

It's in Their Eyes: the Humanity of *The Walking Dead* Zombies

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Abstract

This research examines the portrayal of the zombies in the hit show *The Walking Dead*, and to better understand what makes the zombies in this series so humanly real. The purpose of this research is to understand how zombies are portrayed in eight notable horror movies, and how those portrayals compare to those in the series. Understanding the depictions of zombies, and possibly how it affects viewers, can help explain the attraction to the “realistic” zombies in *The Walking Dead* that makes it so pivotal in the re-awakening of the zombie horror genre. Previous research has examined zombie movies as political and social narratives, but little has been done over the types of zombies that are portrayed, and how audiences perceive them. This qualitative research analyzes eight movies for all of its zombie portrayals, and the data collected was then categorized into prominent cluster depictions. These depictions were then used to compare to *The Walking Dead*'s zombies. Conclusions were drawn about the show's zombie portrayals, camera angles, storytelling, and other aspects to help explain why *The Walking Dead*'s zombies are so hauntingly real.

Introduction

Last Halloween night, the AMC Network aired a new series titled “*The Walking Dead*.” This television show, along with several recent movies, graphic novels, and video games has adamantly helped to awaken the zombie phenomenon. This post-apocalyptic mini-series is based on the largely popular Robert Kirkman graphic novel of the same name. Much like the monthly comic book series, the television show follows the journey of Rick Grimes, who awakens from a coma, and finds flesh-eating zombies have overrun the world. Readers and viewers are taken on a journey of action, emotion, struggle and survival as the brave protagonist leads a group of human survivors through the world of the undead (Grossman, 2009).

Season one of the instant-hit series had six episodes that aired to rave reviews. According to a press release by AMC, *The Walking Dead* “broke ratings records, with the series reaching more Adults 18-49 than any other show in the history of cable television.” The epic mini-series found its audience in young and old die-hard comic book and zombie fans. Though the series has only aired six episodes to date, it has helped the zombie genre grow in popular culture.

The series is often touted as having poignant and powerful scenes that keeps audiences interested. A recent review by Richard Lawson describes the several scenes in the show as being “so artfully and terrifyingly done, relying on agonizing silence rather than creeping music.” He goes on to describe how a zombie attack scene was scary even during the light of day because of the up close and personal scenes. Of course, Lawson critiqued how a few zombie scenes in the show exhibited too-human characteristics, such as the little zombie girl who picks up a teddy bear for no apparent reason, or how the zombie wife jiggled the door handle to her own home

Viewers comments on various blogs, discussion forums and comments often discuss how “real” the zombies are portrayed in this series (Lawson, 2010).

Within recent years it seems zombies have dominated some aspect of pop culture, whether it is movies, comics, literary adaptations (i.e. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith), books, video games and television shows. The utter fascination with zombies, and its underlying themes, is a popular one in our society of consumerism and rampant fear, and the zombie genre often captures that. With the airing of *The Walking Dead*, our attraction to zombies has become even more apparent in part because of this show’s realistic and unparalleled characters, storylines and cinematography. And just like the hordes of mindless zombies that roam the streets looking for flesh, we’re eating it all up.

Literature Review

A brief assessment of how zombies have been portrayed in the past can help our understanding of zombies’ portrayals in recent movies. The fascination with zombies, in one form or another, has had a presence in mainstream America since the early twentieth century. In his comprehensive book about zombie studies, editor Shawn McIntosh says the fascination comes from, “the unique balancing act that zombies represent between control and enslavement, strength and weakness, us and them, and group versus individual identity offers a window into [a] better understanding [of] why we enjoy the horror genre in particular and how we perceive ourselves and certain aspects of popular culture in general,” (McIntosh, 2008).

The history of zombies in western culture derived from researchers and ethnobiologists such as Wade Davis who have studied the ancient voodoo of Haitians. In Haitian folklore, there are often two types of zombies: “spirit” zombies who are souls without bodies, and “walking”

zombies who are bodies without souls. Through his journey about Haitian voodoo, Davis found that the culture believed zombies are more about possession over a human's body that was on the cusp of death (Dendle, 2000). The Haitian culture of zombies and voodoo certainly had influence in American culture with the U.S. military occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934.

Zombies entered the stage and screen for the first time in 1932 with Kenneth Webb's stage production of *Zombie*, and the summer movie *White Zombie* by the Halperin brothers. Though not a successful hit like other monster movies at the time, including *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Mummy*, *White Zombie* was a "formative example of the narrative/filmic figuration of desire in terms of possession. Not only is the paradigm of possessor/possessed... figured narratively amongst the characters of the film; it is also figured in the enunciative devices employed to situate the viewer on both sides of the paradigm of different points," (quoted in McIntosh, 2008).

Zombie film productions continued, unremarkably, through the 1930s and 1940s. The original theme of possession often played out in these movies, and often dealt with either the possession of females for sexual reasons, or touched on racial issues. In the 1950s, zombies were more often than not thinking, planning Martians than they were traditional zombies in movies such as *Zombies in the Stratosphere*. While traditional zombies largely disappeared from the screen at the time, there was still a strong fascination with the word itself.

The portrayal of zombies took a turn in the 1960s, when the physical portrayals of zombies changed. Up to that point, zombies were often portrayed as slow-moving automatons with shabby clothes, and not like the rotting cadavers they were meant to be. Though the 1966 release of the United Kingdom's *The Plague of the Zombies* showed decrepit, decomposing walking zombies, they were still reminiscent of possessed plantation workers.

The seminal work that forever transformed how zombies are portrayed is, of course, George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968. "*Night* not only started off a spate of zombie movies and derivative zombie-cannibal movies for the next several year but also ensured that zombies would, in many ways, replace the classic monster types and science-fiction creatures as one of the most popular, widespread monsters in popular culture, permeating movie practice in various subgenres," (McIntosh, 2008). His portrayal liberated zombies from the shackles of being possessed by a master, and invested the zombies not with a function, but a drive. The low-budget horror film was unprecedented at the time with its violence and graphic images, and largely functioned as a metaphor for the atrocities of Vietnam and racism (Connolly, 2003).

The *Night* movie made way for several popular apocalyptic-themed movies during the 1970s. Most of the movies had a similar plot: a small group of people are trapped in a remote location, and have to fight off numbers of slow-moving zombies who want to eat them. The apocalyptic theme was even more relevant in Romero's follow-up film, *Dawn of the Dead*, a social commentary on American mass consumer society as zombies overtake survivors barricaded in a shopping mall. The theme of apocalypse from governmental forces and testing fit well with a culture that had a generation of people growing up under the threat of nuclear annihilation as they did in the turbulent 1960s. In later years, the reasons for the creation of zombies range from radiation and experiments often reflected a general distrust of big government and business.

The influence of Romero's movies on current zombie films has been exceptional with contemporary movies building on the metaphors and themes that Romero touched in his movies. Recent zombie adaptations include comical spoofs such as *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), bloody and crude in *Braindead* (1992), and truly terrifying in *28 Days Later* (2002).

The fact that zombies now had a physical and biological drive, nicely conflated the underlying themes that zombies has long represented; the cherished idea of life after death and the connection between our physical bodies and what we consider our souls or spirits. Another culture resonance with zombie movies includes the fight against becoming one of the many zombies. Like most characters in the films, the audience can relate to the tension that exists when the protagonists must work together to try to overcome the zombie masses and survive.

“Historically, zombie cinema had always represented a stylized reaction to cultural consciousness and particularly to social and political injustices,” (Bishop, 2009).

Especially so in the 1980s when zombies reached mainstream America with Michael Jackson’s Thriller, Romero’s third film, *Day of the Dead*, and the AIDS epidemic. However, America in the 1990s saw perhaps too much complacency and stability in culture to be interested in zombie movies. With nothing specific to react to or protest against, cinematic versions of the zombie genre declined steadily through the 1990s. This break in film allowed for the continuation of zombies in popular video games with Resident Evil, Doom and Wolfenstein.

Many researchers note that the uprising of zombie movies in recent culture has happened in a post 9/11 world. Since 2002, the number of studio and independent zombie movies has been on a steady rise. The re-embraced genre gave us films such as *28 Days Later*, *Resident Evil*, and big-budget remakes like *Dawn of the Dead* (Dendle, 2000).

“During the latter half of the twentieth century, zombie movies graphically represented the inescapable realities of unnatural death (via infection, infestation or violence) and presented a grim view of a modern apocalypse in which society’s infrastructure breaks down. Scenes depicting deserted metropolitan streets, abandoned human corpses, and gangs of lawless

vigilantes have become more common than ever, appearing on the nightly news as often as the movie screen,” (Bishop, 2009).

Bishop also describes how these images of infectious diseases, biological warfare, euthanasia, and terrorism, all often the plight faced by zombie movie heroes, is more relatable to present-day Americans because of the horrific images of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the War in Iraq are something to compare it to.

The fascination with apocalyptic movies, particularly zombie films usually represent the catastrophic end of humans, and while it is true that occasionally such an end is avoided, the contagion of the zombie always at least threatens absolute destruction (Pagano, 2008). In terms of popular culture and entertainment, zombies are versatile enough to be the fall guys for a range of paranoid theories on secret government programs or corporation plans. Zombies represent an abandonment of society even as they envelop the individual in a security blanket of community—a community in which not much is asked and where the behaviors are clear (Bishop, 2006).

Perhaps the most prominent part of zombie movies is naturally the zombies themselves. At their core, zombies are feared because they are corpses of the known dead who pursue living humans with “relentless dedication and kill people mercilessly by eating them alive,” (Dendle, 2000) unlike most undead monsters including ghosts and vampires.

Bishop also discusses how in contrast to other undead or supernatural creatures, the zombie directly manifests the visual state and horrors of death. Simon Pegg, co-writer of the comedic zombie film *Shaun of the Dead* is quoted as saying, “Metaphorically, this classic creature embodies a number of our greatest fears. Most obvious, it is our own death, personified. The physical manifestation of that thing we fear the most,” (Bishop, 2009).

The portrayals of flesh-eating zombies are often the most frightening aspect of the zombie genre. The special effects of organs spilling from bodies, severed arms and legs, and other gory details of the decomposing human bodies, special effects or not, are often part of the most prevalent portrayals of zombies.

“The horror of gore films comes from the horror of viewing the ‘human body’ sewn up to be all it can be before it exists destroyed. The power of horror is that it forces us to submit to images that destabilize our sense of self, and the gorier and less coherent the film, the more this destabilization is activated,” (MacCormack, 2008).

How the zombies are physically portrayed is just as important as how they look and what they represent. This research aims to study the varying degrees of zombie representation in several zombie films, including George Romero’s five *Dead* films, and compare them to representations in *The Walking Dead*, ergo it is worth the time to consider several editing techniques that are often used in portraying emotions and narratives of film characters.

To further analysis the physical portrayals of zombies, we look to the studies of cinematography and cinema editing. Film scholar Edward Branigan, in his book *Point of View in the Cinema* (1984), was one of the first to study point of view (POV) editing as it relates to narration and emotion. Point of view camera shots are often the ones that audiences remember and relate to on an emotional level the most because the camera shots transport us to what the character is seeing and their perception of the setting, or at the very least we recognize some similarity between ourselves and the character or situation (Branigan, 1984). This way of shooting a movie scene is especially pertinent to zombie movies, which often use POV shots in one form or another. Branigan defines the point of view shots as “a shot in which the camera assumes the position of a subject in order to show us what the subject sees.”

This analysis of the POV shot can help us in determining how there is an emotional or narrative connection between a film character and the viewer. Noel Carroll researches how POV editing uses the character's face to give us information about an emotional state with respect to whatever they see, and is designed to activate our recognitional capacities in such a way that we identify the global state of the relevant character (Carroll, 1993). This POV shot, in other words, provides a rough guide to what is salient, emotionally speaking, in the movie.

The physical and emotional portrayals of zombies in this study's set of films will be used to compare with the portrayals of zombies in *The Walking Dead* as a way to possibly explain why the show has been so popular, and why audiences are so attracted to the realistic show.

Methodology

To properly analyze the zombie portrayals of movies, and to compare them to the recent *The Walking Dead* series, eight movies were selected to be analyzed based on their popularity with audiences and historically based on their influence. George Romero's pentads of zombie movies were selected. This includes the pioneering *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Though the production was low budget, this black-and-white film is still a cult classic because of its documentary style shooting and cinematography. Romero followed up with the gore-filled sequel *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) that followed a group of survivors who sought refuge in a deserted shopping mall, and *Day of the Dead* (1985) in which a group of survivors take refuge in an underground bunker. Romero finished his series of zombie films with *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Diary of the Dead* (2007) and *Survival of the Dead* (2009), which will be further examined later. Two other movies that were examined included the British hit *28 Days Later* (2002), and

Quarantine (2008) which is an American remake of the Spanish film *Rec* (2007). Both of which are often examined in recent zombie film research for its realistic and emotional appeal.

The movies were watched, and every scene with a zombie was recorded. The zombie(s) in the scene were analyzed based on their facial expression, as well as their actions. Facial expressions that were analyzed included the zombie's eyes, mouths, and emotional expression. The behaviors and actions of the zombies were also taken into consideration, and included things such as what the zombie was doing, where they were going, their reaction to their environment, etc. Whether the zombie was acting alone, or as part of a large group was also considered. More importantly, how the scene was shot was noted, and instances of POV editing were noted, as well as how long the camera concentrated on the zombie's facial expression. All of these portrayals were then grouped into several categories, and an inclusive analysis was prepared.

Results

The many instances of the zombies in these eight horror films offer a range of portrayals to analyze. The scenes with zombies in them were separated into one of four major categories based on their portrayal. In this study, portrayal is the instance that the zombie, or zombies, is on screen. Originally, the zombie portrayal would have been categorized into an "expression" and "action" group, but since there was such a strong correlation between certain expressions and actions, the categorization was not needed. For instance, a zombie in *Land of the Dead* was grimacing (expression); therefore he acted like an animal (action). The four major categories that zombies were portrayed in were animalistic and nonaggressive, trainable, and progressive depictions. These four categories can be seen as two separate types of zombies- non-trainable zombies and trainable zombies.

Animalistic zombies were the most prevalent of zombie portrayals, and unsurprisingly so since most people will consider this the most basic of zombies. This often showed zombies as menacing, aggressive and erratic animals with an innate instinct to kill and consume humans. There is not a lot of consistency throughout these eight films in terms of how the zombies look physically as far as their eyes, mouths and skin. Speaking cinematographically, the zombies are rarely on-screen longer than a few seconds. These zombies would often make noises including screams and screeches, and were often part of a large mob of zombies. Most zombie mob depictions were considered fast moving, and often increased the pace of the scene. A great example of the animalistic zombie is in *28 Days Later* and *Quarantine* where, in almost every instance, zombies are seen as erratic and on the prowl. In fact, the movie explains that the reason for the infection was a high dosage of “aggression” in the person. Perhaps the most common form of zombie representation, the animalistic zombie is often used for the fear and adrenaline factor in films.

The second type of animalistic portrayal is called nonaggressive zombies because they exhibited a much lower level of aggression. Nonaggressive zombies are the typical flesh-eating zombies we love, but their actions are less erratic compared to the animalistic zombie. Without any humans to attack, these zombies display an unassuming and quiet role that is pointless unless there is food to hunt. A typical scene of nonaggressive zombies would be wide shots of zombies walking around a deserted street. Often times, these scenes are used to depict the scope of the zombie infestation, with hundreds and hundreds of zombies in one area. Though not much time is spent on the zombies’ faces, they are still seen as a threat, although not as frightening as the animalistic zombies. In a scene from *Dawn of the Dead*, the group of survivors has managed to barricade themselves from the zombies in the mall with the department store’s glass doors. As a

character sits and rests in safety, she places her hand on the glass door where, on the other side, a zombie sits and does the same. This casual encounter portrays the zombie as a calm, gentle, almost endearing creature once it realizes it cannot eat the human. This particular scene helps show how the characters, and the audience, can still feel remorse for the zombies, but still see them as threats.

Trainable zombies have been categorized as those who are perceived to have some thought processes based on their expressions and actions. These zombies depict a wider range of human emotion and action that separates them from the herd of mindless zombies. Their actions are a direct result of their basic instinct, which is to find and consume flesh. For instance in *Dawn of the Dead*, a recently turned zombie remembers where the group of survivors is hiding, and leads the zombies to them. Zombies who learned to use automatic weapons in *Land of the Dead* are another example of a trainable zombie depiction. The amount of screen time that these trainable zombies receive is interestingly longer. Camera shots tend to focus on their faces a lot more for the possible reason that viewers need to clearly show how the zombie is considering some action.

A portrayal of trainable zombies is in the movie *Survival of the Dead*, in which a character is experimenting with domesticating the zombies. He attempts to teach them to eat animal meat, and has them conduct chores as if they were human. In one of the scenes, we see a zombie dressed as a mailman, but he is chained up. He walks to the mailbox, opens it, closes it, then walks away, and repeats these actions several times. Clearly not an animalistic zombie, this portrayal shows how zombies are often comically portrayed more as pets than monsters.

Progressive depictions are another level of zombie portrayals that are prevalent in terms of humanistic emotion. These depictions show zombies who, either through actions or

expressions display some form of human thought process that is higher than the other categories. They exhibit the ability to think outside of their innate drive for human flesh, and can comprehend what is going on around them. Of the eight movies, half of them displayed some form of progressive zombie, often times it involves a character attempting to train the zombie in some form.

In the 1985 movie *Day of the Dead*, Dr. Ted Fisher attempts to domesticate a zombie he names “Bub.” The scene that spends roughly five minutes on Bub shows a very progressive depiction of zombies. In the scene, we see Bub interact with several objects including a razor, book and headphones. Even though it is clear the doctor is still teaching him, he sees the razor and lifts it to his face, he opens the book as if reading it, and shows a clear enjoyment when music is played through the headphones. Although chained up, Bub is not shown as being aggressive, and certainly not towards the doctor with whom he has presumably spent some time. When the inevitable attack on the human survivors happen, Bub takes active revenge on the army captain who killed the doctor, and actively seeks him until the captain is dead.

Another progressive depiction of zombies is from Romero’s *Land of the Dead*. In this movie about survivors who live in a post-apocalyptic bordered city, audiences are immediately attracted to a zombie called “Big Daddy.” We are attracted to him because within ten minutes of the movie, the camera focuses on his face from another character’s point of view. Despite the distraction of the fireworks, Big Daddy attempts to organize the zombies around him and does so during the entire movie. He leads them through the river, and gives them weapons to attack the city. In the end of the movie, the main character has a clear shot of Big Daddy, but chooses not to kill him. Viewers can only assume there is a mutual agreement between the two, despite being natural enemies, when the human survivor says, “... they’re just looking for a place to go.”

The portrayal of Big Daddy is very similar to Bub in that they are not aggressive, erratic zombies. They show a deeper understanding of what is going on around them, and how they interact with the human characters. Their thought processes are clearly motivated by something other than their innate drive to consume flesh, perhaps their residual humanity, and they take the action towards different goals. The portrayals depict the zombies in a much slower pace, compared to the animalistic zombies. Viewers are given time to reflect on the zombies' actions, thought processes and perhaps relate to the zombies' plight. Perhaps, if more time is spent on the zombies, we begin to react to its presence, and if zombies are not portrayed as erratic animals, we begin to see deeper layers to them in terms of their humanity.

Analysis of The Walking Dead

These four portrayals of zombies reflect a small, but consistent spectrum of how zombies have been portrayed, particularly in George Romero's films. *The Walking Dead* series includes several of these zombie depictions throughout its six episodes in very memorable scenes.

Animalistic zombies are used, as in the movies, to portray the scope of the epidemic and the insatiable zombies. The scope of the zombie infestation is shown in the scene where hero Rick Grimes escapes the hordes of zombies in Atlanta. As he lowers himself into the tank for protection, the camera pans out with an aerial shot for us to see the many zombies who surround the tank. In that same scene, we see the viciousness of the zombies as they take down a horse. We see their desperation for flesh when they storm the department store, attack the campsite, and chase after the humans.

Nonaggressive zombies are the least portrayed zombies in the series so far. Of the scenes depicting zombies in *The Walking Dead*, these zombies are used only to show the challenging situations that the human characters are in. The nonaggressive zombies are prevalent in a scene

from the first episode, which shows the zombies walking around the neighborhood. They are drawn by noises, and often cluster around noises, even if it is the sound of gunshots. Another nonaggressive zombie that is particularly interesting is one that is portrayed getting off a bus as Rick makes his way into Atlanta. The zombie is seen dressed in a suit, and some time is spent on camera as it follows him making his way towards Rick. In the first episode, Rick encounters his first zombie after awakening from the hospital. This memorable zombie was only a torso with arms and a head, and was still agonizingly moving after human flesh. When Rick comes back to the zombie later on, he talks to her as if she were human before he shoots her. Audiences can only assume that through Rick's speech, and the fact that this zombie was not a major threat, Rick shot her to put her out of her misery, which gives another human dimension to the zombies in the show.

The opening sequence of the show, Rick is seen walking towards a deserted gas station. As he takes the terrifying setting in, he notices a little girl grab a teddy bear on the street, and continues walking. We see, from his perspective, as she turns around and is revealed to be a zombie and quickly begins to catch him. As Rick is forced to shoot the zombie, we see the emotion that it takes for him to shoot the little girl. While the little girl zombie did not show very much action, this scene does help portray the intensity and humanity of having to kill monsters that used to be human. Another scene that falls into this category is with Morgan Jones, the human survivor who helps Rick when he wakes up in the hospital. We learn quickly that Morgan's wife has been turned into a zombie, or a "walker" as the series calls it. Morgan's wife, in one scene, is shown walking up to the house where they are staying at, looks at the door as though she recognizes it, and begins to jingle the doorknob. This moving scene helps audiences see sympathy towards the zombies, who were once people we loved.

This qualitative study attempts to find several key elements to humanistic zombie portrayals. That is, what makes a zombie human? Is it their actions, emotions or a combination of both? Do we as viewers feel empathy for zombies if we know more about them? The answers to these questions can perhaps help explain the connection we feel about certain movies, and why they attract audiences, and become a part of pop culture.

Perhaps what makes *The Walking Dead* so popular is its ability to showcase various kinds of zombie portrayals, giving us a roller coaster ride between being frightened by and feeling empathy for the zombies. The show's balance between fast and slow scenes is admirable. One minute, we are slowly getting to know the characters, and the next they are attacked by a hoard of zombies. Interestingly enough, the series spends very little time actually examining individual zombies, but with the cinematography that takes place, the slow-moving scenes help viewers feel some sympathy towards them.

Another possible explanation of why people feel the show is portrayed so realistically may have nothing to do with the zombies at all. Perhaps audience members feel so enthralled in the actions because they are relating to the human characters. What is great about a show like *The Walking Dead* is that audience members get a chance to see the character's growth and actions for a longer period of time, as opposed to a movie where we only spend an hour and a half getting to know the characters.

It's In Their Eyes

While the physical portrayals of the zombies are prevalent in most movies, a closer examination of the zombie's facial appearance, especially their eyes, can also help explain their humanity. The old adage is that eyes are the window to the soul, and in some aspects, tells the

audience a lot more about the portrayal of the zombie than their actions, and certainly at a much deeper level.

The movies that were analyzed had varying degrees of zombie eyes, from red to yellow, to gleaming black. While most depictions of zombies are quick and fast-moving, there are a few examples of how more time is spent on zombies that are meant to portray a different aspect from the hordes of mindless zombies. For example, in *28 Days Later*, the emphasis on the eyes being bright red helps to accentuate the rage and aggression that is in those infected. In *Survival of the Dead*, emphasis on the eyes is spent on zombies that have meaningful connections to the zombies, such as the twin sister of the main character. Her eyes are portrayed as empty with grey pupils that are filmed over, whereas the other zombies in the movie rarely have enough time on screen to even see their eyes.

However, different colored eyes are not always used. Ever since *Night of the Living Dead*, zombies tended to have large, open eyes, and deep, dark circles under the eyes distinguished the zombies from their human counterparts. The eyes of most zombies are filmed over, portraying a hauntingly blank stare. This ghoulish look is often used, but doesn't provide much information regarding the zombies, and certainly not about their humanity.

The difference between the movies analyzed and the series *The Walking Dead* is that there is more emphasis in the zombie's facial expression. Perhaps the slow-moving pace of the show allows audience members to focus more on the zombies' face and eyes than on other distractions. During the close point of view shots, one might notice that the zombie's eyes do show the bright red around their pupils, for instance in the zombie that walks out of the bus and begins to follow Rick. However, the pupils are still colored as if they were human. Such is the case of the first zombie portrayal of the series when Rick runs into a little girl zombie. Her wide

eyes are a bright green color that makes the zombie girl look so innocent and human, despite her chillingly decrepit face. Large brown eyes are extremely prevalent in the point of view shot of Morgan's wife when the audience is peering through the door. Her clear eyes are seemingly normal; adding to the empathy and connection viewers may feel when contemplating zombies' humanity.

The show's ability to mix character empathy, thematic metaphors, and zombie action is the main game-changing "effect" added to *The Walking Dead* that makes it so popular among a variety of audiences. The opportunities of mixing all those elements in the show's scenes allow the audience very little distraction to truly examine the portrayals and plights of the characters, living, dead or undead.

Appendix

Night of the Living Dead- (1968)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 96 minutes
- 26 instances of zombies
- The movie largely takes place in an abandoned farmhouse where a woman Barbra escapes a zombie after her brother is attacked. She finds other human survivors, including Ben who saved her life, in the home who must find a way to work together to survive. While the zombies kill all of the survivors except Ben, who ironically dies at the hands of a human who believes him to be a zombie.

Dawn of the Dead- (1978)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 127 minutes
- 30 instances of zombies
- A group of survivors have barricaded themselves inside of a shopping mall when the dead begin to rise from the grave. The group of survivors seemingly finds refuge in the mall after killing the zombie inhabitants. Their material security is short-lived as the mall is broken into, and the survivors must find a way to escape.

Day of the Dead- (1985)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 102 minutes
- 28 instances of zombies
- This movie follows a group of scientists and military personnel who are living in an underground bunker in Florida. The scientists work to understand and even attempt to train the zombies, causing friction between them and the military personnel, who banish them to a section of the bunker that houses the Living Dead. The zombies eventually make their way into the bunker, and the survivors attempt to make it out of the bunker alive.

28 Days Later- (2002)

- Directed by Danny Boyle
- 113 minutes
- 20 instances of zombies
- This movie follows a man as he wakes up from the hospital a nearly a month after an outbreak occurs. As explained at the beginning of the film, the people infected with this outbreak are infected with aggression, so they exhibit behaviors similar to zombies in that they attack and eat humans. One prominent theme in this movie questions the humanity of the humans.

Land of the Dead- (2005)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 93 minutes
- 28 instances of zombies

- Follows the journey of a group of survivors who are living in a pseudo-city after the zombies have taken over. The city is protected by rivers and a large wall, and is run Paul Kauffman provides refuge only to the rich. This movie also depicts the lives of the zombies, and how they seem to mimic their previous lives including being able to use firearms.

Diary of the Dead- (2007)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 95 minutes
- 15 instances of zombies
- Diary of the Dead is shot entirely as a point-of-view movie, which follows the story of a group of film students. While shooting a horror movie in the woods, the students find out about an outbreak in the city. As they try to find answers to their questions, a student continues to film the events and their experiences. The images and experiences they encounter show just how grisly and unkind some humans can be.

Quarantine- (2008)

- Directed by John Erick Dowdle
- 89 minutes
- 15 instances of zombies
- A remake of the popular Spanish film *Rec*, this movie takes place entirely from the point of view of a video camera. The story takes place as a local camera crew team following a call with the fire department. They are called to an apartment complex where a woman an outbreak has occurred. Officials have quarantined the residents and the camera crew, as they fight to survive the outbreak.

The Walking Dead- (2009)

- Developed by Frank Darabont
- Six episodes about 45 minutes each
- Around 35 instances of zombies total
- Based on the popular comic book by Robert Kirkman, *The Walking Dead* follows the journey of Rick Grimes who wakes up in the hospital in the middle of a zombie outbreak. While attempting to find some sort of salvation and safety, Rick runs into a group of survivors that includes his wife and son. The show follows the group as they run into all kinds of situations.

Survival of the Dead- (2010)

- Directed by George A. Romero
- 90 minutes
- 18 instances of zombies
- A pseudo-sequel to *Diary of the Dead*, this movie takes place around the same time, but follows a group of survivors on Plum Island where two feuding Irish families reside. They encounter several people including a man who is trying to train the zombies, and a women, who's twin is now a zombie. The survivors end up leaving the island as it has seemingly become overwhelmed with zombies.

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