

With a Shamble and a Moan: The Zombie Eschatology in American Popular Culture

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They're coming to get you, Barbara!—Johnny, *The Night of the Living Dead*¹

The dead walk among us. Zombies, ghouls—no matter what their label—these somnambulists are the greatest threat to humanity, other than humanity itself.—*The Zombie Survival Guide*²

I stare and wonder how we've survived as long as we have against such inevitable destruction.—Annah, *Dark and Hollow Places*³

If eschatology is a theory of the end of the world, the apocalypse is a doomsday scenario, and zombies are the resurrected dead, then what happens when these are combined? The result is zombie eschatology, which emerges from a genre of horror, science and speculative fiction, and fantasy, labeled the zombie apocalypse, in which zombies bring about the end of the world. In this genre, corpses reanimate, hunger for human flesh, and cause the downfall of individuals, families, and communities, local, national, and global. The living dead destroy the living and tear down the tenuous social contract between human beings. This current American millennial fascination groans and shambles while serving as a reckoning with our increasingly connected global world, its danger and its elusive possibility of security. For this special issue of *Arc* on eschatology, I chart the presence, proliferation and popularity of the eschatology of the living dead. I explore

1. *The Night of the Living Dead*, DVD, directed by George Romero, 1968 (Good Times Video, 2001).

2. Max Brooks, *The Zombie Survival Guide* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003), Introduction, Kindle edition. Emphasis mine.

3. Carrie Ryan, *The Dark and Hollow Places*, (New York: Delacorte, 2011), 106. Kindle edition.

why this cultural monster, the zombie, functions so effectively as an apocalyptic agent. Zombies are wed to end, and I wonder why this monster is the best equipped to bring about the downfall of humanity. The living dead are another example of Michael Barkun's "pervasive millennialism," which is the floating millennialism "woven into the fabric of daily life."⁴ This gruesome eschatology points to an American obsession with doomsday and collective fantasies of the end. The world will end not with a bang but a moan.

"They're coming to get you!"

In 1968, George Romero unleashed the zombie apocalypse in *Night of the Living Dead*. He continued this imagining in his sequels, including *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985), and *Land of the Dead* (2005). His independent film introduced the threat of the "things," reanimated human corpses, caused by radiation from space, and the ordinary people confronting this extraordinary crisis in gritty black and white cinematography. The film begins with a car winding down isolated roads in Pennsylvania to a cemetery. Johnny and Barbara, siblings, visit the grave of their father. What appears to be a routine, mundane, and even-loathed task is the beginning of the end. While Barbara kneels at the grave, Johnny teases her about her childhood fear of ghosts and ghouls. He prophesies, "They're coming to get you, Barbara!" As they leave, a pale disheveled man grabs Barbara. Their shuffling attacker tussles with Johnny and chases a frantic Barbara, who flees. The shell-shocked heroine finds an old farmhouse seemingly abandoned. Ben, a young African-American man, joins her and secures the house. Ben discovers the Cooper family, including Harry, Helen and daughter Karen, as well as Tom and Judy, a younger couple, hiding in the cellar. This classic film showcases the standard of zombie eschatology: the dead rise, they crave human flesh, humans become prey, some humans survive, and many humans don't.

Moreover, Romero documents the despair, shock, hopelessness, and violence of the new apocalyptic world. The things are not as important as the human interaction, characterized by mistrust, antagonism, and violence.

4. Michael Barkun, "Millennium Culture: The Year 2000 as Religious Event," in *Millennial Visions: Essays on Twentieth Century Millenarianism*, ed. Martha Lee, (Praeger, 2000), 43.

None of the protagonists make it out alive. Johnny, now a thing, comes back for Barbara. Judy and Tom die in a gas explosion, and their destroyed bodies become a buffet for the things. Karen kills her mother with a spade and dines on her father shot and killed by Ben, who lives through the night, only to be shot by a white posse of hunters come morning. The credits roll interspersed with images of Ben's corpse and the white men who murdered him, echoing the lynching photos of the early twentieth century.⁵

Romero's depiction of human social interaction, race/racism, and the fight for survival provides a bleak portrait of humanity. The things outside might be relentless and hungry, but other human beings are the true peril. For cinema scholar Kyle Bishop, Romero "took a rather insipid, two-dimensional creature, married it to an established apocalyptic storyline, and invented an entirely new genre."⁶ The horror of zombies is facing those you loved, despised, and recognized as unfamiliar monsters who seek to consume you. Bishop writes, "Those who should be dead and safely laid to rest have bucked the natural order of things and have returned from the grave."⁷ Zombies are scary because they are no longer who they were, yet Romero's continued lesson is about the nature of human social relationships. He wants the viewer to ponder who the real threat is: zombies or humans.

"Without people we might as well be zombies."⁸

Zombieland (2009) follows the seemingly sole survivors of the zombie apocalypse, Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson), Wichita (Emma Stone), and Little Rock (Abigail Breslin), as they travel in what is left of the United States. In his opening narration, Columbus notes that a country cannot exist without people. The nerdy and timid college student found that his phobias and avoidance of people helped him survive the zombie plague. After he runs out of gas, Columbus meets up with Tallahassee, who avoids the use of real names because "it makes us familiar." Tallahassee is a gun-slinging and shear-wielding zombie killing aficionado. Later, the viewer discovers that he gleefully kills to avenge

5. *The Night of the Living Dead*.

6. Kyle Bishop, "Raising the Dead: Unearthing the nonliterary origins of zombie cinema," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 33:4 (Winter 2006), 3 of 14.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Zombieland*, DVD, directed by Rueben Fleischer, (Sony Pictures: 2009).

the death of his young son, Buck, originally described as his lost puppy not child. Not surprisingly, much of the film's action revolves around spectacular ways to destroy zombies with occasional asides for the "zombie kill of the week." Columbus's rules for survival also dominate the film, and they include "cardio" (number one) to the "double tap" (number two) to "travel light" (luggage or personal baggage, number seven) to "don't be a hero" (number 17) to "check the backseat" (number 31) to "enjoy the little things" (number 32).⁹ Two young women, Wichita and Little Rock, outmatch the protagonists, yet Columbus and Tallahassee find themselves traveling with the sisters in a yellow Hummer to Pacific Playland, the amusement park rumored to be zombie-free. Wary of each other, the four still develop camaraderie. However, staying together violates Wichita's main rule: trust no one but her sister. They leave for the park.

The fabled amusement park, like the rest of the U.S., contains the living dead. Luckily, Columbus decides to follow Wichita and Little Rock, and he prods Tallahassee into help by noting "they are pictures in someone's wallet too." At Pacific Playland, Tallahassee manages to annihilate almost all of the zombies in the park with guns, guns, and more guns. In spite of Columbus's vaunted rules for survival, he ignores rule 17 (don't be a hero) when Little Rock and Wichita need help fighting off zombies. The film ends with optimism as the four drive off together as a ragtag family, and Columbus notes, "Without other people we might as well be zombies."¹⁰ Other humans are worthy of trust in *Zombieland* because the major battle is between human and zombie, and survival is not worth the sacrifice of others. This is what separates human from zombie. Yet Columbus's survival was predicated on his avoidance of other humans. He might have found the family he always wanted, but his future cannot be ensured. The zombie apocalypse is still visually stunning with deserted towns, destroyed roads, and zombies devouring humans. The message might be hopeful, but the visualization of the end suggests its gritty reality, harsh landscapes, and emotional and mental toll on the survivors. Tallahassee, for instance, survives the apocalypse by "blowing off steam," which is code for beating, battering, and annihilating objects. They might survive in *Zombieland* together, but what does it mean to live in an undead world?

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

“There’s us and the dead.”¹¹

The Walking Dead (2010) is based on Robert Kirkman’s series of graphic novels of the same title. The series documents a small group of survivors in the American South lead by sheriff Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln). Rick awakens from a coma to find a world filled with walking corpses, decay, and chaos. How the zombie apocalypse occurred is not as important as its occurrence and reality for the few unturned humans. In the early moments of the series, Rick, in his uniform, winds his way around abandoned cars seeking gas for his own car. He comes face to face with a zombie, a blonde haired little girl. As she growls at him in her blood-spattered nightgown, the protagonist shoots her in the head. Nothing is sacred at the end, and children, much like adults, turn into zombies. The sheriff searches and eventually finds his wife, Lori (Sarah Wayne Callies), and his son, Carl (Chandler Riggs), along with his deputy Shane (Jon Bernthal), camping out with other survivors outside of the very perilous and “geek”-filled Atlanta. Each episode visualizes the ongoing struggle for subsistence and Rick’s ethical wrangling, which causes tension in his marriage and in his friendship with Shane. In the universe of *The Walking Dead*, society is fragile, human survival is a torturous endeavor, and hope is not the appropriate response to this undead cataclysm. This zombie apocalypse becomes a lesson in situational ethics and often works against the cavalier nature of zombie destruction in film.

In episode 2 “Guts,” Rick recovers the wallet of a zombie and tells his fellow survivors the name of the man who used to be human. Rick, then, hacks into the zombie to use its body parts as a scent-masking technique. Yet he needs to affirm that the “geek” was once like them, familiar, loved, and human. This gruesome action emphasizes that anyone can have the same fate as this man. Remembering one’s humanity in an inhumane moment is most important. In episode 5 “Wildfire,” Andrea (Laurie Holden) refuses to abandon her sister Amy (Emma Bell), who died in a geek attack at the camp. While mourning, Andrea remains by Amy’s side and does not allow the other campers to come near her, much less burn her corpse along with the other zombie carcasses. When Amy reanimates, Andrea watches her former

11. *The Walking Dead*, Episode no. 2, first broadcast November 7, 2010, directed by Michelle Maxwell MacLaren.

sister open her now milky eyes, hugs her one last time, and puts a bullet in the zombie's brain. Amy's death/undeath undoes Andrea, who loses her will to survive. Without Amy, Andrea is not convinced survival is worth the pain and trauma. In the last episode of the season "TS-19," her friend, the elderly Dale (Jeffrey DeMunn), convinces Andrea to keep living by threatening to die with her in a sequenced explosion at the CDC. With Dale's life on the line, Andrea continues on. *The Walking Dead* emphasizes that post-apocalyptic life is dirty, momentary, and traumatic. Survival appears finite at best. The season ends with the camp breaking up, and Rick's smaller group fleeing the CDC in Atlanta as it explodes. Hope is a fleeting commodity, and the price of surviving might be too high.

"Zombies are a force of nature."

John Joseph Adams' *The Living Dead 1* and *2* provide zombie stories from popular authors Stephen King, Kelley Armstrong, Cherie Priest, Max Brooks, and Joe McKinney. Zombie fiction catalogs apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic scenarios: humans live, or at least attempt to, in an undead world. John Joseph Adams, the editor of *The Living Dead 1* and *2*, describes zombie fiction: "It's about battling a frightening, implacable foe and imagining what it would be like to survive the end of the world and trying to figure out what to do when the dead won't stay dead."¹² Metaphorically, zombies present humanity, all of our features and flaws, back to us. They are us.

His collections include a wide variety of zombie fiction from the so-called Romero zombies to revenants to voodoo zombies to reanimated corpses of all stripes. In *The Living Dead*, Adams collected previously published zombie fiction, while *The Living Dead 2* presents many new zombie stories written specifically for the volume from the newest generation of zombie fiction writers. In the first volume, Sherman Alexie's "Ghost Dance" depicts those killed at Little Big Horn enacting gory revenge on white people. Dan Simmons envisions the elementary school classroom after the dead return. Stephen King depicts a little Maine fishing town's wrangling with the familiar undead, who return home. Perhaps, the best example of zombie eschatology in the volume is Nancy Kilpatrick's harrowing tale of

12. John Joseph Adams, "Introduction," in *The Living Dead*, ed. John Joseph Adams, (San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2008), 1.

the last human survivor, and her exhaustive work to simply stay alive. The protagonist is alone with her memories, garden, fences, and weaponry. Her desperate need for touch, even an undead one, leads to her own personal end.

Scott Edelman writes about the last stories of the last humans, who die painfully and grotesquely at the hands of zombies, and he documents the unheroic actions of these ordinary folks who ignore the plight of others to survive. Edelman writes:

Zombies are a force of nature, and forces of nature do not come equipped with morals. Forces of nature do not come packaged with a purpose, a message, or a reason. They just are.¹³

The second volume continues the zombified end. Robert Kirkman balances the peril of one's fellow survivors against the threat of the living dead. Kelley Armstrong interrogates who the real threat might be and suggests that humans endanger zombies not vice versa. Seth Lindberg's story documents the end through twenty-three photographs, which memorialize life before the end, the cataclysm, and all those you lose along the way. David Wellington writes about a group of survivors, who are "good people," forced to make bad decisions, like sacrificing a single mother and her child to the zombies for the larger community's survival.¹⁴ Evil times make even good people do bad.

"Survival is the key to remember—not victory, not conquest, just survival."¹⁵

Max Brooks is the author most associated with the zombie apocalypse. His popular *Zombie Survival Guide* (2003) is a how-to guide to outlast the impending undead onslaught, and his *World War Z* (2007) is an "oral history" of the zombie war and end of the civilization as we know it. Like most how-to products, the *Zombie Survival Guide* instructs the reader on zombie origins, the likelihood of the zombie apocalypse, and helpful tips

13. Scott Edelman, "Almost The Last Story By Almost the Last Man," in *The Living Dead*, ed. John Joseph Adams, (San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2008), 451.

14. David Wellington, "Good People," in *The Living Dead 2*, ed. John Joseph Adams, (San Francisco: Night Shade, 2010), 134.

15. Brooks, *Zombie Survival Guide*, Introduction.

for weathering this type of end. Brooks compares and ranks methods and tools for murdering the undead (aim for the brains), provides advice on appropriate clothing and transportation, and establishes what materials one needs to secure a home. This general planning for the inevitable plague of zombies, the downfall of civilization, can be accomplished after purchasing and reviewing the guide.

What Brooks makes clear is that enduring the apocalypse is not easy, fun, or perhaps, even possible. He writes, “Survival is the key to remember—not victory, not conquest, just survival.”¹⁶ Humans cannot win, but we can subsist. While urging preparedness, Brooks notes the massive amount of time, money, and effort that a civilian must engage in to battle the undead. He emphasizes the possibility of doomsday and urges the reader that the only thing that separates humans from zombies is the will to live. While cataloguing what each survivor needs, Brooks includes heavy-hitting social commentary alongside his cavalier depiction of the destruction of zombies. Brooks assesses the difference between human and zombie. Zombies are undead. They don’t feel, remember, or know. They are walking corpses driven by infection. They are no longer human. He writes, “Simply put, there are thousands of ways to kill a human—and only one to kill a zombie. The brain must be obliterated, by any means possible.”¹⁷

In *World War Z*, Brooks’ oral history of the great zombie war, the reader gains glimpses of life before, during, and after the war. This zombie apocalypse tale is a scathing assessment of global politics, militarization, capitalism, and humans in general. Those interviewed are at best ambiguous. There are no heroes, just maimed, broken, and unrepentant survivors. The book begins with an explanation, an attempt to tell the actual story of the zombie war not just the facts and figures. The oral historian wants to preserve the “human factor” of the war between the living and the undead. After all, isn’t the “human factor” what separates humans from the zombies?¹⁸ *World War Z* picks up familiar themes: ignorance/disbelief of the threat, government inaction, global panic, and the fight for survival. The interviews range from soldiers to politicians to civilians to mercenaries to smugglers

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 19.

18. Max Brooks, *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), 2.

to doctors to professors to spies to parents to children. The most haunting stories of this particular zombie apocalypse involve a woman who survived the zombie infestation as a child; the mastermind of the Redeker plan that saves South Africa by ranking which people should survive and which are left to die; and the persistent fatalism of the soldiers about the war.

Philip Adler, a veteran of the war, noted: “Funny, eh? I could accept everything else that was happening, the fact that dead bodies were rising to consume the world, but this... following orders that would indirectly cause a mass murder.”¹⁹ By following orders, Adler compromised lives. Impossible decisions guaranteed the survival of some humans over zombies, but this required sacrificing the many to save a few. Brooks sharply imagines the consequences of global war, nations fighting against nations, and the ways in which ordinary lives are fundamentally altered by the undead. Each snippet, interview, and story documents the ruin of places and people. Brooks includes violence, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, murder, cannibalism, death, mourning, fortified communities, fascism, fake cures, false hope, and broken people. The loss of life dominates each page turn, and these ordinary folks were the victims of zombies, “hunger, disease, interhuman violence,” and despair. In a world more dead than living, despair killed those unable to manage the bleakness of the new world.²⁰ Cataloging the human factor of war makes Brooks’ commentary on zombies and the modern world more poignant and powerful. Adler, the former soldier, states, “We lost a hell of a lot more than people when we abandoned them to the dead.”²¹

“This is it, I realize. The end of me.”²²

In a similar vein, Carrie Ryan’s *The Forrest of Hands and Teeth* Trilogy (2009–2011) creates a post-apocalyptic world in which zombies are an ever-present danger right outside the fences of civilization. Her books along with the edited collection *Zombies Versus Unicorns* (2010) affirm the zombie’s position as an agent of the end in young adult fiction. Ryan’s trilogy imagines a world generations after the apocalypse, the Return.

19. Ibid., 113.

20. Ibid., 159.

21. Ibid., 339.

22. Ryan, *The Dark and Hollow Places*, 34.

Zombies, or “Unconsecrated” or “mudo” or “plague rats,” destroyed the United States, and Ryan focuses upon three heroines Mary (*The Forest of Hands and Teeth*), Gabry (*The Dead-Tossed Waves*), and Annah (*The Dark and Hollow Places*) as they struggle to live in the ruins of a world. Mary lives in the Forest of Hands and Teeth, a closed community surrounded by fences and Unconsecrated. Their moaning and clawing at the gates creates an existence of noise, and Mary longs for quiet space beyond the undead. In the trilogy, the young heroines strive to find something more than survival. Mary seeks to find life beyond the fences at the fabled ocean of her dead mother’s stories. Headstrong and inquisitive, Mary constantly bucks against the religious and political authority of the Sisterhood, a convent of nuns. Life in this post-apocalyptic world echoes medieval fiefdom combined with modern imaginings of romance, agency, and existential angst. There is a certain bleakness to Ryan’s world; Mary’s choices are limited, and happiness is elusive, fleeting, and full of consequences. The zombies hunger for humans, but the real threat in the forest is the nun’s authoritarian rule and their unwillingness to give villagers information about the time before. This leads to the ruin of the village when a fast Unconsecrated breeches the fences and allows her slower brethren entrance. What Mary uncovers outside of the fences pushes forward the action of the sequels, in which Mary’s “daughter” Gabry and her lost twin sister, Annah, belong to other spaces of the living, a seaside village and the City respectively, in the world of the dead.

While *The Dead Tossed Waves*, the second book, is interesting in its own right, the action of *The Dark and Hollow Places* finishes out the trilogy with another zombified end. A horde of millions of zombies overwhelm the barriers of the City, and Annah escapes along with Gabry, Elias (Gabry’s boyfriend), and Catcher (Gabry’s friend and an Immune) to a Recruiter (militia) protected island. While both Mary and Gabry’s stories focus on desolation and struggling to survive, Annah’s story is the most tortured because of her continual introspection and interrogation of whether survival is enough. This narrator prompts the reader again and again with the question: is survival really worth the pain and torment? Why survive when the world is going to end (again)? Anna’s tale showcases the desperation and ruthlessness of survival, and she gives up at several pivotal moments only to be convinced that maybe survival is better than being undead. Yet, she still wonders if the Unconsecrated are better off because they lack the

capacity to feel. Ryan's trilogy argues that the capacity to feel is what makes us human. The fact that we can feel pain separates us from the numb, moaning Unconsecrated. Unlike Mary and Gabry, Annah is sure that this end is the inevitable one, the last stand for humans. In the final moments of the novel, when the horde and the Recruiters pursue Annah, she simply gives up to exhaustion, desperation, and weariness. She regains her strength to fight because of her love for Catcher. Ryan's trilogy ends with Annah and Catcher reuniting as they seek a home in the only remaining human space, the seaside village. They are among the last living humans. The dead have claimed the world. While her story ends with Catcher and Annah's embrace, the lingering question of the village's survival remains unanswered.

"Nut up or shut up."²³

On December 22, 2012, zombies will bring about the end, at least according to the Facebook event "Zombie Apocalypse." 717,000 people are attending, 118,000 are maybe attending, and 456,000 have politely declined their invitation to a gun-toting, gore-filled end.²⁴ The event site proclaims:

The time is finally set. The day of the dead is coming, so make sure you have your Zombie Survival Plan ready. Many people are concerned about December 21, 2012, the alleged end of the world. This is just a ploy to hide the real day of reckoning, December 22, 2012, THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE! Grab your sawed-off shotgun, baseball bat and your running shoes and be prepared to kill or be killed! Oh, and by the way, you've got some red on you.²⁵

The wall for the event is filled with helpful hints for zombie killing, comparison/contrast of preferred weaponry, general excitement over the possibility zombies, and a keen desire to do harm to zombies. Unsurprisingly, an occasional poster laments the loss of energy and time on the far-fetched end via zombies, especially considering global unrest, hunger, terror, and war. Attendees fire back that the zombie apocalypse is fun and harmless.

23. *Zombieland*.

24. Some of these comments originally appeared at the Religion in American History blog. Kelly J. Baker, January 21, 2011, "Zombies, Millennialism, and Consumption," *Religion in American History*, <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2011/01/zombies-millennialism-and-consumption.html>.

25. Brian Chappell, "The Zombie Apocalypse," *Facebook*, Accessed April 26, 2011, <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=110187222330959>.

It is just “fun” to imagine devastation, destruction, and ruin of our world, which doesn’t negate their interest in global or domestic problems. When compared to the bleakness of zombie apocalypse portrayal in film, television, and fiction, the palpable excitement on Facebook is disconcerting. Why does such an event exist anyway? Why should we imagine how to destroy zombies in more novel and grotesque ways? Why is the end at the hands of undead laughable, entertaining, or even joyous? The consumption of the zombie apocalypse, I think, doesn’t have to resonate with the author or director’s vision, but it is interesting that Romero’s original use of zombies as radical social commentary is obscured by the entertainment value of zombies as monsters. Zombies are scary but entertaining.

When comparing the Facebook event to the cultural works reviewed here, it becomes evident that zombie eschatology reflects pressing concerns about the nature of humanity, the callousness and detachment of our current moment, and the use of violent fantasy to interpret an equally violent but seemingly safe reality. From Romero to Ryan, the question of survival and what makes us human becomes paramount. Zombies are a relentless, unstoppable threat in these works, but the zombies are not our sole enemies. The zombies are perilous, but so are we. Humans are just as likely to destroy, consume, or maim our fellow human beings as the shuffling monster. In the *Living Dead* volumes, contributors emphasize the problem of remaining humane/human while confronting the reanimated dead. These stories showcase the central concern of zombie eschatology: what truly separates us from zombies. Sometimes, the boundaries blur uncomfortably. *World War Z* picks up the same theme and suggests that what is at stake in the catastrophic end is a shared sense of humanity. What the *Zombie Survival Guide* and *World War Z* make clear is that humans need more than subsistence to live and that sometimes personal survival comes at the forfeit of another’s life. If we value self-preservation over the preservation of our fellow humans, then we are no better than the undead. For Ryan even, Annah and Catcher’s long-term survival in the face of the onslaught is not clear. Yet their choice to love one another makes them human. This ability to feel makes us different from the zombies, but the fragility of humanity is Ryan’s parting shot. Her work brings to the fore a long-standing assumption of zombie eschatology that they must kill us and we must kill them. Perhaps, this showcases the destruction of the monster to create what is human. By saying what the zombies are, we hope that it is what we are not.

Zombies work as bearers of the end because they have no agency, no humanity, and no final end in sight. They are relentless, hungry, and always present. They are near and present death, which is messy, oozing and falling apart rather than sanitized and contained. They press forward without soul, mind, and often without appendages. They do not stop. Zombies become a relentless force of the apocalypse that time and again end humanity. This end of humanity by the familiar undead and the triumph of survival at any cost finds purchase in fiction, film, and television. Isn't the important point of the apocalyptic story the triumph of hope at the end (like *I am Legend* or *Shaun of the Dead*)? Aren't these stories of human adaptability and survival in the face of the worst calamities? Doesn't the zombie apocalypse make us feel good about the human ability to survive? I am not so sure. Zombie eschatology problematizes human behavior and the quest to subsist at the cost of other people. Survival equals life but also trauma and loss. The end includes the loss of what makes us human. The boundary between human and zombie becomes muddier and muddier, as humans become as unfeeling and callous as the ever hungry, never satiated monster.

These monsters *du jour* of the end allow us commentary on empire, globalization, war, and terror. Zombies become the agents of humanity's fictionalized and supposedly destined end because they showcase how fragile humans actually are, with or without crisis, the brokenness of survivors, and the popular violent fantasies of revenge and survival. Zombie eschatology assures readers/viewers that humans will surely cause the end of the world and zombies just aid this inevitable destruction along. Much like other apocalyptic scenarios, the end by zombies is commentary on the destructive nature of humanity and the likelihood of human-wrought cataclysm. However, what zombie eschatology might truly teach us is the familiarity with destroyed human bodies. Zombies resemble the corpses that litter our actual world. These corpses do not resurrect or walk, but we bear them with us. While we analyze which weapon would be more fun, gun or baseball bat, to harm a zombie, we become more comfortable with the destruction of ordinary folks. As Max Brooks reminds us, there is only one way to kill a zombie, but with humans the possibilities are endless.

