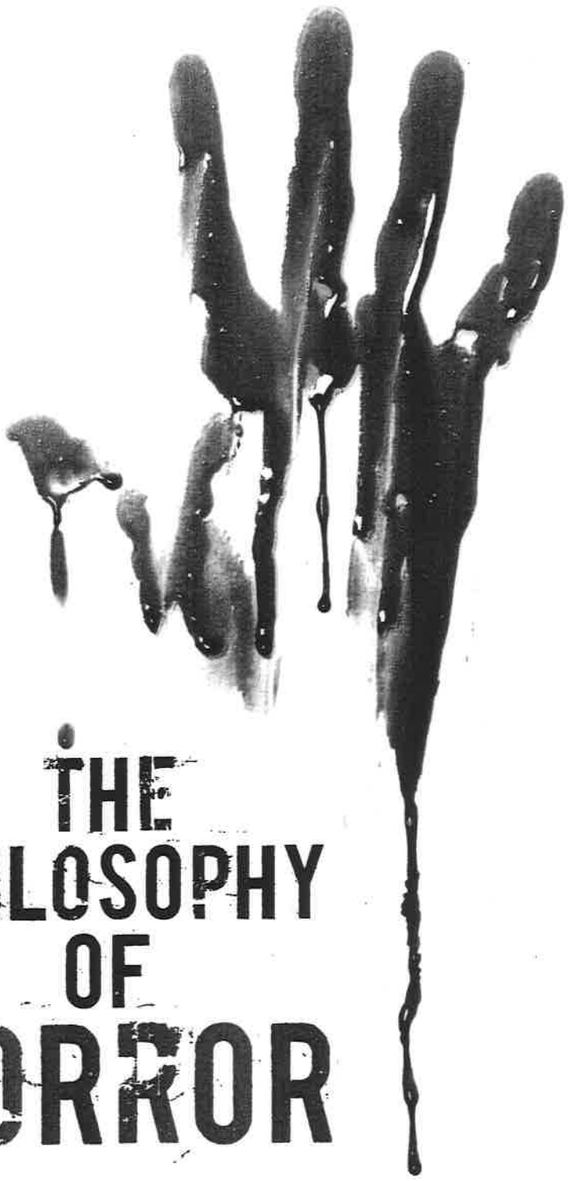


THE PHILOSOPHY OF HORROR

EDITED BY THOMAS FAHY

Exchange," in *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film*, ed. Gregory A. Waller (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 180.

24. Rodowick, "The Enemy Within," 327–28.

25. Marcia England, "Breached Bodies and Home Invasions: Horrific Representations of the Feminized Body and Home," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, no. 4 (2006): 359.

26. Ibid.

27. Rodowick, "The Enemy Within," 324.

28. In fact, the ideology of family has in many ways superseded the power of education (identified by Althusser as the premiere ISA) in its ability to fashion social responses.

29. Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 91.

30. Rodowick, "The Enemy Within," 329.

Zombies of the World, Unite

Class Struggle and Alienation in *Land of the Dead*

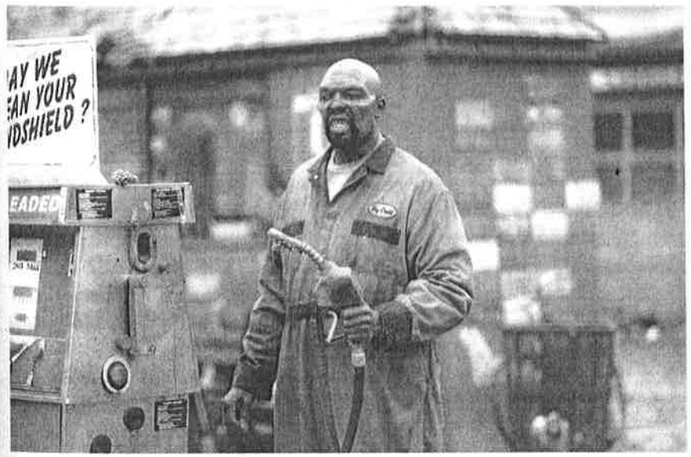
John Lutz

> MIKE: It's like they're pretending to be alive.
> RILEY: Isn't that what we're doing, pretending to be alive?
> —*Land of the Dead*

In a 2005 review of George A. Romero's *Land of the Dead*, Roger Ebert notes the class structure of the society of surviving humans residing in Pittsburgh, pointing out the contrast between the luxurious (and apparently completely idle) lifestyle of the residents of Fiddler's Green, a luxury skyscraper at the center of the city, and the dehumanized condition of the poorer inhabitants surrounding it. Ebert goes on to note how the functioning of money is never explained in this economy, "where possessions are acquired by looting and retained by force."[1] This provocative description is not pursued any further in the review, but it provides a point of departure for examining the film's satiric treatment of American capitalism and, by extension, a global economic order predicated upon class exploitation. Indeed, the economic system depicted in *Land of the Dead* has a remarkable parallel with Marx's representation of capitalist society. According to Marx, capitalism is defined by an unremitting conflict between classes with antagonistic and irreconcilable interests. In the Marxian view, class struggle represents a central feature of human history. This is a struggle in which, from one economic system to its successor, oppressor and oppressed have "stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."[2] One of the fundamental characteristics of Marx's description pertains to the some-

times "hidden" nature of class conflict. This insight suggests that members of classes with antagonistic interests may not always recognize themselves as representatives of a particular class, nor recognize the precise nature of their true interests. In the United States, a country where discussions of class rarely find their way directly into public discourse, representations of class conflict sometimes appear in unlikely places. Romero's film is one such place: an ostensible representation of what is known as a survival narrative, that is to say, "a story in which a group of characters undergoes a crisis that tests their individual and collective capacity to survive,"[3] that actually represents a complex, sustained allegorical treatment of class conflict in America and exploitation on a global scale. At the same time, the film represents an interesting variation on the genre of survival horror and, in particular, the zombie film, which, like its prototype *The Birds,* usually involves a relatively small group trapped in a house or mall. In *Land of the Dead,* this principle is applied on a grand scale. The besieged house is transformed into an entire city allegorically representing America and its relationship to the underdeveloped, exploited nations on the periphery of empire.

Furthermore, like Romero's earlier films in this genre, *Land of the Dead* seems preoccupied with making comparisons between the cannibalistic zombies and uninfected humans. The opening scene depicts members of a zombie brass band playing their instruments pathetically. A teenaged couple, the unlaced sneakers of the male very much like the style currently fashionable, parades past. And, when the gas station bell rings, the African American attendant, Big Daddy, who will later lead the zombie "revolution" against the businessman Kaufman, emerges to answer the bell and picks up the gas handle in imitation of his former life. The choice of an African American for this role contributes to the film's allegorical exploration of class and privilege on two levels. Even as it evokes the zombie figure's origin in the history of African slavery in the Caribbean, it comments upon the relationship between race and class in the United States by pointing to the disproportionate number of African Americans in impoverished conditions and the role of violence in enforcing these conditions. Indeed, in a discussion of George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* cycle, Noël Carroll points out that these films are "explicitly anti-racist as well as critical of the consumerism and viciousness of American society."[4] Similarly, in a discussion of the original *Night of the Living Dead,* Tony Williams suggests that the film represents "a devastating critique upon the deformations of human personality operating within a ruthless capitalist society."[5] *Land of the Dead* carries on this tradition, emphasizing how racism and brutally competitive consumerism function on a global level by reinforcing the underdevelop-



Eugene Clark (as Big Daddy) in *Land of the Dead* (2005). Directed by George A. Romero. (Universal Studios/Photofest)

ment and exploitation of nations primarily populated by nonwhites. Big Daddy's response to the assault on his town is particularly suggestive here, since he clearly expresses rage over the killing of his fellow zombies. When provided with an opportunity, he grabs a gun from a soldier passing on a motorcycle and begins to teach himself how to use it. In arming himself, Big Daddy figuratively sets foot on the path of violent resistance and revolution. In this connection, it is worthwhile noting that "the original narrative of Caribbean cannibalism in Columbus's journals rested upon a distinction between those who would work docilely for European colonizers, and those 'cannibals' who staged resistance and could thus be enslaved or killed."[6] Like Columbus's cannibals, these zombies will not stand peacefully by and allow their town to be emptied of its resources. As the soldiers leave the town, Big Daddy puts the gun over his shoulder in military fashion, begins walking in the direction of the departing soldiers, and successfully exhorts his fellow zombies to follow him.

Although Roger Ebert's review mentioned earlier may seem to foreground class, in the final analysis it proves to be quite typical of American public discourse to the degree that it fails to pursue the full allegorical implications of the film. Early in the review, Ebert points out that the healthy humans surviving in Pittsburgh "have evolved a class system."[7] This is an

interesting, if not symptomatic, phrase that directs attention away from the film's allegorical treatment of class and race by suggesting that before the zombie outbreak there were no classes. Ebert's use of the word *evolved* implies that the residents of Pittsburgh have constructed a class system in order to survive rather than merely reproduced the one that existed before. A full exploration of the film's allegorical (and sometimes bitingly satiric) depiction of American capitalism requires shifting from an exclusive focus upon the inhabitants of Pittsburgh and extending the analysis of class struggle to encompass the zombies as well. In many respects, the zombies prove to have more in common with the poorer inhabitants of the Pittsburgh fortress than these poorer inhabitants have with the wealthy residents of Fiddler's Green. Ruled over by the dictatorial businessman Paul Kaufman, who enforces the city's system of privilege with direct violence and allocates the resources pillaged from the surrounding countryside, Pittsburgh represents only an apparent oasis of partial stability in a world characterized by utter chaos and insecurity. Although initially Kaufman seems to exert absolute control over the city and the surrounding land of the dead, he can be viewed as a symbol of modern capitalist society with its exploitative class relations and inequitable distribution of property. Marx describes the modern capitalist with a provocative Gothic metaphor as one who has "conjured up . . . gigantic means of production and exchange" but "is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells."[8] The zombies surrounding the fortress of Pittsburgh are apt symbols of these "powers of the nether world" constantly threatening capitalist society with destruction. They signify not only the countless individuals impoverished by the system and the disruptive potential of their unrest, but also the commercial crises that periodically threaten the prosperity of the privileged classes.

In this respect, the film can also be seen as an explicit commentary upon America's place at the center of global economic imperialism. Bordered by two rivers and an electric barricade, the city of Pittsburgh in *Land of the Dead* serves as a figure for America's place (bordered by two oceans and a barricade between it and Mexico) in the global economic order. The militarism apparent in the city emphasizes the degree to which America's global hegemony is maintained by imperialistic violence while pointing out how the sharpening contradictions between capital and labor have created social instability and political chaos. Similarly divided between a class of wealthy survivors living in luxury in the city's center and the poor living on its outlying edges, Pittsburgh exists in a permanently antagonistic relationship with the surrounding territory, populated by the undead. This relationship

signifies America's exploitative relationship to the underdeveloped nations of the world. Using its heavy firepower and accompanying assault team to gather commodities from the territory of the undead, the armored vehicle named *Dead Reckoning* represents the military enforcement of U.S. economic imperialism as it relies upon violent coercion to appropriate raw materials and perpetuates the exploitation of cheap labor.

Furthermore, the subhuman condition of the zombie masses, permanently afflicted with an insatiable hunger coupled with rudimentary intellectual skills, serves as a powerful allegory for the condition of alienation described by Marx. The title of the film, *Land of the Dead*, metaphorically represents the living death experienced by the brutalized and exploited worker. The worker's domination by the system of production has a dehumanizing effect upon his or her psyche, creating psychological forms of degradation and impoverishment to accompany the physical ones. As Marx describes this process of domination:

> They [conditions of labor] distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labor by turning it into a torment; they alienate [*entfremden*] from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labor process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the juggernaut of capital.[9]

More than the poor inhabitants of Pittsburgh, the zombies populating the surrounding land of the dead reflect this psychological condition. The horrifying facial expressions, distorted posture, and subhuman grunting of the zombies clearly suggest a condition of unrelenting torment and misery. Their frequent appearance in clothing suggesting working-class roles (more on this later) and their wielding of various tools and vestiges of material culture all point to their dehumanized, alienated condition.

Indeed, the metaphorical significance of the zombie as a representation of a victim of exploitation can be traced back to its origins in Caribbean folklore. In a book examining the consumption of the Caribbean from the initial stages of European conquest to the present, Mimi Sheller emphasizes its defining condition of enslavement and points out that the Haitian *zombi*, "a living-dead slave deprived of will and physically controlled by a

sorcerer," functions as "the ultimate representation of the psychic state of one whose body/spirit is consumed."[10] Making a similar point, Joan Dayan views the zombie as a way of representing the twentieth-century history of forced labor and denigration during America's occupation of Haiti, in which "the phantasm of the zombie—a soulless husk deprived of freedom—is the ultimate sign of loss and dispossession."[11] Although there is no apparent sorcerer controlling the zombies in *Land of the Dead,* unless it be the capitalist sorcerer described by Marx, they are clearly driven by forces beyond their own rational control and exist in a state of constant hunger. This condition reflects the physical impoverishment of the exploited worker. In this respect, the title of the film represents an ironic commentary upon the alienated condition of the mass of humanity under global capitalism.

In an interesting exchange that underscores this commentary, Riley, the leader of the strike team assembled to raid supplies from the region surrounding Pittsburgh and the ostensible hero of the film, comments upon the similarity of the zombies to humans:

> MIKE: They're trying to be us.
> RILEY: No, they used to be us. Learning to be us again.
> MIKE: No way. Some germ or some devil got those things up and walking . . . but there's a big difference between us and them. They're dead.
> MIKE: It's like they're pretending to be alive.
> RILEY: Isn't that what we're doing, pretending to be alive?

Riley alone seems to recognize the humanity of the zombies and later comments that they are learning to be useful. This theme will come up frequently in assessing the value of various characters. The usefulness of the zombies serves as an implicit condemnation of the comparatively "useless" wealthy residents of Fiddler's Green who spend all of their time in complete leisure. At the same time, Riley's recognition of the humanity of the zombies initially only goes so far, since he is leading a raid against the town in which they reside. In several respects this raid resembles the military enforcement of U.S. imperialism. As Riley and Mike observe the gas station, Riley notices that Big Daddy seems to be communicating with the other zombies and even thinking on a rudimentary level. Riley's perception of the zombies is quite similar to standard imperialist perceptions of colonized peoples during the height of European imperialism. The grunts and groans that have a meaning opaque to Riley and Mike present the standard stereotypical view of the savage cannibal, and indeed, as Mimi Sheller points out, there is a close association between zombies, cannibalism, and the exploitation of labor in which "the dialectics of eating and being eaten pertain as much to the hollowing out of human agency by degraded forms of labor (the zombie) as to the actual appropriation, objectification, fragmentation, and ingestion of the physical body itself (to be cannibalized)."[12]

Furthermore, the fireworks display that is used to mesmerize the zombies signifies the superior technological and military might of the United States, a "shock and awe" display of force that is intended to make the zombies submissive so that the strike team can gather the resources they need without interference. The raid itself, reminiscent of any number of Western imperialist military adventures in which civilians have been indiscriminately killed alongside soldiers, quickly degenerates into the random gunning down of zombies in the street. The whooping and yelling of the members of the assault team as they leave the town evokes lawless pillage and presents the zombies as victims of random violence. This leads one of the soldiers on Riley's team to comment, "I thought this was going to be a battle. It's a fucking massacre," an observation no doubt made by more than one soldier enforcing the imperatives of U.S. economic and political hegemony abroad.

Riley's attitude to all of this is clearly ambivalent, and we learn during the raid that this is his last night performing this kind of work. At one point Riley mentions that he doesn't want anything to go wrong and expresses his commitment to getting the job done. Riley's comment represents an interesting representation of the work ethic. Not unlike the character of Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* whose perception of Africans has some remarkable parallels with the film's representation of the cannibalistic zombies, Riley places a value on work for its own sake, independent of the kind of work in which he is engaged. Evocations of imperialism are also evident in the way the zombies react to the raid. As the zombies are mesmerized by the fireworks display, that is to say, the superior technological might of Western capitalism, the African American zombie Big Daddy alone seems immune to it and attempts to rouse his companions.

In addition to its allegorical exploration of global capitalism, the film explores class relations in America by focusing upon the contrasting living conditions of Pittsburgh's wealthy and poor residents. One focus of this exploration is the relationship between Kaufman and his henchman Cholo. Cholo has been procuring luxury items for Kaufman in the raids upon the countryside and disposing of the bodies of those whom Kaufman has had killed to preserve his power and position. In one of the more interesting segments of the film, a conversation between Riley and Cholo takes place underneath a television screen playing an advertisement for Fiddler's Green.

In his review of the film, Roger Ebert takes note of the commercial and expresses perplexity about its possible purpose in this world;[13] however, even though there are no consumers left who can aspire to live in Fiddler's Green, the entire segment represents a complex commentary upon the manner in which advertising works as a purveyor of what Marx referred to as ideology. Marx defined ideology as the "false consciousness" adopted by workers and capitalists alike that participates in the reproduction of the system by persuading the workers in particular that its institutions are arranged to support their interests. In his theoretical work, Marx frequently concerned himself with the role of ideology in capitalist society since he realized that it played a powerful part in preventing workers from developing a direct awareness of their exploitation. However, one of the most provocative descriptions of ideology in the Marxist tradition was arrived at by Louis Althusser, who defined ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."[14] This definition represents an ideal characterization of Cholo's initial perception of his place in the order of things. As the commercial announces, "Life goes on in Fiddler's Green in the heart of one of America's oldest and greatest cities," it advertises its six fine restaurants and endless shopping opportunities. When it goes on to point out that there is a difference between Fiddler's Green and other places, Cholo announces to Riley his intention to have his own home in Fiddler's Green. He then goes on to characterize the world as a place of ruthless competition where only those who act selfishly in their own interests can get ahead. Essentially, Cholo has fully internalized the competitive ethic of capitalism, subordinating all moral considerations to personal enrichment and drowning everything, like the capitalist whom he serves, "in the icy waters of egotistical calculation."[15]

Cholo's attitudes explain the continuing function of advertising even in this postapocalyptic world. Cholo announces his intention to gain entry to the Green as he is watching the advertisement. This detail participates in the film's critique of how advertising functions not only to literally sell products but also to inculcate the lower classes with an ethic of consumption and persuade them that they have the opportunity to join the ranks of the privileged. In his aspirations for a life of wealth and privilege, Cholo can be viewed as a direct representation of a worker whose investment in an "imaginary" relationship to the real conditions of his existence deludes him into believing that he can achieve the American dream. Later, when Kaufman rejects his bid to live in the Green and Cholo steals *Dead Reckoning,* he continues to hold onto this delusion, believing that the power that the assault vehicle gives him will enable him to extort 5 million dollars from Kaufman and still achieve his goal of reaching a privileged lifestyle.

In the course of a conversation in which Cholo has come to understand the world as a place where all advantages are gained by the ruthless application of violent force, he glances at the monitor of the assault vehicle to see a Latino zombie pushing a manual lawnmower in meaningless circles. Before shooting the zombie, Cholo, Latino himself, points out that the power that *Dead Reckoning* gives him represents the only thing that sets him apart from the "Mexican bastard" with the lawnmower. In addition to directing social criticism at the racist tendency to label all Latino workers as "Mexicans," the segment directly comments upon the widespread exploitation of undocumented workers in the United States as landscapers. Simultaneously, it provides a powerful image of how the extensive use of machinery reduces the worker to an "appendage of the machine" from whom "only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack" is required.[16] Although Cholo has developed a better understanding of his real place in the world, his individualistic focus compels him to see all human relations in terms of ruthless competition. The conversation between Riley and Cholo about Cholo's aspirations provides additional insight into the function of ideology. Riley recognizes the absurdity of Cholo's goals, assuring him that his desire to get a place in Fiddler's Green, that is, become a member of the capitalist class, will never come to pass because both of them are the "wrong kind." Cholo refuses to accept Riley's point of view and, as their conversation ends, the camera returns to the television screen and the voice-over saying, "Isn't it time? Isn't it your time for Fiddler's Green?" Taken as a whole, this segment of the film represents a caustic satire upon the vast discrepancy between the ideals of the American dream and the underlying brutal reality of American society.

Even though the world is in complete disorder and the Green is closed to any new members, the commercial still serves a crucial function as a source of ideology. It is intended to keep the poor surviving residents of Pittsburgh buying into the system in order to preserve the privileges of the ruling class. The final voice-over of the commercial comments upon the delusional nature of Cholo's aspirations, and allegorically exposes the imaginary nature of the American dream. It demonstrates how ideology functions as a means of getting people to reproduce the system without the state having to use direct repressive violence. After this exchange, it really comes as no surprise when Kaufman tells Cholo that there isn't enough space for him in the Green. At the same time, not only does the commercial serve as a vehicle for reinforcing the aspirations of the lower class, but it also comments allegorically upon the American obsession with commodity consumption. In addition to being a place of residence, Fiddler's Green is essentially a luxury

shopping and dining center. In one of the few glimpses we have of the inside of the tower, the wealthy white residents, none of whom are shown working, spend all of their time shopping and dining. As Cholo walks through the Green to deliver the whiskey he has procured for Kaufman, the viewer is given a glimpse of an insulated world of privilege with virtually unlimited opportunities for consumption. This world of privilege stands in stark contrast to the conditions of scarcity and competition that exist in the rest of the city and the surrounding land of the dead.

However, the poor residents of the city and the zombies, despite their condition of deprivation, share with the wealthy residents of the tower an obsession with consumption. As in the second installment of Romero's earlier trilogy, *Dawn of the Dead*, "humans and zombies become equal partners in a goal of conspicuous consumption dominating personal behavior."[17] The opening shot of the film emphasizes this point by lingering upon an old sign with the word "Eats" with an arrow pointing in the direction of zombies wandering in an abandoned churchyard. This segment provides a satiric commentary upon America's origins in a Puritan ethic and its abandonment of Puritan religious ideals for the ideals of unlimited consumption. The sign itself is ambiguous and raises interesting questions about the nature and limits of human consumption. While the main activity of the zombies is the consumption of human flesh, an activity that serves as a figure for capitalist competition and the social and economic construction of scarcity through the exploitation of labor and the unequal distribution of wealth, Riley's team is also coming to the town to gather resources. If the zombies serve as a figure for the exploited workers of the underdeveloped world, then there is a clear sense in which they are being eaten as well. Marx's understanding of how commodities are produced makes this process more explicit. According to Marx, commodities are a form of "dead labor," that is to say, they represent living flesh transformed into a fetishized commodity available for consumption. Understood in this sense, those who consume commodities are consumers of bodies. Consequently, Riley's raid on the town for commodities allegorically represents the Northern Hemisphere's consumption of the "dead" labor of the underdeveloped South.

The link between consumption and human exploitation is made explicit in the segment of the film in which Riley and Charlie visit what is clearly the commercial hub of the city. This area serves as a marketplace, casino, strip club, and entertainment center. Interestingly, this mini Las Vegas is the only place where the wealthy are seen mingling with the poor. The one activity that apparently unites the residents of Pittsburgh is consumption. In this section of the city, zombies and humans alike are objects for exploitation.

Zombies are used as targets for paintball guns and as props for the wealthy to pose with for pictures. However, the most overt example of exploitation is depicted when the young heroine Slack, a former soldier and prostitute who has challenged Kaufman's authority, is placed in a cage with two zombies in order to induce them to fight. The cage occupies the center of a strip club, and the spectators are placing bets on which zombie will get the food (Slack) first. In this context, the zombie fight serves as a clear example of the way in which the film uses cannibalism to characterize Western consumer culture as "a culture of excessive consumption and insatiable hunger, feeding off human bodies for profit."[18] At the same time, this segment represents a commentary upon the sexual exploitation of women as objects of consumption. The literal threat of dismemberment that faces Slack is emblematic of the process of objectification of women's bodies and the fragmentation (in this case, literal morselization) of women for economic gain. Although Slack finds herself in the cage as a result of her resistance to Kaufman, her exploitation there is merely the extension of the sexual exploitation she experiences as a prostitute. With the exception of the forms of entertainment involving zombies, the remaining ones differ in no way from what can be found in any of the gambling centers of America or elsewhere. Later in the film, when Kaufman, like any good capitalist, takes credit for the privileges of the Green as the product of his ingenuity, he points out that it was his idea to set up the gambling and other vices to keep the poorer residents off the streets. The representation of Pittsburgh's mini Las Vegas, in tandem with Kaufman's explanation of its true purpose, offers a critique of the American entertainment industry and its role as a purveyor of an ethic of consumption designed to distract the poor and exploited from their oppression and keep them from unrest and revolt. When these measures fail, Kaufman relies upon both overt and covert acts of direct violence to suppress any resistance to his regime.

Indeed, when Riley and Charlie put an end to the zombie fight and save Slack from certain death, they all find themselves in prison as a result. While in prison, they see Mulligan, a resident of Pittsburgh who has been calling for the overthrow of Kaufman, being led past. Lurking behind the apparent tranquility of the life of privilege in the Green and the fevered pursuit of consumption in Pittsburgh's commercial hub and entertainment industry, one encounters the specter of a patriarchal and totalitarian political regime driven by the vicissitudes of profit. This regime is appropriately surrounded by a wasteland that, following the logic of competition, is presided over by the last capitalist left standing. Evoking the conflict between Harry and Ben in the isolated farmhouse in *Night of the Living Dead, Land of the*

Dead exhibits a similar awareness "that the competitive arena of patriarchal aggression is no solution for the besieged humans."[19] Through its representation of the antagonism and conflict between the survivors in Pittsburgh, the film explores not only the institutionalized forms of violence endemic to American society, but also the violent coercion that lies in wait for those who pose an actual threat to the system.

Furthermore, the existence of a repressive military apparatus in postapocalyptic Pittsburgh serves as a means of allegorically exploring the forms of militarism that emerged in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. When Riley and Charlie are about to enter Pittsburgh's entertainment center, they are stopped by two guards in front of a barricade. In a remarkable image, one of the soldiers stands in front of a mural of the Statue of Liberty. The arm of Liberty's torch is outstretched and the soldier stands directly beneath and next to it. The soldier appears seamlessly nestled beside her in an image intended to demonstrate the discrepancy between the ideology of American democracy, with its promise of freedom, and the violent coercion that the system relies upon to perpetuate the exploitation of one class by another. Directly invoking the environment of New York City after 9/11, the deeper aim of the image is to point out the sham character of American democracy, a system reinforced by imperialist violence abroad and more subtle repressive measures on the domestic front, where wealth and property are protected by the threat of violence should ideology fail. These repressive measures extend beyond the borders of the United States but are justified by pointing to real or imagined threats to those borders. Unlike the soldiers who stop Riley and Charlie, who are present to exert control over Pittsburgh's poor population, the soldiers who guard the only overland access to the city play a different role. They patrol the border in order to protect the survivors of the city from the zombies. However, viewed allegorically, the fences barricading the third side of Pittsburgh signify the border between the United States and Mexico and, by extension, the underdeveloped, exploited countries of the Southern Hemisphere. The soldiers who guard the overland access to the city refer to it as the "throat." This description provides yet another image of consumption that metaphorically registers America's consumption of a disproportionate quantity of the world's resources and its exploitative relationship to the underdeveloped world. At the same time, the rigorously patrolled border allegorically represents the attempt to limit the flow of undocumented workers across the U.S./Mexican border. The threat of invasion by the zombies provides a means of representing American xenophobic anxiety about immigration. As it turns out, the zombies will not invade the city by the overland route; they will cross the water by walking on the bottom of the riverbed and emerge (literally with wet backs) on the other side.

In addition to metaphorically representing the class character of American society and the global contradictions between capital and labor, *Land of the Dead* ultimately finds a way to figuratively present socialist revolution. Early in the film Riley encounters Mulligan in the poor section of the city exhorting his fellow citizens to overthrow Kaufman, who didn't "build" Fiddler's Green but merely took it over. He goes on to point out that if they all joined together they could transform the city into a fit place for all of them to live. When he speaks to Mulligan, Riley observes that although they may be locked out of the Green, they're also locked in the city. He goes on to say that he is "looking for a world where there are no fences." If the fences signify the differences between the American ruling class, the American working class, and the classes of the underdeveloped world, Riley's statement amounts to the search for a world without classes and, by implication, a world without exploitation.

At the same time that Mulligan is involved in generating a revolt among the citizens of Pittsburgh, the zombies are pursuing a parallel revolt of their own. The assault on the city led by Big Daddy is accompanied by a process whereby the zombies begin to regain social skills from their former lives. This development of intellectual capacities signifies the growth of class consciousness among the alienated "undead." In an interesting parallel to Marx's description of class consciousness as a product of revolutionary struggle, the zombies begin to regain their humanity only when they revolt against the wealthy denizens of Pittsburgh who have been appropriating and consuming the commodities taken from their territory. The long march from their town ends with Big Daddy learning how to cross the bottom of the river. This act is preceded by an image of the crowd of zombies lined up on the river's edge, looking longingly across at the lit-up tower of Fiddler's Green at the center of the city. Figuratively, this is a powerful image of deprivation and the longing for a decent life, an image of the masses of deprived humanity looking at America with desire but also with rage at those who have exploited them. The emergence of the zombies from the river after crossing is perhaps the most frightening scene in the film and was used in the advertising trailer. The camera pans over the seemingly endless crowd of zombies as they rise from the water to begin their assault on the city. This metaphorical rebirth signifies the awakening of the masses as they develop a revolutionary consciousness. As they draw closer to the tower, the zombies begin to learn how to use tools. They begin to recover their lost humanity in the process of revolt. At one point Big Daddy even teaches a female

baseball player how to use a gun, taking away the bat she is carrying and demonstrating to her how to fire the weapon.

While all of this is going on, Riley and his team have regained control over *Dead Reckoning,* and Cholo, bitten by a zombie, decides not to kill himself, claiming that he always wanted to "see how the other half lives." This satiric comment adds emphasis to the film's treatment of class, as does Cholo's confrontation with Kaufman once he has transformed into a zombie. Kaufman refers to him as a "fucking spic bastard," echoing Cholo's earlier reference to the Mexican zombie as a bastard and reinforcing the ethnic and racial dimension of the privilege enjoyed by the white residents of Fiddler's Green. As Cholo and Kaufman struggle and the zombies eat the wealthy residents of the Green, Big Daddy returns to the scene. After having earlier pumped gasoline into Kaufman's Cadillac, Big Daddy rolls a burning can down the slope of the garage and kills both Kaufman and Cholo in a massive explosion.

The killing of Kaufman and the destruction of the Green effectively abolish the economic system as well as the classes it supports. In an echo of Marx's description of the revolutionary association of the proletariat in the *Manifesto,* those who have the least to lose and the most to gain by abolishing the system, the zombies, prove to be, in a wonderfully ironic twist, the "grave-diggers" of the ruling class.[20] The allegorical revolution undertaken by the zombies is given further emphasis when it turns out that many of the poor residents of the city have survived and are led by Mulligan. Mulligan has armed himself and his companions and encourages Riley to stay and "turn this place into what we always wanted it to be." Mulligan and his companions are an allegorical representation of socialist revolution, inspired with the goal of transforming America into a place more consistent with its democratic ideals. The destruction of the wealthy center of the city along with its privileged citizens, in tandem with the survival of the city's poor inhabitants, suggests a common set of economic interests between the zombies and the impoverished inhabitants of Pittsburgh. As in Romero's earlier zombie trilogy, "the real threat to survival [proves to be] the class-based verbal savagery different characters exhibit towards each other rather than the zombies outside."[21] The common ground discovered with the zombies points toward a resolution of the global contradictions between capital and labor as well as the universal economic exploitation endemic to capitalism. The destruction of the city effectively abolishes the class system dominating the city and, in a displaced form, offers a representation of socialist revolution. Still resolved in his intention to go north to Canada, Riley is concerned about what Mulligan and his comrades might turn into in the process of rebuilding the city, a possible reference to the failures of historical communism that Mulligan optimistically responds to with a noncommittal "We'll see, won't we?"

As Riley leaves for Canada, he spares the life of Big Daddy and the retreating zombies, claiming, "They're just looking for a place to go. Just like us." With the zombies as the primary agents of change, all of the fences have been destroyed. On an allegorical level, it turns out that the most wretched of the earth, that is to say, the exploited and impoverished masses of the underdeveloped world, serve as the primary agents of this transformation. The poor and working class of the developed world follow their lead. With the departure of the zombies, class distinctions and privilege have been abolished, but it remains to be seen what kind of world will replace the capitalist one. At the same time, Riley's perception of some common interests with the zombies humanizes them and metaphorically suggests a common set of needs and desires between America and the rest of humanity in the underdeveloped world that transcends the barriers of race, class, and ethnicity. Indeed, if we understand the figure of the cannibal as Elsbeth Probyn does in her work *Carnal Appetites* as "a historicized spectre of Western appetite" offering a critique of excessive consumption that points to an "an ethics and practice of restraint,"[22] and the cannibal/zombie as a metaphor for a society in which consumption has exceeded all moral limits, then the film can be viewed as a powerful condemnation of capitalist society and its economic imperatives that require human beings to consume one another in order to survive. The final moments of the film even hint at an ethical alternative to capitalism. As *Dead Reckoning* heads north, it fires off the rest of its fireworks in an evocation of freedom that deliberately echoes Fourth of July celebrations. However, in a significant departure from other installments in this genre, the zombies turn out to be among the survivors, and the enemy is not a monster but the monstrous exploitative institutions of global capitalism. After all, in this postapocalyptic land of the dead characterized by insecurity, scarcity, and profound deprivation, the zombies have nothing to lose but their chains.

Notes

My epigraph is taken from *Land of the Dead,* dir. George A. Romero (Universal Pictures, 2005).

1. Roger Ebert, "*Land of the Dead*: This '*Land*' is Gore Land," June 24, 2005, http://rogeregbert.suntimes.com.

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 1998), 35.
3. Kirsten Moana Thompson, *Apocalyptic Dread: American Film at the Turn of the Millennium* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 127–28.
4. Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror; or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 198.
5. Tony Williams, *The Cinema of George A. Romero: Knight of the Living Dead* (London: Wallflower, 2003), 21.
6. Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 148.
7. Ebert, "*Land of the Dead*."
8. Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 41.
9. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), 799.
10. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 145.
11. Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 37–38.
12. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 145.
13. Ebert, "*Land of the Dead*."
14. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), 162.
15. Marx, and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, 37.
16. Ibid., 43.
17. Williams, *Cinema of Romero*, 93.
18. Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 148.
19. Williams, *Cinema of Romero*, 28.
20. Marx, *Manifesto*, 50.
21. Williams, *Cinema of Romero*, 131.
22. Elsbeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 99.

The Fall of the House of Ulmer

Europe vs. America in the Gothic Vision of *The Black Cat*

Paul A. Cantor

> The American public apparently does not want us to give screenplays a natural ending, because movie fans really do not want motion pictures like the books from which they are adapted. . . . In Europe a realistic production is considered splendid entertainment by the masses, even though it is a stark tragedy. In America, however, every picture must end with the hero and heroine dying in each other's arms. They must live happily ever after, but life isn't like that.
> —Carl Laemmle Sr.

Importing Horror

The horror story is one of the many exotic goods that Americans have traditionally imported from Europe. This was already true in American Gothic fiction in the early nineteenth century, but the situation persisted even in the twentieth century and the new medium of cinema.[1] To be sure, the horror movie seems at first to be a quintessentially American phenomenon—a rite of passage for American teenagers and a genre in which America has come to dominate the world. It is due to American movies that the faces of Dracula and the Frankenstein monster are known all around the globe. Yet both these creatures were originally the creations of European authors (Bram Stoker for Dracula and Mary Shelley for the Frankenstein monster). Even as motion picture figures, they can be traced back to European precursors in German expressionist cinema—*Nosferatu* (1922) for *Dracula* (1931), and *The Golem* (1920) and *Metropolis* (1927) for *Frankenstein* (1931).