a behavior no zombie has previously been seen employing. The scene is shot predominantly with profile views of Ben; not once is the point of view of the militia looking at the farmhouse shown. The camera work only lends to the ambiguity of the final scene. Despite his ultimate demise Ben's peripheral position gives him power through the night but immediately puts him back into danger in the morning when the dominant white hegemony is restored. Phevos Kallitsis writes, "Ben is the actual hero of Romero's film; he is the only one who manages to survive the attacks and is the viewer's

last hope of survival. Unfortunately, he is a pre-defined enemy.”¹³² Simply, Ben’s race makes him an enemy of the dominant white patriarchal hegemony that collapses at the beginning of the film but reasserts power at the end. It is only with a sense of irony that Ben survives because of his peripheral position in white patriarchy which allows him to subvert dominant values but is ultimately gunned down because of that position when the militia regains control of the center. The conclusion of the film, and ultimately his peripheral position in hegemonic structures, presents a bleak outlook on social mobility and hegemonic evolution.

Ten years later, in *Dawn of the Dead*, there is still only one black protagonist but this time his authority is unquestioned by his fellow survivors although his placement in the racial hegemony is still peripheral. Peter’s unique position allows him to ultimately survive and offers a chance to see what would have happened in *Night of the Living Dead* if Ben had met less resistance from the other survivors. Like Ben, Peter commands an authority over his surroundings from his first appearance on screen when he first meets Roger in a Pittsburgh housing project where they have been instructed to raid the project and seize control from the tenants. Peter and Roger cross paths when a trooper in Roger’s unit goes off on a bigoted hunt for both zombies and humans: “Blow their Puerto Rican and nigger asses right off!” Roger attempts to disarm him, but it is Peter that fatally shoots the man before he can continue his rampage; an act that may have gotten him in trouble before the collapse of the dominant hegemonic structures: It is the first of many examples of Peter abandoning pre-collapse values in order to survive. Peter is also highly sympathetic to the tenants’ need to look after their dead, saying that “they still think there

is respect in dying.” Both of these incidents show that Peter, who does effectively seize control is still on the periphery of racial hegemony much like Fran. Because Peter is black and because as Williams contends, “Romero represents [the scene] as a politically motivated act of class and racial harassment,”¹³³ Peter is pictured as sympathetic toward the peripheral tenants. His sympathy for the minorities of the project connects him to a peripheral, minority housing, government dependent position, putting him further away from the center and closer to the edges.

Although his control over the situation is unquestioned by white counterparts Roger, Fran and Stephen, Peter’s position on the periphery is constantly reinforced not unlike Ben’s position was reinforced. Fran asks him as they are flying away from Pittsburgh if he is leaving anyone behind. Peter says that he is leaving “some brothers” behind to which Fran replies “real brothers or street brothers?” This once again connects him to peripheral urban life that does not benefit from propagating white patriarchy, a life he identifies with by answering, “Both. I have one brother in prison, the other is a pro ballplayer.” While stereotypical in terms of white assumptions about young black men it is unclear whether Peter is telling the truth when answering Fran. Whether lying or not his answer provides the viewer with the knowledge that Peter knows that he is peripheral and that Fran assumes that he is peripheral. He is also seen near the end of the film playing waiter during a romantic dinner for Fran and Stephen. Although this is a voluntary action it still frames Peter outside the center of white heterosexual hegemony.

Because of his peripheral position in hegemonic structures Peter recognizes the pull of consumerism for the survivors, a pull he cannot entirely escape himself because of

how strong the values of consumerism are — a point well explored in the second chapter. Although, according to Noel Murray, “Peter struggles between belief in old values and the necessity for moving forward,”¹³⁴ he is constantly advocating for need over want. From the very first scene when Peter and Roger break into the first department store, Peter puts priority on survival necessities like a radio and batteries while Roger wants chocolate and lighter fluid to smoke his cigarettes. This is emphasized visually when the pair has raided the store and are headed to the ground level: Peter takes the stairs of the inactive escalator while Roger childishly slides down the center of the up and down escalators. This not only juxtaposes Rogers frivolity and Peter’s rationality, but also places Roger in the very center of the frame and Peter on the edges. Peter directs the survivors in the eradication of the mall’s undead occupants and attempts to fortify the mall through necessity. While Stephen talks about all the great stuff in the mall Peter talks about the mall as a safe haven; only when the mall is clear does he allow frivolity in himself and others. Perhaps his most prophetic moment in the film comes after the cleansing of the mall’s interior and looking out onto the zombies locked outside: “They’re after the place. They don’t know why, they just remember. They remember that they want to be in here. They are us, that’s all. There’s no more room in Hell.” This speech is delivered on a balcony with the characters side by side. Roger and Stephen are in the center while Peter and Fran take the outside edges — yet another visual cue of the position of the characters. Peter also teaches Fran and Stephen how to shoot, consents to Fran’s demands of inclusion and tries in vain to ignore his sense of personal property when the bike-gang raiders storm the mall. He urges Stephen to “ignore them” and “let

them fight it out with the zombies.” Stephen disregards these instructions and engages the bikers who kill him and allow the zombies to access the upper floors which forces Fran and Peter, the only peripheral characters in the film, to flee in the chopper.

Although Peter survives, his story is similar to Ben’s in that a pre-collapse hegemonic value impedes his ability to help other survivors; in this case the impediments are commodity and consumption. Stephen’s reluctance to let go of the mall and its contents is similar to Harry’s reluctance to accept Ben’s position as leader and protector, both of which hinder the black protagonist’s ability to maintain control and lead survivors to safety. Also similar to Ben’s experience in *Night of the Living Dead*, the bike gang, like the state militia, is entirely white and breaches a place of safety without concern for the occupants inside. In *Dawn of the Dead*, however, this white patriarchal surge at the end is unsuccessful and repelled by the zombies who take complete and total control of the shopping mall. It is well within reason that the bike gang would have killed Ben and Fran given the chance. In *Night of the Living Dead* order is restored, but at the hands of a destructive white patriarchy while *Dawn of the Dead* concludes in a second fall of the white patriarchy with no order restored.

Conclusion

Romero emphasizes different dominant discourses in each film such as consumerism in *Dawn of the Dead*, or race and gender in *Night of the Living Dead*. These discourses inevitably overlap. Examining which value was harder to let go of in each film not only gives one a glimpse into Romero’s concerns but also the concerns of the decade in which they were filmed. Harry’s inability to relinquish power to a young African-

American in the 1960s gives way to Stephen and Roger's inability to let go of the values of capitalism in the 1970s. In each case the actors on the periphery of hegemonic structures are able to avoid many of the films' pitfalls due to their ability to let go of outmoded values.

Romero, Fromm, Marcuse, and McLuhan, all recognize the power of the women's movement, but it is Romero who puts that recognition into a working model in *Dawn of the Dead*. He uses Fran, in some sense, to liberate the women of *Night of the Living Dead* by acting in ways they could not — in essence creating a two-film metaphor of second wave feminism. Romero, however, also recognizes that female liberation is not easily achieved; Fran not only has to fight the zombies to survive but she also has to fight her fellow survivors. The struggle in the end, though, seems to be worth it for Fran who escapes the zombie horde by flying away in a helicopter that she insisted on learning how to operate. Like Marcuse, Romero seems to place an emphasis on the autonomy of the woman as a gateway to freedom.

Unlike Fromm, Marcuse, and McLuhan, Romero is also concerned with race and its effects on survival. Ben in *Night of the Living Dead*, struggles with Harry through the night as the two of them — one white, one black — duel for control of the farmhouse and its occupants. It is a sensible conclusion that Ben's race impedes his ability to properly lead and help others survive, but it is this peripheral position that allows him to make it through the night as the sole survivor. Ironically, the same peripheral position that helps him make it to morning gets him killed by the white patriarchal militia as he emerges from the basement of the farmhouse. Ten years later Peter is still on the periphery in

Dawn of the Dead because of his race but not to the extent of Ben. Peter, however, does have an impediment that interferes with his ability to help the other survivors: consumerism. In both *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* race positions the black protagonist on the periphery which helps them survive, but race as a roadblock to helping others survive disappears in *Dawn of the Dead* and is replaced by consumption.

With two major movements happening at the same time (the civil rights movement and second wave feminism) Romero had plenty to talk about. But in a slight deviation from McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm, Romero extends his critique of gender, a critique that runs parallel to the critiques of the three scholars, to race and race relations. Romero does this because, race, like gender, affects a character's position in hegemonic structures. As to peripheral characters, any time spent outside the center of dominant hegemonies is beneficial for situations of survival: all three, Peter, Ben, and Fran, abandon hegemonic values that would have killed them otherwise.

Conclusion

Recognizing cultural hegemony theory in the works of Marcuse, McLuhan, Fromm, and Romero allows for an insight that reveals a commonality among them. This commonality would be uninteresting if it weren't for Romero, who is not, and has never been, an academic. Despite his lack of academic influence, Romero wrote and directed two works in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* that carry similar ideological traits to Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm, who are considered a few of the most prominent psychosocial critics. Romero, then, should be considered among them as a potent and relevant social critic. Romero's criticism just happens to be packaged in films about a zombie apocalypse due to his exposure to EC comics and other popular mediums.

While Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm questioned and criticized the hegemonic structures of gender, consumerism, and media through academic writing, Romero used the medium of film narrative. Even the shallowest inspection of *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* reveals subtle criticisms of gender roles, consumption habits, media integrity, and race relations. Indeed, many scholars have done just that: examined the cultural criticism present in both films. But it is only when cultural hegemony theory has been applied to the films that a discursive logic within the world of the films is

revealed. Romero follows a narrative pattern in *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* that revolves around cultural hegemony: zombies rise up and overwhelm mankind, hegemonic structures collapse under the weight of the endemic, a diverse group of characters try to survive the endemic, together, in the absence of a dominant hegemonic structures, dominant hegemonic structures attempt to reassert control. Romero exposes his characters to this uncertain world in the throes of hegemonic collapse and the audience watches the outcome. As it has been shown, character action and reaction is dependent on placement in hegemonic structures and placement depends on race and gender.

The differences between *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* are plentiful but can be explained by actual events that occurred within the ten years between the films. Because the changes in *Dawn of the Dead* can be explained in relation to the women's movement and the civil rights movement, it gives credence to Romero's position as a psychosocial critic in the same tradition as Marcuse, McLuhan, and Fromm. This evidence seems to bridge the gap between fiction and non-fiction which is seemingly the biggest divide between Romero and the others.

Not unlike the horror films that preceded it and the horror films that followed it, *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* are reflections of social anxieties and attempts to grapple with the past, present, and future of the culture that spawned them. As Wells writes, "the history of the horror film is essentially a history of anxiety in the twentieth century. In the way that fairytales, folktales and gothic romances articulated the fears of the 'old' world, the contemporary horror film has defined and illustrated the

phobias of a 'new' world characterized by a rationale of industrial, technological and economic determinism."¹³⁵ Like McLuhan, Marcuse, and Fromm, Romero uses his medium to reflect, critique, hypothesize, and contribute.

Notes

- ¹ Originally explored by Karl Marx, but developed into an autonomous theory by Antonio Gramsci.
- ² Grosswiler, Paul. *The method is the message: rethinking McLuhan through critical theory*. Black Rose Books Ltd., 1998, 112.
- ³ Biodrowski, Steve. "Night of the Living Dead (1968) - A Retrospective | Cinefantastique Online." *cinefantastique online*, February 13, 2008. <http://cinefantastiqueonline.com/2008/02/13/retrospective-night-of-the-living-dead-1968/>. Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000.
- ⁴ Romero has often expressed in interviews that he does not write a script or shoot a zombie film unless he has something he desires to say. Murray, Noel. "George Romero | Film | A.V. Club." *A.V. Club*, February 12, 2008. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/george-romero,14198/>.
- ⁵ Romero claims that he first understood the significance of Ben's assassination in *Night of the Living Dead* when he was driving the film to a distributor in New York and the news of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination came over the radio.
- ⁶ Hobbs, S. "The Study of Race, Religion and Society within George A. Romero's Dawn of the Dead and Lucio Fulci's Zombi 2" (2008), 17.
- ⁷ Ibid, 19.
- ⁸ The *Magic Island* explained in detail a voodoo practice by practitioners that would bring the dead back to life. The book also explains that people are often brought back to life in order to work the fields as slave labor.
- ⁹ Dotson, J. W. "Considering Blackness in George A. Romero's Night of the Living Dead: An Historical Exploration" (2006), 20.
- ¹⁰ Waller, Gregory A. *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003.
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- ¹² Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 26.
- ¹³ *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*. 1st ed. Texas film studies series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996.
- ¹⁴ Harper, Stephen. "They're Us: Representations of Women in George Romero's "Living Dead" Series." *cult-media* (2003), 1.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 6.

- ¹⁶ Harper, S. "Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate: George Romero's Dawn of the Dead." *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002): 2000.
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- Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2008.
- ¹⁷ Loudermilk, A. "Eating 'Dawn' in the Dark: Zombie desire and commodified identity in George A. Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead'." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 3, no. 1 (2003): 92.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 97.
- ¹⁹ Lauro, S. J, and K. Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *boundary* 35, no. 1 (2008): 101.
- ²⁰ Schneider, S. "Monsters as (uncanny) metaphors: Freud." *Lakoff, and the representation of monstrosity in cinematic horror'*, reprinted in *Alain Silver and James Ursini (eds), Horror Film Reader, New York: Limelight Editions 2000 (1999): 4-10*.
- ²¹ Gunn, J., and S. Treat. "Zombie trouble: A propaedeutic on ideological subjectification and the unconscious." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 2 (2005): 153.
- ²² Bishop, K. "Raising the Dead." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 33, no. 4 (2006): 196–205.
- ²³ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. Beacon series in contemporary communications. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, 5.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 94.
- ²⁵ ibid, 96.
- ²⁶ ibid, 97.
- ²⁷ Fromm, Erich. *The Art of Being*. New York: Continuum, 1992, 19.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 27.
- ²⁹ Ibid, 25.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 68.
- ³¹ Fromm, Erich. *Love, Sexuality, and Matriarchy: About Gender*. 1st ed. New York: Fromm International Pub, 1997, 85.
- ³² Ibid, 87.
- ³³ Ibid, 87.
- ³⁴ Abromeit, J., and W. M Cobb. *Herbert Marcuse: a critical reader*. Routledge, 2004, 15.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man; Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964, 21.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 11.
- ³⁸ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium Is the Massage*. New York: Bantam Books, 1967, 13.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 14.

- ⁴⁰ Further reading on the advent of modern horror cinema:
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 Twitchell, J. B. *Dreadful pleasures: an anatomy of modern horror*. Oxford university press, 1985.
 Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000.
- ⁴¹ Diehl, Digby. *Tales From The Crypt: The Official Archives Including the Complete History of EC Comics and the Hit Television Series*. St. Martin's Griffin, 1997, 28.
 "In the way that fairytales, folktales and gothic romances articulated the fears of the 'old' world, the contemporary horror film has defined and illustrated the phobias of a 'new' world characterised by a rationale of industrial, technological and economic determinism." Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000, 3.
- ⁴² Murray, Noel. 2008. George Romero | Film | A.V. Club. A.V. Club. February 12. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/george-romero,14198/>.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 25.
- ⁴⁴ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 17.
- ⁴⁵ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 18.
- ⁴⁶ Diehl, Digby. *Tales From The Crypt: The Official Archives Including the Complete History of EC Comics and the Hit Television Series*. St. Martin's Griffin, 1997, 37.
- ⁴⁷ Feldstein, Al, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Graham Ingels, Joe Orlando, and Jack Kamen. *The EC Archives: Shock SuspenStories Volume 1*. Gemstone Publishing, 2006.
- ⁴⁸ Patterson, J. T. *Brown v. Board of Education: A civil rights milestone and its troubled legacy*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2002, 52.
- ⁴⁹ Moses, Norton H. *Lynching and vigilantism in the United States: an annotated bibliography*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997, 215.
- ⁵⁰ Feldstein, Al, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Graham Ingels, Joe Orlando, and Jack Kamen. *The EC Archives: Shock SuspenStories Volume 1*. Gemstone Publishing, 2006.
- ⁵¹ In Shock SuspenStories issue no.2 A man is beaten to death for not taking his hat off as the American flag passed during a parade. It is discovered by the crowd that the man was a blind veteran of the Korean war.
- ⁵² In Shock SuspenStories issue no.2 a white man is killed by spirits after disturbing an Indian burial ground in attempt at turning the site into a cash crop field.
- ⁵³ See Shock SuspenStories issues no.1 and no.2, as well as Tales from the Crypt issues no.26 and 27.
- ⁵⁴ Weiss, Jessica. *To have and to hold: marriage, the baby boom, and social change*. University of Chicago Press, 2000, 18.
- ⁵⁵ Diehl, Digby. *Tales From The Crypt: The Official Archives Including the Complete History of EC Comics and the Hit Television Series*. St. Martin's Griffin, 1997, 93.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ See *ShockSuspenStories* #010 through #018.
- ⁵⁸ Feldstein, Al, Wally Wood, Jack Davis, Graham Ingels, Joe Orlando, and Jack Kamen. *The EC Archives: Shock SuspenStories Volume 1*. Gemstone Publishing, 2006, issue #012.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid, issue #012.
- ⁶⁰ Romero, George A. *Dawn of the Dead*. Starz / Anchor Bay, 2004.
- ⁶¹ Tudor, Andrew. *Monsters and mad scientists: a cultural history of the horror movie*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1989.
- ⁶² Ibid.

- ⁶³ Crane, Jonathan Lake. *Terror and everyday life: singular moments in the history of the horror film*. SAGE, 1994, 1.
- ⁶⁴ Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000, 4.
- ⁶⁵ Lears, T. J.J. "The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 567–593.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Hallin, D. C. *We keep America on top of the world*. Routledge, 1994, 78.
- ⁷⁰ Marcuse, H. *One-dimensional man*. Beacon Press Boston, 1968, 11.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 10-11.
- ⁷² McLuhan, Marshall. *The Medium Is the Massage*. New York: Bantam Books, 1967, 26.
- ⁷³ Fromm, Erich. *The Essential Fromm: Life Between Having and Being*. New York: Continuum, 1995. 24.
- ⁷⁴ *Dawn of the Dead*, DVD, directed by George A. Romero (1978; Starz/Anchor Bay, 2004).
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ The makeup worn by the predominantly black actors of the housing project makes them look white. This is an irony that suggests white culture is made of zombies acting on instinct alone. That instinct is supplied by the hegemony and the dissemination of hegemonic values.
- ⁷⁹ Marcuse, H. *One-dimensional man*. Beacon Press Boston, 1968, 10.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid, 14.
- ⁸¹ Fromm, Erich. *The Essential Fromm: Life Between Having and Being*. New York: Continuum, 1995, 16.
- ⁸² Marcuse, H. *One-dimensional man*. Beacon Press Boston, 1968, 120.
- ⁸³ Sassatelli, R. "Virtue, responsibility and consumer choice." *J. Brewer and F* (2006), 250.
- ⁸⁴ Loudermilk, A. "Eating 'Dawn' in the Dark: Zombie desire and commodified identity in George A. Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead'." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 3, no. 1 (2003): 83.
- ⁸⁵ Rumbo, J. D. "Consumer resistance in a world of advertising clutter: The case of Adbusters." *Psychology and Marketing* 19, no. 2 (2002): 127–148.
- ⁸⁶ Harper, S. "Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate: George Romero's Dawn of the Dead." *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002), 2.
- ⁸⁷ Lauro, S. J, and K. Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *boundary* 35, no. 1 (2008): 89.
- ⁸⁸ Gunn, J., and S. Treat. "Zombie trouble: A propaedeutic on ideological subjectification and the unconscious." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 2 (2005): 150.
- ⁸⁹ Martin, James. *Antonio Gramsci: Contemporary applications*. Taylor & Francis, 2002, 256.
- ⁹⁰ Lears, T. J.J. "The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 567–593.
- ⁹¹ *ibid*
- ⁹² Lauro, S. J, and K. Embry. "A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism." *boundary* 35, no. 1 (2008): 93.

- ⁹³ Hobbs, S. "The Study of Race, Religion and Society within George A. Romero's Dawn of the Dead and Lucio Fulci's Zombi 2" (2008), 10-17.
- ⁹⁴ Wallerstein, I. *The modern world-system*. Academic Press New York, 1974, 349.
- ⁹⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁹⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁹⁸ Please refer back to note number 7.
- Lears, T. J.J. "The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 567-593.
- ⁹⁹ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. Beacon series in contemporary communications. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, 32.
- ¹⁰⁰ Marchessault, Janine. *Marshall McLuhan: cosmic media*. SAGE, 2005, 58.
- ¹⁰¹ McLuhan, Marshall. *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*. Beacon series in contemporary communications. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, 60-61.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid*, 61.
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- ¹⁰⁴ Marchessault, Janine. *Marshall McLuhan: cosmic media*. SAGE, 2005, 57.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*
- ¹⁰⁶ Fromm, Erich. *Love, Sexuality, and Matriarchy: About Gender*. 1st ed. New York: Fromm International Pub, 1997, 40.
- ¹⁰⁷ Fromm, Erich. *The Essential Fromm: Life Between Having and Being*. New York: Continuum, 1995, 40.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 41.
- ¹¹⁰ Kellner, D. "Erich Fromm, Feminism, and the Frankfurt School." *Illuminations: The Critical Theory Website* (n.d.), 120.
- ¹¹¹ Fromm, Erich. *The Essential Fromm: Life Between Having and Being*. New York: Continuum, 1995, 39.
- ¹¹² Marcuse, H. *The new left and the 1960's*. Routledge, 2005, 33.
- ¹¹³ Cerullo, Margaret. "Marcuse and Feminism." *New German Critique*, no. 18 (Autumn 1979): 21-23.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid*
- ¹¹⁵ Cerullo, Margaret. "Marcuse and Feminism." *New German Critique*, no. 18 (Autumn 1979): 21-23.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid*
- ¹¹⁷ Harper, Stephen. "They're Us: Representations of Women in George Romero's "Living Dead" Series." *cult-media* (2003), 1.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid*
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.
- ¹²⁰ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 22.
- ¹²¹ Waller, Gregory A. *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- ¹²² Harper, Stephen. "They're Us: Representations of Women in George Romero's "Living Dead" Series." *cult-media* (2003), 3-7.
- ¹²³ *Ibid*, 3.
- ¹²⁴ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 22.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid, 88.

¹²⁷ Harper, Stephen. "They're Us: Representations of Women in George Romero's "Living Dead" Series." *cult-media* (2003), 4.

¹²⁸ Waller, Gregory A. *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986, 283.

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003, 28.

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ *Night of the Living Dead*, DVD, directed by George A. Romero (1968; Weinstein Company, 2008).

¹³² Kallitsis, P. "Urban Fears and spatial transformations: the horror movie point of view" (n.d.), 17.

¹³³ Williams, Tony. *The cinema of George A. Romero*. Wallflower Press, 2003.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 90.

¹³⁵ Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000.

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