

# Alternative Characterisation Strategies in Contemporary Mainstream Zombie Cinema

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## Abstract

This paper explores the nature of alternative zombie characterisation through contemporary mainstream cinema. As Hegel laments that madness is ‘a derangement of a person’s individual world’ (Hegel, 408 Z), ‘an attempt at self empowerment where the power of the divine is experienced as either absent or irrational’ (Berthold-Bond, p.152) this kind of consideration is amongst a misguided if not misinterpreted reasoning nested within cinema that portrays zombies as blundering, blood-thirsty monsters instead of what Hegel further considers to be ‘a religious disillusionment’ (ibid.). This paper will challenge the archetypal limitations of screen zombie characterisation by presenting test cases of the films *Shaun of the Dead* (dir. Wright, 2004), *Zombieland* (dir. Fleischer, 2009), *World War Z* (dir. Forster, 2013), and *28 Weeks Later* (dir. Fresnadillo, 2007) into the philosophical frameworks of Hegel’s notion of madness, Socrates notion of morality, and Nietzsche’s will to power. The intent of such is not to provide a critique of these three perspectives but rather in reverse, to establish a model by way of deconstructing the aforementioned films through a means that plays out a deeper understanding through characterisation of the genre and the limitedness of determinism in recent zombie-based cinema.

Keywords: zombie, scriptwriting, contemporary cinema

## INTRODUCTION

“Thank God for rednecks!” exclaims Tallahassee in the film *Zombieland* as he gleefully discovers an armoured car filled with available weaponry destined for the defence against the film’s imploding zombie apocalypse. This kind of sentiment is commonplace throughout recent cinema’s zombie genre yet such an archetypal perspective brings with it a narrow field of view as to what constitutes both the agency of a zombie and moreover, how an audience might come to terms with such a state through the action, and from this, the projected views of the narrative’s protagonist. As this paper will propose, the issue at hand is that contemporary cinema often plays out the agency of a zombie from an understanding that they are an invading pest in need of extermination yet fail to present such people in a broader contextualisation of self empowerment manifested through biological flux.

To come to terms with this idea, we must first consider the role of zombies as that of two fundamental principles which are understood through the terms of transformation and empowerment. The first, transformation, explicating what I will refer to hereafter as Zombie Type A, is commonly fixated on the notion that ghouls have risen from the grave or that the living have been infected by some kind of virus, imbued through a key narrative plot point such as contamination, a military conspiracy, or a biological interference which thereby transcends the mind and the body into an acute level of rapid mutation. This fictive process then causes immediate death followed on by a state commonly understood throughout zombie films as being ‘un-dead’. Zombie Type A, in this instance, becomes a first generation zombie whereby transformation has occurred from an event driving the narrative through an immediate distinction, separating the protagonist – the living - from the antagonist – the un-dead. We see this in the film *World War Z* when the rapid mutation of a deadly virus kills the general populace who in turn become an army of undead agents, rampaging through cities and towns in a blood lusting array of global anarchy.

Such a corporeal transformation renders the victims of this virus into an immediate state of flux yet in doing so merely projects a modern audience into a conventional territory thus depicting an archetypal flesh eating, homicidal character whom we can undeniably recognise as a zombie. With this regard, it becomes clear that we ought to consider the Zombie Type A agent as a type of homogenised character device which is exploited by writers and producers of screen zombies to such an effect that the only substantial character development in these kinds of films occur through the protagonist fighting their way through a flesh-eating pandemic. What indeed, of course, is problematic about this way of portraying zombies is in what I argue to be a cheapened process of ‘monsterfication’ dominated by set of a bland and hollow antagonist structures which simply do not take into account of any deeper or more emotive ways of developing the undead from their existing idiotic evilness. Such a systemic approach throughout contemporary cinema brings with it a limited methodology, which sees genre restricted through a narrow scope as to what constitutes the behaviour, and from this, the limited being of a zombie.

Yet with regards to the second principle, empowerment, I propose to identify that this limitedness is located in the theorem adopted by filmmakers thus directly responsible for the repetitious restriction of zombie character development; ultimately hampering the character’s capacity to develop and engage through deterministic processes. Unlike the transformative notion of categorising Zombie Type A through an event-based scenario, what propels the action of the proposed Zombie Type B occurs through directive empowerment that, as such, defines how and why a zombie will engage to others and also through the world around them. Situating a Zombie Type B character into a narrative which has already established the pending event or cause of viral mutation opens up a wider expansion for the zombie character to evolve into something else. Yet there is little if any indication that such areas of assessment have been advanced throughout contemporary cinema. For example, *Shaun of the Dead* portrayed zombies as quintessential Zombie Type A agents. As the narrative in the movie unfolds, the writers positioned their zombies into the story ‘by not allowing the viewer to determine what actually happened’ (Munz, p.134) yet by the end of the film, the protagonists merely pacify the remaining monsters into restrained ‘attractions’ for

themselves to control. This appeasement did not however lead a Type A into a Type B model where, in doing so, would have made the film into a more original and unique representation of the undead. Yet the limitedness of antagonist characters in *Shaun of the Dead* chose to focus instead on the devices of irony to propel and contrast Shaun, the anti-hero protagonist, into a series of events that promoted the character's transformation to emotional prosperity while leaving the zombie characters fundamentally stranded in their inability to progress and develop beyond their fictive state. This is not to say that the film was bad nor have the writers produced a mediocre script. It is rather an indication that the writers have not intentionally explored, or at the very least, have not been allowed by producers or studios to explore a greater developmental stage for their zombie characters. It is this very reason, I claim, that contemporary cinema might ought to consider withholding the continuation of such attested monster lineages in such a packaged and predictable method.

We do see, at the conclusion of *Shaun of the Dead*, a montage of television clips which feature pacified zombies eating each other in ghoulish-themed game shows as well as a chained zombie who inhabits *Shaun's* garden shed. Yet the writers failed to take this concept one step further by giving the zombies a more unified process of deterministic agency. The issue for *Shaun of the Dead* is that progression once again unfolds through and for the living. Unfortunately for this purpose, characterisation stops once the living dies then metamorphoses into a zombie. It is this factor that instigates the restrictive practice of denying the undead an opportunity to advance through cinematic narrative.

The commonality amongst recent zombie films is that the undead are presented as being a type of collective antagonist pitted against a group of protagonists who are forced to fight their way out of an often-apocalyptic event. In doing so, the wider dilemma for the genre is that it merely presents a range of situations whereby transformed people are developed as perpetrators and that such people have no valid place, or at the very least are forbidden to engage in societal structures just as they themselves suffer a reduction of intermediate differentiation between their own subjectivity and the ways in which their capacity for self determination is removed. What I argue in this instance is that zombies have an underdeveloped scope brought about by their situated agency which has distinct capabilities in need of expansion so as to be evolved further into a more enriching type of character. The way this can be achieved through narrative is by consideration of a set of key philosophical ideas, which I refer to hereafter as 'conditions', lending themselves to the advancement of zombie characterisation thus being madness, morality, and will to power.

Zombies have historically existed in cinema as being undead, caught in a nexus between the living and death but they have also existed in other contexts which affect their on screen characterisation. 'In philosophy of mind, 'zombie' is a technical term for a rather specific kind of creature that features large in philosophical thought experiments. [As] a philosophical zombie, as opposed to a Hollywood zombie, is an exact physical duplicate of a human being that lacks consciousness' (Goff) what is of interest to this paper is how removing the notion of 'lacks consciousness' can dramatically change a zombie to then give it determinate reasoning above what has been commonplace throughout formulaic instances.

The first and perhaps more common variety of this formula is a zombie rising from the dead who exists as a 'reanimated corpse that feeds on living human flesh' (Brookes 2003) not unlike the medieval manifestations of ghouls whereby 'the souls of the dead could return to earth one day and haunt the living' (Wade, 1995). 'These awakened dead took the form of an emancipated corpse and they wandered around graveyards at night' (Munz et al, p.134). A quintessential example is located in the music video clip *Thriller* (dir. Landis, 1984) where we see ghouls climbing up out of numerous graves to occupy Brookes notion of a 'reanimation' state. Another type was that the living were rapidly killed then returned in an undead state yet either way, the bodies of such victims engaged through an arbitrary transformation which defied natural agency and thus presented each character through a supernatural event.

This transformation can indeed be observed through the considerations of voodoo practice yet the problem with this approach for a scriptwriter is that by its very nature, voodoo themes, however limiting, surmount the action where people are succumbed to, and are paradoxically caught in, a lack of agency brought about by a chemical state of hibernation and therefore endure a limited capacity to make deterministic judgements. Such approaches delineate our screen zombies into nothing more than single minded ghouls who combine the desire of hunger with unstoppable, blood lusting anger. We see this in *Shaun of the Dead* as much as we do in *World War Z* so to make any distinctions between how each movie presents its own definition of screen zombies is that we see very little separation, which, of course, is an underlying issue for both the causality of human determinism and universal determinism. In a broader context, if we understand that human determinism is such that 'all humans are fully determined by preceding events' (Litch, p.144) and universal determinism exists where 'every event has a cause that fully determines it' (ibid, p.142) then the consideration of the supernatural has little to offer a scriptwriter because the populist genre manifests the antagonist - the zombie - as limited by universal determinism and the protagonist - the living - bound by the more widely accessible human determinism. Yet if we reverse these conditions whereby the protagonist is effected by universal determinism and the antagonist is bounded by human determinism, the abilities of zombie agency then expand simply because they, as moving agents, are allowed to make judgements impacted by the secondary effects of universal determinism and subsequently have then more scope within their own characterisation to be able to engage determinant values, and as we will later read, morality, based on the impact of their own surroundings rather than simply having the potential to access their own agency bound through the absence of morality.

With this in mind, these two types of determinism are useful to understand when examining the motivations of characterisation. Thus contrasting the characters of the living and the undead on screen inasmuch as the conditions brought about from these opposites do, on the one hand, intersect with the positions of madness, morality, and will to power in their own right while on the other, explicate a value located in the characters themselves which allows for a more deterministic approach in establishing stronger written characters. With regards to contrast, there is little evidence to suggest otherwise that contemporary zombie cinema is based on defining zombies by the humans they entangle whereby the undead themselves 'are defined to a great extent in relation to those human beings who serve as victims, accomplices, or destroyers of the undead' (Waller, p.280). This prompts us to arrive at a point where zombies are, in the

case of *Zombieland*, for example, given meaning only by the living with whom they contrast. Yet the question for the writer's process is how can such characterisation be changed and given a more direct role for zombies to embrace with determinism without relying on humans to define and contrast their own identity through such transcendental agency?

## CONDITIONS

A proposition to answer this question will be comprised of three additive conditions. The first of which relates to Hegel where the philosopher presents the notion of 'verrücktheit' (madness) as a disease of the spirit thus aligning the condition to 'an attempt at self empowerment where the power of the divine is experienced as either absent or irrational' (Berthold-Bond, p.152). Such an approach can be considered an important method of coming to terms with the characterisation of Zombie Type B primarily because what Hegel establishes is that madness is not of a purely cognitive-based infliction but instead extends further to the spirit thus opening up a wider field of interrogation primarily due to the spirit in a Hegelian sense determines the holistic actions of the body not necessarily governed by cognitive means. 'One of the features of Hegel's conception of madness which sets it apart from other theories of the turn of the eighteenth century is his phenomenological approach' (Berthold-Bond, p.37). Hegel's coining of the term 'nightlike abyss' was essentially brought about by an understanding that madness was an infliction of the mind, yet the spirit, Hegel considered, governed and controlled such an infliction. 'Hegel's notion of madness hinges on the dialectical tumult that ensues between desire and reason, emphasising the struggle to main mastery over the mind's experience of pain and suffering' (Mills, p.8). This of course leads us to Zombie Type A whose portrayal has no control in determining the distinction between desire and reason. We see this in the opening sequence of *Zombieland* whereby numerous instances of the living are chased and murdered by zombies who are themselves incapable of doing anything else. Returning to the notion of the 'nightlike abyss', this particular scene in *Zombieland* presents what Hegel makes reference to as 'within which a world of infinitely numerous images and presentations [are] without being in consciousness' (Hegel, p.153).

Yet the comprehension of Hegelian madness can in turn be considered to transcend Zombie Type A into Zombie Type B by using the notion of the spirit as a core device thanks to his phenomenological approach. As Berthold-Bond delineates that 'while his [Hegel's] middle path between opposing paradigms seek to acknowledge important insights of both empirical and philosophical psychologies, his speculative philosophy of medicine does not simply integrate both sides of this opposition, but goes beyond them' (ibid, p.37). Hegel's overall instances of regarding verrücktheit as a phenomenological construct assist in considering in this regards to a broadening of zombie characterisation. If the spirit has, in Hegel's discussion, the capacity to discipline madness, that is, to acknowledge the controlling of agency by human determinism, then one might argue that the spirit can also act as an agent of moral judgement.

Obviously, the zombie characters who feature in all of the discussed movies so far do not have morality in mind when rampaging through their daily occurrences. Thus the

second condition of morality introduces a *reason* for determinism to make judgement, understood as the *process*, to analyse why brain eating massacres may not be an entirely appropriate activity for the undead. While there has been much discussion by philosophers about the ideas of morality, Socratic morality is a notion to consider because it can only be achieved, according to Socrates, when an awareness of understanding is established through new knowledge. Maxwell comments that ‘Socrates believed that the path to self improvement existed in gaining new knowledge. In order to become better human beings, we need to devote ourselves to developing a greater understanding’ (Maxwell, p.1). The critical component of this approach, and the key element that will make such a transgression work, ensures that Zombie Type B engages determinism in a way that ‘requires a capacity to learn. Zombies cannot learn and are stuck in their wandering, verbally limited, brain eating state’ (ibid).

So what this means for a scriptwriter is rather simple - that zombies need have access to human determinism and by this process of new knowledge they, the character, will then potentially have the capacity to consider reason and after which, comes moral virtue. Yet if the gained deterministic values do not allow for the coming of terms of new knowledge then the pathway to morality, or at the very least, the *potentiality* to determine morality would be consequently lost. There seems to be an important relationship established in this instance between determinism and morality. Without morality as the *reason*, there seems little, if any, motivation as to why a screen zombie might ought be able to hold the capacity for moral judgement because without it, there would be no new knowledge at all. The zombie ought to be considered as having the abilities to review its actions and determine its own choices but these choices without morality would then still be of an instinctual base and without the holding moral virtue. A screen zombie therefore cannot be advanced unless it has a reason to choose from good or bad as opposed to what it does or does not desire. Without morality, our brain eating characters will still eat brains no matter how many times it considers the option to do so. Yet the problem with zombie morality is that if a Zombie Type B character determines that a Zombie Type A is acting immoral, it will then have the ability to determine if they will defend against what it considers to be a wrong doing. Why this becomes problematic for cinema is that the screen zombie who determines morality may start to defend and protect the living against those who seek to attack them, and thus the same issue of bad zombies, as the antagonists, versus the good living, the protagonists, still takes place. In this instance though, it would helpful for a more dynamic story if the living were bad or if not all completely rotten, then have failings to suggest a weakness in their own morality.

An example of this can be found at the start of *28 Weeks Later* when the protagonist *Don* played by Robert Carlyle abandons his wife and a neighbour's child in order to save himself despite his own moral judgement later urging him not to do so. As they soon appear to peril at the hands of the attacking zombies, who in this film are infected by the fictive rage virus, an overriding sense of guilt pervades him throughout the rest of the movie which arguably makes his character more complex and powerful than say, Brad Pitt's character *Gerry Lane* in *World War Z* who is, from the start of the movie, consistently heroic. Such accolades of *Gerry Lane*, the hero, and *Don*, the coward, are accelerated simply because their actions are contrasted with the bad zombies who, for both of these stories to exist, must stay constantly bad in order to support the

protagonists journey from start to end. As *Don's* character contracts the rage virus and subsequently turns into a zombie, the ferocity of his zombie characterisation is accelerated because he transforms instantaneously from coward to ferocious killer. I argue that this contrasting nature propels the characterisation because the audience has something to contrast the zombie with which is not necessarily found in any great detail throughout the rest of the movie.

If zombies did have both human determinism and morality, in say, zombie *Don's* agency, then the distraction away from our contrasted protagonists would not be as stark and as such, if new knowledge is transferred to the zombies progression and not to the living, then how can the living be good if they do not enact on new knowledge to make their own agency act with moral virtue in the first place?

There is an argument to be said though that the screen zombies in *28 Weeks Later* do have deterministic tendencies yet have not advanced to recognise morality or if they have, none of them had decided to act on it. Once infected, these kind of screen zombies are far more dangerous than other examples from what we have seen in, say, *Zombieland*, simply because they choose to attack out of rage not hunger. Moral virtue gained from new knowledge as a condition then enables the scriptwriter to propel the story much deeper and idiosyncratic, as in the case of a story with the bad living and the good zombie. The living could very well be thought of as the perpetrator by the end of the movie just as the zombies be understood as the protagonist, thus by doing so, intentionally develop screen zombies away from such motivations of violence and genocide with the help of transforming themselves into a thinking agent rather than a biologically controlled entity.

The third condition pertains to a separation of terms located in Nietzsche's concept of will to power where he establishes a distinction between 'kraft' (force) and 'macht' (power). As Nietzsche considered kraft to be a universal strength and macht to be a determinant in how one can engage through kraft, the implication of such for zombie characterisation provides the means for a screenwriter or a producer to create and employ a more advanced type of character when taking note that kraft, thus comparative to a Zombie Type A agent which, in its advancement, leads to macht thus quintessentially, a Zombie Type B agent. As Nietzsche says that '...I have rediscovered the way that leads to a Yes and a No... I teach the Yes to all that strengthens, that stores up strength, that justifies the feeling of strength' (Nietzsche, p.33) such a perspective contextualises one of the more important aspects of this paper's consideration of determinism by which the acknowledgement and intentional advancement of understanding one's own agency - moreover, the implications of the transgression from power to agency - enables a screen zombie to bring with themselves an internationalised engagement to the narrative world it occupies as defined by and within a screenplay. In the traditional sense, '...zombie [characterisation] will to power is in the zombie's complete devotion to fulfil one simple drive... to eat your brain' (Maxwell, p.1) and thus, therein lies a problem for writers to solve.

In *World War Z* for example, zombies gain awareness of their plight by adapting to their own experiences of a mutating virus but such motivations are governed by kraft not macht, that is to say, a Zombie Type A agent still remains as a containment, lacking in

an opportunity for progression. In one particular scene, *Gerry Lane* travels to a Scottish medical lab where he is confronted by a population of screen zombies trapped inside the facility who pose a threat to the remaining survivors. While it is clear that the central protagonists are trying to outwit the infected antagonists in order to find an eradication of the pandemic infection, one striking aspect of this movie is that the only main antagonist character who remains constant throughout the movie is the virus itself. There are no singular antagonist characters who journey from start to finish and only when the pandemic's nature changes its behavioural characteristics is when the fate of the protagonists advance forward, obviously, and somewhat not surprisingly, pitted in favour of themselves. It is, of course, non consequential to enact the presence of a recurring character throughout a story in order to demonstrate a Zombie Type B agent however, without the implicit demonstration of *macht*, screen zombies will arguably remain perpetually restricted.

An observation to support this approach is found in Hewitson's consideration that zombie characters who are featured in contemporary American Western films are 'understood as embracing all creatures who have lost their humanity and have been made subservient, either to the will of another or to their own base physical needs' (Hewitson, p.167). It becomes clear in this regard that the absence of *macht* is vital in attaining any substantial act of determinism from character development as in, with the case of *World War Z*, the screen zombies are still confined to the story as pests who do not have the capacity to self determine their own actions nor change their agency through free will.

## MODELLING

To come to terms with the impact of these conditions, this paper proposes to enact conceptual modelling to illustrate character structures in the aforementioned movies and then progress to a proposed alternative which seeks to enable a Zombie Type B agent transformation.

To attest the indicators of Zombie Type B, the following classes are adopted.

- The Living (*L*)
- Zombie Type A (*ZA*)
- Zombie Type B (*ZB*)
- Event (*E*)
- The Outbreak (*O*)
- Narrative (*N*)
- Agency (*Ag*)
- New Knowledge (*NK*)

The additive conditions of such classes are governed by

- Deterministic Values (*Dv*)
- Morality (*My*)
- Madness (*Mn*)

These classes and additives are then applied to the four case studies.

$$O + (L) ZA (Ag) + E + L (Ag + Mn + NK + My) = N$$

Figure 1: Zombie character model of *Shaun of the Dead*.

The *Shaun of the Dead* modelling demonstrates an outbreak which transforms the living into a Zombie Type A agent who experience agency yet are unable to progress in such a state any further than what their restrictions allow. The event is perceived by the living as madness and based on this new knowledge, is determined by the living to be bad through the gauging of morality.

$$O + (L) ZA (Ag + Dv) + E + L (Ag + Mn + NK + My) = N$$

Figure 2. Zombie character model of *World War Z*.

The *World War Z* modelling demonstrates the same type of equation as with *Shaun of the Dead* however the fundamental difference is that these screen zombies select who they attack. If, for example, they determine that the living are unhealthy, that is, if the living have a virus or an illness, they will then bypass such people and move on. One might argue that these types of zombies are more advanced, and from this, more menacing than those located in *Shaun of the Dead* because they are able to have an awareness of their own agency but also progress this awareness towards deterministic values. While they are selective in who they attack it must be considered that this selectiveness is based on their own instinct to survive rather than on moral judgement.

$$O + (L) ZA (Ag) + E + L (Ag + Dv + NK) = N$$

Figure 3. Zombie character model of *Zombieland*.

The *Zombieland* modelling demonstrates a slightly different scenario where the undead, much like those in *Shaun of the Dead* and *28 Weeks Later*, exist by indiscriminately killing and eating the living without the additives of determinism and new knowledge. But their effect on the living who have survived the zombie apocalypse is such that the living are presented in the movie to be void of morality as Tallahassee and the other main protagonists share little remorse for killing zombies. In the supermarket scene, for example, Tallahassee gains personal gratification from exterminating zombies in the most violent and impactful method possible. Therefore in Figure 3 the class of morality has been removed from the living's conditions whereas in *28 Weeks Later* and *World War Z* the living do kill zombies indiscriminately but rather, is framed through self defence instead of morbid self gratification.

$$O + ZA (Ag) + E (Mn) + L (Ag + Mn + NK + My) = N$$

Figure 4: Zombie character model of *28 Weeks Later*, version 1

The *28 Weeks Later* modelling demonstrates the same equation as that of *Shaun of the Dead* yet differs with *World War Z* because of the zombie's immediate lack of determinate abilities. On screen, there is an argument to suggest there are strong contrasts with *Shaun of the Dead* zombies, namely, that the screen zombies located in *Shaun's* backyard in the second act are more passive when contrasted with the rage virus zombies who appear to have an accelerated state of violence. There is no difference in either of the generic zombie's agencies simply because they both have no shown abilities of determinism beyond their own sense of agency irrespective of such differing levels of passivity. Yet what differs in *28 Weeks Later* is zombie *Don's* evolution into his undead state whereby he demonstrates the ability to reason unlike his other zombie counterparts. There are two key scenes in the movie which demonstrate this; the first is when *Don* exclaims 'Oh' when running with a group of zombies into a building just before an airstrike is called to firebomb London. The second is shortly afterwards, when *Don* appears momentarily to his son then disappears as his children are lead by a small group of survivors to escape the airstrike zone. It is not clear if this was actually *Don* or a plot point to illustrate the child's manifestation of *Don* used as a fear factor for emotional effect yet hypothetically, let us consider it was *Don* appearing for a brief moment.

$$O + ZA (Ag + Mn + Nk + My) + E (Mn) + L (Ag + Mn + NK + My) = N$$

Figure 5: Zombie character model of *28 Weeks Later*, version 2

*Don's* presence in this scene has great importance for our modelling because all other screen zombies throughout the movie would sight their prey and immediately rush towards them to attack. However, if it actually was *Don* then this demonstrates his ability to not only hold human determinism but also to suggest he was capable of feeling morality yet made a conscious choice *not* enact on its virtue. Thus a second variant of the modelling needs to be considered based on *Don's* hypothetical representation. This leads us to develop *Don's* version 2 model into a Zombie Type B model as seen in Figure 6 below.

$$O + (L)ZA (Ag + Md +Dv + NK + My) + E + L (Ag + Dv + NK + Mn) = N$$

Figure 6: Zombie Type B proposed narrative.

We see in this instance that the zombies gain equal transformation after madness and deterministic values, which consciously attest new knowledge from such processes to then respond through morality. With that said, there is no guarantee that a screen zombie will enact this knowledge through moral virtue but instead has made a consideration of this knowledge through a moral filter thus, still allowing the zombie to decide if it is or not going to purposely eat people's brains and murder the living.

## CONCLUSION

This model, however, is not concerned with convincing zombies themselves within a story that they must use their motives for the common good. Moreover for writers to broaden a level of complexity within their stories and in doing so consider zombie

characterisation in a more expressive potentiality; to move through an apocalypse scenario without the confinements of stereotypical, albeit homogenised, formulas from the writing genre.

While these examples highlight the existing problem, therein rests an additional issue of how to facilitate the proposed model into a contemporary zombie movie when the restraining factors of profitability and financial risk might impede a studio from taking risks on deviating away from an existing method of formulaic genre which has a demonstrated track record of being extremely profitable. None of the movies referenced as examples in this paper made a financial loss and, from an entertainment perspective, to deviate from a working model that already is a guaranteed method of financial return might seem to be too risky to otherwise undertake. As mainstream cinema is first and foremost an entertainment business, there stands little value in an economic context to take risks on something which is already well established as a low risk transaction for movie investors. With this in mind, mainstream cinema may never change its restrictiveness to employ a Zombie Type B approach due to this very reason. However with the rise of easily accessible indie movies operating outside of the mainstream distribution system, there are examples of script writers, such as Sang-ho Yeon, moving away from Zombie Type A models which gives an audience a far more meaningful approach to the genre as a whole. Notwithstanding, the Korean director's *Train to Busan* (dir. Yeon, 2016) shares equal propensity by challenging traditional notions for zombie characterisation but still replicates the stereotype of the good living as victorious over the bad undead. Yet as this paper is primarily concerned with mainstream contemporary zombie cinema, such instances support the ability to successfully incorporate a Zombie Type B approach. However, through the current formula of zombie mainstream cinema there is much that screenwriters and producers need to advance if we are to at all enable screen zombies to be more than just antagonistic, habitual pests.

Drawing from the proposed models, the economic obstacles likewise present a challenge for scriptwriters and producers, yet such instances will be reduced if these same people might start to think in more broader terms about determinism, morality, and will to power in their own characterisation process. Zombie characters can exist without a confinement to their agency and instead, act as a free-thinking agents throughout a greater defined story. If audiences are to witness such a shift throughout mainstream cinema then such proposals of alternative characterisation can provide a means for more stronger, enriching types of screen zombies who can strengthen a story by transforming the genre into a more engaging cinematic space.

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