

Modernity's Automatization of Man: Biopower and the Early Zombie Film

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With the film *White Zombie* in 1932, the zombie fully takes its place in the consciousness of the West. The figure of the zombie will quickly find itself at home both on the battlefield and in the factory, giving us the perfect image of the subject as a body, as a resource for both war and commerce. But these appropriations of the subject-body are enabled by a panoply of techniques bound to the human sciences, techniques not limited to the exigencies of the military or capital. What we encounter in the film and the zombie films that follow is the fear that these appropriations are not limited to war, business, psychiatry, medicine, or any other site or institution, but that modernity itself holds the potential to make zombies happen because the modern subject is immanently zombifiable. At the cinematic zombie's ur-moment, *White Zombie* and its follow-up *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), the expropriation of bodies is not bound to any type of person or activity but to a vision of the subject as an object. Humans are reduced to bare biological life, life that can be operated on, controlled, and exploited. In the age of biopower, all have the potential to become zombies. This is what zombie films have always told us.

The cinematic zombie, then, is a creature that belongs to and is about the West. Just prior to *White Zombie's* production and release, the Haitian "Vodou zombie" had made its initial American appearances in a popular travelogue, *The Magic Island* (1929) by William B. Seabrook, and a not so popular play, *Zombie* (1932). It was only with Seabrook's book that the term zombie was first used in English to denote the living dead. But as Gary D. Rhodes notes, "it was not print and Seabrook which truly introduced the word to U.S. culture, however; it was the cinema and *White Zombie*" (Rhodes, 2001: 183). So much so that when the producers of *White Zombie* began an ostensible sequel, *Revolt of the Zombies*, they were sued by the backers of the first film for trademark infringement for the use of the word "zombie." The cinematic zombie has subsequently revealed itself to be a very curious and resonant creature. In its more than 75 years of existence, the zombie has taken on a variety of forms, many of which show little to no relation to its origins in Vodou. Though the zombie is typically understood as an animated corpse, many cinematic zombies are not dead at all. Zombies on the screen are just as likely to be drugged, hypnotized, or infected by an exotic virus as to be

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the dead returned to “life.” Undead zombies can be the result of a myriad of causes both supernatural and scientific – magic curses, poisons, electricity, radiation, sonic waves, et cetera. The zombie on film is often not even called a zombie. *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968)—the most important and influential zombie film, or zombie cultural product of any stripe for that matter—never once uses the term, and the film is far from an anomaly in this respect.

In contrast to most classic film monsters, zombies are not necessarily evil, destructive, or threatening. While some are violent or cannibals others are completely passive, barely capable of the simplest actions. Others are little more than model workers. Part of the reason the cinematic zombie is so varied is because its defining factor, that which makes it a monster, is not that it is dead but that it is mindless. Steven Shaviro characterizes the zombies of Romero’s Dead Trilogy as “in a sense all body: they have brains but not mind” (Shaviro, 1993: 86). Its defining characteristic is its total absence of subjectivity – a human being lacking all that, supposedly, makes one *human*. “They are empty shells of life that scandalously continue to function in the absence of any rationale and of any interiority” (*Ibid.*). To put it another way, the zombie is the negative definition of subjectivity. The zombie has no consciousness, no free will, no autonomy and, in general, no affect. It has no self-interest. Whatever actions the zombie undertakes are done without thought or reflection, whether they are purely automatic in the manner of an animal or machine or under the direction of an external will. However consciousness is defined, whatever it denotes, is removed or suppressed. Zombification is the erasure of subjectivity; this may be analogous to death, but it is not equivalent to it.

Here we have the essence of the cinematic zombie’s figurative power. Throughout the zombie film’s history, the core fear is zombification, that is, not what zombies might do to the subject or even the subject’s death, but the fear of the subject losing its subjectivity and becoming a zombie. Following Georges Canguilhem, we see how this is what makes the zombie a genuine monster:

The monster is not only a living being of reduced value, it is a living being whose value is to be counterpoint [...] The vital counter-value is thus not death but monstrosity [...] Monstrosity is the accidental and conditional threat of incompleteness or distortion in the formation of the form within, the negation of the living by the nonviable. (Canguilhem, 2008: 135-136)

The cinematic zombie provided a vehicle for Western subjects, those partaking in bourgeois subjectivity, to figuratively stage fears of their own extinction in and through modernity (i.e., modern science, industrial

capitalism, and liberal-democracy) while simultaneously valorizing their subjectivity.

The zombie film articulates in a fantastic form a crisis brought on by a shift of politics and power from being organized around "subjects" (e.g., of the crown or collective sovereign) and territories to bodies and populations. This transformation of the nature of power is the decline of sovereign power and the ascendancy of what Michel Foucault calls biopolitics or biopower, "modern technologies of power that take life as their objective" (Foucault, 1978: 152). Previously power and politics were primarily directed at and conducted between ostensible subjects, subjects who can obey or make demands or be divested of rights. As the modern world unfolds, the subject is exalted but also subsumed into statistics and the masses, as Foucault characterizes it, "the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (Foucault, 2000: 336). Foucault describes how beginning in the modern era politics and power take on a radically different form – biopower. At the level of detail was "*an anatomo-politics of the human body*" that "centered on the body as a machine [and] its disciplining" (Foucault, 1975: 139). At the mass level are regulatory controls, concerned with the biological processes of populations: "propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary" (*Ibid.*). This second form of power is not deployed to discipline or in anyway impinge on individual bodies, but to regulate populations. However, biopolitics often involves the coordination of both of these registers. This new *biopower* is not directed towards subjects but at the level of the individual towards bodies (i.e., disciplinary power) and at the level of multiplicity towards populations (i.e., regulatory power). In both cases, it is a biological entity not a political or conscious one that is being worked on. This biopolitical horizon is both the condition of possibility for the zombie and what it makes legible. For the zombie is a body, a life animated by power, not by a subject.

In contrast with the later *Night of the Living Dead* with its masses or hordes of zombies, the early zombie films (1932-1944) are centered around zombification in a predominately disciplinary key. In these films, the primary concern is individual zombie bodies and what they can and should do. There is also a recognizable zombie master, one modeled along the lines of a sovereign. However, this sovereign seems to partake as much in the imago of the liberal subject as that of the absolute monarch. To further complicate matters, the zombies themselves are at times represented as a mass form, the individual obscured by the multiplicity. The era of the early zombie films is one in which the figure of the zombie is continually changing and transforming, its ontology and mythology so inchoate as to be unstable within individual films, not to mention across films. But these disparate forms make these films the exemplary point of entry for a biopolitical analysis. I want to do this by

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looking at the first two zombie films, *White Zombie* and *Revolt of the Zombies*, but also at the influence on zombie cinema of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and its proto-zombie germ. We will find the zombie elaborated as the subjectless body that biopower works on and through, the body as productive resource, and perhaps most importantly, we will see that the zombie is immanent in the bourgeois subject, that it is even a goal of modernity – the coordination of automatons.

When undertaking any of this, we need to look at the pre-history of the cinematic zombie, for the fear of becoming a subjectless body precedes the zombie film. Mesmerism and hypnotism already seemed to posit man as immanently zombifiable, at least for short periods. The image of the diabolical master hypnotist, epitomized by Svengali, is certainly a prototype for the zombie master and an early registration of the fear of losing one's subjectivity. If the zombie did not exist, the West would have invented it. And perhaps it did just that in Haiti, through the institutions of colonialism, capitalism and especially slavery and the creation of the "socially dead" – where "[the slave] is desocialized and depersonalized," made into a non-being, the living dead (Patterson, 1982: 38). What was appealing about the Haitian zombie for the West was that anxieties over power and subjectivity could be both articulated to a hitherto unprecedented degree and simultaneously projected away from the West – i.e. the bourgeoisie, America, whites – and thus effectively projected onto the past in the progressive mythos. Here, the past entails not only a place in time but also in space, in physical form (lower races), and in thought (magic and superstition but also feudal and monarchical power). Thus, anxieties over modernity are already assuaged to a certain degree as they are articulated in archaic terms. The zombie appears to be the return of some pre-modern being, something that modernity has repressed (its other), but in fact the zombie is a wholly modern phenomenon.

Simultaneously, zombies in the West are a forceful, if seemingly fantastic argument for total human automatism. In this respect, the cinematic zombie is a more inclusive phenomenon than the Haitian (folkloric) zombie. There is little possibility of a white person becoming a slave, but he could be turned into a zombie; for the zombie as monster is basically an ontological proposition, not a socio-historical one. It is not rooted in the contingencies of birth or the particularities of social status but potentiality inherent in all humans, i.e., as humans are understood within modernity. Zombies are the result of power's imbrication with modern science as it takes man as its object of study, opening him up to new applications and techniques of power. In this sense, science both provides insights into bodies, and thus how they can be exploited, and also extends the "body" by objectifying more and more of the subject. This latter trend and the objectified and easily subjugated human it generates makes the zombie so understandable. If the zombie seems

ready-to-hand to take up the crisis of the subject in modernity, this is because the West had already established its conditions of possibility – automatism, the template for biopower's course through the body.

"Anatomy in Motion"

"Is Man an Automaton?" William Benjamin Carpenter addressed this question in a lecture given in 1875 at Glasgow City Hall. It is a preeminently modern question, not only because it is posed from the forefront of contemporary life sciences—Carpenter was a wide-ranging natural scientist working in biology, physiology, and a nascent psychology—but because the very sense of the word automaton had changed from its classical connotation. *Automata* had been mechanical representations of life, but since the Enlightenment the concept incorporated the view of life itself as mechanistic and modeled after machines: "[a]utomata figure in the sciences of the Enlightenment as machines in the form of humans and as humans who perform like machines" (Schaffer, 1999: 126). Most famously, Descartes characterized men's bodies as machines and likened them to automata (e.g., clocks). One could even confuse men with the latter: "Were I perchance to look out my window and observe men crossing a square, I would ordinarily say I see the men themselves [...] But what do I see besides hats and clothes, which could conceal automata?" (Descartes, 1993: 22). By Carpenter's time, the mechanical is further inscribed into nature. His automaton is exemplified not by the clock but by the centipede and its ability to be cut into self-propelling segments thanks to a body structured around an extensive network of ganglia. As Carpenter moves up the chain of being to man, and the cerebrum increases its dominion over the body, one still sees a preponderance of automatic processes and actions. In a striking reformulation of the mind/body split, Carpenter goes as far as to describe the human body as "a trained automaton" with the mind or Ego giving it orders: "The Ego determines to do a certain action, and commands the automaton to do it" (Carpenter, 1875: 24). Yet as Carpenter notes, we are then led to ask "how far the mind of man acts automatically" (*Ibid.*: 25) This is the source of the lecture's title. Does not man's personal history, social setting, and – most importantly for Carpenter – his heredity appear to ultimately determine his mental actions? Carpenter does not deny the force of these influences but, he states, the Ego does have one area of agency: it can direct attention and by choosing what to attend to, one can to a certain extent direct one's life. It is this singular quality of man's Ego that differentiates him from insects and machines. Without a cerebrum and its ability to choose what to be attentive to man *is* nothing more than an automaton, in essence something like a zombie.

What is most interesting about Carpenter's lecture is the very fact that it was necessary to make a public argument that man is not an automaton.

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In the eighteenth century, Descartes' characterization reached an apogee of sorts with Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *Man a Machine* (1748). La Mettrie had argued, to some controversy, that man should be understood in mechanical terms through and through, not just his body but his mind and soul (the latter "an enlightened machine"). A little over a century later, Carpenter made almost the opposite argument. Man as a machine was a disturbing proposition, and the more validity it seemed to have, the more urgent the need to refute it. As the human sciences provided material explanations for an ever-wider sphere of human behavior, the qualities that marked man as an agent seemed to be eroding. What had been philosophical speculation was by the late nineteenth century the topic of public and scientific debate. In part this was because the image of the mechanistic human was especially problematic, as the cultures and societies of the West that were underwriting modern science were themselves predicated on man as autonomous, self-interested, and self-directing – rational, yes, but not mechanical. But as Foucault pointed out, "the celebrated automata [...] were not only a way of illustrating an organism, they were also political puppets, small-scale models of power" (Foucault, 1995: 136). Framed in this way, the antinomy of the bourgeois epoch was between what Foucault called the "docile body" – one both analyzable and manipulable, and thus, one "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1995: 136) – and a subject posited as free from necessity and material constraints in its subjectivity, an almost disembodied will or Ego. The autonomous subject of the modern West was in imminent danger of dissolving into just a docile body, an automaton. It is this vexed situation of the subject, valorized ideologically while being undermined both epistemologically and in more practical ways (like the scientific management of workers' bodies) that sets the stage for the zombie's appropriation in the twentieth century.

The zombie is then a figure for the instrumentalizing tendency in the West of which the factory worker and the soldier are the signal examples. But the zombie also gives substance to new forms of power. Biopower manages and conducts life itself and does this by reducing human subjects to nothing but biological material, automata, zombies.

World War I and *Revolt of the Zombies*

One of the most striking instances of biopower in the early zombie film is the beginning of the second zombie film proper, 1936's *Revolt of the Zombies*. The film's opening of zombies fighting on the Eastern front plunges the zombie into the center of modernity's paradoxes. Yet the film's haphazard execution has meant it has been largely ignored. Whereas *White Zombie* has been canonized as a minor classic of 1930s horror, exemplifying the substantial aesthetic possibilities of low-budget filmmaking, *Revolt of the Zombies* is generally remembered for its

complete inability to duplicate its predecessor's achievements in either arena, characterized as the nadir of Poverty Row filmmaking in the 1930s. Yet of the two it is this film that more fully reveals why the zombie is so enduring and powerful a metaphor. *Revolt of the Zombies'* very illogic and inconsistency serve to highlight this fact. Within the first ten minutes, the zombie is not only completely severed from its historical sources, it is also divested of any pseudo-gothic trappings it may have acquired from *White Zombie* and hurled pell-mell into the crucible of modernity – both figuratively in the torrent of meanings and explanations attached to the zombie and literally in the form of World War I.

Historian Modris Eksteins characterized the First World War as the first great war of the bourgeoisie: “[i]t is therefore hardly surprising that the values of this middle class should have become the dominant values of the war, determining not only the behavior of individual soldiers but the whole organization and even strategy and tactics of the war” (Eksteins, 1989: 177). It is in this sense of the war as a bourgeois limit experience that it has the ability to generate the bourgeois antithesis, the zombie, “the *automatisme anesthésiant* that the trench experience induced” (Eksteins, 1989: 172). The trench changes soldiers, bourgeois subjects, into Carpenter's automatons:

What becomes clear from the diaries and letters of front soldiers is that in front-line service, particularly in action but in routine duty as well, the senses become so dulled by the myriad assaults on them that each man tended after a short while to live according to reflexes. He functioned instinctively [and these] reflexes and instincts were in large part prescribed by soldier's society. (Eksteins, 1989: 171)

We can see trench warfare as performing Foucauldian-like discipline over the soldiers qua bodies, taking over and extending the disciplinary function of the various spheres of civilian life.

Foucault saw the soldier as the locus classicus of the disciplinary techniques of modernity.

Out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit. (Foucault, 1995: 135)

Trench reality becomes a disciplinary apparatus. Those soldiers who lived beyond a few weeks began to shut down their “human” faculties, like thought and emotion. Most surprising, though, is that they shut down their instinct for self-preservation. The automatism of the soldier-

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machine even trumps death. It is not just trench warfare by itself that marks World War I as a signal event of modernity and precursor to the zombie, as modern trench warfare is coupled with new strategic concepts such as attrition, which are regulatory. Attrition did not aim at achieving specific tactical goals, such as territorial advancement. It aimed at depleting the enemies' resources and stifling its productivity. It engaged the enemy at the level of statistics. In this frame, World War I is an exemplary instance of the biopolitical in action.

Revolt of the Zombies takes up and responds to the issues arising from the Great War in a variety of ways. This is foregrounded in the beginning of the film, which is so bizarre it is surprising more attention has not been given to it. The film begins with a scrolling text declaring that "Many strange events were recorded in the secret archives of the fighting nations during the World War [...] But none stranger than that which occurred when a regiment of French Cambodians from the vicinity of the lost city of Angkor arrived on the Franco-Austrian front." We then cut to a general rejecting protagonist Armand Louque's report of "mesmerism, occultism, men without souls, hordes of supermen capable of annihilating armies of trained men." Louque, recently returned from Cambodia, timidly tries to convince the general of the factual nature of his report. Upon hearing a dispatch on Austrian troop reinforcements, the general concludes their meeting by saying "I wish I could believe in your robots, I could use seven regiments right now." Louque exits the ornate Old Europe office to the far more utilitarian antechamber. There we find an American officer and a pale grey-haired Asian in a toga-like robe standing erect and expressionless, a vaguely ritualistic posture, one divorced from its environment. (Is he one of those "robots" just mentioned?) The American Clifford Grayson chides his French friend for lack of "intestinal fortitude," the ability to be ruthless, self-centered, to go after what one wants regardless of sentiment or the consequences. Louque retorts by sardonically calling this "Ego."

They take up the debate from the general's office. Cliff concedes to Armand that black magic and telepathy could exist, "but not your robots." Armand explains that Angkor was built by zombies, "controlled and directed mentally by their priest-king" of which the priest Tiang, the silent Asian to their right, is the last descendant. The priest, now included in the conversation, declares that he will demonstrate for the general the power and effectiveness of his zombies. The film cuts to the front – mostly represented through rear-projection and constant gunfire on the soundtrack – and we can just see the top of an Austrian trench as the Cambodian zombies enter uniformly from both sides of the frame. They form ranks and the camera tracks across them in a medium shot. They do not appear dead but stoic and vacant, their French uniforms open or missing sleeves. During the shot, Tiang is briefly superimposed, only to be replaced by an extreme close-up of two eyes (belonging to Bela

Lugosi, an image from *White Zombie*). The zombies slowly march forward in a flat straight-on composition that mirrors their own "flatness," flatness further accentuated by the lack of depth in the image from the rear-screen projection. An Austrian fires into one, and a close-up of his chest shows the bullets striking but having no effect beyond bloodless holes (this is a restaging of a moment from *White Zombie*). The zombies take the trench, dispassionate and unabated. In the general's office an Austrian military envoy implores, "I am not here to plead the cause of the Central European powers but that of modern civilization. In the name of humanity you must not go further with your experiments. It may mean the end of the white race." The French general assures him that the "experiment" is ended. Subsequently, the Cambodian priest is imprisoned and mysteriously murdered. The allies then decide to undertake an expedition to Angkor after the war to find the secret of the zombies and destroy it. The rest of the film is effectively a new story.

What is most striking at first is the characterization of World War I as filled with strange events. This opening line reminds us just how apocalyptic this event was for the peoples that passed through it. Hayden White described "modernist events," of which World War I is one of the first, as exceeding previous comprehension and understanding, functioning in a way analogous to psychic trauma but on a societal level. Many of the most distinguished historical works on World War I take as their central theme the attempts of the various participants to understand the war. In its own fantastic way, *Revolt of the Zombies* is another example of this coming to terms. The opening scenes show us what will be the center of this process – the modern battlefield with its trench warfare and a strategy of attrition based on draining the opponent's resources, and the key resource here is fighting men. Thus, the Entente general wishes that there *were* zombies. He spells out what is needed in this situation, hordes of supermen, men without souls, robots. This elaboration of the zombie ontology through naming continues outside the office – "automatons, tireless, feelingless human machines" – the American Clifford then completes the equation "or as you call them zombies." The term is spoken to highlight that the "zombie" is just an exotic, "strange," technical term for a known (or at least deducible) quantity. The litany of names then does not reflect confusion over what it is, simply what one should call this particular instance. If anything, the implication is that the exotic zombie is just fancy dress for a much more mundane phenomenon. Certainly what makes the zombie *a priori* understandable is that it embodies those qualities modern warfare demands – a body unencumbered by thoughts and feelings, a body that makes no demands but only fulfills them.

The efficacy of the zombie body as weapon, as a military resource, is a pre-given. "I could use seven regiments right now," states the general even as he disbelieves. That is to say, zombies cannot be real yet they

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are rationally required. They are the perfect soldiers. When they are set into action, we see them advance in formation, they march at a steady pace, and they absorb ordinance without falling or breaking ranks. And it is this very perfection that is problematic, for it transfigures the bourgeoisie *weltanschauung*, drawing together its essential contradictions into a single location – progress and tradition, the autonomous and the universal subject, the individual and the masses, self-interest and self-sacrifice. By concentrating the culture's contradictions, zombies jeopardize its existence. The crisis the zombie embodies is an apocalyptic one, the end of the bourgeois epoch. This is the crisis that the Austrian attaché is responding to, and it is within this frame that we can find the "white race" and what threatens it with "destruction." It also helps us understand one of the axes on which race is being configured, not a race war in the sense of two opposing races but an internal struggle within the ideal type of the white race. It is the biologization of culture. What is at stake is not necessarily the future of a particular bloodline or skin color but the end of a particular ideology and socio-political system that it is seen to announce. This is the ending of those qualities that make up this particular instance of "whiteness," the end of the bourgeoisie as reality and paradigm, the end of the bourgeois race as a way of life. This crisis for the white race comes about because the perfect soldier the zombie embodies is precisely one that lacks subjectivity. The war between bourgeois nations must be fought and won by embracing a bourgeois antithesis. The soldier is both subject and non-subject, or we should say the battlefields of World War I reveal the subject in its essential non-subjectivity. In Adornian terms, the subject comes to understand the primacy of the object as it pertains to itself. The West's progressive success is not based on creating more or better subjects but objects, "a domination which a priori keeps subjects from being subjects and degrades subjectivity itself to a mere object" (Adorno, 1973: 178). Thus, the nature of the power exerted on the soldier is not the sovereign power that demands to be recognized and willfully obeyed, nor is it the power of the collective subject that enacts a social contract, but it is a disciplinary and to an extent regulatory power that demands nothing but trains, manipulates, and deploys soldiers' bodies.

From Caligari to Legendre, Part I: The Science of Zombies

If all psychology since that of Protagoras has elevated man by conceiving him as the measure of all things, it has thereby also treated him from the first as an object, as material for analysis, and transferred to him, once he was included among them, the nullity of things. —Theodor W. Adorno

The notion that World War I can be viewed as a source of zombies or at least a site of zombification is not wholly original to *Revolt of the Zombies*. Once we understand the zombie as a concept that takes many

names and forms we can then locate it *avant la lettre*. Perhaps surprisingly, we see that it is *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) that should be considered the prototype or even the first zombie film. The film not only presents us with a zombie analogue but also helps us to see how questions of power and sovereignty connect with the human sciences and its techniques, here in the complex of psychology-psychiatry-psychoanalysis. Anton Kaes has shown that the film is productively seen within the horizon of shell shock and trauma (Kaes, 2000: 121-130; 2009: 45-86). Kaes has argued that many of Weimar cinema's greatest works recast World War I and the trauma it caused into fantastic form. It is precisely the fantastic and its irreality that enables these films to grapple with the war and "shell shock." If it was near impossible for realism at the time to represent the destructive magnitude of the war, it was absolutely beyond its ability to give form to the point of view of trauma. The fantastic masterpieces of Weimar cinema, though, "found a way to restage the shock of war and defeat without ever showing military combat. They were post-traumatic films, reenacting the trauma in their very narratives and images" (Kaes, 2009: 3). Francis's story is the ultimate example of this recasting of the trauma of war into a phantasmatic form because his past life as a soldier, now shell-shocked, brought him to the institution of the frame tale. The disciplined soldier, its compliment the shell-shocked soldier, and the zombie are all made possible due to the modern conception of man which has shaped the first, diagnosed the second, and projected the third, the logical if fantastic extension of the former two. This is the conception that the early zombie always gravitates to – that of man being to a greater or lesser degree a machine.

Evident in Carpenter's lecture is a very physiological (reductionist) approach to psychology. Historically, what follows in turn is a materialist psychiatry. With World War I and shell shock this approach engendered shock therapy and solitary confinement as treatments even while diagnoses fell back to moral judgments or wartime expediency (Kaes, 2000: 121-123). In contrast to and often counter to a psychiatry of brute physicality, psychoanalysis took a hermeneutical and organic approach, treating the irrational as constitutive of man and not an avoidable defect. Psychoanalysis as a science rationalizes the irrational, systematizes it and makes it subject not simply to interpretation (of dreams, fantasies, behaviors, etc) but also to understanding and control, a docile psyche. If psychoanalysis seems to have evaded the trap of man-as-machine, it still posits a mechanistic if occulted view of man, one composed of rationally explainable processes (an *economy* of drives or the infamous steam engine analogy). In this sense, psychoanalysis fits squarely *within* the Enlightenment tradition; and as the notion of the dialectic of the enlightenment would lead us to expect, psychoanalysis's insights, its reclamation of the irrational to the rational, have furthered man's ability to dominate man. Not only has it penetrated to the depths of the psyche,

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but it has also opened the psyche up as a field of application for experts to analyze and manipulate.

At stake here for the zombie is psychoanalysis's symbolic force within Western culture vis-à-vis the subject. The empirical individual is shown to be always subject to control and manipulation by forces outside of itself (or the Ego) such as drives, traumas, family members, and most importantly, psychoanalysts. In *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the notion of the doctor having potentially absolute power over his patient is staged at multiple points. Not surprisingly then, the film also serves as a prototype for most of the early zombie films with their emphasis on the zombie master's power. Caligari himself figures psychoanalysis's power over the individual but also the West's increasing ability to minutely control the individual through the further domination of a nature that is reinscribed deeper and deeper into man's being. We should thus be able to see and understand Cesare as the object of these techniques of knowledge and power, the figure of the subject's immanent potential for dissolution and erasure on which the zombie is founded. Certainly in many ways he already is a zombie – a somnambulist (the visual-empirical reference point for zombies), almost completely devoid of emotion, lacking free will, no language use (he is *used* by language, being a medium), easily replaced by a doll, and kept in a coffin when inactive. Moreover, if we follow Siegfried Kracauer's original insight into Cesare's utilization by Caligari as a killing machine, as a soldier "who is drilled to kill and be killed" (Kracauer, 1947: 65) and combine it with Anton Kaes's sensitivity to the traumatic historical component informing the film, Cesare is then seen himself as a victim of shell shock. He is the zombie after-effect of the war. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* plays out the subject's potential to be subjected and controlled by external powers, which for various reasons – ontological, ideological, and institutional – it is powerless against.

The doctor of the frame tale is himself presented as suspiciously like his phantasmatic double; he claims an omnipotent understanding and corresponding power that is analogous to the absolute power of Caligari or of the generals and heads of state responsible for sending men off to war, or the scientists and technicians that made both modern warfare and psychiatry possible. The film, through its layering of these realities and many doublings of characters, situates the zombie concept at many sites simultaneously – soldier, psychotic, mental patient, trauma sufferer, somnambulist, as well as in curious relation to its erstwhile masters, whose control and self-identity are also called into question. Certainly the sovereign as monarch or absolute ruler is discredited. But another is set in his place, not one who channels a line of royal power but one who partakes in a dispersed power of modern science and its allied discourses, a power not based *on* obedience but one *through* analysis.

From Caligari to Legendre, Part II: The Business of Zombies

Only when the process which begins with the metamorphosis of labour-power into a commodity has permeated men through and through and objectified each of their impulses as formally commensurable variations of the exchange relationship, is it possible for life to reproduce itself under the prevailing relations of production. Its consummate organization demands the coordination of people that are dead. —Theodor W. Adorno

The zombie's inauguration in *White Zombie* is not staged around battlefields, laboratories, or clinics but the other privileged site of modernity, the factory. Caligari would be just as apt a head of a factory as a psychiatric clinic. The majority of the zombies in *White Zombie* are portrayed "as laborers in a capitalist regime" (Rhodes, 2001: 45). The initial definition of a zombie, as given in the film, quickly locates them as workers. "They are dead bodies [...] Zombies, the living dead, corpses taken from their grave and made to work the sugar mills and fields at night." The full import of this statement is not realized until plantation owner Charles Beaumont arrives at Murder Legendre's sugar mill. In this scene we are witness to the culmination of technological reason in a morbid replaying of *Metropolis* (1927) and Freder's journey to the workers' underground. The zombies are not simply mindless workers who will work without complaining: "they do not mind long hours," Murder informs us. They are of absolutely no individual value, easily replaceable parts, "themselves indistinguishable from the gears and machinery" (Dendle, 2001: 190). In this the film registers the zombie's origins in slavery and industrial capitalism.

All of this is baldly on display in the film's set piece, prefiguring and surpassing Chaplin's iconic moment in *Modern Times* (1936). With only the incessant sound of the sugarcane grinding, we see dozens of zombie-workers on multiple planes expressionlessly and unfailingly operating and powering the rather simple machines. Sisyphean circles and circular motions dominate, exemplified by an overhead shot of the series of crude alternating blades that chop up the cane. The zombies walk around a bin containing the blades into which they empty their baskets of sugarcane. The camera tracks on one of them as this zombie stumbles, loses his balance and falls into the bin. The camera replicates his downward trajectory with a tilt to show us the zombies underneath powering the blades through a continual circular march. This movement also maintains the mechanical flow of the factory – workers, gears, and framing all equated, even the "error" of the stumble is incorporated. The soundtrack increases slightly to accentuate the grinding sound which now implicitly includes a zombie-worker body in with the cane. No one except Beaumont registers the event, and there is no pause in the processing of the cane. Beaumont is appalled, though not enough for him to end his

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relationship with Legendre. He, unlike *Metropolis'* Freder, knows there is nothing to be gained here for the bourgeoisie. Much like Beaumont, the narrative too will leave this moment behind. *White Zombie* does not return to the factory or to its implications.

Yet the zombie factory, the factory as zombie workhouse, will haunt the rest of the film through the character of Murder Legendre. Murder's role as the industrialist seems to devolve into that of the absolute ruler, a tyrant even. Murder appears to embody the absolute power of the classic sovereign, the one who can "take life or let live." But as zombie maker and master he also embodies a new kind of sovereign. At one level he controls bodies, disciplining them, his omnipresent eyes keeping them under surveillance. Here he stands in for the classic techniques and technologies of disciplinary power. Yet at another level he does not control or concern himself with any particular body but with a field of power that generates and regulates bodies in mass. His then is a sovereign power coterminous with the biopolitical, a biopower. Foucault notes the changing nature of sovereignty with the ascension of biopower:

I wouldn't say exactly that the sovereignty's old right – to take life or let live – was replaced, but it came to be complemented by a new right which does not erase the old right but which does penetrate it, permeate it. This is the right, or rather precisely the opposite right. It is the power to 'make' live and 'let' die. (Foucault, 2003: 241)

To make live or let die is the definition of the zombie master.

Yet the factory is even more anathema to the bourgeois subject than the battlefield and the narrative quickly retreats. Subsequently, the zombies are no longer presented as simply factory workers but as factotums, trophies, and objects of desire. In this, *White Zombie* follows *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* where control of others is shown to be undertaken for subjective, irrational reasons. In this, both films to some extent deflect the problem of power away from both its traditional and emerging apparatuses and institutions. Yet in both instances power does not escape completely into the interior. In *White Zombie*, like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the project of control is linked to a scientific worldview. When Legendre drugs Beaumont, he is interested in the zombification process in itself as a biological and psychological phenomenon. We can also see vacillation between forms of power mirrored in the very indeterminacy of the agent(s) of zombification. The film is quite obscure when it comes to the actual "how" of making and controlling zombies. Poisons, fetishes, sympathetic magic, hypnosis, telepathy are all in play at various moments throughout the film. But the necessary and sufficient conditions for zombification remain occluded. This is because, unlike the external (mimetic) practices of magic or folk medicine, the zombie

concept is based on an internal quality of man. In this, these zombies are the same as the inhabitants of the asylum or the phantasmatic Cesare. Zombies happen because they are deducible from modernity's understanding of man. If man's body is an automaton waiting to receive orders from an Ego, why not from an Ego located elsewhere than the body (e.g., the will of an industrialist)? The film itself repeatedly references this disembodied Ego through extreme close-ups of Legendre's eyes, often superimposed upon the actions he is influencing. This omniscience and omnipotence aligns him as we have seen with both the absolute sovereign and disciplinary power but also with an ego-centered subject exerting influence over other ego-subjects. In this, he is divorced from his initial role as industrialist; if this did not occur, one would imagine the film forced to end in a workers' revolution. In its place we find a tyrant who only needs to be overthrown for things to be put right. The film has through these various machinations of zombification and control diffused its initial proposition of zombies as an institutional imperative of industrialism, that is, as a modern phenomenon, much as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* tried to alleviate the abuse of power. But in the process it has unmoored zombification from any specific site, setting its potential free into the world.

As we saw, it was this freedom that *Revolt of the Zombies* exploited, but like its predecessor, it too retreats. After its delirious opening, in many ways a radical break both with zombie folklore and the mythology of *White Zombie*, the film, in a blatantly incoherent manner, reverts back to the narrative schema of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *White Zombie*. The characters that were soldiers are recast as scientists and scholars with no mention of the war. A rather clumsy love triangle ensues with Armand Louque losing out and consequently seeking the secret of the zombies to make his will literally law. In contrast with its beginning, by the second half of the film the zombies are now living; their state only temporary. Repeating *White Zombie's* own vacillation, by the end of the film, once the telepathic concentration is broken, all those under Armand's thrall are returned to normal. As in *White Zombie*, the secret is never actually clear, all the sources of zombification we encounter, apparently, are not *the* agent. Zombies are first generated by an esoteric smoke, but then controlled by a kind of direct willpower-hypnosis, but then all it takes is mass telepathy. This profusion of methods parallels the film's early profusion of definitions and terms. Again, this finds its justification in the quality of the subject and its body – docility.

Armand's ambition, his acquiescence to his own selfishness ("ego") leads him to control a whole nation. He becomes a tyrant per Kracauer's characterizations of such masters of hypnosis as Caligari and Mabuse. Like Caligari, Armand repeats and is trapped in a mythic narrative: he has become the priest-king mentioned at the beginning of the film whose tale, which is a maudlin one of unrequited love, is repeated at several points.

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As in *White Zombie*, the zombie master is the self-centered subject gone awry, but now his role as sovereign is explicit. The film is a renunciation of the ideal of the sovereign. In a curious reversal of the history of modern power, it is the sovereign instead of the biopower that supersedes it that brings forth zombies. In both films, there is a displacement of the anxiety over the changed nature of sovereignty and power unto archaic forms, but by using the figure of the zombie the very biopolitical situation that has in a sense caused the anxiety, this truly modern mode of power, is disavowed as something that modernity attempts to surpass. The films enact a similar move with the subject, where the villain is the truly modern subject – the self-interested individual that adheres only to instrumental reason – and is linked with a pre-modern form of sovereignty, that is to say, the villains are both anachronistic and avant-garde. The protagonists are the collective subject of a modern form of dispersed and impersonal power, but shown as tradition bound and group oriented, both progressive and static. Ultimately both films are staged around a fundamental anxiety over a form of modernity in tension about its origins and possible future.

That future is one progressively filled more and more with zombies. By World War II, the cinematic zombie and its zombie master are both under the control of an impersonal ideology, almost always National Socialism. Unfortunately there was an horrific sense to equating zombies with the Nazis, for the reality of concentration and death camps exceeded the comparatively tame nightmare embodied by zombie cinema. Far worse, in the camps the de-individuating, objectifying logic underwriting the zombie reached an unimaginable apogee. Reality had outstripped the fantastic. In Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz* (part of a series of investigations on the biopolitical condition of modernity), Agamben quotes from survivors' testimonies about the figure of "the *Muselmann* of Auschwitz [one who is] defined by a loss of all will and consciousness" (Agamben, 1999: 45). Emaciated "creatures" are described as "walking corpses," "living dead," "mummy-men," or in Agamben's own terms, "a kind of absolute biopolitical substance" that biopower sought to produce (Agamben, 1999: 54, 156). But even in 1945, well before the concept of biopower, Leo Lowenthal in "Terror's Atomization of Man" (second in a series on "the crisis of the individual") had understood the camps in a similar way. "Terror" (totalitarianism) had reduced people to "natural material" and the individual "into a unit of atomized reactions [...] a mere object, a bundle of conditioned reflexes" (Lowenthal, 1945: 3). The camp functions like a factory or a department store, "human beings as surplus or commodities or means" (*Ibid.*: 8). Moreover, the guards themselves do not escape this same terrible logic, transformed into "automata" controlled by forces and imperatives at a far remove (*Ibid.*: 3). For Lowenthal, the methods of capitalism and extreme nationalism are not a difference in kind but of degree, the camp and its zombie-like inhabitants an immanent potential of modernity.

It is little wonder then that after the war the zombie seems to recede, absorbed and attenuated by the sci-fi boom of the 1950s, and that the controlling power becomes even more dehumanized, becoming literally alien. Though often read as figuring the threat of communism, taken together the films of this period are far more ambiguous. It is not so much a specific ideology that is the problem but ideology in general. Whatever moral claims it may make, the power exerted by ideology is desubjectifying, at least as far as the West's liberal-humanist tradition has construed the subject. Moreover, in these films it is a hyperbolic science that accomplishes this. The coupling of zombies with ideology and science establishes the new poles around which the post-war films will be organized, until with *Night of the Living Dead* even ideology disappears. Nature and power overlap, and science becomes as dumb and meaningless as the reality it posited, the nullity of things. In a morbid, distorted echo of structuralist and poststructuralist thought, the zombie film becomes literally and philosophically antihuman.

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