RHETORIC OF DEATH AND GENERIC ADDRESSING OF VIEWERS IN AMERICAN LIVING DEAD FILMS

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1 FRAMING RHETORIC OF DEATH

'Death is but the doorway to new life—We live today—We shall live again—In many forms shall we return.'

These are the words from the opening of a classic horror film, *The Mummy* (1932). The citation from the *Scroll of Toth* foretells the following scene of an ancient mummy returning to life to haunt the living. The words also open the door to a specific American horror film genre. As the mummy rises from his tomb, so the corpses of zombies walk the earth and vampires honor the dark nights. In these living dead films of undead monsters, death is not where the narration ends. In the words of a tagline of the postclassical mummy films of the 1990s and 2000s: 'Death is only the beginning.'

In all these films, the dead return to life. Van Helsing famously states in the definitive *Dracula* (1931), 'A Vampire, Mr. Harker, is a being that lives after its death'. By returning to life, the undead have the power to bear upon the society and the personal lives of the living, forcing the living to renegotiate their understandings of life and death. This is what happens, for example, in the *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), where the characters are advised to set their existing cultural modes aside once ordinary funeral practices have proved futile. Instead of burying their dead, the characters ought to burn them, because the dead are 'dead flesh and dangerous'. In this sense, the focus of such films is on the re-evaluation and redefinition of existing rituals and understandings of death.

Death remains a mysterious event and experience. The vampire sums up our awe of death in *The Return of Dracula* (1958): 'You only fear the unknown. Only this casing, this clumsy flesh stands between you and me. You are already balanced between two worlds. Eternity awaits you now.' The dual relationship to death—of endlessly escaping control and thus intensifying the desire to master death—is evident in the living dead films whose explicit encounters with death grow both to re-mystify and de-mystify death. Dead, well and truly, entices imagination. These films are one way of trying to imagine that which is unknown. It is therefore fascinating to study how these films encounter, construct and articulate death.

The practically compulsive repetition of death in the living dead films proclaims the continued cultural need to negotiate with and manage death. The allure of death in the living dead films is apparent in the vampire's recitation of a poem in *Dracula*:

'Above, lofty timbers, the Walls around are bare, echoing to our laughter, As though the dead were there. Quaff a cup to the dead already, Hurrah for the next to die.' Also, it is through the very repetition of death that the films of different decades and generations create—more or less as a by-product—a picture of the changing values and attitudes related to death in American society. This study assigns a leading role to the living dead characters in American horror films not because I wish to suggest the originality or superiority of Hollywood films, but because of their dominating international position in the mainstream of the horror genre. Death represented in American living dead films clearly participates in the negotiation over death not only in the United States, but elsewhere, too.

Furthermore, and importantly, by addressing the themes of death and dying, the films invite the viewer to participate in the negotiation process. Take the final scene of *Resident Evil* (2002): the main character recovers consciousness in hospital, facing the camera and demanding to know 'Who is in there, come out.' By establishing eye contact with the viewers, the character challenges us to become aware of our active role as spectators, to reflect upon our experiencing and interpreting process of cinematic horror and cinematic death. Presentational strategies and solutions always include communicative—rhetorical—dimensions, and I argue that it is crucially important to analyze the ways in which films invite their viewers to experience and conceptualize death.

Throughout this study I will maintain that the articulation of death in the living dead films invites the viewers to interpret death in relation to the films' socio-cultural background and predominant understanding of death and dying. Through addressing strategies, these films participate in negotiating contemporary death-related meanings and attitudes. The American living dead films not only reflect but also take part in the changing meanings and attitudes. I will therefore focus on how the American living dead films articulate, address, and negotiate cultural understandings of death for and with their viewers.

1.1. Approaching Death in Living Dead Films

Aims of the Study: Multiple and Changing Dimensions of Death

A number of scholars, such as Philippe Ariés, Norbert Elias and Zygmunt Bauman, have suggested that the role of death changed in Western societies with the onset of modernization, industrialization, and medicalization. Since the late eighteenth century, death and the dying started to be marginalized and removed from public space into hospitals and other specialized institutions, to be dealt with by professionals. By the mid-twentieth century, the process had taken death away from the social sphere, replacing the public experience of death with experiences of the private.[1]

While modern medicine and society seek to explain death away, the desire to understand death perseveres. Vicki Goldberg argues that the birth of new reproductive media (the press first, to be followed by cinema and television), created alternative public images of death and dying, exaggerated and visual. Deaths in the media served as 'a substitute for experience'.[2] Charlton D. McIlwain, who has studied the cultural role of death in the United States, takes this argument a step further by claiming that the mass media and entertainment function as the missing link between the periods which openly embrace death as part of the public sphere. According to him, the media have actively forced death back in the public by allowing people to communally discuss and give meanings to death.[3]

The mass media encompass different approaches to portrayals of death. Folker Hanusch feels that it is important to separate between documentary (news) and fictional approaches. Whereas they both participate in the 'reflecting and shaping' of death-related attitudes, these modes have different relationships to the construction of reality.[4] I argue that the fantasizing potential of the cinema makes it possible to play more freely with our understanding of death. Furthermore, as Goldberg maintains, the cinema's audiovisual and dramatizing possibilities highlight the 'extensive and intimate view of

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[1] Ariés 1977 (1974); Elias 1993 (1982), 12, 17–18; Bauman 1992, 92–97, 104–136. See also Walter 1994, 1–2, 9–13; Goldberg 1998, 28–29, 33, 37; Staudt 2009, 3.
[2] Goldberg 1998, 29–30, 38, 42, 48. See also Hanusch 2010, 2–3. Moreover, Goldberg reminds us that death was by no means the only experience that became more mediated than immediate. Modernization affected several corporeal processes, such as sexuality, in a similar way. (Goldberg 1998, 31.)
[3] McIlwain 2005, 3, 8–10, 19–20, 39.
[4] Hanusch 2010, 5.

death'. The cinema thus moves close to death, not only through images, but through emotional engagement and narrative structures.[5]

The cinema's medium-specific features enable us to fantasize and experience death in effective ways; films imagine, define and give a visible and audible form or shape to death.[6] In particular, when the modernization of death led to emphasizing the personal level of experience (one's own death and the death of beloved ones), the cinema provided a place for personal experiences and public images to meet. As James Donald and Stephanie Hemelryk Donald claim, cinema is a public form of communication, engaging filmed deaths with social, political and cultural processes.[7] On a more general level, then, films are not only a place of negotiating death-related meanings as part of one's personal experience, but the shared nature of these experiences force the negotiation back into the public space as well. In this manner, cinema has participated in a process where the individualization of death has turned into a personal and public awareness of death. This revival of death has been particularly visible in the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.[8]

Because of the media's active role in the revival process, McIlwain demands that it is not enough to recognize the media as an alternative public or refuge for death. Rather, we should study how the restoration has been embedded through mass-mediated articulations of death.[9] This indeed is my goal in this study. I suggest that by looking into the ways in which films such as American living dead films fantasize and address death we can gain a more comprehensive picture of death's role in Western societies. My hypothesis is that the change from modern and alienated death to the revival of death is evident in the American living dead films, and even more so, I argue that these films have both reacted to the socio-cultural change in death-related attitudes and values. The films' repetitive structures of producing death-related experiences and the ways in which the films have continuously challenged the possibilities and limits of modern death have foretold and even encouraged this change.

Death has obviously been one of the key themes in horror films[10], and because horror films intend to cause fear, death is most often constructed as monstrous and horrifying. The Latin verb *horrere* means 'to bristle' or 'to shudder', and this, as Anna

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[5] Goldberg 1998, 49–51.
[6] See also Grønstad 2003, 108; Gorer 1960, 404–405.
[7] Donald & Hemelryk Donald 2000, 114–115.
[8] See, for example, Staudt 2009, 14; Walter 1994, 1–2, 17, 22, 24, 39.
[9] McIlwain 2005, 49.
[10] See, for instance, Grixti 1989, 15–16.

Powell notes, emphasizes the affective dimension of the horror genre. A film is a horror film if it aims (and succeeds) to cause horror in the viewer. The chosen themes, motifs, and aesthetics are always bound to the viewer's experience.[11]

This disposition where horror's recognizable features are connected to the genre's intentions (not its attributes) can be labeled as the 'dominant feature' of horror (a term adopted from Russian formalists). Steve Neale argues on behalf of naming the dominant features, because genres cannot be defined in any other way than at such a basic and descriptive level. Even the most formulaic and generic story can only repeat a certain amount of all possible conventions of each genre.[12] In the genre of horror, the aim is to generate terror, frequently with narrative techniques that rely on anxiety, shocks and special effects. The macabre themes of horror, the probing of taboos, fears and the unknown, as well as pushing the limits of what is 'normal' and accepted, and the use of certain iconography and monsters generate a discursive repertoire for the genre.[13]

The dominant feature of horror encourages the films' contribution to shocking and culturally controversial issues, such as violence and death. The use of terrifying effects has also entailed that deaths in the living dead films are rarely natural, beautiful or peaceful transitions from life to death. Rather, the conventions of the genre frame dying in an exaggeratedly dystopic manner, representing it as unnatural, disturbing and violent. Deaths in living dead films do not reflect or directly imitate the everyday reality of viewers; what they offer instead are dramatic and narrated spectacles. As such they rather reflect and imitate the cinema's and the genre's own history of expressing death.[14]

At the same time, however, the films are part of a culture, and their meanings are negotiated in relation to the society. Christine Gledhill, for example, writes (more generally) that genre films tend to repeat generic motifs over and over again—compare this to horror's repeated death—and by doing so they create dialogism over the topic, providing struggles over the understanding of the topic in changing socio-cultural contexts.[15] Similarly, the relentless balancing of horror films on the fine line between

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[11] Powell 2005, 8. See also Leffler 2000, 10; Schepelern 1986, 20; Tudor 1995 (1973), 4.

[12] Neale 2000, 220.

[13] Lists of elements within the horror genre abound, such as Russell 1998, 234–238; Schepelern 1986, 20; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 19. However, there is no single film that could possibly include all the different dimensions in one and the same story. As David J. Russell (1998, 234–238) notes, no one feature can define the horror genre by itself, as the genre is a combination of these. Also, the viewer's recognition of a sense of threat remains a dominant feature.

[14] See, for example, Cawelti 2004, 153–154; Grønstad 2003, 74–79; Leffler 2000, 197–227, 262–264; Leffler 2001, 134; Smith 1999b, 229–230.

[15] Gledhill 2000, 238.

terrifying yet fictitious death and socially acceptable uses of death imagery demands constant re-evaluation of death-related values and practices.

In this study, I will approach the struggling with death through American living dead films, paying particular attention to the films' monster characters. They provide a fruitful object for the study of death-related values because not only do they symbolize the threatening death but their grotesque corporeality also embraces and embodies it in a most concrete and impressive way. It is noteworthy that the living dead monsters are embedded in Western imagination. Many folk stories already show fear for the returning dead, who are destructive forces as carriers of death and dying.[16] The cinematic undead figures, too, connect with the complexity of death-related cultural attitudes and fears, articulating and addressing in medium-specific ways the biologically natural and inevitable fact of death, which is socially, culturally, and personally disturbing. It is this destructive force of death that the living dead films and their monsters enclose.

Thematically, then, the living dead films exploit different dimensions and consequences of death. However, as a medium, cinema does more than discuss death-related issues: it shows them. The technological nature of the filmic medium takes advantage of the sensual aspects of death and dying. Death is embraced both at the story level and by giving it an affective visual and audible form. The medium-specificity of cinema highlights the corporeal dimensions of death. In modern zombie films, for example, the detailed disintegration of the body has become an important part of the dying process, screams accompanying body parts being torn off and entrails falling on the ground. The corporeality of death is further accentuated in the grotesque corpses of the living dead. Death is not simply a theme, as it inextricably intertwines with the films' material-technological dimensions. Embodied images make death an integral part of the embodied cinematic experience.

Death has obviously been discussed in horror film studies, but often the visual effects of representing death have dominated the analysis which has either justified or moralized the use of these images. And more often than not the emphasis has been on the horror genre's violent nature of death. Horror films have triggered an interest in how and why violence is used and what are the possible effects of violent death scenes on the

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[16] For example, Bishop 2006, 198; Davies 2005, 131, 146–147; Klemettinen 2002, 262; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 195.

viewers.[17] Departing from this approach, I seek to look beyond violence and concentrate instead on the cultural tasks of cinematic deaths and on the ways they are dramatized in the narrative and generic contexts of horror. It is not my intention to justify or moralize the use of (violent) death, but critically to analyze the dynamics of articulating and framing death in the American living dead films.

Because of the framing and artificiality of death, the living dead films are in my understanding a space where death can be socio-culturally negotiated. These films constitute public spaces for the film-makers' and viewers' death-related meanings to meet and interact without any direct influencing relationship. The film-makers' encoded meanings are affected by their socio-culturally embedded understandings of death, their use of generic conventions of fantasized death and Hollywood's production modes and practices. The decoded meanings, for their part, relate to the viewers' generic expectations, to their more general media competences and socio-cultural backgrounds.[18] However, film is not an empty spatial structure but actively takes part in the process of signification through its technological apparatus[19] and its viewer orientation. Films are both viewed objects and subjects that offer themselves for viewing.[20] Film thus participates in the negotiation process by communicating death through different imaged thematizations and materializations, which the viewers can use for both experiencing and conceptualizing death.

I will focus on the relationship between the living dead films and their viewers from the perspective of film text and its communicative elements. In other words, my

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[17] Many studies have traditionally condemned the use of violent death for the possible and much-debated negative effects of violent scenes, as in the pedagogical approach by Henry Giroux (2002, 5–11, 1999) or in several empirical studies of horror violence as described in more detail by Asbjørn Grønstad (2003, 27–30), for example. On the other hand, other studies, such as the psychoanalytic approaches by James Twitchell (1985, 7–16, 65–92, 104, 141, 287, 301) have justified the violence for therapeutic reasons, or because of cognitive advantages in conceptualizing both death and violence (including Cynthia Freeland 2000, 2–17) or for aesthetic reasons (as exemplified by Yvonne Leffler 2000, 9–10, 21–22), or even because of educational issues (such as Charlton D. McIlwain 2005, 28).

[18] Whereas I stress the genre film as a space for negotiation, Moine uses the term 'site' for cinema genres, as this refers to both inscribed and symbolized sites, or, to cultural sites. 'Site' therefore encompasses those who operate within these spaces—the producers, films, and the audiences—and pertains to a historical position or certain socio-cultural context. As cultural sites, the genre films are situated in history, communicating relationships, experiences, and memories. (Moine 2008 (2002), 206–207.)

[19] Marshall McLuhan, in particular, has promoted the medium's role in the communication process. His famous sentence 'medium is the message' refers to how the medium is actually an 'extension of human senses'. As such it defines the possibilities and limitations of experience and signification for a receiver. (McLuhan 1964, 7, 13, 21.) Based on his argument I claim that the cinematic medium plays an important role in defining the viewer's experience, and different genres use this available technology in different ways.

[20] See also Williams 1995, 9; Sobchack 1995 (1992), 37; Dixon 1995, 2–7.

starting points can be called rhetorical and in order to understand rhetoric of death in the living dead films—that is the textual presupposing and the textual relationship between these films and their viewers—the keyword for my approach is a generic mode of address, or the ways in which the genre conventions generate a type of discourse which identifies and requires the viewer to get involved in the narration. Addressing hence refers to the medium-specific and genre-related rhetoric processes by which the film text invites viewers to read out and embody the articulated death-related meanings and experiences in certain preferred, or suggested, ways.

Accordingly, this study explores how reception processes and experiences of death are constructed, and, at the same time, anticipated in the American living dead films. How do film texts invite actual viewers to negotiate, experience, witness and interpret death? Because the creation and interpretation of filmic meanings are bound to different contexts (to socio-cultural understandings of death, among others), also the addressing is bound to the changing contexts of cinema, genre, society and culture. I will therefore also take into account the changes that have been played out in the addressing of death in the living dead films.

Moreover, I will debate how death-related meanings and experiences have been constructed and anticipated at the textual level of American living dead films, recognizing three main objectives and contributions to different theoretical and critical discussions. First, I will further discuss the questions of generic addressing and the horror genre's relationship with its society, culture and putative audiences. By looking at the debated theoretical questions of textual spectatorship through one genre, I will test and evaluate these conceptualizations. This systematic study will show how textual and theoretical understandings of spectatorship can be used in film analysis and how these understandings of addressing can also open up the film's relationships with historical and changing audiences.

Second, I will combine questions of generic addressing with a detailed thematic analysis of one category of films which has not been studied systematically and critically so far: the living dead films. Several writers acknowledge and even define the living dead as one (or multiple) category of Hollywood horror.[21] While making provision for the multiplicity of undead figures, these writers tend to take the characters as given

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[21] See, for example, Waller 1986, 9; Bishop 2006, 201, 204–205; Klemettinen 2002, 262; Davies 2005, 146. The definitions of the living dead are also discussed in, for example, the essay collection *The Undead and Philosophy: Chicken Soup for the Soulless* (Greene & Mohammed 2006), although the reference is rather on the philosophical uses of the term than on the cinematic applications.

without asking which narrative characteristics the films may or may not share, which characteristics maintain their influence over time and which are more vulnerable to change, and why these characteristics are important for the death-related themes of the films. My study, then, seeks to apply new and interesting turns in theoretical debates over the horror genre's relationships with their audiences. The aim is also to present a definition, systematic analysis and historical survey of the American living dead films.

Third, I will analyze how the living dead films use addressing as a socio-cultural involvement with cultural struggles over death. By deconstructing the cinematic rhetoric of death, I will demonstrate how genre films create an intriguing relationship with socio-cultural understandings of death and how this relationship—and both the addressing and understanding of death—have changed since the classical living dead films of the 1930s. In addition to these three main areas, I consider my position as a Finnish researcher a significant contribution to the debate over horror studies in general and living dead films in particular. On the one hand, horror film studies are rather marginalized in Finland, and most of them are historical surveys of the genre rather than systematic academic investigations of the horror genre's practices.[22] On the other hand, my position offers a certain critical outlook to violent death in American living dead films. The international role of Hollywood cinema and the wide socio-cultural impact of American cinematic deaths necessitate the critical analysis of these films from the outside of the culture as well. My study is one contribution to an analytic cultural approach to American culture and film.

Theoretical Departure Points: Understanding Textual and Generic Addressing

My study of how death is addressed in the living dead films is informed by three different theoretical and methodological sources: apparatus theory or elaborated Screen theory; postclassical narratology; and socio-semiotic understanding of genre. Apparatus theory provides me with a model of textual and cinematic spectatorship, while narratology complements this viewpoint with a perspective into analyzing the addressing of death at the level of film narration. Genre theory accounts for the ways in which formulaic films—of which horror films are claimed to be a prime example[23]—create standardized yet constantly evolving models for communicating certain themes, such as

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[22] See, for example, Alanen & Alanen 1985; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992.
[23] For the formulaic nature of horror, see, for instance, Clover 1996 (1992), 212.

death. Despite the differences in their theoretical premises and ambitions, these approaches overlap in several questions raised in this study. They all approach films through the films' semiotic elements, but at the same time they widen the perspective from aesthetic and representational questions to encompass issues of the communicative dimensions and social implications of cinema.

Because of this combination of semiotic, communicative and social questions, my approach can be described as rhetorical, in the footsteps of, for example, Seymour Chatman and Wayne C. Booth. Booth, for instance, defines rhetoric quite widely, arguing that it is 'the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another.' In other words, rhetoric can be applied to all fields so long as the methods and goals of communication processes constitute the core of the study.[24] This kind of approach to narrative studies dates back to Aristotle's writings in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. Similarly as his characterization of tragedy—drama of strong emotions, such as pity and fear, and exploration of what may happen—can be seen as a first attempt to define what later evolved into the horror genre, Aristotle's description of catharsis—release of emotional tension created and solved by fictive text—is recognized as a first known attempt to map the relationship between textual elements and viewer experiences.[25] This communicative dimension of textual features has maintained its importance in the rhetoric of fiction ever since. For example, Michael Kearns contends that rhetoric is interested in the 'interaction between text and audience', in how text works as an act of communication and how textual elements affect the audience.[26] Similarly, by approaching the rhetoric of death in living dead films, I intend to highlight the communicative elements of these film texts.

The discursively structured nature of cinematic addressing makes questions of textual spectatorship unavoidable. The theoretical notion of textual spectatorship was introduced into the cinema studies by Screen theory in particular.[27] Although not a homogenous entity, Screen theory in the 1970s became known for its theorization of textual viewership and critical analysis of Hollywood's ideological viewing positions. Screen theorists drew their concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism and semiotics, discussing not only questions of aesthetics and film language

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[24] Booth 2004, xi.
[25] For example, Hiltunen 2002, xiv, 12, 16; Phelan 2005, 501–502.
[26] Kearns 1999, 6, 8.
[27] Screen theory was named after the British cinema studies magazine *Screen.* (See, for example, Kilpi 2004).

but also film as a sign system with cultural, psychological, technological and ideological dimensions. Screen theorists criticized Hollywood films for using repetitive forms in creating norms for 'realistic' and, as such, highly ideological presentation. This viewpoint along with limiting theoretical and methodological choices led them to theorize the subject positions in realistic texts and most notably in classical Hollywood films in terms of restricting the viewers' signification process. According to them, Hollywood forced its viewers into a predetermined receiving position in which, during the viewing, they merely reproduced the male and bourgeois meanings preferred in the text.[28]

This form of Screen theory has itself been disparaged for being overly deterministic, too general, essential, universalizing and transhistoric or ahistoric. The critics hold that Screen theorists take into account only the cinematic form, ignoring socio-cultural or other contexts. In doing so, Screen theory disregards the main idea of semiotic theory of multiple significations and meanings by claiming that all viewers interpret the same text in the same way and, significantly, that all texts work in the same way. Critics have also found problematic the highly abstract level of the theory because it did not allow any empirical research and therefore alienated the actual viewer from the reception process.[29]

Some of the most vocal critics of Screen theory came from the cultural studies tradition, which set aside the deterministic view of a textual viewer and engaged instead with the diversity of actual processes of viewing. Cultural studies shifted the focus on the real viewers as an active force while safeguarding the original text as a source of fascination in the cinematic experience.[30] However, the viewers' intensive relationship to the cinematic text motivates the continuing relevance of Screen theory. As Andrew Tudor notes, Screen theory generated in most parts the terms for studying spectatorship, subjectivity and film/viewer relationships.[31] Now that empirical studies have provided a

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[28] For example, Creed 2000, 77; Tudor 1999, 84–104; Williams 1995, 1–3; Klinger 1995 (1984), 81–83; Moores 1993, 12–16; Ridell 1990, 7–9; Rosen 1986, 159. Also, the Hollywood realistic form is compared with avant-garde cinema which Screen theorists saw as more open for different interpretations and ideologies. However, as Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson emphasize, the classical audiences were already actively engaged in interpreting the events and film texts. While wishing to steer clear of too much openness, classical narration still resisted the idea of a passive viewer. (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 37–39.)

[29] For example, Landsberg 2009, 223–224; Tudor 1999, 106; Morley 1992, 60–71; Moores 1993, 12–16; Ridell 1990, 20; Rosen 1986, 163; Williams 1995, 3–4; Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 37; Mayne 1995 (1993), 157–162.

[30] Mayne 1995 (1993), 157; Williams 1995, 3–4.

[31] Tudor 1999, 107.

more detailed understanding of the viewing processes, it is useful to turn the discussion back to a theoretical understanding of viewing. Textual spectatorship can thus be critically re-evaluated and re-formulated on the basis of empiric information, leading to new starting points for empirical studies as well. Tudor also maintains that the theoretical and empirical film/viewer relationships continue to interact with one another in any audience-related study: the debates on both actual viewers (subjects) and textual viewers (objects) continue to exist.[32]

I will refer to the redefined version of Screen theory—which discusses the re-entry into textual spectatorship in a less textually deterministic manner—as apparatus theory.[33] In this way, by naming the re-entry, I distinguish myself from Screen theory's psychoanalytical and Althusserian theoretical background, and will rather emphasize the critical cultural studies approach to viewing. Moreover, I prefer 'apparatus theory' as a term, because the concept of apparatus highlights the materiality and medium-specificity of the chosen medium, both in general and in cinema in particular. Apparatus includes elements that enable, limit and change medium-specific expressions and communication, foregrounding the communicative and enacting role of a certain technology without being limited to technological possibilities and constraints. Apparatus is also a social and cultural product, because the social and cultural uses of certain technologies bring the apparatus to life.[34] As Karen Barad argues, an apparatus produces certain kinds of existence, knowledge and experience. Apparatuses are not fixed entities, but are open to changes and re-articulations: 'apparatuses do not simply change in time, they materialize through time', Barad claims.[35] Labeling the re-entry of textual spectatorship to Screen theory as apparatus theory makes it possible to address the ways in which the cinematic apparatus materializes through certain kinds of technologically, rhetorically, socially and culturally formulated spectatorships.

In a similar fashion, Screen theory can be 'updated' as apparatus theory by problematizing its one-sided understanding of communication and by questioning its dismissal of the actual viewer. Moreover, the methodological take of this approach should be situated in the broader theoretical understanding of film/viewer relations,

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[32] Tudor 1999, 194. See also Hansen 1991, 6.
[33] The term 'apparatus theory' was already used in reference to the Screen theory of the 1970s, but the term has since been assigned to newer writings in particular within this tradition, because the earlier label is closely associated with the 1970s writings of the *Screen* magazine. (For example, Mayne 1995 (1993), 156.)
[34] See also Heath 1985 (1980), 1–6; McQuail 2006 (2003), 42–43, 45, 49.
[35] Barad 1998, 98–103 (quote from page 102).

which helps to loosen the deterministic stance. The viewing positions should be regarded as possibilities created for the viewer, not as constricting and forcing positions that dictate the actual viewing process. This, again, enables systematic analysis of textually produced reception structures.[36] Understanding spectatorship in this way makes the methodological and theoretical relevance of apparatus theory clear. In the case of the living dead films, textual spectatorship provides a fruitful starting point for recognizing how these films articulate and negotiate cultural understandings of death for the viewers.

Furthermore, because my study approaches the viewers' relations to death through the cinematic text, I will focus on how the textual addressing of actual viewers is connected to the films' narrative structures. This brings to the fore narratological theories, which will give insights into the ways cultural narratives and their specific elements, such as textual spectatorship, are constructed. In my understanding, narration is more than a collection of certain techniques and signification systems, and my understanding can thus be considered to follow the premises of postclassical narratology.

Postclassical narratology differs, says Gerald Prince, from classical narratology in its emphasis and rethinking of central discussions and elements of classical narratology. Whereas classical narratology (formalist/structuralist approaches) paid attention to the narrative form, techniques and elements, postclassical narratology concentrates on the contextual elements of the narrative: its goals, reception strategies, the viewer's role and different socio-cultural contexts.[37] In the absence of any fundamental difference, classical and postclassical narratology are separated by the questions they ask. What is a narrative, asks classical narratology, and is countered by postclassical narratology seeking to know what a narrative does. This perspective is visible, indeed, in my interest in what the dramatizing and narrating of death does in and through the living dead films.

However, the postclassical approach to narratology has been criticized as well. The recognized problems are mostly linked to the possibilities of separating narratives from the structural and formalist approaches altogether. If the postclassical approach to narrative fails to see the constructiveness of narration—or its semiotic and discursive level—narration threatens to become a simplified and empty concept which can be easily replaced by other forms of discourses or assimilated into other approaches.[38] The structural elements of the narrative, or how stories are narrated, need to be included in

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[36] Williams 1995, 4; Mayne 1995 (1993), 157; Ridell 1990, 36, 41.
[37] Prince 2008, 115–121.
[38] See, for example, Kindt 2009, 44; Prince 2008, 122; Chatman 1990, 309–315, 320–323; Kearns 1999, 9.

the postclassical approaches, even though the emphasis would be on the communicative and contextual dimensions. In my analysis, I will refer to concepts of classical narratology, such as narrative perspective or character construction, but I will deploy these to study the themes of death, not to describe the content of the films as such. Similarly, Ansgar Nünning argues that classical narratology offers field-tested analytic tools to which postclassical narratology adds contextual meanings. This shifts narratology from content description to vital contributions to the different cultural and interdisciplinary debates (such as understandings of death).[39]

However, postclassical narratology is not a unified or coherent approach. Rather, there are multiple approaches to what a narrative does. This multiplicity is engagingly present in David Bordwell's functionalist approach, in Mieke Bal's cultural approach and in Michael Kearns' rhetorical approach to narratives, which all consider the formalist questions to remain as part of the narratological debates, although they emphasize these questions slightly differently than in classical narratology.

Firstly, in his *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), David Bordwell already defined narrative as a process where the story material is actively arranged and read out of the text. Later, he refined his definition as functionalist, which can indeed be regarded as a postclassical approach.[40] Functionalism, as Noël Carroll explains, acknowledges film as 'designed to perform some purpose'. Because a film's narration and style support the achievement of the film's goal(s), the functionalist approach is interested in how the chosen elements are used to serve the film's function.[41] Bordwell, similarly, stresses the film's narrative as a process that is designed to fulfill some purposes and has specific goals and effects. By concentrating on one function, Bordwell argues, the narratological analysis can do much more than merely describe the narrative techniques and separate practices systematically as is the custom in classical narratology. The narrative techniques can rather be used as manifestations of the goals in order to analyze the narration holistically.[42]

Secondly, Mieke Bal represents a cultural approach to narratology. Similarly to Bordwell, she argues that the narrative should not be seen only as a selection of semiotic objects that can be arranged in certain ways. Instead of justifying her conclusion with functionalist arguments, however, she underlines the narrative's role as a cultural and

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[39] Nünning 2009, 52–56, 60–63.
[40] Bordwell 1985, xi–xiv; Bordwell 2004, 204.
[41] Carroll 2003, 141.
[42] Bordwell 2004, 204–205, 207–212.

discursive phenomenon which participates in cultural and historical processes.[43] Her cultural studies take highlights the narratives as active cultural modes and forces, which work beyond fiction, too, and provide wider cultural models for making sense of experiences.[44]

Thirdly, as a representative of postclassical rhetorical narratology, Michael Kearns pays attention to the ways in which texts and audience's experiences are linked together. His approach also signifies a synthesis between classical and postclassical approaches: the discursive elements of narratives stand in relation to the communication, goal-oriented narrations and cultural effects of the narratives. His rhetorical approach brings the spotlight on how a receiver should 'take the text', not only what a story does.[45]

I will draw on these three different postclassical viewpoints (functionalist, cultural and rhetoric) to create a synthesis for a narrative addressing of death. To begin with, how is the purpose of encountering death executed in the narration of the living dead films? Moving on, I will look into the ways in which such narratives of death participate in the death-related cultural processes. And finally, how are the two levels—narrative purposes and cultural processes—linked through the process of textual addressing of the American living dead films? I adopt these understandings of 'narrative', because they foreground the various techniques and structures used in the death scenes of these films and because they also connect cinematic death to cultural and genre processes. And since I emphasize the communicative elements of narrated death more than the systematic analysis of all narrative elements of the living dead films, my approach is, indeed, postclassical. This makes my reading both functionalist and, even more especially, thematic. This, according to Heta Pyrhönen, is not concerned with what narratives are as a whole, but how they conceptualize and address a certain theme, such as the theme of death.[46]

Consequently, in my close reading I will apply postclassical narratology as a methodological tool to the narrative practices of representing and negotiating death at the textual level, and make use of apparatus theory for exploring, methodologically as well, the textually constructed viewing positions for interpreting death. In order to combine these two methodological perspectives on the living dead films, I will draw on socially

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[43] Bal 1999 (1997), 9, 14, 222.
[44] See also Erll 2005, 89, 91–92.
[45] Kearns 1999, 2–18.
[46] Pyrhönen 2005, 597.

and semiotically inclined genre theory as a more general theoretical framework, which provides me with a systematic description of Hollywood's cinematic mechanisms. Through specific cultural conventions, genre theory also brings production, film texts and reception together. It has multiple functions both generally and in this study, helping us in classification, describing films as social and cultural practices, and taking into account the historical processes of standardized meaning making.

As a concept, 'genre' enables comparisons between different films with similar features, such as the living dead films which deal with death-related topics, embodiments of death and experiences of death. Basically, this classifying and categorizing function is what the notion of genre is traditionally understood to do, already present in the etymology of the word: the French *genre* refers to a type or kind. Genre has a long history within literary studies where it has been used extensively for classificatory purposes. The concept has also been adopted in other fields.[47]

In cinema studies, too, the concept carries a classificatory function: films of the same genre are supposed to share similar textual or iconographic features.[48] However, individual films do not always fit into the recognized genre categories, and even within a same genre films may differ to a great extent. For example, in the case of the living dead films, or horror films more generally, it is difficult to find an adequate definition that would allow the dynamic, historical and changing manifestations of genre while still maintaining some of the notion's classificatory uses. All in all, the classificatory dimension of genre does not alone provide the whole picture of the concept and its analytical potential. Moreover, purely classificatory uses of the concept easily end up simplifying the dimensions and uses of genre.[49]

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[47] In retrospect, even genre theories have been dated back to Aristotle's *Poetics* For the history of genre as a concept, see Neale 2000, 9, 21–23, 207. Nowadays, genre is a popular concept in literature, cinema, television, music and art studies, as well as in linguistics. (See, for example, a collection of genre essays *Genre—Tekstilaji* edited by Anne Mäntynen, Susanne Shore & Anna Solin in 2006.)

[48] Although the first writings of film genres were published in the 1940s and 1950s (by theorists such as the French André Bazin), the 1960s and 1970s debates over how genre categories are created established the concept of genre as an integral part of film studies. (Neale 2000, 10.) The emergence of 'genre' was widely discussed in the 1970s in particular. Such questions were asked as how we recognize films that belong to the same genre until we have an understanding of the genre, and, conversely, how we define a genre if there are no contents, or films. See, for example, Tzvetan Todorov's discussion over theoretical and historical genres (Todorov 1975 (1970), 13–14), Tudor's defense of historical genres (Tudor 1995 (1973), 5, 7) or Buscombe's idea of theoretical genres (Buscombe 1995 (1970), 19).

[49] Classificatory approaches that I refer to here are often called synchronic, as opposed to diachronic approaches. Synchronic approaches emphasize clear borders and static features in each genre, whereas diachronic approaches draw attention to constantly redefined genre boundaries and features. (Jenkins & Karnick 1995, 2–3.) Similarly, my view can be described as leaning toward the diachronical, because I recognize both the standardization and differentiation as being part of the historical process where genres are made.

I therefore agree with John Frow, who argues that individual films do not belong to genres, but rather participate in generic processes (even in several genres at once). Films use generic processes for some purpose and thus formulate genres.[50] Each and every new living dead film takes part in its genre by negotiating the meaning of both death and the cinematic ways of its cultural representation and by inviting the viewers to join in the negotiation. This invites an alternative definition of genre: more than a classification system, genre is cultural practice. This broader and more dynamic view incorporates the classificatory function but emphasizes social and historical processes where industrial mechanisms, genre aesthetics and cultural forms of signification are formulated in relation to one another. In this broader sense, genre theory provides an approach that connects the production context, film contents and textuality as well as the reception conventions with a culturally specific whole. It is within this whole that all of these aspects are seen to share certain norms, expectations and conventions that guide the meaning making.[51]

Also, socially and semiotically inclined thinking on genre makes provision for the socio-cultural and historical contexts where these negotiations over genre boundaries, genre-related meanings and generic addressing take place.[52] Genre theory thus highlights not only the shared characteristics and conventions recognized and negotiated both by production and reception, but also gives prominence to an individual genre's socio-cultural dimensions and processes in history, emphasizing that films participate in the constant making of the genre and its role in the society.[53]

My starting point in this work is that in academic genre theories, too, generic narrations need to be understood as dynamic and functional cultural processes. Within cinema studies, the dynamic and processual viewpoint to genre has been well developed by Rick Altman, Steve Neale and Richard Maltby. They have insisted on genre as a communicative process in which meanings are built into and read out of the text. While their approach to genre is textual and semiotic, it nevertheless stresses historically varied

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[50] Frow 2006, 2, 28. See also Gledhill 2000, 221–223; Ridell 1998a, 127.

[51] See, for example, Altman 1999, 166, 178; Hietala 2006, 103.

[52] Among others, Schatz (1981, viii) argues that genre as a narrative medium provides a cultural framework in which films are produced and consumed. See also Neale 1995 (1990), 180; Moine 2008 (2002), xvi, 166; Jenkins & Karnick 1995, 8–9.

[53] Also, Moine 2008 (2002), 63–65, 71; Gledhill 2000, 241. For example, Joseph Grixti stresses the importance of horror films' reflecting and commenting both cultural and personal issues, contexts and understandings. The cultural practices and society's norms and values construct and affect not only a single film, or a viewer, but the institutional conventions of cinema as well. (Grixti 1989, xii–xiii, 6–7, 22, 25, 163–164, 183–184.)

textual structures in the communication process. They all discuss how changes in the production practices have affected the fictive world of each genre, how an individual genre's strategic goals are visible in the textual (semiotic) structures of films and how these structures are signaled to the historically specific audiences.[54]

Such a semiotic approach can be further developed by emphasizing the social aspect of genre in more depth. This makes it possible to elaborate a dynamic model, as Finnish media researcher Seija Ridell does by distinguishing three analytically different dimensions in studying the processes of genre-related meaning making: textual, interpretive and practical. All three dimensions, according to Ridell, are present at the levels of media production, representation and reception, and each of them can also be applied in an analysis which focuses specifically on media texts. In such cases, the textual dimension refers to the (re)presentational conventions of the media product. The viewer can then recognize the genre on the basis of these discursive traits of the text. Second, the interpretive dimension stresses the primary meanings positioned to the product and offered as primary for the actual receivers. Reception can hence produce meanings and social communities out of their interpretations. And third, the practical dimension refers to the genre's position in the media and culture as well as to the ways in which people use the media in their everyday lives and routines.[55]

In this study, I will adopt the socio-semiotic understanding of genre formulated by Ridell, because the dynamics of genre-specific address—or, more briefly, addressing—can be identified as overlapping with all three dimensions at some point. Addressing functions through the textual level, but it orientates towards reception which is at the same time presupposed in the text and mutually guides its construction. It should be stressed that textual presupposing and actual meaning making can differ from each other, which becomes obvious through a historical perspective on genres. In any case, because of the overlapping of texts, reception, production and socio-cultural contexts, the question of generic addressing opens up a fascinating world on the relationship between the horror films' spectatorship and cinematic-specific textual constructions of death.

I am aware that my theoretical departure points come from a different area than is customary in exploring viewers' relationships and reactions to the themes of horror films

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[54] Altman 1999; Altman 1995(1984); Neale 2000; Neale 1995 (1990); Maltby 2003. For an analysis of their writings, see also Frow 2006, 72–75 and Gledhill 2000, 224–225.
[55] Ridell 2006, 191–195, 206–207; Ridell 1998b, 76–80.

and the living dead films. Although, as my major theoretical background I do not use the traditions of horror criticism, such as psychoanalysis or cognitive approaches, I do refer to horror criticism later in my analysis. However, I find that horror criticism is too often hermetical and that theories from rather different research traditions, mainly from those theorizing film–viewer relationships, may widen the perspective of horror's viewership. Furthermore, the materiality of horror can also provide new insights into the theoretical debates of spectatorship and film textuality. Cinematic rhetoric of horror is embodied and it highlights the participatory role of the viewer, not only as a cognitive but sensual subject as well. Thus, the combination of these two different areas appears productive.

I am also aware that while my approach can provide new insights into the ways in which horror films construct the addressivity of certain themes, such as death, this textual approach has some other limitations. Concentrating on the textual dimensions of addressing death meets the cultural demands of postclassical narratology by participating in the socio-cultural discussion of the changing role of death in the United States, instead of discussing complex historical contexts of the analyzed films as a whole. Furthermore, my approach notes changes in film production when they have directly influenced the living dead films and their depictions of death, instead of creating a general view of Hollywood's (production) history. And even though I claim my approach to be narratological, it does not equal a coherent description of the films. Rather than providing a comprehensive interpretation of the living dead films, I focus on how death and dying is narrated. I am therefore the first to admit that there are limitations to my approach.

However, all these limitations are at the same time conscious strategies of framing and focusing. I do not intend to cover all different aspects of the living dead films, but my study participates in a wider discussion created by earlier horror criticism. The field of horror films has already been well mapped: for example, Robin Wood, Andrew Tudor, Noël Carroll and Cynthia Freeland have creditably studied the common narrative and thematic solutions of horror films; Paul Wells, David Punter and David J. Skal have considered the historical changes and production contexts of the genre; and Kendall R. Phillips, Adam Lowenstein and Carol J. Clover among others have paid attention to the socio-cultural, historical and gendered contexts of horror. Instead of trying to reinterpret all the different aspects of the horror genre, then, my aim is to build on these existing studies. My study wishes to supplement and widen the discussion by paying attention to the communicative elements of horror films. In summary, I will

systematically close read certain American living dead films through certain theoretical and methodological approaches on textual spectatorship and generic addressing. I will approach my study objects through the methodologically weighted perspectives of postclassical narratology and apparatus theory, and theoretically through the socio-semiotic understanding of genre.

Material of the Study: American Living Dead Films

I will concentrate on American genre films, because Hollywood's genre system is perhaps the best known and most influential,[56] and even if the American horror films' primary audience is national, these films also make up the international mainstream for the genre. Since World War I, Hollywood (including its horror films) has had a leading market position in the Western countries. In addition to the internationally distributed products, Hollywood films are often produced internationally as well. Since the early twentieth century, Hollywood has collected film-makers, screen writers, stories and shooting locations from different parts of the world.[57] More specifically, although undeniably American, Hollywood's living dead films exploit the undead legends from all over the world: vampires are borrowed from Eastern European folk tales, mummies are Egyptian and zombies have a Haitian background. In addition, many of the horror producers and actors, especially in the classical Hollywood era, were European immigrants, and on top of this, American audiences are far from homogenous, either, but a mix of different cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds.[58]

It can also be argued, as Barry Keith Grant does, that it is these culturally complex audience and production constructions which make American genre films interesting. The formulaic audiovisual stories have gathered wide audiences despite differences in languages, nationalities, districts or class. In this sense, the genre films can be seen to function as an ideal melting pot of American culture where the understandings of what American culture is are transmitted and transformed.[59] According to this argumentation, we have a further accentuated need to understand death-related negotiations in the living dead films: the cinematic formulations of death do not function in a vacuum, but in close relation to the society. Furthermore, this argumentation reveals

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[56] For example, Neale 2000, 21–23; Maltby 2003, 74; Ryall 1998, 327; Schatz 1981, 8.
[57] For example, Balio 1995, 32–35; Neale 2000, 222–226.
[58] See, for instance, Neale 2000, 222–226.
[59] Grant 2007, 5.

why it is important critically to approach American imagery of cinematic death from the perspective of other cultures as well. The global influence of American cultural myths requires international critique.

In order to study how death is cinematically addressed for horror audiences, I chose to concentrate on the living dead films in which the threatening element is embodied by a monstrous figure with an intimate connection to death. The living dead are located on the borderline of the living and the dead, threatening the living with their existence. It is not an unproblematic task to define the living dead precisely, as there are multiple cinematic characters that are former humans but whose unnatural relationship to dying and death has turned them into appalling and unnatural creatures. However, some definitional limits can be set for the living dead as a certain kind of monster in the horror genre. I will return to this task in more detail in chapter two, but as a starter, Richard Greene and K. Silem Mohammed define the undead as 'corporeal beings who are physically or mentally dead, but are in some way not "at rest"'.[60]

In this study, I refer to such corporeal figures either as the living dead or the undead. What matters with the living dead is the corporeality of the figures, while the undead are characterized by their problematic relationship with death. Although both terms describe mummies, vampires and zombies, I have to chosen to refer to the (sub)genre as the living dead films, partly because of its common use, but partly because this label highlights the corporeality and separates these figures from a wider problematic of the undead, which includes also other postmortem characters, such as (immaterial) ghosts.

Although the living dead characters are widely recognized monsters in the horror cavalcade, the term 'living dead films' is not a firmly established subcategory.[61] These characters are more often dealt with separately as in the cases of vampire films or zombie films. For example, although Kyle Bishop recognizes that vampires, mummies, golems (such as Frankenstein) and zombies share similar features, such as a corporeal crossing of boundaries between life and death, he nevertheless claims that zombies should be approached by themselves, mainly because of their highlighted instinctual physicality, corpse-likeness, and lacking of human qualities, mind and capability to

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[60] Greene & Mohammed 2006, xiv.

[61] However, my labeling of the living dead films follows a common procedure of horror criticism where the monsters form the basis for theoretical discussion and for the categorization of films. For example, Erich Ballinger divides horror films by monsters into the categories of supernatural, artificial or natural (humans and animals). He then subdivides them, classifying humans as transformers (Jekyll-Hyde), deviants (psychopaths) and the living dead. (Ballinger 1995 (1989), 8–9.)

speak.[62] However, I find his argument rather artificial. What I argue instead that it makes sense to compare the different undead characters, because the differentiation and standardization between these figures introduces new dimensions of undeadness.

I will hence approach the wider category of the living dead films as an analytical department for films which portray undead characters as their central sources of deadly threat. At times, undead characters appear in other genres as well. In my understanding, these films offer interesting intertextual debates between undead figures from horror and other genres. However, within this study I delimit the discussion to the horror genre, not because I argue that this is a more important genre, but because I consider that the horror genre's transgressing and violent role in the Hollywood's genre system challenges the ideals of modern death.

Even within the horror genre, there are several different undead forms, and I will concentrate on the (sub)genre's three most common undead characters: mummies, vampires and zombies. This is not to say that these three figures are the only available choices. For example, many horror scholars highlight Frankenstein as a famous undead creature along with vampires, mummies and zombies.[63] However, I have excluded Frankenstein from my material in this study, not because I would deny his undead nature, but because he is also a creation of a mad scientist. Also, rather than referring to one living person before transformation, Frankenstein is a combination of different humans.[64] Because I will later discuss the continuance between the deceased and the living dead, Frankenstein would introduce rather different questions than those raised by the three other living dead creatures. The difference is extremely pointed in their relationships to modern death and its belief in science. Mummies, vampires and zombies are rather magical creatures, and as such they contrast and challenge the idea of modern death. Simlarly John Edward Browning and Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart argue that vampires are about resisting 'the rationalism of science' whereas Frankenstein is all about 'possibilities of science'.[65] Because of this fundamental difference in the characters' approach to death, Frankenstein films are not part of my primarily material.

Also mummies, vampires and zombies articulate a slightly different relationship to death and thus slightly different experiences for the viewer both at personal and social levels. The varying histories and character traits of the undead produce differentiated

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[62] Bishop 2006, 200–201, 204–205.
[63] For example, Creed 1995, 145; Bishop 2006, 200–201, 204, 205.
[64] See also Browning & Picart 2009, xii.
[65] Browning & Picart 2009, xii.

symbolization and, thus, important diversities. At the same time, conventionalized generic narration and the use of monster create tendencies similar to the ways in which these characters are approached in the living dead films. Comparing their similarities and differences is an opportunity to recognize some more general features and interesting contradictions in the broader cinematic context of negotiation and representation of death. The comparative generalization allows me to draw a more detailed and diversified image of the relationships that actual viewers may establish with death through horror films.

As the society and generations of viewers have changed, so the living dead films produced over the decades have changed as well, and with every new film, negotiations over death have been made and remade in their generic, narrative and socio-cultural contexts. My study extends from the first American living dead films of the 1930s to films made in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. To capture the changes that have taken place in the (sub)genre, I will make use of the cinematic periods that emphasize the transitions in Hollywood production modes, reception structures and the cinema's cultural role in society.

Probably the best known classification of the Hollywood periods is given by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson in their influential book *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*. They divide Hollywood's history into three main periods: the period of early films, classical Hollywood (1917–1960) and post-classical Hollywood. In this classification, the classical period is seen as having had a controlled style, with a tendency for causality of events, psychological motivations of characters and coherent use of closures, while the studio production mode had controlled economic and technological practices and a homogenous audience. According to Bordwell et al., such elements were evident in Hollywood productions as early as 1917. They also argue that after 1960, television forced both production and reception through a series of changes which ended the studio era. This is when the economics and production modes shifted from the studio mode into a system of independent production.[66]

In my understanding, any classification needs to reflect the socio-cultural background and medium-specificity as well as genre conventions. The socio-cultural background frames the cultural uses of cinema, whereas medium provides technological

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[66] Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 4–13.

possibilities and limitations which are utilized differently by different genres according to their created conventions. This creates a loop where genre films change in relation to shifts in both cinema as a medium and to shifts in a given culture and society. Therefore, in concentrating on the living dead films, I will apply the above general classification to the more specific area of horror films with some modifications.

Instead of three periods, I will refer to four: early horror films (1908–1929), classical period (1930–1940), transitional period (1950–1975) and postclassical period (1975 onwards).[67] The best known early horror films came from Germany, including the influential and pioneering undead film *Nosferatu* (1922), but this period also included some American short films and silent films.[68] However, before the 1930s horror was still marginal at Hollywood, and I will concentrate on films made after the introduction of sound and the establishment of classical strategies of film narration. I will therefore locate the beginning of the classical horror period in the early 1930s when the first American living dead features were made.

While my study recognizes and at points concentrates on the tension between the classical and the postclassical era, I also argue that it is important to distinguish a transitional period between the classical and postclassical cycles. During this time, the narration and imagery of films, production and audiences underwent several changes. In the horror genre, this change was deeply influenced by an international horror culture, especially by British Hammer Production, which recreated the images of known monsters, including the living dead, through more graphic and colorful images. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson also emphasize that change from the classical to the postclassical period did not happen overnight but rather over several decades, and this transitional time underlines the connection between classical and postclassical eras.[69] The postclassical era, indeed, contrasts with the classical period's well-structured

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[67] Douglas Gomery applies the same classification, but with different labels. His division is based on the Hollywood industry: 'The rise of the Hollywood, from the late nineteenth century to the coming of the sound, the studio era of the 1930s and 1940s; the television broadcasting age beginning with the rise of television in the 1950s; and the era inaugurated by the coming of the feature film blockbuster in the mid-1970s.' (Gomery 1998, 246.)

[68] *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was filmed in the United States in 1908, followed by other film versions of classical horror stories (Leffler 2000, 46). Several silent horror films were shot in the 1920s, most of them starring Lon Chaney Jr. However, before the sound films, horror films remained more or less isolated productions. (Vieira 2003, 9–10, 14; Balio 1995, 298.)

[69] Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 9–10.

production mode with its more self-conscious, inter-textual and nostalgic processes and techniques of presentation.[70]

Furthermore, it is important to notice that the postclassical period is less homogenous than the classical era. Several changes have come about both in the production modes (the 1990s transnationalization of production and ownership in film industry) and in the technology and aesthetics (the digitalization of cinema).[71] However, the relation and tension between the postclassical films and the classical films has remained. Although the postclassical films in this study come from the later postclassical era (the 1990s and 2000s) with digitalized possibilities and a globalized marketing of media events, I will nevertheless use the term 'postclassical' to describe these films. I do not seize the challenge in this study, but I do recognize that we should also critically consider whether the digital era could form a separate era from the postclassical period altogether. The benefits of digitalization in creating and developing cinematic spectacles have enabled a renaissance of genres dealing with magical realism, including horror, fantasy and science fiction.

Finding thematic inspiration from Romantic horror literature and the stylistic models of German silent and expressionistic horror films, the beginning of the 1930s was a major starting point for the wider production of cinematic horror in Hollywood. At this point, Hollywood horror films utilized the newly developed classical film genre narration and made the most of the new advantages of sound technology in order to intensify anticipating and terrifying effects. The films incorporated the aesthetic influences of German expressionism (cubistic environment, lighting techniques and strong shadows) into a frightening staging and make-up which together created a distinctive style. They exploited other inventions, too, in the cinematic/filmic presentation techniques of cutting, editing, picture quality, and special effects. Such medium-specific features gave horror films and the cinematic adaptations of literary

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[70] I prefer to use the concept of postclassical horror films for two main reasons. First, and more important, this concept emphasizes the relationship between the classical and postclassical period. The classical era has maintained its significance as a reference point to later films. According to Peter Kramer (1998, 289), 'post-classicism' stresses that despite changes in style, narration and institutions there are several continuums as well, bringing the two main eras, classical and postclassical, closely together. Second, the concept refers primarily to the American film industry. Other concepts are in use as well. These include 'modern' (for instance, Buckland 1999 (1998), 167, 17 and Elsaesser 1999 (1998), 195); postmodern (for example, Waller 1987, 2, 12 and Alanen & Alanen 1985, 113); and new horror cinema (Smith 1999a (1998), for example.)
[71] For instance, Steinbock 1995, 262.

classics in particular a freshly terrifying face.[72] These features have been recognized by Bordwell as the cinema's tendency for spectacle. Indeed, when compared to literature, films, obviously, will rather show than speak of their material. Bordwell adopts Aristotle's separation of *diegesis* (telling of story) and *mimesis* (showing the story) in the cinema, giving more weight to the mimetic practices as more typical in cinematic narration.[73] Similarly, the ways in which these new monster stories could both tell and show their topics have later become associated with the birth of the golden era of Hollywood horror.

This golden age started with the Universal Studios' *Dracula*. Symbolically, the first production created a Hollywood interpretation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) to compete with the genre's international forefather, a German adaptation of *Nosferatu*. In the German version, the emphasis is more on the stylistic visual elements, whereas Hollywood not only adds sound to the story but concentrates more on the causal relationships and character motivation of the story. The film opened in February 1931 with Béla Lugosi in the leading role, and its success came as a surprise even for the producers, who saw their product turn into their studio's biggest box office hit of the year.[74] The success elevated horror themes momentarily to feature production more generally, not only at Universal but at other studios as well. The wide production inevitably developed the narration and themes of horror cinema, and the years from 1931 to 1936 witnessed several horror productions within the classical Hollywood system. However, the originality and creativity of horror films, including the living dead films, waned after the golden years. Classical Hollywood held on until the 1950s, but the horror films started to decline already before 1940s, partly because of censorship and partly because there were no new ideas.[75]

It took until the late 1950s for classical Hollywood production to renew itself in the aftermath of World War II, which had changed both cultural and production values,

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[72] For example, Balio 1995, 298–299; Tudor 1989, 27–29.
[73] Bordwell 1985, 3–15, 20.
[74] Vieira 2003, 30–35.
[75] For failing to renew horror themes, see also Wells 2002, 53; Jancovich 1992, 59; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 69; Soren 1997, 121. Moreover, as regards changing censorship, the Production code (or Hays Code) was introduced as early as the 1920s by the association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America as a form of self-regulation in response to public pressure to control the morality of Hollywood. The Production code started to exert more influence in 1934 after several public debates on the topic. Horror production suffered badly, when Britain, the most important international buyer, limited screenings of horror films in 1936 for moral reasons. (Smith 1999a (1998), 4; Balio 1995, 4, 9, 303; Skal 1993, 172; Doherty 1999, 2, 6–8; Vieira 2003, 30–35, 73, 91; Grønstad 2003, 125–127, 131; Soren 1997, 39.)

bringing an end to innocence with atomic bombs and concentration camps. Horror films found new possibilities in the apocalyptic tone and feelings of sin and guilt.[76] At the same time, the end of the classical period was closing in, as the new medium of television drastically cut movie attendance. The years of homogenous productions and audiences were over. During the years of transition, movie goers grew younger and more segmented, the old censorship model became outdated and power positions changed in the film industry while the old studios struggled. Independent productions and new narrative strategies, including apocalyptic narrations such as *Night of the Living Dead*, now gained popularity. However, these changes were rather adjustments to the turbulence in society: the transitional period is not about abandoning classical values, but about adding new influences to the tradition.[77]

According to Andrew Tudor, the postclassical horror film had differentiated itself from the classical narration by the mid-1970s. After this transition period, changes took place in postclassical narration rather than in any direct relation to classical narration.[78] This led, for example, to increased episodic structures at the expense of causal storytelling, more open endings instead of closures and more self-reflective generic narration instead of a clear plot. The viewers' knowledge of the genre conventions and mythologies also gained a bigger role, which meant that horror could concentrate on other elements of the genre, such as on special effects as in *The Mummy* (1999). These have become more impressive with the advent of new technologies and especially with digital possibilities.[79]

On the basis of this periodic distinction of the living dead films, I have chosen films from each main period: classical (1930–1940), transitional (1950–1975) and postclassical (1975 onwards). As my analysis zooms in on the living dead characters, I have picked set films of each monster—vampire, mummy and zombie—from each era of my research (except from the transitional period during which no mummy films were made in the USA). The films I have chosen are well known and have in most cases been extremely influential both within the American horror genre and in the international

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[76] See, for example, Wells 2002, 56–58; Skal 1993, 229; Tudor 1989, 39–47; Schepelern 1986, 30; Ahonen 1999, 296; Mäyrä 1998, 54.
[77] See, for instance, Gomery 1998, 247–249; Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 331–332; Vieira 2003, 173; Smith 1999a (1998), 6–7, 14, 16; Cook 1999 (1998), 230; Maltby 1999 (1998), 34; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 97.
[78] Tudor 1989, 150–151.
[79] For example, Buckland 1999 (1998), 167, 17; Elsaesser 1999 (1998), 195; Cook 1999 (1998), 231; Carroll 1990, 210–213; Tudor 1989, 179–180; Sjögren 1989 (1985), 25–26.

horror culture. More importantly, these films represent the typical features of their own period. From the wide selection of possible films, I have selected eight (8) films for close reading.

Films from the 1930s are the first widely spread cinematic versions of vampires, mummies and zombies. From the classical period, I have chosen Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), Karl Freund's *The Mummy* (1932) and Victor Halper's *White Zombie* (1932). Mummy films were not made in Hollywood during the transitional period, but I have chosen a vampire and a zombie film to be able to explore the changing genre conventions both in reception—films such as *The Return of Dracula* (1958) by Paul Landres were aimed for younger viewers—and in production—George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) is an example of change towards independent productions. Lastly, the postclassical period is represented by films which focus on market synergies and the branding of films. They exploit the earlier horror stories while also challenging the horror genre's boundaries and traditions: Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Stephen Sommer's *The Mummy* (1999) and Paul W.S. Anderson's *Resident Evil* (2002).

Furthermore, these films are not just a random selection, but are in one way or another connected. They tap into discussions with earlier folklore and literature traditions of the undead, and build on a repetition of films with the same topic. The films I have chosen can be considered to be adaptations, remakes or comments. Scott A. Lukas and John Marmysz, for example, argue that the cinematic remaking, repetition and recreation takes advantage of technological innovations, but more importantly, they react to cultural changes. The cultural need and desire to repeat certain stories, formulas and themes reveals the existence of timeless issues, such as death, but every new version, even the 'bad' or 'not–too–interesting' versions, show that there has occurred a desire to rework, and enter into a dialogue with, these issues within that genre, with other cultural products and with society.[80] Similarly, I will approach the individual films from the premise that the different characters and films provide repetition and recreation, which makes comparison all the more interesting. And yet these characters and films emphasize certain new dimensions in their relationship to death and in the ways they address death for the viewers.

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[80] Lukas & Marmysz 2009, 2–5, 12, 16.

Although I have made the three most common and most recognized undead characters of Hollywood films the object of my study and even if I have tried to select as representative films as possible, eight films cannot possibly create an extensive picture of the whole (sub)genre. Also, the films selected to this study are fairly acknowledged, and the image of the living dead category could be rather different if the chosen films were more marginal, or more formulaic or shallow, as many cheap productions in the horror genre unquestionably are. However, with the help of the selected films that were influential in their own socio-cultural context (and afterwards), I intend to propose certain topical death-related structures and generic addressing modes, which future research will hopefully further contest and try out. It is not my intention to provide a watertight image of the living dead films as a subgenre, but rather to use these eight films to suggest a starting point for defining and approaching these films and conceptualizing their relations to viewers.

Structure of Study and Posing of Research Questions

Through the selected examples, I will ask how modern death is addressed for horror audiences in the American living dead films and how this addressing has changed over the decades. In the different chapters of my study, I will try to answer this question from different perspectives: through characters, death events and death-related symbolism. Moreover, I will keep returning to the living dead characters throughout and examine how these embodiments of death assume a central role in all the different dimensions of the addressing of death.

Before turning to a more detailed analysis of my research material, however, I will take the second part of this introductory chapter to elaborate what I mean by the notion of addressing. I will outline my theoretical and methodological uses of both generic addressing and textual spectatorship. Furthermore, I will consider theoretical discussions with Screen and apparatus theorists (such as Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, Paul Willemen, Colin MacGabe, Franco Casetti and Judith Mayne), with narratological theorists (David Bordwell, Mieke Bal and Seymour Chatman among others) and with genre theorists (including Rick Altman, Steve Neale, Richard Maltby, Christine Gledhill, John Frow and Seija Ridell). I will draft the analytical framework which will be the basis

for my exploration and close reading of generic addressing in the living dead films during the past decades.

After the introductory chapter, I will tackle the question of addressing in the living dead films through my research materials. I will start from the characters as discursive elements which not only mediate certain existents of death, but also mediate different death-related responses and emotions. In the first analysis chapter, *Embodying Death*, I will examine the structures of character engagement, then, that enables the viewer to experience death from different points of view.

In the second analysis chapter, *Narrating Death*, I will proceed to analyze the death events, because such events and the characters (actors) have been identified as the key defining elements of the story by the narrative theories.[81] I will therefore concentrate on how death events are depicted in medium-specific and genre-specific ways within the narration of the living dead films. How is death used as an important narrative turning point and what are the ways in which the generic use of death events mediate death and address the horror viewer?

The last analytical chapter, *Symbolizing Death*, seeks answers to the addressing of death in a slightly different manner. Whereas the two previous chapters focus on *how* death is addressed, this last chapter also analyzes *what* is addressed, or what kind of social and cultural functions these films can be seen to serve. As postclassical narratology is fond of saying, the mere form would only map the different modes of address, whereas the relation to death also has a function, a purpose.

In *Symbolizing Death* I will thus consider how death and the embodiments of death are used to express different social values and cultural allegories. I will discuss how each living dead character mediates death-related meanings, inspiring and articulating multiple social allegories and tasks through a close relationship to death. Mummy films, vampire films and zombie films each have their preferred themes of death: while mummy films dissect practices of death rituals, vampire films deal with linkages of sex and death, and zombie films thrive on the frontal and destructive force that death has on a society's structures at both material and ideological levels. By emphasizing certain dimensions of death more than others, these films also offer different interpretative dimensions of death for viewers.

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[81] For example, Bal 1999 (1997), 5.

The final chapter, *Transforming Traditions of Rhetoric of Death*, functions as a conclusion of the previous chapters, making it possible to summarize, in a more systematic manner, the changes in the strategies of addressing death. I will draw a summarizing picture of the evolving processes of generic addressing, of the living dead films, and of the ways in which (modern) death has been negotiated and offered for the viewers to interpret. This will, I hope, show how the American living dead films have partaken in the negotiation and challenging of modern death, and how they have invited their viewers to do so, too. I will discuss how the films' depictions of death have been suggestive of socio-cultural practices of death and have both anticipated and participated in the changes in death-related attitudes.

My study can hence be seen as a process which starts from a more clear emphasis on the semiotic or discursive level of films, progressing to a wider approach to encompass social practices of film. I will demonstrate how both the discursive elements and socio-cultural contexts and functions are linked already at the textual and symbolic level of films, and how the addressing will invite the viewers to engage in the complex process of textual and socio-cultural meaning making. In other words, as a consequence of my approach, I will discuss how the living dead films function as a public space where understandings of modern death are negotiated.

1.2. Generic Addressing and Positioning of Viewer

Perspectives on Textual Spectatorship

All films are made to be viewed. The film text always presupposes the existence of a viewer and requires an embodied response.[82] Here, I will therefore debate the communicativeness of cinematic text, processes of generic addressing and structures of textual spectatorship. As such, the subchapter will serve as an introduction to the theoretical and methodological background of my study about the addressing of death for viewers in the American living dead films.

There are several analytical labels to describe the process whereby a film text presupposes the existence of the viewer—and not just any actual viewer, as Franco Casetti says, but the possibility of a viewer.[83] These labels include positioning, point-of-view and enunciation,[84] to name a few, but I prefer to use the term of addressing because it includes a component of activity: addressing is not in itself a textual position, but rather refers to a shifting process between multiple possible positions offered for the viewer. This approach combines film to the dynamics of reception. Addressing thus pertains to the multi-staged and dynamic process in which text prescribes meanings in medium- and genre-related ways, invites viewers to read these meanings accordingly, and also assumes certain responses and experiences.[85] Addressing is tied to the ways in which the film both imagines, and offers itself to, the viewers, without determining a priori the readings and experiences of an actual viewer. It is a concept which highlights the rhetorical communicativeness of films and emphasizes the role of film texts as central parts of this communication.[86]

We can dissect the communicative specificity of film texts by utilizing Stuart Hall's well-known and influential encoding / decoding model. Hall formulated his model

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[82] Williams 1995, 9; Sobchack 1995 (1992), 37; Casetti 1998 (1996), 9.
[83] Casetti 1998 (1996), 46.
[84] See, for example, MacCabe 1986 (1976), 184; Casetti 1998 (1996), 18–22.
[85] See also Frow 2006, 72–76; Ridell 2006, 207–209; Ridell 1998a, 127–128; Ridell 1998b, 54–55; Mayne 1995 (1993), 157. Moreover, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia for Narrative Theory* Irene Kacandes defines 'address' as a narrative act that identifies the receiver. This direct recognition of the viewer thus also demands the receiver to get involved with the narration, and invites the receiver to experience the events at a personal and emotional level. (Kacandes 2005, 4–5.)
[86] Casetti 1998 (1996), 9, 44.

as an answer to the critique of rather linear understandings of communication.[87] His model of encoding and decoding maintains the same construction of 'sender—message—receiver', but contrary to linear designs, he does not assume that encoded and decoded messages are the same. Rather, the effects of decoded meanings cannot be dictated, although some preferred or dominating meanings can be proposed to the viewer. The actual viewer has in principle the power to choose from among the available meanings according to his/her background, competences, uses and gratifications, or even to oppose the offered meanings altogether.[88] Judith Mayne argues that this model includes not only how texts are constructed or interpreted, but it also sheds light on how texts take part in wider cultural negotiation processes over meanings by providing a certain form and frame.[89]

The encoding / decoding paradigm appears to be especially fruitful in the analysis of genre films in terms of conventionalized communication, as Ridell suggests. The model does, after all, enable the study of genre conventions that drive both the encoding and decoding processes.[90] The encoding–decoding model can therefore be taken as a starting point to formulating a dynamic, socially and semiotically oriented model of genre which includes and approaches generic functions at three different levels—at the level of film texts, production and reception.[91] The encoding of meanings in genre films is guided by Hollywood's production practices, modes and technologies as well as by cultural and genre conventions. Moreover, encoding decisions do not exclude intertextual elements, which similarly address viewers in their own ways, or extra-textual factors such as age limits, distribution strategies, advertisement and institutional

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[87] For example, Robert Huesca has summed up the history of changing communication theory in his article *From Modernization to Participation: The Past and Future of Development Communication in Media Studies* (2003). His main argument is that communication theory's key shift has been from positivist and linear models to more participatory models of communication. In the 1960s, the linear processes where communication was seen as messages transferred from sender to receiver were discussed, for example, by Shannon and Weaver (1964), Lasswell (1964) or Berlo (1960). However, there was pressure already during the 1970s towards a more processual understanding of communication, and today's communication models emphasize receiver participation in the communication process, either by meaning-making or even through mobilized and interactive participation. (Huesca 2006 (2003), 51–53, 57–58, 63–67.)

[88] Hall 2001 (1980), 166–169, 172–175.

[89] Mayne 1995 (1993), 171.

[90] Ridell 1998a, 127–131.

[91] Several theorists have stressed genre's nature as a process or contract in which the film text, production, and audiences take part: Schepelern (1986, 11–15), Tudor (1989, 5–6; 1995 (1973), 10), Grant (1995, 115), Gledhill (2000, 223), Frow (2006, 10) and Moine (2008 (2002), 89-92, 206), for example.

criticism which touch the expectations both film-makers and viewers have of genre films.[92]

In analyzing the cinematic processes of meaning making from the viewpoint of a social semiotic genre model, the role of the audiences should also be taken into account. As Ridell pinpoints, viewers have internalized generic conventions which they employ competently in their decoding.[93] Yvonne Leffler presents the complementing view that in the horror genre in particular, where unrealistic and often violent images can overwhelm the viewer, the whole communication process depends on the generic knowledge and skills of the viewer. At the same time, the generic competences help the viewer to keep in mind the constructed nature of the material presented.[94] Furthermore, by being based on and offering certain reception modes, each genre invites its viewers to participate in specific communities, whether imagined or real. The communal dimension of genre films is a central part of genre-related pleasure while also enabling negotiations over understandings and expectations of the genres themselves.[95]

In other words, genre processes affect both encoding and decoding. Reciprocally, it is possible to argue on the basis of Hall's model, as Ridell does, that because encoding and decoding are generic, all communication is indeed generic. Hall's model thus channels attention to the generic practices of decoding.[96] Although not dictated as an action, viewing is still governed by socially constructed rules, as Kearns argues. At one level genre can be seen as a set of rules that guides the perception, and although these rules do not control the readings, they help the viewer to process genre films, generic meanings and generic practices.[97] Even so, like any encoding / decoding practices, communicated generic rules—and by this token, genres themselves—are negotiated and multidimensional cultural processes. To Altman, they are struggles between the different users of the genre. He goes on to argue that different participants of communication processes (producers, distributors, audiences and critics) keep creating conflicting uses and interpretations of genres and thus constantly negotiate over the genre's boundaries.

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[92] Moine 2008 (2002), 108, 116, 128–129, 146; Neale 2000, 39, 43; Neale 1995 (1990), 162–166, 177); Maltby 1995, 112; Cawelti 2004, 135; Altman 1999, 90–96, 156–160; Altman 1995 (1984), 27–28.
[93] Ridell 1998a, 128.
[94] Leffler 2000, 236. See also Telotte 1987, 115–116; Freeland 2000, 5–7.
[95] Altman 1999, 158–165; Ridell 1998a, 130–131.
[96] Ridell 1998b, 45–47.
[97] Kearns 1999, 70–71.

They participate both in the meaning making and in the making of genres and their rules.[98]

Understood in this multidimensional manner, Hall's encoding–decoding model assumes a viewer who is actively engaged in the decoding. According to Mayne, this is also one of the points where Screen theory made a fundamental mistake in the 1970s. Screen theorists presumed a passive viewer who would and could only submit to the textual strategies employed by the encoder.[99] This misreading of the viewer's role can be described by referring to Casetti's distinction between Screen theorists' 'decoders' and the notion of 'interlocutors' as used in more refined apparatus theory. Whereas decoders merely open the encoded messages, interlocutors participate in the making of the story that is addressed to them.[100] The renewed theoretical understanding of a textual viewer already presupposes an active viewer. The viewer is needed to complement the film in the process of cinematic circulation of meanings.[101]

The same idea of complementing is seen in one of the most pervasive models of narratology, that is, in the Russian formalists' classification between *syuzhet* and *fabula*. *Syuzhet* is the 'how' of the story, how it is presented and expressed through narration and other discursive strategies in the film material, while *fabula* is the chronological reading of the events and cause-effect chains put together by the viewer. The story can be seen as a product of the viewer's active participation which, however, is cued by the film material.[102] Although these terms have been translated into English in many different ways, such as plot and story[103] by David Bordwell, and fabula and story[104] by Mieke Bal, I will adopt Seymour Chatman's concepts of discourse and story, mostly because of his rhetorical emphasis of the division.[105] Unlike Bordwell's plot or Bal's fabula which refer more to the logically related elements of the story, Chatman's discourse gives prominence to the expressiveness of narrative elements.

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[98] Altman 1999, 99. See also Moine 2008 (2002), 93; Sobchack 1995 (1992), 52–54.
[99] Mayne 1995 (1993), 172–175.
[100] Casetti 1998 (1996), 4–7.
[101] See also Sobchack 1995 (1992), 45.
[102] See, for instance, Bordwell 1985, 49–57; Bal 1999 (1997), 5–7; Chatman 1978, 9; Smith 1995, 74.
[103] Bordwell 1985, 49–50.
[104] Bal 1999 (1997), 5–6.
[105] Chatman 1978, 9. Tzevan Todorov uses the concepts of *histoire / discourse*, and in his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1972), Gérard Genette names *histoire* and *recít* (discourse), adding one new component, narration or narrating, to refer to the producing of narrative action in the texts. Still, even with this new dimension, he maintains the main tension between story and discourse. (See, for example, Bordwell 1985, 49–57.)

Furthermore, through the discursive level it is possible to approach not only how a story is cued for a viewer, but also the medium-specificity of this cuing. Indeed, as Ari Hiltunen argues, Aristotle's theories already assumed that a story can maintain identifiable elements from one medium to another[106], but Bal notes that the ways in which story is converted into discourse, into signs, is medium-specific.[107] Similarly, Chatman contends that in the communication process of the (generic) narrative, the discourse is the performance and the story is the abstract level to be read out of that performance.[108] Chatman's use of 'discourse' includes this performative connotation, but similar functions are recognized also by Bordwell, whose *suyzhet* identifies both the dramaturgical (plot) and technological processes (style) from narration. By incorporating style into an entity of its own, Bordwell underlines its importance in films and its participation in the viewer's construction of a story.[109]

Moreover, when looked at from the perspective of postclassical narratology, as is already anticipated in Bordwell's early writings, the usefulness of this distinction is further highlighted, because it gives access to how the viewer might interpret the story.[110] This separation between story and discourse is meaningful in analyzing the film–viewer relationship, because it reminds us that the film material itself is not the story, but the story must be read out of it. As Murray Smith and Marie-Laure Ryan point out, narration is necessarily part of communication because it provides material yet depends on the viewer's construction of story and response to that material.[111]

Several reception studies, including those made within the field of cultural studies, have been interested in how an actual viewer creates the story from the discourse. However, my emphasis is on how the text invites the viewer to read itself and how the text, as part of this addressing activity, proposes the story to be created in reception. Drawing on Hall's understanding of his model, Ridell argues that audience members may interpret the text in diverse ways, but they are not able to control how the

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[106] Hiltunen 2002, 68.
[107] Bal 1999 (1997), 8.
[108] Chatman 1978, 19, 37, 43.
[109] Bordwell 1985, 49–53.
[110] Bordwell 1985, 49–57. David Bordwell also explains the viewer's experience as that of reading the material and filling in the gaps. As such, film experience appears as a constructivist approach, which compares viewing to a hypothesis process: the viewer keeps testing his/her hypothesis throughout the film. This active and cognitive process is related to the perceptual capacities, to the film itself, to the expectations and to the background knowledge. Bordwell recognizes four ways of composing the film experience: through organizing the story material, through realistic motivation so that the events appear believable (in their own context), through transtextual motivations (such as generic knowledge), and through artistic motivation (style). (Bordwell 1985, 30–33, 36.)
[111] Smith 1995, 74; Ryan 2004, 9.

text is constructed as an industrially produced object.[112] Or, following Dennis Giles, the 'final' meaning in this negotiation process is neither totally the same as the one encoded in the film by the producers, but nor are we talking about a completely individual experience.[113] Instead, as a shared experience with other viewers ('imagined community'), the film experiences enter the public. And public here refers not only to the public space of movie theaters, but also to the ways in which film texts create a public space by introducing certain themes and how they provide particular experiences and suggest certain meaning-making processes to the viewers.

In short, both the encoding–decoding model and the tension between story and discourse presume that there are certain meanings built into the text and suggested as primary for the viewers and introduced in the public debate. In the case of the living dead films, the relationships with deaths are not random, but the death scenes in horror texts suggest certain experiences, emotions and interpretations over some others. The ways in which the textuality of living dead films encounters and challenges modern death in the different decades provide interesting avenues to discussing how these films have taken part in the public debates over modern death. Because death is constructed centrally in narration, it is important to look at the interpretational possibilities communicated to the viewer through the narration strategies of the living dead films.

As both apparatus theorists and narratological scholars argue, the reception of a film is therefore always connected to the signifying elements of the film.[114] One way of approaching the film–viewer relation at textual level is through the concept of an implied reader (viewer), which appears as a counterpart to the implied author, a notion introduced by Wayne C. Booth. In a Boothian sense, the implied author is responsible for the narration and presupposes as its equivalent an implied reader who follows and interprets 'correctly' the rhetorical and discursive choices directed behind the narrator's back by the implied author.[115] However, the term of an implied reader was introduced by the German reception theorist Wolfgang Iser, who also used it to refer to the reader's role in textual structures (not to any actual reader).[116] The two notions do not pertain to real author and real viewer, but to the 'background' figures or positions of maker and receiver at the level of the fictional text.

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[112] Ridell 1998a, 127–131.
[113] Giles 1984, 38–39.
[114] MacCabe 1986 (1976), 194; Casetti 1998 (1996), 9.
[115] Booth 1969 (1961), 70–75, 116.
[116] Iser 1984 (1978), 27–38.

Seymour Chatman, who has discussed Booth's concepts also in the context of films, holds that the implied viewer can be seen as a position where the story is supposed to be seen, even though the real viewer does not have to take this position.[117] Markus Kuhn, then, examines the implied viewer from the perspective of film studies. According to him, we can find the implied level of the film narrative (implied director as well as implied viewer) where the film apparatus mediates events, or, in other words, in the cinematographic narration of camera shots, editing and the combination of these shots. The implied level comes alive where all of the narrative's aspects meet, including shot compositions, mise-en-scène, visual and auditive elements, lighting, set design, etc.[118]

The notions of implied author and viewer do not even refer to any certain detectable formal element, but rather they are embodiments of production and reception processes within a text. The idea of an implied viewer does not even try to map out how actual viewers use and interpret the text; it is an analytical tool for studying how the viewer is constructed in the text, how the text anticipates and offers itself to be viewed. In Franco Casetti's words, the implied viewer is a rhetorical figure through which the film text addresses its viewers.[119] In terms of genre, the implied viewer is an especially fruitful concept, encompassing the specific knowledge and understanding of generic conventions.

Because there is no explicit access to the implied level, the implied viewer always stays as a theoretical construction. And although the theoretical idea and formulation of textual spectatorship, exemplified by the implied viewer, formulates one essential viewpoint in my study, I am aware of the valid criticism of this conceptualization as well. Often, it resembles the criticism directed at Screen theory. For example, Judith Mayne points out that the implied viewer is always a researcher's construction, created for a certain purpose and from a certain historical perspective. As such, it unavoidably either marginalizes or idealizes the actual reader.[120] Similarly, the implied viewer constructed throughout this work will undoubtedly carry more or less straightforward connections to my own socio-cultural background, presuppositions and intentions for this study. However, I do not see this as a fundamental problem, because there is no direct way to any world, textual or otherwise. Even the actual viewers in empirical

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[117] Chatman 1978, 148–151. See also Ridell 1990, 45–59.
[118] Kuhn 2009, 260–262.
[119] Casetti 1998 (1996), 129.
[120] Mayne 1995 (1993), 158–162, 172–175, 180. See also Berenstein 1995, 233; Hansen 1991, 4–7.

reception studies remain artificial constructions formed selectively and approached in specific and predetermined ways.

When I use the concept of an implied viewer, it is not to suggest that there is one predetermined and existing position as the Screen theorists supposed.[121] This is even more important, since subsequent debates and empirical studies have demonstrated that theoretical ideas should not be applied too directly to actual viewing.[122] My 'implied viewer' therefore appears in relation to the refined version of theoretical spectatorship that highlights the constructiveness and multidimensionality of the implied and possible viewing positions. Later studies and criticisms have in fact replaced the view of the dominant (and ideological) position with the idea of negotiated meanings, multiple positions and fluid viewing processes. These developments in the understanding of a viewer are visible in the theoretization of textual spectatorship as well.[123]

Living dead films are particularly fascinating material, if we seek to theorize spectatorship as multidimensional constructions and if we aim to widen our understanding of textual spectatorship. These films are integral to the horror genre, which plays on expectations of confusion, doubtfulness and doubles as part of the film experience and cinematic narrative constructs. David Punter captures my point: horror films can 'use images of terror to provoke powerful tensions between different interpretations.'[124] As such, the narration of living dead films can quite freely provide alternating, contradictory and even ideologically (or morally) questionable positions. Rhonda J. Berenstein, Judith Mayne and Barbara Creed similarly argue that the exploitation of unrealistic and ambiguous fictive worlds invites the viewer to engage in multiple positions and experiences that deviate from everyday expectations. These films can cross cultural borders, pose alternative questions, and provide positions not normally attainable.[125]

The idea of multiple and competing viewing positions has been further highlighted in the postclassical era when digitalization has opened horror films to amateur and independent film-makers. There are now new and user-friendly ways to consume films and to create alternative interpretive and fan communities (on the internet in particular), which has served to emphasize the viewer's role. If not before, these

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[121] For example, MacCabe 1986 (1976), 184.
[122] For example, Williams 1995, 4; Ridell 1990, 36, 41.
[123] See, for instance, Landsberg 2009, 223–224; Mayne 1995 (1993), 172–175; Berenstein 1995, 231–235.
[124] Punter 1996b, 117.
[125] Berenstein 1995, 231–235; Mayne 1995 (1993), 158, 167, 170–171; Creed 1995, 155.

developments have by now made it clear that viewers not only view films, but participate in them.[126] In offering several and even transgressive positions for the actual viewer, the living dead films present a challenge for theoretical thinking, even if the transgressive possibilities of horror do not make these films automatically progressive. In contrast, quite often the transgressive possibilities of genre remain underexplored in several horror films. The very possibilities for transgression, however, make this genre theoretically interesting in relation to changing and transgressive viewing positions suggested by empirical audience research.

I argue that the narrative structural level of the living dead films already contains and implies elements of change as well as contradictory and challenging positions to death in place of merely creating dominant ideologies. These multiple possibilities to try out death-related positions accentuate the importance of negotiation that the actual viewer needs to take part in during the film experience. As my emphasis is on the textual level, I will concentrate on the multiple techniques and strategies of addressing through which the viewers are invited to medium- and genre-specific ways of experiencing death from varied positions. When I refer to the viewer in this study, it is to the implied viewer (unless otherwise stated), to the textual and theoretical abstraction that articulates the addressing and positioning efforts in the film text. My analysis should therefore not be read as an attempt to explain any actual viewer's experiences but as a mapping of the possibilities offered to an actual viewer by the text.

Addressing through Gazes

While there are, generally speaking, multiple positions through which the viewer can engage with the film text, the films do in actual practice use certain techniques and strategies of addressing to construct a more limited amount of implied positions. Next, I will propose how such implied viewing positions are constructed at the discursive level of film narration. From the point of view of literary texts, Michael Kearns suggests that the rhetorical features of narration (discourse) can be identified by paying attention to narrating voices.[127] In relation to cinema, however, voice refers to a slightly different idea than in literary works. To foreground the role of mimesis (showing) instead of

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[126] See, for example, Keane 2007, 1.
[127] Kearns 1999, 107.

diegesis (telling), I suggest that it is more appropriate to approach film discourse through gazes, not voices.

The importance of gazes (looking) in the dynamic process of addressing is also emphasized by the apparatus theorists,[128] to whom gazes are part of the debate of how the viewer's relationship with film material is created. Apparatus theorists argue that the available gazes control the images and transmit the implied positions for the viewer.[129] Most often apparatus theorists distinguish two dominating gazes: the gaze of the camera and that of a character.[130] These two gaze-creating positions are easily recognizable also in the living dead films. The character's gaze usually points to the reactions to the undead monsters, signifying an exemplary relationship with death and dying. The function of the camera's gaze is to reveal or hide death-related events to the viewer and create a style of images and movements that construct the violent death. Together, both of the gazes leave their mark on the narrating and experiencing of death.

Christian Metz was one of the first Screen theorists to separate the two gazes. For him, primary identification is with the camera, which allows the spectator an all-perceiving position. It may appear as an absent factor, but the camera nevertheless determines the perspective to the film. Characters provide secondary identification. Metz argues that the two identifications work as a series of mirrors, starting from the technical equipment and ending with the film's characters.[131] Laura Mulvey followed Metz's groundbreaking differentiation between camera and character, but she added the notion

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[128] The significance of looking and gazes dates back to Screen theorists. Christian Metz (1986 (1975), 244, 253) preferred the term of identification (on the basis of psychoanalytical theories), but Paul Willemen (1986 (1976), 210–211) and Colin MacCabe (1986 (1976), 184–186) already focused on 'look', which emphasizes the importance of ideologies (Marxist and Althusserian approach). For her part, Laura Mulvey (1986 (1975), 203–205) discussed the notion of 'gaze' grounded on Lacanian theories.

[129] For example, 'gaze' is highlighted in the *Routledge Encyclopedia for Narrative Theory* and defined by Roby Warhol as follows: '"The gaze" refers to the representation of the act of looking'. Furthermore, she connects it to the narrative's (gendered) point of view and the ways in which 'gaze frames the object of narration'. (Warhol 2005, 194.)

[130] Williams 1995, 1; Berenstein 1995, 231.

[131] Metz 1986 (1975), 251–260. Metz, as many other Screen theorists, based his theory on a psychoanalytical approach (both Lacanian and Freudian versions). They have fixed their interest on questions of identification through mirror stages and on issues of pleasure through looking, as in the cases of scopophilia and voyeurism. See, for example, Metz 1986 (1975), 250–251; Mulvey 1986 (1975), 200–202; Cohen 2001, 247; Plantiga & Smith 1999, 10–13. However, many scholars have also criticized the use of Lacanian theory. For instance, Clifford T. Manlove and Todd McGowan argue that theorists such as Mulvey have partly misunderstood how Lacan and Freud conceived of gaze. Their 'psychoanalytical' interpretation is therefore not psychoanalytical enough. (Manlove 2007, 83–84, 88–91, 103–104; McGowan 2003, 27, 44.) Rather than psychoanalytical perspectives as such, my interest lies on how the theorists defined the relationship between viewer and film.

of a viewer's gaze. In her theory, the viewer gazes the film through the camera's gaze, which is often locked together with the gaze of the male character.[132]

Both Metz's and Mulvey's conceptualizations emphasize the idea of chained and hierarchical positions, which was typical for several Screen theorists.[133] According to these formulations, the camera would furnish the internal logic of the story, thus dictating the perspective of the narration of the story. These chained positions highlight the ideological power structure played up by Screen theorists. According to Mulvey, for example, the one with the gaze has the power to use it, and therefore also holds power over the one who is gazed.[134]

New forms of apparatus theory have shown that although the question of power and the social implications of gazes is important—and I will return to this—no single gaze should be designated *a priori* as the dominant one. I agree with Vivian Sobchack who contends that Screen theorists were wrong to suppose that one of these gazes would create primary positioning, which would then dominate the viewing process and force ideological meanings onto the viewer.[135] When spectatorship is conceived of as an ongoing process, the film/viewer relationship manifests itself as more complex than as an idea of the viewer passively receiving the projected gazes of the camera and characters or actively mastering the image through gazing. Gazing should rather be understood as an engaging role where both the gazer and the object of the gaze affect the viewing process. Gazing becomes an affective relationship between film and viewer.

Because there appears to be no dominating gaze common to all films, the multiple, overlapping and participating gazes continually create, rather automatically, diverse structures of gazes and points of view for the viewer. For example, Norman K. Denzin argues that many gazes produce many pleasures, such as 'supervising, controlling, malefic, investigative, destructive, self-protective, clinical, erotic, indifferent, self-constructive'.[136] Moreover, Nick Brown, a representative of Screen

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[132] Mulvey 1986 (1975), 203–209. Mulvey's argument critically approaches the conventional, and thus patriarchal, gender positions in films. These determining gender positions of her theory have also invited criticism. Her theory has been seen to underestimate women's pleasure of cinematic experiences. See, for example, Clover 1996 (1992), 206; Tudor 1999, 147; Manlove 2007, 88–91; Denzin 1995, 43. Even so, even the critics have tended to acknowledge the influence and usable elements of this theory (see, for example Tudor 1999, 148–149; Manlove 2007, 103–104). Mulvey's essay has been extremely influential in feminist horror criticism, as is apparent, for example, in Carol J. Clover's study of gender in horror films. (Clover 1996 (1992), 7–10.)

[133] Moores 1993, 12–16.

[134] Mulvey 1986 (1975), 204.

[135] Sobchack 1995 (1992), 48.

[136] Denzin 1995, 48–49.

theory, recognized that the different positions provided by gazes are always connected both to the offered points of view and to the viewer's attitude (approval or disapproval) of these viewpoints. The viewer can always use double structures (camera and characters), while the same structures also create ambiguity to the narration and addressing.[137]

Occasionally, the preferred gaze turns out to be somewhat uncertain in the living dead films, This refers not only to the visual imagery, but to the sound world, or voice, of the film as well. The uncertainty is a source of ambivalence in the horror films and presupposes an active spectatorship even at the textual level.[138] I will therefore argue that when the viewer is offered both gazes, the positions they construct can be parallel and overlapping but also contradictory. As such, they can be used to create—intentionally, accidentally, intertextually or because of a historical perspective—confusion to the text, which challenges the addressing modes.

It is apposite now to turn to Paul Willemen, because he is one of the Screen theorists to present a more complex view of the nature of the interaction processes between film text and viewer. According to him, the film text does not create any dominated positions, nor does it allow the viewer to be left outside interaction. Instead, he stresses a subjective intentionality in the viewing process during which the viewer constantly moves closer and pulls away from the text. Willemen maintains that while this process is often understood to take place with the characters, it does apply to the camera as well, because the viewer's gaze is not identical with either that of the camera or of the characters. Each gaze, emanating from the viewer, camera, characters and apparatus, sees differently rather than seeing something different.[139]

According to Willemen, the non-correspondence becomes especially clear where the film apparatus returns the viewer's gaze. These moments serve to remind us that while the actual viewer is the subject watching the film, the viewer is also gazed through different aesthetic strategies which strip the viewer of his/her all-perceiving, invisible position. Willemen calls this the fourth gaze of the cinema. This apparatus gaze at the viewer is reflected back onto the viewers' faces, forcing them to confront their position and pleasure of viewing. This is not the film-maker's gaze, but it is rather created at the discursive and implied level of the text, and, as Willemen argues, it is a gaze at an

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[137] Brown 1986 (1975–1976), 111–116.
[138] See also Clover 1996 (1992), 200–205.
[139] Willemen 1986 (1976), 210–211, 215; Willemen 1995, 106–108.

'imaginary other', or the implied viewer.[140] At these moments, film discourse invites the actual viewer to become conscious of his/her viewing. The discourse summons at least an implied viewer to respond to the call, but the actual viewer may or may not acknowledge this addressing. In any case, Willemen's fourth look carries potential for 'considerable implications regarding the social experience of film-going.'[141]

The apparatus most often returns and exposes the viewer's gaze when the diegetic[142] space of the narration is broken. Moments of direct viewer address include titles and credits, voice-overs and scenes where a character or some intense event faces the camera directly, stepping out of a fictive world's frame. Similarly, extratextual elements, such as posters and advertisements can be seen as forms of direct addressing: the film makes clear that it is conscious of its nature as a cultural artifact, expecting to be viewed.[143]

In the living dead films, gazing back is often made obvious at the textual level when dealing with death, threat of death, dying and undead characters. For example, Willemen claims that the unpleasant, spectacular and intense moments in film narration are typical junctures of unmasking the viewer's position at the narrative level. Physically intense moments in particular, or an 'excess of signification', involve direct addressing through embodiment and affective relations to the viewer.[144] Similarly, the corporeal and physical images of (violent) death in the living dead films make the viewer stop and take a closer look at the death and negotiate the socio-cultural and personal meanings and experiences of death and dying. By doing so, the living dead films can provide fantasies of death for the viewer to experience and understand something that is hidden in and rejected from the legitimate cultural sphere. At the same time, however, these films throw the need of dealing with death back at the viewers. The films ask why such undead monsters are created and should be popular in our culture in the first place and why death depicted through them is often extremely violent. The films can therefore dare and reveal the viewer's ambivalent relationships with modern death and/or representations of modern death.

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[140] Willemen 1986 (1976), 211–216; Willemen 1995, 100–101, 107.
[141] Willemen 1995, 108.
[142] 'Diegetic' here refers to the fictional world created by narration (as adapted from Genette's use of the word), not to the Aristotelian distinction of discourse's level with diegesis (telling) and mimesis (showing).
[143] Casetti 1998 (1996), 25–29, 44; Dixon 1995, 2; MacCabe 1986 (1976), 190.
[144] Willemen 1995, 93, 117–119, 122.

Interestingly, Wheeler Winston Dixon says that the returned gaze of apparatus is an integral part of cinema, a cohesive act of production, presentation and reception, existing whether it is made visible in narration or not. Through returned gazes, films participate in different cultural processes and invite the viewer to participate in them as well. For this reason, and in contrast to the Screen theorists, Dixon argues that the ideological power of cinema resides not in the ways in which characters and events are represented by the camera's gaze, but where cinema gazes back at the viewers through these representations.[145] In conclusion, camera gazes and character gazes create different positions for the viewer to negotiate with. Even more so, whereas different living dead films use varied undead monsters, also gazes are differentiated from film to film and monster to monster. Alongside with these dynamic processes of addressing different narrative positions, the films constantly view back at the spectator, uncovering socio-cultural practices, attitudes and values.

Social Dimension of Addressing

As the questions of textual spectatorship and different gazes have demonstrated, addressing can take place either implicitly, functioning in a diegetic/fictive world, or explicitly, transgressing the boundaries of the diegetic/fictive world. It is noteworthy that implicit addressing has been thought of as containing strong ideological dimensions, whereas explicit addressing has been endowed with empowering political implications.[146] However, rather than discuss differences between ideological and political death depictions, it is more important here to recognize that both of these words refer to the social implications of genre-related addressing. Furthermore, films within the same genre not only share certain conventional themes and narrative structures, but they also use similar strategies of addressing, which means that their social implications can be gainfully compared. It is not for nothing that living dead films keep returning to questions of death. By standardizing their generic narration, the films end up using similar strategies when addressing death for their viewers. As Ridell and Frow maintain, it is therefore important to notice the societal force implicated in the genres' addressivity. The structural relationship established through the generic mode of address

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[145] Dixon 1995, 2–7, 17, 31, 76, 201.
[146] See, for example, MacCabe 1986 (1976), 191.

is reciprocally linked to the single elements included in the genres. Generic addressing does, after all, generate through textual elements, and textual elements become socially forceful because of their generic mode. [147]

One way of approaching the rhetorically created and maintained (and thus not determining) relationship between genres and their audiences is through the terms of standardization and differentiation. These derive from an analysis of Hollywood's studio system, describing how Hollywood has an enduringly recognizable style and a rather stable construction of production and ideological practices while it at the same time adapts to new situations and ideas.[148] Genre films are part of this very process. The standardization of genre formulas enables studios to produce formulaic films cost-efficiently, helps genre narration break the general causal structures of Hollywood narration and concentrate instead on the dominant features of a certain genre, and assists the viewer in interpreting genre films. Differentiation, then, makes it possible to individualize products (with new monsters, for example) and try out innovations within rather stable formulas.[149]

The dual dynamic of standardization and differentiation can explain how the makers of genre films are able to choose from a wide array of conventions and even expand these traditions. Rick Altman introduces the terms syntactic and semantic to describe the process of ongoing selection and combining of conventions. To him, the semantic dimension refers to an assortment of conventions for films to choose from, while the syntactic quality adheres to the ways in which these conventions are connected and organized in the film text. In combination, the semantic and syntactic opportunities allow simultaneous change and repetition.[150] Whereas Altman describes how the standardized production mode of genres includes and enables differentiation, John Cawelti links the idea of constant play with repetitions and exceptions to socio-cultural uses of genres: the viewers must recognize the film's form which corresponds to their

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[147] Ridell 1998a, 131, Frow 2006, 72–75, 102, 129.
[148] Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 88, 97.
[149] Grant 2007, 8; Cowie 1999 (1998), 183–185; Ryall 1998, 328; Jenkins & Karnick 1995, 10–11. Differentiation and standardization as analytical terms are linked to the classical Hollywood studio system, where different studios used genres differently. The major studios (Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, MGM, Warner Brothers and RKO) concentrated on large-budget features, whereas the minors (Columbia, Universal, and United Artists) depended on genre specialization. For example, Universal engaged in horror films in such ways as to make horror an important part of the studio's brand and image during the 1930s and 1940s. (Vieira 2003, 97; Altman 1999, 103–107; Doherty 1999, 4; Gomery 1998, 247; Balio 1995, 310–317, 326–333; Jenkins & Karnick 1995, 11; Roddick 1983, 8; Schatz 1981,4.)
[150] Altman 1999, 88–90; Altman 1995 (1984), 30–36.

expectations and provides emotional security with the repetitive and predictable modes. At the same time, genres also have to permit some changes to keep up with social and cultural changes, which guarantees that formulas are not totally static.[151]

Standardization and differentiation are integral to the process through which the living dead films connect to the wider society and culture. By conventionalizing certain aspects of death—notably the predisposition to avoid and alienate death within the narration—the living dead films in fact emphasize the cultural meanings of modern death. However, through continuous differentiation and search for an original filmic expression, these films provide options to alienating death, thereby challenging the role of modern death as well. They respond to changes in death-related attitudes, but through their strategies of returning the gaze, for example, these films can also comment on death-related socio-cultural practices.

The commenting is especially pronounced in the horror genre, because it has more flexible possibilities for commentary than most other Hollywood products. Despite their occasional popularity, horror genre films are not part of the mainstream, and their repertory of generic conventions includes chaos and ambivalence. Certain experimenting is therefore allowed, enabling the crossing of cultural borders, different definitions and new understandings of death.[152] In fact, every new living dead film renegotiates genre boundaries, including some features of death and excluding others, thus expanding the generic understanding of death with new features. This constant negotiation with standardized practices of how death is represented and the adjustments to different socio-cultural situations make living dead films a forceful part of cultural and historical processes of death.

The ways in which horror films in general and living dead films in particular participate in their cultural and historical contexts are widely debated. One popular approach is to see horror films as mere reflections of the social situation. This interpretation has been used to explain horror's popularity by arguing that horror could dismantle social anxieties and insecurities of each period.[153] The nineteenth-century peak in horror's popularity with gothic novels has been accounted for as a reaction to insecurity caused by the rapid and drastic changes of industrializing societies.[154] The same therapeutic model has been used to justify the popularity of 1930s horror films

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[151] Cawelti 1976, 6–9, 35–36.
[152] See also Neroni 2005, 27; Wood 1984 (1979), 171–172.
[153] For example, Punter 1996a, 20–21; Twitchell 1985, 50; Gelder 2001 (2000), 253; Crane 1994, 46.
[154] For example, Punter 1996a, 20–27.

made in the shadow of the Great Depression. These films, including those of the living dead, were seen to mirror the reality of depressed people in a society which had unmasked inequalities in the distribution of work and power. In a similar way, film monsters carried their burdens of tragic stories as misunderstood characters, outsiders of society and victims of either bad luck or human wrongs.[155]

A reflection theory of this kind offers interesting readings of horror films, but it fails to provide a comprehensive and coherent model. Or how should we interpret the fact that the popularity of horror films was waning in the 1940s and 1950s, although the cultural anxieties were escalated by World War II and its aftermath? The studios still produced horror films, but the films' role as social therapists had been taken over by science fiction and other film genres. Still, reflection theory is easy to grasp when the wider institutional and genre context is taken into account. First, the implementation of a production code (or censorship practices) hit the horror genre particularly badly. Second, horror films mainly repeated old formulas through remakes and sequels. A fresh perspective was clearly missing.[156] It is therefore not enough to consider the socio-cultural context alone. The breaks and continuities in the genre's institutional contexts and interpretations of horror themes and traditions need to be included in the understanding of the historical processes of this genre, or of any genre for that matter.

My contention is that although horror film is connected to its socio-cultural context, such as the Great Depression, this relationship is not one of direct reflection, but of complex interaction between cinematic processes and socio-cultural contexts. I agree with Gregory A. Waller, who claims that reflection is a simplified explanation because horror also challenges, explains, denies and interprets the themes that are important for society. The fictive worlds of horror have other functions than merely reflecting society; they comment the society as well, as discussed above.[157] Gledhill reminds us of the elaborate link that different fictional worlds and artificial deaths have to their socio-cultural contexts: fictive worlds transgress boundaries between 'fictive' and 'real' by using ideologically charged ways of defining, for example, gender, class or sexuality.

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[155] Skal 1993, 114–115; Crane 1994, 72–74, 91–92; Wells 2002, 51; Carroll 1990, 208. For instance, Doherty argues that Renfield's character in *Dracula* stood for economic collapse in being lowered from the status of a bourgeois lawyer (middle class) to Dracula's servant (servant class). This degradation leaves only an empty shell of Renfield's earlier self. (Doherty 1999, 300.)

[156] See also page 32 of this study.

[157] Waller 1987, 12. See also Wood 1986, 2; Neale 2000, 253–254; Punter & Byron 2004, xix, Jenkins & Karnick 1995, 12; Karnick & Jenkins 1995, 72. Kendall R. Phillips, who also criticizes the oversimplifying nature of 'reflection' as a term, suggests the word 'resonate', because it allows more artistic freedom while also using a cultural context familiar to the viewer. (Phillips 2005, 5–9.)

The overlapping of publically shared images and themes can function as sources for a (de/re)construction of social imagination.[158] Similarly, the horror genre's images of death do not reflect the deaths of everyday life, but they nevertheless create a critique of their socio-cultural background. Furthermore, this transgressing of boundaries is in direct relationship with the apparatus gaze. The verisimilitude and transgressions of boundaries succeeded at the discursive level of films have provided an opportunity for horror films to resemble, comment and influence public negotiations over death.

Comparing films to religions as cultural practices, John Lyden similarly argues that films which do not describe or reflect the world in any direct and straightforward way, but resort to their own registers (to genre-related registers in particular), present an especially interesting relationship between the two worlds. Through this indirect medium- and genre-specific relationship, films can uncover new dimensions in the everyday world and by doing so they exert social power. Lyden also claims that each film genre has its own key tasks. In the case of horror, he draws attention to the challenging questions of evil, both within and outside the viewer. By emphasizing difficult questions, cinematic fiction can momentarily look back at the viewers and trigger off dialogues on these themes.[159]

Correspondence with the society does not imply that horror films screen or reflect 'real-world' events. Instead, the correspondence or verisimilitude is filtered through the genre's discursive/textual forms and aesthetic conventions, as stressed by Neale, who adds that genre films can also have an impact on the 'real world' through this institutionalized relationship. Neale chooses to stress verisimilitude instead of direct social reflection for four reasons. First, generic verisimilitude can be based on but equally well also ignore societal and cultural systems. Second, different genres make use of socio-cultural authenticity in different ways. Third, the generic categorizations are widely known in Hollywood and can thus inform the public opinion. And finally, generic authenticity and cultural similitude can provide pleasure in equal measure.[160] Genre films, and thus the living dead films' generic understanding of death, adjust to changes in culture and society, not because they have to or because they conspire with a

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[158] Gledhill 2000, 237–241.
[159] Lyden 2003, 2–3, 41–42, 48, 54, 228, 245–246.
[160] Neale 2000, 32–34, 213; Neale 1995 (1990), 160–162. However, Neale is also critical of the frequent stressing of these cultural reasons: he claims that the socio-cultural significance of Hollywood genres is accentuated because it makes the study of genres more acceptable. The genres in themselves are often seen to be too formulaic, too simple or uninteresting. The genres' socio-cultural functions both explain the popularity of these films and justify their existence. (Neale 2000, 220.)

hidden agenda, but because they are—precisely through the generic conventions and strategies—an integral and dynamic part of that culture and society. Indeed, while they may be seen both to resemble and anticipate the changes in death-related values and attitudes, the living dead films in fact employ the already existing (albeit sometimes suppressed) cultural tensions. What they do is give them visibility, which impacts on the public debates.

Deaths in the living dead films are always constructed and artificial creations, articulated in narration where death is given space, time and causality, and stylized with an aesthetics and composition of different elements in specific ways. The aesthetical nature of the films generate, as Asbjørn Grønstad points out, a distinction between real and imagined, providing a place for imagination and play.[161] Similarly, the living dead films are able to formulate what a modern death is or could be, how and why our relationship to modern alienated death remains problematic and how the alienation of death might eventually prove to be impossible or unnecessary. This is exactly why Colin MacCabe argues that Hollywood film realism does more than refer to the ways in which the film meets social or historical expectations. Realism is also about the cinematic apparatus itself within which the repetitive conventions (re)produce the realism. In such a way, as MacCabe formulates, 'realism is no longer a question of an exterior reality nor of a relation of reader to text, but one of the ways in which these two interact'[162].

To summarize my dual point, the socio-cultural context affects how death is depicted in the living dead films. But in return, these films are capable of creating fictive worlds which overlap with the everyday world. They have reciprocal social implications. Such overlap and interaction is further highlighted by the repetitive genre conventions that actualize at the textual level and are skillfully employed by horror viewers. The constant interaction established and enabled by these conventions between producers and receivers, and between viewers and text, spotlights the nature of horror films as a meeting point and space where negotiation over death can take place and where death can be made public.

In summary, my theoretical starting point is based on a need to understand the generic communicativeness of the living dead films in relation to death. I approach the

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[161] Grønstad 2003, 47–48, 53, 57, 59. See also Smith 1999b, 229–230.
[162] MacCabe 1986 (1976), 180–182, 194, 196. MacCabe in fact represented original Screen theory, which makes some of his assumptions of realism rather one-sided. His point about the value of repetition nevertheless has some merit, even though it should not be constructed as creating a Hollywood conspiracy.

communicativeness from two perspectives: from Hall's encoding / decoding model and from the idea of textual structures of narrative communication, that is, production—implied direction—implied viewer—reception. Both models also need to be situated into the socio-cultural, institutional (cinema apparatus and Hollywood's production practices) and generic contexts. This makes all encoded and decoded messages as well as film texts part of the struggle and negotiation over meanings and genre boundaries, including struggles and negotiations over modern death in the living dead films. In other words, I wish to emphasize and explore the multidimensionality of this communication process as it takes place in the medium of cinema and in the genre of the living dead films.

Figure 1: Communicativeness and mediation of films.[163]
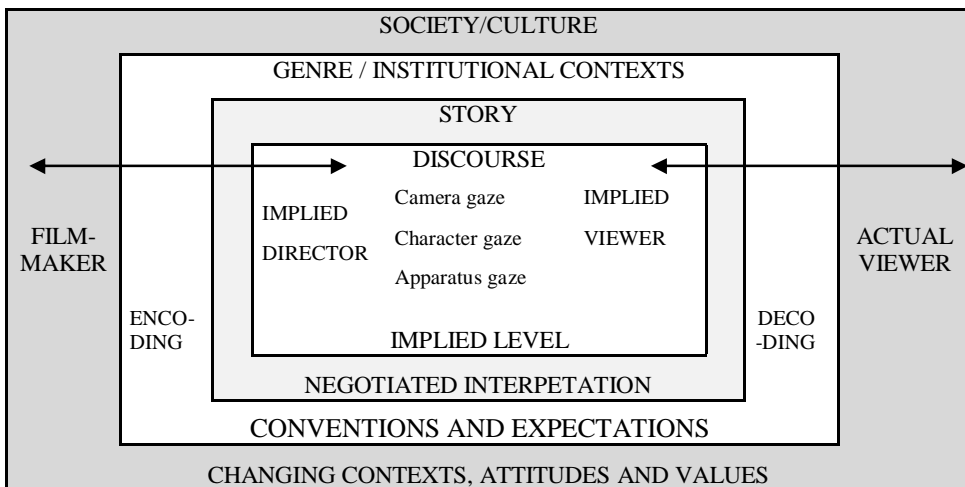
However, because there are many working parts in this communication process, I cannot draw a comprehensive picture of all possible struggles taking place within the living dead films. I will therefore focus on how film text engages with the struggle over death-related values and attitudes and how it a relationship with the viewer. My emphasis is on the ways in which the film text addresses the viewer: how it invites the viewer to conceptualize, challenge and experience death, and how it can end up suggesting certain (and often ambiguous) relationships to death.

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[163] The model draws on Hall's encoding / decoding model (Hall 2001 (1980), 168) and on paradigms related to implied authors and viewers. A key influence in relation to film narration is the model by Markus Kuhn (Kuhn 2009, 261).

I argue that in the living dead films, where stories and narrations revolve around the monsters, the undead become the most important means of producing addressing to the horror film texts. Through rhetoric, discursive and symbolic analysis of the different living dead characters, their varied relationship with death and dying, and their unique death-related symbolisms, I can theorize how these films mediate diversified and complex, competing and generalizing experiences and significations through the implied viewer for the actual viewer. The cinematic techniques, generic narration and the rhetorical choices of producing sharable viewer experiences create similarities into the ways in which different undead characters and their specific traditions are used in discursive storytelling. However, at the symbolic level and through the social verisimilitude, the different undead characters invite varied dominating death-related themes with changing socio-cultural implications. These ongoing differentiation and standardization processes of the undead characters and their uses in film narration lead to recognizable, but renewing death-related experiences for the horror genre's audiences.

In order to approach the addressing and changes of addressing at the discursive level in the American living dead films, I will use the concepts of gazes as an entry to the narrative and addressing structures of the film text. In the following chapters, when I turn to analyzing the research material, I will discuss the living dead films through three different gazes: characters, camera and apparatus. The grounding idea is that all three gazes exist more or less simultaneously, addressing multiple possible positions for both the implied and the actual viewer. In the analysis, however, I will emphasize the gazes differently. First, I will concentrate on the characters' gaze by considering the structures of character engagement. Second, I will discuss the camera's gaze by focusing on the filming of death scenes. And third, I will look at the apparatus' gaze through the social allegories connected to death in these films.

2 EMBODYING DEATH

We have no reliable information of death as an experience. Several thanatologists have emphasized death's nature as a secret and mysterious event. For example, Andrei Demitshev and Zygmunt Bauman argue that while it is the most trustworthy experience in human life, death still remains inexplicable and unknown. People therefore need to encounter the death experience in other ways, such as by watching and following the death of others, as well as with the help of fiction, imagining how it will feel.[164]

In *The Return of Dracula* (1958), the vampire seduces a young girl by reasoning: 'There is only one reality, Rachel. Death. I have come to bring you death, a living death.' As Dracula brings death to many of the characters in the film, so the living dead characters have a possibility to bring death for the viewer—not as a real threat, but as a modeled experience and encounter that is both medium-specific and genre-related. In the living dead films, the viewer can thus confront death by observing how others die and how characters react to the deaths.

Different characters model different death-related experiences. There are in fact two prime positions of modeling and experiencing death through characters in these films: through the undead, who both embody death and represent existence and the threat of death in diverse and (partially monster)specific ways, and through the living, whose relationships to the undead reflect multiple attitudes towards death. If death can be experienced by watching the deaths and reactions of others, then the possibilities to engage oneself with different and multiple character positions invite the viewer to try out varied and even conflicting positions related to death.

Film scholar Robin Wood's famous definition of horror considers precisely the tension it creates between the two offered viewpoints: monsters and other characters. In his influential essay *An Introduction to the American Horror Film* (1979), Wood argues that in horror, 'monster threatens normality'. '[A]lthough so simple, the formula provides three variables: normality, the Monster, and, crucially, the relationship between the two.'[165] Indeed, without the reciprocal relationship, monster and normality reveal themselves as empty concepts. It is the negotiation process that takes place during the film viewing which defines the concepts in relation to one another, renewing understandings of both monstrosity and normality.

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[164] Demitshev 1999 (1997), 7, 12, 124–125; Bauman 1992, 2–4, 14–17, 44, 50.
[165] Wood 1984 (1979), 175–176.

In the living dead films, the same definition could be formulated as follows: the undead threaten the living, and depending on the monster type, they do this in specific ways, or when the undead are understood as more general embodiments of death, death threatens life (social order). In this sense, the living dead represent death which supposedly needs to be alienated from the modern society, but which refuses to do so. This is why the problematic relationship with the modern understanding of death starts the cinematically mediated negotiation in which death, the undead, and the living become conceptualized, embodied and experienced.

Accordingly, in this first analysis chapter, my emphasis will be on the cinematic and constructed addressivity of the characters' gazes to death. I will concentrate on the possibilities of experience the film text offers the viewer: what may the viewer undergo with the characters, both the undead and the living? Main emphasis will be on the undead monsters who trigger the reactions from other characters and from the viewer.

I will start by introducing analytical concepts to approaching the engagement with characters before looking into how the living dead embody death and how the addressing of this embodiment invites the viewer to join in. Second, I will pay attention to the ways in which the different characters encounter death and how, from certain viewpoints, the films address the viewer rather differently in classical and postclassical films. And last, I will explore the moral experiences the viewer is offered through the different positions. In other words, I will analyze the horror film texts' strategies of character-based addressing of experiences and how it has changed from classical to postclassical era, especially when it comes to mainly standardizing, but also differentiating the film–viewer relationship through specific monster types. My analysis will probe whether the living dead films, and those in particular produced since the classical era, narrow the gap between monstrosity and normality while widening the viewer's possibilities to experience death from varied viewing positions.

2.1. Character Engagements as Encounters with Death

Monster Centralization in the Living Dead Films

The idea of the characters' gaze supposes that film characters offer important positions for the viewer to attach to the story. This premise is by no means limited to Screen theory;[166] as several narratologists, too, including Bal and Chatman, argue that characters are important elements of narrative films, not only because of their functions and actions, but because of their essence, psychology and personality.[167] Moreover, Murray Smith, who writes from a narratological perspective, contends that the viewer's '"entry into" narrative structures is mediated by character'.[168] This viewpoint, which I find more than plausible, leads to the hypothesis that if characters are important entries to the film text, they are also an important means in addressing the viewer in the living dead films as mediators of death and as providing components for negotiation over death-related processes.

As in any formulaic film genre, the character positions on offer in the living dead films are generic, defined by their relationship with the monster: there are victims, heroes and monsters, for example. In other Hollywood horror films, too, the monster (whether real or imagined) is typically a central character, who brings together the reactions of characters and the events of the film. The centrality of the monster is highlighted both in cinematic culture and in horror criticism. For example, horror films tend to be classified by their monsters (living dead films, ghost films, devil films, etc.), the films are named after their monsters (*Dracula*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Mummy*, *White Zombie*, etc.), and many monster actors enjoy legendary reputations (Lon Chaney, Béla Lugosi, Boris Karloff, etc.). In horror criticism, monster centrality

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[166] For a long time, Screen theory and psychoanalytical film theories dominated the study of identification with the characters, but the field has since opened up to other, especially cognitive, approaches. These strive to combine the reactions of mind, body and emotions without explaining them through former experiences and drives, preferring instead to stress underlying structures of viewing processes. (See, for example, Plantiga & Smith 1999, 2–4, 6–7, 10–14; Gaut 1999, 201.) The broadening interest of identification has been important for film studies because it has widened the understanding of viewing processes as well.

[167] Bal 1999 (1997), 5; Chatman 1978, 111–113, 131–132.

[168] Smith 1995, 18.

similarly creates one traditional interpretation line, as is evident in Robin Wood's definition, where the relationship to the monster also defines normality and humanity.[169]

Not all horror films depend on monster centrality[170], but the living dead films appear to do so. They all have central monsters, such as vampires, mummies and zombies, and they create a threat which calls for a reaction by other characters in the story. For example, monsters have not only given their names or marketing edge to the films in my study, but the very openings of the films already highlight monster centrality. Of the classical films, *Dracula* (1931) opens with a scene of horrified locals trying to warn Renfield about Dracula's monstrous nature; *The Mummy* (1931) unfolds with an archaeological set of the mummy's corpse coming alive again; and *White Zombie* (1932) is set in motion with a terrifying encounter with local zombies. In the films of the transitional era, the first thing that *The Return of Dracula* (1958) does is introduce Dracula by voice-over accompanied with an image of an empty grave, while *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) opens to a graveyard and the leading lady being attacked by a zombie. Whereas the earlier films start from an existing threat, postclassical films are rather more curious about the birth of the monsters: *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) invites the viewer to witness Dracula's past and transformation; *The Mummy* (1999) opens with a prolonged sequence from ancient Egypt and the mummification of the future monster; and last, *Resident Evil* (2002) frames the whole film as a flashback to the events that lead to zombification.

All these films start with recognizing the monsters and their undead state. For example, the horrified locals in *Dracula* flinch at vampires because 'they (vampires) leave their coffins at night'. In *White Zombie*, the local driver argues that 'they (zombies) are not men, they are dead bodies'. The reactions and recognitions spotlight the monstrousness of walking corpses, also providing clues of the characters' fear and cringing at the undead monsters. They invite the viewers to share their experiences.

In this sense, the films accord with Noël Carroll's influential horror identification theory, where horror is marked by the characters' emotions towards the monster. Through identification processes, the characters' emotions work as mediators between a

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[169] See Wood 1984 (1979), 175–176. According to the most extreme claims, the whole horror genre should be defined by its monsters, as is insisted by, for example, David J. Russell (1998, 238–252).

[170] Several writers have criticized the monster-centrality of horror studies. Not all films have (unnatural) monsters on whom the narration could center. (See, for example, Freeland 2003, 203–209; Hills 2003, 139–143; Smuts 2003, 159-162; Knight & MacKnight 2003, 217.) Still, monsters do have a central role in living dead films, making them central in this study. It is not my intention, however, to suggest that all horror films would function in the same way.

film text and a viewer's experience. Quite plainly, horror seeks to horrify the viewer, and the ways in which other characters react to the monster create the appropriate emotion for the horror genre—horror, terror and disgust. Carroll argues that the spectator of fictive horror does not believe that he/she is in real danger, but he/she can fear for others. Even fictitious objects can therefore cause emotions.[171] The undead figures of the living dead films thus generate certain responses from the characters, and it is these reactions that mediate the death-related attitudes and values to the viewer.

The cognitive presupposition of Carroll's theory—identification makes the viewer respond emotionally to unreal things—has inspired the label 'Thought Theory'. Carroll's idea has been particularly influential because it emphasizes that viewers are not afraid of monsters as such, but rather of what these monsters can do to film characters. For example, Yvonne Leffler maintains that horror genre demands an (actual) viewer's participation and emotional commitment to characters, which makes this engagement possible. The viewer is encouraged to share the feelings of the characters and worry about their fates.[172] According to Carroll, then, the characters carry possibilities for mediating an experience of horror through identification. In a rather similar way, several other writers have argued that identification enables emotional and social learning in teaching how to respond to depicted situations or to encounters with death. The constructed positions in the text may thus provide such perspectives and attitudes to death which the viewer would not encounter in his/her everyday life, and through creating identification, the films can give birth to an understanding and acceptance of rejected issues, such as violence or death.[173]

However, these arguments have their reverse side as well: the learning and modeling experiences can also be negative. Jonathan Cohen justly argues that while identification increases pleasure and emotional involvement with a film, it decreases the critical perspective toward the film. Identification may therefore increase the film's effect on a viewer. With violence and horror, the effects are not always seen as positive.[174] Carroll has sought to avoid this conclusion by stressing that identification takes place only with positive characters of the story. Indeed, the main criticism towards Carroll's theory has questioned the exclusion of monsters as identification possibilities.

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[171] Carroll 1990, 16–17, 60–86; Carroll 1999, 29–30, 42.
[172] Leffler 2000, 165–166; Leffler 2001, 55.
[173] See, for example, Gaut 1999, 213–216; Cohen 2001, 246, 249, 259; Landsberg 2009, 221–228; Giroux 2002, 5–11.
[174] Cohen 2001, 260.

Criticism has clearly challenged narrow understandings of available relationships with the characters.[175]

Carroll's premises simplify practices of cinematic experiences, making the undead merely triggers of reaction, not characters in their own right. This is problematic because monsters were already given sympathetic characteristics in the classical films. For example, the *White Zombie*'s zombified Madeleine, exercising no free will of her own, does not appear as threatening, but rather as a sad outcast. Consequently, the core of the problems of Carroll's theory can perhaps be found in his cognitive understanding of identification which undermines several dimensions of the viewing experience. Carroll's choice of concept—that of identification—focuses attention on the positive relationships the viewer has with certain characters. This understanding of identification appears problematic because it can constrict analysis into points of imitating sympathetic characters, although Carroll emphasizes that identification does not equal emotional symmetry with characters.[176]

Many writers, including Jonathan Cohen, Alison Landsberg, Yvonne Leffler, Berys Gaut, Carl Plantiga and Murray Smith, have argued that identification is a problematic term because of its confusing and undifferentiated nature, guiding perception to similarity where the viewer would share the character's feelings and perspectives. Instead, the relationships between viewers and characters should be seen as an engagement where the viewer imagines the character's situation and emotions, but does not necessarily adopt them or go through exactly the same emotions.[177] Instead of using the term of identification in this study, then, I will refer to 'engagement', which makes it possible to recognize several different processes that take place between viewer and both positive and negative characters. It also enables me to pay attention to the monster and to the reactions to monstrous death at more detailed levels than is possible with Carroll's singular term of identification.

Besides the problematic understanding of identification, Carroll's theory leads to a narrow understanding of viewer/character relationship by oversimplifying the viewer's

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[175] See, for instance, Hill 2003, 143, 146, 150; Knight & McKnight 2003, 213, 218–219.

[176] Carroll 1990, 89–96.

[177] These theorists have also offered different concepts, such as sympathy and empathy, as replacing the notion of identification. Here, sympathy refers to the ways in which the viewer fears for the character in a certain situation, while empathy denotes the ways in which the viewer can momentarily share the character's emotions. Despite using such terms, most theorists stress that although identification can momentarily contain the feeling of the same emotions, the difference between character and viewer is mostly maintained. (Cohen 2001, 251; Landsberg 2009, 222–223; Leffler 2000, 168–169; Gaut 1999, 203, 206–207; Smith 1999b, 220; Plantiga 1999, 244–247.)

experience as mainly a cognitive experience.[178] The viewer does not connect to the film merely cognitively, but the relationship with characters is also embodied, affective and sensual. The viewing process is by no means disembodied interpretation. As Vivian Sobchack points out, it is an embodied process in which the viewer participates with his/her body through seeing, hearing and movement, through the materiality of the film.[179]

Steven Shaviro goes one step further by claiming that films are totally freed from cognition and interpretation, and are only sensorial and affective experiences, or intensified physical and corporeal cinematic spectacles. He suggests that the immediacy of cinematic material excludes everything else but experience. Shaviro's concept of 'cinematic body' in particular underlines the cinematic experience as arising from several material processes, including those of the body.[180] However, I would not go as far as Shaviro and insist that there is only sensual relationship with the film. I would rather acknowledge the embodied role of the gaze, which is highlighted in the embodied corporeality of the living dead and their violent relationship with the other characters. In other words, the ambiguous relationship with death, created by the living dead, is both embodied and metaphysical.

The phenomenological trend in film studies, and in horror studies, has likewise called attention to the affective and material relationship between film text and viewer. Most notably, the theories of Gilles Deleuze have encouraged affective readings, apparent in his formulation of the film/viewer relationship: 'power to affect and be affected'.[181] Following in Deleuze's footsteps, Anna Powell argues that the cinematic experience can be understood as embodied thinking. While the horror films often affect human bodies, both the bodies and minds of the viewer are threatened as well. Therefore, as Powell indicates, the horror films' potential lies with the viewer's incorporated mind–brain–body–text and transformation with the image.[182] Through these transformations, the living dead films, too, provide multiple and varied bodily positions for the viewer to both conceptualize and experience death. Unlike Carroll suggests, the relationship with the characters is more than cognitive, it is also embodied.

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[178] See also Smuts 2003, 160–162.
[179] Sobchack 2008, 196–197.
[180] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 30–35, 42–45, 50, 254–256.
[181] Deleuze 1989 (1985), 139.
[182] Powell 2005, 4, 110–116, 150, 201, 208.

Changing and Multiple Dimensions of Character Engagement

Despite its faults, Carroll's theory is an interesting starting point for appreciating the characters' mediating and addressing role in the viewing process, and the ways characters (and especially monsters) are used in the addressing of death and death-related experiences. I will therefore proceed from this starting point, applying a refined version where character engagement is understood more open-mindedly, as a subtle, complex and embodied process of the viewer being invited to position himself/herself both to the reactionary roles of the characters and the threatening roles of the monsters.

Character engagement provides encounters with death, which in the viewing process are transformed into both cognitive and sensual experiences. These experiences are clearly personal, as every viewer decodes the film material by himself/herself.[183] At the same time, however, also because of the cinema's publicness, the experiences are socially shared. Alison Landsberg, for example, emphasizes the public nature of widely mediated film experiences. She argues that engagement produces experiences and memories that are real although not lived through, but picked up and embodied from the mediated representations. Landsberg calls such memories prosthetic and claims that their importance is in their shared social status.[184] Indeed, the engagements with characters not only create personal encounters with death, but produce socially shared encounters as well. Different films from different eras also address different encounters with death, which makes it important to look at these processes of addressing through character engagement in more detail.

Indeed, instead of the singular term of engagement, it is relevant to use differentiated concepts which allow a wider appreciation of the ways in which film text mediates its story through character gaze. In order to approach such multifaceted patterns of character engagement (or structures of sympathy as Smith calls them), I will refer to Smith's terms of recognition, alignment and allegiance as analytical concepts in

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[183] Cohen, for example, emphasizes the changing nature of the engagement process as a response to the varying textual features of the film as a key cinematic process. He adds that the engagement process is also touched by an actual viewer, attitudes, moods and parasocial interactions, as several empirical studies have shown. (Cohen 2001, 245, 250–253.) A case in point is the empirical and quantitative research carried out in Spain by Juan José Igartua and Carlos Muñiz, who studied the viewers' responses to films and ended up showing that engagement with the characters was the most important factor in the film experience and enjoyment. Cultural relevance, cognitive pleasures, personal meanings attached to the film and the general perception and affect of the film mattered less for the received pleasure. (Igartua & Muñiz 2008, 25–26, 36–47.)

[184] Landsberg 2009, 222–223.

connection to the characters' gaze. Smith's 'recognition' applies to the ways in which characters are structured for the viewer's engagement. Smith argues that the characters' physicality presents a body to which both iconic and indexical meanings can be attached. The existence of any character already provides some sort of embodiment of the film's thematic motifs. Second, 'alignment' refers to the points of view which the film offers for a viewer. The narration and cinematic devices provide different accesses to the different characters and their feelings, thoughts and actions. And finally, 'allegiance' includes a moral evaluation of the characters, with whom a viewer might—or might not!—be ready to sympathize or feel empathy.[185]

These three more refined dimensions of character engagement also open up more refined avenues to discussing how the relationships to death are created through characters in the living dead films. First of all, recognition enables me to study in more detail how the living dead embody death, how these genre- and monster-specific embodiments create overlapping, comparable and yet multifaceted aspects to the addressing of death-related attitudes, and how the viewer can experience different dimensions of death through such embodied thinking. The recognition of the undead relates to the realization of death's continuing existence in the world. The different monsters force the characters and the viewer to start negotiating with the existence and culturally specific aspects of death.

Second, the difference between alignment and allegiance makes it possible to observe why horror films also present the monsters' point of view as an entry to certain events, although the monsters rarely provide morally positive entries to the story. I can therefore analyze how the viewer can experience emotions triggered by death through other characters and how this experience can be made more complex if or when the monster's vantage point is included in the experience. Through a more complex relationship with the viewer, these films force the viewer to evaluate death-related practices from multiple and even contradictory perspectives.

In the following, I will hence analyze how film texts introduce characters and imply certain positions in relation to death through the structures of character engagements. In other words, I will introduce the characters' gaze and the relationships it suggests with death through three levels: recognition of monstrosity, alignment with different character positions and the moral evaluation of these positions and experiences.

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[185] Smith 1995, 6–7, 19–20, 73, 75.

2.2. Recognizing Death: The Living Dead as Embodiments of Death

Monstrosity of Living Dead Characters

Smith argues that characters (including living dead characters) are always constructions for narrative purposes. Although they can and should be regarded as persons (whether described in more or less detail), characters are always abstractions that embody necessary themes and purposes of the story.[186] In this sense, as cinematic figures, the living dead characters provide abstractions and embodiments of death. In fact, they are personifications of death. As Karl S. Guthke argues, despite multiple alternatives, Western art and folklore have chosen to give an abstract concept of death a human form, to personify death.[187] The living dead are part of this tradition, and death marks not only their existence, but their physical and mental traits as well. Their mere existence forces death back to the public and under debate in the story worlds, and through the viewing experiences they also increase the awareness of death in the everyday life. Accordingly, I will now turn to the discursive mechanisms by which the embodiments of the undead monsters of the living dead films address death to the viewer.

The genre conventions of the living dead films—for example, a discursive use of sound effects, anticipative sounds, and visual shocks—mark the living dead characters as monsters. In the addressing of monstrousness for a viewer to recognize, as Jason Grant McKahan observes and as will be debated below, the monster's actual presence or actions are not as important as is their narrative position as monster. This discursive position is dehumanizing, which attracts an interpretation of the monster as unsympathetic.[188] The dehumanization of the living dead also dehumanizes death: the relationship between the undead and death is represented as unnatural. Although the monstrosity of undead characters is primarily produced at a discursive level of the text, Smith argues that in order to embody a film's themes, characters are also constructed through pre-existing cultural and social schemas that guide the viewer's expectations and

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[186] Smith 1995, 20.
[187] Guthke 1990, 4, 13.
[188] McKahan discusses the ways in which public writing borrows from gothic narratives in order to dehumanize certain groups or issues. Through certain rhetoric practices the media can make drug addicts, for example, appear as monsters and therefore as something that should be marginalized and banned. (McKahan 2007, 137.)

perceptions of a character.[189] In the light of this argument, I will first discuss the socially and culturally recognizable characteristics and the use of the undead on the story level before concentrating on the discursive level of monster recognition.

What is culturally troubling with the cinematic living dead is that they force viewers to encounter questions of death and dying which have been marginalized in modern Western societies. Through cinematic encounters, they violate Western understandings of death, challenge our common world view and question the basis of Western identity. For example, Jen Webb and Sam Byrnand contend that although zombies—and other living dead for that matter—have many ambivalences, the singular ambivalence is the state of being undead, the way they hold the door slightly open to the other side and refuse to become exiled from community, returning to bite back at humanity and defying social control.[190] At a personalized (embodied) level, the undead characters represent a death that refuses to be alienated and marginalized, and instead demands attention even of the modern society.

The unnatural relationship to death is the main source of threat by the living dead, which changes their social status from humans to monsters. Apart from this wide understanding of the living dead, it is challenging to define them at a more practical and detailed level. The difficulty arises from the repertoire of undead characters, from their wide use in different film genres and horror subgenres, and from the differentiation between different eras and films. For example, the vampire, a generally acknowledged living dead, has different and contradictory descriptions in different eras and films (not to mention literary tradition). Tod Browning's 1930s Dracula cannot stay up during daytime, but the vampires of the *Twilight* saga (2008–2012) avoid to be seen in sunlight merely because it makes their skin twinkle, which would render them recognizable to the living.[191]

Despite these challenges, and drawing on the three specific monster characters analyzed in this study (vampires, mummies and zombies), I have recognized five advisory characteristics for defining the living dead: transgressing death, unexpectedness, corporeality, consumption and capability to transform others. Furthermore, the monster-specific application of these five characteristics should be seen as aspects to the understandings of death. Each of the undead characters articulates these

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[189] Smith 1995, 31.
[190] Webb & Byrnand 2008, 83, 85.
[191] Nina Auerbach in particular has explored the history of both literary and cinematic traditions of vampires in more detail in her *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995).

five characteristics differently according to their traditions and film-specific discourses. Applications are often comparable, even hybrid at some points, and yet they manage to bring new points of view to a death-related narration and discourse.

First, the living dead have an unnatural relationship to death in that when faced with it, they refuse to end existing; they refuse to die. Matthew Walker describes this as follows: 'To be without death in this sense might count simply as not being dead, or as being un-dead'.[192] This state between life and death is the source of the terms of 'living dead' and 'undead' which are both used to refer to the monsters who are born when a living person crosses the border of death by either dying or by reaching a death-like state interpreted by other characters as dying. As Mohammed notes, it is not merely the technical death that makes a person a living dead, but it might be that a person is forced to act like a dead. Take the Haitian zombies, for example, who are separated from their consciousness.[193]

What is disturbing in their death or death-like states is that the living dead threaten the existing categories of life and death. This dimension is widely used, not only in twentieth-century cinema, but the undead have transgressed limits in different cultures and times. Many disciplines, too, such as medicine, politics and philosophy, discuss the living dead either metaphorically or directly. For example, in philosophy, the undead offer interesting possibilities for arguing metaphysical questions of subjectivity, consciousness and morality. Zombies, for instance, provide mental test ground for different ideas of body and soul.[194] This is acknowledged by both cinema and other forms of popular culture. Whereas Western folklore presents the returning dead as horrifying, infectious and barbaric results of failures in the transition rites[195], the fantasizing images of literature, popular music, etc. present more complex functions for transgressing.[196] However, the transgressing of categories always remains an important starting point, whether it is to discuss the effects of Alzheimer's disease, brain death or ideals of modern death.

At a general level, anthropological studies have discussed the cultural power of transgression. For example, in her influential book *Purity and Danger* (1966), anthropologist Mary Douglas discusses the now commonly adopted perspective that

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[192] Walker 2006, 85.
[193] Mohammed 2006, 91.
[194] For example, Greene & Mohammed 2006, xiv–xv; Hauser 2006, 54; Jacquette 2006, 106.
[195] For example, Barber 1988, 29–30, 37–45, 57–58; Davies 2005, 131, 146–147; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 14–30, 195; Anttonen 1999, 17.
[196] See for example, Mäyrä 1999, 171–172.

cultures are built on different regulations, rules and categories. These rules give order and system to the society, making filth and sickness, for example, abnormal because they threaten the order of society and thus create possible chaos. The conservation of categories through cleanliness, for example, becomes a sign of maintaining social order.[197] Similarly, because the living dead refuse to stay in their marginalized and sanitary positions in graves and graveyards, they become connected with chaos and impurity, thus destabilizing existing social order. In other words, the transgressing and anarchic state of the living dead threatens and confuses the existing cultural categories. They serve as a perspective to ambivalent thoughts, emotions and existences regardless of the chosen form of expression—cinema, literature, art, videogames, interactive media, etc. In the cinematic versions of the undead, this ambivalence and anarchy can be combined to resisting the alienated death in modern societies.

Second, the crossing of the border between life and death has to be unnatural and unexpected. The living dead create a threat that is unanticipated and often impossible to understand or accept by the other characters in the film. For example, as Walker observes, people in George Romero's zombie films strive to reason the existence of the zombies, but each of his zombie films gives a slightly different reason for their being, and their appearance remains a mystery. Walker adds that it might be enough to explain their origins with their eagerness to live, their 'unlimited desire for life.'[198] According to the American horror historian Gregory Waller, the living dead will eventually betray their origins. Although they remain recognizably human, their physical existence may alter and they may gain supernatural powers or other extraordinary features.[199]

Third, therefore, while it may change, the body must survive death. The undead bodies have crossed what are considered 'normal' understandings and limits of the body. They have physically transformed into something appalling, unnatural and discriminated, but still the living dead are first and foremost corporeal creatures. They personify death, not through symbolical elements, but because they are corpses, or, as McIlwain formulates, mediums of death.[200] Because of this corporeality, I have ruled out immaterial figures such as ghosts who create their own version of post-mortem existence. However, some writers, such as Adrian Poole, consider ghosts to be the most

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[197] Douglas 1996 (1966).
[198] Walker 2006, 85.
[199] Waller 1986, 16.
[200] McIlwain argues that corpses serve as an important link between life and death because the living continue their relationship with the dead through corpses and their remains by visiting and appreciating these remains. (McIlwain 2005, 16.)

traditional undead characters, who are similarly terrifying because they have crossed the boundaries of life and death. Still, Poole also acknowledges that ghosts do not always materialize in flesh, nor are they a random or unexpected threat, but are linked to personal retributive justice and revenge.[201] Unlike the ghosts, the living dead always have physical bodies, which do not refer to afterlife but rather to the continuance of a bodily existence in this life, as a recognizable and undeniable influence on the society of the living.

The theologian Douglas J. Davies also stresses that human corpses are always in relation to the bereaved and to the society. They are never plain objects, or destroyable waste, not even in the age of marginalized death: corpses carry different meanings and social significations.[202] The undead corpses of the living dead films still bear the signs of the human body and as such they participate in ongoing cultural and social practices and meaning making. Quite similarly, Margrit Shildrick, who analyzes corporeal monsters from the perspective of gender studies, further discusses the disturbing transgressivity of corporeal monsters, arguing that they question and redefine embodied subject positions. Corporeal monsters are therefore more than bodies; they are also discursive and mediated practices. Shildrick claims that monstrousness is not separated from humanity, although it is often distanced from it, and consequently, when encountering the monstrous, both parties (monsters and non-monsters) participate in becoming, and redefining of, monstrosity and normality, as Wood suggested.[203] Shildrick also describes the cinematic experience of encounters with the undead, when the undead creatures challenge the viewer's understandings of the dead body, and, by the same token, the living body. In this way, the disturbing transgressiveness of the undead challenges the viewer's ideas of bodily limits.

Such an intensive relation to body is further highlighted in the fourth dimension of the living dead's monstrosity—consumption. The living dead are not only corporeal creatures but they also have bodily needs such as hunger and sexual urges. To satisfy these, the living dead consume the bodies, blood or flesh of the living. Even when a living dead is part of a crowd (zombies), they remain extremely self-serving and aim to fulfill their own needs. As Phillip Cole puts it, we are not scared of the undead only because we fear death. Death can be a peaceful event or an attractive state. Instead, we

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[201] Poole 2004, 33–38.
[202] Davies 2005, 150.
[203] Shildrick 2002, 1–5, 9–11.

are more afraid of the dead who come back to destroy and consume us. For the living dead, humans are reduced into prey with blood and flesh.[204]

However, consuming is not the only threat posed by the living dead, who also have the power to change others. This is the fifth defining characteristic for these monsters. Indeed, Shildrick argues that the monstrous body is both anomalous in itself and startling precisely because it always carries a risk of contamination—if not at the material level, conceptually at least, because the improper body threatens to reveal the constructed nature of the 'proper' bodies.[205] However, in the living dead films, the risk of contamination is both conceptual and material. A vampire's kiss, a zombie's bite and a mummy's curse bring transforming death to others, challenging the viewers' relationship to death and corpses through a monster-specific embodied narration.

This possibility for monstrous transformation underlines, Yvonne Leffler claims, the threat to identity because one cannot get rid of the monster even by dying.[206] Instead, the living dead are a plague that keeps spreading. The contagious death is not a unique idea to horror films, but rather a common idea in folklore and folk beliefs where death was feared for causing more death, a belief that was well justified by infectious diseases.[207] For example, several so-called real-life vampire cases have been explained as misunderstood contagious ailments, when several deaths within a short space made a community blame vampires for the misfortunes.[208] Similarly, the idea of contagious death is central in the living dead films. Together, the consumption and the possibility of transforming others represent the fear for what happens if death is not alienated from the society. The undead represent the urgent force of death, insisting to be noticed and demanding to be allowed to participate in the modern society.

These five main characteristics—an unnatural relationship to death, unexpected threat, corporeality, bodily consumption and the ability to transform others—provide the basic frame for defining the living dead. And although I have chosen to concentrate on vampires, mummies and zombies as the three most typical undead characters, the features can also be applied to other undead figures, such as Frankenstein. While this is

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[204] Cole 2006, 186–188. Wayne Yuen claims that the consumption of human flesh by the undead does not drastically differ from the way people eat animal meat. He argues that the consumption of lives is merely a question of perspective: we choose to determine that our consumption of meat is innocent while the consumption of the living dead is monstrous (because it is directed at us). (Yuen 2006, 141.)
[205] Shildrick 2002, 68–73.
[206] Leffler 2000, 156.
[207] Anttonen 1999, 17. For example, the idea of *Kalma* is well-known in Finland.
[208] Davies 2005, 146–147; Kilpinen 2000, 21–24; Barber 1988.

the case, the generic practices have their limitations as well, since this general level of definition does not provide the whole picture of the varied field of undead monsters.

Every monster emphasizes these dimensions differently, and vampires, mummies and zombies have varied backgrounds in folklore, literature and in other sources, and evolving traditions which also differentiate the undead monsters from film to film. While the living dead films are standardized in the general premises of how undead monstrousness is created and what cultural and narrative tasks it realizes, they are differentiated in their traditional, unknown (unexpected transgressing) and physical (corporeality, consumption and transforming capabilities) relationships with death. The varied uses of individual monsters differentiate them in relation to addressed stories, viewing experiences and death-related structures.

The gothic fiction preceding film has widely influenced horror film conventions, and the vampire tradition in particular. Vampire figures exist all over the world, but Hollywood's vampires are based on Western traditions.[209] Western folklore presented vampires as decaying and barbaric corpses,[210] but the romantic gothic fiction from the early nineteenth century onwards transformed vampires into civilized, erotic and attractive characters.[211] In this process, especially influential were the ambiguous and romantic vampires of *The Vampyre* (1819) by John William Polidori and *Carmilla* (1872) by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. When Hollywood adopted vampires in its horror category, it combined physical elements of both folklore and romantic tradition. It chose to pick up the aristocratic and eccentric characters of the gothic novels, but traces of folklore can nevertheless be seen in the medium-specific emphasis of the corporeality, physical threat and killing methods of the vampires.

It is an interesting twist that for its mental archetype of the unknown, Hollywood decided to use Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) instead of the romantic vampires. Dracula still hinted at the seductive power of death, but for modern society it appropriately

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[209] Vampires can be recognized from different folklores, and these figures are also part of the contemporary popular culture outside Western cultures. For example, the article collection *Draculas, Vampires, and Other Undead Forms: Essays on Gender, Race, and Culture* (2009) focuses on non-Anglo vampires. Different articles study culturally specific vampire figures in film, literature and anime. The perspective is on different ethnic groups, nationalities and transgressing borders. (Browning & Picart 2009, ix-xxii.)

[210] Sisättö 1999, 64–66; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 14–30; Twitchell 1985, 105, 110, 112; Barber 1988, 39–45, 57–58; Cole 2006, 183.

[211] For example, Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 34–35; Waller 1986, 54.

concentrated on questions of control, power and authority[212], not only in its own behavior but in the story's relationship to death. Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegle add that Stoker's novel was conveniently structured as a monster-slaying story with cathartic possibilities. The openly monstrous figure of Dracula therefore fit easily into Hollywood horror and its understanding of monster stories.[213] By adapting literature and folklore vampires for their own uses and cultural contexts, vampire films have created their own cinematic tradition and medium-specific ways of handling death-related themes. The close relationship with a literary tradition continues, but at the same time the vampires have proved their popularity in cinema as well.

Like vampires, mummies have their background in the Western literary tradition, which borrowed these figures from the ancient Egypt, using them to embody nineteenth-century fascination with the mystery and mysticism of ancient funeral and burial practices.[214] Where the previous literary tradition had emphasized the romantic nature of these characters, the modern audiovisual horror films shifted the conventions into a more corporeal direction. While culturally distanced and mysterious death remained as the main unknown element of the cinematic mummies, Hollywood flavored it with threatening consumption. The first mummy films in the early 1930s were still closely connected to Egyptomania, which was euphoric about the discovery of Tutankhamun's almost intact tomb in 1922. This find was especially intriguing to the horror genre because the crew had faced several misfortunes, leading the popular press to accelerate rumors of the mummy's curse.[215] The earlier silent films had pictured mummies mostly in fantasies and comedies, but Tutankhamun's curse made the mummies of the new sound film of the 1930s and 1940s part of the horror genre. The reputation has stuck ever since.

However, the mummy legend proved to be rather limited, and after scientific research started to lift the veil of exoticism from the mummified bodies, the mummy films and their relationship to death became too repetitious. Since the 1940s, Hollywood let mummies rest in their tombs for several decades (although mummy films have

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[212]Furthermore, several researchers, including Nina Auerbach and Milly Williamson, have argued that American cinema took Dracula as a symbol for power because of the cinema's cultural context in the success-oriented culture of the early twentieth century. Vampires, too, would presume that they had a right to personal fulfillment and power. They thus became a successful alternative for mass society. (Auerbach 1995, 101, 112; Williamson 2005, 294.) However, as I will discuss later, this cinematic starting point of vampires has since shifted.

[213] Saler & Ziegle 2003, 17–19.

[214] Ikram 2003, ix; Day 2006, 3, 129.

[215] See, for example, Day 2006, 3–4, 50–51, 55–56; Ikram 2003, 194; Craig & Smith 2003, 175.

continuously been produced by the international cinema, mostly as British and Mexican interpretations)[216] before returning to the classical monster with digital possibilities in the 1990s. This postclassical series uses digital technology to create impressive monstrous images of the mummy which can now highlight its grotesque corporeality and mysterious undeadness in novel ways.

Vampires and mummies were not the only ones to have been influenced by the literary and folklore traditions of old. Zombies, too, carry the burden of tradition, but unlike their co-monsters, zombies were introduced into Western imagination through films. Their cinematic corporeality makes them extremely visual characters: they act and threaten physically, but do not speak or think.[217] Zombies are rooted in the Caribbean voodoo tradition where zombies, or non-personas, are created by Bokors (priests) with voodoo magic. Bokor traps the victim's soul, and after his/her death the victim keeps walking around with a catatonic face, without memories and ability to speak or to recognize friends and loved ones. These features made their way into zombie films, where, most importantly, the automated zombies were forced to obey their master in the absence of a free will of their own.[218]

However, the classic Haitian voodoo zombies were more or less forgotten once George Romero recreated a zombie tradition with cannibalism in his film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968).[219] This change in the tradition continued to debate issues of mindless death, but it further highlighted the zombies' corporeality; the visual awkwardness, trance-like walking and physicality remained and were even further stressed with an added element of obsessive and consuming cannibalism.

Moreover, the change in this tradition shows how the conventions of the undead characters affect one another. It appears that the idea of consuming infection was borrowed from vampirism. The bite of the zombie causes death in a similar way as the vampire's kiss. The postclassical mummy, too, has noted the tendency for highlighted consumption by becoming a renewing body which needs to consume the bodies of the living to recreate itself. Although all three undead monsters—vampires, mummies and zombies—have different traditions and backgrounds, they all feed on the corporeality and physicality of death. And although the unexpected and infectious transgressiveness

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[216] For the history of mummy films, see, for instance, Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 201–205.
[217] See also Bishop 2006, 197.
[218] For example, Bishop 2006, 198; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 195–199.
[219] For instance, Bishop 2006, 199; Bishop 2008, 144; Fay 2008, 83; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 206–207; Waller 1986, 275.

of death is typical for these monsters irrespective of the medium, the cinema (and today also the world of video games) is keen to emphasize and explore the consuming corporeality of death in the living dead films.

In short, these characteristics and traditions call attention to the close relationship between the living dead and death. It is through a generic articulation and embodiment of these characteristics that the living dead challenge a viewer's understandings of death and dying. By doing so, they start a dialogue with modern death that continues throughout these films. Indeed, the monstrousness of the undead can be found in our own problematic relationship with death. The fear of death is apparent on two levels at least. To begin with, we are afraid of the unknown, which is investigated through the transgressiveness and unexpectedness of the monsters. We are also afraid of the horror of the corpse, which is investigated through a consuming and contagious corporeality of the undead cadavers. The cinematic medium tends to underline the graphicness and materiality of death, including the grotesque and decaying bodies of the undead. What gets highlighted in such a situation is the fear of a consuming death and of the transforming body, because they seem to create an immediate threat, not only to characters but to the viewer as well.[220] The living dead therefore represent and personify the common fears of death and dead bodies, but furthermore, they provide recognizable forms for death in the films. The need to encounter these fears and to throw them back at the viewers shows that the marginalization of death is unthinkable.

Corporeal In-Betweenness and Becoming Undead

In *Resident Evil* (2002), a group of soldiers are sent to investigate what happened in a mysterious and catastrophic attack inside an underground research facility. Once in the hive, the group discovers that the personnel has not only died, but that they have become undead. The soldiers seek answers from the Red Queen, the controlling computer with artificial intelligence who chose to shut down the hive. The Red Queen explains that the living dead creatures are there because of a spreading T-virus: 'Even in death, the human body still remains active. Hair and fingernails continue to grow. New cells are produced. And the brain itself holds a small electrical charge that takes months to dissipate. The T-

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[220] See also Badley 1995, 24–25; Sobchack 2000, 115.

virus provides a massive jolt, both to cellular growth and to those trace electrical impulses. Put quite simply, it reanimates the body.'

The quote shows that the transgressiveness of death, transformation and corporeality are crucial for the undead. These cinematic creatures also invite the viewer to participate in the death-related transformations through embodied experiencing. As the corporeal living give prominence to the materiality of death, so the cinematic and embodied experience highlights the affective and sensorial dimensions of death, refusing to alienate, medicalize and modernize it.

In this sense, the animated bodies challenge the definitions of death, the physical as well as mental and social aspects of death. The first edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1768 defined death plainly and dualistically as the separation of soul and body.[221] The definition has since become more complicated. Ethical, medical and legal questions of the frontiers of death, such as coma, brain death, euthanasia and abortion, have challenged straightforward descriptions. For example, the medical definition of death that was based on the absence of heart beat and breathing was replaced by a lack of brain function in the late twentieth century. However, even this demarcation is problematic, as is evident from coma patients.[222] As a consequence, the dualistic definition where death could be defined through mere bodily functions, has been discredited. For example, Elizabeth Hallam, Jenny Hockey and Glennys Howarth argue that instead of a singular 'truth' of death, there is a need to speak of a multiple system of different deaths with complex physical and psychological processes.[223]

A pure medical or biological definition of death is thus not an adequate map. Moral and ontological questions have become as important, and some researchers claim that a person should be pronounced dead if he/she has no more chances to live.[224] The exact definition of death with strict borders has therefore become increasingly hard to formulate, and it is this alarming uncertainty which the living dead films address. As Lisa Badley argues, the modern fear of death does not concern death as an event or state, but it is a fear of '"deadness" and the possibility of a "living death".[225] As such corporeal continuity after dead-like state or death questions existing definitions of death. For example, Bishop suggests zombie films raise a question comparable to questions of

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[221] Kastenbaum 2003b, 224.
[222] For example, Gervais 1986, 3; Kastenbaum 2003b, 226–228.
[223] Hallam, Hockey & Howarth 2001, 63–65, 72.
[224] Gervais 1986, 4–5, 10, 45, 162; Singer 1995 (1994), 1, 5, 191.
[225] Badley 1995, 71.

euthanasia: 'is it better to murder loved ones or to allow them to become something monstrous?'[226]

Therefore, it is the in-betweenness between life and death that inspires anxiety towards the living dead. This in-betweenness reflects the difficulties of clearly and exclusively defining death, or of protecting clear categories of life and death. As such, the living dead threaten the existing social order. Their unfitness makes the undead monstrous, because they force 'normality', or the concept of modern and medicalized death to redefine itself.[227] Undeadness in the living dead films is not about abandoning human specificity or concepts of life and death, but the films are rather about expanding these conceptions. As death always involves becoming something else, some other state of existence as well as bodily, mental and social transformation, the undead transformation process dramatizes and expands these processes.

Vampires, mummies and zombies highlight this exceptional relationship with death in their varied cinematic and embodied appearances. As Manuel Vargas argues, the undead do not make one harmonious class of monsters, but they appear to have different relationships to death and the dead body.[228] Mummies are ancient relics with preserved bodies, which serves to emphasize their mystical power over death and decaying processes. Vampires have something of the mummies' embodiment in being preserved, but their bodies are both preserved and renewed. Vampire' bodies are constantly fighting ageing, which denies death its power to change the body. Frann Michel interprets vampire bodies as fantasies of immortality, comparing them to the bodies of zombies, which do not hide their close relationship to death. In relation to death, then, says Michel, vampires and mummies bring to the fore possibilities of desire and power in their bodies, whereas the zombies' bodies stress dread and loss.[229]

In other words, the bodies of the undead monsters have different relationships to the dead body. For audience recognition, as Smith argues, the character's physical uniqueness is an important factor. The exterior features help to individuate characters, but the physical features also imply psychological traits of the characters.[230] In a similar fashion, the preserved and aged corpses of the mummies horrify in a culture where the dead are marginalized and the bodies of the young and beautiful are idealized. The

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[226] Bishop 2009, 23.
[227] For example, Carroll (1990, 32) and Schepelern (1986, 35) stress the unfitness and in-betweenness of the monsters.
[228] Vargas 2006, 42.
[229] Michel 2007, 392.
[230] Smith 1995, 19, 113.

renewing bodies of the vampires fit this idealized image, but their unnatural bodies rather mock these values by using them against themselves, by using artificially maintained beauty and overtly sexualized grotesque bodies to deadly seduction. In contrast, zombies underline the inevitable frailty of the human body and, therefore, zombies anti-idealize the desire for immortality. Or, maintains Bishop, the zombies' relationship to death and dead bodies is more unashamed in its explicitness of decaying and less romantic than, for example, in the case of the vampires.[231]

However, despite the differentiation, all these monsters deal with the bodily changes that death necessarily brings. Paul Wells writes that the images of corpses remind the viewer of mortality but the undead cause true anxiety because they resist the finality of death—either by remaining animated while the body is rotting or by resisting the bodily changes altogether.[232] They embody death, because the bodies of the undead are not only dead bodies; they are transformed bodies which have traits of death in them.

In their transforming corporeality, the living dead challenge the limits of body. In accordance with the conventions of horror monstrosity, the transformation often exploits grotesque and graphic corpses. The freakish features of the unclean, incomplete, swelling, dismembering, disparate, unstable, loud and parodying, for example, stress the corporeality and physical needs, which are crucial definitions for the living dead as well.[233] Through the addressing of the grotesque embodiments of death, the film text also triggers bodily reactions in the viewer and forces him/her to experience death through amazement, curiosity, loathing, disgust, etc. Since the undead characters invite material experience and affects, the corporeality of the undead also addresses the viewer at the corporeal level. That the viewers are invited to take part in the confusing effects, bodily reactions, shocks and other spectacles of the body has always been recognized in horror studies. It is for a good reason that the horror film's intention to horrify is rather material.[234] For example, Linda Williams calls horror a body genre, along with porn and melodrama, because they all depend on sensation and affect the bodies of the spectators.[235]

Deleuze, too, accents the affective and embodied relationship between film material and viewer, which makes his theories significant for the understanding of horror

[231] Bishop 2009, 20.
[232] Wells 2002, 10.
[233] For example, Makkonen 1998 (1995), 222, 226; Sederholm 1996, 28, 43–45; Creed 1995, 136.
[234] See, for example, Crane 1994, 37–38; Altman 1999, 153; Shaviro 2004 (1993), 54, 100–101.
[235] Williams 1991, 3.

genre's viewer relationship.[236] One of his terms in particular, that of becoming, is absorbed in the transforming embodiments of death in the living dead films. For Deleuze, becoming is continuing and acentral movement between forces, between beings and nonbeings, which focuses on the movement itself rather than the goal of this movement. In the continuous movement of cinematic images, the viewer is transformed, too, and becomes with the image.[237] More than most, Powell has adapted this term to horror films in a way that monsters, horror themes and viewers can all be seen as part of a becoming process where constructed boundaries between them are melted. Powell argues that becomings have traditionally been the source of terror in several horror films, including those with werewolves or the living dead films, etc. However, in its Deleuzian context the idea of becoming cannot be simplified into one single affect. Becoming is a complex process of a constant movement of and between different singularities.[238]

Although the living dead have their own definitions and features, they have also preserved their relationship with humanity, and as is often the case, these similarities are more important than the differences, because they accelerate the reciprocal movements and becomings. Furthermore, although the movements are mostly based on the physical nature of the monsters, the becomings and transformations are also social and mental. In fact, one interesting way of opening up such social and mental transformations is by looking at Sigmund's Freud's concepts of the psyche. However, it is not my intention to undertake a psychoanalytical analysis of horror experience as such. I will instead use Freud's concepts to bring forward Wood's notion of the cultural and narrative fragility of boundaries between the undead monsters and the living in the living dead films. [239]

According to Freud, the human psyche is not fixed, but a constantly shifting and struggling process between three different parts of mind: the id, ego and superego. In this division, id refers to the amoral drives that are based on bodily needs and instincts and it works through an inner reality of the subconscious. In contrast to id, the hypermoral

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[236] See also Powell 2005, 4, 17, 20–21, 201, 208. As Anna Powell reminds us, Deleuze himself did not apply his theory to the horror genre and did not offer positive comments on genre. Instead, he preferred 'the Parisian cineaste'. However, Deleuze's cinepsychoanalytical or schizoanalytical approach, according to Powell, fits into horror themes and motifs. (Powell 2005, 6.)

[237] Deleuze 1989 (1985), 140–143. In his film theory, Deleuze in fact highlights the importance of movement: films and cinematic experiences are about movement which is provided and used through different cinematic techniques, such as framing, cutting, montage, etc. (See, for example, Deleuze 1986 (1983), 1–11.)

[238] Powell 2005, 62, 66–68, 78.

[239] As a whole, the Freudian psychoanalysis model assume too much of the (unconscious) viewing processes in ways that end up defending the psyche's limits and underestimate the importance of corporeal experiences. (For the limits of Freudian analysis in horror films, see, for example, Andriano 1999, xi–xiv.)

superego contains social rules and outside influences, working through a suppressed understanding of outer reality. Together, id and superego influence the conscious ego that controls the behavior and functions as an (moral) adapter and negotiator between the reality principle and the pleasure principle.[240] The shifting nature alone of the Freudian psyche emphasizes becomings, but when it is applied to the living dead characters, it seems that their balance of psyche is transformed in such a way as makes superego either vanish or overlooked. This is dramatized in *Resident Evil* with the Red Queen defining zombies as follows: 'They are driven by the basest of impulses, the most basic needs - - the need to feed.' Indeed, as Gregory A. Waller and Mark Jancovich argue, zombies act like animals, basing their existence on instinctual behavior, repressed desires or repressive control instead of conscious decisions.[241]

With zombies, the balance of the psyche is extremely disturbed. And yet, although the automated zombies lack the rich mental life of the vampires and mummies, zombies perform some psychological continuance. For example, in *White Zombie* Madeleine hesitates to kill her fiancé, while in *Resident Evil* a zombified sister hesitates to attack her brother. The question of their mental and social consciousness is therefore rather a question of degree and quality, not total lack.[242] Moreover, mummies and vampires seem to be more conscious of the social and cultural norms, even if they, too, often choose to ignore them, acting on their instinctual drives. Vampires suck blood at the expense of others' lives and mummies use the bodies of the living for their own purposes.

Because of their transformation, the living dead are openly connected to their amoral id, suppressed needs and drive-based and instinctual corporeality; they are free to act on their pleasure principle. The psychological traits of the living dead are to be found on the suppressed side of corporeal humanity. The monsters have changed physically and metaphysically and also threaten the existing social and moral codes by virtue of their existence and behavior. Furthermore, besides representing the transgressiveness of death and of the social order, the living dead represent the difficulties in establishing a comprehensive definition of death. In their transgressing physicality and mentality, the living dead also challenge the legitimacy of medical definitions of death, which work as

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[240] Freud 1997 (1900), 53, 382; Freud 1993 (1923), 125, 157, 163. For the influence and uses of this theory in fiction and the study of fiction, see also Jackson 2000, 46–46, 49–50.
[241] Waller 1986, 276–278; Jancovich 1992, 91.
[242] See also Thompson 2006, 33; Greene & Mohammed 2006, xv; Webb & Byrnand 2008, 85–90, 95–96.

the foundation of modern death. Thus, by questioning existing practices and rules, the living dead invite the viewer to question the legitimacy of the notion of modern death. Indeed, the recognition of the undead characters in these films entice the viewer to embody corporeal processes related to death, to transformative bodies, to the becoming identities and to the wavering of clear definitions of death.

Changing Recognition of the Undead

In the addressing of an embodied death, the living dead films exploit cinematic practices and visual possibilities in creating the corporeal undead, but this is always connected to the mental traits of the characters. Horror's use of an excessive imagery of grotesque bodies, Carroll argues, both tempts physical responses and marks the monsters as impure and bestial. The creation of ugliness is fascinating, sensual and political as well.[243] The generic (and political) use of ugliness is often related to the idea of a mystique of beauty where monstrosity has to be reflected on the appearances of the characters, as Anthony Synnott contends. This goes back to ancient cultures and Christian traditions of beauty being connected to moral goodness and God: a person's appearance would reflect his/her soul and inner beauty. Conversely, evil would show as ugliness or grotesqueness, an idea much-exploited in fiction.[244] For example, the corporeal transformation of the undead merely makes the dehumanizing transformations of death visible. Similarly, James Dadoun connects the decomposing and reformulating bodies of horror to the need to link the outer and inner appearance when the monster is born.[245]

The visualization of transformed human bodies has been part of the living dead films since the first cinematic horror stories. By making the undead look appalling and monstrous, the cinema highlights the horrific affect. However, the range of the bodily changes is wide: at the one end, we have modern rotting zombies who are missing organs, flesh and skin, while at the other end of the spectrum there is Madeleine in *White Zombie* (1932), whose body remains intact and whose transformation becomes apparent in her empty stare and slow movements.

This comparison shows that undead bodies have always been raw material for the living dead films and the viewer's experience, but because these characters have been

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[243] Carroll 2003, 89–93, 103–104.
[244] Synnott 1993, 78–79, 90–95.
[245] Dadoun 1989, 49.

consumed in several films, they and their embodiments need variation over time. The changes in the generic monster images are necessary in terms of the logic of generic processes. Any genre, including horror, has its conventions which are created over time. This process includes repetition, but as Barry Keith Grant reminds us, the more the viewer learns to recognize the basic conventions, the more open the genre is for differentiation, making it possible to reduce the basic elements of the genre to mere hints in the mise-en-scène, plot or characters. Familiarity leaves room for new elements and differentiation.[246] Similarly, those elements which were new and frightening for the 1930s viewers have become part of the horror tradition and they are understood in this conventional context. Moreover, while horror is supposed to make its viewers shudder, the monsters have to carry the burden of being terrifying. Their differentiation from story to story requires that new frightening elements be found once former conventions lose their effect.[247]

Introducing a mummy to the horror audiences for the first time in 1931, the opening image shows a group of British archaeologists studying it. The mummy is wrapped in a shroud, which seems well-preserved, like the body inside the wrap. When brought to life, the mummy (alias Imhotep alias Ardath Bey) has removed the shroud, but his skin still shows traces and prints of the sheets.

Picture series 1: Classical mummy in his casket and after his revival.

The violent death he experienced after being punished to be buried alive is visible on his face and body. The prints are impressive in hinting at the otherness without exaggerating

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[246] Grant 2007, 7–11.

[247] For example, when video horror appeared in the 1980s, several writers were concerned about the excessive need to shock. For example, according to the Swedish researcher Olle Sjögren (1989 (1985), 45–46), violence in horror films had become expected and institutionalized to such an extent that the borders of violence and violent death had to be crossed compulsively to gain the desired shock effect.

the experience. In addition, Jasmin Day argues that the mummy's appearance is marked by the bandages in order to both communicate his antiquity and to link him with decay.[248]

However, in the postclassical *The Mummy* (1999), the relationship with the decaying body is played out rather differently. When the main characters open the casket, the body of the postclassical mummy is far from well preserved but is rather a skeleton with the remains of shroud and flesh which still appear to be rotting. Once resuscitated, the skeleton wants to regain his former human appearance. Instead of starting with a well-preserved body, the modern mummy starts from a decaying body which it then renews step by step.

Picture series 2: Postclassical mummy fresh out of his casket, during his recreation and after his recreation.

Almost 70 years between these two Hollywood mummy films also bring to the fore the aesthetical and technical changes of Hollywood. The new mummy exploits the developments in special effects and digitalization. In the 1930s, top know-how was represented by make-up skills which created the mummy's preserved skin and took hours to achieve. By the end of the century, bodily limits and facial features could be expanded in amazing ways. No longer is it enough to remove the sheets. The modern Imhotep needs to recreate his body from bits and parts of other humans. In this sense, the modern mummy resembles zombies, who consume the flesh, skin and organs of humans, and bears a resemblance to vampires, who can renew themselves with the lives of others. The new digital mummy consumes the bodies of his victims, and the regeneration of his body is followed in great detail throughout the film. His body is perfected close to his former appearance only towards the ending.

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[248] Day 2006, 81.

However, pure recreation is not enough in the digital age: the recreated body is more than that of the classical mummy. The postclassical body is more flexible, able to change its form fluidly. The transformation and becoming of the postclassical mummy's body does not end with recreation, but exceeds it by turning the mummy's body to a constant becoming. Recreation therefore continues, extending the viewers' amazement with an extending embodiment.

This amazed relationship with the recognition of death can, according to McIlwain, be connected to fantastical possibilities of death where our understandings of death are being questioned by the blurring of the borders and definitions of death and body.[249] The case of the mummy serves to remind us that the depiction of monstrous bodies in the living dead films has changed considerably since the classical films and that the cinema has exploited its medium-specific possibilities and developments in relation to the corporeal presentations of death. However, while technological possibilities have increased, this change has also continued to blur definitions and meanings of death further.

In the classical films, and by no means only in the mummy films, the living dead resemble the human body and form. Classical zombies can be recognized from their clumsiness, expressionless posture and empty stare of the eyes, whereas Dracula in his human form is given away by his paleness and strange posture. However, the classical Dracula already exceeds the limits of the human body because he can transform into bats and wolves and his shadow can be separated from his body. The transformation of undead embodiments started to change with British Hammer production during the 1950s and 1960s. Hammer films were more bloody and the monsters more visual, and their success had a bearing on the American undead films as well.[250] The vampire character of the 1958 film *The Return of Dracula* still follows the classical interpretation, but Romero's zombie characters ten years later took more liberties in their deadly postures. This time the zombies came closer to violated corpses: they were expressionless and clumsy, their bodies bloody and missing organs.

This tendency of emphasized grotesqueness is culminated in the postclassical horror films where the living dead can assume the most imaginable forms of grotesque bodies. In *Resident Evil* (2002), colors added sensationalism to Romero's black and

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[249] McIlwain 2005, 173.
[250] For Hammer's role and influence, see Wells 2002, 64; Soren 1997, 144–145, 151; Iaccino 2003, 428; Wells 2002, 63, 69; Twitchell 1985, 60; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 85; Jancovich 1992, 75–76.

white version. The blood and the mutilated organs of the visceral, half-eaten and genetically mutated bodies created by digital effects made the corpses more violated and more imaginative than the viewer could ever come across in his/her everyday life.[251] Postmodernist and poststructuralist theorists argue that such overemphasis of the bodies' constructiveness has increased since the late twentieth century, not only in cinema but in other cultural practices as well. They also contend that the performative and fragmented nature of constructed bodily identities emphasizes bodies as personal projects. The bodies and other dimensions of identity are individualized, constructed, transformed, challenged and modified, which clearly shows in an increased interest in bodies in cinema.[252]

In postclassical *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a lot of attention is directed to the transforming body and the identity of Dracula. Not only is he capable of transforming himself to a bat, a werewolf, a bunch of rats or beautiful mist, but this time his human embodiment is transforming, too. Depending on the amount of blood he has had, his human form changes from an old man on the brink of the grave to a handsome young man.

Dracula also exploits these different forms to his advantage. In order to seduce, he appears as a young man; in order to intimidate his enemies, he takes on the form of a monstrous werewolf, which foregrounds the grotesqueness of his occasionally conventional beauty.[253] As Joan Grassbaugh Forry argues, visual beauty makes vampires less threatening for their victims, but for a viewer this beauty appears frightening because of its destructive force. When it is time to attack, beauty gives way to monstrous features (fangs, yellow or red eyes).[254]

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[251] In the twenty-first century, the zombies have not only become more grotesque, they have become unnaturally fast and aggressive as well. For example, in Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* and Jack Snyder's remake, *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), the fast zombies, enraged and angry, no longer desire food or life. Rather, they are metaphors for irrational aggression. (See, for example, Mohammed 2006, 93–94, 99–102.)

[252] See, for example, Csabai & Erós 2003, 206–207; Klesse 2000, 19; Skal 1993, 311, 323.

[253] However, whereas Dracula's figure highlights the supernatural body, many postclassical cinematic vampires, such as *Twilight* vampires, are less transformed. For example, Sally Miller argues that previous supernatural beings have become closer to the living: they have reflections, they rarely transform to other shapes, or react to holy objects or even to the sun. Their physical strength and occasional supernatural powers are reminders of their past. (Miller 2003, 53.) Still, even these vampires are connected to questions of physical otherness.

[254] Grassbaugh 2006, 237–238, 241, 246–247.

Picture series 3: The old and young Dracula, and Dracula in monstrous appearances.

The changes in the transforming bodies in the history of the living dead films betray the artificiality of these character constructions. These are no realistic dead bodies, but rather imaginative versions of reanimated and transformed corpses—either through excessive grotesqueness or excessive beauty. This process of exceeding bodily limits has increased with new technological potential. Smith also argues that character recognition has always been constructed and necessarily changes with new cinematic techniques and conventions. Before the sound era and the possibilities of mediating emotions and embodiments through dialogue, silent films trusted overflowing posturing. In contrast, classical films used rather discreet structures, such as facial expressions or close-ups, including expressionless or suggestive stares of the classical undead. Conventions changed again during the transitional era, making continuance and bodily expressions reflexive and stressing the artificiality of characters. This new reflexivity challenges the characters' features and the recognition process where the viewer can become frustrated, amused or confused.[255]

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[255] Smith 1995, 138, 151.

A similar historical pattern, suggested by Smith, is recognizable from the living dead films where the classical undead created a discreet relationship to corpses and the postclassical bodies exceeded the limits of the human body on purpose. At first glance it would seem that such increasing constructiveness of death seeks to increase the viewer's distance from the monster. In this interpretation, the living dead films would differ from another trend in the genre of horror, the slasher films, where the monsters are quite explicitly made part of humanity through a recognized 'normalcy'. Since Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and the introduction of 'real' monsters, as is noted by Steven Jay Schneider, the grotesque tradition of monstrosity has been broken. It has become harder to detect new monsters without excessive aesthetical characteristics.[256] However, there are differences within horror's subgenres: slashers, for example, which *Psycho* pioneered, refer to monstrousness hidden in human form. Whereas vampires utilize this element as well, the living dead films emphasize more often the physical embodiment of the unknown. I argue that the continued use of grotesque bodies in the living dead tradition does not intend to distance the viewer, nor does it intend to dismiss questions of shifting borders between humanity and monstrosity. Instead, increasing corporeal images force the viewer closer to monstrosity by creating intensive embodiments as part of the cinematic experience. The increasing emphasis on the corporeality of the living dead thus underscores the physicality of death and forces the viewer to take part in the embodied processes of dying and death. Such an emphasis increasingly refuses to exclude death.

Powell, likewise, draws attention to the ways in which horror cinema can use aesthetical elements in addressing cinematic experiences and sensations. She argues that the themes and aesthetics of horror films challenge the lineal understanding of cinema, and by doing so, they stimulate the experiences that challenge a 'clear distinction of inside and out during the film event'. Powell further claims that 'inner becomings have their outer parallel in the physical transformation of horror film'. When humans become monsters, the viewer is invited to affectively engage with these bodily changes and explore the challenged biological and cultural norms on the narrative and experiential levels.[257]

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[256] Schneider 2003, 176.

[257] Furthermore, Powell uses such Deleuzian terms as schizoanalysis or body-without-organs to stress this complex engaging process. Both concepts reject finalities and stress a sense of disintegration and constantly shifting dimensions of films, be they 'cultural, social, technological, molecular or organic' aspects. By underlining the constant transgressing within the narrations and between film and its viewer,

This puts Wood's definition of normality-threatening monsters in a new perspective, because the interactive relationship does not limit its power only to the narrative level, but forces the viewer to participate in this negotiation, both by providing multiple affects and sensations and by challenging the existing cultural models of death. In conclusion, the in-betweenness, closeness to humanness and the becoming bodies of the undead test the ideas and limits of life and death, humanity and monstrosity. They also presuppose, in increasing amounts, an active viewer who participates in the shifting descriptions of dead bodies.

The embodied nature of film/viewer relationship thus stresses the medium-specific emphasis on the corporeal dimensions of death and strengthens the addressing of corporeality of death and dead bodies. The very recognition of the living dead characters as embodiments of death and their transforming bodies and identities confront the idea and definition of modern, alienated and controlled death. By inviting the viewer to participate in experiencing death, the undead monsters bring the encounter and experience of death closer to everyday life and public debates.

Powell argues that horror films provide the viewers with affective and bodily experiences. (Powell 2005, 19–23, 58, 62, 78–79, quotes from pages 58 and 79.)

2.3. Aligning with Characters: Changing Reactions to Death

Alignment and Reactions to Death

The recognition of the living dead characters as corporeal and disturbing embodiments of death provides some insights into the addressing of death to horror audiences. However, as Smith argues, this exterior character recognition is a tentative process with many other dimensions affecting addressing as well. At the level of the characters, the viewer is positioned with several characters through their exterior features, actions, knowledge and emotions. Smith sees such access to the character's point of view as an alignment or as a process where the film guides the viewer's perception through the character's perspectives. Even more so, the film alternates between different perspectives, creating interesting patterns for the viewing process.[258] In short, I will study how the viewer is invited to establish relationships both to the monster and other characters, and how narration generates multiple viewing positions through the shifting and transforming relationships.

The monster becomes a central character in horror films not only because of its attributes, but because it creates a threat to which other characters react, Carroll argues. For their part, the reactions mediate emotions and experiences to the viewer.[259] It would seem that the horror films' alignment process concentrates on the ways in which the characters react to the undead monsters and that these reactions reflect multiple attitudes and emotions also towards death. It is through alignment that the opening scene of *The Mummy* (1931), for example, induces different emotions and reactions to the monster and to death within a few minutes. During this one scene at least three major emotion scales are addressed to the viewer: fascination, anxiety and horror.

Furthermore, all these emotions are communicated through one character, a young assistant on an archaeological dig in Egypt. This is his first excavation, and he is eager and impatient to examine the findings. The young man is accompanied by an older archaeologist, Sir Joseph Whemple, and an Egyptologist, Doctor Muller. They are surrounded by several finds, most importantly by a newly found mummy and a mysterious box buried with it.

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[258] Smith 1995, 83, 142, 156.
[259] Carroll 1990, 16–17, 60–86; Carroll 1999, 29–30, 42.

Where the older specialists aim to sift through the findings systematically, the young assistant is fascinated by the mummy, begging the others to focus on him, yearning to know who he was, why he deserved to be buried alive and what is in the box that was buried with him. When the older men finally agree to open the box, they find a casket with a curse on the cover. At this point, fascination merges with anxiety and doubt about the curse: should it be honored or not? Unable to resist the temptation, the assistant opens the casket and accidentally brings the mummy back to life. Realizing what has happened, he is horrified by the resurrected mummy. His fascination and anxiety turn into horror, with undertones of amazement and awe.

While calling for mixed emotions at a meeting with death, this scene also lays bare how reactions and emotions are communicated to the viewer through different narrative strategies and cinematic techniques. Several techniques are thought to encourage alignment, including a point-of-view shot (the viewer sees what a character sees from the character's perspective), a reaction shot (the viewer sees how a character reacts to events), close-ups (of faces in particular), point of enunciation (the main perspective that dominates the scene) and music, dialogue or other soundtrack elements.[260] These techniques highlight the importance of the characters' figures, facial expressions and compositional relationships between characters, which is not surprising considering that the viewer tends to react to recognizable expressions and gestures and even mimics these expressions rather automatically and involuntarily. Facial and bodily expressions are therefore forceful means of addressing emotions and experiences. Generating emotional responses, these cinematic expressions are also used to drag the viewer into the scene. The affects are further stressed with characters whose points of view are underlined in the narrative situation and who are offered as implied positions.[261]

It is interesting to look in more detail into this opening scene of *The Mummy* to see how it addresses the emotional reactions to an embodied death. First, the opening scene creates a clear point of enunciation for the viewer: it starts the narration by focusing the viewer's attention on the three male characters who are studying the mummy. The introduction already suggests that the scene will be narrated from their perspective rather than that of the monster. It is their actions that become motivated and studied, while the mummy's motives remain unknown. The enunciation also

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[260] Gaut 1999, 204, 209–213; Landsberg 2009, 221–225; Plantiga 1999, 239; Smith 1995, 146–147, 151, 156, 158.
[261] Plantiga 1999, 240–243; Smith 1995, 96, 100–103; Powell 2005, 145.

communicates the men's fascination over the mummy's tale. Furthermore, alignment is tied to the assistant.[262] Once the box has been opened, the older men take their debate on the existence of a curse outside, leaving the assistant alone with the mummy. Although the narration occasionally cuts to the debating men during the rest of the scene, these cuts serve rather as intervals underlining the threat to the eager assistant when he, heedless of the curse, opens the casket and finds a scroll inside it.

When the young man starts interpreting the scroll, the effects are brought home to the viewer at several levels. The camera pans from the man to the mummy and back, revealing how the man's almost silent reading brings the mummy to life. First, the camera shoots at the assistant unrolling the scroll and studying the signs, then pans to the mummy's corpse, which rests motionless and dead in its coffin, and finally pans back to the assistant. When he starts to read the spell, fascinated and unaware of the consequences of his actions, the camera cuts to a close-up of the mummy's face. The viewer witnesses him slowly open his eyes, move his arms and become animated. The assistant is still reading the scroll when the mummy extends his hand towards the scroll. At this point, the camera returns to shoot the scroll in close-up. Suddenly, the mummy's hand appears, grabbing the scroll. The image spans backwards somewhat and shows the man finally raising his eyes from the text. His reaction is first amazement and disbelief, then fear.

At this moment of recognition, film narration concentrates on the young man's face, expression and posture. The affect is further emphasized by the scream which breaks the anticipating silence of the previous scene and turns into a loud and hysterical laughter that seals the amazement, disbelief and horror into one continuing and affecting sound. From the moment on when the man faces the animated mummy, the camera stays with him and mediates his emotional reactions to the viewer.

His face is first shot in a close-up, followed by a shoot of his frightened posture after he has jumped up and withdrawn to the back wall, creating a combination of a reaction shot and a close-up. The reaction shot is effective, because it gives the viewer information on how the character reacts to what he sees and what emotions the event triggers—horror and shock. The close-up of the character's face provides intimate contact with the character and his emotions. Next, the point-of-view shot reveals that the

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[262] Narratological theories often label this sort of focusing alignment as focalization, which takes place when narration is restricted to someone's point of view. Focalization thus selects and channels perception, cognition and emotions. (See, for example, Kuhn 2009, 263; Horstkott 2009, 172; Jahn 2005, 172.)

assistant has been watching the mummy walk out of the tent. The camera then pans to the floor, enabling the viewer to see the end of the shroud being dragged through the door.

Picture series 4: The mummy's awakening in the classical film.

The continuing point-of-view shot at the end of the scene gives the viewer access to the character's subjectivity and forces the viewer to align with his perspective. The hysteric

laughter that surrounds this point-of-view image further accents the emotional shock as a reaction to a corpse which has been dead for more than 3,000 years being able to walk out of the door and disappear. When the other scientists rush on the scene, the only intelligible words the assistant is able to muster: 'He went for a little walk. You should have seen his face.'

This scene crucially spotlights the mediating potential of the human face, although the whole posture of the body is used to communicate emotion as well. The opening scene of one film already shows how the living dead films create different emotions in relation to death and undead monsters and how these emotions provide interesting construction material for the viewer's experience. Indeed, in this one short scene, the relationship with death is at first filled with curiosity and exploration, but it also reveals the darker undertones of the fear of the unknown.

Multiple and Changing Alignment Positions

Alignment thus creates effective means of addressing different reactions to death. The complexity of alignment as a process becomes further stressed, when attention is shifted from one scene and one character to multiple scenes and characters within a movie. Alignment does not apply to one character only, such as the protagonist, as different scenes offer different alignments throughout the narration. Characters—heroes, victims, authorities and monsters—have different functions. They are there, for example, to engender threat, mark danger or represent resistance to accepting a monster's existence.[263] On the textual level, the viewer is expected to change between positions when the narration continues and the viewer might also have a certain character he/she prefers over others. The constructed positions in narration therefore provide multiple implied perspectives into the events. Silke Hortskott says that no single alignment determines the narration, because the offered points of views change all the time. Furthermore, no single alignment offers a neutral perspective, but it is part of the actual viewer's interpretation process when selecting (or choosing not to select) offered alignments.[264]

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[263] Andrew Tudor argues that horror films contain several different characters and therefore several different relationships to the monster. For example, victims or authorities represented in the films make the identification process more complex. (Tudor 1989, 117–118.)

[264] Horstkott 2009, 189-190.

Although alignment is often connected to the positive characters of the story, the position of the monster is also available and even stressed in certain scenes. Such different positions are important because of their different function. In horror films, as Leffler argues, positive characters are supposed to represent how to react to death and how to encounter threatening situations, whereas monsters represent primitive, threatening and uncontrollable facets of humanity.[265] In fact, Daniel Shaw claims that this potential for dual alignment—of trying out different positions and perspectives in the battle for mastery between the human and the monstrous, between life and death—is a source of pleasure for the viewer of horror.[266]

All of the major alignment positions (heroes', victims' and monsters') are visible in Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931). This was also the first living dead film with sound, with a huge impact on later films and their narrative structures. It is therefore a fascinating model on how narration shifts from one alignment process to another through transitions and how these transitions are often connected to the encounter with death or undeath. *Dracula's* first preferred alignment takes place with Renfield, traveling to Transylvania, where he is expected to meet Count Dracula for a real estate deal. The film opens to a carriage of Renfield approaching Transylvania. The narration focuses on his character representing Western rationality and the bourgeois world view familiar to the viewer. The locals he meets during his journey appear to him as superstitious with their irrational warnings about Dracula.

The viewer, however, is able to see Renfield's situation in a different light. Extratextual knowledge and the viewer's competence of the genre guide the viewer to take the locals' warnings and fears seriously, especially since the warnings are underlined by cutting to Dracula's castle where the vampires rise from their coffins after darkness. Renfield, at this point, remains ignorant of the true state of events, but the viewer knows. The scene shows that alignment is not about sharing emotions and positions of the characters as such, but about mediating these emotions and positions.

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[265] Leffler 2000, 159; Leffler 2001, 54.

[266] Shaw 2003, 11. Similarly, Ilkka Mäyrä emphasizes the possibility of aligning with the hybrid and ambivalent monster as an important element of horror. Mäyrä has researched horror literature from the point of view of subjectivity and dissolving limits of the self. He argues that whereas identity can always be considered changing and dissolving, horror depictions in particular study similar processes by creating controversial, ambivalent, changing and conflicting reading possibilities, or, in other words, 'demonic' imagery. According to him, plurality appears in several text types, but horrific texts manage to reach the terrifying part of it—where identity 'deforms and decomposes.' Whereas the monster takes the blame and guilt for all evil, pain and cruelty, these stories allow recognizing the problematic parts of the identity in a rather constructive way, Mäyrä argues. (Mäyrä 1999, 62, 68, 73, 82, 103, 108–109, 286–287.)

Exterior features only serve to bring an additional dimension to the mediation. As Berys Gaut claims, sometimes the visual or sound effects make the viewer know something more than the character does, which provides the necessary emotion (of horror and fear) and tension to the narration. Alignment does connect with the character, but it also distinguishes the viewer from that character and helps to see what situation the character is in.[267]

The information provided for the viewer by genre conventions and narrative clues is intended to make the viewer anxious for Renfield, who also becomes suspicious when he continues his journey alone towards Dracula's castle. He starts noticing strange things, a bat directing the horses, the decaying castle and his host's strange features. At this point, both the viewer and Renfield feel in awe of Dracula, who appears fascinating and horrifying at the same time. When Renfield is attacked by Dracula, the shared fears come true.

At the moment of the attack, the proposed alignment process shifts as well. From this point onwards, Renfield has been touched by death. And more often than not, the touch of death in itself creates marginalization and alienation of any character in the living dead films. It shows how the idea of modern death as alienated from the public space influences the world of these films. In the case of Renfield, the distancing process is further emphasized by his reactions to encountering death. He becomes insane, and his incapability to deal with death puts him in a position where the viewer both pities him and is horrified by his transformation.

For a while, the film has no positive characters for alignment, and the narrative's enunciation concentrates on Dracula instead. This alignment carries Dracula during his ocean journey and arrival in London, giving the viewer access to Dracula's approaching his victims aggressively or seductively. Dracula offers a position that is not available to the viewer in everyday life, presupposing negotiation over the offered violent encounters. The monstrous position can obviously become disturbing as well. For example, Jonathan Cohen holds that an occasional position of the monster, or understanding and sympathizing with an evil character, can also produce negative feelings and 'cause dissonance, guilt, or even fear'.[268]

However, Milly Williamson argues that there exists also a positive alignment with the monsters. And unlike some of scholars have claimed, the positive alignment

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[267] Gaut 1999, 207–209, 213.
[268] Cohen 2001, 252.

with the monster is not only an act of a viewer who desires to read horror texts in a resistant way, but these positions are available, because they are offered in the text, too. Whereas in classical films these might be less obviously suggested positions, they become more common in the postclassical period, as I will debate below. Still, most monstrous positions, according to Williamson, are hybrid, and thus open for several readings.[269]

Furthermore, Elizabeth Cowie argues that also the very unpleasure can contribute to the viewer's pleasure, as the horror film's dominant feature of aiming to horrify rests on the idea of unpleasure and traumatic events. The horror genre depends on the anxiety it stimulates in the viewer, and the understanding of the difference between reality and fiction stops cinematic trauma from turning into a real trauma. Unlike most theorists, Cowie does not try to explain how a negative emotion is turned into a positive experience, but considers the possibility that the viewer may enjoy these films because of their very unpleasantness.[270] By the same token, death may be a source of stress for a viewer, but it may also create excitement or encouragement in the very encounter.

Moreover, Lansdberg notes that when some suggested position becomes uncomfortable for the viewer, he/she can distance himself/herself from that position. The uncomfortable position of the monster, for example, is not forced, even if it were to be cinematically stressed.[271] Similarly, *Dracula's* alignments shift quite quickly when new characters are introduced. Dracula visits Doctor Seward and his company at the opera, and although the scene's dominating enunciation is still Dracula's, the preferred alignment is shifted to Lucy, who is enchanted by Dracula's appearance. It is made obvious to the viewer that Lucy is dangerously affected by Dracula. Later, she continues to profess her admiration, which thus provides an invitation for Dracula. The following night, she is attacked by the vampire.

Once again, the touch of death serves as a transformation in the narrative's perspective on characters. Once again, death has an alienating effect. From the corpse of Lucy, attention shifts to the man who is trying to make sense of her death by investigating her blood cells: 'Gentlemen, we are dealing with the undead.' Lucy's death introduces a new character, Van Helsing, who becomes the hero of the story, a man who knows how to resist and destroy the vampire. Van Helsing in fact proves to be the first

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[269] Williamson 2005, 297-299.
[270] Cowie 2003, 27–34.
[271] Landsberg 2009, 222, 224–225.

Western character to understand the threat posed by a vampire, but unlike the superstitious locals of Transylvania, his approach is scientific. His understanding and approach invites the viewer to respect him after the 'true' nature of Count Dracula has been exposed.

At this point, all the main characters and their viewpoints have been introduced to the viewer. The remaining scenes, except for the closing, take place at Seward's house, and while all the main characters, including Van Helsing, Dracula, Renfield, Seward, his daughter Mina and her fiancé John, are present during the rest of the film, the viewer can more freely change between the different characters and their positions. This makes it possible to present several struggles between different perspectives. The viewer's participation changes within the viewing experience, pulling away from and drawing closer to the fiction at different points of the film.[272]

The discourse centralizes the positions of Van Helsing (hero), Mina (victim) and Dracula (monster). Struggling to expose Dracula's monstrousness, Van Helsing offers a sensible alignment position. He represents safety, knowledge and resistance of the vampire, or in other words, resistance of death. He is an embodiment of that authoritative and professional voice which the modern society uses to repress and marginalize death. For her part, Mina becomes Dracula's next victim, standing for a dual relationship to death where death is both seductive and terrifying. She represents a problematic relationship to modern death in that she tries to maintain the ideal of modern death, but fails to do so. Mina's struggling with her pure love for John (life) and impure desire for Dracula (death) is emotional, although her resisting position to the vampire is the more desired one culturally. The film also makes clear the position of Dracula. The viewer can, once again, align with the vampire threatening his victims and opposing his hunters, but the enunciation focuses on the more positive characters of the hunter and the victim for the rest of the film.

At the end of *Dracula*, it is the perspective of the heroes that prevails: Dracula is killed. Once again, the winner is the modern marginalization of death. As Barry Keith Grant and Rhona J. Berenstein argue, horror films may allow fluid positions and pleasures, including monstrous positions, throughout the film narration, but most commonly, the end of these films restores the social order by defeating the monster and thus reconstructs the positive, conventional and politically correct engagement position

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[272] See also Leffler 2001, 66–68.

as the preferred one.[273] The monsters' positions are indeed often constructed in conventionalized ways and are received in relation to genre competences. At the beginning of the film, the living dead force death back to the public eye, challenging its marginalized role and studying its threat throughout the narration, but most often, in the end, it is returned to its place and placed firmly outside the legitimate social sphere.

Changing Perspective in the Narration of Living Dead Films

Although this conventional alignment process and relationship to death is introduced by the classical living dead films, the alignment structures have changed since then. What has decreased in particular is the differentiation between monstrous and other positions. Postclassical living dead films make monsters' positions more available and openly suggested for the viewer. This change is executed at the discursive level most of all: the postclassical living dead films emphasize and explain the perspective of the undead much more than do the classical films. Classical narratives alienate the viewer from the monster's position by dehumanizing them, whereas postclassical narration allows monsters to tell their stories, too. What has changed, therefore, is not the nature of the undead (monsters have been more or less tragic since the first living dead films), but the narrative viewpoint and the preferred alignment positions. Monsters have a bigger voice to express their tragic and sympathetic features.

Classical films practically excluded the monsters' point of view by telling the stories from the heroes' and victims' perspective. *White Zombie's* narration first centers on Madeleine, who has come to the distant and exotic location of Haiti to get married. However, while celebrating her wedding, she is poisoned, which starts her transformation into a zombie. At this moment the focus shifts onto her fiancé. Madeleine's fate remains open until the moment when the fiancé finds that Madeleine might still be alive. Even though the story begins through Madeleine's eyes, she, too, is excluded from the narration when she gains horrific characteristics through death.

Not only does the perspective of narration change, but as a zombie Madeleine loses her ability to speak and to express herself. A similar exclusion is highlighted in any zombie's inability to speak, including both classical and postclassical zombies. The voicelessness or inarticulateness is understood by Edward J. Ingebretsen as a part of the monster's alienation process. When a monster is doomed to silence it is denied a

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[273] Grant 2007, 48; Berenstein 1995, 231–235, 262.

common language and excluded from negotiation and from being heard. The voicelessness of the monster becomes a way of removing sympathy.[274] Similarly, only at the end of the *White Zombie* when Madeleine starts to fight against her zombification, is her point of view restored to the narration. Saved from zombification (death), she regains her voice.

This example shows how power relationships between different positions are created to alignment processes. The narration of the films separates between those who are allowed to talk and those allowed to act.[275] Notably, the monsters can act in classical films, but they are not allowed to talk: their voice is removed from public discussion. This political positioning of the undead which highlights their monstrosity and makes death appear terrible starts changing slowly in the transitional era. The return of the voice of death in public can be linked to the rise of the hospice and palliative movement in the United States. Although these movements, which take care of the emotional, spiritual and social needs of terminal patients, have existed for centuries, their modern attempts to give a dying person a say in the process started to take off during the 1950s, leading to public debates in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and became recognized by the U.S. Congress in 1987.[276]

Anticipating these changes, in *The Return of Dracula* (1958), the vampire is allowed to express himself to the heroine when pretending to be her cousin. He explains his arrival to the United States: 'I feel quite excited. I only hope your family will understand certain things about me. See, my life has been confined, that's why I have come here, for freedom. I must have it.' Compare this self-explanation to conceptions of modern death, and you will find that in the classical films, embodiments of death were excluded from the public sphere and were denied participation in society. That the vampire was capable of phrasing this sentence and specifically chose the term 'freedom' highlights the link between a more flexible role of the undead characters in Hollywood films and the forthcoming more open relationship with death as part of American culture.

In contrast to classical films, the monsters' perspective and voice are often used in the narration of the postclassical films. This allows a further discussion of the differences and similarities between humans and monsters, between life and death. An

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[274] Ingebretsen 2001, 11, 37, 170.
[275] Bishop highlights the capability to speak and/or act as a distinguishing element in relation to zombie characters. (Bishop 2006, 197.)
[276] See, for example, Staudt 2009, 8, 11–12, 16–17.

increasing number of films represent their monsters as sympathetic and, even more importantly, they refuse to exclude the monsters' perspective and self-definition. Although the zombies cannot talk in postclassical zombie films, either, the reaction shots of Romero's zombie sequel, *Land of the Dead* (2005), for example, are used to communicate the zombies' expressions which imitate sadness, helplessness, rage and the need for revenge. As Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger note, when the films change the conventional narration of horror films, their stories become narrated from the inside, through the eyes of both monsters and victims.[277] Such a change of narrative perspective shows how the death-related emotions and expression are slowly becoming more accepted and integrated into the public debates.

Within the living dead films, the transition in the perspective and the increasing use of the monsters' voice has been most palpable in vampire films. Whereas the 1930s Dracula was forced to the position of a stranger unable to communicate his desire for love, the Dracula of the 1990s openly discusses his desire and inability to love. The change is remarkable in the dialog. Béla Lugosi's classical Dracula was able to speak, but was restricted to explaining himself in quoted poems or short sentences such as 'I am Dracula', or 'I never drink wine', or 'I dislike mirrors, Van Helsing will explain'. These are rather statements than explanations or self-expressions, and the ultimate power of definition is given to others. In fact, William Hughes argues that because others speak for him, and, more importantly, because his antagonists speak for him, Dracula is denied self-explanation and made both physiologically and morally the 'other'.[278] Furthermore, in this case the other characters and the viewer are supposed to trust an authority's definitions, whereas the viewpoints of the deceased are not considered valuable.

The contradiction with Coppola's postclassical *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is enormous. His Dracula is given more room for self-expression, even self-loathing: 'I am nothing. Lifeless. Soulless. Hated and feared. I am dead to all the world. Hear me. I am the monster that breathing men would kill. I am Dracula.' In this scene the famous statement of the earlier film is taken and expanded to contain more expressive power than the short statement of the 1930s—'I am Dracula'—ever did. Interestingly, the self-expression has not only revealed the sympathetic side of monstrosity, but the tragedy of it, too. Hughes argues that as the postclassical films have become more tolerant of the

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[277] Gordon & Hollinger 1997, 2.
[278] Hughes 2000, 149.

monster's perspective, some of the vampires have become prisoners of their own self-interpretation and the pointlessness of their lifestyle.[279]

The 'new', self-searching vampire type became famous from Anne Rice's first novel of her *Vampire Chronicles* series, *Interview with a Vampire* (1976).[280] The 'new' figure had transformed into a secularized character who was communal rather than solitary and a reluctant and self-doubting killer rather than a cruel and intentional predator.[281] However, the idea of a self-searching vampire was not 'new' in every sense of the word. Instead, it was an example of a change in the Western vampire tradition, which had started from the demonic and evil creatures of folklore, transformed in the early nineteenth century to romantic and tragic lovers, and took the shape of an evil predator in the Dracula of the late nineteenth century. The earlier part of the twentieth century, and thus the beginning of a cinematic tradition, had been dominated by Dracula's archetype, but Rice's vampires had their predecessors in the romantic tradition and in the earlier bypaths and marginal interpretations in modern literature, film and television. For example, European films such as *Nosferatu, The Vampire* (1979), or the ABC television show *Dark Shadows* (1966–1971) introduced sympathetic vampires, and even the 1940s sequels of Dracula explored the nuances of a lonely character.[282]

At first, Rice's recreated chic vampire was imitated in the vampire literature of the 1980s and 1990s, but it was soon introduced to film audiences with movies such as *The Lost Boys* (1987), *Innocent Blood* (1992), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) and *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). David Punter and Glennis Byron recognize that this change from the demonized vampire of the late nineteenth century to the humanized vampire of the late twentieth century questioned the existence of good and evil, religious belief and the scientific understanding of the world, prioritizing instead the vampire's own experiences.[283] In this sense, the change from the 'old' cinematic vampire to the 'new' correlates with the change in the social role of death. At the opening of the twentieth century, the modern and scientific understanding of alienated death prevailed,

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[279] Hughes 2000, 151, 155.

[280] The new and tragic monster figure is usually connected to vampires, but the idea of a romantic mummy who could even function as a role model, has featured in literature, too, including the novel by Anne Rice *The Mummy or Ramses the Damned* (1989). (Day 2006, 127) The new mummy figure has nevertheless not yet premiered on the cinema screen.

[281] See, for example, Punter & Byron 2004, 271; Gordon & Hollinger 1997, 1; Tomc 1997, 96; Zanger 1997, 17–18, 21.

[282] See, also, Auerbach 1995, 1, 13, 191; Williamson 2005, 292–293; Williamson 2003, 101-102; Waller 1986, 198–225.

[283] Punter & Byron 2004, 270–271.

but before the end of the century, death had been revived by the individual experiences of the dying and the bereaved. The postclassical films invite the viewer to create a relationship with embodiments of death directly, not only through professional voices.

Furthermore, as Vesa Sisättö contends, the change in the vampire tradition has made vampires more human and secular. This has clearly diminished their supernatural role, making the origins and stories of these monsters reasoned and explained.[284] The change in perspective is seen in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which opens with a scene from the fifteenth century, introducing Prince Vlad the Impaler. This warrior for Christianity is portrayed as extremely brutal and cruel. After a bloodthirsty victory he returns to his castle and finds that his wife has committed suicide after receiving false news of her husband's death. Devastated and revengeful, he feels betrayed by God and curses not only the Church but himself as well. He becomes undead but is differentiated from the standard vampire in not having been bitten. He causes his transformation into a monster by himself. Furthermore, his motivation lies not in the lust for power, as the Dracula figure has been explained traditionally,[285] but in lost love and a thirst to avenge the loss.

The film's following sequence, of Jonathan Harker arriving in the castle to complete the real estate deal with Dracula, communicates the contrast to classical film. The classical *Dracula's* posture was quite threatening, but the postclassical discourse frames him rather as a lonely and bitter man, resentful of his prolonged life on the earth and of his unfortunate struggle with the church. During this sequence, Dracula accidentally sees Mina's picture, which gives him hope. He recognizes his lost beloved in the picture, which both upsets him and reminds him of his lost love and gives him a prospect of regaining that love. Indeed, whereas the classical Dracula also expressed his need of death to be re-recognized, to be restored from the marginal to the center of the cultural definition of life, the postclassical version of the vampire brings an emotional urge to the topic. He desires personal attachment and meanings to be attached to the return of death. He does not force death back to the public; he seduces people to love its return.

Because the viewer has witnessed his unfortunate, but apparently lasting love, his world view becomes more accessible and understandable. The way in which he is introduced does not brand Dracula as an evil character as such, but makes him a more

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[284] Sisättö 1999, 74.
[285] See, for example, Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 34–39; Waller 1986, 54.

complex personality. This is why Murray Smith claims that even if our alignment with the monster seems perverse at first glance, these affectively positioned monsters are often only partially evil: although immoral and vicious, the characters are given some attractive qualities. It is therefore not their evil actions or traits that cue alignment, but the viewer may engage with the monster in spite of these actions.[286] Therefore, with the complex image of the vampire, questions of evil remain, but are problematized with vulnerable elements, Ilkka Mäyrä argues and continues that this necessarily makes the voice of a vampire polyphonic.[287] Similarly, when this discussion is returned to the idea of modern death, it appears that although death is a disturbing or even frightening event, such ambivalent positions of embodied death suggest that it is still possible to create a more familiar and meaningful, yet ambiguous relationship with it.

Also, the monstrousness appears to be a question of perspective. Although *Bram Stoker's Dracula* begins by offering affective alignment with Dracula in the same way as some films introduce their protagonists, the position of Dracula is marked with ambivalence from the start. The generic knowledge of Dracula's wickedness and evil deeds ensures that the viewer is aware of the monstrousness of his position. However, only when the narration starts to stress Jonathan's position does the image of Dracula change in the discourse. It is from Jonathan's position that the vampire appears monstrous and threatening.

Interestingly, both of these contradictory perspectives and alignments are offered for the viewer, and the viewer is in fact provided with two competing and contradicting alignments at the same time when Jonathan is seduced by female vampires. His horror becomes evident from a point-of-view shot showing him witness the nature of Dracula's prey, a human baby. A reaction shot bares his shock and disgust. In contrast, the position of Dracula, created through the combination of a close-up and a reaction shot, when he is accused of not being capable of loving, demonstrates the distress of this lonely man who desires nothing more than to love again. Dracula's deeds may be monstrous, but the scene raises the question of whether he is monstrous by his nature. Or, if death is a disturbing event, is it monstrous in itself?

This domestication of the vampire has also been criticized. Michel, for example, claims that the sympathetic vampire is less monstrous and threatening and has therefore caused the loss of popularity of vampires in horror films. Vampires have instead become

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[286] Smith 1999b, 220–225.
[287] Mäyrä 1999, 171-173.

material for other genres, such as teenage drama or romance. Michel argues that zombies have replaced vampires as the most popular monsters of the twenty-first century, because they have remained monstrous, grotesque and deadly.[288] However, Williamson says that this domestication or shifting towards women's fiction is often misunderstood as a destruction of the 'original' myth of vampires. Instead of seeing domestication or feminization as a negative process, Williamson fairly argues that the connection with the everyday and mundane should be regarded as further widening complex engagements with vampires.[289]

As we saw with George Romero's *Land of the Dead*, not even zombies nor their relationship to death are excluded from the process of humanization. The film's ending stresses the new perspective: in the final encounter the main character chooses not to kill the zombie leader and says: 'They are just looking for a place to go. Same as us.' This moment might be the most positive in the Romero zombie saga, as both the human and the zombie refuse to use violence against each other, which creates the possibility of co-existence. When this idea is applied to the idea of modern death, it would seem that the exclusion of death from society less of a critical question in postclassical zombie films. The film instead suggests that a coexistence could also mean that death could be accepted to reappear in public contexts.

From a similar perspective, mummies are an interesting case within the living dead films. *The Mummy* (1931), a film of the classical era, allows the mummy to explain himself at length. This takes place in a sequence where the mummy reveals his past to Helen through hypnosis. They sit beside the pool, and the mummy says: 'You shall not remember what I show you now and yet I shall awaken memories of love and crime and death.' The camera dives into the pool and into the mysterious past which is framed by the mummy's voice-over narrating the death of an ancient princess and himself. The image then returns to the present, with Imhotep (alias the mummy) continuing his confession: 'My love has lasted longer than the temples of our gods. No man ever suffered as I did for you. The rest you may not know. Not until you are about to pass through the great night of terror and triumph, until you are ready to face moments of horror for an eternity of love, until I send back your spirit that has wandered through so many forms and so many ages.' This classical film has a whole sequence dedicated to the mummy's point of view, even if it ends up mystifying culturally distanced death.

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[288] Michel 2007, 392.
[289] Williamson 2003, 101-102.

Furthermore, it is interesting that the scene takes place during hypnosis. It is not as if Helen would remember what has happened. The scene and the information are aimed primarily at the viewer. In this sense, the alignment with the mummy is an existing tendency in the classical films already, although it has become more pronounced in the postclassical era.

Classical films could access the monster's point of view and allow the monster's voice to be heard, and the postclassical films can similarly choose to exclude the monster's vantage point. The bestial undead have maintained their fascination, and the earlier traditions exist side by side with the newer conventions.[290] For example, the postclassical mummy is not as sensitive as the classical monster. The opening of the postclassical film highlights the mummy's perspective and his romantic side, but after being brought back from the grave, his monstrosity and undeadness steal the attention. Only at the end does the mummy show his softer side when he mourns over his lost lover. However, it is important to notice that the main change has been in providing the monsters with a voice. They are not excluded or fantasy monsters anymore but have instead become part of humanity in all its tragicness.

While classical films would more often emphasize death as something that needs to be alienated from the society and the daily experiences, the postclassical films invite the viewer more openly to experience death. This serves to communicate that death is indeed part of the human experience, not something exterior to it. Similarly, when the living dead films are looked through the possible character gazes, it becomes clear that since the first living dead films of the early 1930s the use of conflicting and multiple viewing positions have increased. At the same time, the viewer is called closer to the monsters and closer to death. As a summary, Smith argues that the classical narration attaches the viewer to positive and well-introduced characters through conventional cinematic techniques, whereas postclassical films use more complex (and even misguiding) attachment structures.[291]

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[290] Even in the vampire tradition, the old cinematic and bestial vampire has survived beside the new emotional vampire. The brutal old vampire still warns of decay and immorality: in the 1980s, for example, these inhuman and destructive vampires were warning examples of the AIDS epidemics. The old vampires have also renewed themselves, preying in groups rather than as individual characters. (See, for example, Auerbach 1995, 165–171, 175–176, 186, 192; Waller 1986, 234–244.) According to Jules Zanger, the new vampire contains risks turning into a mere serial killer: it has become more human and has therefore lost its supernatural or bestial elements, but it still keeps murdering rationally, sometimes even sadistically, similarly to serial killers. (Zanger 1997, 22–27.)

[291] Smith 1995, 143, 160, 173.

The changing, conflicting and challenging positions of alignment both open up and deny the viewer's participation in death and dying. Within these changing processes, however, the viewer is invited to transform and be challenged by the images of dying and death. He/she is pushed to experience them either through the undead or through responses to death. This becoming, furthermore, triggers an interesting question of the morality of such positions and the addressed viewing process. Next, I will discuss these moral questions of character engagement in more detail.

2.4. Allegiance with Characters: Moral Affects of Death

Marking Monsters with a Distancing Sense of Immorality

The 1932 film *White Zombie* introduces the monsters within the first minutes. A young couple, recently arrived in the West Indies, encounters a group of zombies walking catatonically among the graves in the darkness. Recognition of the undead takes place through their postures, but it is also helped by the horror genre's iconographical symbols of graves and darkness. The reaction of the couple's carriage driver intensifies the affect: in shock, he starts driving madly towards the mansion. When accused of almost getting them killed, the driver reacts: 'Worse than that, monsieur, we might have been caught', and explains their meeting with the clumsy and hollow-eyed men: 'They are not men, they are dead bodies—Zombies, living dead, corpses diggen from their graves.'

This opening provides both a recognition of the embodied death and an alignment through a horrified reaction towards it. However, the opening does not say anything about the monstrousness of the zombies as such, but rather focuses on how the local people see these creatures as monsters and how they therefore avoid them and treat them as monsters. By the mill scene which shows the zombies working as slaves it must be clear to the viewer that these creatures do not act monstrously unless they are ordered to. In this sense they could be seen as tragic rather than terrifying.

In the *White Zombie*, the driver's reaction against the zombies is not stirred by anything that the zombies have done to him. Instead, his response arises from cultural beliefs and fears. The driver evaluates the zombies through their relationship to death, which he also offers to the viewer: the undead are unnatural, animated dead, and therefore monstrous. While there is no absolute category for either humanity or monstrosity, the definition of monstrosity appears to emerge from the moral evaluation of the characters. According to Smith, by 'Sharing basic cultural concerns and symbolic systems with a character, we are likely to assess and react to horrific monsters in a same way as the character.'[292] The driver's reaction to the creatures slogging down the graveyard marks them as alien both to the newly-arrived couple and to the viewer. In this part of my work, then, I shall analyze the morality of characters and how it affects the viewer's positioning in the text.

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[292] Smith 1995, 79.

The moral evaluation of any character is important for Smith's understanding of character engagement. Although narration can align the viewer with any character, this positioning does not automatically produce empathy or sympathy towards that character. For a viewer to become 'allied' with a character, some sort of moral evaluation is needed. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between alignment and allegiance, as the viewer evaluates whether he/she can evaluate a character to be morally desirable or worthy of sympathetic reactions. In this assessment, the characters' behavior is one crucial element, but Smith also argues for the significance of contexts and co-texts. In other words, the appraisal is influenced by cultural schemas of moral norms, generic conventions and other Hollywood practices (such as marketing).[293]

The viewer can be aligned with any character in the living dead films, as we have seen, but he/she is rarely offered allying with monsters. In accordance with the generic conventions, the undead are the monsters of these stories with a generic horror film task, as Leffler writes, to destroy at physical, moral and psychological levels.[294] And the living dead do act monstrously, consuming the living: mummies threaten the bodies and lives of the living, vampires suck blood from the living, and zombies mindlessly attack the living, either under command or instinctively.[295]

The monsters of the living dead films are defined through their generic unnatural relationship with death and through their consuming death, but they are also constructed through various cinematic techniques. Smith argues that these techniques, such as generic iconography, have a 'pervasive influence' on the moral evaluation.[296] The

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[293] Smith 1995, 84, 187–188, 190–193. Empirical studies of engagement have shown that the characters' positive features invite viewer engagement. For example, Elly A. Konjin and Johan F. Hoorn studied the effects of the characters' features—ethical (good vs. bad), aesthetical (beautiful vs. ugly) and epistemic (realistic vs. unrealistic)—for the viewers' experience. Their findings demonstrate that positive characteristics encouraged engagement, while negative features increased the distance between the viewer and character. Indeed, ethics became the most important factor for engagement, and its effect was increased by aesthetical and epistemic features, so that a good, beautiful and realistic character was most likely to be allied with. However, when the mixing of both good and bad features in one character increased, it also strengthed the involved and distanced positions taken in relation to the character. When a character was defined as bad (or monstrous), their beautifulness and realism decreased engagement, whereas some affection was possible with bad characters who were ugly and unrealistic. (Konjin & Hoorn 2005, 107, 131–136.)

[294] Leffler 2000, 156.

[295] Whereas Dracula continues consuming others, some other postclassical vampires have more complex relationship even with their monstrous actions. For example, Sally Miller argues that the most important feature of the 'new' vampire is their reluctance to feed on humans. Instead they feed from animals, blood banks, willing donors whom they do not kill etc. This, according to Miller, has affected their self-identity, emotional experiences, physicality and sexuality, because they have started loathing their own bodies and natures. By trying to be more human, vampires end up destructing their current bodies. (Miller 2003, 53-56.) From the vampires' problematic dieting, see also Tomc 1997, 95-114.

[296] Smith 1995, 191–192.

intrusion of monster is stressed at several levels, not only in what the monster is and what it does. Monstrosity is created by different signals (sounds, visual cues, camera angles), mise-en-scène (setting, lighting, costumes and make-up, the monster's outward appearances and figure expression), and relations on and off the screen. These different narrative elements address threat and emotions for the viewers.[297] The viewers' evaluation therefore relies on a range of cinematic techniques, too, not just on the reactions and definitions of morally positive or culturally corresponding characters' reactions and definitions.

The opening of the *White Zombie* uses several intimidation techniques to encourage the adoption of the carriage driver's distrustful evaluation of zombies. During the opening credits, a local funeral serves as a visual and audio background. It is already dark, and there are workers, chanting rhythmically while filling a grave. The darkness, low lighting and (from a Western perspective) exotic ritual make for an atmospheric setting. It is to this funeral scene that the young couple and their driver arrive.

Picture series 5: Use of dissolve and point-of-view shots in the opening of *White Zombie*.

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[297] Hills 2003, 143, 146, 150–154; Leffler 2000, 149, 152; Leffler 2001, 48, 180–182.

When the carriage continues its journey in the darkness, a sense of threat is intensified by dissolving images.[298] Behind the light source, the viewer slowly recognizes an eye watching over the carrier. When the carrier pulls away, eyes appear over the image, and a staring gaze lingers. The effect is perfected when the party stops to ask the way: the camera shoots an extreme close-up of the gaze of the staring man (zombie master), who is unveiled as the evil force in the story and the cause of the anticipating mood of the beginning. Through a visual comparison between these images, his threatening power is made clear for the viewer. The man's gaze is fixed on Madeleine who will become his victim and turn into a zombie.

A threatening atmosphere is thus created even before the meeting with the zombies who scare the driver. When shown on-screen for the first time, the zombies are shot from a low angle and through underlighting to stress the threat. The gravediggers' chanting has faded away, and the only thing that the viewer may hear before the driver's scream are crickets in the night. The white crosses looming in the darkness and the party's passing by several graves further amplifies the panicky getaway.

The viewer is given a number of cues for recognizing generic conventions of horror and its monsters: character reactions and offered explanations, setting, sound, lighting, cutting, camera angles and the slow and catatonic movements of the living dead. However, when these are set aside, the zombies do not in fact appear very frightening, but rather emotionless and depressed. As Leffler notes, it is often the narration and narrative elements which tell the viewer that the monster should be feared. In the end the viewer may find that the monster was not such a threat at all; it was the narration that transmitted fear and horror.[299]

Genre and generic conventions provide an important formula for the moral evaluation of monsters. Furthermore, Edward J. Ingebretsen claims that the horror stories' monster making is intertwined with cultural models of moral norms, as monsters are used to carry social significations in order to comment social systems. Monsters (whether fictitious or real) are created to stress, limit and recognize as well as to exceed and blur 'normality' as it is socially understood. In this sense, monstrosity is always a social, political and narrative position created by others (by 'normality') on the basis of

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[298] For example, Karen Sisco King argues that dissolve is one typical cinematographic device to creating anxiety by visually grossing borders and merging together not only the images, but themes and characters presented in those images. (King 2004, 21–25.)

[299] Leffler 2001, 48, 180–182.

difference.[300] This kind of monster making and its narrative and discursive positioning of monsters necessarily contains moral evaluation.

Generic conventions, cultural practices and Western values towards death therefore mark the existence of the undead problematic and their consuming behavior as immoral. Western understandings of death have been informed by Christian definitions[301] where the body is viewed as mortal and animal whereas the soul is immortal and divine.[302] Such dualism is visible also in the living dead films, where the non-undead characters tend to define the undead as soulless and bestial bodies. Both in the classical and postclassical films, the non-undead appear to fear for their souls. In the classical *Dracula*, Mina begs Van Helsing: 'If you can save Lucy's soul after death, promise me you'll save mine'. Also, in the classical *The Mummy*, Muller tries to rescue Helen from the hands of the mummy, pointing out that 'it's not her life in danger. It is her soul'. The soul clearly epitomizes humanity in postclassical films. For example, Rain, a wounded character in *Resident Evil* worries about her destiny. She begs Alice to kill her if she turns into a zombie: 'I don't want to be one of those things, walking around without a soul'. The characters fear the undead life more than they fear death, because if their animated body continues to life, their (moral) soul is captured in a state in-between and inside a sinful (immoral) body. By killing the body, the soul can be released from this in-betweenness.

These examples also demonstrate an interesting change in monster evaluation. In both eras, the characters regard the undead state to be worse than death. In the films of the classical era, the characters are concerned about the afterlife of their souls, not for their lives or bodies. They want peace after death, even after a monstrous death. In contrast, postclassical films no longer make an issue of afterlife in itself. Instead, the characters are afraid of their continued living in this world. They fear what they, or rather their bodies, might do as monsters.[303] Whereas the characters of the classical films fear for what they would *be* as monsters, in postclassical films they appear to be afraid of

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[300] Ingebretsen 2001, 7, 37, 161, 166. For Ingebretsen, monsters are made both for fiction and used in everyday narrations (as pedophiles, etc.). Such monster making is an old tradition. Punter and Byron argue that even the so-called 'born' monsters—with physically deformed, incomplete and excessive bodies—have always been made to serve the symbolic functions of monstrosity, whether they were signs of the divine or the disastrous. (Punter & Byron 2004, 263–264.)

[301] As Smith (1995, 213) argues, Hollywood reflects Graeco-Roman and Christian values that have affected the behavior models of Western cultures.

[302] See, for example, Reuter 2000, 24; Damasio 2001 (1994), 12–13, 231–233; Cottingham 1997, 13, 33, 42. About the relationship between bestial body and divine soul in (Christian) dualism, see, for example, Descartes 1956 (c. 1637–1650), 81–83, 93–97, 141.

[303] See also Mohammed 2006, 91; Greene 2006, 14.

what they would *do* as monsters. Here we have a contrast in what death is and what death does. That which is horrifying is borne of a different function. The metaphysical questions of death have been replaced by questions of death-related transformations, and corporeal metamorphoses in particular.

And yet both classical and postclassical films emphasize the same horrifying continuance between a person before and after transformation. This continuance provides a moral dilemma about the nature of the humanity. As such, the narrative solutions of these films create uncanny sensations for the viewer. Uncanny, as a concept, has been adopted to horror film studies from the writings of Sigmund Freud, whose 'uncanny' is an unpleasant experience of a sudden recognition of familiar, but repressed issues, such as alienated primitive beliefs of death. This encounter triggers an internal threat which is frightening, familiar and strange all at once.[304] In horror films, uncanny is often connected to moments where the viewer recognizes familiar characteristics in the monstrousness and is forced towards otherness. The recognition unpleasantly dissolves the limit between fictitious and real, because the recognition has a base in reality as well. The viewer is therefore suddenly challenged to doubt his/her everyday understanding of world and realizes that there might be other ontological possibilities than is culturally accepted.[305]

Uncanny sensations in the viewing process hence cue how the undead remind us of their human background, which challenges our understanding of life and death. These films also question the existing limits by showing them as constructed. Even the moral evaluation addressed to the viewer is made by the victims and heroes of these stories. It is not as if the chosen points of views are 'natural'; instead they draw on the generic conventions of the horror films. When looked at from the point of view of the living dead, the morality of their transformed existence is evaluated differently. For example, in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, when Van Helsing finds Lucy and is determined to put her soul to rest, Lucy does not seem to be too happy about it. Now that she has already faced the dreadful transformation process, she would want to continue her life as a 'monster'. Come the killing scene, Lucy resists, but her viewpoint and desires are overruled, or rather they are not taken into a consideration at all. Van Helsing is convinced that he is

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[304] Freud 1985 (1919), 341,345, 368, 372.
[305] Bowman 2003, 72; Leffler 2000, 152, 163; Freeland 2000, 236; Tudor 1989, 115. The problematic relationship with death and dead bodies is thought to be most typical cause of uncanny experiences. The living dead thus invoke this experience through their embodiments of death and through the way they challenge the boundaries between the living and the dead. (See, for example, Punter & Byron 2004, 283; Mohammed 2006, 92; Cole 2006, 186.)

doing Lucy a favor. As this death scene shows, too, moral evaluation always takes place from a certain vantage point. In the living dead films, that is most often the point of view of the living. The undead and their relationship with death are addressed as unnatural and monstrous.

Challenged Allying with Moral Characters

Because horror narration and monster making distance monster positions by using techniques that highlight their immorality, the viewer is rarely encouraged to ally with the monsters. Instead he/she is more often enticed to join the positions of other characters, who share the same cultural values and offer moral positions for allegiance. The allegiance with a character, however, does not mean that the viewer imagines being that character. The empathy can occasionally be so strong as to make this sort of central imagining take place, but mostly, the imagining is acentral, enabling the viewer to experience emotions for the character in a certain situation.[306]

In the horror genre, this acentral imagining is underscored. For example, within the first minutes of the film, *Resident Evil* aligns the viewer with Alice, who is clearly confused, not sure where or who she is. The viewer who does not know, either, what has happened and what is about to happen understands and even shares her confusion, but at the same time, he/she starts to fear for Alice. The generic conventions of the zombie films make the viewer anticipate that something is wrong. In this introductory scene, the feeling is highlighted by a threatening atmosphere. When Alice walks around the house, the conventional omens of the horror genre start occurring: a swarm of birds pull away, and a sudden wind raises the leaves off the ground and seems to close in on Alice, etc. However, as it turns out, there is no monster to explain these omens yet; the monsters are still locked in within the research facility. Horror's generic conventions of suspicion and mood are used here to induce a feeling and fear in the viewer that something terrible is about to happen to Alice.

Such (involuntary) autonomic reactions, including responses to surprising sounds, movements or increasing tension, are one dimension of character engagement. According to Smith, these autonomic reactions do not arise from direct engagement with

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[306] See, for example, Smith 1995, 96.

a character, but from the environment of the characters.[307] In this scene the automatic reaction for character engagement is created slowly, but horror conventions also use reverse effects, those of shocks.[308] Later, in the research facility, noticing one of the corpses floating in a water tank, Alice studies the corpse. When Alice turns away, the viewer witnesses how the corpse suddenly opens her eyes and reveals her undead nature for the first time. From this moment on, the viewer knows for certain that Alice is in danger. The scene also provides another type of affect: because of an unexpected shock, the viewer automatically reacts physically to the surprise.

Bodily shocks force the viewer, too, to participate in the narration materially. As a body genre, horror films are especially fond of using the experiential and affective possibilities of cinematic techniques. Shaviro, for example, argues that the impact of film is grounded in the experience of shock. This is accentuated in violent and pornographic films where the viewer's experience is deeply rooted in his/her bodily (and intimate) experiences. In the extreme cinema of horror films, the intensified experiences challenge the traditional ideas of physical passivity of film viewers because of bodily reactions, including disgust, laughter and fear.[309]

In this case, the viewer is invited to participate in the events as allied with Alice, both emotionally and physically. The scenes show that the cinematic techniques are intended to make the viewer align with a certain character. Together with a morally positive evaluation that is slowly being created about Alice, allegiance with her becomes more and more encouraged as well. Although she is capable of acting violently, Alice seems a sympathetic character and her intensions appear moral, which makes the viewer most likely able to share her cultural values and to become allied with her.

Most films have positions which are preferential to others. The position of Alice is a case in point. Classical films in particular favor allegiance with the main characters. Leffler argues that the favored positions tend to be those of the positive (good) characters or heroes. According to Leffler, the hero image is usually an idealized self-image. This ideal character needs to be recognizable and ideal at the same time. An ideal character should be a positive character that shares both the cultural and generic idea of how one should react or work in certain situations. However, the character should not be

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[307] Smith 1995, 100–103.
[308] David Scott Diffrient defines shock (or the shock cut in cinematographic terms) as a 'sudden, violent eruption or peak moment in a film narrative' which forces the viewer to react to the film with a startle. Moreover, he argues that the shock cut is especially important to horror genre because it explores 'the material of embodied presence' and generates 'technologies of fear'. (Diffrient 2004, 61–63, 81.)
[309] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 59–61.

too perfect; it is the human characteristics which make him/her approachable.[310] Leffler's connection of hero and preferred position shows how the positivity of a character tends to be evaluated on moral terms created by the narration.

The moral dimension of the preferred position is foregrounded in the finishing scene of the classical *Dracula*, where Dracula is killed. At this point, Mina is under Dracula's power, and although the viewer fears for her innocence, the narration has distanced itself from her frame of reference because of her contamination by death. The focus is now on the heroes, on the perspectives of Van Helsing and John, who are trying to safe Mina. Although Van Helsing's superior knowledge of vampires has earned him respect, the closing scene suggests that the viewer be aligned with John who has thus far been placed in assisting roles in character engagement.

There are two important reasons for this shift. First, John will necessarily model emotions and tensions for the viewer. Horrified at Mina's fate and desperate to rescue her, John's reaction to Mina's abduction is emotional—a position which the viewer can share. In contrast, Van Helsing is more interested in his own struggle with Dracula and wants to destroy the vampire and Mina, too, if she has already transformed. Secondly, then, John has a more moral relationship to violent death than does Van Helsing, who is prepared violently to kill the vampire(s), taking it in his stride. John, however, finds it hard to help him and has difficulties in witnessing the killing of a living being. He puts up with it in order to save Mina's soul and life, but recoils from the prospect of violent action. John therefore becomes the ideal moral position for the viewer. He offers a clean and moral getaway from violent death. Once Dracula is dead, Van Helsing is left alone in a decaying castle, while John carries his beloved Mina (and the viewers) into the sunrise and a brighter future.

As the *Dracula* shows, films may change character alignment, but they create hierarchies, too, between different character positions through allegiance. These hierarchies also mark the ideology or morality of the films and determine how the films mediate the relationships with death to the viewer. Plantiga claims that a film's emotional responses and engagement are 'fully integrated in the film's moral and ideological project'.[311] In *Dracula,* for example, the discourse occasionally tells events from Dracula's point of view, but this position is made uncomfortable for the viewer.

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[310] Leffler 2000, 173–174, 249–258; Leffler 2001, 58–59. The ideal character is based on Aristotle's requisites for a morally good, but imperfect and humanized hero. (See, for example, Hiltunen 2002, 17.)
[311] Plantiga 1999, 253.

What is highlighted in contrast are the heroes' and victims' moral positions. And in the end, Mina's/John's emotional and innocent perspectives are morally and ethically more appreciated than Van Helsing's respectable, practical, but ultimately violent position.

When evaluating the morality of characters in the living dead films, the challenging question is whether the living can use violence to kill the living dead and still provide positive character engagement for the viewer. In the classical films, this question was circumvented by denying that there were problems with defensive violence. Similarly, as the viewer is distanced from Van Helsing at the moment of his violent act in the *Dracula*, none of the main characters use violence against the zombie master or his underlings in the *White Zombie*. Instead, Charles Beaumont, the man who was responsible for Madeleine's zombification and who has been zombified himself, too, drags the zombie master to death with him as self-punishment and an act of atonement. Furthermore, in *The Mummy*, there is no physical violence against the mummy whatsoever. Instead, an ancient ritual and intervention by an Egyptian god makes the mummy return to ashes.

Ingebretsen has pondered this interesting question of performer and responsibility. He argues that it is extremely important in monster narrations that defensive violence is justified by the monsters' actions and the distress they cause. Paying attention to such questionable justification of violence, Ingebretsen considers it significant that the death of the monster 'cannot be my fault'. The responsibility cannot be given to an individual (or the viewer), but rather to the whole community which has only reacted to the threat as they see fit.[312]

Even if the killing of a monster as a solution were interpreted positively, and although it is desired both by the characters and the viewer, it still does not erase the ethical problems of violent acts. After all, these films thrive on the American myth of a moral necessity of violence, justifying the use of even reciprocal and vengeful violence when it can be seen as maintaining the existing (or preferred) social order and as producing peace and harmony.[313] In the living dead films, too, the living dead are destroyed in the name of morality[314], survival[315], and ontological purification[316].

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[312] Ingebretsen 2001, 43, 171–175.

[313] Cawelti 2004, 155–157; Giroux 2002, 231; Russell 1995, 194. Cawelti, for example, bases his argumentation of the American myth of violence on American history (conquest of the continent, frontier ideology, Indian wars and later the distribution of democracy) and on the idea of heroism. In this sense, violence can bring peace, order and civilization—or solve problems that cannot be solved in any other way. (Cawelti 2004, 144–150, 155–157, 161–171, 212–240.)

[314] See, for instance, Jacquette 2006, 107–109, 115–118; Draeger 2006, 124; Greene 2006, 14.

However, none of these reasons erases the fact that the living are still responsible for their own actions, quite as the undead are responsible for their monstrous deeds. Interestingly, ethical questions linked to this myth have become more important in the postclassical era. In fact, the major difference between the classical and postclassical era is that the capacity of violence to solve conflicts has been challenged, together with the role of the living as righteous users of violence.

In *Resident Evil*, the position of Alice is similarly hybrid as that of Van Helsing's in the classical *Dracula*, but whereas classical narration distances the viewer from Van Helsing in the end, the postclassical narration stays with Alice to the end despite the increasing violent tendency in her behavior. From the first images of the film, narration slowly increases the feeling of Alice's competence to deal with a terrifying situation, whereas her vulnerability and humanity is highlighted by an idea of being lost in the Wonderland. Like the viewer, Alice is trying to make sense of emerging monsters, but as a true heroine she still remains at the top of situation. However, during their escape, she briefly gives in to violent revenge that is not motivated as a right or good solution. Earlier in the film, the survivors have been betrayed by her friend and sham husband. When Alice catches up with the traitor, she does not leave him to zombies, but violently kills him—a live person, not a zombie—as an act of personal retaliation. At this point, the viewer is forced to witness an act of murder which shakes the image of Alice as a morally positive allying position.

The moral hierarchy between heroes and monsters started to break down already during the transitional era, exemplified by the *Night of the Living Dead*. Here, monsters are rather starting points for the characters' violent behavior, which challenges the morality of human nature. None of the main characters is innocent or even ideal; they all appear to have more weaknesses than positive characteristics. As Matt Becker, Kendall R. Phillips and Berys Gaut put forward, this film redefined the use of main characters in the horror films: the characters are conflicted and disturbingly ordinary in their egoistic motivations and violent reactions in a desperate situation. In this film, normality becomes monstrosity both on the level of zombification and on the level of the main characters.[317]

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[315] See, for example, Thompson 2006, 28–30.
[316] See, for example, Barrows 2006, 72–74, 78–79.
[317] Becker 2006, 42–43; Phillips 2005, 98–99; Grant 2007, 53.

In this film the protagonists—the hysteric Barbra, African-American Ben, a young couple and the father, mother and injured daughter of the Cooper family—are trying to survive in a country house surrounded by zombies and the external threat posed by them. As Jancovich observes, however, 'the zombies outside are responsible for hardly any of the main characters' deaths'.[318] Most of the deaths occur because the survivors cannot agree on their actions. Instead of fighting the zombies, they start to fight one another. In what follows, the viewer is expected to become frustrated and confused with the offered positions. With all the characters making mistakes and false conclusions, the hierarchy of moral characters becomes harder to detect. These people do not work together nor are most of their decisions based on a rational evaluation of the situation, but rather, as Waller says, on envy, hatred and jealousy.[319] Relations are particularly fraught between the two male figures, Harry Cooper (the father) and Ben, who both act as if they were leaders of this group. The conflict comes to a head during the night and in a violent struggle Cooper is wounded. And, ultimately, the film denies the viewer any kind of moral resolution, because Ben, too, by now the only survivor, is shot in the end.

The internal conflicts of the survivors appear to be more threatening than the actual monsters, making the humans cruel to one another in the midst of crisis. Relationships are destroyed, including family and romantic love, and other American institutions such as private property and heroicness are left in tatters, Waller notes.[320] The film is an extreme example of how horror films can present humans as more monstrous than the monster figures themselves. While the zombies follow their basic instincts, the human characters draw on conscious decisions and therefore ought to carry the responsibility for their actions. Because they fail to do this, the zombies as former humans become more sympathetic than the main characters. According to Becker, the categories of monsters and victims are blurred, and all the 'heroes' are conflicted characters, who become as (or more) violent as the monsters.[321] The violent conflict between the living and the living dead only serves to demonstrate that there is no 'natural' difference between these groups.

In this film, it is not death as such which needs to be alienated, because true deadliness is found in the human nature. The film lays bare the hypocrisy of denying

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[318] Jancovich 1992, 90.
[319] Waller 1986, 281.
[320] Waller 1986, 281.
[321] Becker 2006, 49.

death, because it is the violent nature of humans that produces more and more death every day. This cynical world view with the desperate, yet hopeless cry for responsibility over violent death has gained more ground since World War II (as will be discussed in chapter three in more detail), and whereas such fragility between monsters and humans has always been part of the living dead films, at the discursive level it has become more visible in the postclassical era. As Murray Smith, Deborah Knight and George McKnight argue, morally positive characters are harder to discern in postclassical films than in the classical films. Postclassical horror films may lack morally positive or ideal characters altogether.[322] In the postclassical era, the emphasis has also changed in such a way as highlights the artificiality of justification, which questions the role of the living, especially when they are violent both against the monsters and other characters.

Questions of morality and attitude have brought the threat of the undead closer to humans. Andrew Tudor has studied this change in the horror genre's monstrousness. According to him, horror's history is marked by one central change in the attitude: what dominates the scene is inner horror. Tudor classifies three central oppositions that define the monstrous threat. First, the horrifying creature can either be secular (psychopath) or supernatural (werewolf). The second opposition is linked to the humanity in that horror can either be born inside (psychosis) or outside (demon who possesses a person) of a person. Third, the threat can exist in itself or it can be created either intentionally or accidentally by human action. In the transition towards inner horror, Tudor says, the secular and inside threat that is created by human action has started to lead the horror field. He concludes that in postclassical horror, everyone is a possible monster and a possible hero.[323]

The changing understandings of good and evil, or normal and monstrous, in the living dead films show how important the actions of the characters are in evaluating their morality.[324] Although the living dead are the ones who violently threaten the living, they are not the only ones to use violence. The living, too, try to kill these monsters, and such violent encounters challenge further the limits between humans and monsters because both motivate violence for their own purposes. Waller argues that the nature of violence does not become more or less moral depending on who is acting (the undead or living). Rather, violence has an ambivalent nature, because by using it, humans may out-monster

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[322] Knight & McKnight 2003, 213, 218–219; Smith 1995, 213–215, 222.
[323] Tudor 1989, 9–10, 22, 151.
[324] See also Smith 1995, 190.

the monster. The defensive violence contains elements of both the destruction of humanity and its preservation.[325]

Yvonne Leffler holds that when a monster is encountered, the limits between human and monster are always reconsidered, and when the main characters meet the monster, the line between them is questioned. At the same time and through engagement, the viewer is forced closer to the monster as well.[326] In other words, when violent characters end up producing more and more death, the line between produced death and consuming death become challenged, making the alienation of death more difficult. Violent death appears part of culture and society. Its naïve denial is not a resolution.

Where a monster is depicted as tragic and/or sympathetic, we can clearly see the questionable nature of the use of violence, irregardless of the perpetrator. Angela Curran argues that films with tragic monsters can sometimes be more horrifying to the viewer than films with unsympathetic monsters, because the tragedy unfolds when the monster and other characters cannot understand one another. Curran continues to claim that these tragic misunderstandings reveal something of the humanity and its vulnerabilities.[327] When the living are unable to encounter and handle death, death becomes violently alienated from society. Such marginalization further increases the unknown and horrifying nature of death.

Shildrick, too, discusses the tragicness of this violent encounter with otherness, arguing that the encounter with monsters is mostly about fear of otherness and of the unknown, whereas ethical encounters should be about learning and widening perspectives of the humanity itself. According to her, an 'embodied gesture of touch' could provide understanding and intimacy enabling a capacity to move beyond differences. The feared touch is most often carried out in the form of violence that aims to exclude the unknown.[328] Similarly, the living dead films reject corpses violently, although postclassical films tend to criticize the violent nature of this rejection and rather suggest a more open-minded relationship to death through embodied physical experiences.

In summary, when the viewer is attached to the story by characters, the living dead films create experiences that challenge the viewers' understandings of life and death. The films offer different positions for the viewer to experience encounters with

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[325] Waller 1986, 340, 342, 349. See also, Curran 2003, 51; Punter & Byron 2004, 266.
[326] Leffler 2000, 163.
[327] Curran 2003, 48, 53, 61–62.
[328] Shildrick 2002, 102, 117, 121, 132–133.

(violent) death. Classical stories offered the viewer rather clean, but still multiple, positions to study and understand death, to examine death in a manner similar to modern science and medicine. In the end, death was neatly put back into its socially accepted place. In other words, although the undead monsters of the classical films stirred this negotiation between a demand for recognition of death and alienating tendencies toward death, the solutions of these films recreated the conventional idea of modern death as an ideal socio-cultural attitude and response towards death.

This observing position has since become questioned, not least because of the viewer's expected participative role. First, the transforming embodiments of death have turned more material and grotesque, pushing the viewer to embody death in more reflexive and intimate ways. Second, the more openly complex alignment processes have given the viewer a more open view into the monstrosity and death as well. And last, when the moral basis of character allegiance became challenged, the viewer had no more places to hide. Through character engagement and by the time of the postclassical films at the latest, the viewer was made to take part in the struggle between enforcing and alienating tendencies of death-related practices. From these varied positions which highlight the importance of experiences, the marginalization of death appears violent and artificial. Death has revealed its role as a cultural product, and its exclusion from being part of the public has ceased to be an ideal situation.

3 NARRATING DEATH

As seen in the previous chapter, undead monsters and the other characters' reactions to them provide different positions for the viewer to embody death. However, character engagement is not the only means of mediating death; another major mediator are death scenes. In this chapter, I will look into the ways in which death events are gazed through the camera and explore how the addressing of death events in the living dead films and through camera narration has changed from classical to postclassical era. I will discuss how the narrative level of death scenes constantly intertwines and negotiates with the discursive and rhetoric level of images of death events. On the narrative level, death events are mediated to the viewer by storytelling, either with or without explicit images of dying. However, as is obvious in some of the newer films, the horror genre has become especially well-known for spectacles of death events. I will also explore how the death scenes of the living dead films contribute to the narration of these films and how narrating is created by camera gazes through the act of showing (or by refusing to show).[329]

Narratological theories construct events as building blocks of the plot, defined as changes of state, or transitions from one state to another.[330] Death, too, is a veritable change in state, a transformation from one kind of being to another kind of being or nonbeing, and as with any narrative element, death happens in a certain place and at a certain time.[331] Consequently, as a narrative event, death both affects the characters (and thus viewers) and leads the story to some direction. Death events also provide an audible and visible form to death, enabling the study of death through such constructed forms and experiences.

In fictive stories, death is often recognized as having narrative power. For example, Catharine Russell introduces the term 'narrative mortality' to describe death's narrative and discursive role, the desire in Western fiction for meaningful death. Death

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[329] Although I speak here of the narration of death and of camera gaze, I do not intend to suggest that camera is the narrator of the film. Rather, as characters' gazes, also camera's gazes provide perspectives into the stories. The cinematic 'narrator' is a more abstract element which includes visual and auditory elements as well as editing and framing the film. As Silke Hortskott argues, cinema cannot be directly compared to literature where most of the narratological theories originate. Unlike literature, film narration does not reveal any recognizable narrator, and it stays at a high abstraction level in a way which makes interaction between the film text and the viewer more important in defining the narration. (Horstkott 2009, 170–171, 189.)

[330] See, for example, Bal 1999 (1997), 5; Chatman 1978, 43–44.

[331] See also Kastenbaum 2003b, 224–225.

can be used to advance the plot, but more often it is employed as closure to emphasize its meaning and importance.[332] Death events are obviously exploited in the narrations of living dead films, but because these films introduce several different kinds of death, I will specify the use of 'narrative mortality' in the living dead films with a concept of 'narration of death'. This refers to the ways the living dead films use death and dying processes as central construction material in structuring the films not only in the closures, but at all main narrative turning points. Three different deaths are recognizable from such narration of death: transformative, social and final death. A transformative death transforms a person into an undead monster; in social death, the character's transformation is realized and accepted by others; and in the final death the undead monster is violently destroyed. In Aristotelian concepts, transformative deaths serve as the beginning and escalation of the story, while social deaths function as the story's middle section, where the otherness is processed, and final deaths act as a closure.[333] I argue that these three create a formula—a narration of death—which is used in the living dead films.

By standardizing the narration of death, the living dead films suggest a certain process of dying to occur, to be processed and accepted. My process-driven reading of these films' structure is based on the postnarratological idea of the narrativist turn. Since the 1990s, this turn has opened the narrative to other fields, too, besides the study of fiction.[334] The opening has also shifted the role of the narrative from techniques of narration to a form of knowledge: storytelling has come to be understood as a fundamentally human way of comprehending the world.[335] By the same token, it can be appreciated that the dramatization of death events helps to comprehend (not only to fantasize) death. Through a systematic use of death events, these films can also model dying processes, not only death as an experience.

Because death often has a violent nature in the living dead films, it stands to reason to consider its significance in light of what Rachel Louise Shaw maintains in her empirical study of the importance of narrative models in the understanding and telling of

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[332] Russell 1995, 2–4.

[333] The ideal of a coherent plot with causal relations, goal-orientation and clear phases of beginning, middle and end, was introduced in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1997 (c. 335–322 BC), 77).

[334] See, for example, Kreiswirth 2005, 378; Kreiswirth 2000, 295–300.

[335] See, for example, Kreiswirth 2005, 380–381; Kreiswirth 2000, 305–306, 314–315; Prince 2008, 118; Herman 1997, 1048–1049, 1052, 1057. However, this perspective has been criticized as well. For example, Kreiswirth argues than when narrative knowledge is seen as universally human, the ways to know and the ways to tell can become overtly similar, which leads to a failure of seeing how the rhetorical solutions affect this process. (Kreiswirth 2000, 306–314.)

violent encounters. She compared film and real-life experiences of violence, concluding that both were framed by narrativization. Moreover, the cinema's narrative models were borrowed to make real-life occurrences comprehensible and understandable.[336] The narrativization of death in the living dead films likewise deconstructs death into smaller, more comprehensible parts. Death as a process thus offers itself to be studied.

In the living dead films, death events have a dual role. The films emphasize death's role in the narration, which makes it possible to study the processes of dying (in other words, to deconstruct death), but the films also give form to death through violence (to reconstruct death), which enables an analysis of the nature of death as an aesthetical experience. For example, Catharine Russell and Asbjørn Grønstad explain that cinematic violence is typically used to give form to death, to capture and expose it. Violence extends the dying process and lends it movement, color, sound and actors. Violent deaths can hence be described as performances and spectacles of the unseeable.[337] The combination of story-telling and attraction elements allow living dead films to slow down dying process, to draw attention to immediate experiences, and concentrate on death scenes while still providing important narrative turning points.

In this chapter, I will discuss death events and study how they model, deconstruct and reconstruct death for the viewer. I will first examine death's narrating power before moving on to exploring how the relationship to the spectacular nature of violent death scenes has changed from classical to postclassical films. In doing this, I will demonstrate that death has been brought more and more openly under study. It has become more detailed, sensual and accessible for the viewer. At the same time, however, death's role as a closure has been compromised. The use of death scenes has further challenged the possibility of alienating death from the public.

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[336] Shaw 2004, 131–132, 144–149, 148. For the meaning-making power of dramatization and an aesthetization of violence, see also Prince 2000, 28.
[337] Russell 1995, 175; Grønstad 2003, 9–10, 111, 114, 238–240.

3.1. Cinematic Narration of Death

Death as a Narrative Turning Point

The focus here is on the ways in which events of death serve as part of the narration of the living dead films and how the narration of death deconstructs processes of death, inviting the viewer to encounter and comprehend its dreaded certainty. The produced narrative knowledge of death in the living dead films is generic. As David Herman argues, genres anchor knowledge in a certain way, and when such generic knowledge is activated in the reception process, this knowledge helps the viewer to decode the narration.[338] Horror viewers have a certain image of the genre which any given film can utilize by challenging or strengthening the expectations.

Paul Watson writes that generic pleasures arise from institutionalized and formulaic narration. Horror film viewers expect to encounter a monster, some characters to be killed by the monster and the monster to be killed by some character.[339] This simple pattern is more than recognizable in the living dead films. The opening scene of *The Mummy* (1932), for example, introduces the monster, a mummy accidentally brought to life by a team of archaeologists. When attempting to resurrect his lover, the mummy winds up killing those in his way before being destroyed himself in the end.

However, the same monster narrative can be seen in another light as well. Carroll holds that the basic monster narration can easily be simplified into a revealing and exposing story.[340] *The Mummy*, too, can be read from this perspective: the true identity of the mummy has to be first questioned and confirmed, and it is only after this that it can be encountered victoriously. And so it happens that the main characters of *The Mummy* refuse to believe fully that the mummy has been revived, insisting instead that he has been removed from his location by robbers. When a museum guard is found dead after the visit of the mummy, alias Ardath Bey, Doctor Muller's suspicions arise. Once his suspicions are confirmed and once his companions have been convinced, the team successfully arrives at the correct protective methods against mummies. The mummy can thus be destroyed in the final scene of the film, linking the use of death in horror films to the question of causality: death (or undeath) can be defeated, when there is an

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[338] Herman 1997, 1054.
[339] Watson 2007, 118. Ingebretsen, similarly, defines the monster narrative as a simple story where the monster is first created, then located and finally killed. (Ingebretsen 2001, 8.)
[340] Carroll 1990, 97–102, 106, 108.

underlying cause. This, according to Bauman, is in keeping with a modern tradition of death always having a cause, which promises that although one cannot avoid dying, the causes of death can be fought.[341] Exposing and studying death in the living dead films, then, functions as a substitute for the encounter with death in the modern world.

Likewise, the two narration formulas can be seen as revealing and fighting the unknown, of which death is a prime example. In both formulas, the monster is created, exposed, and finally dealt with before balance is returned to the society by extinguishing that which is threatening 'normality'. In this sense, horror films can be understood as variations of the basic narrative structure of any Hollywood film: order—disorder—return of order.[342] Thomas Schatz in fact divides Hollywood genres into two categories based on how genre films create disorder and restore balance in society. According to Schatz, the genre of horror belongs to the 'determinate' school together with Westerns, war films, gangster and crime movies, for example. These genres deal with physical and ideological conflicts that are connected to the violent struggle for control and domination. In contrast, the 'indeterminate' genres (musicals, comedies, melodramas, etc.) confirm existing values by solving local and often romantic problems.[343]

Instead of searching for an original storyline for horror films or the living dead films, I will therefore study how the living dead films use basic conflicts and themes in Hollywood narration. The narration of the films is clearly linked to death and dying, and while death is a typical closure in several genre films, I argue that in the living dead films the role of death is especially important. Death constitutes far more than a closure or a beginning; it is the cause for the film's existence and experiences, making death and dying an integral part of the narration and its effects.

While death is a major theme and source of emotions, the events of death also serve as the films' key narrative turning points. For instance, the revival of the mummy generates the basic tension which is released when the mummy dies. The classical films speak volumes of the films' narrative structure being based on deaths and reactions to deaths. Dying changes the state of both characters and the ensuing events.

In these films, death is not an end but a cause for some other form of existence, a transformative death that threatens the living. While the living dead stories commence

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[341] Bauman 1992, 135, 138.
[342] For example, Andrew Tudor (1989, 81–83) and Robin Wood (1986, 78–80) maintain that the horror films' narrations follow a certain order: monster brings disorder; order is restored by destruction of monster.
[343] Schatz 1981, 21, 24, 26–27.

with the birth of the main monster, it does not necessarily follow that the birth is shown to the viewer. Often, the viewer interprets it. For example, in *Dracula* (1931), the vampire's returning back to life is never shown or explained. Dracula's existence is implied to the viewer by 'superstitious' stories of Romanian peasants. Despite the means, in one way or another, it is made clear that the limits of death are transgressed. Zombies keep on walking, vampires defy the powers of death, and mummies can be brought back to life.

In the mid section of the film, the main monster intensifies its influence. Victims are killed, and conflict will escalate until such a moment that the characters understand the nature of the monster. After Dracula has caused several deaths and some others to transform into vampires, Van Helsing starts to suspect vampirism. Although his peers first discard this as superstition, the hypothesis is eventually proved, and support to kill Dracula gathers momentum. Once the monster is killed socially, it is destroyed physically as well. The final death is an exclamation mark, showing that death needs to be barred from the society or otherwise its continuing existence will decompose the society—as it does in the apocalyptical and postclassical visions of zombie films.

Paul Barber recognizes a similar three-part pattern in different folklores around the world. Many cultures, he argues, separate between the moment of death, the time of burial, and the time when the memories and dreams of the deceased have faded away.[344] This makes the death pattern of folklore quite similar to that introduced here, with differences in a problematic relationship with death and in the dramatized causalities of cinema narration. First of all, the moment of transformative death is not one recognizable moment of dying, but a process. Second, in the films, the memories and ideas of the deceased have to be dealt with at some level already before the final disposal of the body. However, both of these structures describe how death affects a person and society, how the bereaved survive both loss and acceptance of death, and how the parting with the dead is carried through.

Transformative Death—Death of a Person, Birth of a Monster

As discussed earlier, by definition, the living dead have transgressed natural borders between life and death by transforming from a human being into an undead. Their very

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[344] Barber 1988, 196.

existence already challenges the purely medical or physiological definitions of death, as the living dead are physically alive yet they have been defined as dead. More importantly, though, something crucial has changed in them. They are not the same as they were before. Because the body survives, what 'dies' in the transformative death is the person they used to be. The living dead have lost some or all of their human identity. Hallam, Hockey and Howarth argue that whereas identity is today thought to be a construction of both body and self, the death that affects the body necessarily affects the self as well—or at least changes the way others relate to the deceased.[345]

Similarly, transformative death affects both body and mentality, and despite the continuance between two existences, the personality changes. The transformative death is not the living dead's final death, however, but a birth of something else. Interestingly, Skal argues that all monsters can be seen as expressions of birth, no matter how weird or unnatural.[346] Similarly, in the transformative death, when a recognized person dies, an unknown otherness (often understood as monstrousness) is born, which is a new beginning and a distinct narrative turning point.

The transformative death of the main monster creates the tension of the story. In *Dracula* (1931), Renfield travels to meet the monster, although he is repeatedly warned of his host— 'They (vampires) leave their coffins at night and they feed on the blood of the living.' Dracula, the main monster, already exists, but the film starts when he is brought into Western (viewer's) consciousness. In the postclassical version of the same story, the birth of the undead is not only told to the viewer, it is shown as well. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) opens with a scene from centuries ago, with Dracula cursing himself to an eternal life as a nosferatu: 'I shall rise from my death to avenge hers with all the powers of darkness. The blood is the life, and it shall be mine!'

Postclassical zombie films, however, often lack a main monster, and the threat of death is built on the threat of the masses. While the main monster no longer drives the narration of death, such narration is still there in multiple and overlapping forms. There are several monsters as well as several interlocked transformative, social and final deaths. In their own way, such overlapping narrations highlight the importance of dealing with death and they underline the manifold and ongoing narrations of death and dying in other living dead films, too.

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[345] Hallam, Hockey & Howarth 2001, 65.
[346] Skal 1993, 287.

Overlapping narrations of death also exist in the main monsters' stories. Although the transformative death of the main monster is sometimes hidden from the viewer, the transformative deaths of the monster's victims and monsters–to–be are often followed in more detail. The death scenes allow the viewer to witness the process, which starts from the contamination, unfolds with warning signs of forthcoming death and finally culminates into the event of the transformative death, which makes the changes in body and personality irreversible. In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, the transformative death of Lucy is described in detail. Her contamination by Dracula sets in motion her metamorphosis towards a monster, and when her friends and family call for a doctor, he gets to hear Lucy's plea 'Help me, Jack. I don't know what's happening to me. I'm changing. I can feel it.' Jack, the doctor, interprets the symptoms as blood disease but cannot trace the primary cause for anemia and constant blood loss. When summoned, Van Helsing recognizes the marks of a vampire: two bite marks on the neck, paleness, growing fangs, violent reaction to garlic, and changeable behavior.

Although there is a recognizable moment of transformative death, it is the culmination of a longer process which further highlights the power of death. This transformative phase can be compared to the degenerative nature of death in modern societies, where most deaths are caused by long-term illnesses with slow changes in a person's body, self and social relations. In the living dead films, at the actual moment of the transformative death, these changes become irreversible. Death starts to mark Lucy's newly found otherness—or monstrousness—and James Dadoun argues that in this rebirthing process, the inner state of monstrousness becomes outer and concrete reality.[347] In other words, Lucy's bodily changes only serve to accent the more important change of the death of a person as she was known. Her new unknown or unrecognizable parts render her dying process monstrous and alienating for others. Moreover, as Davies notes, death necessarily changes a person's identity mainly because it changes his/her social status and relations to others.[348]

Social death—Practices of Grieving

The actual event of death is an individual phenomenon with social reflections, as Grønstad writes, continuing that death in narrative practices also becomes socially and

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[347] Dadoun 1989, 49.
[348] Davies 2002 (1997), 4–5.

culturally produced.[349] These different levels of experience are found in the culturally produced living dead films, where transformative death is a personal process but where the effects—birth of a monster—are undeniably social. As seen in the previous chapter, death usually changes the focus or perspective away from the person and concentrates instead on those who survive. The films thus end up describing a social death, where the bereaved need to accept transformative death. I have borrowed the term of social death from Michael Mulkay, who talks of biological and social deaths. Biological death is the demise of an organism, whereas social death is the end of a person's social identity and influence: a person can be physically death and still have social influence and vice versa. Dying is therefore a long process, starting often before the actual death, and continuing after it.[350] I argue that the living dead films portray similar phases of dying processes. The transformative death has started a process in which a person has to be declared both socially and biologically dead, in this very order—as is often the case with coma patients and the brain dead.

Social death therefore constitutes the middle part of the narration, where the effects of death are debated. And as Leffler argues, in the horror it is not the beginning nor the end that are important, but the middle part that forces both the characters and the viewer to encounter otherness and the unknown.[351] In the films of the living dead, otherness is marked by death, and these narratives tell as much about the fear of death as about the process of dying. The narrations communicate the transformation process not only of the monsters but also of the victims' friends and family. The bereaved have to accept the death of their close ones to survive and to avoid becoming a victim as well, which makes the films harrowing and traumatic descriptions of mourning. Indeed, unlike American media presentations, which according to Charles and Donna Corr mostly overlook grief and consequences of death[352], the living dead films concentrate, beautifully and horrifyingly, on processes of loss, grief and rejection. This acknowledgment reminds us that while we wish to privatize death and keep it as a personal experience, death always has social and cultural dimensions, and needs to be encountered despite (or because of) its disturbing nature.

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[349] Grønstad 2003, 229.

[350] Mulkay 1993, 32–34. See also Hallam, Hockey & Howarth 2001, 63, 75.

[351] Leffler 2000, 110–113.

[352] Corr & Corr 2003, 43. This interpretation is supported also by McIlwain who argues that while events of death have grown more common on television since the 1960s, the actual dying processes have been largely missing. Instead, people have died without too much grieving or funeral scenes. However, since the 1990s, several medical dramas and new openings in soap operas have also featured the emotional consequences of death, increasing the shows' popularity. (McIlwain 2005, 51–57, 61–69.)

As Norbert Elias has remarked, death is a problem to the living, not to the dead. The living have to find means to deal with death and loss and with the anxiety they arouse.[353] From the society's point of view, death threatens societal continuity and must therefore be excluded. In fact, all societies have their so-called 'death systems', the ways in which dying, death and grief are socially expected, encountered and controlled. In the United States, the death system includes predictions of life expectancies, preventing deaths, caring for the dying, disposing of the bodies (funeral practices), grieving modes, and defense activities for violent deaths (social sanctions).[354]

Such death systems do not seem to apply when the living dead return from their graves and force the systems to be re-evaluated. The failure of commonplace death rituals—burying the corpses, for example—also makes the undead unacceptable and representatives of otherness for the other characters.[355] As Carroll maintains, it is typical for horror that the monster's existence is not immediately accepted even though the existence is recognized. While the characters and authorities are fighting the idea of the unnatural and the fantastic[356], the monster has time to enhance its power and influence— similarly as death grows more terrifying when its denial makes it more unknown.

The significance of acceptance is connected to the studying of death and the undead, as it produces new death systems that can be applied to the living dead. An interesting comparison can be made, in fact, between the narration of death and Michel Foucault's theories of power, knowledge and social control, discussing as he does the modernization process and the importance of knowledge in this process. For example, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault argues that modernization shifted away from bodily processes towards control executed through knowledge. He also contends that knowledge produces power, and both power and knowledge are produced in complex relationships of multiple networks. This is how the borders of modern society and humanity are formed, defended and renegotiated in practices of knowledge and power.[357] The living dead embody those parts of the humanity which already seem under control in the modern Western society: they represent death and corporeality (including desires and sexuality) that have been controlled through processes of medicalization and modernization. The undead who defy the limits of death also stand for the failure of

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[353] Elias 1993 (1982), 3–6.
[354] Morgan 2003, 1; Corr & Corr 2003, 41.
[355] For example, Poole argues that tragedies or horror as a derivative are often concerned with rites of social memories and mourning, and even more so, when these rites go wrong. (Poole 2004, 41.)
[356] Carroll 1990, 128.
[357] Foucault 1977 (1975), 9, 19–22, 26–28, 138, 141, 306–308.

societal self-control by refusing to be placed in accepted positions. The stories of the undead can therefore be viewed as struggles to restore and extend shared knowledge and control.

Furthermore, social death in the living dead films is not only about accepting death and renegotiating with existing death systems, as processes of grief and mourning are an important part of these debates. This dimension of social death can be described with Julia Kristeva's concept of abject, much used in horror studies. Abject is something that has been a part of a human being, but after separation from the subject it creates a threat to the identity and a source of chaos, contamination and fragility, which needs to be cut loose. Abject is thus located between object and subject. The experience of abjection is typically linked to bodily functions such as vomiting or a corpse. What was once part of humanity has become appalling.[358] Jonathan Lake Crane further highlights the corpse's role as a source of an abject in horror. The corpse is a reminder of life and subject, both of which it ends up denying. As a source of mayhem, the corpse must be shut out, often with violence. Before such exclusion can take place, the protagonist and other characters need to accept the transformation of the diseased. They must negotiate between their memories and abject.[359]

If they are unable to deal with loss and grief, the survivors become easy victims for the newborn monster. For example, *Night of the Living Dead* starts with an introduction of a brother and sister. While Johnny is victimized by zombies, Barbra manages to run away. Later, once Barbra has barricaded herself with the other survivors into a small farm house, Johnny arrives at the scene as a zombie. Unable to accept the change in his brother, Barbra does not fight back but lets her brother tear her out of the house to be eaten by him and other zombies. This scene from 1968 is interestingly contrasted in *Resident Evil* (2002), where a zombified sister walks to her brother, one of the team members trying to escape zombies. Matthew calls her sister by name, hoping that she has survived, and for a short while it seems as if Lisa could connect with her brother, but then she suddenly attacks him. Matthew fights back, but is unable to do anything drastic. He is about to be zombified, quite as Barbra was in *Night of the Living Dead*, but is saved by an intervention by Alice, the film's heroine. Indeed, if the characters are able, as Alice is, to accept the process that has started by the

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[358] Kristeva 1982 (1980), 1–12. For abject's use in horror studies, see, for example, Creed (1989, 63–90; 1995, 157); for its use in visual images of horror, see, for instance, King (2004, 21–25, 33–34); and for using the term in describing monsters, see, for example, Shildrick (2002, 55).
[359] Crane 1994, 30–34. See also King 2004, 25.

transformative death, and accept the existence of the monster on its own terms rather than as someone it used to be, the characters are given both keys and emotional capability to rid themselves of the monster.

Social death requires acceptance of death at two levels: comprehending death through knowledge and handling death emotionally through abjection. This difference becomes embodied in the different types of the main monsters' and transformed victims' social death. Whereas the main monsters' social death is often about accepting its existence by gaining knowledge, the social death of the transformed loved ones brings the questions of mourning and acceptance of the loss to the fore. Ultimately, both dimensions seek to alienate death, as the concept of modern death requires. However, the willingness of these films to pay attention to social death emphasizes the need to widen the understanding and scope we have of modern death. The failure of modern death systems criticizes the limited understanding of death, whereas the requirement for abjection condemns the hastened grieving processes, where the characters and viewers are not allowed to mourn for the loss of a person. The hastened process of grief resembles the role that grief has in modern society of United States. Although regarded as a natural reaction to death, grief is ignored as much as possible, and it should not take too long or be too public. It should be discreet in order to disrupt social life as little as possible.[360] Social death in the living dead films pinpoint problems with existing modern death, of grief and death having to be dealt with in private to keep from disturbing the smooth running of the society.

Final death—End of existence

Although social death debates problematic encounters with death, the final death (or the killing of the monster) puts both the monster and death back in their places. In this way, final death is about gaining control over a situation which has thrown the community off the track. Final death manages, finally, to push death outside the community and return death under social control, within the modern borders between life and death. The dramatization of death's exclusion also brings an end to the monster's existence and makes sure that this time both the person and the body are positively dead, no longer

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[360] Morgan 2003, 2; Corr & Corr 2003, 45–46.

able to come back. In the narration of horror, as Carroll describes, the encounter with and destruction of the monster composes a typical ending for the story.[361]

The final death of the main monster (mummy, Dracula or zombie master) serves as a closure in the classical films in particular, which respect the Aristotelian dramatic value of a distinct end. Sobchack continues that closure is important in solving major conflicts and ambiguities, tying the strings and resolving thematic tensions. In most cases, closures and resolutions adopt socially accepted and conservative solutions[362], providing comforting security of death's final exclusion. It is also argued by Russell that such use of death as closure 'tames' death, because this death is expected and desired by the viewer.[363]

Final death, therefore, can be seen to produce catharsis, which many horror scholars consider a necessary emotional response in viewing a violent film. Catharsis, another Aristotelian concept, explains how negative events and emotions can be used to serve 'moral' purposes by helping the viewer to process negative issues and to release emotional tension with a positive solution.[364] The killing of the living dead creatures in the end may release anxiety, which may produce narrative catharsis, but it does not remove the moral question. Indeed, as Stephen Prince argues, catharsis is rather a cognitive term, and as such it does not explain away all the sensual dimensions of violent films: 'justified' solutions may provide pleasure for the viewer, but they still carry with them problematic dimensions of aggression.[365]

The final death, problematically, is an especially violent act, suggesting that conflicts can be solved with violence. The monster needs to be killed, as Ingebretsen argues: 'the monster must be staked, burned, dismembered, or otherwise dispatched in the final reel.' Only through such extreme violence can the exclusion and death of a

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[361] Carroll 1990, 102–103.

[362] Sobchack 1995 (1975), 105–106, 109, 112. The view of the classic form of the stories carrying a classic (conservative) ideology is featured by several ideological genre theorists, such as Klinger (1995 (1984), 82).

[363] Russell 1995, 2, 174.

[364] Aristotle 1997 (c. 335–322 BC), 69, 99–103. See also Grønstad 2003, 41; Klemettinen 2002, 260; Hiltunen 2002, 5, 8, 12, 37. To Grønstad, Aristotle's influence has been undeniable. It has given an instrumental meaning to film violence and negative emotions, because the moral end works as a safety valve for the viewers in their dealing with their own dark impulses. (Grønstad 2003, 37.)

[365] While he notes that empirical studies do link film violence and aggressive behavior, Prince does not mean that a film's effects would be direct or mechanistic, as cognitive components and personal stratifications are clearly used to interpret violence on film. But still, the possibility of an effect exists, especially when films present violence as pain-free, justified or part of a 'pleasure-inducing aesthetic experience'. Not only has American cinema become more violent and bloodier, Prince argues, but this applies to the whole culture. (Prince 2000, 20–21, 23, 27, 34.)

monster be secured, which then enables the society to let go of the past and to restore balance.[366]

The violent nature of the monster's death is highlighted by generic conventions which decree that unnatural monsters cannot be killed naturally. There are special methods which are based on the knowledge of a monster's weaknesses.[367] The mummy, for example, is an ancient creature who comes from a different time and different religion. This necessitates the use of knowledge of this ancient culture. A mummy cannot be killed with bullets, but rather through ancient spells which it is forced to obey. Secondly, the cinema has also adopted the age-old folk tradition where a vampire is pierced with a wooden stick or burned or its head might be cut off.[368] Thirdly, zombies (excluding those from Haiti) will die if their brain is smashed—either by shooting them in the head or by cutting their heads off.

Final death has immediate effects. While the transformative death is more like a process of dying, slowly revealing the transformation of body and personality, the final death destroys that which is monstrous and makes the body's connection to death explicit. Mummies and vampires in particular tend to undergo dramatic and sudden bodily changes, burning into ashes and turning into skeletons. In contrast, the most corporeal of the living dead monsters, zombies, who already have a corpse-like appearance, bypass such changes, but their corpses are disposed of by humans. These extermination methods highlight an important difference between transformative and final deaths: transformative deaths are caused by the monster (otherness), while the violence of final death is a product of human control.

The problematic dimensions of the violent final death have been further accentuated in the postclassical films. Grønstad argues that although conservative closure with death still appears as a desired destination or fulfillment of the story, it is often forbidden in postclassical films, which will rather create a spectacle of dying and death that never ends. These films deny death's role as a natural ending for the story. 'The texts end technically, but not structurally', Grønstad formulates.[369] The apocalyptic tendency that has taken over since the late 1960s and early 1970s, defies the tamed death, as Russell argues, and also defies the security provided by classical closures.

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[366] Ingebretsen 2001, 8, 11, 171, 173 (quotation from page 8). Schatz, too, argues that in a conflict, one of the opposing powers must be eliminated in order to gain control and balance, and that this elimination is usually a physically violent act, at least in the final resolution of the film. (Schatz 1981, 32–35.)

[367] See, for example, Leffler 2000, 139–140.

[368] For killing vampires, see, for example, Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 21–22.

[369] Grønstad 2003, 230–235. (Quote from page 230.)

Instead of explaining death, these films explore and make visible the spectacular and taboo nature of death.[370]

Apocalyptic zombie films are fond of masses of zombies, and while some of the zombies are killed, others keep coming. An open ending where not all of the monsters are killed places the emphasis on surviving in a death-filled world. In these films, final deaths become separate incidents; rather than conflict resolutions, they are new narrative turning points. In fact, in denying closure, such apocalyptic films also withhold solution by death. The violent alienation of death just creates new problems. In such a way, apocalyptic films ask whether classical films provided deadly closures only in order to avoid handling the consequences of violent death.

The narration of death breaks dying into smaller phases which punctuate both the narration and the addressed images of death. Moreover, this narration reverses the processes of dying, focusing on the personal, social and cultural aspects before the physical death, which comes last in line. The physical existence of the living dead characters forces the viewer to encounter all aspects of death, which makes death harder to marginalize and circumvent than is the case in modern medicalized understanding.

Changing Violent Nature of Death Events

However, as both transformative and final deaths show, besides deconstructing dying into phases, physical and violent elements are essential to the process. Whereas the narration of death slows down the process of dying at a metaphysical level, the actual death scenes stall the physical processes of dying, providing spectacles for the viewer. Such spectacles of death are, in fact, an important part of genre conventions and as such they constitute a central ingredient of how the viewer expects death to be addressed. The death scenes are the 'numbers' of the living dead films. According to Cynthia Freeland, numbers are scenes that concentrate on the typical elements of each genre, which would be violent acts in the case of horror films. During these scenes, the spectacle overcomes the plot, although the spectacle can and often does connect to the narration and its aesthetical, emotional and cognitive goals and effects.[371] The numbers with death scenes

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[370] Russell 1995, 2, 174–176.

[371] Freeland 2000, 256–257, 261–262. The concept of numbers comes from musicals, where musical numbers are at the core of the genre. Rather similarly, but instead of numbers, Verstraten, for example, uses the concept of intermezzo. By this he refers to points where 'narrative patterns have been sacrificed for the true "attraction" of these genres'. (Verstraten 2009, 161.)

are necessarily complex, because they are part of the narrative knowledge about death, integral to the narrative turning points of the story and components of the emotional goals of horror films, but at the same time they are also aesthetical spectacles.

As such, the death events in the living dead films also have non-narrative elements. Peter Verstraten names them as excessive elements of films. He argues that all films include excess, but within classical films excess was often momentary and rare, emphasis was rather on sound narrative logic. Postclassical films more openly embrace moments of non-narrativity, which replaces psychological, temporal, spatial and causal motivation with excess of formal cinematic aspects. In other words, in such moments attention is drawn to the style, not to the story. In a way, non-narrative moments are a return to the attraction cinema which existed before the classical storytelling of Hollywood. While Verstraten argues that non-narrative points of excess can often be found in unorthodox stylistic elements—atypical use of lighting, cutting, camera operation or music which are not motivated by story,[372] Hilary Neroni and Raphaëlle Moine argue that spectacular violence, too, has non-verbal and non-narrative qualities. In contrast to other narrative structures, violence mediates immediate experiences instead of meanings and, as an attraction, brings a different logic and viewer relationship to the films.[373]

Indeed, in the living dead films narrative elements concentrate more on a symbolic representation of death, whereas spectacular moments of violent death avoid inviting cognitive interpretations. Instead, they concentrate on a rather direct addressing of physical dimensions of dying. For example, Romero's sequel *Survival of the Dead* (2009) repeats images of bodies being torn apart. In these images, (supernaturally strong) zombies grasp their victims, slowly and in close-up tearing their organs apart—hands, legs, heads, upper and lower bodies. These lingering close-ups mediate no new information to the story, no further points for interpretation. Through excessive and impossible forms of dying, they, first and foremost, both force and allow the viewer to experience how fragile the human body is at the moment of death.

Similarly, Verstraten acknowledges that in horror films in particular, the distinction between story and discourse (or style) is often purposefully blurred, because

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[372] Verstraten 2009, 155–164, 168. Among these atypical elements Verstraten lists, for example, sharp-edged transitions, or an extremely low number of cuts, shaky or very steady camera operations, illogical transitions in time or space, a bizarre choice of actors or actresses, quaint music and sounds. (Verstraten 2009, 165.)
[373] Neroni 2005, 2–6; Moine 2008 (2002), 193.

tension is created by the limitations on the viewer's access to all story elements. Stylistic and excessive characteristics add an affective side to the horror experience.[374] The horror genre's intention to cause terror in the viewer is typically generated by employing shock and suspense. For example, David Scott Diffrient defines shocks as a sudden violent excess of images, whereas suspense is rather based on empty images and increasing tension provided by other means (music, generic anticipation, etc.). Also, horror's suspense and shock feed on each other: while neither works alone, they both use different relationships to images.[375]

Both also play with the viewer's vision, by either showing too much or too little. As Clover argues, horror films can be considered projects where the viewer's own vision is constantly teased, threatened, confused and blocked.[376] Films exploit the horror viewer's constant anticipation of something happening: the films provide excessive information that makes the viewer fear for characters, or keep this information away and force the viewer to experience horror with the characters.[377] This game also applies to death scenes. The hiding and revealing of death are executed at the discursive level and through different narrative solutions, which as a manipulation of narrative events has potent emotional power, says Ralf Schneider.[378] The play of hide and seek is thus part of the horror viewer's generic anticipation of being horrified by the horror film.

As within character engagement, then, the narrative structures of the living dead films offer complex relationships to the violent death events. First, narration can perform a spectacle or an act of violence. Second, it can authenticate the death events by concentrating on the consequences of these acts (corpses, funeral scenes, etc.). And third, narration can confirm death by revealing the characters' affective reactions to the event.[379] These three ways of mediating the death event to the viewer can be used even within the same scene, all inviting different emotional, cognitive and physical reactions from the viewer. Essentially, the spectacles of violence emphasize direct sensual

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[374] Verstraten 2009, 165.

[375] Diffrient 2004, 52–53, 58–59, 77–78, 62.

[376] Clover 1996 (1992), 166–167.

[377] See, for example, Tudor 1989, 107–109; Schepelern 1986, 37; Leffler 2001, 61, 66–67; Leffler 2000, 130–136; Carroll 1990, 128–144; Diffrient 2004, 52–81.

[378] Schneider 2005, 136.

[379] The three relationships to numbers of violent death can be seen as a combination of Steven Jay Schneider's (2003, 117–179) representational differentiation between products and performances of murder and of Marco Abel's (2007, 9) division between affective qualities of effects and causes of violence. On their own, these dichotomies are one-dimensional, but when acts (recognized by both men—performances by Schneider and causes by Abel) are accompanied by consequences (products by Schneider) and embodied responses (effects by Abel), the produced picture is more complete.

reactions, while the consequences provide cognitive knowledge that the viewer can use in constructing the story and in giving causal meanings to death. Finally, the embodied reactions focus on an emotional engagement with the affects of death.

Moreover, contemporary apparatus theorist Franco Casetti discusses (camera's) gazes in relation to hiding and revealing, seeing and unseeing. He recognizes four different shots; objective, impossible objective, interpellation and subjective. Of these, interpellation and subjective shots are related to the characters and are comparable to the concepts of reaction shots and point-of-view shots. For Casetti, the interpellation (reaction) shot implies the moments when the character clearly sees something that is not shown to the viewer. The film thus plays with on-screen and off-screen, visible and invisible spaces. The subjective (point-of-view) shot reveals to the viewer what the character sees (performances of death events). These two character-based gazes authenticate the death event as a narrative turning point either through reactions or through engaged spectacles of death (as discussed in the previous chapter). Furthermore, Casetti's division between objective and impossible objective gazes is interesting. An objective shot invites the viewer to be a silent witness of events (performances of death events) without enforced alignment, but rather from the position where the viewer is more clearly controlling the image. Lastly, the impossible objective shot restricts and limits the viewer's gaze. Because of this limitation to the performance of a death event, death needs to be authenticated either through reactions or through consequences.[380]

These different methods in mediating death events also highlight the medium-specificity of the cinematic practices. Ryan points out that apparatus (film as a medium) is not only a channel of communication, but a certain material means for expression, which both limits and empowers the cinematic medium as to the ways in which genres can execute their norms and cultural practices.[381] Powell goes further to stress the technological perspectives on creating affective images and framing generic and narrative events. It is not only what is shown (acts, consequences or reactions) or how they are shown (through which shots), but also the cinematic style that affects the spectacle of death. The viewer's attention is captured by camera movements, editing rhythms, duration and time, mise-en-scène, iconography, color, sound, composition, movement, lighting, and cinematographic techniques such as focus, filters, lenses, etc.[382]

[380] Casetti 1998 (1996), 48–52, 63, 66, 71, 112–115.
[381] Ryan 2004, 19–20.
[382] Powell 2005, 109, 116–118, 129–135, 155–159. See also Plantiga 1999, 249–254.

The use of varied cinematic techniques calls attention to the constructedness of death events, which renders these images technical, institutional, generic and medium-specific. However, they are also cultural, as they respond to the contextual limitations and desires. Thus, the living dead films standardize the relationship with death through the narration of death, which describes similar phases of dying in each film (and which, indeed, can cross media borders), and differentiate these films from one another by altering the mediation and construction of cinematic death events. In the following, I will show that whereas classical and postclassical films discuss the process of dying rather similarly through transformative, social and final deaths, they offer different aesthetical and experiential relationships to violent death, implying a socially changing emphasis on death. My analysis will show that it is rarely the actual images of violent death which the classical films bring to the fore, but rather the effects and consequences of death. This started to change during the transitional era, and postclassical films are positively excited about direct images of violent death. In other words, the living dead films have slowly shifted their emphasis from deaths at the story level, interpreted by the viewers, to the discursive level that the viewers witness and bodily experience.

3.2. Restricted Images of Death in Classical Films

Classical Horror and Hiding of Violent Death

Within the narration of death, the classical living dead films articulate and address death in the hide and seek of death images. This game employs death as a narrative turning point, uses violence as part of the death scenes, and has been played since the first living dead films, although the conventions of American horror films were only in the making in the early 1930s. Aided by preceding horror fiction and silent movies, the very first films already invited their audiences to anticipate deadly themes even before the screening of the first image. For example, advertising introduced viewers to new cinematic monsters and experiences. In the trailer for *Dracula*, the interval texts declare: 'Back from the Grave. Back to Thrill and Chill You.' Similarly, the poster of *White Zombie* portrays Béla Lugosi, the evil zombie master, with a young woman—the victim—in white dress, captioned with: 'She was not alive nor dead. White Zombie. Performing his every desire.' And the narrator of the trailer of *The Mummy* asks: 'The Mummy. Is it dead or alive? Human or inhuman? You'll know, you'll see. You'll feel the awful, creeping, crawling terror that stands your hair on end and brings a scream to your lips.' The addressing of horror's generic expectations thus begins even before the film experience. Furthermore, as Clover argues, all promotional material addresses the viewers directly, because it talks to 'you', as seen in the advertisements above, and builds up viewer anticipation for a horrifying cinematic experience.[383]

In the classical living dead films, the promised themes of death, undeadness and anticipated feelings of terror take place in a rather formulaic way in the narration of death. The golden age of horror commenced with the success of Universal Studios' *Dracula*, which modeled the cinematic vampire characters[384] as well as motives, situations and the range of other characters for other living dead films. After *Dracula*, both *The Mummy* and *White Zombie* were mere rewritings of the same story.[385]

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[383] Clover 1996 (1992), 201.

[384] Béla Lugosi's interpretation created the mannerism, dressing and style of the cinematic Dracula as a courteous, reserved and well-dressed predator of innocent girls. See, for example, Auerbach 1995, 113, 118; Skal 1993, 81.

[385] See also Twitchell 1985, 260, 264; Craig & Smith 2003, 176; Bishop 2006, 198.

The films introduce the undead cast to the viewer within the first minutes, although never through their transformative deaths, but starting from a time when the monsters already possess their fiendish powers. After introducing Dracula, the mummy, local zombies and the zombie master, all films establish the deadly nature of the monsters with at least one death of a minor character. Dracula kills a flower girl, the mummy murders a museum guard, and the zombie master ignores the death of one of his working zombies. What these deaths do is reveal and further emphasize the monstrous nature of the undead. When the monsters turn their attention to the young and innocent women, to Mina or Helen or Madeline, the viewer knows to be afraid for their fate and possible future as undead characters. The girls also get to represent the transformative death in more detail, since Mina and Helen both become affected by undead characters and Madeline even undergoes death and transformation into an undead. However, in these films of the classical era, all three women are saved by men in the end, while the monsters are punished with final death.

Such a brief summing-up serves to show that the very first living dead films already relied on transformative, social and final deaths in creating their basic tension. Death, of the violent kind in particular, is brought to the viewer as threatening, even if the threat of death remains at a psychological and philosophical level: the actual physical death scenes are often hidden from the viewer. Lucy, for example, is headed for a transformative death in *Dracula*, which becomes anticipated at the moment when Lucy and Mina are getting ready for the night after meeting Dracula at the opera.

Lucy keeps singing Dracula's praises, deeply impressed by him. The cross-cutting camera reveals to the viewer the silent character of Dracula standing in the darkness of the garden. When Lucy falls asleep, the viewer knows to expect the arrival of the vampire predator, who soon enough flies in from the open window as a bat and is transformed to his human form by the side of Lucy's bed. He bends over, his teeth coming close to Lucy's white neck. At this point, the camera cuts away from the scene, the next shot showing Lucy's body in hospital and a voice commenting 'Another Dead'. The following conversation reveals that Lucy has died from blood loss despite several transfusions. There has apparently been a transformation phase before her transformative death, but this is not shown. It is later suggested that Lucy has indeed become an undead, but this side plot is not further explored. Her role has been minimized, as she rather functions as proof of the vampire's powers.

The implicit depiction of Lucy's transformative death is typical for classical films. The disposition to hide the death event from view is linked to the institutional and cultural contexts of classical Hollywood production. Violent contents were considered to be culturally controversial, which made them closely monitored and controlled. In targeting itself to a large and homogenous audience, classical Hollywood was marketed as harmless and innocent entertainment suitable for all groups, including children. In such a context, horror appeared problematic, because most horror films were not received as innocent fun.[386] There was also huge social pressure for regulation of film contents, even more so if the contents were sexual and violent. Although Hollywood's self-regulation—the Production (Hays) Code—started to gain wider influence only after the production of *Dracula*, *The Mummy* and *White Zombie*, it is obvious that shared social values and Hollywood's practices restricted how violent death scenes could be filmed.[387]

Violent images and death scenes were therefore rather hidden than laid bare in the classical horror films.[388] Acts of violent death are rarely shown to the viewer. Only the outcome is made clear, mostly through reactions and sometimes through images of actual corpses. The 1930s films thus often excluded bodily violence from their imagery. However, as Stephen Prince argues, while they might look naïve or free from violence from our perspective, back then these classical films were considered violent and were likely to raise anxiety and moral debates.[389] They may have been discreet, but these films did not lack possibilities for mediating death and horrifying experiences.

A case in point is again *Dracula*, where the vampire closes in on his victims but the actual physical act is never shown. Similarly, the viewer does not get to see the scene where Van Helsing kills Dracula by piercing his heart. Instead, the body of the vampire's victim, Mina, is used to communicate the action. Mina is in Dracula's power, and when Van Helsing prepares to strike the wooden stick through the vampire's heart, the camera cuts in to Mina, who experiences every blow in her body. When Dracula is dead, Mina is

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[386] See, for example, Smith 1999a (1998), 3; Balio 1995, 3–4. Interestingly, Grant argues that the idea of a homogenous audience led to the notion that mainstream Hollywood films were produced for white, male and heterosexual viewers. This constructed gendered, racial and sometimes even class-based stereotypes and conventions into classical films. (Grant 2007, 80.) The patriarchal pattern can be seen to function in classical horror films as well and has proved hard to break in later production, too.

[387] For classical Hollywood's censorship practices and social pressure, see, for example, Smith 1999a (1998), 4; Balio 1995, 4, 9, 303; Skal 1993, 172; Doherty 1999, 2, 6–8; Vieira 2003, 73, 91; Grønstad 2003, 125–127; Prince 2003, 31–32.

[388] In a philosophical sense, the classical era can be seen to reflect the Western tradition of a fear for images and the power that the images might have. (See, for instance, Shaviro 2004 (1993), 14–16.)

[389] Prince 2003, 52–53, 85.

finally released from her trance. Furthermore, when the image refuses to show the action, the soundtrack carries the story. In the film's final scene, the viewer can hear Van Helsing banging the spear deeper into the vampire's heart, while Mina provides a reaction shot. Classical films, too, communicate violent deaths, although, as Freeland says, they tend to highlight the distance between the terrifying act and the viewer: the viewer is not forced to witness the performance of death.[390] Instead, the viewer is allowed to engage with Mina who is saved. By replacing the act of violence with a reaction shot during the monsters' final death, the demand for taking responsibility for violence is replaced with positive emotional alignment.

In the final death of Dracula, not seeing can provide release from responsibility, but it does not give a visual (nor verbal) confirmation that the vampire actually dies. This causality is, of course, implied in the film, but it still leaves the lid of the casket slightly open. Interestingly, Dennis Giles argues that sometimes, '*not seeing*—the delayed, blocked or partial vision' is, indeed, what provides the sense of horror and fear, and therefore the expected pleasure. Furthermore, he maintains that instead of an excess of images and emotions, the anticipatory vision, or restricted gaze, is more interesting, because it hints at the horrific event, but at the last minute refuses to encounter it. These restricted scenes promise, yet do not deliver. Through the absence of vision, scenes of violent deaths only allude (although influentially) to the possibility of violence becoming visible.[391]

Similarly, rather than embracing the violent numbers directly, the classical horror films play with the viewer's expectations, promising but delaying the fulfillment, often through restricting the viewer from seeing what is happening. The viewer is addressed with consequences and responses to death. For example, when the mummy kills a museum guard, the camera shoots the wall of the museum, leaving the viewer only with the screams and the death rattle of the guard. The actual death is confirmed to the viewer when the police call the museum director to tell him that the guard is dead and—in the absence of traces of visible violence—that the cause of death appears to be fear or shock. This description of the guard's death is rather representative of the role that the (violent) death scenes have in the classical living dead films. Death provides effects of fear and shock, but refuses to exploit visible violence.

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[390] Freeland 2000, 243.
[391] Giles 1984, 41–42.

Mediating Deaths in Classical Films

While preferring not to show death scenes, the classical films also avoid using subjective (point-of-view) and objective shots in the death scenes. Classical narration tends to incline towards impossible objective shots and interpellation (reaction) shots. This follows the broader logic of classical Hollywood narration. According to Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, for example, classical narrations are particularly fond of the causality of events and the importance of consequences. There is also an emphasis on character-centered narration which draws attention to the characters' psychological motivations.[392] Similarly, classical living dead films tend to mediate deaths to the viewer by relying on character responses, such as horrified expressions and screams, and on causality and consequences. For example, when Dracula is shown to close in on the flower girl, the viewer can guess what will happen although the actual attack remains unseen. This educated guess is later confirmed when the police find a girl's body on the street.

The import of consequences and reactions to violent death scenes highlight the fact that although death scenes are not witnessed by the viewer, they are mediated in ways which invite the viewer to imagine and fantasize death. This creates a rather different film–viewer relationship than explicit death images in the postclassical films do, but the difference is not a question of effectiveness, but of uses of cinematic strategies that create effectiveness either through direct witnessing or imagined witnessing.

In order to avoid exploiting performances of on-screen death, classical films, says Stephen Prince, use five main techniques to narrate such acts through narrative consequences and references: 'spatial displacement, metonymic displacement, indexical pointing, substitutional emblematics, and emotional bracketing.' First, spatial displacement refers to practices of the camera cutting or moving away from violence, which hinders the viewer from facing violent acts directly. Second, metonymic displacement uses symbolic compensation for showing a violent act, as when sound or music stand in for violent images. Third, indexical pointing foregrounds the causal effects of off-screen violence. Fourth, substitutional emblematics allows access to some violent acts, but limited access to bodily damages. And lastly, emotional bracketing

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[392] Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson 1996 (1985), 13–22.

refers to the ways in which violent acts are placed in the stories: violence is followed by reassuring narrative pauses, giving the viewer time to recover from violence.[393] Although Prince discusses the use of violent images, the same tactics apply to hidden scenes of (violent) death as well.

For instance, in the case of the flower girl, the viewer sees a girl trying to sell a flower to the vampire. Instead of taking the flower, Dracula leans towards to the girl, and they both vanish behind the corner. This hides the actual attack from the viewer (spatial displacement). Still, the viewer can hear the girl screaming, and despite the impossible objective shot the viewer can guess what is going on (metonymic displacement). This scene also gives prominence to sound as part of the horror gallery. While the 1930s horror producers could not use aesthetical acts of violence, they stylized the scenes with sound, which made off-screen death scenes vivid and disturbing at the same time.[394]

Sound therefore has an essential role in the classical films, where deaths cannot be communicated through explicit images. Such is the case with the flower girl, when the camera shoots the street corner. It is also the case with the night guard, when the viewer may only watch the museum walls while the guard is being murdered. The arrival of sound proved to be a most important invention for the horror genre and its conventions, as it made possible the generic uses of anticipating sounds and special audio effects for shock and suspense. Classical films in fact made good use of the newly found possibilities of sound at all levels. Philip Hayward introduces a three-layered world of horror sounds: 1) music that creates tension and brings additional elements of anxiety to otherwise often empty images, 2) sound effects that especially in classical films use sounds of nature to create tension and a link to the wild (animal noises, thunder and storm, etc.), and 3) voice performances where the dialog creates dramatic acting, and screaming in particular that accompanies horror stories with dramatic voices.[395]

Not only did sound provide possibilities for sound effects in classical Hollywood, but, as Nick Roddick stresses, it changed audience expectations and the narration as well. The coming of the sound demanded more credibility from the dialog, characters and stories.[396] This could be described as the last major shift from former cinematic attractions to classical Hollywood's realistic narration, seen in the classical living dead films' fascination with both sound effects and dialogue. However, Robert Spandoni

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[393] Prince 2003, 207–208, 220, 227–230, 238–239, 244–245.
[394] See, for example, Prince 2003, 67, 72.
[395] Hayward 2009, 2, 6.
[396] Roddick 1983, 10–11.

argues that the arrival of sound impacted on the first horror sound films rather differently than in most other genres. Sound did not add realism as such, but sound effects and dialog were rather employed to stress the uncanny nature of horror and its monsters, to trigger sensations and feelings of strangeness.[397] Indeed, the way horror cinema adapted the coming of the sound to its own uses highlights the spectacular nature of the genre.

The eerie power of the dialog and sound effects becomes obvious when we compare the death of the flower girl to the death of the museum guard. *Dracula's* narration offers narrative causality by showing Dracula walking along the street after he has disappeared from view with the flower girl. At the same time, the viewer can hear whistling, and the camera spans to a police officer standing besides the girl's body. Sound effects clearly guide the attention of the narration, revealing to the viewer the consequences of violence. In contrast, *The Mummy* uses different methods to mediate the consequences. After the death scene, the narration changes tack for a while and concentrates on the events taking place at Whemple's residence. After adequate emotional bracketing, the phone rings, the incident is reported, and Muller and Whemple rush to the museum. The camera then cuts to an image of the police officer, Muller and Whemple studying the body of the guard, which confirms the consequences through image. However, after sufficient recognition of the corpse, the film reframes its image by placing the body off-screen and focusing on the men discussing the events. The dialog and the telling of death are given more space than the visual images of death or any specific sound effects.

The central role of dialog in the narrating of death events underlines the importance of characters and reaction shots in classical narration. When the actual death events are hidden, the character's reactions are used to mediate the consequences, emotions and experiences related to death. Visually, one phenomenon catches the eye in the character-related narration of events in these classical living dead films: the mediating role of staring eyes of both monsters and their victims. Carol J. Clover describes the repetitious gazes as assaultive (attacking) and reactive. Whereas the assaultive gaze provides suspense and offence, the reactive gaze gives shelter and defense. Clover argues that although the assaultive gaze is necessary for a story, the emphasis is on horror film's reactive gazes that narrate in multiple ways how both

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[397] Spandoni 2007, 1–8, 121–127.

characters and viewers are attacked by monster or terror.[398] The flower girl scene in fact starts with such gazes.

Picture series 6: Dracula kills the flower girl: approaching her, Dracula hypnotizes the flower girl and leans over to bite her. At this moment, the camera refuses to follow the act, but the girl's scream mediates the hidden murder which is confirmed by causal result.

When Dracula approaches the flower girl, the viewer is situated behind Dracula's back. This allows the viewer to witness the girl's expression change from welcoming to anxious. At this point, the viewer is shown a close-up of Dracula and his staring eyes which cut back to the close-up of the flower girl's wide-open and trance-like eyes. The assaultive gaze of an undead has found a new victim, who reacts to this embodiment of death with amazement and anxiety. The scene also reveals how both assaultive and

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[398] Clover 1996 (1992), 191–200.

reactive gazes mediate anticipation of the flower girl's fate. This dual positioning is, according to Dixon, a typical solution in the violent scenes, encouraging the viewer to try out different positions, those both of victim and tormentor.[399] Moreover, Smith adds that these changing positions provide a play of imagination for the viewer, as they produce emotional reactions, denied experiences and an understanding of the effects and social reactions of such actions, not only on film, but in the discussions about the films and their contents.[400]

Although assaultive and reactive gazes have been widely used in horror narrations, classical living dead films were especially fascinated by their effects, not least because the gazes connected the films to the popular contemporary trend of hypnotization and mesmerism.[401] All classical undead monsters make use of their assaultive gaze to hypnotize or to seduce their victims and to control their enemies. The classical mummy, for example, resorts to the hypnotizing effect throughout the film. The very awakening of the mummy starts at his slowly opening his eyes, followed by repeated close-ups of his face which stress his dark and mysterious eyes. His hypnotic powers are revealed to the viewer for the first time when he arrives at Whemple's residence and meets the servant. The scene unfolds in low-key lighting emphasizing the mummy's impressive posture. The impression is further intensified by a close-up. During this shot, the mummy's eyes grow bigger and lighter, which contrasts with the dark background. The mummy does not kill the servant, only subordinates him, but the purpose of the scene is similar to the death of the museum guard: in the next scene, when the mummy directs his hypnotic and assaultive gaze to his primary target, Helen, the viewer has already been warned of his powers.

The growing tension between the mummy's hypnotic gaze and Helen's adaptable gaze suggests an important feature in the use of assaultive and reactive gazes in the classical living dead films, that of the question of gender. Clover stresses that the horror films' assaultive gaze is usually male, while the feminine aspect is found in the reactive. This reflects horror's tendency to simplify gender roles in that monsters and heroes are usually men, and women are made victims.[402] Similarly, the classical living dead films use women to mediate a deadly threat. Young women are seduced to death by male monsters, only to be saved in time by protecting men. Women authenticate the

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[399] Dixon 1995, 7.
[400] Smith 1999b, 220–221, 230–236.
[401] See, for example, Fay 2008, 83; Bishop 2008, 144.
[402] Clover 1996 (1992), 7, 12, 211–212.

monstrous threat, and the struggle for and against violent deaths is likewise experienced, culminated and solved through women.

This penchant for placing women in a reactive role and men in an assaultive role, directing the monster's assaultive gaze towards women and heroes' assaultive gaze to the monster, can be compared to the cultural gender roles of death systems. According to Tony Walter, death has been both modernized and masculinized: the death industry of doctors, funeral directors, police officers, soldiers, etc. at least used to be controlled by men, whereas women have historically carried the responsibility for mourning and reacting to death.[403] Similarly, in the classical living dead films, men can be seen to produce death in violent ways and to act against death, to exclude death from the society and control it by struggling and abjecting the undead monsters. In contrast to the dual role of men, women are made to represent an emotional struggle, to be overwhelmed with encounters of death or undead monsters and to create emotional responses to these embodiments of death.

When the classical films chose to narrate the death events and the threat of violent death through channels other than images, the assaultive (male) and reactive (female) gazes became important means of addressing threat and tension to the viewer. Clover also reminds us that the assaultive and reactive gazes amount to more than mere character gazes, for they are the gazes of the viewer and camera as well.[404] And more often than not these gazes are directed at the viewer as well.

The ways in which the viewer is included in this process of attacking death and reactions to death is compellingly described by Edward Lowry and Richard deCordova's analysis of the gazes used in the *White Zombie*. They maintain that an intriguing tension emerges in the camera narration when zombie master Legendre's possessive gaze is contrasted with the empty gazes of the zombies. The zombies' gazes are ghastly in their declaration of lost self and autonomy, while Legendre's gaze is evil in its violating domination. However, it is not enough to reveal these assaultive and reactive gazes which describe the threatening power of death and the resultant non-existence. Instead, the camera often situates itself into either of these positions. Through Legendre's point of view, the viewer is forced to take the perspective of the possessor. Uncomfortably enough, the viewer is also pressed into noticing and experiencing the zombies' restricted vision through alignment. Not only does Legendre possess the zombies, but often he

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[403] Walter 1994, 13, 18.
[404] Clover 1996 (1992), 202–205.

possesses the images of the film as well. From time to time, Legendre's gaze is directed to the camera, and it is during these shots that the viewer, too, becomes possessed by his gaze. The (actual) viewer is invited into the position of possessor and the possessed at the same time, suddenly becoming conscious and sometimes even horrified of his/her own possessive or assaultive gaze of violence, horror, and death.[405]

As these different gazes in *White Zombie* show, the violent position remains possible through metonymic displacement of violent gazes, even if the classical living dead films were to hide the actual death events. This is exactly Lowry's and deCordova's point when they argue that horror always positions the viewer at some level and in such a way that the viewer necessarily participates in the violent death. The camera situates the implied viewer into a sadistic position, although the actual viewer has potential to distance him/herself from the image or reject the image.[406] Films rather use their power to suggest or deny certain positions for the viewer, and although the camera can either make the viewer witness or deny access to violent death, the narration of these films does not erase the actual viewer's responsibility for his/her own willingness to peek at violent death scenes and to be attacked by the same violent scenes. The game of hide and seek takes place at the level of the film's narration and also at the level of the actual film experience.

White Zombie and Restricting Gaze

Giles recognizes a fetishist structure in the viewing of horror, referring to the viewer's desire for a full vision of horrific events. At the same time, however, the viewer is afraid of looking, which leads to both presenting and hiding these events. In such a structure, classical horror narration turns to defending the viewer from him/herself. While the narration provides the necessary psychological and culturally accepted defense mechanism, the viewer can enjoy the possibility of looking.[407] This fetishistic structure of hide and seek is made explicit in the *White Zombie's* depictions of violent death scenes, which emphasize the constant play with expectations and revealing and hiding death scenes. Violent death is imminent from the opening to the closure of the film, and

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[405] Lowry & deCordova 1984, 350–384.
[406] Lowry & deCordova 1984, 349.
[407] Giles 1984, 45–48.

whereas the first deaths are hidden from the discourse, the last ones are more detailed, with the narration slowly revealing the events of violent death to the viewer.

The film opens with a scene of death through a funeral. Death is not narrated as an actual event, but with the help of the local funerary habits: the corpse is buried in the middle of the road to be better guarded against the evil forces which might take advantage of the corpses. The imagination of the viewer is thus triggered by a fascinating explanation of the dangers facing the dead, but any further knowledge is denied at this point.

The next death is already more than a suggestion, taking place in Legendre's mill, where the zombie slaves are working. First, the camera provides a long shot of the grinder, showing sugarcane being crushed by the blades. The image is then cut to zombies carrying baskets full of sugarcane above the grinder. Suddenly, one of the zombies sways and silently falls over the edge. The fall or the moment when the body hits the blades is not shown, but the image is cut to under the grinder where the zombie slaves continue to rotate the blades, not reacting in any way to the accident, only mindlessly mincing the body into pieces.

This scene shows the viewer the preceding events and effects (or lack of them), but not the actual event of death. Also, what strikes the eye about the scene is the insensitivity of the other characters. No-one seems to notice or care about the death of a zombie, and even the sound world of the scene remains the same throughout. The viewer can only hear the screeching sound of the grinder, not even a single scream or climactic music indicating the accident, which remains hidden in a disturbing silence. When the image cuts to Beaumont, who has witnessed the scene and who shows his astonishment and confusion over the situation, the viewer is offered a position of experiencing discomfort with him.

The following death scene is Madeline's transformative death, more closely observed. First the viewer is allowed to watch Madeline being given a poisoned rose by Beaumont and later Legendre arriving at the scene and starting to create a voodoo doll for Madeline. The cuts between Madeline celebrating her wedding inside the house and Legendre starting his voodoo process behind the window create a cause-effect chain of Legendre becoming responsible for her death-like state. The causal effects are brought together by the use of music that culminates in Madeline's death. The actual event of her transformative death is shown through the point-of-view shot of Neil, who holds Madeline in his arms. This subjective point of view exposes to view Madeline's stare

with empty, dead eyes before they finally close. In this scene, her death is revealed to the viewer, but mostly through Neil and Beaumont, which invites the viewer to participate in the experiences of shock and loss.

Picture series 7: Visual causality between Legendre's actions and Madeleine's death-like state.

Madeline's transformative death is depicted in detail, but it is not violent at the level of the image. It is rather like falling asleep, and as the film will go on to show, the poisoned rose created a death-like state, not death itself. However, the revealing death scene opens up possibilities to depict the rest of the violent deaths in more detail.

The next death takes place in Legendre's castle. Legendre has just poisoned Beaumont and laid bare his intentions of possessing both Madeline and Beaumont. Beaumont begs his servant to kill Legendre, but the master of the castle manages to prevent this. Suddenly, his zombies start to pile into the room, surrounding the servant,

catching him and starting to haul him upstairs. However, the camera does not follow the zombies, but remains with Legendre and Beaumont who is begging for mercy on behalf of his servant.

While the image lingers on these two men, a scream from upstairs implies a set of events to the viewer. As Giles says, sound is a typical way of communicating frightful events while the gaze is restricted: 'sound plays a crucial role in horror film by filling in the relatively empty visuals with suggestions of menace.'[408] The servant's scream enables the viewer to imagine the worst, but when the image suddenly cuts to the events upstairs, the zombies are still carrying the servant and nothing bad has yet happened. Similarly, Thomas Elsaesser argues that one of the key sources for revealing and deceiving is the audio. The source of a sound can be kept away from the frame, making the viewer's imagination all the more efficient in creating the source. The extra-diegetic world of horror is in a central role, as it introduces a range of elements in order to surprise, shock or even mislead the viewer.[409]

But the servant's death scene is not over yet. While he has already seen the torrent that will become his end, the viewer is still in a non-seeing position. After a play of hide and reveal, the viewer sees the servant thrown into the torrent, where he desperately reaches out his hand. And once again, the actual scene of death is not revealed. Instead of focusing on the death struggle of the servant, the camera follows the zombies leaving the scene.

The next scene of death depicts the death of the zombies in the final reel of the film. They act under Legendre's command, but when Bruner, a missionary, knocks Legendre on the head, Legendre loses his hypnotic control over the zombies, and the zombies fall over the edge of a cliff one by one. The first of these falls is partly shown to the viewer: the zombie steps over the edge, while the following cut reveals the shadow of his falling body reflected on the face of the cliff. However, before the body hits the awaiting rocks, the image is once again, and at the last moment, cut away. The event of death is unavoidable, but still not shown.

While the camera becomes more revealing on violence and the death scenes, there are still some restrictions in place, which will be abolished by the time of the last death scene, that of Legendre himself. Regaining his consciousness after being hit on the head, Legendre realizes that he has lost his zombies and is fighting a losing battle. He

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[408] Giles 1984, 49.
[409] Elsaesser 1999 (1998), 195–196.

tries to escape when Beaumont catches up with him, forcing him over the edge and jumping after him. The camera is not in the least interested in Beaumont's fall, but the fall of Legendre is followed in detail.

Picture series 8: Legendre falling from the cliff and his dead body.
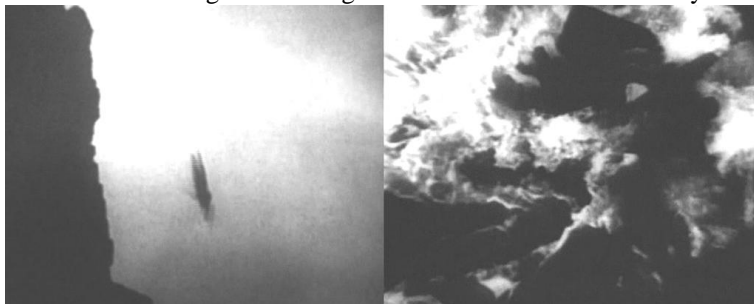
The camera follows Legendre's falling body, showing it hit the rocks and lie there lifeless and unanimated for a moment, before the sea throws the body away. The last death scene reveals everything and proves that the monstrous figure is dead, that the previous deaths and injuries caused by Legendre are avenged, and that the protagonists are free to continue their lives. The detailed death restores balance to the world at the same time as it fulfills the viewer's generic expectations.

Giles' notion of fetishistic, or restricted, gaze emphasizes more the absence of an object of horror than the excess of it. The absence has more possibilities for creating horror, because the viewer may know what is going on although he/she were not allowed to witness it. What he/she can do instead is imagine these events. When the events are actually shown, it only reveals their artificial and constructed nature. Therefore, Giles argues, 'to look the horror in the face for very long robs it of its power.'[410] This becomes evident in the closing scene of *White Zombie*, because the death of Legendre also means that he is deprived of his powers, the threat is dissolved and the viewer is allowed to master the image, and through image, master the image of death. The revealed image of violent death in fact serves as a kind of catharsis in the film. By the end of *White Zombie*, the camera (and perhaps the viewer as well) has gained a controlling gaze over evil, the undead, and even death—as in a truly modern world.

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[410] Giles 1984, 48.

The revealing and thus controlling image of the final death of any monster is important in the creation of cathartic closure for classical films. The Screen theorist MacCabe argues that seeing the actual image is considered to mediate the 'truth of events', whereas restricted views can also intentionally misinform the viewer.[411] The revealing of the final death therefore proves that the monster is dead, which provides the classical necessity of returning the assaultive gaze back on itself, as Clover formulates.[412] In conclusion, the final deaths of the monsters are described in more detail than the other deaths in the classical living dead films. It is these deaths that provide closure, although even these scenes do not exploit images of dying and death to the extent that the later films do.

While death and dying processes are deconstructed in the classical films, the deconstruction is more common at the level of the narration of death than at the level of images. The films produce narrative knowledge of death by using it as a narrative turning point and by concentrating on consequences and reactions. At the idea level, death is encountered in controlled and protected ways. Moreover, the idea shapes modern death, which is controlled and excluded from the public at the story level through professionalism and knowledge, and where death images are alienated on the level of public screenings of horror films.

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[411] MacCabe 1986 (1976), 182–183.
[412] Clover 1996 (1992), 208–209.

3.3. Revealing Images of Death in Transition Era

Film Violence of the 1950s and Changing Cultural Views

The social atmosphere of the 1930s did not encourage embracing images of death or culturally progressive ideas of death that would radically challenge the strategies of modern understanding of death. Viewers of classical living dead films remained well protected against explicitly violent imagery. While death was already an important part of contemporary narration, it was mediated in other ways than through direct witnessing. However, when Hollywood started to renew itself during the 1950s, the socio-cultural atmosphere and the production values had shifted, which allowed a more direct addressing of death events in the narration of death. This can be detected in the increasingly inclusive images of death as well as in a more frequent use of death scenes and a more critical relationship to death.

In the 1950s, although the 'natural' death itself remained an alienated part of the society, the disturbing power of mass-scale violent death had forced its way into the public, not least by World War II and its aftermath. Mass destruction by the atomic bomb and concentration camps and the possibility of a nuclear war heightened the influence and recognition of violent death. Changes in the socio-cultural context, innovations in cinematic technologies and an increasing influence of mass-mediated audiovisual material encouraged American cinema, too, to exaggerate violence and make deaths more inventive. At the deeper lever of cultural attitudes and values, the pervasive mass threats changed the way in which terror and the evil potential of man was understood: people grew conscious of man's potential for depravity, cruelty, mass destruction and loss of values to an extraordinary extent.[413] David Skal, for example, sums this up by arguing that the 1950s American films were in general loaded with guilt, sin, and fear.[414]

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[413] See also Wells 2002, 56–58; Skal 1993, 229; Tudor 1989, 39–47; Schepelern 1986, 30; Ahonen 1999, 296; Mäyrä 1998, 54; Goldberg 1998, 50; and Zimmer 2004, 38.

[414] Skal 1998, 186. Both horror and science fiction produced several movies that dealt with atomic experiences and the revenge of nature. For example, *Them* (1954) is considered to be a typical contemporary film, in which radiated giant ants follow their natural instincts. Their destructive and impersonal threat causes panic because ants do not respect humanity but see people as prey. Many critics see these films as metaphors for social resistance and for the questioning of social order and personal, cultural and national identities in the post-war United States. (For example, Ahonen 1999, 297; Soren 1997, 130; Crane 1994, 105–109; Jancovich 1992, 59, 63, 69; Wells 2002, 58.)

In other words, mass-scale and mass-mediated violent death pierced American consciousness, forcing the American public to face their social responsibilities. Symbolically, in the opening scene of *The Return of Dracula* (1958), the viewer observes Dracula's abandoned coffin in a European graveyard, framed with a voice-over: 'It is a known fact that there existed in Central Europe a Count Dracula. Though human in appearance and cultured in manner, he was, in truth, a thing undead. A force of evil. A vampire. Feeding on the blood of innocent people, he turned them into his own kind, thus spreading his evil dominion ever wider. The attempts to find and destroy this evil were never proven completely successful. And so, the search continues to this very day.' In the next scene, the viewer sees Dracula on a train on his way to the United States. In this opening, Dracula is disconnected from the old continent, brought instead to 1950s America with all his might.

The opening of the film redirects the responsibility for violent death to America, stressing that the surface of the society might be civilized, but it has dark undertones of violence and death. In a sense, this 1958 film foresees a Hollywood horror film tradition which is formulated as a convention after Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1961). This, notes Wood, made horror both American and familial. While the 1930s monster was foreign, horror in the 1950s was brought closer to home, if not onto American soil, then at least through the characters. Horror and death also started to emerge from American families.[415] In fact, when Dracula gets off the train in 1950s America, he is mistakenly recognized as a missing relative whom Dracula had killed on the train. The family takes Dracula to their home and makes him a part of the family.[416]

At the same time when the cultural recognition of the role and responsibility of violent death started to change, the limitations of the classical horror films' use of violence became outdated and naïve. The Production Code still existed, although it was slowly losing its grip. In *The Return of Dracula*, too, many death scenes still follow the classical rules of hiding the acts of violence, but deaths are nevertheless explored in more detail. For example, when the transformative deaths of the vampire's first women victims (Lucy in *Dracula* and Jennie in *The Return of Dracula*) are compared, it becomes clear that whereas Lucy's dying process was only hinted at in the classical film,

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[415] Wood 1984 (1979), 183–185.

[416] Years after *The Return of Dracula*, these ideas of perverse families have become more common in vampire films in particular. They start to function as alternatives to the normative nuclear family. Benefiel, for example, sees that the vampire tradition based on Anne Rice's work, notably *Interview with the Vampire*, pioneers families with same-sex parents, incestuous relationships between adult vampires and their children/lovers. (Benefiel 2004, 263–264, 270.)

the transition era film explores the dimensions of Jennie's transformative, social, and final death more closely.

The exploration of Jennie's transformative death begins from her contamination with Dracula. The vampire seduces the girl, although the actual violent act is not shown to the viewer. The following morning, a doctor calls Jennie's friend, Rachel, who rushes to her friend's death bed. The viewer is able to see how the encounter with Dracula has weakened and changed the sick girl, leading Jennie to die of blood loss. The fascination with Jennie's death does not end there. The viewer goes on to participate in her funeral with other characters and to witness her coming back from the dead. After the funeral, the viewer in fact joins Dracula in visiting Jennie's grave and reviving her by demanding her to 'come, we have work to do.'

Later, vampire hunters come to Jennie's empty coffin, and when she returns to her resting place, the viewer attends her final death in a killing scene which is given a specific role in the film. Although the viewer cannot see her speared, the spear is being hammered revealingly enough. While the image remains impossible objective, it uses strong indexical references. Some access to excessive death is provided also by the only colored images of the film: the blood running from Jennie's now dead body is telling enough.

This scene uses the idea of montage to suggest a violent death without actually showing the violent act objectively or without letting the viewer enter and control the scene in its entirety. The montage connects the image of a spear-hammering man, the blood running and a picture of Jennie's face when she transforms to a motionless state and closes her eyes. In connecting individual images which do not contain excessive violence as such but which imply a violent process, the film invites the viewer to experience violence through imagination. As Prince argues, montage became one important means of extending violent cinematic contents, because the combining of different images through editing allowed violent scenes more space, although the death event itself lasted no longer than in the classical films. It was just given more screen-time, which has grown to be an increasingly popular tactic since the classical films.[417] Similarly, by using such editing techniques, *The Return of Dracula* exploits violent references without actually showing the graphic acts.

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[417] Prince 2003, 35–36.

Picture series 9: Transformation and final deaths of Jennie.

When Dracula dies by falling into a mine shaft, the camera does not turn away at the moment of this violent death. Although the viewer is not allowed to see the exact moment of Dracula hitting the poles at the bottom of the shaft, he/she is allowed to observe the death and Dracula's transformation in the final death through an objective shot. The film also welcomes the viewer to witness the event of death by bringing him/her slowly closer to Dracula's death struggle. This time, the consequences are exploited: when the image is filled with blood, the pierced body starts to transform into a skeleton. The picture series is carried out with a sequence of dissolving images, until only a skeleton remains. The viewer is distanced from the image only after Dracula' transformation has ended and he is certainly dead.

Picture series 10: Final death of Dracula in *The Return of Dracula*.
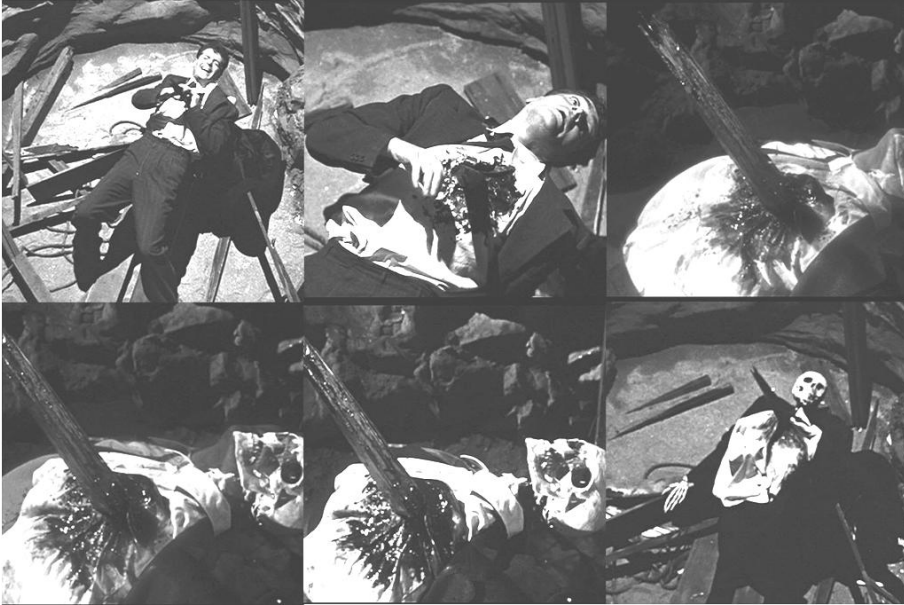
Especially effective, this scene encourages the viewer to note and embody the vulnerability of the body and the bodily consequences of death. In confirming the death of the monster, the scene is also cathartic, but at the same time, it is also disturbing in forcing the viewer close to death. It denies the distancing effect of the classical films and does not spare the viewer from the violent affect of these images. Instead, it allows access to death at a detailed level. In comparison, classical horror appears more secure to the viewer. According to Andrew Tudor, this move away from the classical films, where threat was often supernatural and foreign, closures were delivered and the viewer's security was guaranteed, has culminated in the postclassical films' lack of social and moral order, distrust of authorities and insecurity.[418] The changes towards (American) responsibility over death and the changing access to death scenes force the viewer to both encounter and embody death more openly.

Moreover, differences in the images of death bring up generational differences. *The Return of Dracula* is one of the first Hollywood films not marketed for a homogenous audience, but to new segmented and young audiences. Since the early 1950s, television had challenged Hollywood's role as the leading (family) entertainment

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[418] Tudor 1989, 27, 211–222. Furthermore, Wells (2002, 82) claims that Roman Polanski's films of the 1960s mark the end of secure horror with such pieces as *Repulsion* (1965), *Dance of the Vampires* (1967) and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968).

form in the United States. Not only was movie attendance declining, but the myth of a homogenous audience had reached its end. Hollywood was forced to change its production modes to meet the needs of a changing audience composition.[419]

In the horror genre, the change in the viewer base was significant: the young became the main audience group with almost three-quarters of the viewers 12–25 years old. This was also the time of the emergence of youth culture, when young people with money and spare time became a major source of income for the cinema. The film industry, too, started to notice the new audience segment in production and distribution. However, because the old studios were slow and inflexible to react to cultural changes, the more marginalized horror genre became something of a pioneer in adapting to the new viewer group.[420] The pioneering role was copied from the British Hammer company who had welcomed young American viewers with colorful scenes of sex, violence and nudity. The success of such images made Hollywood exploitation film-makers follow suit, leading to productions such as *The Return of Dracula*.[421]

These new versions were box-office hits among the younger viewers, which promised further changes in the aesthetics, themes and explicit violence of the genre, quite like *The Return of Dracula* anticipated the viewer's more explicit access to violent death scenes. More importantly, the changes spoke of a changing world where the new generation considered violent death part of their world view and reality, and thus part of their cinematic expression as well.

By bypassing and ignoring the previous limitations on horror's imagery, the 1950s and early 1960s horror films made clear that the Production Code had become outdated and hypocritical. Television already mediated violent images to the living rooms in the United States. For example, when President Kennedy was shot in 1963, the pictures of the assassination, Kennedy's exploding head and his transition from life to death were more publicly and directly violent than any film violence ever before, Grønstad maintains.[422] Also, the mediated images of the Vietnam War in particular changed cultural practices. The war in Vietnam brought images of death and dying in war onto the television screens for the first time. This finally proved that if detailed and graphic images of death were shown on television, death could be explored in film,

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[419] For example, Cook 1999 (1998), 230; Smith 1999a (1998), 6–7; Maltby 1999 (1998), 34; Gomery 1998, 247–249; and Alanen & Alanen 1985, 97.
[420] Vieira 2003, 172; Maltby 1999 (1998), 33; Skal 1993, 255.
[421] Soren 1997, 144–145, 151; Iaccino 2003, 429; Wells 2002, 63–64, 69; Twitchell 1985, 60; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 85; Jancovich 1992, 75–76.
[422] Grønstad 2003, 169–171, 177.

too.[423] In early 1968, then, the Production Code was replaced by an age classification system. While classical horror films had gained their power on what they did not show, horror was now both able and allowed to do more than just hint. The era of modern cinematic violence had begun.[424]

Night of the Living Dead and Revealed Images of Death

The processes of the 1950s and 1960s launched the forthcoming changes. As Vivian Sobchack argues, before the 1960s death was usually quick, something that the camera did not concentrate on, although death in itself was already dramatic and meaningful. In the course of the 1960s, mass-mediated death became violent and lost its power to solve issues, or to produce catharsis. Moreover, a cinematic model for this new aesthetical death was created by *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), which 'choreographed a dance out of blood and death'.[425] Of the living dead films, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was the first to reveal, if not detailed acts of violence, then at least elaborate images of graphic corpses.

Night of the Living Dead seized the opportunity to challenge the earlier production values as well as the moral, social and political standards and narrative strategies, but as with *The Return of Dracula*, some moral codes from the classical era still persisted. The zombie film's director, George Romero, would later recall that while 'there was no MPAA censor's office or local censor board any more, you didn't have that panel of experts that were issuing dictates and reviewing films, saying, You can leave this in, but you have to take that out. But there was this unwritten law which said you had to be polite and just show the shadow and not show the knife entering flesh.'[426]

The contrast to classical films is nevertheless explicit. While the closing scene of the 1932 *White Zombie* concentrates on dying, the camera's objective gaze stays far from the falling body of the zombie master, keeping the viewer at a safe distance. The distance is abolished in the construction of the death scenes in *Night of the Living Dead* where close-ups throw death at the viewer's face, and detailed images of dying or dead people force the viewer to follow the process and ugliness of violence through alignment

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[423] Goldberg 1998, 50. See also McNeil 2007, 122–123.
[424] Prince 2003, 30; Vieira 2003, 230–231, 240–241; Doherty 1999, 345.
[425] Sobchack 2000, 112–114, 118.
[426] Romero's comment is documented by Vieira (2003, 242–243).

heightening the viewer's involvement. This possibility to solicit the viewer close to the horrific events was generated, as Katherine Zimmer states, by the new camera technology of the 1950s and 1960s. New portable and lighter cameras encouraged both closeness and unstable images, shifting the focus from continuity to disjuncture.[427]

The impression that the camera is participating in the events rather than observing them from a safe position is confirmed with the first zombie attack in the graveyard. When a strange man suddenly grasps Barbra, her brother Johnny intervenes, putting up a fight. For the entire sequence, the camera stays close to the fighting couple, and both the close proximity and hand-held shooting heighten the viewer's feeling of being involved. The very proximity makes it hard to get a clear picture of what is happening, because occasionally the men drift out of the picture or too close to the camera. The general view which was much used in *White Zombie*, does not apply. Furthermore, when Johnny has lost the battle and the zombie has chased Barbra to their car, the camera is situated next to Barbra on the passenger seat inside the car, where it follows the zombie's attempts to get in through the window. With such a positioning of the gaze, the viewer is shut into this same claustrophobic space, without any apparent getaway from the situation or the image.

Picture series 11: Intimate encounter with a zombie: attacking zombie in the graveyard and zombie trying to get inside the car.

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[427] Zimmer 2004, 39–42.

The opening already makes clear that this film has discarded restrictions on violent scenes in creating tension, preferring to compose a sense of closeness to produce an atmosphere of shocking participation in the events. It does not mean, however, that the camera would reveal everything at once. Instead, it stays with the characters, first with Barbra and when more characters appear, with them as well. The narration of the film stays so close to the characters in fact that the film ends up using a more uncommon narrative solution than was the case with classical living dead films. In the *Night of the Living Dead*, the viewer learns about the monster together with the other characters instead of being shown a monster whose nature is immediately revealed to the viewer, although not necessarily to the characters.[428] The film thus takes all control away from the viewer.

This is also how the film's first graphic image of a corpse is executed. Barbra has escaped to a farm house and realizes that the house is surrounded by zombies trying to get in. She starts to search the house, with the camera positioned at the top of the stairs and revealing Barbra walk up the steps slowly and cautiously. The image cuts to a close-up of her face and her frightened look. The narration does not end with the interpellation (reaction) shot, however, but a subjective shot is offered as well, when the image cuts to the point-of-view shot. This is a close-up of a violated corpse's face where the flesh has been removed, the eyes are open and the mouth appears to be screaming. The following reaction shot reveals that Barbra has covered her eyes with her hands before running back down. The scene can be viewed as an interesting parallel to horror film's changing relation to violent images. Barbra covers her eyes at this first encounter with a violated corpse, quite as the earlier horror films used to cover their images when faced with a violent death.

The same scene is repeated not long after, now with Ben, who comes to see what frightened Barbra. The camera is in the same position, at the top of the stairs where, as the viewer knows by now, the body is. Ben, too, takes the steps slowly. And once again the image cuts to the close-up of the corpse's face and returns to shoot a reaction shot of Ben, who does not scream as Barbra did, but is still clearly freaked out and almost falls down the stairs. In a metaphoric change, Ben does not cover his eyes, which makes the relationship with violent death more openly addressed, and from this point on, the film

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[428] See also Carroll 1990, 127–128.

shifts away from looking away from death and turns to study death further. And further still.

Such closeness, provided by character-centered narration, is evident throughout the film. There are two exceptions. The first takes place shortly after an attempted escape scene where a young couple, Tony and Judy, have been blown up in a car, and Ben and Cooper have fought each other in the desperate situation. Suddenly the image cuts from inside the house to the outside where the zombies are approaching the car and the charred bodies inside. For a while, the camera lingers with the zombies ripping the bodies into pieces, fighting over body parts and eating them. Several close-ups gaze at the zombies who tear the flesh out of the body parts with their teeth and then eat these parts. The scene is there for the shock and attraction of violent images, and also to remind the viewer that the real threat should be the deadly figures, not the people inside the house. The same scene is soon repeated, but now from the familiar character-based location and through a subjective shot of Ben staring out of the window at the zombies.

The second scene where the camera distances itself from the surrounded people in the farm house comes towards the end. At this point, the camera reveals its objective position by gazing at the rescue team who are cleaning up and killing the zombies. The change is purposeful because it contrasts the perspectives of Ben and the cleaners. When Ben hears the approaching sounds of dogs and gun shots, he comes out from his shelter in the basement and goes to the window, prepared to shoot any zombies if he has to. At the same time, the rescue team is nearing the house, more than prepared to shoot all the zombies, as has already been shown. When they see movement by the window, then, they interpret this as a threat and shoot Ben. The change of positions is important in highlighting the narration's cynicism and the apocalyptic ending of the film.

This nihilistic scene reflects increasing distrust as an undercurrent of the films. As Crane and Skal argue, after the classical era, horror films have reveled in destroying relationships between individuals, family members, group members, authorities and society at large. By the time of postclassical horror, if not already before, the stories dwell on a dystopian world where people do not trust each other, cannot work together and therefore do not have a chance of survival. The destiny of the world is out of their hands. No knowledge, will or action can change this even though people would love to be able to make changes.[429]

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[429] Crane 1994, 6, 9, 13–16, 137–140; Skal 1993, 379.

Especially when the role of violence as a moral solution is denied, as it is in this ending, the previous deaths in the film appear more violent and irrational. Grønstad, too, maintains that when violence fails to provide narrative closure, it turns into a spectacle, which underlines and makes visible the role of violence.[430] The final scene of the *Night of the Living Dead* not only announces the film's cynical attitude, but broadcasts a broader development of increasing irrationality and violence which had started to dominate horror films in the late 1960s.[431]

In fact, as Kevin Heffernan writes, the release of the *Night of the Living Dead* caused public outrage for its 'pornography of violence' or use of graphic violence, cynical world view and nihilistic ending.[432] Especially one of this transitional film's death scenes, which takes place in the cellar of the house with the Cooper family, culminates these arguments. Previously in the story, Ben has shot Cooper who staggers down the stairs to the cellar where he dies next to his sick daughter. A little later, Helen, the mother, escapes the invading zombies to the basement as well, only to find her beloved daughter, Karen, eating the ripped arm of her father. The viewer knows from previous experience that Karen has been zombified and that Helen is now in danger. The mother, however, finds this hard to accept, which is why she does not fight back, although she does try to escape.

The failure of accepting loss, and abjecting the corpse, is highlighted by Karen's killing of her mother in a prolonged sequence, which also becomes the film's ultimate image of violent death, both at the level of experience and constructed image. The scene is so brutal, graphic and detailed that its aesthetical features are singularly foregrounded. As Romero himself has pointed out, the scene never shows the flesh being attacked, but rather builds the sequence through impossible objective shots and, most notably, through carefully framed point-of-view shots. The scene nevertheless unveils the potential of revealed images and the power of forcing the viewer to stop by the image and be impressed by its ghastly contents.

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[430] Grønstad 2003, 283.

[431] See also Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 10.

[432] Heffernan 2002, 59, 66. Heffernan adds that the distribution and exhibition of *Night of the Living Dead* reflected the transition which was taking place in Hollywood cinema. In its first run, the film was often shown as part of the afternoon matinee and was mainly visited by an audience of children. However, during the first screenings, the film's nature seemed inappropriate for the slot it was given in the schedule. New practices were required for the renewed cinema. *Night of the Living Dead* created novel characteristics (implicit death scenes, violence, cynicism and unhappy endings, for example) for the screening of horror films, which helped the film fit better into the programming in the further distribution of the film. (Heffernan 2002, 60–75.)

In its overemphasized sensual affects, this scene produces a sublime effect. The background of the concept is found in aesthetical theories, such as the writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Whereas Burke connects the sublime directly to fascinating and painful experiences of horror and suspense,[433] Kant links it to the aesthetics of art works and representations.[434] Both of them, however, see the sublime exceeding physical limits, moral essence and human sense. According to James Donald, horror films combine these two traditional views on the sublime. Horror themes arouse powerful emotions but the genre still remains as a representation and fictitious.[435]

The sublime can accordingly be defined as an aesthetical sensation and experience that is created, when the viewer encounters something that exceeds human senses and comprehension. With a sublime experience, the viewer may enjoy something horrible, because the concept brings together feelings of pain and pleasure, and sensations of horror and excitement.[436] The scene where Karen kills her mother is such a sublime scene: a child brutally murdering her mother is obscene and terrifying, but the scene is aesthetically constructed with details, built to fascinate the viewer.

The scene is executed by paralleling point-of-view shots of mother and daughter. When Helen, the mother, enters the basement, the camera chooses her subjective point-of-view shot, as she witnesses Karen eating her father. As viewers, we also get to see Helen through the daughter's eyes and are able to feel some of the mother's reactions: she cannot believe what is happening. The image then returns to Helen's perspective, and the viewer witnesses Karen holding out her arms, as if to hug her mother. From this point forward, the camera changes between the subjective views of these two characters. Through Karen's eyes, the viewer sees the mother run away from her and fall to the ground. Through Helen's eyes, we see Karen grip a hoe and slowly approach her mother with the hoe raised above her head.

When Karen is so close to her mother that her own shadow covers the image of Helen's face and a close-up of Helen's screaming face fills the image, the hoe strikes for the first time. The point-of-view shots now change between Helen's view of the raised hands bringing the hoe down time after time and Karen's view of Helen's tormented

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[433] Burke 1990 (1757), 36, 51–53, 119–121, 145.
[434] Kant 1965 (1833), 54–55.
[435] Donald 1989, 241.
[436] Leffler 2000, 74–77; Freeland 2000, 236–237; Freeland 1999, 66. The sublime is often connected to the religious, primitive or mythical experiences, which has tended to make it seem like a distant model for experiences in the modern world. However, the combination of amazement and fear is still powerful, at least in horror films. (See, for example, Leffler 2000, 74–77; Crane 1994, 27–28.)

face, which is slowly being covered with blood stains. The death struggle is detailed through Helen's facial expressions and the bloody hoe that continues its deadly work. When Helen dies, the camera cuts itself away and shoots the basement's wall, where the shadow of Karen makes it clear that her work continues, with blood stains now filling the walls as well.

Picture series 12: Matricide in *Night of the Living Dead*

Like the final death of Jennie in *The Return of Dracula*, this matricide sequence uses montage to create a series of shots where none of the used images contains violence as such, but where the consequences of images—raised hoe, screaming face of the victim, lowered hoe, blood stains on the wall—suggest that the viewer decode the scene in detail. The suggestion is especially poignant because the scene is accompanied with an intensifying screeching sound, reminding the viewer of the shower scene from *Psycho*, which further emphasizes the slashing moment of the murder. However, what differentiates *Night of the Living Death* from the earlier film is the frequency of edited cuts: the changes between point-of-view shots are so fast that the increasing tempo makes the scene so much more aggressive. In fact, the scene follows the classical code that guides the filmmaker to cut away from violence to spatial and metonymic displacement as well as to indexical pointing. However, these solutions are used in such

an excessive way as rather mocks the code. This, according to Prince, is a typical resolution in postclassical films, which can choose to adapt the classical codes of violence for their own purposes, not hiding graphic violence, but rather highlighting it.[437]

As this scene in *Night of the Living Dead* illustrates, the sublime gazing and its excess of images allows the viewer to enjoy how dying is created and how the aesthetical representation of extreme feelings is unified. A sublime experience allows the viewer to be fascinated by such horrifying aesthetics of death, which both magnifies and slows down the scenes to create physical and emotional reactions in the viewer. However, the sublime is not only about feasting on images. Despite its non-narrative tendency with a demand for extreme and disturbing emotional experiences, its socio-cultural and generic contexts invite the viewer to create meanings as well, Freeland argues. She continues that through this cognition, the sublime also provides understanding and thoughts. Accordingly, Freeland argues that the sublime experience consists of four main features: emotional conflict between horror and pleasure, greatness of the image, painfulness of the image, and a reflection of these, including a moral perspective to the story. [438]

During the transitional era of living dead films, the nature of increasing access to violent death was not merely sensational, but also critical. These films used violent images to stress American responsibility for violent death (war deaths and the use of violence in different conflicts in particular), forced death back on the public agenda and refused to marginalize encounters with such images. Violent deaths were employed as part of social commentary and politics. The living dead films thus started to oppose the hiding of death events and shifted their narrative emphasis from the narration of death to the actual events of death. The political commentary had a side effect as well, when the more revealing images of death scenes brought the viewer's sensual and physical cinematic experiences to the center of cinematic narration. The physical reactions also make death itself a part of the viewer's personal but socially shared experiences. The films clearly anticipated a change both in cinema and in American culture, where death—and not only political or violent death—was slowly returned to the public through personal experiences.

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[437] Prince 2003, 220.
[438] Freeland 1999, 68, 82.

3.4. Excessive Death in Postclassical Films

Increasing Use of Numbers and Bodily Violence

Classical films frame violent death mainly through reactions and consequences. During the transition era, structures of censorship dissolved, audiences fragmented, and violent visions became culturally more accepted and even expected, and by the time of the *Night of the Living Dead* at the latest, images of death were revealed and out in the open. However, in the postclassical age, the excessive imagery of death has been given an even more visual and aggressive position. The transition from classical to postclassical era changed not only the role of violence, but there were changes, too, in Hollywood's narrative practices. While causality and motivation are still important in the narrative logic, Warren Buckland and Thomas Elsaesser argue that postclassical narration makes increasing use of episodic structures, open endings instead of closures, and self-conscious generic narration instead of a clear plot. The audiences' knowledge about genre conventions and mythologies has gained a bigger role, leading the films to concentrate on other elements of the genre, such as death scenes.[439]

Indeed, when *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is compared to two earlier vampire cases, the changes in the uses of violence as part of transformative, social and final deaths are brought to light in Lucy's fate. She still features in a side plot, but this time Lucy provides both a necessary turning point for the narrative and a required build-up of anxiety as well as a spectacle of death where all different deaths are emphasized, detailed and carnivalized. In contrast to the two earlier vampire films, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* invites the viewer to participate in Lucy's seduction, contamination, and transformation.

The seduction is a violent but aesthetical scene: we see Lucy standing in her bedroom, wearing a blood-red nightgown as a reference to sexuality and sinfulness. Suddenly, there is a change in the atmosphere. Lucy senses a vampire's call in the now stormy night. She opens the doors to the garden, letting in a strong wind. Her dress gets entangled around her like a bridal trail. Her appearance is all the more pronounced when she is contrasted with Mina, who sees Lucy disappearing into the gardens. Mina is

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[439] Buckland 1999 (1998), 167, 17; Elsaesser 1999 (1998), 195.

dressed in a pure white gown, marking both her innocence and her so far safe and secure position in the story.

Picture series 13: From seduction (contamination) to phases of Lucy's transformative death

When Lucy walks into the stormy night, the scenery is toned blue in the thunder storm which lights up the garden and fills the scene with a rumble. Moreover, the toning renders the scenery a mystical and even mythical air. We are no longer in a secure and

welcoming garden. As in a trance, Lucy walks towards the center of the garden labyrinth to meet the vampire who has assumed the form of a werewolf. The viewer is summoned to witness the beast ravage Lucy in a sex act that makes her contamination appear more fantastic than realistic.

The embodied scene, which is filled with aesthetical detail, is further dramatized as Lucy's contamination becomes confirmed through a transformation phase. This time, also the physicality of the transformation stands out, with visible signs of the forthcoming transformation. She grows paler, her fangs start to grow, and she starts to reject garlic and other anti-vampire symbols. The changes do not appear quietly, either, as she is clearly in agony and pain throughout the transformation. Her change to the undead state is drastic, because at that point all the changes have become irreversible, and all the lively colors have been taken away from her.

Lucy's detailed bodily changes and physical encounter with Dracula show how the attacking and reactive gazes of the classical films have been replaced by bodies and embodiments. In her seduction scene, it is a threatening male body that possesses the woman, and as the transformative phase shows, it is the female body that becomes a means of mediating the power, physicality and embodiments of death and violence in the living dead films. Postclassical horror has thus delimited its territory as a body genre.

Horror is indeed marked by a dual relationship to the body: while an attacking body is threatening and exciting at the same time, the attacked body is an important metaphor in the postclassical period when viewers tend to demand more embodied experiences from the media.[440] Bearing this in mind, postclassical living dead films can offer one channel (along with several other violent genres) to experience strong feelings and extreme experiences in a safe environment.[441] I agree with Grønstad who maintains that classical violence has changed from 'a narration about the body' to a postclassical version of 'a narration by the body', or from the 'euphemistic portrayals of the violated and wounded body' to 'the vulnerability of the flesh'.[442] The distinction to classical films can be formulated in different character-mediated experience. In the classical films, the

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[440] Although part of the genre's pleasure in general, physical experiences have arguably grown increasingly central in the audiovisual media. During the twentieth century, such experiences gradually replaced direct experiences with media representations. It is therefore important that there are also audiovisual experiences that stress the viewer's bodily reactions. (For example, Skal 1998, 92–93; Froy 2003, 141–144, 149.)

[441] For instance, Crane 1994, 141. However, the horror genre is not unique in its relation to violence, as violence has increased in other genres as well. (See, for example, Prince 2000, 6–19.)

[442] Grønstad 2003, 161, 191. For the increasing importance and spectacle of violence and body, see also Derry 1987, 164; Leffler 2000, 55; Badley 1995, 25–29, 74, 152–154.

film characters see death on behalf of the viewer who is socially excluded from a seeing position, while the characters of the postclassical films embody death for the viewer who is not yet experiencing the actual physical death experience.

The growing emphasis on the body reveals an important change in the narration of the living dead films. The protective images of the classical films made fear of death primarily a psychological and philosophical experience. Death was processed at the story level of the narration of death. In comparison, the narration of death of the postclassical films merely frames the detailed images of death, which are so excessive and open that they necessarily detract from the anxiety over what might be happening. The psychological effects of horror have been turned into effects which are physical. As Creed argues, postclassical horror films 'address the viewer directly' through embodied experiences. These films aim at realism—on the level of experience—in their destruction of bodies and in attacking the viewer's body as well. Such attacks cross the boundaries between symbolic and real.[443]

Similarly, Jonathan Lake Crane holds that in the contemporary, cruel and cynical world, the most entertaining and truthful imaginary hurts the viewer most, and such images tend to relate to postclassical horror's bodily violence.[444] Moreover, Shaviro recognizes that the constructive nature of the images creates an affective reality through perception, further enhanced by the cinema's power to draw on 'technology for intensifying and renewing experiences'. This makes the experiences produced by images, sounds and movements both personally encountered and socially shared.[445] In other words, death in the postclassical living dead films is primarily an embodied phenomenon, which creates shared experiences of death and dying in the viewers.

While these experiences do not try to imitate everyday life experiences as such, they do comment on everyday life's relations to death. According to Altman, the norms and values of everyday life are often conflicted in generic films, but rather than a negative conflict, this is a place where a cultural work can critically study the very values and norms. The pleasure of genre cinema can arise from such conflicts and differences, because genres offer a countercultural pleasure.[446] The ways in which postclassical films encounter death through (re)constructed death imageries and

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[443] Creed 1995, 156–157.
[444] Crane 1994, 12, 159, 166, 168. For the increasing bodily violence, see also Freeland 2000, 241–242; Alanen & Alanen 1985, 119, 121; Makkonen 1998 (1995), 221.
[445] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 37–38, 40, 64, 258, 263. (Quote from page 64.)
[446] Altman 1999, 147–152.

deconstructed dying processes can supply us with emotional, cognitive and aesthetical pleasure exactly because these images replace the modern idea of clinical death with embodied experiences. With their non-narrative moments, postclassical living dead films bring death onto a sensual and affective level.

In this process, violence and death have become an exaggerated, unavoidable and maybe even self-evident part of horror narration, as is argued, for example, by Freeland. Violence has of course always been part of the genre's narration, but in the postclassical films it no longer has to be logical or solve conflicts. Violence is there for the sake of spectacle, not for the sake of the plot. Similarly, the viewer has learned to expect images of monsters and violence, and these scenes promise the kind of excitement that he/she desires.[447] The excessive use of violent death scenes has hence become an anticipated ingredient of the living dead films and part of the genre-based viewer experience. Without hesitation, then, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* opens with Count Dracula's military crusade with pierced, violated and brutalized bodies in the battlefield.

In this construction and deconstruction process, death's aestheticized nature is both emphasized and revealed. Although the characters and their relation to death events remain an important part of the story, the showing of actual death events is given more space and prominence in the narration. Not all death scenes have characters a viewer can align or ally with; instead, emotions and experiences are invited through the framing of images, sounds, and effects.[448] Whereas classical films created techniques of hiding and implying death, postclassical films have adopted cinematic techniques which underscore the visuality of death. These stylistic elements include prolonged on-screen death scenes, use of montage, slow motion, extreme close-ups, and graphic effects. All give form to and extend the process where the body transforms from being to another kind of being or non-being.[449]

The moment of death is prolonged, for example, in the scene of Dracula's final death. The injured Dracula retreats to his chapel and falls on the floor. Where *The Return of Dracula* used dissolving images in witnessing Dracula's metamorphosis into a skeleton, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* employs a refined version of dissolve to show how the monstrous body of Dracula changes into the body of the man he used to be. An extreme close-up then lingers on his face, enabling the viewer to encounter the moment of

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[447] See, for example, Freeland 2000, 256.
[448] The idea that the viewer engages with the narrative in multiple ways—through characters and movement, space and time relations—is especially prevalent in a Deleuzian reading (Powell 2005, 109).
[449] See also Prince 2003, 17, 35–36; Sobchack 2000, 118.

Dracula's death. His face slowly turns immobile, bringing a countenance of peace. Here, Dracula is allowed to die as a human, not as a monster. After his death, Mina makes sure that he can rest in peace by cutting his head off with a sword, which is overtly shown to the viewer as well.

(De)constructing Death in Postclassical *The Mummy*

In postclassical films, deaths have become openly accessed and violent, but the possible viewing positions are still multiple, as is evidenced by a comparison of *The Mummy* (1999) and *Resident Evil* (2002). Both films highlight the constructiveness of death and bodily experiences, and both also exploit new digital technology. The films are, however, directed to different audiences. With an age limit of PG-13, *The Mummy* also solicits a younger audience, suggesting that anyone over 13 is welcome to watch the film and that under-13s should do so under parental guidance only. This indicates that the film may contain some violence, which should not, however, be realistic or extreme. In contrast, *Resident Evil* is R-rated, guiding that those under 17 should not watch the film, because it can include intense or persistent violence.[450] Because the two films frame the constructed and embodied death scenes differently, and for different viewers, I will analyze their death scenes in more detail.

The postclassical *The Mummy* includes several death events, and some quite direct images of death. The constructed nature of death in this film is emphasized in five different types of death: 1) ancient crimes and punishments that involve a violent death; 2) deaths caused by the mummy's curse; 3) warning scenes where violent deaths are used as an alert of greater dangers ahead; 4) punishment scenes where the wrongdoers face their penance in the form of death; 5) and action scenes.

This wealth of death scenes shows the significance of death events. Not only are there different dying processes as part of the narration of death, but there are also different types of death events in relation to this narration. Moreover, the hybridity underlines the film's position in postclassical cinematic culture. *The Mummy* could be called, as Paul Simpson does, a horror event movie, attracting mainstream audiences while still playing inside the horror genre. The film has a big-budget, well-known director and box-office actors; it concentrates on stylistic and technical effects and

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[450] For film ratings, see The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), http://www.mpaa.org/FlmRat_Ratings.asp, link checked March 20, 2010.

simple stories. By marketing the film with the reputation of an earlier story, but in relation to multi-generic practices, an event horror film of this kind sells the movie to a wider audience than to an ordinary horror audience.[451]

From a comparison of different types of death scenes, it emerges that the action scenes of death differ from a typical use of death in the horror genre. The intention of action is not to cause horror or terror in the viewer, but rather these scenes are filled with fighting, explosions, fast-moving sequences and cuts from one fighting scene to another. The film has several action scenes: of Egyptian Bedouins fighting treasure hunters; of Magi (protectors of the mummy's tomb) fighting treasure hunters; and of treasure hunters and Magi fighting together with Imhotep's human slaves and army of mummies. The scenes include several violent deaths, but they are covered in fast-moving images, sounds and colors. The scenes therefore resemble 'regular' action scenes or those in adventure films. They are also tinged with elements of humor and comedy in relation to death. The death of the commander inspires punch lines such as 'you just got promoted' rather than expressions of grief and loss.

In this sense, the postclassical *The Mummy* is a retelling of Sobchack's argument: since the 1980s, cinematic death has become careless. According to Sobchack, the transitional film made death an expected and critical part of the narration, whereas today's relationship with death is more casual, technologized (special effects) and ironic. No longer does death have a 'moral agenda or a critique of violence'. Instead, without blinking an eye, the action scenes produce more dead bodies within a few seconds than some of the classical films during the whole film. This careless death also has its cultural functions, one of which, says Sobchack, could be found in the liberating potential of an exaggeration of death images.[452] An excess of death and dying makes death common and takes away its disturbing power.

The numerous death events of the action scenes of *The Mummy* are ample proof of such exaggeration. With the other types of death, the film uses more familiar horror techniques to provide excess. Deaths related to ancient crimes, warnings, curses and punishments—unlike those related to action scenes—are filled with painful images and terrifying effects of violent death. These deaths are also clearly linked to one another, following horror genre's conventions of framing the violent deaths. The film opens with an ancient dying scene, and its colorful, golden glow and revival of an ancient kingdom

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[451] Simpson 2004, 85–87.
[452] Sobchack 2000, 120–122.

makes the opening a fantastic, sublime experience, which leaves the viewer in awe of the grandness of palace life. In this scene, the viewer witnesses the murder of the pharaoh, the suicide of his reluctant lover, Princess Anck-su-Namun, a ritual of high priest Imhotep (alias the mummy) trying to bring her spirit and body back to life, and—as punishment for these crimes—the mummification of his still living priests, and Imhotep himself being cursed and buried alive with flesh-eating bugs. The scenes are connected with an impressive use of music that further highlights the dramatic tone of the events.

These ancient deaths are crimes and punishments of passion, clearly intended to impress and stir the viewer. For example, both the transformative and final death of Anck-su-Namun are shown through the silhouettes of a body pierced with a sword. While the actual dying is hidden, the shadow of the dying body resembles the wall paintings in ancient Egyptian style. Such framing mystifies the death instead of horrifying or alienating the viewer from the scene, allowing him/her to empathize with Imhotep and Anck-su-Namun's passion and love.

Picture series 14: Shadowed transformative and final deaths of Anck-su-Namun
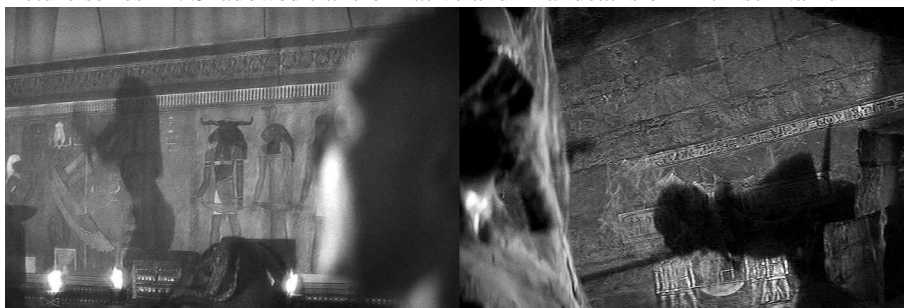
As these ancient deaths illustrate, the film also employs other means of producing exaggeration: violent acts are turned into a spectacle. As Grønstad argues, open access to images of dying brings home the unrealistic nature of film violence. In avoiding the use of explicit violence, classical films end up leaving violence on an abstract level, which makes the bodily consequences of violence invisible. In contrast, postclassical films avoid such invisibility. In turning violence into a graphic spectacle, they in fact impose limits on the use of violence. As it were, postclassical films proclaim that 'violence may be this, but at least nothing more'. In this sense, Grønstad says, the abstraction of classical violence may act against the idea of limitation of violence.[453] Similarly, deaths

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[453] Grønstad 2003, 140, 282. See also Sobchack 2000, 124.

related to ancient crimes, warnings, curses and punishments create more direct images, but at the same time they produce more mystified and fantasized images of violent death.

The mummy's return brings his curse and revenge upon those who open his tomb. These scenes continue the film's powerful images of violent death. Four of the American treasure hunters are liable for opening the casket with the *Book of the Dead* which brought Imhotep back, and all four meet their destiny with the mummy who consumes their bodies and leaves the corpses for the viewer to behold. The actual scenes of violent death remain out of sight probably for age limit reasons, but are either served through impossible objective shots or through consequences, which leave all the corpses with terrified expressions. Moreover, the death scenes dealing with the curse focus not on the dying of the victims but on the renewing and regenerating body of the mummy. *The Mummy* represents the still quite early phase of large-scale digital effects, playing with the technological possibilities of spectacle especially when they are, says Stephen Keane, '*about* bringing forms to life'.[454]

And yet, these deaths are the most horrifying of the movie, because the victims are not only killed, but consumed and used as construction material for the mummy's own body. Moreover, the viewer grows familiar with these characters, with whom he/she aligns with or feels allegiance to. Unlike in the warning deaths, this is prone to create emotional anxiety. Not only is the viewer forced to witness the violent deaths, but he/she also experiences them through character engagement and sensual violent images. This affect can be compared to the warning deaths, which tell the viewer to take the curse and threat of the mummy seriously. Caused by entering the tomb, the ten plagues of Egypt or by the flesh-eating bugs, these deaths are brought on by curiosity and greed and are bypassed quickly after their warning function has become clear. These deaths happen to characters who are less familiar to the viewer, and in the absence of alignment and allegiance, their loss does not produce too much anxiety.

The deaths induced by warnings and curses create a need and motivation to punish the mummy before he goes on to destroy even more lives. The killing of the mummies (Imhotep, Anck-su-Namun and the mummy army) and their assistant Benny at the end of the film therefore generates cathartic deaths, which returns balance to the world. The mummies are killed by the protagonists, the good characters, who are forced to use violence and deadly force, but these killings do not appear as brutal as those

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[454] Keane 2007, 59, 61. (Quote from page 61.)

perpetrated by the mummy. The 'good' killings are excused partly as self-defense and partly as a duty to return the mummy to his grave. What they promise for the viewer is to relieve rather than increase the tension in the film.

The different death types of *The Mummy* show that the violent deaths of the horror genre cannot be approached through a single frame or emotion, but the viewing experience has to be understood as a process where the narration provides different subject positions to the text and creates multidimensional alternatives for the viewer to interpret and experience the violent death. The scenes also highlight the constructed nature of the violent deaths, their intrinsically aesthetical nature, and also their unrealistic character, as Grønstad stresses. She reckons that the constructed nature of violence intervenes in the viewing and makes the viewer aware of his/her viewing process. The viewer does not witness violence as such, but encounters filmic or generic violence which is represented as part of the story and intrinsic to its themes and aesthetics.[455]

Resident Evil and Discomforting Positioning

Resident Evil, a film based on a popular computer game, represents another type of horror event movie, because it is targeted to a more specialized yet cross-media audiences. Mutual borrowing has made video games and films come closer, Keane and Lukas maintain. Films such as *Resident Evil* have borrowed speed, effects and techniques from games, whiles games have borrowed characterization, world making and narrative forms from the cinema. Different user interfaces between viewer and player demand different solutions in participation, but often, films based on games (and vice versa) focus on action and spectacle, which highlights the role of experience and immediate responses to the story (both rewards and punishments of the choices taken).[456]

In the case of *Resident Evil*, the demand for participation is built into the original story, because the game belongs to a genre of survival horror. As Richard J. Hand describes, the players participate in a role game where they try to survive disastrous events in a hostile environment. In such games, role-playing participation is especially stressed. While a film cannot be as interactive as a game, Hand argues that the film version of *Resident Evil* still strives to emphasize the participating role of the viewer on

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[455] Grønstad 2003, 323–324.
[456] Keane 2007, 11, 99–100; Lukas 2009, 221–222, 230.

the journey with the main character, Alice.[457] Furthermore, besides character engagement, the importance of violence, action and spectacle create several excessive moments, when the viewer is challenged to participate in the film at a physical and embodied level.

Indeed, the R-rated *Resident Evil* emphasizes further the constructiveness of death images, exposing the discomforting positions of the viewer. Classical films used narrative solutions to distance the viewer from the violent scenes and to protect him/her from disturbing images. When forced to encounter violent scenes in postclassical films, the viewer has been made responsible for his/her own distancing. As Freeland continues, this has led to horror films deconstructing a protective distance between the viewer and graphic violent deaths. There are greater demands on the viewer to participate in the bodily experience and celebration of violence, the grotesque and the evil.[458]

One of the scenes of *Resident Evil* makes the viewer's responsibility for distancing especially explicit. At this point, the zombies have already been released from their locked spaces and they are now hunting down members of the rescue team when one of the soldiers, JD, is dragged to an elevator full of zombies. His violent death scene is shown first by using the traditional alignment methods, reaction shots of his horror, subjective point-of-view shots when he realizes that none of the others can help him, and through shots of zombies closing in, biting and tearing him apart. The scene ends with a subjective point-of-view shot where the last thing he sees alive are the zombies' hands filling his field of vision. With overwhelming excess, this image situates the viewer in the uncomfortable position of a man dying a horrible and painful death.[459] Such positioning of both victim and monster forces corporeal affects, because the participatory cinematic techniques enable the viewer to participate in immoral acts through curiosity, as Shaviro argues. Such scenes also invite the viewer to become transformed with, and be corporeally affected by, these images.[460] Indeed, this scene at the very least confirms that the living dead films have shifted from assaulting gazes to bodily assaulting the viewer.

Later, the film returns to JD, and this time the image is not accompanied by screams, but by an unsentimental computer voiceover reviewing the nature of the

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[457] Hand 2004, 117–122, 126–127.
[458] Freeland 2000, 243.
[459] Indeed, according to Lowry and deCordova (1984, 347–349), an excess of images or showing too much is one way of forcing the viewer to experience fear and horror.
[460] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 49.

undead. The camera slowly shoots the bruised body until it finds a close-up of JD's face. At the same time that we recognize him, JD becomes animated and the first thing he does is gaze back at us, making us realize that it was only a while ago that we witnessed his death, maybe even found pleasure in it, and now we are forced to carry the responsibility for the assaultive look at the intimate moment of his death. In this case, death is no longer hidden and must be encountered.

This scene also draws attention to the twofold impact of excessive violent images. As Grønstad reminds us, violence both engulfs and distances the viewer,[461] who is therefore left alone with his/her own reaction at such excessive images. At these moments, the film does not provide any more hiding places. This is what Marco Abel calls the necessity of the viewer's 'response-ability'. He argues that excessive images have shifted the emphasis from the signification or meanings of death to the affective processes of experience. It is not important what violence does, but how the viewer reacts, or, in other words, how these excessive images require responses. Consequences are replaced by reactiveness, something that exists even before the images. Violent images thus require that the viewer becomes affected and effectuated by the experiments. This also makes violent images performative, converting them into rhetorical provocations that do not necessarily require moral, cognitive, ethical, or pedagogical effects, but they do need the viewer to prove that he/she is at least capable of being moved by these images.[462]

Sometimes, as Dixon argues, it is exactly the (non-narrative) intensity of the scene that causes the affective effect and forces the viewer to become aware of the reciprocal gaze of the film. The intensity of the feared and private moment of death forces extreme images of the human body and drives the realization that such extremeness can only lead to a viewer's response and to his/her awareness of his/her viewing position.[463] In *Resident Evil*, such intensive death scenes include those, for example, which do not lead to zombification. Instead, in these scenes it is the computer, Red Queen, who kills part of the team in order to protect herself. The team members who try to shut down the main computer are trapped in the hallway outside the Queen's chamber. The deadly laser beam cuts the team into pieces one at a time. The viewer is forced to watch the beam pierce the bodies and kill the victims instantly. When the

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[461] Grønstad 2003, 161.
[462] Abel 2007, x, xii–xiii, 10-11, 14, 25, 86, 132, 181, 189, 295.
[463] Dixon 1995, 33.

beams turn off, the viewer is positioned to look in the victims' staring yet unseeing eyes, only seconds before their bodies fall apart.

These intensified moments call attention to Freeland's comparison between porn and horror. Freeland argues that violent scenes of postclassical horror resemble pornographic sex acts, as such scenes highlight the visual and the bodily at the expense of the plot. The violence of horror also imitates sex scenes in porn in an intriguing sense: porn makes sex 'better' than in reality, and graphic horror shows more pain, blood, and screams than is realistic or even believable.[464] This argument applies especially to postclassical horror films where the advances of film technology have made the images of death more graphic, colorful, and physical. The developments in (surround) sound and widescreen technologies alone have rendered death more aggressive, with further potential afforded by digitalization.[465] Digital effects have enhanced postclassical death scenes, which can cross the limits of the rather realistic images of the classical films. By their very nature, digital effects are 'designed to be noticed', as Keane says, but quite as violent scenes can be seen to disturb the narration. Keane points out that digital effects, too, were first seen as disruptions. They were regarded as spectacles, or 'visual excess' without meaning and, as such, inferior to 'narrative' events. Although now considered part of the narration, the digital effects, such as digitalized death scenes, still highlight their nature as spectacles.[466]

The last of these hallway deaths, in particular, underlines the role of death as a digitalized spectacle, maximizing the effects of an explicit showing of the death. The viewer is able to see the deadly laser beams dissolved into a dense web of beams that surround the last person standing in the hallway. When the beams pass through him, one of the other team members manages to shut down the computer. For an intensified moment, the viewer stares at the perfect figure of the soldier, before it becomes clear that the shutdown came too late. Laser imprints become visible on the soldier's face when the body starts to disintegrate into tiny parts that fall on the ground. This slowed-down moment of death is what Russell calls a ballet, or 'danse macabre' of cinematic violent death. He argues that violent death scenes sometimes narrate and present death in slow

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[464] Freeland 2000, 190, 271.

[465] Keane 2007, 3–7. Moreover, Marie-Laure Ryan holds that since the invention of cinema as a mass medium in the early twentieth century, the digital revolution is the second most important change, not only because of different modes of production and reception, but also because it gives new possibilities and effects to the contents that can be produced. (Ryan 2004, 30.)

[466] Keane 2007, 56–58, 62–63.

motion, broken into individual scenes, and both the death and the affected body become deconstructed in a most concrete way.[467]

Picture series 15: Dance of death with lasers in *Resident Evil*.

At this moment of death, the film concretely returns the viewer's gaze, not only through the moment's intensity, but through the stare of the dead. At such moments, according to Dixon, narration attempts to force the viewer to become an integral and active part of the film, and to recognize his/her part in it.[468] At these moments, the viewer is reminded that the characters do not do the dirty work by looking for the viewer (as was the case especially in the classical films), but the viewer has his/her own gaze, which is the reason for the film's existence.

Although the recognition of the viewer's responsibility and 'response-ability' can appear quite abstract, the end of *Resident Evil* makes it visible. By now, Alice and Matt have successfully escaped the underground facilities, but the corporation representatives isolate them and run tests on Alice. The final scene starts with an extreme close-up of an eye that stares directly at the camera, startling the viewer and providing the effect of breaking the narrative space. The camera then slowly pulls back and shows Alice awake in a hospital isolation room. She frees herself from the wires attached to her body and

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[467] Russell 1995, 186–187. Danse Macabre or the dance of death refers to artistic productions (paintings, poems, etc.) that present figures of death (skeletons) in a slow dance. The tradition dates back to fourteenth-century Europe. (See, for example, Kastenbaum 2003a, 201–202.)
[468] Dixon 1995, 2–7.

sees a mirror on the wall. At this point, the camera becomes positioned where the mirror is, and when Alice slowly walks to the mirror, she appears to be walking straight to the camera's eye, staring at the viewer. The viewer's impression of being watched is stressed when Alice tries to look through the lens—wanting to know who is there—and demands to be let out. It is as if the film were speaking directly to the viewer who is gazing at Alice yet is unwilling to reveal his/her position. Obviously, Alice expects the viewer to take responsibility for what is done to her by begging to know why she has been violated for the viewers to be entertained.

This is precisely the point that emphasizes the importance of negotiation over death-related images. The power in the film's gaze back lies in its revealing of socio-cultural practices, attitudes, and values. It shows what the viewer's gazes are constructed on, in the same way as the monstrous position reveals that the monsters are created for a certain purpose. And as the undead monsters question why such images of death have been created, the other parts of the story and the discourse of violent death demand the viewers to think why they are depicted in such ways. When the living dead films make gazing back visible, these moments often deal with violent death and violated corpses, pushing the viewer to take a closer look at the death and negotiate over the socio-cultural and personal meanings and experiences of death and dying. And while the living dead films can provide fantasies of violent death for the viewer's desires to experience and understand something hidden and rejected from the culture, they also throw the need for violent deaths back at the viewer, unveiling the cultural incompetence of dealing with the topic. These films dare to reveal the viewer's problematic—both curious and terrified—relationship to violent death, if not in real life at least in what roles they play in entertainment and the media.

In this sense, death scenes have become more important in the cinematic addressing and experiencing of death. Since classical films, the viewer has been invited to witness more and more detailed images of violent death, as if this detailed splitting could deconstruct death and conceptualize different features of (violent) death. At the same time, the protective and distancing techniques have become a matter of choice, not a matter of cultural necessity. This further highlights the postclassical films' tendency to place responsibility for violent images on the viewer. While the violent death scenes have opted for more graphic violence and while the viewer's role as witnesses of mediated violence has grown, the viewer has been compelled to move closer to the malaise as well.

Besides responsibility, this is a question of affectivity. For example, McIlwain, who has studied changes in televised death representations, argues that the increasing images of death in the media are not only about social critique, but also about an invasion of emotions. Death and dying, and suffering and mourning connected to them, have become acceptable.[469] Similarly, the detailed death images of the postclassical films have made the viewer participate in death and dying, which has increased the function of experiences and embodiments. The narration of death has moved from mediating death to the viewer through alternative and diverse techniques to a position where the viewer is made to encounter embodied images of dying.

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[469] McIlwain 2005, 68. As an interesting comparison, McIlwain has studied how the frequency, depth and handling of death has changed on television since the 1960s. In the 1960s, death was prominent and destructive because of the cultural context, including the televised Vietnam War, social turmoil and assassinations of political figures. However, during the 1970s death was once again isolated and avoided on television, but since the 1980s death and dying—both in terms of numbers and explicitness—have steadily become more common on TV as well. (McIlwain 2005, 50–51, 55–57, 65.)

4 SYMBOLIZING DEATH

In the previous two chapters I have discussed how death is constructed for the viewer at the level of discourse, or, as Altman phrases it, at the level of immediate spectatorship. By this, he refers to those cinematic techniques that are used in engaging the viewer with the characters and events during the viewing process. However, in this last analysis chapter I will discuss yet another important dimension of death-related addressing in the living dead films, namely the symbolical meanings which the viewer can read from the films. In Altman's terms, analyzing the implied symbolic spectatorship may help to explain how the actual viewer interprets often generically conventionalized, recurring, and cumulative socio-cultural problems in the text.[470]

Whereas immediate spectatorship is closely related to the discourse of film narration, symbolic spectatorship is founded at the story level, remaining as an actual viewer's reading of the text, as his/her individual decoding process. This notion is extremely important for the horror films' participation in the public debate over death, because this process is dependent on the viewers' interpretation processes. However, symbolical readings of the living dead films are not random. Because they are founded on the discursive level, on generic uses of death events and undead characters, they can also generate socially shared or debated meanings. The living dead films thus create a discursive context for symbolic meanings: the narration can address certain meanings over others. That the viewer can decode the symbolic spectatorship or the dominating or privileged symbolical meanings of death and dying in the American living dead films will therefore be the focus in what follows.

Immediate spectatorship is accompanied by the character gaze and the camera gaze. These play an important role in the embedding of symbolical references, but in order to grasp a symbolic spectatorship's interactivity we also need the notion of an apparatus gaze, or the returned gaze of the cinema. The apparatus gaze, as discussed in the framing chapter of this study, crosses the limits between text and reality and between implied and actual viewer. It is therefore useful for the focus of this chapter and makes the gaze congruent with the symbolical meanings which are also situated at the juncture of these levels. The addressing of death-related symbolism invites the viewer to participate in the negotiation over these preferred meanings. It is through this process that the living

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[470] Altman 1987, 336–337.

dead films return the viewer's gaze and attempt to force him/her to realize his/her viewing position and participation in the cinematic process. Such reciprocal processing is part of the pleasure of viewing a film. As Schatz writes, the 'success of any genre depends upon at least two factors: the thematic appeal and significance of the conflicts it repeatedly addresses and its flexibility in adjusting to the audience's and filmmaker's changing attitudes toward these conflicts.'[471] In the living dead films, repeated conflicts are related to death and dying, either implicitly or explicitly.

The implicit and explicit meanings cannot be traced to any individual element, but as John S. Nelson argues, they are part of the networks of narrative elements and genre traditions. According to him, the implicit level can be called subtexts, which raise and encounter culturally and personally problematic issues. For Nelson, a vampire film's subtext deals with 'the charismatic and totalitarian politics of perfectionism', mummies encounter 'disorders of tradition and authority' and zombies 'examine mass societies'.[472] I will consider these suggested subtexts as more explicit levels of symbolism, whereas the intervention of such topics with death and dying creates an implicit meaning to the living dead films. I argue that the living dead films nurture at least two different levels of symbolism, negotiating with existing understandings of death and dying and adapting the understanding to other socio-cultural themes of the films. Reciprocally, the debated cultural conflicts also bring new dimensions to the understanding of death and dying.

Although symbolic meanings, or social functions, cannot be reduced to a single element, they are still addressed through the materiality of the films as is supposed by the socio-semiotic genre model. In the living dead films, the central material is monstrosity and the corporeal nature of the undead. The etymological roots of the 'monster' in Latin—*monere* is to warn and *monstrare* to point to—refer to the monster's symbolic tasks.[473] The living dead, as any monsters, not only create narrative threats, but they function as symbolic scapegoats. Monsters warn, teach, provide public shows, and redefine boundaries, as is listed by Ingebretsen, and through these social tasks 'monsters help a community reinterpret itself'.[474] Similarly, the undead are used to debate social

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[471] Schatz 1981, 31.
[472] Nelson 2005, 382–383.
[473] Picart & Greek 2007, 12.
[474] Ingebretsen 2001, 2, 4, 8, 33, 157, 175, 207. (Quote from page 4.) See also Punter & Byron 2004, 263; Leffler 2000, 137–142, 154–159; Freeland 2000, 276. Similarly, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that monsters communicate a culture's problems, desires, and difficult issues. From this basis, he recognizes seven theses of monstrosity: 1. The monster is culturally constructed and therefore also reflects the culture that created it. 2. The monster does not remain the same, but changes with the times and escapes the original borders. 3. The monster refuses categorization and conceptualization and tends to cross

boundaries and values, not only in relation to death, but through death as well. In this process, the bodies of the undead are important because corpses relate to both death and 'waste', as Barbara Creed argues. Death is thus used to mark issues that need to be abjected.[475] The very connection with death already creates conflicts in the debated socio-cultural issues, which is commented on by the threat of death and abjection. At the same time, different symbolic relations are created to death and offered for the viewer as well. Death is considered abject, impure, punishing, and destructing, but also seducing, liberating, and empowering, as my analysis will show.

In this chapter, I will discuss the different relationships with death through Davies' idea of three general responses to corpses: questions of impurity, fertility, and fear. Impurity pertains to the corpse belonging to a different realm than the living, which leads to creating rituals to purify the boundaries between life and death. By fertility, Davies refers to reactions where death reminds us of (and even celebrates) the importance of continuity of life. And, lastly, fear connotes the anxieties triggered by death's ability to threaten this continuity of life.[476] The three relationships can be compared to the living dead characters in that mummies are connected to questions of impurity (death rituals), vampires to fertility (sexuality) and zombies to fear (destruction of society). Similar symbolism can be seen in the final deaths of these monsters: mummies are killed through proper death rites, the vampires' weakness is their heart, and the zombies' final death relates to controlling or destructing their brains.

Although I will concentrate on death-related themes with each monster, by no means do I claim that this is the sum total of possible decoded meanings. In fact, horror films can activate multiple levels of symbolism at the same time.[477] While multiple sources for meanings exist, I will focus on the themes arising from the undead figures and the conflicts that their existence fosters. In the following, I will first discuss the allegorical potential of the horror genre before proceeding to analyze the addressing of the key death-related allegories of each monster, first mummies, then vampires, and

borders. 4. The monster represents otherness and difference, and the form of otherness depends on the socio-cultural background and functions of the monster. 5. The monster reveals the borders of possibility by testing the limits of monstrousness (and therefore normality) both materially and morally. 6. While the monster is made part of the forbidden practices, it also represents desire and fascination in its escaping of norms. 7. Monsters represent how we see the world, society and culture, and their main function is to challenge us to re-evaluate our understandings of these. (Cohen 1996, 4–20.)

[475] Creed 1995, 127–128, 132, 146. For the importance of bodies and corpses in symbolism, see also Shildrick 2002, 20; Davies 2005, 77; Davies 2002 (1997), 24, 33.

[476] Davies 2002 (1997), 38–41.

[477] See also Nelson 2005, 382–383.

lastly zombies. I will focus on the notion that although different undead characters emphasize specific and explicit allegories which change with socio-cultural developments, the general relationship with death has implicitly shifted its emphasis from the abjection of death towards a liberating death.

4.1. Symbolic and Allegoric References in Living Dead Films

Allegorical Potential of the Living Dead Films

'All films', in Leonard Quart's and Albert Auster's words, 'can be considered political' because they, whether explicitly or implicitly, communicate with the audiences and society, its values and problems.[478] Social commentary is typical for all films in one form or another, but what is specific for the living dead films is combining this commentary with themes of death and dying. The films' social commentary therefore proceeds at two levels: they both comment on death and use death to comment on social issues, such as American death rituals, sexuality and gender roles, and the destruction of American society. Thus, I will discuss the potential of social commentary in genre films' symbolism and will provide means to evaluate the use of this potential in the living dead films.

In genre films, genre conventions, generic and repetitive narrations often seem to overrule any direct social commentary. Instead of being openly political, the horror films' social, political, and cultural meanings tend to be constructed through allegories.[479] Carol Clover, for example, maintains that allegories help concretize the different themes and issues in a manner differently than in realistic traditions.[480] The importance of both allegories and the ability of horror films to deal with social issues is recognized by Adam Lowenstein, who writes that unlike representations, 'the allegorical moment attempts to shift cinema's relation to history from compensation to confrontation.'[481] Therefore, while films that deal with the politics of the United States can be directly read as representations of events, allegorical films, such as the living dead films, can choose indirect links to confront socio-cultural issues differently and more freely.

Indeed, genre conventions provide excuses to play with allegorical potential. As Jean-Loup Bourget suggests, these films are able to break Hollywood's preferred depictions of social structure and the existing social systems of American society.[482] The

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[478] Quart & Auster 2002, 4–5.
[479] Allegory refers to a rhetorical figure of multiple meanings. The term derives from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agureuo* (to speak publicly). (For example, Kasten 2005, 10.)
[480] Clover 1996 (1992), 231. Grønstad (2003, 19, 288), too, argues that violence should also be read as an allegory, whose aesthetic and narrative forms carry ethical meanings and questions.
[481] Lowenstein 2005, 8.
[482] Bourget 1995 (1973), 57.

horror genre, in particular, has potential to exhibit issues that are normally suppressed in Hollywood films. Because of the genre's marginal position and because of its themes of destruction and chaos, horror, according to Wood, has an opportunity to reveal relations to ideology. Horror films can therefore be radical, subversive, and conscious of social criticism. They can shatter the dominant conventions and dramatize encounters with otherness and socio-cultural conflicts through their monstrous figures.[483]

The idea of monsters playing an important role in creating a social criticism is recurrent in horror criticism. For example, Waller emphasizes that the monsters of the horror genre represent the collapse and recreation of the order in creating a feeling of a civilization both destroyed and preserved.[484] In other words, every monster recreates and renews the idea of humanity, society, and death. As counterimages of ideal humanity, they expose taboos and suppressed desires and bring out the conflict between the restrained and the primitive, between the civilized and the uncontrolled.[485]

The narration of death, as analyzed in the previous chapter, collides with this monster narration where the monster brings fantasized possibilities to the story and where the destruction of the monster seems to restore socio-cultural stability and renew understandings of normality. The middle part where the monster offers fantasies of otherness interrupts with the traditional views, providing multiple viewing possibilities. This is how films could be seen to supply collective rituals of fantasizing and to provide means to encountering complex issues triggered by death. However, closures which restore order can be identified as reinstating existing social and cultural structures of death. In doing so, such films build ideological meanings within their narrative structures, including a renewal of the culturally idealized modern death. The dual functioning of living dead narrations—fantasizing about other kinds of existence and strengthening the existing order—suggest two different relations for the viewer in his/her reaction to an apparatus gaze. The viewer can negotiate with otherness quite safely, because most often the balance is returned. However, I argue that this returning of balance does not discredit the negotiation during the film. Quite the opposite, both types return the viewer's gaze: the fantasizing and supporting gazes of the apparatus have their own specific socio-cultural functions.

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[483] Wood 1984 (1979), 171–172. See also Wood 1995 (1977), 62–63; Klinger 1995 (1984), 77.

[484] Waller 1986, 340–355. Quite similarly, Abel maintains that in Western societies, violence (not only monsters) is both responsible for the decline of the society and obligated to support the 'normative' society. (Abel 2007, 3.)

[485] Crane 1994, 73; Leffler 2001, 54 and Leffler 2000, 159; Kinisjärvi 1986, 57.

Evaluating Socio-Cultural Meanings in Genre Films

Since the 1970s genre theory, two main approaches, one ritualistic and the other ideological, have fashioned our understanding of the socio-cultural tasks of genre films.[486] Each approach has interesting views on the generic processes, but in the end, as separate theories they tend to simplify them. More often than not, however, genre films solicit either ideological or ritualistic interpretations, which is why the approaches have maintained their importance in film criticism. Instead of treating them as separate approaches, therefore, I argue that they should be understood as parallel functions which are triggered in different genre films in different ways. This option keeps the best qualities of both approaches and dismisses their overpowering preconceptions.

Traditionally, the ritualistic approach draws from the study of myths and notably from the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and his understanding of cultural contradictions, such as tension between culture and nature. The ritualistic approach also claims that genre films are capable of solving or relieving cultural contradictions and of providing a common understanding of society.[487] The continuing cultural (and personal) need to encounter and negotiate with death forces these films to return to the topic time after time, since every generation needs to create its own images of death and dying.

While ritualistic theories see this common understanding as a positive effect, ideological theories, looking at the issue through power relationships, do not. These theories build mostly on Louis Althusser's idea of how art and its aesthetic forms participate in the process where cultural hegemony is negotiated by inviting subjects to participate in some socially (ideologically) constructed positions. In the tradition of film criticism, ideological genre theories use this idea to support their institutional view of culture, claiming that generic narrations are created by institutions in a way as renews existing society.[488] Indeed, the ideological approach maintains that the living dead films negotiate with the social product of modern death of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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[486] For example, Altman 1999, 26–27; Altman 1995 (1984), 29.

[487] For instance, Schatz 1995 (1977), 96. While this oppositional structure is most familiar from the interpretation of Westerns (see Maltby 2003, 91; Cawelti 2004, 144–150), it could be gainfully applied also to the living dead films, where the main opposition between culture and nature can be seen as reflected in further oppositions between the living and the undead, life and death, humanity and animality, normality and monstrousness, etc.

[488] For example, Klinger 1995 (1984), 75–76.

As these backgrounds show, ideological and ritualistic approaches assume different roles for the genre, which is further reflected in their understandings of audience and generic repetition. First, the ideological approach constructs a top–down model where the meanings and interpretations manipulate audiences and where the interpretive possibilities are restricted by the genre. For its part, the ritualistic approach assumes a bottom–up model where the films meet the audiences' needs, and genre rather mediates cultural necessities.[489] Second, for ritualistic approaches, generic repetition, such as dealing with death in the living dead films, reveals mythical contradictions which can never be totally solved but must be continuously repeated. Ideological theories, however, argue that repetition rather hides than reveals the ideological cultural practices by normalizing them.[490]

Because of their different points of view, these theories appear to contrast each other. Ritualistic theorists argue that ideological theories bypass the importance of audience and positive effects of symbolism, whereas ideological viewpoints criticize the ritualistic analysis for excluding society, maintaining traditional values, and for reducing films to unconscious anxieties and grand narratives.[491] Such counterarguments are based on deeper problems facing both approaches. I agree with Neale, Moine and Grant who claim that both approaches end up undermining the heterogeneity of the audience, films, and cultural dilemmas. The weighty preconceptions of the impossible idea of a 'pure genre' produce foregone conclusions. In the analysis process, they fail to understand differentiation, change, and controversies within the same genre and how both the myth and ideologies are simultaneously built into the complex generic processes.[492]

If the two approaches could be seen as parallel functions (instead of separate approaches), their ways of reading the cinematic texts could be employed to complement rather than to contrast. This would assign preconceptions a smaller role and enable differentiation during the analysis process. Moine and Altman also hold that instead of trying to force the films in either ideological or ritual categories, these approaches should be viewed as functions which can appear in any film. In such a way, Hollywood can serve both mythical and ideological aims at the same time: ritual functions unify values

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[489] See also Altman 1999, 27, 172; Altman 1995 (1984), 29; Moine 2008 (2002), 71–72, 103; Neale 2000, 221.

[490] In fact, the newest versions of the ritualistic theories have come closer to the ideological theories in adopting the wider understanding of 'myth' provided by Roland Barthes. In this understanding, myth deals with cultural issues in ways that purify and naturalize them as part of the society. (See Schatz 1981, 12–22, 31, 261–265; Schatz 1995 (1977), 93–99; Grant 2007, 32–33, 115, 126–127.)

[491] See, for example, Wright 1995 (1974), 41–42; Grønstad 2003, 62, 70.

[492] Neale 2000, 222–228; Neale 1995 (1990), 178–179; Moine 2008 (2002), 84–85; Grant 1995, 120.

and ideological functions model society.[493] Genres and genre films would not be obligated to replay the same model, but existing films could be approached on their own terms, whether mythical or ideological. In the living dead films, ritualistic tendencies relate to a cultural need to encounter death, while ideological tendencies pertain to existing practices of death and dying. Similar processes take place with those socio-cultural themes that are connected to death and dying in these films.

Ritualistic and ideological tendencies suggest that even when cinematic death themes expose the importance of the issue, they can end up normalizing death-related practices. This idea of renewal is somewhat problematic, because genre films are not static but differentiated. Allegorical potential is not only about renewing, but also about fantasizing, challenging, and commenting. In this sense, Wood's theory of horror films can be used to bring this necessary dimension to the discussion. Rather similarly, in line with a division to ritualistic and ideological predispositions, Wood recognizes repression and oppression tendencies in horror films. He distinguishes between the two concepts by connecting repression to issues that are inaccessible to the conscious mind (such as norms which guide sexuality and brand gayness, bisexuality, and the sexuality of women and children as repressed), whereas a person can become conscious of oppression (for example, on the basis of ideology, class, gender, race, or ethnicity).[494] In this way, horror films' ritual dimensions deal with repression, whereas the ideological tendencies connote oppression. The dimensions are parallel, although one can dominate the other in different films.

What is important in Wood's terminology is the recognition that film narration can make the socio-cultural meanings visible and thus challenge them. Two other terms further highlight the viewer's possibility openly to negotiate with the encoded meanings of film. Wood argues that horror films can deal with the repetitive patterns of destruction and recreation either in a reactive or progressive way. Reactive horror films merely describe the social issues, and in the end a closure often restores the repression or oppression, myths or ideologies. In contrast, progressive films present radical

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[493] Moine 2008 (2002), 85, 95; Altman 1999, 27–28; Altman 1995 (1984), 36.

[494] Wood 1984 (1979), 165–166. Wood himself often highlights the importance of an ideological approach. To him, the others in the horror genre were often made to represent women, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups, alternative ideologies or political systems, children and deviations from sexual norms. Similarly, the themes of horror films become ideological, dealing with capitalism, wealth and success, work ethics, progress and technology, nature as agrarianism and wilderness, the importance of marriage and family, the ideal gender roles, and, most of all, America as a land where everyone has opportunities and everybody can be happy. (Wood 1995 (1977), 60–61; Wood 1984 (1979) 168–172.)

possibilities by displaying the disintegration of the society.[495] Indeed, Wood's idea articulates how myths and ideologies can overlap and be combined. In this sense, ideological and ritualistic aspects can be seen as the obverse and the reverse of each other. Similarly, the living dead films' relationship to modern death can be seen through the concepts of 'reactive' and 'progressive': reactive films often return to ideas of alienation of death, while progressive films willingly explore other definitions of death.

Interestingly, Wood's conceptualization seems to carry the ideas of changing horror films. His understanding of the reactive and the progressive is based on a certain appreciation of monsters and closures, which, as we have seen, have changed from classical to postclassical films. To begin with, films with closures would count as reactionary. Although they articulate social problems, they end up resuppressing them. Second, Matt Becker, for instance, sees Wood's model dividing films into reactionary and progressive cinema by their monsters. The unsympathetic monsters highlight the position of the victims and the necessity of the existing society, creating a reactionary allegory. For their part, sympathetic monsters indicate progressiveness because they make it possible to engage with the emergence of repressed/oppressed issues.[496] For example, the classical *Dracula, White Zombie* and *The Mummy*, with straightforward closures and monsters, would automatically count as reactionary films, whereas post-*Night of the Living Dead* films and those with an apocalyptic force and sympathetic monsters would be read as progressive.

Barbara Klinger criticizes Wood's rather mechanistic model for being too bound to its own socio-cultural context. After all, Wood's conceptualization rises from 1970s horror films (including *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, and *Night of the Living Dead*) which reject the genre's conventional solutions and purposely differentiate themselves from the classical films.[497] Later, in the postclassical era, the use of monsters and endings multiplied once again, as is demonstrated by the postclassical *The Mummy*. The idea of development should therefore not be as straightforward. Although the changing positions of monsters and the changing use of closures certainly mediate social, political, and cultural allegories differently, progressiveness still needs to be analyzed film by film, not according to a grand theory that excludes variation.

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[495] Wood 1984 (1979), 171–172, 191–193.
[496] Becker 2006, 48.
[497] Klinger (1995 (1984), 79.

Apocalyptic films, in particular, call attention to the limitations of some of Wood's premises. To Wood, all apocalyptic films contain progressive potential, as their negation-filled starting point necessarily reveals the problems of a society.[498] For example, *Resident Evil* is apocalyptic in a similar way as *Night of the Living Dead*, but it concentrates more on the physical affects of graphic scenes than on social allegories. Apocalyptic solutions can therefore be used for other reasons than just political commentary. Dana B. Polan argues, in fact, that apocalypse is a certain kind of proneness in commentary rather than a progressive form in itself. Although the horror films' apocalypse always challenges the social order, from the point of view of progressiveness it is more important to follow where the apocalyptic solutions lead. According to Polan, if an apocalyptic end does not offer any new options for society, it rather winds up violent, nihilistic, and cynical instead of progressive. True progressiveness should be sought in the ways in which horror films serve ideological criticism, not in the forms themselves.[499]

Therefore, while Wood's idea of the reactive and progressive uses of repressive and oppressive socio-cultural meanings is both enchanting and functional, one has to be careful automatically not to reproduce some of its presumptions in the analysis. Instead of blindly marking films with closures or unsympathetic monsters as addressing reactive solutions, and labeling films with open endings and sympathetic characters as addressing progressive meanings, these concepts should be used in such a way as pays more attention to how the films' understanding of society is built and addressed. Do the films maintain the social structure; how do they pay attention to the problems in that structure; and do they provide solutions or alternatives to the problems they introduce? Similarly, although the classical films abject and marginalize death, they still produce encounters with death for the viewer, and the postclassical films can similarly choose to highlight the importance of alienating death rather than the progressive and liberal uses of excessive death.

While I am aware of the limitations of the conceptualizations that Wood made in his influential essay in 1979, I argue that his starting point is still functional for the interpretation of horror film symbolism. When his approach that includes the challenging

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[498] Wood 1984 (1979), 192.
[499] Polan 1984, 205–210. Furthermore, the repeated empty forms and solutions can even make the political implications of the films worse. For example, Lowenstein and Redfield hold that even if films carry power for dealing with historical or cultural traumas, the communicativeness of film can also turn against this purpose. The communicative nature can end up restricting people from working through the trauma when they are constantly reminded of it. (Lowenstein 2005, 5–9; Redfield 2007, 55–56, 76.)

and exposing of socio-cultural practices is combined to ritual and ideological tendencies, the living dead films can be seen to discuss death and death-related issues both implicitly and explicitly, challenging and renewing the understandings and cultural rituals. They thus provide multiple and changing positions and relationships to death in the viewing process. In the following, I will discuss the social commentary through allegories and their either reactionary (ritualizing and/or ideological) or progressive (confrontation) uses in the addressing of the viewer.

My analysis is based on types of monster. I will illustrate how different living dead characters invite different dominating themes (death rituals or impurity of corpses; sexuality or fertility of death; and power relations or fear of death's destructive power). Different monsters provide varied insights into linking death and social criticism, quite as the negotiation over death can provide insights into American culture and society and how the negotiations over death have changed from classical to postclassical films.

4.2. Rituals of Death: Ancient Mummies in Modern World

Mummies as Allegories for Modern Need to Control Death

All living dead films deal with society's and individuals' problematic relationship to death, but at the discursive and story levels the mummy films tend further to highlight for the viewer the anxiety triggered by dead bodies. Every society needs to cope with its corpses and the emergencies that death necessarily produces, as several critics have emphasized. Rituals are therefore created to regulate these rites of passage in socially accepted forms, giving mourning a time and a place and conventionalizing the practices which are used to dispose of decaying bodies. Death rites are the society's ways of controlling death and assuring the continuity of society.[500] Next, I will analyze how the cinematic mummies invite the viewer to challenge Western death rites and the modern Western desire to control death through science and knowledge at junctures when the ideals of modern death have flourished and at times of the ideal's crisis.

Western death rituals are tested by the deviant traditions of ancient Egyptian mummies, which model the mummies of Hollywood. Ancient mummies belong to a rich death system which itself is part of a complex religious structure with particular ideas of death and afterlife. In ancient Egypt, the preservation of the body was an important element of maintaining, not the body itself, but the human soul and spirit. The body created a link between the different spiritual parts of a person and was preserved only in order to ensure afterlife. Furthermore, mummification did not seek to prevent the corpse from decaying, but rather aimed to create a resemblance of the deceased, because changes to the body's appearance would have jeopardized possibilities for afterlife. The body was therefore an integral part of the spiritual entity.[501]

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[500] Davies 2002 (1997), 1, 6–7; Lyden 2003, 80; Anttonen 1999, 15–16, 21; Bauman 1992, 24; Demitshev 1999 (1997), 22–23.

[501] See, for example, Ikram 2003, ix, 23–31, 187–189, 199–200; Peck 1998, 17, 25, 36; Barber 1988, 167–168. According to Egyptian beliefs, a person was made up of different and interconnected parts: physical body, name, shadow, *ka* (life-force or double), *ba* (personality or soul), and *akh* (the spirit that emerges after death). They all needed to be preserved to guarantee an afterlife, a more permanent life in a kind of mirror image of Egypt. (Ikram 23–31; Barber 1988, 167.) Also, mummification and beliefs related to it went through several phases in ancient Egypt. Mummification was discovered probably accidentally in a certain climate, becoming connected to afterlife and the soul's immortality. Mummification practices were developed in the course of the different Kingdoms (Old Kingdom 2600–2066 BC, Middle Kingdom 2066–1549 BC, New Kingdom 1549–1064 BC). During the New Kingdom, this Egyptian art had already become famous. In the era of decline (from 1000 BC onwards), which was marked by political fragmentation, civil unrest, and foreign influences, the death beliefs and

However, when they were brought to Anglo-American fiction during the nineteenth century in the wake of increasing archeological and scientific interest[502], mummies were also adopted into Western death systems. Davies argues that although dead bodies, including Egyptian mummies, carry references of afterlife, corpses, in fact, symbolize this life even more than the next.[503] Similarly, as part of Western fiction, mummies stopped reflecting ancient practices and instead started to project Western views on death, corpses, and ancient Egypt.

Hollywood filmmakers saw Egyptian conceptions of death as fascinating material to work with. Dismissing mummies as spiritual objects, they would rather highlight the mummies' corporeal features, that is, bodies which resist natural rotting and decay. In making the mummies walk, the filmmakers also ignored that the Egyptians had not expected the mummies to return to live in this world, but in the next. As Jasmin Day argues, the spiritual dead were transformed into mythological demons of ancient Egypt, which made mummification—from an American perspective—a sign of primitivism and paganism.[504]

Furthermore, the mummies' ancient corporeality challenges the practices of how death and dead people are managed in the United States, and it is this otherness that makes the mummies not only fascinating, but horrible as well. The preserved corpses break American understandings of death and dying at least on three levels[505]: mummification is justified by a foreign cultural and religious background; mummies impose on society a continuing presence of death; and the rituals of body preservation are strange.

First, mummies are made threatening by the cultural and religious distance. In Hollywood, the mummies became detached from their own religious subtext. In all religions, questions of death and afterlife are important part of the doctrine—death is often seen as a transition where the human ends and the divine starts. In the mummy films, two different religious and death systems collide. In the United States, questions of death and afterlife are dominated by Christianity, which centers on questions of resurrection, where death and the disappearance of the body do not influence salvation of

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mummification also declined, especially after Christian influences. Mummification came to an end in the fifth century AD. (Day 2006, 14–17; Ikram 2003, 3–15, 47, 52, 207–222; Peck 1998, 17–29, 36.)

[502] For the mummies' past, see Day 2006, 2–4, 31, 43, 46–47, 62.

[503] Davies 2005, 166–167.

[504] Day 2006, 6, 18, 129.

[505] I wish to emphasize that when I speak about American death-related practices at a general level, I refer to the mythical understandings of death systems in Hollywood cinema, not to the multiple practices, beliefs and attitudes that vary regionally, ethnically and in other ways.

soul.[506] Therefore, when in horror films the mummies' physicality became linked to their resurrection in this life, these 'pagan' representatives of different religion challenged the prevailing Western values and understanding of death where the preservation of the body is not important as such.

The ritual otherness of the mummies' feared resurrection potential is evident in plenty of onscreen time for ancient funerary and burial rituals in the mummy films. The mummies' past is often described in prolonged scenes of ancient death, embalming, funeral rituals, burying, and ideas of defying death. Both the classical *The Mummy* (1932) and the postclassical *The Mummy* (1999) include two different but comparable scenes with ancient death rituals—one from the past and another attempted in the modern world. The past ritual recounts the mummy's story and reason for being buried alive (a tainted love for the pharaoh's lover and an attempt to use impure death rites). The modern ritual takes place after the mummy's resurrection when he tries to resurrect his lost lover. By visual cuing, the viewer is pushed to compare the two scenes in both films: the past rituals are mystified, making the mummy a victim of fate, while the modern ceremonies appear threatening and offending. The rituals could, in fact, be accepted as part of a mystical past and primeval religion, but they become unacceptable in the modern (civilized) world, where they threaten the prevailing Western and Christian death.

The classical *The Mummy* obeys the rules of 1930s Hollywood, which based its stories on character motivation. The film thus highlights the comparison between the ancient and the modern by framing death rituals through one character, Helen, who yearns for life in ancient Egypt. When the mummy recognizes his lover Anck-es-en-Amon in her, Helen's desire nearly comes true. The mummy reveals his past to Helen, and the ancient rituals are screened to the viewer as well with the mummy's voice-over narration. At first, Helen seems intrigued by the mystical rituals, but by the final reel, she realizes that the rituals demand corporeal violence. At this moment, she comes to understand the improperness of the rituals in modern life. Helen appreciates that they belong to the past, which leads her to choose life today over ancient death.

In the postclassical *The Mummy*, and in an era of digital spectacles, this comparison between the past and the present is stressed through visual parallelism. The film opens with the ancient rituals and closes with the modern rites.

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[506] Segal 2004, 3–5, 17; Anttonen 1999, 21; Davies 2002 (1997), 125–127.

Picture series 16. The resurrection of an ancient princess in postclassical *The Mummy*, first in the ancient past and then in modern Egypt.
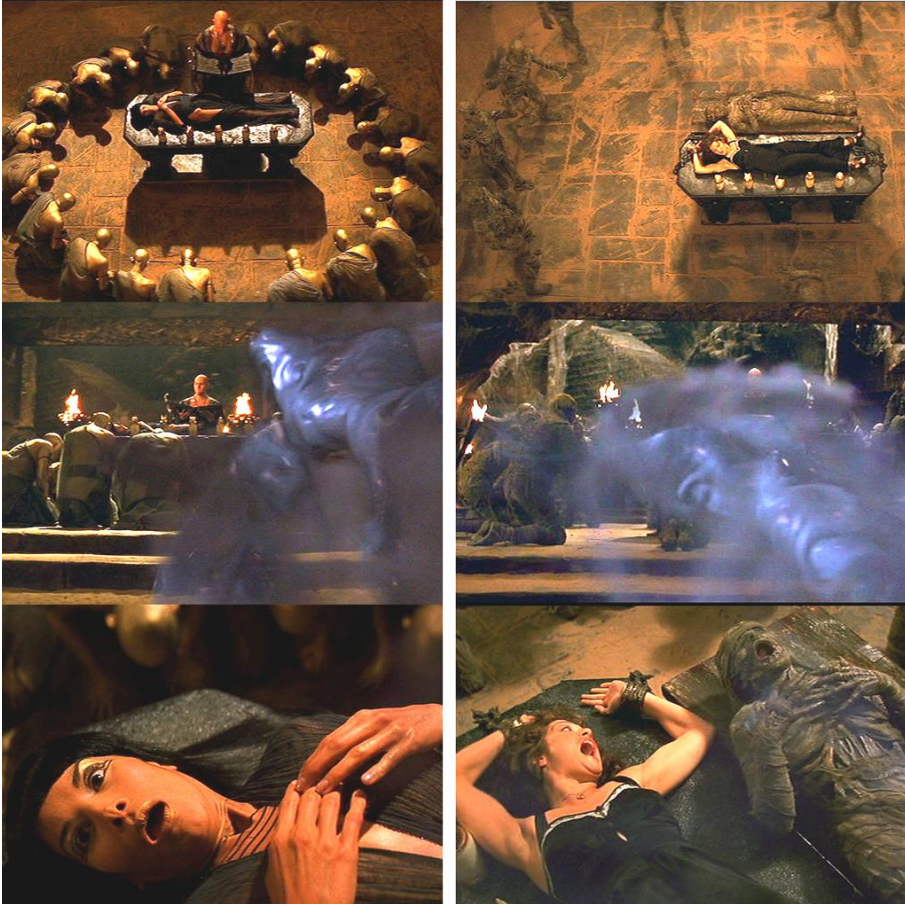
Both scenes of the mummy attempting to raise his lover from the dead are parallel: they happen in the same setting with the assistance of the same priests and in the same sequence. There are also important differences. The ancient version is mystified and even glorified, whereas the setting of the modern version (ancient tomb) is decaying, and mummified priests have become grotesque skeletons. The opening ritual of the film has turned into a rotting version of itself, illustrating how times have changed. The modern world has no place for these ancient rituals.

The distinct death rituals of the mummy films emphasize the significance of controlled and regulated relationships with dead bodies. Modern Western societies expect death to be rejected, which the very existence of mummies conflicts with and which links them with primitivism. Norbert Elias, for example, connects the rejection of death with a civilization process which has slowly repressed all signs of animality,

including death, from culture and society. Death has therefore been marginalized from the center of civilization and alienated from the public.[507] Second, the preserved corpses of the mummies become constant and visible reminders of death. Day maintains that the mummified Egyptian body seems to defy normal postmortem processes. From the Western perspective, these bodies appear as if still in the process of dying.[508]

This brings us to a third, and important, factor of mummies' otherness. Their preservation is a threat to the familiar Western rites that control death. These films bypass the fact that mummification can be compared to Western ways of controlling death. Barber argues that mummification sought to ensure that the deceased could safely enter the realm of death. Still, the practice seems deviant, because the North American practice is to dispose of the bodies either by burial or cremation.[509] The denial of these 'normal' (Western) death rites, as Davies emphasizes, makes the foreign corpses ritually impure, which poses a potential danger to society and its boundaries and to prevailing definitions of death.[510]

The insufficient primitive rituals which have not sanctified the bodies of mummies enough, leave them in a primitive, unclean, and uncontrolled state. Through a Western gaze, the mummies can be compared to state of the unburied dead in the three-phased system of transition rites. In addition to this liminal state, Demitshev recognizes phases where a person is a mortal before the actual death, and where he/she is buried dead.[511] Whereas the positions of mortal and buried are secured positions, the unburied dead are not. From the Western perspective, the in-betweennes needs to be solved, and the mummies' strange status understood and corrected.

To sum up, the mummy films narrate the Western need to re-control pagan death and primitive otherness. Horror cinema indeed brings mummies back to life to study and correct their liminal state. The narration of death has its own importance here: the revival of the mummy makes its transformative or liminal state visible and open to social study, acceptance and after that a social death. Besides destroying the dead body, the final death is also about exploring the superiority of modern and Western death and extending its power over ancient corpses. The mummy films expose, rebury and reject the

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[507] Elias 1993 (1982), 13, 17–18.
[508] Day 2006, 106.
[509] Barber 1988, 166–168.
[510] Davies 2002 (1997), 24, 37–39. For the functions of transition rites and rituals, see also Elias 1993 (1982), 3–6; Anttonen 1999, 15–16, 21; Bauman 1992, 24; Demitshev 1999 (1997), 22–23.
[511] Demitshev 1999 (1997), 22–23.

mummies and death by Western standards.[512] Such narrations spotlight and negotiate Western attempts to control death in particular and otherness in general. Whereas the main task is the same in all Hollywood mummy films, the classical and postclassical films seem to study aspects of dead bodies and death rites rather differently.

Classical Mummy and Modern Death

The opening scene of *The Mummy* of the classical era introduces for the film viewer the mummy's rebirth as a monster both in the narration of death and in the mummy tradition and legends. The setting at the archaeological excavation introduces the mummy as an evil undead and cursed being of whom the writing on the casket buried with him warns: 'Death, eternal punishment, for anyone who opens this casket in the name of Amon-Ra, the king of gods.' Such curses did exist in the Egyptian tombs, but according to Salima Ikram they were there to protect the tomb and to stop grave robbers and other (by religious standards) impure people from entering the tomb.[513] However, Hollywood found a new use for the curses, which were now to bring misfortune, death, or other punishments on those who disturbed the mummy and made it rise from the dead. Egyptian tradition conceived of the punishments as spiritual[514], but mummy films made the sanctions corporeal and deadly.

Classical films in fact linked the mummy to the tradition of the living dead monsters. According to Day, mummies had not been similarly abjected in older mummy novels and press articles. They were instead either objectified—used in show business, or for medical or industrial purposes, etc.—or subjectified, made into characters for fiction. In the earlier fiction, in particular, mummies were rather victims, deployed as part of the romances where the mortal (men) fell in love with beautiful (female) mummies, or they were narrated through justified revenge when their peace had been disturbed. In contrast, Day continues, the classical films abjected mummies, turning them into threatening monsters by drawing attention to their violent actions and perverse relationships to decay and death.[515]

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[512] Day reports that some actual mummies were reburied in accordance with Christian rituals in the assumption that Christian death rites could be extended to pagan remains. (Day 2006, 35.)
[513] Ikram 2003, 47–48, 195–196.
[514] Cockburn 1998, 9; Ikram 2003, 200.
[515] Day 2006, 23–43, 82–93, 170–173.

Day further argues that the change in tradition can be explained with changing political balance. The pre-classical mummy novels were an expression of guilt over Western colonialism, making the mummies' revenge just because they were repelling against an external sovereign. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century Egypt was slowly gaining independence from Britain, and started to demand more self-government, also in relation to archeological and cultural finds. This self-governance and occasional hostility against the former colonial masters threatened the Western position and turned the situation upside down. Symbolically, the mummies now turned into a threat.[516] The cultural context influenced the mummy films as well, and the mummy's revenge is not random, but threatens the autonomy of Western characters in particular and seeks to exert its influence over what used to be a Western sphere. The same parallelism operates in the area of death. The mummies' preserved corporeality threatens the Western understanding of modern death and provides a competing (and therefore a possibly colonizing) death system.

The mummies' death needs to be given a Western explanation, which leads us to the familiar undead monster of the folklore and literary traditions. In *The Mummy*, Imhotep (alias Aradath Bey) not only returns to life, but also becomes an undead. The connections to Western undead traditions are visible from the beginning. When studying the mummy before its awakening, the archaeologists make interesting discoveries: the mummy has been buried alive because he has committed a sin punishable with death and denial of afterlife. Doctor Muller states, for example, that 'Imhotep was sentenced to death not only in this world, but in the next'.

These notions compare with Western folklore where, according to Paul Barber, the most common reasons for people to come back from the dead include predispositions (different, unpopular people or sinners), predestinations (people born in unfavorable conditions), events (things that they do or things that happen to them) and non-events (things that are left undone, for example, during funerary or burial practices).[517] Three of the four categories also apply to the mummy. Imhotep is a sinner, having sinned in rebelling against the society's practices and boundaries. However, and more importantly, the people who punish the mummy are responsible for his resurrection because they condemn Imhotep to a liminal state and deny him the normal burial practices. Instead of embalming the corpse, they embalm the living body and open the possibility for the

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[516] Day 2006, 21, 8–9, 50, 81.
[517] Barber 1988, 29–30, 37–38.

whole body to return back to life, not only the spirit, as would be the case if he had been properly mummified.

In this way, the Western gaze burdened the mummies (and Egyptian death) with evil, making them antagonists and representatives of occultism, past times, and superstition. Indeed, the joining of the other undead characters and their impure relationship to death abjects the mummy. Besides making the mummy a liminal, undead character, Day also recognizes three other methods of abjecting in the classical mummy films. First, mummification was branded as a pagan and barbaric ceremony, not least when the mummies of the horror films were buried alive. Second, the romance theme was contaminated and turned into a perversion, as a beautiful woman should not fall for a corpse. And finally, the mummy's mind was abjected. The classical sequels were especially notorious for making the mummies animal-like and unable to express themselves, or even to speak. Because of such abjections, the mummy started to express himself and his love through violence, becoming a loathsome figure.[518]

While the mummies were abjected, so were the ancient death rituals represented by them. The rituals became contrasted with the modern Western world which idealizes modern and scientific death. In the process, these films (like many archaeological films) became guilty of an Orientalism where Western heroes and practices gained a necessary contrast from the exotic otherness of Egypt. This remodeled ancient Egypt as a demonic country that refused to let go of its strange and pagan magic.[519] The tendency for Orientalism is repeated even at the level of colonial images of the film. Without questioning, the film images center on the Western characters; local people are almost absent. When locals are shown, they are often in subordinate positions, workers doing the actual digging in the desert while Western archeologists watch over and claim the credit; servants managing the households of Western people, etc. The main tension in *The Mummy* is therefore created between Western and Egyptian practices, where the mummy defies Western cultural and political colonialism.

The scientific systems of the West have sought to explain death. This was increasingly common in the first half of the twentieth century, which led to a growing modernization of death in Western societies. When the classical films were made, the modernization and medicalization of death were still being produced, and death was

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[518] Day 2006, 82–88.
[519] See, for example, McGeough 2006, 182; Day 2006, 39, 60.

moving to hospitals, away from homes.[520] The modernization, scientification, and professional management of death were idealized in the cinema, too. The opening scene of *The Mummy* already introduces Western scientists, archaeologist Sir Joseph Whemple, his assistant, and Doctor Muller, professor of occult sciences. Sir Joseph Whemple lectures on the importance of science and scientific methods: 'Our job is to increase the sum of human knowledge of the past, not to satisfy our own curiosity.' The scientific approach is further stressed when the professor of occult sciences tries to convince the archaeologists to respect the ancient curses and beliefs: 'The gods of Egypt still live in these hills, in their ruined temples. The ancient spells are weaker, but some of them are still potent.' But the archaeologist sticks to his scientific intentions and claims: 'In the interest of science, even if I believed in the curse, I'd go on with my work for the museum'.

This Western attempt to deal with death-related topics scientifically is contrasted with the idea of traditional death which the mummy and ancient Egypt are made to represent. Indeed, Western practices create tensions at a time when traditional death is losing the last remnants of its influence. Traditional death, according to Walter, was quick and frequent, an open part of a community's life, and managed by priests and religious rituals.[521] The mummy's representative role of traditional death is highlighted in his character: he was a priest in his own time and controlled the death rituals. With its religious practices, the mummy juxtaposes the traditional death with the controlled death of the grand modern world.

Helen, whom Imhotep chooses for the reincarnation of his ancient princess, becomes a symbol for the battle over death-related practices. Helen is half-British, half-Egyptian, and at times she seems to admire ancient Egypt over modern Cairo, which gives her figure a hybrid character. While the mummy finds himself between life and death, Helen is caught between Western and Egyptian cultures as well as between modern and ancient times. Her beliefs and her body therefore become a battlefield for different worlds and understandings of death. This is underlined by a love triangle: she is caught between her desires for the Western Frank and the Egyptian Ardath (Imhotep), who are both in love with her. Part of her longs for an early grave and eternal love, whereas the other half wants a modern life freed from death. For example, she begs Frank, 'Don't let me go again. I'll try to get away, but you mustn't let me. No matter

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[520] For example, Goldberg 1998, 33–34, 51; Corr & Corr 2003, 38; Davies 2002 (1997), 62.
[521] For traditional death, see Walter 1994, 47.

what I do or what I say. There's death there for me. And life for something else inside me that isn't me. But it's alive too, and fighting for life. Save me from it, Frank. Save me.' This, indeed, can be seen as a symbolical reference to the suppressed death in modern times. Death desires to become noted, but instead it is constantly fought back.

Imhotep, and his old-fashioned relationship with death, embodies the traditional death seeking to fight its ground. He threatens to consume Helen and represents the undead enemy that will consume 'our territory, our culture, our identity', as Cole articulates it.[522] Indeed, the mummy proclaims: 'No man ever suffered as I did for you. The rest you may not know. Not until you are about to pass through the great night of terror and triumph, until you are ready to face moments of horror for an eternity of love, until I send back your spirit, that has wandered through so many forms and so many ages.'

In this triangle, Frank is seen as a (modern) savior and Imhotep as a (traditional) threat. This ideological positioning invites the viewer to consider the Western ideals and practices as superior. However, the narration also provides interesting fractures to this image. Imhotep is not defeated by Western methods, but meets his end from a bolt of lightning once Helen begs the ancient god to intervene. In this ending, Helen, who has become an ancient princess, refuses to undergo the transformation rites suggested by Imhotep. She begs, 'No, I'm alive! I'm young. I won't die. I loved you once, but now you belong with the dead. I am Anck-es-en-Amon, but I... I'm somebody else too. I want to live, even in a strange new world.'

But even if the mummy is destroyed by the laws of his own religion to which he is bound, the knowledge by the Western scientists has been offered as the preferred meaning throughout the film when addressing the story for the viewer. Doctor Muller in particular becomes a professional of death. As a professor of the occult, he is familiar with both modern Christianity and ancient paganism, providing the necessary information to understanding and controlling the past and its death rituals. He explains the existence of the mummy to the characters and the viewer alike, using his knowledge of the past to protect others. From this perspective, the mummy remains a religious relic from the past, and from the scientific perspective, the ancient Egyptian death and funeral

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[522] Cole 2006, 192. Cole's comment concerns mostly vampires, but applies to mummies as well. According to Day, the reason why the classical films abjected mummies can be found in the fear of being consumed. She argues that the earlier mummy tradition challenged the Western imperial domination of Egypt and its ancient treasures, either in the form of seduction or rape. However, when the West's colonial domination of Egypt ended the roles turned around and mummies started to threaten to possess a Western young woman. (Day 2006, 8–9, 19, 38–40, 43–47, 52–53, 63–66, 170–173.)

practices are studied and stripped of their powers by knowledge. The West uses its own death system to control otherness and make it understandable. In fact, the film does not end with an ancient killing scene, but in a scene where Muller advices Frank to call back Helen's soul, which has now been captivated in ancient Egypt. At the final moment, then, it is the Western call and knowledge that prove victorious over the ancient world and foreign beliefs.

In summary, this classical film made the mummy into a monster by abjecting it. Furthermore, the film replayed the modern alienation of death by following scientific procedures and using the knowledge thus gained against pagan religion. The superiority which is used to control and locate traditional death, is visible also in the chosen mise-en-scène. Most of the events take place at the excavation and museum run by Westerners and in the homes of Western authorities. Even the controlled locations participate in limiting the influence of traditional death and in reframing it as a relic which can be studied but which does not influence the world outside museum institutions. In the end, Western practices emerged as superior: the modern, 'civilized', and medicalized death overcomes the traditional, religious, and pagan death. In this sense, the classical mummy film appears to idealize modern death. When compared to the task of this study—the relationship with modern death—the film could appear as reactive. However, it must be remembered that the film was made at a time when many deaths still took place at homes and under traditional authority. From the viewpoint of emerging modern death, then, the film can be read as progressive.

Postclassical Mummy and Commercialized Individualization of Death

The postclassical version of *The Mummy* brings the lost world of ancient Egypt alive on the screen, not in the controlled museums of the West, but on 'genuine' and local locations. The prologue narrates the story of love and death of Imhotep, the pharaohs' high priest, and Anck-su-Namun, his lover. Anck-su-Namun was also the pharaoh's lover and denied from others. The secret lovers defy the orders and murder the pharaoh. When interrupted, Anck-su-Namun encourages Imhotep to escape, because this priest, the keeper of the dead, is the only one who can resurrect her. Before his escape, Imhotep swears 'you shall live again.'

The dramatic love story continues when Imhotep and his priests steal the girl's corpse and take her to Hamunaptra, the City of the Dead, an ancient burial site for the

sons of the pharaohs. The *Book of the Dead*[523] and ancient rituals are used to recover Anck-su-Namun's soul from the dark underworld it has been sent to. Visually impressing graphics paint her soul's return from the dead, but the pharaoh's bodyguards stop Imhotep from finishing the ritual. As a punishment, Imhotep's priests are mummified alive, and Imhotep is cursed to the fate of the undead for all eternity. The evil place stays undisturbed for 3,000 years, protected by the Magi, descendants of the pharaoh's sacred bodyguards.

This prologue, which brings life to the ancient rituals in much more color and imagination than the classical film, appears to highlight the threat of the ancient rituals even more. However, rather than abjecting death, such an approach seems to concentrate on the embracing of death. The marketing of the film promises to make the new version bigger, better, and more of a spectacle, evident in the ways in which the mummy now threatens the whole world, instead of a few meddling individuals, Simpson argues.[524]

And true enough, in this film the mummy's curse does not concern only the people responsible for his awakening. The punishment has repercussions for the rest of the world. The curse states that 'There is one, undead, who, if brought back to life, is bound by sacred law to consummate his curse. He will kill all who open this chest and assimilate their organs and fluids and in so doing, he will regenerate and no longer be the undead but a plague upon this earth.' The film seems keen to raise questions of the legitimacy of Western cultural dominance and superiority. In fact, in these films the Western characters are repeatedly warned not to bring the mummy back, and the relic is protected by the Magi. Still, the Westerners refuse to listen to the local wisdom and end up bringing devastation to the world. In this way, the film can be seen to reflect some post-colonial concerns of the effects that colonialism caused, and still causes.

The transformation in the mummy's goals—from an eternal love to the eternal possession of the world—is linked to death being made into a spectacle. After his revival, the film creates a prolonged narration of the regeneration and recreation of the mummy's powers. The mummy literally consumes the bodies of those who opened his tomb. Organ by organ and murder by murder, his body becomes more and more generated, until by the end of the film he is no longer a walking corpse, but a man. The earlier tensions between the modern and the ancient are replaced by an unsettling

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[523] The *Book of the Dead*, to which several mummy films refer, is the most famous of the Egyptian funerary texts. Its spells or chapters were to provide protection for the dead and guide them to afterlife. (Ikram 2003, 38, 43–44.)
[524] Simpson 2004, 89, 91.

relationship with the body and individuality. Such questions, as seen in the previous chapters, increase physical and affective responses in the viewer, highlighting personalized yet publically shared experiences when encountering death through cinema. This process is part of what Walter calls a neo-modern death, which gives more room to the personal experience on the public agenda. In neo-modern death, the dying person and the bereaved have both become professionals of death, which comes to be public again by taking control over dying.[525]

The need for such a neo-modern death, or revival of death, can be seen in the way that the mummy's bodily expressions have changed. In the classical era, his body was horrifying because it resisted decaying and the society's idea of disposing of the dead. The postclassical mummy is dreadful because it decays, thus hurting the person's identity by destroying the body. According to Demitshev, contemporary culture which has long rejected death from the view has rendered the physical decaying of the body the terrifying aspect in the process of death.[526] The postclassical mummy therefore highlights questions of the individualization of death.

For her part, Day links the postclassical development to a culture obsessed with youth and hygiene and simultaneously afraid of death, decay, and images of filth. Mummies have come to signify 'age, decay, pollution, death and difference'. Historical accuracies are abandoned for the sake of special effects and experiences through shock values.[527] Indeed, when Evy's and Rick's team opens the casket they find that the mummy has been buried alive and that he is still decomposing. Even the discoverers are appalled: 'I've never seen a mummy like this before, he is still juicy.'

The terror of physical decay connects to the American process that had culminated by the mid-twentieth century at the latest: death and dying people had been taken away from homes to hospitals, and encounters with death and corpses had been assigned to professionals.[528] Rejection of death is seen in the growing popularity of the American tradition of an open casket with prepared corpses whose looks seem to deny the power of death. Is there not a link here to the ancient Egyptian mummies, although

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[525] Walter 1994, 40–41, 47–48.
[526] Demitshev 1999 (1997), 30–31.
[527] Day 2006, 9, 82, 125–127, 172. Whereas Day sees the mummies' corporeality threatening a culture obsessed with youth, another undead figure, vampire, uses the same cultural context in a rather different way. Instead of challenging the cultural ideal by confronting it as mummies' and zombies' immortality does, vampires embrace this cultural belief and become desirable images of eternity, especially in the recent teenage romances, such as *Twilight* where vampires are preserved in everlasting youth.
[528] See, for example, Mitford 1963, 20.

the preparation of American corpses is only a temporary and partial process?[529] The open casket is seen to have dual purposes, both quite suitable for a modern understanding of death. First, it locates the dead into a proper social category by making the corpse artificial with chemical and technical processes. And second, it denies the power of death with the life-like and humanized appearance of the corpse.[530] While American corpses are made to resemble living persons, or, in Goldberg's words, to 'hide death with a simulacrum of life, to improve its looks, to render it no longer fearful'[531], the role of the cinematic mummy has changed to focus attention on the perverseness of the decaying body.

In her influential book *The American Way of Death* (1963), Jessica Mitford showed how the tabooing of death has both emotional and financial costs.[532] When communal practices had been replaced with a professionalism where the families of the deceased were denied access to the details and practices of handling a corpse, the death industry (funeral parlors, mortuaries, funeral homes, funeral directors, etc.) gained the authoritative role of defining the disposal of the dead. And, in an industry, the dying turned from modest and plain procedures to commercialized products. The cost of dying and funerals multiplied, when the funeral industry sold its services on the basis that love and the significance of the dead could be calculated with the money spent on funerals.[533]

By defining both the commercialization of death and the proper places and times for emotional mourning (wakes, viewings, funeral), the professional funeral industry has become the most influential definer of culture's death-related attitudes and practices in the United States.[534] Nowadays, commercialization extends its power from actual death rites to promoting services of mourning and dying as well. Charles and Donna Corr, for example, list that there are countless informal and formal programs for death-related activities, such as counseling, therapy, and peer groups.[535] Indeed, the tabooing of death lead into a commercialization of death in the United States, and commercialized practices such as these have made dying a personal experience with a public dimension.

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[529] Davies 2005, 75–76.
[530] See, for example, Hallam, Hockey & Howarth 2001, 73–75. Although Mitford already seemed to refer to these cultural tasks of embalming, she was more critical of the funeral industry's claims—which they issued without proper medical support—that embalming would increase both hygiene (the cultural task of placing a corpse under control) and the mental well-being of the mourners. (Mitford 1963, 45–47, 50–51, 62.)
[531] Goldberg 1998, 35.
[532] See, for example, Staudt 2009, 8.
[533] Mitford 1963, 20-21, 65, 92.
[534] Davies 2002 (1997), 36–38; McIlwain 2005, 241.
[535] Corr & Corr 2003, 49–50.

Commercialization is also evident in the postclassical mummy film, which concentrates on selling death instead of scientifically studying it. Archaeologists are replaced by treasure hunters, and scientific excavation methods make way for a race of who is going to dig fastest and sell the finds at the highest price without regard for what relics might be destroyed during the process. This approach also challenges the role of modern death because death is not encountered by professionals, but by random people who will not fight the mummy with knowledge but with violence and action.

The postclassical film is also about controlling death, but rather than using science and knowledge, it controls and robs death's power by trivializing dying. If not before, this becomes especially striking in the prolonged fighting scene between Western and Arabic treasure hunters over the remains of Hamunaptra. In this scene, death is not abjected through horror, but robbed of its disturbing power by humorous action scenes. Paul Simpson argues that event movies which tap into earlier films, as the postclassical *The Mummy* does, establish 'an ironic distance between the product and the consumer by evoking familiar generic conventions and then mocking, subverting, or lampooning them to produce self-conscious humor obvious to all but the most naïve of viewers.'[536]

The postclassical version does much more than bring color and graphicness to the story, making it available to larger audiences with influences from action and adventure films. Especially clear is the influence of the popular Indiana Jones series.[537] The commercialization is seen in Rick O'Connell, an American hero who 'is clearly intended to be a younger, hipper, and less intellectual Indiana Jones,' as Simpson maintains, continuing that such unoriginality and use of nationalist stereotypes is intended to bring the story some mass appeal.[538]

This newly found identity for the mummy films resembles the change in the wider public understanding of mummies. Their mystery had been explained by science, and as Day argues, the endless repetition of predictable stories made the mummies pathetic, consigning them to humorous contexts and to juvenile and children's culture.[539] Although *The Mummy* partly reinforces the terrifying effects of the mummy as an undead monster and the power of the mummy's curse, the approach in this film is rather adventurous and humorous, filled with funny characters, accidents, and punch lines. The

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[536] Simpson 2004, 85.
[537] See also Craig & Smith 2003, 177; Hopkins 2002, 10; McGeough 2006, 174, 179; Day 2006, 86.
[538] Simpson 2004, 89.
[539] Day 2006, 94–95, 115–117.

postclassical version of the story is therefore a blockbuster rather than an explicit horror genre film, mixing several genre traditions and creating a merry hybrid for the viewer.

Despite the different approach, even the postclassical mummy follows in the conservative steps of the classical tradition in still representing death and decay that needs to be controlled, even though it is not so much for the sake of modernization than the materialistic well-being and peace of the world. The postclassical mummy is similarly brought to life, its undead status revealed. In the end, knowledge of ancient spells robs the mummy of its power, but this time the mummy is not killed by an ancient religion but is made mortal so that he can be killed as any man. On the one hand, this ending is rather reactionary in reclaiming control over death, but on the other, the postclassical film challenges more openly the winning narration of Western science. Western people have saved the world and one another in the end (with violence), but the last words of the mummy—'death is only the beginning'—defy the idea of a clear closure. This becomes especially clear with the sequel *The Mummy Returns* (2001), where the same mummy rises again.

Although both postclassical and classical mummy films are about recontrolling death, their approaches are different. The classical film laid out the basic structure when it abjected the mummy and contrasted ancient death rituals with modern Western practices. The postclassical film starts from this position, but frames death differently by commercializing and individualizing it. The commercialization does not erase the ritual dimensions; instead, rituals are used as part of the game with death scenes and bodily shocks, which flies in the face of discreet modern death. This questions the ideals of modernity, and while it has no intentions of returning to the traditional death, it does suggest that death might be both personalized and public at the same time, not either–or. Death could be allowed to affect, terrify, and be part of identity all at once. In this sense, life can be prolonged and the dying process embraced, not abjected.

Moreover, both of these films narrate the problematic and violent relationships with corpses. Through the mummies' otherness, these films discuss what is frightening in the corporeality of death in Western societies. Whereas the classical film highlights the modern need to control and alienate dead bodies, the postclassical film embraces the denial of death by spotlighting the disturbing effects of decaying bodies. Unlike the classical film, however, it does this from the perspective of individual identity, not from the vantage point of society. By exposing the corporeality and death rites, both these films force the viewer closer to death.

4.3. Eroticized Death: Vampires and Sexuality

Vampires as Allegories for Problematic Sexuality

In his novel *Dracula* (1897), Bram Stoker introduced the single most influential vampire figure, but Dracula, too, drew on an earlier romantic vampire tradition in connecting the theme of death to sexual and gender tensions. Later adaptations of the novel, including film versions, have continued interfacing questions of death and sexuality. 'The question has been raised as to whether *Dracula* is really about sexuality and sexual repression, or whether it is instead about the human fear of death, compensated for in the vampire's immortality', writes Wood, and argues that '[t]he simple answer is that if it is about the former, it must be also about the latter.'[540] In this part of my study, I, too, will analyze the dual symbolism of death and sex in the Dracula films.

The link between sex and death is 'endemic to Western culture more generally', says Jonathan Dollimore, and this dynamic relationship has taken different forms at different times and through different cultural products.[541] Western culture tends to link sex and death, because they both connect to the corporeal and essential processes of life.[542] This also clarifies what Davies means by death's fertility: whereas life constantly reminds us of its inevitable resolution, death points out that life must go on and new life must be created. Death can hence also encourage people to celebrate and bring meaning to life.[543] In this sense, vampire films suggest that the relationship with death is both a negative and a seducing experience.[544]

Perhaps one of the best known conceptualizations of the link between sex and death has been given by Sigmund Freud in his concepts of *Eros* and *Thanatos* and through 'the pleasure principle' and 'the reality principle'. Both divisions are internal conflicts between mortality and the human need to sustain existence, culture, and society immortally. Firstly, *Eros*, the sex instinct, aims to the continuity of life. It is closely

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[540] Wood 1996, 370.
[541] Dollimore 1998, xi–xii.
[542] For example, Dollimore 1998, xii–xx; Gorer 1960, 405–406.
[543] Davies 2002 (1997), 40.
[544] Guthke argues, interestingly, that through personification of death (and its victims), death necessarily becomes gendered in the cultural products. And, since death as a lover is a common and rather universal theme, death necessarily becomes eroticized in these products as well. Guthke maintains that in Western cultures, both genders have been available, although male figures used to be more common, but is was during the twentieth century in particular that female death figures have increased their popularity. (Guthke 1990, 4–14, 173.)

linked to the pleasure principle: as humans, we seek pleasure. Disappointment in this desire starts to develop the reality principle, but we still wish to abandon external pressure and disturbing forces that stand in pleasure's way. The last means is a desire to restore an earlier or original state of existence, that of death. This brings us to the death instinct, *Thanatos*. Although *Eros* and *Thanatos* pull to different directions—death is the ultimate reality principle and interruption of both the sex instinct and the pleasure principle—they are intimately connected.[545]

In the context of vampire films, Wood interprets the Freudian conflict in a way that Dracula, who is potentially immortal, has won the reality principle and therefore represents the pleasure principle. As sexual norms are ideological constructs of a specific culture, the reality principle guides the socially accepted expressions of sexuality. However, Dracula is free from the conflicts of these principles and is able to reveal the repressed nature of sexuality.[546]

In other words, Dracula employs the link between sex and death because his transformative death has liberated him from the reality principle.[547] Similarly, Dracula can openly challenge existing social norms, including norms that regulate sex and sexuality. He symbolizes encounters with sexuality in general and culturally unaccepted sexuality in particular. Like many other vampire figures, Dracula seduces, violates the bodily boundaries of others, and is overloaded with an erotic imagery. Vampires lick, kiss, bite, and suck their victims. The bite has become a metaphor for penetration or intercourse, because it unites the victim and the vampire.[548]

This interface of sex and death becomes even more intriguing, when the victims are taken into account. For example, Tudor writes that it is the human weaknesses of suppressed sexuality, desire for excitement, and longing for immortality that give Dracula his powers.[549] While Dracula may act out his sexual desires, his victims are still bound by social norms which tend to repress open and queer sexuality. Also, the prevailing Christian understandings where sex, sin, and death connect, encourage expressions of sexuality in strictly regulated modes (marital heterosexuality), as

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[545] Clark 2002, 61–65, 68; Demitshev 1999 (1997), 97–99.
[546] Wood 1996, 369–370, 378.
[547] Williamson further argues that the ability to rebel is slightly different with predatory and sympathetic vampires. Predatory vampires, such as the classical Dracula, used to rebel against reason, whereas sympathetic vampires, such as the postclassical Dracula, rebel against what they are and are supposed to do by genre rules. (Williamson 2003, 102.)
[548] For the vampires' sexual imagery, see also Michel 2007, 391–392; Hänninen & Latvanen 1992, 58–59.
[549] Tudor 1989, 165.

Dollimore notes, continuing that such moralities burden women more than they do men. This has made the obsession with death and desire in the Western countries extremely gendered.[550]

Similarly, Stoker's novel and its film adaptations have one common feature in that they are about the woman and the threat of female sexuality. Elizabeth Signorotti sees that Dracula's kiss releases the threatening female sexuality and 'enables women to become sexual penetrators' who can enter men with their sharp teeth and 'reverse traditional gender roles and place men in the passive position customarily reserved for women.'[551] Horror genre's presentation of women's potential to endanger the male dominion and sexuality exploits the proneness of Western culture to connect the monstrous with the feminine. Women connote danger, especially through their sexuality and maternity. When a monster (in this case Dracula) is looked at by a woman, she rather recognizes herself in this monstrous image. The culturally and cinematically dominating male perspective consequently condemns the monstrous and uncontrollable female desire as punishable.[552]

Dracula films provide different and conflicting positions, not only between the monster and other characters, but between men and women as well. Depending on the films' implied positions, the transformative death of Dracula's victims can be empowering and liberating from the women's perspective or threatening and monstrous from the position of men. For men, the empowering transformation makes women monstrous, because it liberates controlled sexuality and changes the power relations between genders. Most film scholars tend to agree that the horror films' sexuality threatens the existing social order, which is why especially female sexuality needs to be returned under control. Wood, for example, writes that '[t]he release of sexuality in the horror film is always presented as perverted, monstrous, and excessive.'[553] In Freudian terms, this would mean that the pleasure principle must be brought back into the orbit of the reality principle; or, in Foucauldian terms, openly expressed sexuality needs to be re-regulated.[554]

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[550] Dollimore 1998, xxiii, 43–47. Tudor also interprets that the idea of 'immoral' or 'threatening' sexuality that leads to death rises from a Christian tradition where sexuality is sinful and sin is punished by death. (Tudor 1989, 167, 172, 182.)
[551] Signorotti 1996, 621–622.
[552] For the Western cultural tendency to link femininity and monstrousness, see Shildrick 2002, 28–31, 38. For the same practice in the horror genre, and vampire films in particular, see Williams 1984, 89–97.
[553] Wood 1984 (1979), 189. See also Wood 1996, 367, 373; Dyer 1997, 210; Tudor 1989, 172–175.
[554] In fact, there are some connections between Freud's and Foucault's understandings of sexuality, since both see the repression of sexuality as part of modern society. Clark argues that for Freud, the repression

As the apparatus gaze is considered male, the male perspective, too, can be considered to dominate the symbolic questions of death and sexuality. The transgressed sexuality which threatens normality after a transformative death needs to be re-tamed, which is typically carried out by men who become the vampire hunters of the Dracula stories. Signorotti calls the re-taming as repossessing the female body and sexuality. She maintains that in Stoker's story, men 'cure' women and return them to their sexually passive positions. The most radical 'cure' takes place with Lucy who is killed after her transformation and who, according to Signorotti, is thus permanently cured from the horrendous female sexuality.[555] In this interpretation, the final death of the victim restores the normality and normative sexuality, which is how the final death can be seen to link sex and death, not through liberation as in the transformative death, but as a punishment, or as a reactionary gaze at sexuality.

However, as discussed, the suggested viewing positions throughout the film are as important as the endings. I therefore agree with Freeland who holds that horror films are complex and discuss both sexist violence and the possibilities of different sexualities.[556] George E. Haggerty, too, writes that despite the reactionary closures, gothic fiction can also resist the dominant ideology of sexuality by transgressing the sexual codes during the story. Horror has become an alternative field where different sexualities as well as sexual and gender identities can be tested.[557]

My reading of the Dracula films, in fact, is closer to a new feminist reading of the popular genre. This differs, according to Cawelti, from the conventional feminist reading of innocent women seduced and destroyed by lustful men and of patriarchal values restored in the end (a view represented by Signorotti, for example). The new feminist reading approaches the horror genre by interpreting the stories 'as strikingly sympathetic

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of the sex (and death) instinct is necessary for the development of society: in order to prosper, the society needs to regulate and legitimate sex. The body and sexuality become indicators of animality, something that is not part of civilized society, even though this repression becomes a source of anxiety and ambivalence. (Clark 2002, 68–70.) Similarly, Haggerty interprets that for Foucault the regulating of sexuality has become part of the social knowledge and control in the discursive and institutional practices. (Haggerty 2006, 13, 23.)

[555] Signorotti 1996, 622–623. Furthermore, as Freeland points out, horror films in general, not only vampire films, represent disturbing violence against women, and it would be easy to argue that they express a patriarchal hatred of women and their sexuality. (Freeland 2003, 205.)

[556] Freeland 2003, 205.

[557] Haggerty 2006, 2. However, I must note that even though female sexuality is the central theme in these films, other themes of 'deviant' sexuality (public sexuality, children's sexuality, and queer sexuality) are also linked to the problematization of threatening, immoral, and abnormal sexualities. (See, for example, Wood 1996, 371; Holmes 1997, 188.)

to women and critical of patriarchal repression.'[558] For example, Bonnie Zimmerman and Andrea Weiss claim that the closures may punish sexual freedom and they may return women under male control, but they nevertheless open possibilities for alternative endings and alternative viewing positions during the film, and these alternatives can be seen as expressing feminist possibilities to transforming the tradition.[559] At the same time, such alternatives have slowly changed the apparatus gaze as well.

We can find at least two reasons for the increasing feminist perspective in vampire films. First, the changing Western culture has become more sympathetic to the women's position, and the apparatus gaze of the cinema has also started to include both male and female dimensions. Second, Dracula films are influenced by two different vampire traditions. Stoker's depiction of Dracula as a sexual predator in love with the death, sexuality, possession, and punishment of women has influenced portrayals of female and queer sexuality.[560] However, this tradition of interpretation has also been influenced by an earlier romantic vampire fiction which emphasized sexual intimacy, empowerment, and female desire.[561] It is my suggestions that the two different and competing vampire traditions depict the two different social commentaries and reactions to female sexuality and death in Dracula films. On the one hand, death is used as a punishment for female sexuality, which appears as a reactionary solution to repressing female sexuality. On the other hand, death also signifies empowerment and liberation as an escape from social restrictions. In these cases, the link between sex and death appears progressive. In either case, these films use death to make tensions between genders and socially accepted forms of sexuality visible and open for cultural negotiation.

Repressing Women's Sexuality in *Dracula*

The classical undead films centered on seductive death, not only in vampire films, but the motivations behind the mummies' and zombie masters' actions were about lust, love and desire. In this era, the undead and male personifications of death were eroticized,

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[558] Cawelti 2004, 91.
[559] Weiss 1992, 103–108; Zimmerman 1996 (1981), 386.
[560] Interestingly, Lisa Nyström argues that Stoker's novel already had an empowering potential in relation to female and queer sexuality, but this potential has been recognized and put into wider use in later adaptations, such as the film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, where transgressive gender roles and active and sexual women create the core of the story. (Nyström 2009, 63–65, 74.)
[561] For such competing vampire traditions, see, for example, Auerbach 1995, 18–19, 50, 65–66, 83, 95–98; Signorotti 1996, 607–632; Benefiel 2004, 262.

and their female victims needed to be saved by men. As the classical mummy film invited the viewer to read him as a representative of traditional death, the seductiveness can be seen in the death's desire to return to an intimate and close relationship, but the authoritative voices of the film keep distancing it. Death is not only seductive, but a question of control as well.

In the 1931 *Dracula*, the repressed female sexuality of Lucy and Mina becomes a battlefield between two male characters, Dracula and Doctor Van Helsing, who dominate the narration. While Dracula represents death and threatening sexuality, Van Helsing stands for social control, knowledge, and power. Dracula and Van Helsing serve as the main characters in the story, and the tension is built on their interaction, between the antagonist and the protagonist. The bipolarity is visible also in the film's structure.

The first part of the film concentrates on Dracula himself: the film introduces this new movie monster, making his threat clear to the viewer through recognition and alignment processes. Dracula subjugates Renfield in Transylvania, murders the sailors en route to London, kills the flower girl and seduces Lucy at the opera. This section of the story culminates in Dracula's victory over one woman of the story. However, Lucy's transformative death also introduces us to Van Helsing inspecting her body, after which he becomes the focus of the narration. It is he who defines vampirism, convinces other men to believe in his theory, and figures out who the vampire is. He is also the one to notice that Mina, too, has come to be infected by the vampire. From this point onwards, Van Helsing has three goals: to expose the vampire, to kill the vampire and to save the girl. Mina therefore becomes the object which Van Helsing wins back from Dracula. Lucy and Mina are reduced to being assistants in the story, objects in a conflict between two strong men. Main attention is indeed given to these men and their exceptionalities.

The tension between Dracula and Van Helsing is revealed when the vampire visits an asylum. Van Helsing manages to expose his vampire nature by using a mirror, which makes Dracula leave, but first he admits to Van Helsing that 'for one who has not lived even a single lifetime, you are a wise man, Van Helsing.' After his exposure, Dracula has no further reason to hide his true nature, flaunting it to Van Helsing. Many horror studies have in fact noted that the 1930s vampires represented an eccentric otherness which rather showed off their stylistic, dynamic and erotic selves than cared for their thirst.[562] However, the same argument also seems to apply to Van Helsing, who

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[562] Auerbach 1995, 113, 118; Skal 1993, 81.

is more interested in proving his case and prowess of killing Dracula than in saving the victims.

Mina thus becomes the means of either winning or losing this war. Van Helsing swears that he will 'protect those whom you would destroy' to which Dracula replies: 'You are too late. My blood now flows through her veins.' After this encounter, Dracula kidnaps Mina and takes her to the ruins of the Abbey, but just before sunrise Van Helsing and John Harker manage to track him down, kill him and save Mina. At an allegorical level, then, Van Helsing comes to represent modern death, fighting for its cultural power over the non-scientific, unexplainable death of Dracula.

This conflict between two men is also a conflict between different ideas of sexuality. In the end, the conventional sexual norms prevail. The patriarchal composition of the story is explained by Richard Maltby as a crisis of patriarchal society during the Depression. He argues that while women's sexuality was more daring in the films of the 1920s, the 1930s once again tried to isolate women's sexuality into monogamy and a state of innocence. Maltby connects this process to the crisis of capitalism during the Depression which also impacted on a cultural crisis, leading to a rise in conservative attitudes.[563]

Such a patriarchal development is seen in other classical living dead films as well, which all have a seducing or possessing character (monster) who leaves his mark on women, who need to be saved both from the monster and themselves. Bruce F. Kawin argues that most classical horror films deal with a perverse or unsatisfactory love triangle where 'monster steals the girl, boy kills monster, girl kisses boy.'[564] While this simple version can be seen in *Dracula*, it is similarly visible in *The Mummy* and *White Zombie*. The three films have a similar casting and similar main stories: Helen is the girl in *The Mummy*, Frank Whemple the boy, Aradath Bey the monster, and Doctor Muller plays a role similar to that of Van Helsing, advising Frank on how to protect and save the girl. In the *White Zombie*, the zombie master Legendre is the monster, Madeline the girl, her fiancé Neil Parker the boy, and this time the advisor and source of knowledge is Doctor Burner, a missionary.

These classical films appear reactive, because the girl is saved by the boy who has the necessary knowledge, and normalcy is then returned by a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. However, there are also progressive dimensions which can be

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[563] Maltby 1995, 255–259.
[564] Kawin 1995, 311.

read through the politics of new feminist reading. The film may create the main tension between the male characters who struggle over the women, but questions of women's sexuality are given at least some thought, when the women start a threatening and intimate relationship with something that should be alienated from modern society. Although the position of male fear is addressed as the preferred perspective, the viewer is also provided an option of seductive relationship with otherness and death. The alternative position is given with what Kawin recognizes as horror films' necessity for 'some real emotional and ethical intercourse between monster and survivor, in the course of which both are changed.' In Kawin's triangle of love this intercourse is traced to the female of the stories: her different relationships to the boy and the monster represent 'two sides of the girl's own sexual desire (i.e. of her own sexual self-image).'[565] In such a view, the boy speaks for the socially accepted form of sexuality, or monogamous, matrimonial sexuality (reality principle), whereas the monster represents open, deadly, and free sexuality, which is not socially accepted (pleasure principle).

The women of *Dracula* can therefore be seen to fight with two conflicting sexualities. Lucy is quickly dismissed, but Mina's struggle with her sexuality is debated at some length. She is described as a virtuous woman who is respected and admired by men, especially by her fiancé, John. When Dracula enters Mina's room at midnight, she remembers the encounter as nightmarish the next day: 'And when the dream came it seemed the whole room was filled with mist. It was so thick I could just see the lamp by the bed, a tiny spark in the fog. And then I saw two red eyes staring at me, and a white livid face came down out of the mist. It came closer… and closer. I felt its breath on my face… and then its lips.' While Mina is complaining that this dream has drained life out of her, Dracula walks into the room, and the whole situation changes. She forgets her previous complaints of feeling ill, announcing that she has never felt better in her life.

The scene illustrates that Mina is socially ashamed of her encounter with Dracula, but at being reminded of the available pleasures she is willing to explore the new path more closely. Next time, it is Mina who is the active party, walking to Dracula who is waiting for her in the garden. The following day she seems, once again, to be loyal to her virtuous self and asks Van Helsing to help save her soul at least, if not the sinful body, from the vampire. She denies herself from John as impure, guiding her fiancé: 'You mustn't touch me. And you mustn't kiss me—ever again. - - It's all over, John. Our

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[565] Kawin 1995, 311–312. According to Kawin, the implication is that she cannot choose Mr. Right without first confronting her desire for Mr. Wrong—or her desire to be Mr. Wrong (Kawin 1995, 312).

love, our life together. Oh no, no, no. Don't look at me like that. I love you, John, you, but this horror...'

However, she will later defend her new-found sexuality. She complains to John that other men are trying to lock her in her room (lock her sexuality), even though she has never felt better in her life and the night is the only time she really feels alive. John recognizes the change in Mina, when she starts manipulating him to stop Van Helsing from protecting (controlling) her. She goes so far as to bend over John, ready to bite him and to act openly sexually, but Van Helsing stops her, and she, once again, remembers her socially virtuous role and realizes her failure in that role.

Mina fights with her awakening sexuality, and according to Wood, it is the possibility of this awakening that constitutes the true horror of women's sexuality in *Dracula*. These women are consequently returned to the moral order and saved from their desires. It would be interesting to know, says Wood, what would happen if the women followed their desires, as sexuality is not only sexuality, but is connected to questions of power, act, and energy.[566] In *Dracula*, this alternative story is hinted at by Dracula's three wives back in Transylvania. They provide a first glimpse of the queer potential and potency of dealing with a different sexuality in vampire films, even if they appear only for a short time.[567] Possible lesbian relationships are not confirmed, but the scene provides an important aspect to homosexuality when Dracula orders the women not to touch Renfield and chooses this male victim for himself. Phillips remarks that in this film, Dracula's sexuality is unclear, transgressing, and unstable and he is therefore able to change the sexuality of his victims as well.[568]

Harry M. Benshoff and Jean Griffin maintain that the horror films which were able to deal with sexuality during the classical era became and have since remained important for queer audiences: 'While horror films supposedly uphold heterosexuality as normative, they also present the sexually Other as fascinating and thrilling.'[569] Queer and feminist readings thus go hand in hand in these films. The structure of the films

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[566] Wood 1996, 373.
[567] It was *Dracula*'s sequel, *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), which has been qualified as the earliest lesbian vampire film. These films became popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Both Zimmerman and Weiss relate the development to the feminist movement at the time and an inclination for women to bond with one another and challenge patriarchal society. Lesbian vampires could be seen as Dracula's counteracts, because they replaced questions of male possession of women with women lovers, who remained similarly violent and deadly. And in these films, too, women's sexual desire is often punished with death. (Zimmerman 1996 (1981), 382; Weiss 1992, 87– 88, 90–93, 103; Benshoff & Griffin 2006, 76.)
[568] Phillips 2005, 28–30.
[569] Benshoff & Griffin 2006, 76–77.

reproduces heterosexuality and women's sexuality as bound to marriage, but the possibilities to read alternative meanings inside the story provide emancipative positions for the viewer by making the alternatives visible. For example, Mark Jancovich argues that the gothic tradition enables a radical reading. Although these stories can be read as part of a patriarchal society, they can also be read as criticism of this very patriarchalism. In horror, women can criticize male control and the way in which men separate women from public space and isolate them into private spaces,[570] as they do very concretely in *Dracula*, when Mina is locked in her room under male dominion.

Even if the female sexuality of *Dracula* is repressed, the oppressiveness of gender roles is still made accessible to the viewer. The film narrates the desire to repress and possess female sexuality, but the process where Mina and Lucy struggle against their sexually oppressive social roles can also be read as emancipating despite the fact that they are not allowed to take an active role in this primarily reactive film narration. Similarly, although death is used as a punishment for sexual activities in this film, the openness in encountering death-related issues makes it possible to negotiate with a disturbing death in a regulated environment.

Borders of Teenage Sexuality in *The Return of Dracula*

The Return of Dracula (1958) is a typical teenage horror flick of the 1950s. Seeking to tempt the newly emerged teenage audiences, this and other teenage horror films at the time updated their stories to resemble the world of young Americans and advertised themselves with beautiful girls and shock effects of horror. Films with teenagers in the leading roles were the studios' answer to the changing audience structures of the 1950s, but Henry A. Giroux argues that youth representations in these films nevertheless remain contradictory. The young are given a voice, but from an adult perspective, which preserves the link between youth films and the interests of the adult world—and, crucially, one of the teenage films key themes are the borders of body and sexuality.[571] In *The Return of Dracula*, too, the socio-culturally threatening teenage sexuality creates the main tension of the story.

The Return of Dracula discusses sexuality, gender and age together. Even though the film is not a direct remake of Stoker's novel, the characters are comparable to those

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[570] Jancovich 1992, 19–20.
[571] Giroux 2002, 170, 177.

of the original story. The film makes use of the same elements as the classical film, but rearranges them, especially in relation to questions of age. Dracula keeps his role as a sexually seductive monster, whereas a teenager, Rachel, is made to play Mina's role, and Rachel's blind friend Jennie has Lucy's role. Tim, the boy next door and Rachel's boyfriend is a reflection of John Harker, and even Van Helsing is replaced by a European vampire hunter who tracks Dracula down to the United States.

The roles are rearranged because the adults, Rachel's mother and the vampire hunter in particular, fail to protect Rachel and Jennie. The mother constantly leaves her two children alone at home, unaware of the influence Dracula is gaining on Rachel. Similarly disconnected and distant from teenage life are the authorities, that is, the European vampire hunters and local authorities (police and doctor). They do trace Dracula and talk over their possibilities, but they are never in the right place at the right time to protect the teenagers, who end up having to find their own means of survival. The teenagers are rather left on their own, and finally it is Rachel and Tim together who beat the vampire.

This situation compares to the process where teenagers have to find their own sexual identities. The adults and authorities, while they know the process, are unable to make it any easier for the teenagers. Once the transition period introduced teenagers as the horror films' main characters, it is no wonder that several scholars have interpreted horror films as portraying adolescents' sexual anxieties. For example, Walter Evans holds that the stories with transforming monsters—including vampire or mummy films—compare to the troubled teenagers with changing bodies and uncontrollable feelings. Similar physical and psychological changes can be found in transgressing monstrousness and emerging adolescent sexuality and sexual experimentation.[572]

In the classical films, women were punished if they expressed their sexuality openly. In the teenage horror films, it is the teenagers' turn to get punished if they engage in pre-marital sex. This was especially common in the 1970s and 1980s horror series of teenage slashers, including *Halloween* and *Friday 13th*, where the teens' sexual activities were followed by sudden death. The killer had the power to punish young people for their immoral actions.[573] The threat of teenage sexuality was, however, already debated in *The Return of Dracula*, and especially in relation to gender. In the absence of a notable influence on older women, the mother of the family treats Dracula

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[572] Evans 1984 (1973), 54–56, 61. See, also, Sjögren 1989 (1985), 18–25; Leffler 2001, 140–145.
[573] For example, Clover 1996 (1992), 24, 35.

as an asexual character. But, in accordance with Stoker's triangle, the sexuality of Jennie and Rachel is under the spotlight. For them, Dracula becomes a dark temptation of unleashed and unacceptable sexuality.

The young girls' awakening sexuality makes them inviting prey to the vampire who symbolizes both sexual desires and rebellious power. We get a hint of the girls' curiosity about sexuality, when we see them read together an erotically loaded novel. Jennie becomes the vampire's first victim. Dracula enters her bedroom at night and seduces her with promises of freedom and sight for the blind Jennie: 'I can take you from the blackness into a light.' Dracula talks of experiences which she would not otherwise get, and even though Jennie is afraid, she allows Dracula to give her a kiss of death.[574] Before her death, Jennie tries to warn Rachel, giving her a crucifix for protection. She says that even if she does not know how the story they had been reading continues past the kiss, she has experienced it herself and has been punished for her curiosity. After her death, it is not other teenagers but the authorities who find her transformed in the coffin and kill her, thereby re-taming her newly found sexuality.

Jennie follows Dracula because of her curiosity and desire for sexual experiences. Rachel, too, is about to enter this adult world. The film makes frequent allegations to Rachel and her boyfriend Tim's experimenting with sex. They are in danger of being led astray before formalizing their relationship by marriage. Toying with sexuality has opened a door for Rachel to feel curiosity towards Dracula as well, and as with Jennie, Dracula comes to symbolize sexual forces. Following in Kawin's footsteps, I argue that if the monster represents the characters' sexual self-images[575], Dracula here embodies illicit sexual desire. However, his illicitness is a product of the perspective addressed in the film. After all, the film's viewpoint is that of adults guarding the acceptable limits of society and behavior. Dracula's horrifying sexuality thus warns teenagers of what will happen if the accepted limits are crossed, even if they were crossed with a safe person.

Giroux argues that cinematic youth representations are ambivalent because they represent simultaneously the future and the end of the society. The young are in a transitional space in expressing 'individual freedom, social power, and critical agency'. This is also why they pose a threat to the existing society and why their transitional possibilities must be oppressed. Giroux goes on to maintain that the body and sexuality

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[574] Interestingly, this scene follows Linda William's argument that the 'good girls' of many horror films are either blind or have restricted view, because when a woman is able to look she only sees, and thus becomes affected by, her own monstrosity. (Williams 1984, 83, 85, 88.)
[575] Kawin 1995, 312.

have become important areas of struggle in these films where the potential of the teenagers' transgressive sexuality calls for repression and control. Teenage sexuality has too often been depicted as predatory or decadent rather than transgressive or progressive, which could be equally possible positions.[576]

Although the moral burden of sexual behavior is aimed more at the girls (especially at Rachel), the film also shows some cultural change in relation to gender. In comparison to the classical version's Lucy or Mina, Rachel is empowered, and at the end of the film it is in fact Rachel who is mostly responsible for the destruction of Dracula. The closing scene takes place in a cave where Rachel encounters Dracula. His seductive power is momentarily disturbed when the vampire hunters kill Jennie. At this moment Rachel realizes the danger she is in—and Jennie's role as a warning example is highlighted to the viewer. Trying to escape, Rachel runs into Tim, and together they face the vampire and fight back his seductive power. They work as a couple and together they survive. The closure of the film, once again, stresses the monogamous, heterosexual, and marital nature of a sexual relationship, but this time the man and the woman are given balanced roles.

The ending clearly demonstrates the filmmakers' adult perspective in that Rachel and Tim are not strong enough to fight back at the vampire (or destructive sexuality) by themselves. They get strength, not only from each other, but from Christianity. With a crucifix they force Dracula to back down, and he falls into an open well. The final scene suggests that the desired teenage life without impure pre-marital sexual relationships is possible through self-control and with the help of God. Rachel and Tim have been tempted, tested, and they have successfully faced their demons. Having internalized the reality principles and socially accepted norms regulating sexuality, they escape deadly punishment. The final scene is therefore both progressive in suggesting more equal gender roles and reactionary in relation to teenage and female sexuality.

Desire and Emancipation in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*

Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) adds new dimensions to vampire sexuality. This film is a redirection of the formula because the vampire's sexuality is no longer monstrous, but

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[576] Giroux 2002, 171–172, 177–178. (Quote from page 171.) Giroux (2002, 174) connects the contradictory and anti-teen teenage tendency to the 1980s and 1990s slasher films in particular. However, the same development is evident in these 1950s teenage flicks.

tragic. Carol L. Fry and John Robert Craig write that instead of narrating Dracula as 'a sexual predator' on the prowl for innocent women as in the classical films, the film develops further the love plot which had already emerged in Dan Curtis's 1973 version and John Badham's *Dracula* in 1978. By focusing on love as the overarching theme, Francis Ford Coppola updates, maintain Fry and Craig, *Dracula*'s value systems for contemporary audiences.[577]

Despite its name, this is not a faithful rendition of the original novel from 1897. Instead, it is a re-interpretation with at least three key contrasts. First, while the main attention is once again on women's sexuality, it is now narrated from the perspective of the women themselves. For example, Christopher McGunnigle argues that Coppola transformed the story 'from a Victorian guys' movie to a woman's date movie.'[578] Second, an important emphasis is on the contrasted gender roles of the 1897 original and the 1992 cinematic reinterpretation.[579] And third, while Dracula's character in the film is based on the story by Stoker, it borrows from the Byronic tradition rather than from the malignant interpretation made by Stoker. According to Fry and Craig, this postclassical Byronic figure is not only a monster, but a tragic and lonely being. While his actions might be criminal, his passion is not. This figure has an aristocratic, ruined, and demonic power which challenges the set boundaries of good and evil.[580] Because of these changes, some, such as Tomasz Warchol, have claimed that Coppola destroyed Dracula as the most pervasive vampire, because he changed its spirit. By giving Dracula a history, this film turned vampire into human.[581] However, I do not regard the renewal of genre conventions as destruction, but as a differentiation to the formula and its themes.

The challenge which the vampire presents to the earlier tradition can be seen in the changing emphasis on alignment positions. The viewer is also given access to Dracula's past with lost love, embittered loneliness, and a desire to find love again. The

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[577] Fry & Craig 2002, 271–272, 277.
[578] McGunnigle 2005, 181.
[579] For example, Carol Corbin and Robert A. Campbell call such rewriting Coppola's 'postmodern eyes'. To them, the central theme of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is the postmodern approach to the dichotomy between the premodern and modern in the story. They understand that Coppola constructs 'postmodern sensibilities' because the film breaks down boundaries of good and evil and reconstructs gender. (Corbin & Campbell 1999, 41.)
[580] Fry & Craig 2002, 272–276. However, with his legacy of evil Dracula does not go as far as some other postclassical romance vampires, such as the more recent vampire figures from *Twilight* films, and *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries* television series. The sympathetic vampires freed from Dracula's history are defined by their reluctance to kill and feed, as Williamson argues, but Dracula follows another convention for these vampires: a romantic and 'destructive love for a human female'. (Williamson 2005, 291–293.)
[581] Warchol 2003, 7–8.

viewer is shown a torn vampire who is caught between monstrosity and humanity. His ambivalence is obvious at several levels. He has no solid bodily identity as he changes between the figures of werewolf, young and eccentric count, rats, mist, etc. He has no solid identity as monster or man, either. The two main women of the story introduce different sides of him. Dracula approaches Lucy as a monster, unable to restrict his overwhelming desires, whereas he becomes intimate with Mina as a tragic man.[582] The same ambivalence that constantly marks his character and provides alternative engagement positions for the viewer is present in his sexuality as well. His sexuality and sexual desires change and become momentarily open to all different understandings of sexuality.

Christopher McGunnigle grasps this ambivalent sexuality, but problematically claims that Dracula's sexuality was deconstructed by the loss of his wife Elisabeta and his self-transformation into a monster. He condemned both himself and his sexuality. From this point onwards, McGunnigle insists, Dracula uses his now queered sexuality as punishment. Mina offers him a way to restore his heterosexual identity and relieve him of queerness. In the end, however, he is killed, but his death, too, can be seen as a restoration of traditional sexual norms which demand that transgressing sexuality be punished with death.[583] Although punishable queer sexuality is a common theme in vampire films, especially during the early 1990s when sex, death, and homosexuality were closely linked through AIDS[584], McGunnible fails to see other dimensions of Dracula's ambivalent sexuality.

His ambivalent sexuality should not be read only as monstrous, but as an exploration of alternate (and positive) sexualities even in a film with heteronormative closure.[585] A queer reading of this kind gives space to alternative sexualities and gender roles, quite as a film provides different viewing positions through fantasizing. At least in the postclassical vampire stories, according to Candance R. Benefiel, for example, the defining of homosexual or heterosexual relationships seems irrelevant when these

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[582] Rather similarly, Warchol argues that Coppola's Dracula has difficulties to hold on to emotional stability and stable identity because of his changing physical appearance and behavior (Warchol 2003, 8).
[583] McGunnigle 2005, 176, 179, 182–183.
[584] For example, Nixon 1997, 119, 127.
[585] See also Holmes 1997, 172.

characters 'transcend the bonds of gender as surely as they have transcended the bonds of mortality'.[586]

This brings us to an important dimension of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. The main thing is not whether Dracula, or any other vampire for that matter, chooses victims on the basis of gender. They will rather choose their victims on the basis of desire. As Haggerty points out, horror narratives are not so much about heterosexuality or queerness as about desire itself. Haggerty continues that desire is related to power, the exercise or resistance of power, or powerlessness.[587]

In this sense, desire should not be seen as lack, as something that is missing and needs to be fulfilled[588], which is what McGunnigle appears to do. Dracula makes clear that even if he possessed Mina, his monstrous nature would not change, it would just gain new elements. At least in relation to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a more suitable desire model can be found in the Deleuzian tradition of interpretation where, according to Powell, desire is a productive experience, not a negation of something else.[589] Elspeth Probyn has carried the Deleuzian idea of desire further. In that desire is always in relation to something, rearranging its position and relationships. It is inbetween, social and productive, longing to become something other. Such an understanding of desire, says Probyn, makes it a positive social force which can rework different social relations in the society, including gender relations.[590]

Similarly, in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* desire—sexual desire in particular—is understood as a social force and part of the power relations. The debated sexual desire also reveals itself with multiple functions which are symbolized in Dracula's four main victims: two men, Renfield and Harker, and two women, Lucy and Mina. These four create two comparable couples in that Renfield and Lucy are the willing victims (whore figures), whereas Harker and Mina are more resistant to the seductive power (Madonna figures). The two couples come to symbolize desire's emancipative potency and the film's unbalanced gender roles. The women's desire for a vampire life and death liberates them, whereas the men's desire for the same life shows their powerlessness to accept the power of desire and death to change them. The women are thus made to

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[586] Benefiel 2004, 268. Similarly, Pat Gill argues that postclassical vampire sexuality does not exclude different sexes or age groups; instead it is seductive, provocative, aggressive, and even flirtatious. (Gill 2007, 152.)
[587] Haggerty 2006, 2.
[588] This interpretation rises from Sigmund Freud's theories. For example, Powell (2005, 20) argues that the Freudian understanding of desire reduces it to lack.
[589] Powell 2005, 21, 93.
[590] Probyn 1996, 13, 42–62.

represent a positive relationship with death and dying whereas the men are afraid of the unknown and becoming power of dying.

The contradiction between empowerment and deprivation of power is first of all seen in the film's whore figures, Renfield and Lucy, who both seem eager victims of Dracula. Lucy is a young woman in the nineteenth century when respectable women's sexuality had a base in marriage. She, however, is yearning for new experiences and is interested in exploring her sexuality. Lisa Nyström, for example, maintains that Lucy is a 'threat to the patriarchal values', for she appears as an independent and sexual women even before Dracula's arrival. She creates anxiety in men, representing an 'attempt to regain control of her own sexual and biological power'.[591] When Dracula comes along, Lucy does not think twice about giving in to her repressed desires.[592] For her, the vampire offers an alternative way to explore sexuality. This makes death an empowering experience, as it enables her to enjoy sex without social boundaries.

However, during her transformation phase she is still conscious of these boundaries. When not with Dracula, Lucy understands the immorality of her actions. For example, she asks Mina not to tell anyone that she has been attacked by the vampire. While Leah M. Wyman and George N. Dionisopoulos interpret the request as Lucy's embarrassment of what has happened[593], it would be equally warranted to suggest that the request stresses Lucy's desire to keep her sex affair as a secret, because she wants to avoid being moralized by the society or being stopped by others. Although the men of the story recognize her changing personality—her open aggressiveness and lustfulness which had so far been repressed—they realize too late what is happening.

Her transformation into an undead being is a painful experience psychologically, physically, and socially, but Lucy enjoys her new-found sexuality. After her transformative death, not only are her desires liberated, but she even enters into a perverse marriage with a vampire where instead of having children she feasts on them. What finalizes her transformation is the outcome of a monstrous mother figure, leaving her to fulfill her instincts and desires in a violent and abusive way, especially from the

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[591] Nyström 2009, 69, 72–73.
[592] The scene where Dracula seduces and contaminates Lucy as a werewolf has been read by many as a raping scene. For example, Wyman and Dionisopoulos interpret the scene in this light, seeing sex as punishable. They claim that Dracula represents a stereotypic male fantasy with untamed and powerful sexuality whereas women represent civilization, culture and purity. The vampires' 'violent and sexual nature' is 'initially and innately masculine' whereas 'female propriety sets boundaries on male overindulgence.' (Wyman & Dionisopoulos 1999, 36–38.) Such an interpretation, however, fails to see that the sexual relationship with the vampire can also be regarded as liberating and empowering.
[593] Wyman & Dionisopoulos 1999, 37.

viewer's perspective who is still bound by the social norms. Lucy, in that sense, follows the more general tendency in Western art, which according to Guthke has two dominant types of female death personification, of mother and of seducer.[594]

While Lucy finds a new identity in seduction and transformative death, Renfield's fate is different. The actual seduction scene between Renfield and Dracula is kept from the viewer, but it is clear that the seduction does not lead into a final transformation. Rather, Renfield is made Dracula's obedient servant. His transformation has started, as in his lust for blood, he eats insects and little animals. At the same time, however, he still holds on to his former identity and is therefore denied the becoming, or empowering, power of desire. The internal conflict with a desire he cannot follow drives him crazy, turning him into an impotent character who has lost his autonomy and identity. The difference between Lucy and Renfield is also evident in their attitude towards death. Lucy embraces death, Renfield avoids it and thus prolongs the painful transformation process.

Unlike Renfield and Lucy, Harker and Mina do not wish to become vampires. They are devoted to each other and are soon to be married. Their sexual fulfillment is waiting to happen within the moral limits of society when Dracula interferes. Harker travels to his castle, is taken prisoner and gets attacked by Dracula's concubines. He manages to escape, leaving three lustful lovers behind, which we could interpret as Harker having resisted the socially unaccepted desire. But this is not the case. He later confesses to Van Helsing that 'I was impotent with fear'. Carol C. Corbin and Robert A. Campbell hold that Harker is a typical modern man who cannot rationally understand the supernatural events he is witnessing.[595] The scene can also be read in relation to sexuality, to which the word 'impotent' refers. In this light, the scene suggests that Harker could not act on desire when he saw it, but became afraid and escaped instead of embracing the opportunity and becoming something else. He is not a hero in the traditional sense of being brave; rather he is undressed from his position of power.

The position of power is given to Mina instead. Dracula sees his dead wife in Mina and wants to conquer her and make her love him. Mina is not easily seduced, but surrenders in the end and chooses to give herself to Dracula. Unlike in Harker's case, this is Mina's active decision. The vampire could easily possess her, but the actual seduction scene gives Mina the decisive role. Before the deadly kiss, Dracula reveals his

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[594] Guthke 1990, 200, 209.
[595] Corbin & Campbell 1999, 47.

true identity and both the positive—'I give you life eternal, everlasting love, the power of the storm and the beasts of the earth'—and the negative effects of vampirism—'You will be cursed to walk in the shadow of death for all eternity'. He almost regrets his actions by stating: 'I love you too much to condemn you'. However, Mina has made up her mind. She sees the possibilities open to her if she dies from the restrictions and rules of this world and is born in the other world of freedom and unbarred sexuality. She demands to be taken 'away from all this death' and drinks the blood of Dracula. Corbin and Campbell understand that 'in this choice that Coppola's film most resembles the empowering feminist qualities of the romance novel.'[596] As with Lucy, such a choice for social exclusion highlights the liberating elements of undeadness.

Mina's actions focus on the changed emphasis from Stoker's original story.[597] At several levels, Mina is the final girl of the film: she takes the role of active men and becomes the active protagonist of the story.[598] In the end, Mina has the power to kill Dracula out of pity and love, whereas in Stoker's novel the vampire is killed by vengeful men because of their jealousy and insecurity. According to Hilary Neroni, for example, the change in balance between active and passive actors challenges traditional gender roles and identities. Onscreen violence has long been seen as a masculine activity. Violent women, who have become increasingly common in postclassical films, can be considered to defy men's active masculinity and to distance women from passive femininity.[599] Similarly, the tradition of young and seduced women is turned upside down in the postclassical vampire tradition, not only in Coppola's film, but in many other films and television series, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, when women become heroes who turn against their attackers and use their sexuality to seduce and control men.[600]

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[596] Corbin & Campbell 1999, 46.

[597] According to Warchol, the changes in Mina's role are the most radical difference to Stoker's original novel. Mina is spiritually connected to Dracula and becomes more enchanted about him than about Harker. (Warchol 2003, 9.)

[598] According to Carol Clover, the only one to survive the murderous attacks of the slasher films is the final girl, who is innocent and often a virgin. She resists the appeal of sex and remains a pure, even androgynous, character. (Clover 1996 (1992), 35–63.)

[599] Neroni 2005, ix, 32–33, 41–42, 46, 160.

[600] For example, Suzanne Scott holds that fantasies of ever-lasting romantic love and a pop-feminist approach to women's empowerment and activity have made all romantic vampire stories, including films and television series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), hugely popular among women viewers. (Scott 2003, 128.) Similarly, according to Corbin and Campbell, the women of Stoker's novel were passive victims raped by Dracula, while in Coppola's film, active women participate in the 'melodramatic love story.' (Corbin & Campbell 1999, 45.)

In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, too, women are willing to give in to desire and change, while men are forced to lose their power, impotent to encounter desire. Death therefore has a potentially liberating role in this film. Choosing a deadly fate is not a punishment but a reward for breaking the social norms. However, this potential is utilized differently by genders. Death is liberating for women, whose life is more restricted—especially in this film because it purposely contrasts contemporary gender roles to those of the Victorian era. The rules make more sense to men, who fail to see the need for change. Whereas the film opens up possibilities to free all individuals from the restrictions of cultural codes, men are not ready to forfeit (patriarchal) society norms. Therefore, in the encounter of desire, they lose their power position and become impotent and trapped in an old-fashioned understanding of the gendered world. In summary, this film makes both gender issues and sexuality visible, carnivalizing and turning them around. The film can thus be seen as progressive, offering the viewer multiple positions and making no clear moral decisions for him/her, although women viewers in particular are invited to create an empowering relationship with the film and the vampire.[601] It is the viewer who needs to take responsibility for negotiation and decoding.

Finally, in looking at the three films analyzed above—*Dracula, The Return of Dracula* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*—it becomes clear that the way in which sex and death are linked through punishment or liberation reflects the times when the films were made. The three films also discuss changing gender roles and ideas of women's sexuality. In the classical films, women need to be protected and placed under patriarchal control. In the transition films, these relations were already more balanced, and a woman could be given an active role although her sexuality still remained problematic. The postclassical version, then, has to a certain extent turned the original arrangement upside down, and sexuality, even if carried out through death, is a rewarding experience to women. The film calls attention to the emancipating and empowering position of women and to the impotent position of men.

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[601] In her empirical studies of women vampire fans, Williamson has noticed that women actually find (sympathetic) vampires offering alternatives for everyday lives. They do not only represent excitement and adventure, but the contradictions between personal desires and society's constructions. Williamson argues that because of an unattainable ideal image of what a modern woman should be, the women fans can sympathize with the vampire's role as an outcast who never truly fits into the society's molds. Williamson thus argues that vampires offer women 'a means of handling contradictory experiences of self and femininity' and ways to imagine that '"things could be different" and so could the "self"'. (Williamson 2001, 103–105, 109–111, quotes from page 111.) Her empirical study supports my argument that women viewers do not see vampire as death, but as a possibility to step outside of society.

This change in depicting gender and sexuality through their relationship with death as punishment or as liberation creates an evolving image of death as well. At the implicit level, the use of death in the Dracula films suggests that death is not only something that needs to be abjected. It can be compared to the potential of expressing oneself, which makes death as an individualized project part of identity. This highlights the cultural change from modern and marginalized death to the revival of death where dying and death are rendered integral to individualism, personal experiences, and self-expression.

4.4. Chaotic Death: Zombies and Breakdown of Social Structures

Zombies as Allegories for Exploitation of Power

Zombies cannot talk. Their means for self-expression are limited to violent destruction and aggression. Such one-dimensionality of the character type makes it an empty canvas for the filmmakers and the viewers, but the emptiness of meaning is purposeful, says Shaviro. Zombies do not serve rationality, but are intended to highlight the social process that has taken place by its own force. Their emptiness also drains the society's powers and those of the humans, allegorizing the demise of the social. Zombies are therefore inside and outside the society at the same time in criticizing and participating in the society.[602]

Of the undead characters, the zombies represent death's destructive power in its most extreme form: they attack the structures of society by unearthing themes of exploitation of power which reveal the society's fractures. As Waller says, they 'are the projection of our desire to destroy, to challenge the fundamental values of America, and to bring the institutions of our modern society to a halt'.[603] I will analyze how the zombies explicitly interrupt with the modern understanding of society and implicitly intervene in the modern understanding of death. I will also discuss the ways in which the deadly mass power of the zombies focuses attention on the anxiety and fear that death necessarily summons up in society.

Bauman argues that society finds death—and violent death in particular—abnormal and dangerous, because death is an end to existence. In order to overcome this disruption, modern society has marked death as a personal dilemma, whereas the past, future, and collectivity of society represent immortality. Societies—and nation-states in particular—provide stability as a counter-force for death's destructiveness.[604] In the zombie films, the animated dead rebel against societal control over destructive death, challenging the situation. By embracing society's fear of death, they threaten the continuance of society. Michel stresses that these former humans become allegories of

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[602] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 83–87.
[603] Waller 1986, 280.
[604] Bauman 1992, 10, 24, 96–105, 114–127, 197–199. See also Russell 1995, 174.

humanity and society, demanding political change in a revolutionary way by destroying not only the humans but the existing social order.[605]

The mindless mass power of the zombies is given an allegorical force denoting the might and control structures of society in all the chosen films of this study. The zombie master's enslaved subjects of the *White Zombie* come to symbolize racial, ethnic, and gender oppression. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombies propose multiple allegories, including those of the mindless American consumers and the returning bodies of soldiers killed in Vietnam. And, lastly, the zombies of *Resident Evil* are mistreated workers in the grips of a greedy corporation. In a broader sense, then, as Jen Webb and Sam Byrnand emphasize, zombies are often connected to questions of power and exploitation of power.[606] Mimi Sheller also argues that all zombies should be read as allegories, as they refer to the deprival of free will and physical control.[607]

The constant and explicit addressing of questions of power and control invites the viewer to become conscious of these questions in society, but also at the implicit level, in a social understanding of death. Zombie films challenge 'individual autonomy and rationalism', as Badley formulates, and are thus about 'fears about de-individuation', as Punter continues.[608] The first ever feature-length zombie film, *White Zombie*, already had an explicit power-related theme in conjuring up a potent slave allegory of the corpses working for their zombie master. Like other zombies, they, too, embrace oppression, and turn into warning examples of alienation. Their connection to death makes them unknown, otherness differentiates them from the rest of the society. In this sense, their transformative deaths have become a source of threat, since their deadly embodiments endanger both societal culture and personal identity.

To begin with, they challenge personal identity because these creatures present death's influence on autonomy. Similarly as the zombies appear unable to impact the world around them, in the modern death where the corpses are handled by professionals, the deceased have no power over what is done to them. Second, the liminal state also has social and communal influences. As a personal issue, the loss of a personal touch to death makes the alienated dying process incomprehensible and meaningless, just a matter of a biological phase. This is implied in the zombies' lack of consciousness, which makes the zombie-like state and social alienation frightening in suggesting that

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[605] Michel 2007, 393–396.
[606] Webb & Byrnand 2008, 85.
[607] Sheller 2003, 145.
[608] Badley 1995, 76; Punter 1996b, 103.

humans might not, after all, differ that much from other living things (animals, plants, etc.).

However, it is the same social alienation that reveals, as Webb and Byrnand point out, the ceaseless destruction of society. In zombiedom, destruction can only go on.[609] Endless annihilation is especially common in the later zombie films of *Night of the Living Dead* and *Resident Evil*, which make apocalyptic developments part of the tradition. While the *White Zombie*'s zombie master is killed in the end and his servants follow him to his watery grave, in *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombies just keep coming. There are no consoling final deaths of the monsters. This emphasizes death as a force of disintegration. The collapse of society is carried further in the following zombie films where zombie epidemics are enhanced and society is driven into chaos by the growing masses of zombies. Indeed, by the time of *Resident Evil*, killing the zombies no longer solves anything. Also, this film does not concentrate so much on the social allegories as on the graphic nature of violent death acts and action scenes. By the end, the apocalyptic solution appears to be as much a question of making sequels possible as of progressive criticism.

Zombie characters symbolize oppression in a very particular way. The most important quality of this allegorical relationship is the ability to become aware of the unequal power relationships. By questioning oppression, these films in fact recreate (personal) death with a possibility of revolution. The society's structures, practices, and norms can first be destroyed and then either reactively restructured or progressively recreated. Next, I will analyze the ways in which *White Zombie*, *Night of the Living Dead* and *Resident Evil* maneuver their social criticism through zombification both at the explicit level, where the zombies destroy social institutions and social order, and at the implicit level, where they represent death's revolutionary power destructively or in a liberating sense.

Oppression and Possession in *White Zombie*

White Zombie (1932) introduces the Haitian belief of undead slaves controlled by Bokors or voodoo priests. In accordance with folklore, the powerful witch doctor, symbolically named as Murder Legendre, uses his powers to transform men into living dead to form a

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[609] Webb & Byrnand 2008, 85.

free and easily controlled work force for his sugar mill in Haiti. The zombie master intervenes in the lives and autonomies of the local people, and the society is too terrified of Legendre's powers, the voodoo rituals, and expressionless zombies to confront the evil commander.

As this short description of the film's starting point shows, voodoo is represented as a form of control and slavery. The film, however, makes use of other means, too, to highlight these themes, including an allegory of the relationship between the US and Haiti in the issue of slavery. At the time of the film's release, US occupation of Haiti (1915–1934) was nearing its end. By using folklore and horror formulas and themes, the film both exploited and exoticized the American movie goers' awareness of Haiti and their curiosity about voodoo practices.[610]

It would be too simplifying to interpret the relationship between the zombie master and his subjects only as a metaphor of slavery in the Haitian and Caribbean context, even though captured Africans were forced to give up their freedom, culture, and personal relationships in a similar way to the zombies. However, *White Zombie*'s perspective is undeniably American, with links to debates on US occupation, colonialism, and postcolonialism. Similarly, Mimi Sheller, Edna Aizenberg, Jennifer Fay, and Kyle Bishop, for example, argue that instead of telling about their own history of slavery, the Haitian voodoo zombies are important allegories primarily for the US occupation of the country.[611]

US occupation has fostered mainly two emphases on the postcolonial interpretations of the film: the slave workers have inspired a criticism of class, capitalism, and labor, while the possession based on ethnicity and womankind stirred up an analysis of oppression built on race and gender. As Fay concludes, the *White Zombie*'s reanimated corpses have been made to symbolize 'racial, class and gender differences.'[612] What is common in all of the earlier interpretations is that the zombies have created perfect allegories for oppression and submission.

White Zombie represents oppression through undead zombie characters. Legendre appears to have two kinds of zombie labor, servants and slave workers. First, the mill slaves are exploitable and replaceable work force. The unsentimental and inhumane attitude towards them is palpable in the death scene at the mill where a zombie slave is

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[610] For example, Fay 2008, 83; Bishop 2008, 143–144.
[611] Sheller 2003, 146; Aizenberg 1999, 462; Fay 2008, 82; Bishop 2008, 145.
[612] Fay 2008, 82.

ground to death. Second, the servants are used not only as a work force, but also as a strategic tool of control which guarantees Legendre's power in the community. Legendre admits that his zombie servants were once his enemies whom he killed and zombified in order to control them. The servants include his former master, who taught him the voodoo secrets, as well as local authorities and officials who threatened to make his actions public. The servant zombies therefore function as warning examples for anyone who might step in Legendre's way.

When seen as allegories for politics, the two zombie types stand for the two sides of US occupation as well: the importance of economics and the presentation of power. The dual function of the occupation is seen, for example, in Fay's comment that during the occupation the United States hid behind the ideological mission of a crusade for democracy while the underlying goals were more materialistic. What the occupation sought to do was gain control over strategic territory, win economic command, and force economic dependency on the US.[613] Legendre, too, displays his power through the possession of zombies and profits from their work.

Because the film's both zombie types are workers, it is no wonder that they have been interpreted as a wider allegory of the laboring classes oppressed by wealthy mill and factory owners.[614] Such criticism of capitalism finds support in the film's cultural context. In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, questions of an unequal division of work, power, and wealth were crucial. As Skal argues, many audience members felt like zombies who were not responsible for their own lives, but were manipulated to act in certain ways, made to act as if they were dead.[615]

Zombies fit in the critique of capitalism more than well. Shaviro describes them as a necessity. Capitalism needs the legions of work force, and the most convenient workers are those who only work and ask for nothing else.[616] Similarly, after the zombification, neither servants nor mill workers have any demands, desires, or free will. They are merely mechanical bodies used by Legendre with the help of voodoo and hypnotization. Ironically, Murder Legendre, who feeds on the work of the zombies and becomes almost a vampiric character of *White Zombie*, was played by Bela Lugosi, famous for his role as Dracula.

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[613] Fay 2008, 82–83, 87–89. Furthermore, Fay states that HASCO, 'the Haitian-American Sugar Company that in 1932 was owned by American interests' was the model for the film's mill. (Fay 2008, 86.)

[614] For example, Michel 2007, 394; Bishop 2008, 146.

[615] Skal 1993, 169.

[616] Shaviro 2002, 281–283.

Like the uncivilized zombies, the aristocratic vampires have also been harnessed to a criticism of capitalism, but from another angle. While the zombies represent the working class, the vampires (and mummies as well) rather symbolize the upper class, as aristocrats feeding on the working class. Since Marx in *Das Capital* used vampires as a metaphor for blood-sucking capitalism, the brand of capitalism—both production and consumption—has stuck, even though vampires are aristocratic rather than bourgeois figures.[617] Legendre, on the other hand, is a bourgeois character who has climbed up the social ladder with lesser respectable means. This is visible at the sugar mill, where his slaves and servants are running the errands for the factory and its owner without a possibility to influence, organize or speak up. Legendre stays in his office, situated above everyone else, highlighting the capitalist hierarchy at the level of the image.

It must be noted, though, that Legendre is a local voodoo master who enslaves his own countrymen. His occupying of the zombies is not an explicit allegory of US occupation of Haiti but is rather a late-colonialist allegory. According to Bishop, it refers to a postcolonial society where the local class has adopted the imperialistic practices of their colonizers and which therefore continues the domination against those who have no language or capacity to organize their resistance and confront the situation.[618]

It is to this backdrop that the film opens. Existing social balance is soon destroyed when the film introduces a new type of zombie and two new kinds of oppression. On the request of the jealous Beaumont, a French banker, Legendre zombifies a young, white Western woman, Madeline, who has come to Haiti in order to get married to her fiancé Neil. Madeline's fate becomes central to the film, because while the local zombies represent social problems, these problems remain marginal until they are encountered through a young, white woman.[619] At the same time, at an implicit level, death's disturbing power becomes problematic when it is met by a Western character. At an explicit level, oppression on the basis of race or gender is made visible, when danger looms on a white woman.

Ellen Draper argues that men become enslaved to be used as workers, but Madeline is zombified because she is an object for male sexual desires. For Draper, the zombie women of the 1930s and 1940s classical films signify an allegory of women's

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[617] For vampires as economic allegories, see, for example Punter & Byron 2004, 269; Picart & Greek 2007, 18; Michel 2007, 394; Grady 1996, 231–232, Shaviro 2002, 281–285; Nixon 1997, 121; Godfrey, Gavin & Jones 2004, 26–27.
[618] Bishop 2008, 141, 145–150.
[619] See also Aizenberg 1999, 462; Bishop 2008, 141.

oppressed position (both socially and economically) in a cultural situation where men have power and control over women. In the classical zombie films, such cultural oppression is transformed into subjugation by both male characters and the camera.[620]

The gender issue is thus managed similarly to the classical *Dracula*. As Lucy and Mina were objects in the battle of male dominion, Edward Lowry and Richard deCordova summarize the male characters' relationship to Madeline as possessive. From beginning to end, she is an object possessed by men. First she is possessed by Neil, her fiancé. After her burial and zombification, Beaumont satisfies his wishes, possessing Madeline as a zombie. After Beaumont regrets his possession, Legendre takes over, and finally, when both Legendre and Beaumont are destroyed, Neil regains possession of Madeline. Lowry and deCordova argue that the repossession works as a resolution for the film in reuniting the romantic couple.[621]

Still, once during her zombification Madeline manages momentarily to resist the possessing and controlling gaze of the zombie master. After Neil has followed Madeline to the castle, Legendre commands her to kill him. She obediently grabs a knife and approaches Neil. By his side, she raises the knife, but hesitates at the last moment and, for a short while, seems to recognize something. This short moment of consciousness and recognition is enough to save Neil's life, although Madeline still remains under Legendre's power. Her example shows that a possibility of resistance exists, although her resistance, based on love, is not strong enough a reason in this classical film for lasting success. Still, even Legendre admits that if some day the zombies regained their consciousness, they would tear him apart. Legendre's comment refers to the awareness of the occupier (whether zombie master or another country) that oppressive actions cause hate and revengefulness. The risk and/or possibility of resistance is therefore always there.

However, somewhat troublingly, resistance and oppression in *White Zombie* appear in a racial form where modern Westerners have the power and knowledge to resist the destructive force of death through science. As with *The Mummy* or *Dracula*, it is the intervention of Westerners that changes the social situation. These classical films tend in fact to highlight the otherness of monsters by distancing them culturally from the

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[620] Draper 1988, 54.

[621] Lowry & deCordova 1984, 351. Bishop recognizes the three male characters as cornerstones of the story, but from a socio-cultural point of view. For him, Neil represents American middle class and US occupation, while Beaumont stands for imperialist and aristocratic French power, and Legendre is an allegory of hybridized capital as part of the agrarian Haitian economy and as a factory owner. (Bishop 2008, 148.)

United States. Wood also recognizes that in the classical period, the monster was generally foreign and 'always external to Americans, who may be attacked by it physically but remain (superficially, that is) uncontaminated by it morally.'[622]

When Madeline is threatened, the monster threatens to contaminate the American realm of the world. This launches the resistance of Western men, who now line up against oppression. As Bishop notes, the major threat in *White Zombie* is hybridization and colonization of Western cultural purity by a primitive culture. When the white protagonist is in danger of becoming an enslaved zombie under the natives' command, she might be 'colonized'. And as Neil comments, 'Better dead than that'.[623] Aizenberg continues the thought in arguing that the colonized society is not threatened by the native zombies, but when a representative of the Western society is threatened, zombification and its questions of oppression and possession become a problem for the whole society, not only for individuals.[624]

Oppression and resistance to oppression also respond to the modern ideology and myth of death similarly as in other classical living dead films. The Western attitude towards the fate of the local zombies shows that Western culture regards traditional death and its disturbing power as a problem for the more traditional (primitive) societies. When traditional death meets the realm and modernized death of the West, the situation turns challenging. In the end, when oppression is overcome by the Western characters, Western supremacy over death and the primitive is complete.

The rescue mission releases the society from under Legendre's power, which is a moot point, because it is executed by Western characters, Neil and Burner the missionary. Ethnicity is further questioned through the ways in which zombie characters are allowed to resist oppression. The local zombies remain unconscious the whole time, while the two Western zombies, Madeline and Beaumont, are given a chance to resist. Beaumont in fact starts to regret his actions after seeing the zombified Madeline. Legendre now turns against him and makes him one of his servants. However, Beaumont who ordered the zombification of Madeline, is able to understand what is happening to him. Because Beaumont is the first man to comprehend the transformation process he is

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[622] Wood 1984 (1979), 171–172, 183.
[623] Bishop 2008, 141–142, 144–145, 150.
[624] Aizenberg 1999, 462. Furthermore, Sheller argues that in these Haitian zombie traditions (and in the later cannibal versions), Haiti serves as a primitive and exotic otherness to the Western society. In this marginalized location, the fear of zombies and infectious bodies rises from the colonial and racial fears of sexual encounters where the bodies of others threaten the white bodies. (Sheller 2003, 146, 152.) Aizenberg (1999, 462) makes similar notions of the threatening hybridization of white and black bodies, and how Haitian bodies are connected to barbarism, animality, and immorality.

going through, Legendre accidentally prompts the possibility for zombie resistance. With his last remaining powers, Beaumont confronts his former ally and future zombie master and drags Legendre to death with him. Unlike in Madeline's case, Beaumont's resistance is based on knowledge, which becomes necessary for successful resistance.

Beaumont thus comes to represent the zombie resistance which has so far been absent. As Bishop summarizes, the zombies had 'no voice, no opinions, no consciousness, and (most importantly) no ability to organize.'[625] But Beaumont does this as a Westerner, and by the end, it is the white men who become the heroes standing against oppression, while the Haitian slaves remain unconscious and follow their master to death. Bishop quite rightly argues that the colonial zombies remain as others and uncivilized who have no place in the Western order. When the zombies are finally heard, it is rather recognition than true interaction from the Westerners. The recognition is not liberating, either: because the zombies are given a voice by the Western people, the marginalized are still in the margins, albeit in a different margin.[626]

White Zombie introduced several forms of oppression, pertaining to class, race, and gender, and also showed how the characters, (some of the) zombies and the viewer are invited to become conscious of them. Most of all, by the end of the film, society did not return to the initial point of departure, but seemed momentarily at least to be freed from one occupier. The ending is nevertheless slightly troubling, as it seems to hide problems with US occupation by depicting Westerners as bringing civilization (especially in the form of modern death), peace and democracy to the society.

As Fay maintains, while US occupation became a major historical and cultural trauma for Haiti, the classical zombie films represent the American side of the story. From this perspective, the existence of the zombies functions as an admittance of the effects of US politics which at the same time are denied by the ending of the film. The zombies are marked as monstrous, and their deadly jump into nothingness in the end erases all trace of the occupation, similarly to having been erased from American memory. Madeline, the zombified white girl and the only zombie saved with any degree of certainty, closes the film by saying 'I dreamed'. The memories of occupation are wiped out, as if they never happened.[627]

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[625] Bishop 2008, 146.
[626] Bishop 2008, 147, 150.
[627] Fay 2008, 82–83, 93–94, 99.

In this sense, after much progressive potential, *White Zombie* ends up being a reactionary film. The closure removes the zombies' threatening force of death from the society, presenting white Western men, values, and practices as savior and as capable of opposing the destructive power of death. At the same time, the film showcases the idealization of modern death which is contrasted to the primitive and traditional death of the local culture.

Revolutionary Zombies in Night of the Living Dead

George Romero renewed the zombie tradition with his 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*.[628] The zombies continued as allegories for oppression in the society, symbolizing a fear for discontinuity, but this time the angle was different. In *White Zombie*, Madeline had already dramatized the zombie-linked de-individuation process and hinted at a possibility of resistance, but according to Punter and Byron, the importance of social withdrawal proved successful with apocalyptic zombies.[629] Actually, *Night of the Living Dead* was among the earliest apocalyptic visions which set in motion a nihilistic vogue in the Hollywood films of the late 1960s and the 1970s.[630] In this film, the number of reanimated, unburied and cannibalistic corpses endlessly grows to make the mass threat of zombies overpowering. All good intentions of the survivors are vain. Their deadly fate seems unavoidable.

While *White Zombie* has been explained in relation to the US occupation of Haiti, *Night of the Living Dead* has been connected to the American cultural trauma of the late 1960s and early 1970s. There was the fading optimism of youth movements (hippies in particular), escalation of the Vietnam War, growing violence between authorities and countercultures, and an emerging sense of social chaos, race and gender questions, and distrust between different groups.[631] For example, Becker argues that where Romero's previous projects had presented hippie values, such as communal love, pleasure of drugs and sexuality, and peace and pacifism, his horror film projected an end to optimism. *Night of the Living Dead* is filled with issues rejected by the hippies: pessimism,

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[628] Despite the film's aura of originality, it is in fact loosely based on Richard Matheson's *I Am a Legend*, a story about the dead retuning to life and feasting on the living.
[629] Punter & Byron 2004, 264–265.
[630] For the apocalyptic bent, see, for instance, Quart & Auster 2002, 10; Russell 1995, 174–208.
[631] For example, Phillips 2005, 86, 93, 96, 100; Becker 2006, 45–47; Higashi 1990, 179, 181.

violence, nihilism, materialism, competitiveness, militarism, and rationality.[632] American society is about to destruct, and like all Romero's films, Shaviro argues, this film, too, becomes a cynical political allegory of the United States.[633]

The allegorical power of the zombies is highlighted ever since the first frames of the film, which opens with a shot of a solitary car riding on an empty country road. The opening credits rolling, the camera follows the car to the local cemetery. Just before the car parks, we see the American flag flying in the cemetery, interpreted by Grant as 'a clear attack on American society', because it shows the connection between death and American society, especially in 1968, a year shadowed by the escalating Vietnam War. Grant continues that the flag and thereby 'the sense of national community' become 'marked by death'.[634] And soon enough, death becomes a serious threat to any kind of community in the film.

In the opening, when Barbra and John are attacked, the zombie who preys in the cemetery under the flag, also creates an allegory for social revolution, which is a product of human activity. There is no zombie master who could be blamed, nor is there any final explanation for the events. Instead, the news broadcasts, which unmistakably echo the television footage and televised settings of Vietnam War news broadcasting[635], offer military and scientific experiments as one probable reason for zombification. These experiments have released radiation which renders the unburied corpses reanimated and cannibalistic. In this sense, it is the existing social order, the silent acceptance of events, and most of all the desire to make modern warfare even more effective and deadly that have caused the problem. Indeed, in this film, modern science is a problematic approach to death, creating more death than it manages to explain. This criticism against science is connected to the cultural context of the film with a conflicting relationship between medicalized death and deadly consequences of scientific innovations. Christina Staudt, for example, argues that while the marginalization of natural dying peaked during the 1950s and 1960s, the same images became fractured by a social awareness of violent death— such as caused by the nuclear arsenal.[636]

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[632] Becker 2006, 42–47, 51.
[633] Shaviro 2004 (1993), 82. Similarly, J. Hoberman (2003, 261) argues that *Night of the Living Dead*'s cannibalistic theme in the most extreme way symbolizes 'America devouring itself'.
[634] Grant 2007, 54.
[635] For example, Sumiko Higashi (1990, 181–184) has similarly noticed the similarities between the televised Vietnam War and the visual cuing in the *Night of the Living Dead*.
[636] Staudt 2009, 6, 8.

Furthermore, the military's responsibility for death is here brought onto American soil and made visible to the American people rather than hidden away to foreign battlefields. This contrasts the undead zombies with American military deaths, which, according to Davies, normally symbolize the sacrifice of the soldiers' lives that a nation is prepared to make in its commitment to maintain existing society. In this sacrificial process, violent death, usually understood in negative terms, has been given meanings which highlight social continuance.[637] Reanimated zombies (or symbols of soldiers who died in Vietnam and came back to haunt the people who sent them there), however, deny such sacrificial power, reminding us instead of death's disrupting power in the society. They refuse to suppress the society's capability of and responsibility for bringing death on its members. Indeed, they actively attack the society that created them, and, therefore, unlike their classical relatives, become revolutionary figures by not accepting their fate in marginalized silence. The zombies force the society to encounter a problematic and violent relationship to death.

Moreover, the phenomenon that brings the dead back to life is now a mass occurrence. This, Grant notes, makes zombies into allegories not only of revolution, but 'of modern crowd behaviour.'[638] What connects such notions of resistance and mass behavior is the idea of consumption which can be read from two different approaches: as revolutionary power and as mass culture criticism. Both approaches bring to the fore the consuming nature of death and illustrate the problematic but changing relationship with death.

First, as a metaphor for mass culture, the zombies act as mindless creatures rather than as active beings. Instead of producing, they only consume at the level that ends up destroying wealth. They do not care what is in their way when they reach for their goals, and as such they end up destroying the material structures of nation. Shaviro points out that the zombies have broken away from their classical roles as slave workers and have transformed into mindless consumers, always wanting more yet never getting any pleasure.[639]

Although such excessive mass consumption can already be read from *Night of the Living Dead*, it is more obvious in the sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), based on a shopping mall where the survivors consume until they get bored. This is also where the

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[637] Davies 2005, 75–76.
[638] Grant 2007, 52–53.
[639] Shaviro 2002, 289. See also Mohammed 2006, 102; Latham 1997, 131; Webb & Byrnand 2008, 90–91.

zombies gather and they, too, are after the place, not the people in it. As one of the characters says, 'They just remember. Remember that they want to be in here,' and continues, 'They're us. That's all.' In Matthew Walker's analysis, *Dawn of the Dead* conveys consumer criticism. In the end, material goods fail to provide happiness, which connects the living to the zombies, as they are both driven by an endless grasping that leads nowhere. Walker therefore argues that by the end of the film, the zombies are no longer cynical or even nihilistic, but rather melancholic and sad creatures who can never gain satisfaction (which symbolically compares to modern consumer criticism).[640]

The need for consumption is visible in *Night of the Living Dead* as well, where the allegory is communicated mostly through the cannibalistic consuming of human flesh. As Webb and Byrnand maintain, the zombies who excessively, mindlessly, and violently consume 'without respect for life' resemble the capitalist marketplace which has a similar all-absorbing environment and logic. While *White Zombie* provided criticism of how capitalism needs and exploits workers, these zombies create another view of capitalism as 'mindless consumption of the unnecessary by the unneedy.'[641]

Second, and more importantly, from the revolutionary perspective, zombie consumption ties in with what these creatures do—eat people. For example, Sheller argues that cannibalism is the ultimate metaphor for consuming lives and souls.[642] The zombies' cannibalistic power makes them a destructive and revolutionary force which destroys the society's structures both in *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels. Webb and Byrnard underline that the social institutions destroyed in *Night of the Living Dead* also become the main sites for zombification and thus bring death into the everyday.[643] At first, the institutions are clearly places of modern death such as hospitals and funeral houses, from where the threat reaches the homes of the living. In the sequels, the zombies wreak havoc on shopping malls, churches, schools, laboratories, prisons, and army barracks, bringing death and chaos into a wider range of institutions.

Such a revolutionary interpretation makes the zombies appear as an active force in the society, even though they do nothing more than expose the already existing societal fractures. Aggressively re-enacting the existent behavior models, these clumsy and pathetic creatures can be interpreted as the decay of culture and its values. While the

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[640] Walker 2006, 83–86, 89.
[641] Webb & Byrnand 2008, 91–92.
[642] Sheller 2003, 145. Or, Wood (1984 (1979), 189) argues that cannibalism represents the ultimate possession where liberation comes too late, and only the punishment is left.
[643] Webb & Byrnand 2008, 91.

zombies are driven by cannibalism, it is also a symbolic reflection of how America self-destructs.[644]

The humanity's destructive force becomes evident when we shift the angle from the zombies to the victims who do the best they can to survive. After Barbra has arrived at the house, another survivor, Ben, enters. While Barbra is confused and hysteric, Ben swiftly takes control. As he tries to keep death from re-entering the home it was once expelled from, he starts to barricade the house against the outer threat and devises ways of scaring or killing the zombies, knowing full well that the zombies are clumsy and move slowly. Once the humans have arrived at the right means of destruction, the zombies' only remaining power is that of the masses.

Ben, and later the news broadcasts, represent acceptance of the situation but also the knowledge to destroy the monsters. Although the killing of the zombies is easy in theory, it fails in practice, because the very existence of the zombies (death) has already shown that the core problem of American society lies in increasing diversities and distrust. This, especially after the five other people who have been hiding in the cellar reveal themselves, becomes the underlying element of threat in the film. The survivors are unable to work together, becoming their own worst enemies. Becker connects such problematics to the social reality of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when people were 'increasingly unable to work together', or communicate with one another, which would later lead to culture wars. In this sense, *Night of the Living Dead* could be seen, Becker argues, as a dramatization and warning of what would happen if individualism and competitiveness gained the upper hand in American culture.[645]

We can recognize four different groups of people in *Night of the Living Dead*: Ben and Barbra, the young couple Tom and Judy, the Cooper family with father, mother and infected child, and zombie-killing officials. First, the main tension is created between Ben and Mr. Cooper who both see themselves as leaders of the group, arguing whether they should defend themselves against the zombies in the house or hide in the cellar. Their argument culminates in a fight over a gun, which is when Cooper gets injured. Second, Tom and Judy become mediators in this conflict, later getting killed in an attempted getaway. Third, the Cooper family holds together behind a façade of happy family life, until the daughter, ironically, eats her parents. Finally, also Ben and Barbra,

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[644]As Waller (1986, 281) observes, *Night of the Living Dead* intentionally creates several similarities between the living and the undead and in this way stresses the bond between normality and monstrousness in the society. See also Alanen & Alanen 1985, 129, 135.

[645] Becker 2006, 52.

the protagonists, face their end. Barbra is hunted down by her zombified brother, and Ben is killed by the officials pursuing the zombies.

Romero's other zombie films, too, deal with similar issues of problematic individualism, distrust, and internal conflicts that lead to destruction. The people in these films are unable to work together, forming smaller groups instead which end up fighting, not the zombies, but one another. In *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), we have the survivors inside the shopping mall and a biker gang outside it, and while the two cannot get along, the zombies are able to destroy both. In *Day of the Dead* (1985), the competitive groups are the scientists and the army; and in *Land of the Dead* (2005), different social classes, or the upper class and lower class. Already at 1986 Waller maintained that each Romero's film recreates images of violence and regenerates its causes, aims and justifications. The living characters hold potential for monstrosity, as most of them are already corrupted: if they become undead, the change is not that drastic. Even those who are not corrupted face turning into the living dead.[646]

After the third sequel, Romero felt an urge to return to zombie stories but with a fresh start, launching another series which is a sequel of sorts to the previous films, but they re-imagine the start of zombification. The main difference is that these films question more openly the violent rejection directed against the zombies. The students in the *Diary of the Dead* (2007) debate quite vividly whether they have a right to kill zombies, while the following film, *Survival of the Dead* (2009), reveals that the zombies might actually learn to live together with the living, but even in these films, chaos prevails because of the internal conflicts of the living. Group loyalty keeps breaking up, leaving us with individual and egoistic goals. *Diary of the Dead* sums up Romero's general approach with a voice-over questioning 'Are we worth saving? You tell me'.

Night of the Living Dead already revealed that the characters' failure to communicate and work together is emblematic of American society. The zombies appear as external threats which become political scapegoats for instability, threat, and death. The society fails to recognize that deep down the outer threats are born in the relationship to the existing society, also failing to see that internal issues can prove to be more pervasive than external perils. The zombies indeed challenge the individualism of the American values and modern death, as their very existence seems to highlight the values of the community and a communal approach to dying.

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[646] Waller 1986, 340–355.

Interestingly, Leah A. Murray argues that the two colliding forces in *Night of the Living Dead*— individualism and communitarianism—have been the two dominant ideologies in American political philosophy for over two centuries, since the founding of the nation. He also argues that Romero's zombie films address communitarianism in dramatizing the problems of individualism. Murray defines individualism as an idea where society depends on self-reliance, values individual hard work and entrepreneurship, and disvalues communitarianism as a limitation to individual freedom. He also defines communitarianism as co-operation which makes the society prosper and which respects community and self-sacrifice.[647]

Individualism fails in *Night of the Living Dead*. This suggests that if people were able to work together and took into account the needs of others, they could beat the zombie threat. However, because they keep acting on their individualistic goals, as a side project, the whole nation, society, culture, and its values are destroyed. The film proposes that the American social contract should be based on communitarianism rather than on individualism, but Murray also notes that the possibility for communitarianism seems to have been erased.[648] In a way, the zombies of *Night of the Living Dead* could be seen as communitarian power. After all, they all are driven by their own needs, but with a rather common goal they end up working together. From their perspective, things are working out. For his part, also Simon Clark argues that Romero's zombies could represent a possibility for a different (and better) society where instinctual freedom could liberate society from the modern understanding of civilization and make it into an allowing and free community.[649] To sum up, communitarianism could be a solution, but it remains unattainable. When society is driven into chaos, there are no solutions.

Night of the Living Dead winds up in disorder. The true communitarian hero, Ben, is killed, and the social criticism provided by the film seems to lead nowhere. Instead, during the final credits, the viewer witnesses the hero burn on a pile of American corpses. These final images highlight connections both to the crisis in Vietnam and to the internal crisis of the United States. Helicopters searching for zombies and survivors parallel the search and destruction methods of Vietnam War; the killing of Ben compares to the assassination of Martin Luther King; and the black-and-white photography of burned bodies during the final credits is similar to the photographic

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[647] Murray 2006, 211, 212, 215.
[648] Murray 2006, 212, 220.
[649] Clark 2006, 197–209. Clark bases his claim to the idea that egoistic zombies are free to reach for their desires and they allow the same freedom to everyone else as well.

images from Vietnam.[650] The hopelessness of the ending carries social criticism, but similarly to Murray, Becker argues that the film offers a critique without a solution. The despair, hopelessness, and nihilism of *Night of the Living Dead* would lead us to believe that there are no broader solutions left, and the society is surely heading towards chaos. Seen like this, Becker claims, the film could be read as progressive because it destroys and criticizes, but in a reactionary way.[651]

Although it is undeniable that *Night of the Living Dead* is a nihilistic film that offers criticism in the form of destruction, I would argue that it is rather progressive than reactionary, because in the midst of the destruction it implies that if people could put their diversities and distrusts away, they could fight the destructive power of discontinuities and death and heal the fractures of the society. Despite the fact that *Night of the Living Dead* is extremely cynical about whether people are able or even willing to do this, it still remains an option. In this sense, the zombies could also be construed as a positive social force whose revolutionary power could awaken people to change their society and to avoid conflicts that lead into increasing violent deaths. The film can thus be thought as educational: death demonstrates that we should learn from our mistakes. Instead of making the same mistakes again, we should live our lives in more fruitful ways.

At the explicit level of symbolic meanings, *Night of the Living Dead* addresses themes of distrust and diversity within the American society. Implicitly, the themes suggest that the film criticizes both individualism as such and the lack of communitarianism in the encounters with death. Communal behavior is praised, including communal and public negotiation with death, although the film also recognizes the failure of modern society to live up to these expectations. Indeed, the apocalyptic images insist that if death cannot be alienated from the society and its structures, it should not be shunned at the personal level, either. This film tends to argue that if people run away from death, try to barricade or hide it, it will sooner or later face them within themselves and within their families, and without sufficient means of comprehending or understanding it. In this sense, *Night of the Living Dead* suggests for the viewer that an open negotiation with death as an experience could increase individual means to encounter death.

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[650] See also Higashi 1990, 181–185.
[651] Becker 2006, 49–50, 58.

Greedy Corporation of *Resident Evil*

While White Zombie presented zombies as oppressed slave workers and Night of the Living Dead featured zombies who finally became conscious of their oppressed state and started a revolution against the society, the zombies of Resident Evil (2002) appear to combine these two earlier traits of enslaved workers and revolutionary resistance. Indeed, these zombies appear to follow Scott A. Lukas' argument that the remade zombies of Resident Evil do not even intend to be original, but intertextual and referring to other zombie versions within different films and in other media.[652] In a way, they accept the revolutionary potential of their monstrous character, and this time the zombified workers succeed in taking advantage of their terrifying and chaotic undead state against their enslavers.

Richard J. Hand argues that *Resident Evil* exploits 'cynicism about global capitalism.'[653] The film's multinational Umbrella Corporation becomes the source of threat and death in referring to fears for viral catastrophes, misuse of public profiles of companies, and fear of both military and terrorist designs. The opening credits already ground the theme of the unethical employer for the viewer, and the first frames of a confidential report of 'the events leading to the incident by Raccoon city' make clear the links to modern capitalist facilities. The report uses both onscreen texting and voiceover to highlight the direct addressing of the topic to the viewer:

> 'At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Umbrella Corporation had become the largest commercial entity in the United States. Nine out of every 10 homes contain its products. Its political and financial influence is felt everywhere. In public, it is the world's leading supplier of: computer technology, medical products, healthcare. Unknown even to its own employees, its massive profits are generated by military technology, genetic experimentation and viral weaponry.'

The dramatization of events starts when someone steals the dangerous serum that has been developed for viral weaponry and destroys one of the serum tubes that causes zombification and chaos at the facility. The facility, or Hive, is situated beneath Raccoon

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[652] Lukas 2009, 233–234.
[653] Hand 2004, 130.

city. It is a secret research facility owned by the Umbrella Corporation with more than 500 workers engaged in classified research.

This film, once again, has one kind of zombie master, an evil force behind the zombification and responsible for the events. The true master of zombification is the faceless corporation and its board greedy for money and power. This becomes clear at the end of the film at the latest, when two survivors have managed to escape from the Hive, which they have successfully sealed, too. The Corporation representatives capture the survivors and use them for inhuman experiments, turning them into monstrous figures who then get introduced to us in the sequels *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004), *Resident Evil: Extinction* (2007) and *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (2010).

In this sense, *Resident Evil* projects a bigger development in recent horror and science fiction films, which according to Pat Gill condemn organizations and corporations as monstrous for their desire for power. Inhumanity and monstrousness feel most at home in the corporate world.[654] In many ways, *Resident Evil* harks back to the classical tradition in representing the Corporation as the source of oppression. Critics such as Jennifer Fay and K. Silem Mohammed have already read the classical zombies as an allegory for modern industrial practice and an alienated workforce.[655] However, *Resident Evil* does this with more strength. The film creates an allegory of the modern factory where the workers work for a large, faceless, and transnational company without understanding what they are doing and who thus alienate themselves from the work and its consequences. The workers at the Hive have been forced to living and working underground without personal ties to the outer world. Their only task is to be productive for the Corporation that does not want their work or working conditions to be exposed to view but strives to maintain a good public face in front of the consumers.[656]

In fact, the Corporation controls both its workforce and its consumers. It has reached the homes of most Americans, who support it in the absence of knowledge of the malpractice. The most horrifying issue, says Hand, is that the Umbrella Corporation is part of the life of the customer, who unwittingly bolsters immoral corporate action and

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[654] Gill 2007, 142. Gill analyzes mostly the recent vampire television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) and *Angel* (1999–2000) where this trend is obvious as well. See also Latham (1997, 135).

[655] Mohammed 2006, 93.

[656] Jean and John Comaroff further argue that the modern zombie allegory can be compared to the immigrant workers of the developing countries where the workers have to travel far and wide to work in a multinational factory and produce cheaply manufactured products for Western consumption. In order to make a livelihood, these zombie-like workers have been forced to give up their traditional culture and personal relationships. (Comaroff & Comaroff 2002, 780–783, 797–799.)

goals.[657] The film combines both the production and consumer criticism that was introduced in *White Zombie* and *Night of the Living Dead.*

However, while the zombie master's and society's roles are similar to those of the *White Zombie*, the role of the zombies is closer to that of *Night of the Living Dead.* After the toxic virus is freed, the computer is programmed automatically to minimize the damage by killing all the employees. This is not enough, however. On the arrival of the investigating team, it becomes clear that every living being (not only scientists, but animals and the end products of the facility's monster experiments) has turned into a living dead now hunting for fresh meat. While preying, they destroy the facility and its research results, causing huge financial losses for the Corporation. These living dead are not controlled in the same manner as they were in *White Zombie.* Rather, the revolutionary zombies turn against the Corporation and society that have created them. The conflict between the workers and Corporation owners is even more evident at the end of the film, when the head of the facility refuses to accept that the Hive and its secrets would be lost and demands that the Hive be reopened. This, however, leads to the zombification of the whole of Raccoon city, and later in the film series, the rest of the world.

The film finishes with an apocalyptic vision of empty demolished streets and striking views of blood-stained buildings. Such a closing image is familiar from *Night of the Living Dead*, but there is nevertheless a difference between the two films. Underneath the nihilistic and apocalyptic vision, *Night of the Living Dead* still provides an alternative social structure which highlights communitarianism. In contrast, no such alternative vision exists in *Resident Evil*, which, while criticizing large corporations and their policies, uses violent death to produce affects and, as a byproduct, some comment albeit without a progressive aim. Alice, the main character, tries to help the protesters bring Umbrella Corporation down for ideological reasons, whereas Spence, who steals the serum, acts on different motives. He sees resistance as an impossible dream and deviates from the original plan by agreeing to sell the T-virus to a competing corporation. Spence is after money and argues against Alice's more ideological aims by stating: 'You really believe that people like him (referring to the American chairman of the transnational company) will ever change anything. Nothing ever changes.' The film

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[657] Hand 2004, 133–134.

concludes by arguing that the problem cannot be solved, and it will endlessly repeat itself.

Spence's stealing the serum and releasing it in the laboratory can be considered terrorist action. His deeds are partially justified by the Corporation's unethical attitude, but the effects nevertheless impact on ordinary people. *Resident Evil* is therefore part of the so-called post-9/11 zombie films which have become popular after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The link is made by Bishop, for example, who sees the recent popularity of zombie films reflecting the post-9/11 paranoia. According to him, the films' graphic violence calls attention to the breakdown of societal infrastructure, which bears a resemblance to the aftereffects of terrorism, in the same way that the 1960s zombie films were reactions to the Vietnam War. In such circumstances, the images of death are culture-specific, Bishop argues. Survival themes, typical for zombie films, have thus become especially popular and relevant for the contemporary viewer, who finds that the apocalyptic scenery has become much more of a reality.[658]

The significance of a terrorist threat is also seen in its ability to bring violent death to American soil and closer to viewers. For example, Staudt argues that by the turn of the century, the American awareness of death has been fostered by terrorism, but also by the AIDS epidemic and hospice and palliative movements. The need to encounter the multiplicity of death thus increased as well.[659] It had become clear by now that modern society could not rid itself of violent death and its place in the public, in the media, political debates, and conflicts. When the possibility of dying tragically—either violently or accidentally— showed that death could not be controlled by modern society's institutions and practices, it highlighted in a specific way the individual need to encounter death and make it meaningful. Such a personal need for an encounter has increased the popularity of violent films which discuss this dimension of death through the physical and affective experiences provided for the viewer.

Resident Evil addresses both violent and affective death by paying attention to modernity's problems with these issues. It does not intend to envisage other social orders and it therefore becomes a reactionary film rather than a progressive one, although in his original essay Wood did suggest that all apocalyptic and nihilistic visions were signs of progressive films. *Resident Evil* ends up reactionary in a sense anticipated by Becker. Rather than providing truly progressive or alternative social visions, the film uses the

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[658] Bishop 2009, 17–21, 24.
[659] Staudt 2009, 10–11, 15–17.

apocalyptic vision for other purposes, exploiting the increasing number of violent deaths and the destructive power of the undead and creating spectacles of death and dying for an eager genre audiences. In films such as this, and in the new cultural context, tension is about surviving in a death-filled world. By concentrating on reactive issues, the film redirects the notion from cognitive explaining of death's functions to the embodied affectivity of death scenes. At the implicit level, then, the focus is shifted from death-related social commentary to a socially shared, but personal level of a death-related experience.

In summary, the zombie films focus on the fear for death, which can be interpreted in a dual yet intertwined light. It can be read as a destructive social force as in *White Zombie* where traditional death threatens the existing ideal of the social order. Also, it can be understood as a revolutionary power which jeopardizes the existing but dysfunctional society. In *Night of the Living Dead*, the revolutionary power throws the doors open to a progressively new society, but in *Resident Evil* the society is left, in a rather reactionary way, to its own devices and destruction. At the implicit level, these films can also be seen to be debating the death's public role. The classical film idealizes the marginalization of death—of violent death in particular—whereas the later films acknowledge that violent death cannot be alienated, but could be embraced instead and studied as destruction or liberation, yet always part of both the public and the personal. This is the social power of the addressing of death in the living dead films: not only do the films force the viewer to encounter death, but the embodied death can be used to mediate several other social issues and vice versa.

Throughout this chapter, I have brought to the fore the allegorical power that the undead as embodiments of death and dying carry with them and mark for the viewer. Death threatens the existence, values, and practices of society and questions the continuity of the society as such. Furthermore, different undead characters invite different social allegories and deal with them differently during different eras and films. The mummies present changing cultural death and dying rituals, the vampires discuss the opening borders of sexuality and gender, and the zombies challenge the existing social order. At the implicit level, these films address the borders of modern death, both by idealizing and challenging it. The change in the mummy films reminds us of the slow commercialization of death, while the vampire films support the individualization of death, and the zombie films force death (violently) back to the public sphere.

However, the films continue to provide rather more questions than answers of modern death. Quart and Auster identify this as a typical development for most Hollywood films which avoid any real social alternatives or different political visions. They claim that the social and political criticism available in American films often occurs as anarchic elements which are meant to break the institutional rules and to question the social and economic systems, but they, too, fail to answer: then what?[660]

This brings us back to the films' capability for social commentary. Among others, Schatz argues that all 'determinate', or violent, genres articulate conflicts that challenge the existing social order, and these films are thus capable of both criticizing and reinforcing the American 'values, beliefs, and ideals' at the same time. Also, although closures can be used to strengthen the existing values and maintain the stability of the society, they will do this only temporarily or partially. Both conflict and resolution are part of American culture, and because conflicts are continuous, they are debated again and again. In conclusion, Schatz claims that 'Hollywood movies are considerably more effective in their capacity to raise questions than to answer them'.[661]

However, I argue that these films do not need to provide a certain ready-made idea for a reformed social order or understanding of death for the viewer. Their social power is in their apparatus gaze. This returned gaze invites the viewer to become conscious of the posed question, which creates a public space for social negotiation. In such a view, the power of the films' returned gaze relies on the viewer's decoding and ability to continue the discussion. By fantasizing and repeating certain questions, the American living dead films can be seen to react and anticipate cultural changes. By questioning the possibility of modern death, by pushing the images and affective dimensions of death, they use socially shared experiences to make death part of the public experience. Death never totally left this sphere, but it gladly reasserted its place, this time through the individualization and commercialization of death.

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[660] Quart & Auster 2002, 5–6.
[661] Schatz 1981, 26–35.

5 TRANSFORMING TRADITIONS OF RHETORIC OF DEATH

The liminal state of the undead challenges the modern understanding of death which supposes that the two spheres—life and death—can and should be separated and kept apart with the help of knowledge, science, and professionals. The fantastic existence of other kinds of possibilities in the cavalcade of American living dead films has sought to open up and widen this understanding. Throughout this study, I have discussed the ways in which the American living dead films have addressed death through different narrative and rhetoric strategies. The themes, narrative structures, imagery, characters, and events have all been connected to death, and in a changing array, these films have used death as part of their cinematic rhetoric. At the textual level, their solutions have also invited the viewer to recognize and interpret death in certain ways. The living dead films have thus created a discursive space for a negotiation over death.

As I argued in the opening, the cultural, functionalist, and rhetoric understandings of narratives regard stories with certain narrative goals, uses for the receiver, and narrative roles which participate in cultural debates. Similarly as cinematic deaths cannot be isolated and separated from their narrative and generic contexts, the living dead films are neither produced nor consumed in a vacuum, but in a close relationship to the film industry, genre conventions, and socio-cultural background. Changes in the communicative elements and in the decoding practices of the viewers thus create reciprocal negotiation over the rhetoric of death.

The viewing process of the living dead films concentrates on the images and themes of death which respond to and negotiate with the impossibility of escaping death: there is a cultural need to encounter it. Through cinematic images (albeit with rather negative images of death), the films successfully give some form and meaning to death, presenting the viewers with specific models of death as an event. Ridell's multilayered notion of space as comprising physical, symbolic or discursive and virtual dimensions which overlap and interweave[662] helps us recognize that the living dead films offer a discursive public space for the actual audiences. It is within this space that they can decode the meanings, interpret the films, and negotiate with the images and themes of violent death in particular. From this point of view, it is crucial that the textual addressing of the living dead films be critically approached, because the cinema not only

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[662] Ridell 2010, 13–14.

provides a space for negotiation, but film rhetoric also participates in such spatial practices.

In the introductory chapter of this work, I formulated three goals for my study: to create a picture of the tradition of living dead films; to discuss through textual analysis the cinematic processes of addressing the viewer in the living dead films; and on the basis of these first two goals, to analyze the socio-cultural negotiation with death within the genre. In this final and concluding chapter, I will survey and assess the results at a general level. A central dimension is the change from classical through transitional to postclassical period which has been a running thread in the analytical chapters. All in all, by looking at the American living dead films from the perspective of the articulation, rhetorical strategies, and force of death at the textual level and by scrutinizing the socio-cultural dimensions of this articulation, I hope to further the discussion on the intertwined role of horror cinema and death in particular, and the relation of Hollywood genres and society in general.

American Living Dead Films

I have discussed the American living dead films as if they were a real category. We need to remember, however, that any genre or subgenre is a constantly reforming process, not a fixed construction as they often seem in academic discourse as a result of our desire to define the phenomena. Likewise, after recognizing that research and film analyses tend to discuss the concept of the living dead film without always inspecting the category itself more closely, I felt an urge to grasp the descriptive and the defining task while paying attention to the changing cultural and industrial uses of these films as well.

I have suggested that the living dead films have certain central textual or discursive trademarks, such as the making the living dead characters the main monsters, the use of deaths as narrative turning points, and the deployment of themes of death in general. The latter are virtually essential to this subgenre of horror where death is treated at the symbolic and rhetoric level that carries a cultural and social significance both implicitly and explicitly. In these films, deaths and the threat of death reveal a set of values, attitudes, and institutional structures. By connecting them all to death at thematic and other levels, the films provide a public arena for negotiating and debating death in Western societies.

Furthermore, the importance of death is visibly embodied in the undead monster on whom the cause–effect chains and emotional and physical reactions seem to center. As I have argued, the living dead are recognizable through five distinct characteristics: transgressing death, unexpectedness, corporeality, consumption, and the ability to transform others to undead figures. The most important feature, however, is the culturally unnatural relationship to death. According to horror genre's conventions, the undead monsters embody death, threaten with death, and can cause death. Similarly, they force the other characters to react to them, and through them, to death. Most notably within the focus of my work, it is through various processes of recognition, alignment, and allying that the characters of the living dead films insist that the viewers, too, forcefully experience death.

While the characters of these films negotiate with death (either through or in relation to their own existence), the whole structure of the films is built around death events. Transformative, social, and final deaths create both structure and tension to the films. The deaths provide important narrative turning points, as death events formulate the beginnings of the story, lead the story to different directions, and often close the films as well. In this sense, the constant repetition of death events invites the viewer to pay attention to these scenes and to the ways in which these often extremely violent events are constructed and what kind of reactions they hope to elicit from the viewer.

The previous chapters have established that in terms of the genre's historical development the basic characters and structures have maintained their position in the continuing struggle of differentiation and standardization of the film narration in the living dead films. In fact, the centrality of both the undead monsters and the death events has been highlighted over the years. The cinematic undead figures, in particular, have become important embodiments of challenging, reinforcing, or destroying the cultural position of modern death. Their existence cannot be explained with reason or science; instead they are unexpected, magical even. With their transgressing corporeality they contradict modern death also by threatening the biological definitions of death in the modern society. In the classical era, the living dead bore traces of traditional death, which was defined rather spiritually. Death was the parting of the soul, and priests were the authorities of death. In the postclassical era, orientation has shifted from the past to the future: no longer do the living dead desire a traditional model of death, but rather new forms of personal and communal encounters with it. In this respect, some of the

most important changes are the viewers' more open access to the monsters' perspective and the increasingly graphic and spectacular visualization of (violent) death scenes.

I have close read eight living dead films for this work, but other vampire, mummy, and zombie films, as well as other horror films with undead characters seem to follow the same generic and repetitive solutions in their imagery, characters, and plot structures. However, a more detailed follow-up study with a broader sampling would be needed to discuss the borders and possibilities of this definition of the living dead subgenre in more detail. In this sense, I do not present my definition as complete or final; what I argue, however, is that the definition of the main character types and narrative structures offered here provides a fruitful starting point for future critical and systematic study of the living dead films.

Addressing Strategies in the Living Dead Films

Thematically and structurally, the living dead films use death as part of a complex rhetorical process of addressing. When addressing is understood as the ways in which the film invites and anticipates the viewer to participate in the film affectively and semiotically, it becomes clear that the complexity of the viewing process of the living dead films is further emphasized by the use of a culturally controversial theme, death, as the unifying idea, repository of imagery, and source of fascination.

As my analysis has demonstrated, it is possible for the viewer to be both fascinated by and afraid of death, to be enchanted by sublime images and despise looking, even at the same time. This highlights the structural strategy which constantly offers the viewer different, competing, and parallel positions to choose and distance oneself from. Such positions also enable the viewer to draw corporeally closer to the fictional world, making it possible to mediate even culturally progressive images of death, or other sensitive themes such as sexuality. Yet, in the end, the narration can choose to return to a conventional and culturally acceptable closure. The different positions that are constructed at the textual level contribute to the viewer's active role in the viewing process. The viewer is both given the opportunity and required to take some responsibility for the meaning making and experiences. The textual level of the living dead films already suggests that death can be interpreted and experienced in different ways, even throughout a single film or a death scene.

The fantasizing possibilities offered in the living dead films through multilayered gazing structures and analyzed in the preceding chapters resonate also with the theoretical views which demand that both the actual viewing process and the textual addressing of the viewer be understood in terms of changing and conflicting positions. Indeed, the gazes of the characters, camera, and apparatus open up different perspectives to the stories and scenes in the narration. Sometimes the gazes support one another, but occasionally they conflict, hide, and reveal different things for different positions, creating a multiplicity on the textual level and to the ways in which the film text addresses the viewer. With the monsters' perspective in particular, the textual possibilities become varied alongside the various other possibilities available for the decoding.

As my analysis shows, even the textual viewership needs to be understood as a flexible process which requires the actual viewer to participate in the viewing process. This process simultaneously invites and demands the viewer to negotiate with the presented possibilities and challenge his/her pre-existing values and attitudes, and to continue the debate with socio-culturally contradictory themes even after the actual viewing.

Despite the diversity, the offered interpretations and experiences are not random. They are suggested or hinted at most centrally in the narration of horror films, which attempts to guide and frame the reception process. This spotlights the textual processes of addressing and the social force implicit in these processes. The repeated stories of death can participate in the public debate over death-related attitudes, values, and practices. Both Miriam Hansen and Norman K. Denzin argue, in fact, that cinema is essentially a collective, communal, and public space and form of reception. They maintain that the publicness of cinema not only depends on the movie theaters as (semi)public places, but the viewing experiences themselves become collectively shared and, thereby, public processes.[663]

Denzin goes so far in emphasizing cinema's social significances as to claim that the United States is a cinematic society. The popularity of the cinema makes it a commercial institution but also a collective and socially shared self-reflection of American society. He also claims that the cinematic imagination has become an organic element in American societal fabric.[664] In the case of the United States, this is an

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[663] Hansen 1991, 2–3; Denzin 1995, 6.
[664] Denzin 1995, 14, 24, 29, 33–34.

especially interesting claim. The United States is not an ethnically or culturally homogenous nation, and while I have described the changing relationship to death as an entity, or as a certain phase of modern society, the relationship is not straightforward in terms of the complex and pluralistic American socio-cultural contexts. There is no homogenous American way of death.[665] Still, the United States presents itself and acts as a nation, and as a nation it participates in the creation of some sort of cultural community and shared narratives, or at least shared processes in the creation of public opinion.

The highlighted role of public discussions in forming of a nation has its roots in Jürgen Habermas' influential theoretization of the public sphere. He defined public sphere as a discursive site for people to freely and rationally discuss societal problems.[666] Whereas Habermas based his theory on debates emerging in the face to face (physical) public spaces, such as cafes, new approaches have widened the public space to include the media and virtual sites where discursive elements refer not only to speech or the written word, but to visuals as well.

The emphasis is on communicativeness, as is argued for example by Jodi Dean and Slavko Splichal. Both highlight the importance of overlapping domains of different institutions and social groups with their communicative actions. Together, these create a communication network often referred to as a public sphere.[667] Hansen presents a similar idea by claiming that the cinema, too, should be interpreted as a form of civil interaction in which film production, film texts, and the viewers take part in a 'web of public communication'.[668]

Therefore, although Denzin speaks of reflection, I argue that films cannot reflect society somehow directly but rather through communicating certain themes. It is the actual viewer who experiences and makes meanings from the cinematic suggestions in accordance with his/her background, capacities, and intentions. This produces a democratic process of values. Hansen argues that cinema as a public space is not an ideologically organized system, but rather creates publicness dynamically through the viewers as experiencing, interacting, and participating subjects. While the cinema may attempt to universalize and invite certain experiences in the viewers by mediating selected themes and images, it cannot dictate the actual participation which is

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[665] For example, Laderman (2009, 166-168), Corr & Corr (2003, 39) and Davies (2002 (1997), 37) highlight the diversity of death-related values and practices in the everyday lives of American people.
[666] See, for example, Habermas 1991 (1962).
[667] Dean 2001, 251–252; Splichal 2010, 32–33, 37.
[668] Hansen 1991, 2–3, 7–9, 11–12.

spontaneous by its nature.[669] Furthermore, the invited experiences by cinema are medium-specific. They are not rational or political debates, but are based on emotions, physical affects and values, which is evident in the analysis of the living dead films' invited relationship with the viewer.

In this sense, cinema as public space challenges the rationality of Habermas' focus on the public use of reason.[670] The public sphere thus appears a more complicated, conflicting and overlapping phenomenon than Habermas' historic specific description allowed. The widening perspective has forced the definition of 'public' to face the human nature with its cognitive (both rational and irrational), emotional, and embodied elements.

However, this emerging reinterpretation of public has not thrown Habermas aside or made his views irrelevant. For example, Jostein Gripsrud has returned to Habermas' recognition of a literary public sphere's influence on the development of a political public sphere. Building on this, Gripsrud talks about cultural public with political importance.[671] Jim McGuigan continues the debate by arguing that 'cultural public' combines public and personal to politics through affectivity and communication. Therefore, then, 'mass-popular culture and entertainment, the routinely mediated aesthetic and emotional reflections on how we live and imagine the good life' create a route for affectivity into public and the creation of an imagined community.[672] Also, in the light of my study and findings, the understanding of public which is affected by the socially shared experiences (not only rational debates) appears as an extremely intriguing notion that ought to be explored further. Here, I only have a chance to note that experiences and embodiments seem important parts of publically shaped values and attitudes as well.

The living dead films do define the monstrous and challenge the idea of death, but they also end up defining normality, or socially preferred understandings of death, to which monstrousness is compared. When the imagery of monstrosity changes in the varying socio-cultural situations and values, the imagery of normality similarly transforms, inviting reactions and attempting to universalize these definitions. The films

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[669] Hansen 1991, 12–13, 19. See also Hansen 1995, 137–140.

[670] See, for instance Dean 2001, 244–245. She supports this argument by suggesting that internet discussion pages are not necessarily reasonable or rational, but 'at worst, a set of irrational and often demeaning rants' (Dean 2001, 253).

[671] Gripsrud 2007, 480–481. For example, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas debates both the birth of the public sphere and the role that culture and discussions over literature, for example, have had in this process. (Habermas 1991 (1962), 27–43.)

[672] McGuigan 2005, 429–430, 433, 435. (Quote from page 435.)

therefore propose and provoke negotiation, but the negotiation as an actual process is done by the viewers who are part of a certain society, culture, and public traditions. Furthermore, the negotiation is also done in relation to the viewers' familiarity with the genre contexts and conventions. Decoding practices are not excluded from the wider generic processes, but are an integral part of them. This relates both the textual and interpretive practices to the genre's practical dimensions. In other words, we need to consider the genre's position in the cinema, culture, and society and examine how the genres are used by their viewers.

Articulation and Modality of Death in the Living Dead Films

Paul Watson argues that a film genre's power lies in its intertextual relationships, not in any individual practices. Any film genre is a 'metaphorical' process that explores specific dimensions of cinematic expression.[673] In the living dead films, the dimensions of violent, physical, and horrifying death are explored by both articulating and deconstructing death at the level of cinematic expression and by placing the expressions of death at the core of the audiences' experience and reception. Such an exploration can be called genre modality, which refers to the different expressed cultural meanings and aesthetic articulations of a genre. This articulation can be borrowed to other genres and other media as well, when a need for a certain affect and expression arises.[674]

The ways in which the living dead films (and other horror films) create models of terrifying death and dying can be employed in other media images, and the recognizable form of these images provides familiar social experiences, embodied sensations, and moral perceptions to the viewers. The living dead films respond to one kind of cultural task in relation to encountering death, or, because 'fear and denial' are still part of the American 'collective attitude about death and dying', as McIlwain argues,[675] the horror films' approach to negotiating with death has preserved its importance.

Many genres and blockbuster films use the horrifying death, but it is the horror genre and the living dead films that have concentrated on perfecting the cinematic

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[673] Watson 2007, 110–120, 124–126. See also Ridell 2006, 209–212.
[674] For the uses of modality, see Frow 2006, 75; Gledhill 2000, 229, 232–236, 240; Hallet 2009, 129, 149. Simpson defines this more philosophical understanding of modality as a 'capacity to shape narrative worlds - - and its potential to produce stories'. Modality thus connotes the idea of possible worlds and the ways in which different patterns of modality are used differently in varied genres. (Simpson 2005, 313.)
[675] McIlwain 2005, 10.

expression of violent death and the depiction of the dying process. The living dead films' affective, physical, and experiencing relationship to death works the traditions of death not only for their own generic uses, but for other films and other genres as well. In the future, it might be worthwhile to study how the modalities and the addressing of the viewer differ in different genres in relation to death-related attitudes, values, and understandings. It would be especially tempting to compare the use of postmortem characters of different film genres to those of the living dead films.

Another interesting question might be to compare two rather big generic modes of 'real' and 'imagined' together. Cinema's use of death is often considered more fantastical and indirect (possibly excluding documents) than the documentary uses of death in newspapers. Also, television's dramatized deaths have a more settled or recognized position in public than do cinematic deaths.[676] Interestingly, the management of death has changed rather similarly in these 'more public' or 'realistic' mediums. For example, McIlwain has studied American television programs, while Folker Hanusch's research has focused on death in news and journalism.

McIlwain argues that death has been given more discursive space both in magazine shows and television dramas as well as in the fan communities and web discussion pages of these shows, such as *Six Feet Under* or *Crossing over with John Edward*. The increasingly open relationship with death and mourning in television has finally reframed 'privacy of death' as 'death as a public spectacle'.[677] Hanusch argues similarly that the news media, especially since the internet's arrival, are now full of mourning, memorials, and the visuality of dying. Death has become 'the new black of the modern media age' and at the same time, the Western media is more aware of the emotional impact of death, both through personal emotions and social anxiety.[678] Still, films have a specific role in this process, recognized by these same writers. For example,

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[676] For television's power of making issues public, see, for example McIlwain 2005, 117–118; Gripsrud 2007, 480. Grisprud, for instance, argues that television, its documentary and dramatic elements as well as factual and fictive elements, can provide 'social coherence and identity', because they influence the debates, values and emotions on different topics. (Gripsrud 2007, 482–483.)

[677] McIlwain 2005, 107, 128, 177, 190, 195–196. (Quotes from page 190.)

[678] Hanusch 2010, 1–12. (Quote from page 2.) At the same time Hanusch argues there is nothing new in death representations at the news. At some points of history, these representations have been even more graphic or cruel as they are nowadays. In this way, news have responded to cultural desires and actually participated in hiding death at points when it has not been desired to go into details. (Hanusch 2010, 32-34, 77-78, 97, 162.)

Hanusch stresses that films have expressed interest in death and dying in more fantasizing ways in being freed from real-life representations.[679]

The cinema's productive power and the social force of horror's modality make it necessary to conclude how death has been constructed in the living dead films and how the addressing of death has changed since the classical to the postclassical era. Most notably, deaths have become more graphic, violent, and extreme. This highlights the constructed nature of death in these films, which tend not to create any sense of cinematic realism around the issue. The deaths have become more fantastic, deconstructed at the level of image, and at the same time they have become more physically challenging.

Violent death and monstrosity have also been brought closer to humanity and normality. The undead monsters are humans, but over the years the monstrous position has been increasingly occupied by living people. They might have become more violent and their activities morally more questionable than the deeds of the living dead characters. However, the change does not end there but the viewer has been dragged into the game as well. Both the extreme violence and the emphasized human responsibility in the postclassical films attempt to force the viewer to look at his/her own viewing position, understanding, and uses of violent death.

The following chart summarizes the main changes that death has undergone at the discursive level in the living dead films from the classical era through the transition period to the postclassical era:

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[679] Hanusch 2010, 3, 5.

Chart 1. Rhetoric of death, or discursive production of addressivity in the living dead films.

Era	Character Engagement			Death Events		Articulation of Death
	Recognition	Alignment	Allying	Narration of Death	Violent Death	Conclusion
Classical Living Dead Films	Undead as evil and corporeal monster.	Pers-pectives of other characters are emphasized.	Allying with morally positive (other) characters.	Highlighting moral closure of main monster's final death. Focus on the end of monstrosity.	Hidden violent death and protective relationship with the viewer.	Distanced and hidden death: abjecting corpses, immorality of death and morality of characters fighting death.
Tran-sition Living Dead Films	Undead as evil and corporeal monster.	Positions of other characters are emphasized, but also questioned.	Chal-lenging the morality of other characters.	Increasing access to trans-formative death of other characters and increasing numbers of deaths.	Revealing images, increasing distrust, irrationality and violence, Americani-zation of violent death.	Taking responsibility for America's uses of violent death, challenging the possibility to distance oneself from death.
Post-classical Living Dead Films	Highlighting grotes-queness of undead monster, inviting viewer to experience monstrous-ness.	Inviting viewer to align also with the monster's perspective.	No more morally positive or negative characters; boundaries between humanity and monstrosity are questioned.	Access to monsters' transformative death, lack of moral closures, and increasing apocalyptism. Focus on the birth of monstrosity, not the end.	Excess of images, aesthetic and constructed death, bodily and physical violence and experiments	Excess of death, bodily experiences and corporeality connected to death, challenged idea of morality, highlighting viewer's responsibility

In changes of generic modality, the main conclusions are that at the discursive level of the classical living dead films, death was hidden at the level of imagery, but still mediated to the viewer by other means. The very hiding of death marked it as something that needs to be alienated from the society and the people's experiences, which was further highlighted by using immoral monster positions and by inviting the viewer to ally with the moral characters of the story.

Such distancing was also accented by the exotic background of the undead monsters. Vampires came from the backwoods of Eastern Europe, mummies were ancient Egyptians, and zombies belonged to Haitian folklore. Classical films used ancient settings, romanticized lands, and mysterious monsters that were external to

America.[680] Cultural distance makes the monsters exotic, but more importantly, it protects American society from the contamination with death. In these films, death is invasive and consuming that preys on American society, threatening its values and civilization. However, by constructing death as an external threat, the films promise that death can in fact be controlled with Western scientific methods and kept away from the public so that it ceases to threaten the existence of modern American society. But already during the classical era, the transgressiveness of horror's themes also opened up possibilities for varied positions during the viewing process. This can be seen to challenge the borders of modern sanitized and insulated death.

The living dead films of the transition era started slowly to unveil images of death. These films addressed death more openly, taking the living dead to the American soil, which they have never left since. By bringing Dracula to the United States and by making the zombies represent ordinary Americans, the transition films concluded that death, and violent death in particular, cannot be removed from public consciousness. They also demanded that the American society acknowledge its violent nature and its acting violently towards others. In this way, the living dead phenomenon became demystified, and violent death came to be articulated publicly as an internal threat of the American society. No longer was death to be marginalized in the public imagination and debate.[681]

Postclassical films continued from this more internal, irrational, and violent understanding of death. In these films, the belief in communal action and the authorities' power has further diminished. Encounters with death have become part of individualized projects of survival and commercialized experiences. At the same time, the films rely on an excess of images of death and on emphasized and sensational bodily experiences: the physical has replaced the psychological fear of death. Such changes call increasing attention to the viewer's responsibility for the cinematic death experience. When the narration does not protect or distance death from the viewer, he/she is required to have other means of encountering death for himself/herself. By closing in on the viewer, the films have further questioned the role of the distanced modern death.

And while death has been brought closer to the viewer's immediate experience at the discursive level, the triumph of modern death has become somewhat more

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[680] See also Wood 1984 (1979), 171–172, 183; Wood 1996, 368, 378; Phillips 2005, 23–24, 30–31; Bishop 2008, 144; Jones 1997, 152.
[681] See also Wood 1984 (1979), 184–185; Zanger 1997, 19, 22.

problematic at the level of the story. Here, the role of death is crucial for the symbolic spectatorship which combines the social imagining of death's chaotic and disturbing nature to other areas of social order and control, including questions of sexuality, race, class, and ethnicity. The following chart summarizes the explicit and implicit social allegories of each living dead monster, and how the processing of these allegories has responded to the socio-cultural changes in the different eras:

Chart 2. Death and symbolic addressivity in the living dead films

Monsters	Era	Explicit Allegories	Implicit Allegories
Mummies: Rituals of Death	Classical	Idealization of modern, scientific and Western death rituals.	Ideals of modern death: distanced and controlled death.
	Postclassical	Idealization of commercialized Western death rituals.	Individualized death and commercialized bodily identity.
Vampires: Sexuality and Gender Roles	Classical	Men controlling women, repressed female sexuality.	Ideals of modern death: distanced and controlled death.
	Transition	Repressed teenage sexuality, balanced gender roles.	Demanding American responsibility over violent death, doubting superior knowledge.
	Postclassical	Empowering female sexuality, liberated women, impotent men.	Liberating power of death in personal encounters with death.
Zombies: Social Chaos	Classical	Oppression by class, race, ethnicity, and gender.	Ideals of modern death: distanced and controlled death.
	Transition	Revolutionary zombies who reveal distrust in the society.	Demanding American responsibility over violent death, community as an impossible ideal.
	Postclassical	Economic oppression and revolution of work force.	Liberating power of death in surviving and accepting death at communal and societal levels.

While the different living dead films implicate different social allegories, the allegories are used for specific purposes in each era. Changes in all these films, in fact, present one important development. Namely, the protective role of the community and of the traditional social models has diminished throughout, and the characters are now more dependent on their own identities, decisions, and actions. Changing traditions of death, alongside with the culmination of modernization, become a personalized issue, and by the end of this process, death has exceeded its private role by commercializing the personal questions and thus recreating some of its publicness.

Moreover, death in the living dead films is first and foremost a violent death. Because of their generic remit to horrify the viewers, these films depict terrifying rather than natural deaths and make a spectacle out of dying and grieving processes. Similarly, changes in culturally controversial themes and grotesque practices have highlighted the importance of negotiation in the understanding of the living dead films and in the public acceptance of violent death. Horror films are constantly balancing a fine line. Meanings over violent death and its representational limits (defined by censorship codes, for example) have always been publicly debated, making these films participants in such debates, not only by their public discursive space, but also through their potential cultural force.

Cultural Verisimilitude of Death: Resembling and Demanding Change

I opened this study by introducing the notion of modern death, which refers to the mechanisms through which the American society has distanced death from the practices of everyday life. However, this marginalization was never total, but death was transferred to the media and fiction which have offered public arenas for encountering, imagining, and fantasizing death. As my analysis of different living dead films from different eras has shown, the fantasized relationship with death is neither simple nor stable. In order to conclude this study, I therefore want to return to the question of refining the definition of the modernization of death since the early twentieth century, and assess how the living dead films have both responded to this change and even anticipated and demanded such change with their transgressive possibilities. This process, indeed, is how these films participate in public through creating socially constructed experiences and affects. As Hansen argues, public life is a mixture of competing forms, including those of more affective sources, of social experience.[682]

The modernization of death, which attempts to hide death in everyday life through processes of professionalization and medicalization, was already in the making before the first screenings of living dead films. Until the 1950s, death and dying were increasingly distanced from their traditional forms. Death used to be a frequent and quick visitor, controlled with the help of religious rituals. For example, in the early twentieth century, the primary causes of death in the United States were infectious

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[682] Hansen 1995, 144.

deceases which developed rather quickly and faced entire communities at once. By the end of the century, these had been replaced by degenerative diseases, which are isolated long-term illnesses (such as cardiac diseases) often caused by life-style factors. Furthermore, the location of death has shifted from homes to public institutions, the expertise of death has moved from the hands of ministers to the hands of doctors, and within the death industry death has commercialized. In conclusion, death has been professionalized, and death and grief experiences have become privatized.[683]

Already the classical living dead films produced during the cultivation of modernization processes deal with the ideal of modern death. Indeed, because the living dead films combine horror's transgressive and countercultural possibilities to the centrality of death in themes, narration and images, these films have had an exceptional position to acceptably debate modern death. These films with undead characters represent the return of repressed and discuss the problematic relationship between death's public and private dimensions. The classical Hollywood tendency of dealing with problematic social issues at the personal level fits the modern society's desire to marginalize death from public view. Similarly, Hollywood did not communicate certain topical issues explicitly, but chose to look at them through the individual's level, treating the problems in the context of the main characters' lives, similarly as modern death pursued to limit social and personal effects of dying and mourning on the individual level. The classical mummy, for instance, desires only to bring his lost lover back to life. Although he threatens Helen with violent death and transformation, the threat of death is limited to one individual whose beloved has to deal with death-related issues. A socially circumscribed death of this kind could be defeated, controlled, and solved by the individuals with the help of experts and modern science.[684] The framing ideal was therefore the modern death, yet the fantasizing middle part left the image cracked.

The centrality of private experiences of death increased throughout the twentieth century. Medicalization has increased life expectancy, which now stands between 70 and 80 years in the United States. People grow up assuming that they live to be old. Since dying is managed by professionals, people have little direct experience with death. The death of aged people has made dying and death less disturbing to the social and economic dimensions of public life. At the same time, however, the modernization and medicalization processes have emphasized the roles of death and dying in the personal

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[683] See, for example, Corr & Corr 2003, 38–39; Walter 1994, 9–10, 12–13, 17, 47.
[684] See also Tudor 1989, 214–223.

experience. When death comes in old age, people's relationships are longer as they used to be. Death has turned into an increasingly personal and emotional experience.[685] While natural death has become hidden from the public and social experience, its disturbing power is more deeply experienced at the personal level.

Interestingly, the privatization has made death that of a singular person, and simultaneously, the living dead films have provided a more open access to the processes and phases of dying. Indeed, along with personalized death, says Walter, death has become a consumer's choice, a private, intimate, and emotional issue. In this sense, the rationalization of death has turned against itself. Towards the latter part of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, death underwent a revival. According to Walter, talk of death and even public images of death have increased to such an extent that we can now speak about a society obsessed with death.[686] Symbolically, the threat of death grows throughout *Night of the Living Dead*. From a single zombie in the graveyard, the film soon introduces several zombies surrounding the house. Of these local zombies, the television broadcasts claim that they are not an isolated incident, but similar events are occurring elsewhere as well. The sequels have irrevocably shown that the living have no refuge against death, by now a global infection.

Following World War II and the introduction of weapons of mass destruction, the living dead films have refused to limit and isolate death to the individual level. The postclassical mummy threatens to curse the whole planet instead of a small community or a group of people or an individual. He will be 'a plague upon this earth'. This shows that in postclassical films, the social influence of death, dying and mourning is no longer limited to the level of the individual, but individual experiences have further consequences and impact. These films refuse to distance, insulate, and rationalize death, demanding the viewers to participate in the encounters with death at several levels. The invisibility of modern death has lost some of its power, and instead, Walter discusses a neo-modern death. This includes the idea of scientifically prolonged life which does not try to deny death's role as a central part of the human experience.[687]

In conclusion, the narration of the living dead films has changed from marginalizing and rationalizing death to a refusal of distancing death and to a commercialization of death. At the same time, the strategies of addressing the viewer at

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[685] Morgan 2003, 1–2; Corr & Corr 2003, 38, Walter 1994, 23.
[686] Walter 1994, 1–2, 17, 22, 24, 39.
[687] Walter 1994, 40–41, 47–48.

the level of personal experience have gained momentum. Postclassical films deny the viewer a secure and detached position, pushing him/her towards participating in the death events physically, emotionally, and cognitively. The films present and even foresee the change from modern death to neo-modern death, which makes death return to the public arena through personalized experiences and consumer choices.

Whereas death has returned to public and it has been granted a communal position once again, this is not a return to the past: death is not re-centered on the family or church in the American society. It is rather turning to new communal forms. Staudt and McIlwain, for example, argue that the recovered awareness and desire to communicate takes place in the imagined communities of cinema and other mediums, but even more concretely in the virtual communities of the web. It is not only images of death and dying that have filled the internet, but the virtual memorial spaces and videos have given death a communal role.[688] McIlwain calls this new expression a 'forever theatre' because it refers to entertainment and a commercialization of emotional responses as well as to public performances and collective memorializing of the deceased.[689] His choice of the word 'theatre' is significant, as web interaction leads the mediation of personal experiences of death and mourning to accent the performative and spectacular aspects of death as side products of this process. Death has indeed become, and will probably become even more so, a performance, not only for the dying nor for the dead, but also for those grieving and mourning.

When arguing that the living dead films have participated in the negotiation over death in reflecting, anticipating, and fantasizing the cultural changes, we may well ask what the next move would be in death-related attitudes. My suggestion is that there will be a slow globalization (but not necessarily homogenization) of death attitudes. Instead of returning to the traditional death of small communities, we are faced with an international entertainment and media culture and also with international virtual communities.

In the United States, Hollywood in particular has taken over the cultural task of creating general or 'national' myths, including discussing understandings of death. Because of its role as mainstream of international film culture (and horror culture),

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[688] Staudt 2009, 3–4, 15; McIlwain 2005, 241–242. McIlwain discusses, for example, a web service called Forever Enterprises Inc., where people may publish their memories of the deceased and share experiences of mourning. Sites such as this show, according to McIlwain, how technology is made to serve communal needs to discuss death, receive and give emotional support and share values and meanings over death. (McIlwain 2005, 207, 224.)

[689] McIlwain 2005, 245.

Hollywood influences the debates in other cultures as well. It would be extremely interesting to study the relationship between American living dead films and, for example, Finnish public debates over death during the past decades. The cultural transformation into modernized death may have occurred slightly later in Finland than in the United States, but the more recent developments of increasing affectivity and individualism have been rather concurrent and thus have a discursive interconnectedness. In the process of debating and perhaps even universalizing death-related attitudes, Hollywood as well as the living dead films will maintain and perhaps even increase their significance.

In conclusion, I argue that the living dead films challenge the boundaries and frontiers of modern death, making evident the constant and pressing human need to encounter death, negotiate with death, and give meanings to death. I also claim that this study provides examples of how these films participate in society and how their cinematic articulation of certain themes through a specific generic modality has the social power to create a public arena for negotiating death in culturally specific ways. I have also illustrated the ways in which they participate in culture and society by addressing the viewer's socially constructed, yet personal experience. Future cinema and genre studies should pay even more theoretical and empirical attention to the public aspects of the cinema, cinematic experience, and cinematic imagination. In this study, the theoretical emphasis has been on addressing and its social dimensions, which paves the way for further theoretization on the cinema's public role. Similarly, the need for empirical studies on the cinema's rhetorical social dimensions—such as the actual viewers' negotiation processes with death—is more than obvious. Empirical studies should probe in practice the relevance of the theoretical debates and shed more detailed light on the topic. All in all, as a participant in these debates, this study shows that Hollywood is not only a 'dream factory' or 'entertainment center', but an influential stakeholder in the contemporary world.

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