

Sustainable Brains: Deep Ecology and Dawn of the Dead

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Abstract:

This paper proposes a revaluation of the critical consensus that societal fascination with zombies reflects collective concern regarding consumerism and conformity. This revaluation supposes instead that zombies speak to deep-seeded anxieties about our unsustainable consumption of the natural environment. It is rooted in the philosophy of Deep Ecology formulated by philosopher Arne Naess in 1973 and offers a novel, environmentally conscious method of reading contemporary culture.

Keywords: zombies, anxiety, culture, society

There is a critical consensus that zombies, as depicted in cinema since George A. Romero's seminal *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and codified in his follow up *Dawn of the Dead* (1979) are a metaphor for the rise of post-World War II consumer culture. Zombies in cinema are read as embodying our own anxieties regarding rampant consumerism and the rise of the monoculture. They present us with an uncomfortable insight into how consumer culture has forced us to commodify our identities through acquisition of material possessions. Stephen Harper argues that audience foreknowledge of zombies as an analogue for consumerism or conformism is in large part responsible for the success of the genre, that "many 'ordinary' people actually sympathize with anti-consumerist views and feel empowered, rather than patronized, by their engagement with oppositional perspectives" (Harper, 2002: 2). We take the connection for granted, the average moviegoer may enter the theatre expecting to see in the visual image of a zombie horde a metaphor for the homogenizing influence of mass culture. Philip Horne writes that the image of "Dazed consumers, haunted by impossible yearnings, shopping for shopping's sake, freed from the casual chains of necessity but feeling endlessly incomplete, hungry", has almost become a cliché (Horne, 2007: 98). I propose that the metaphor is not only a cliché; it is also incomplete while the analogue between consumerism and zombie-ism is readily apparent, the metaphor works at best

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imperfectly. Incorporating ecocriticism, namely the philosophy of deep ecology articulated by Arne Naess in the 1970s, results in a more-complete understanding of the collective societal anxieties at work in the success of zombie films. That is, zombies in cinema are not simply a metaphor for rampant conspicuous consumption of jeans, televisions and power tools but of what we popularly call “natural resources” – fish stocks, fossil fuels and forests. Or, to use Deep Ecological terminology, zombies are the very embodiment of our own anthropocentric attitude toward the planet, which holds that we have a right destroy nature, exterminate other species and subjugate entire ecosystems in the name of supporting our own consumption habits and massive overpopulation.

The zombie-consumerism metaphor in *Dawn of the Dead* works very well on the surface. A group of survivors of the zombie apocalypse take refuge in, of all things, a shopping mall. They futilely try to resist assimilation into the zombie horde while living out consumer fantasies in the mall, taking what they please. The connection is summed up in a scene in which Francine and Stephen are standing on the roof of the shopping mall observing the horde of zombies mill about the parking lot. Francine asks Stephen, “What are they doing? Why do they come here?” to which Stephen famously responds, “Some kind of instinct. Memory, of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives”. There is no small amount of irony at work here; while the mall may be important enough for the dead to return post-resurrection, it is far more important to the surviving humans who take refuge there. It is also “a dangerous prize for the heroes; it is, as Robin Wood says, ‘associated with entrapment in consumer-consumer capitalism’” (Horne, 2007: 99). The survivors, having found an environment of plenty to wait out the apocalypse, are also trapped there, unable to function individually or as a group anywhere else. The mall comes to completely fill the need that sociologist Jerry Jacobs later observed that it fills for suburbia: “because of the expanding use of solitary escape mechanisms [...] people are beginning to feel themselves increasingly isolated. To counteract this isolation and boredom, more and more people are seeking relief at the mall, relieve that the mall is unable in the final analysis to provide” (Jacobs, 1984: 109). In *Dawn of the Dead*, the mall is only a temporary refuge, however, and the zombies eventually get in. The survivors’ brief respite is largely spent shopping, having been set free in a mall with no security and no one watching the merchandise. This temporary stasis, for Erin Moore, best sums up the “contradictions implicit in the consumerism debate [...] On one side of the glass, the mall is a fortress of community, security, and plenitude. [...] On the

other side of the glass doors, however, the mall is a nightmare in which the mystification of commodity fetishism and exploitation is revealed in the grey, vacant gazes of the zombies” (Moore, 2006: 28).

John David Goss examines this mystification in “The Magic of the Mall”, an examination of how the planned nature of shopping malls are key to their meaning-making powers. Goss argues that “the built environment is also, always [...] connotative of meaning, consistent with, but extending beyond its immediate function” and in that malls “present an image of civic, liminal and transactional spaces, forms consistent with, but not identical to, the function of selling commodities” (Goss, 1993: 36). Horne agrees with the idea that there is a deeper meaning for the shopper than material needs, and applies to *Dawn of the Dead* the “emotional function of large-scale shopping for the shopper” identified by anthropologists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (103). This view holds that shopping itself is as important as the item consumed; that, it “is a component in a collaborative human striving to construct meanings” (Horne, 2007: 104). Given the pervasiveness of consumerism, then, *Dawn of the Dead* also presents us with the destruction of meaning. For while the four survivors holed up in the shopping mall have their choice of material goods, they cannot pay for any of them, robbing them of the meaning-making ritual of conspicuous consumption. Horne quotes actress Gaylen Ross, who played Francine, in an interview about the film: “These things are only symbols. A pound of coffee from a store is not just a pound of coffee; it represents a way of being. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the symbols have lost their meaning [...] none of it is valuable anymore, because there’s no longer a context for it” (107).

The ready consumerist parallels to the movie have made it, Harper argues, ready fodder for “the host of unrepentantly Marxian critics [who] have described the baleful impact of capitalist production on those whom it exploits and the depoliticizing effects of commodity fetishism on consumers” (Harper, 2002: 1). It may also be true, then, that, having been so appropriate; there is little incentive to move forward in this vein of inquiry. Jen Webb and Sam Byrmand examine how critics, fans and filmmakers have solidified their own interpretations of zombies, creating a number of tropes within the genre. These include “novelists, movie-makers, cultural theorists, adolescents, philosophers and the mass of fans, each of whom has a solid idea about what constitutes a zombie, what constitutes a seminal zombie text, and why it is worth researching zombies” (Webb; Byrmand, 2008: 83). Steve Shaviro, in his essay “Capitalist Monsters”, takes the idea for granted

that zombies are an analogue for capitalism, and his main task is to figure out how to correctly apply Marx to contemporary cinematic zombies. For Shaviro, while “traditional Marxist theory, of course, focuses on vampires”, all “monsters are intrinsic to the ordinary, everyday reality of capitalism itself” (281). The major task, then, is to figure out exactly how Marx can best be applied to *Dawn of the Dead*. Like Webb and Byrland, Shaviro sees ready parallels between the modus operandi of the vampire and that of the zombie: both are “undead,” both consuming the living, and in both cases the consumed become the monsters by which they were predated. The parallels are too striking to pass up, then. Zombies are, for Shaviro the inheritors of the class struggle embodiment in film and cinema.

Central to Shaviro’s Marxist reading is the “tendential fall”, Marx’s idea about the diminishing rate of return from a single investment. To compensate, “a positive feedback loop is thus set into motion: the accumulation of profit leads to the decline in the rate of profit, which, in turn, spurs an even greater absolute accumulation [...] ad infinitum” (284). Shaviro sees a correlation in the zombie dynamic, where, “at the tendential limit, nearly every last person in the world will become a zombie”, save for uninfected elite. The rest, the zombie mass, presents us with “the human face of capitalist monstrosity [...] the dregs of humanity ... all that remains of human nature, or even simply of a human scale, in the immense and unimaginably complex network economy” (288). For Shaviro, zombies are both the “universal residue” of a post-human world the shuffling mass of consumers, wandering the planet with insatiable hunger. This line of reasoning, and the reaction to it, have both become sufficiently standardized that Harper can undertake a survey of both and examine how *Dawn of the Dead* has become a battleground in that debate. While Harper believes that anti-consumerist critics have been all-too-eager to dismiss “consumers as ‘cultural dupes’ [...] idiots who compliantly consume the images and products imposed on them by the dominant ideology”, the popularity of zombie films suggests a desire on the part of consumers for resistance to that very imposition (2). He points out, however, that critics such as Terry Eagleton, who write convincingly of the glamour and psychological comfort of the commodity bears little resemblance to the realities of everyday value shopping. He sides here with Meaghan Morris, for whom “the radical critique of consumerism itself a Eurocentric luxury, patronizingly aloof from the quotidian concerns of consumers, and women shoppers in particular” (Harper, 2002: 10). Postmodern critics such as Morris reject the image of consumers as a horde of thoughtless

zombies, arguing instead that consumerism provides individuals with “temporary empowerment” (*Ibidem*).

Harper himself, however, is unwilling to dismiss the consumerist implications of the film, pointing out implications of the following scene:

[...] having cleaned up the mall, the survivors stand staring down at the zombies outside as they vainly claw at the glass doors. In this brilliantly conceived scene, it is Peter who makes the chillingly simple observation “they’re us”. Fran gives a slight shiver and pulls up the collar of her expensive fur coat (an apparently unnecessary garment under the air conditioned circumstances), indicating that while guns constitute an effective defense against the enemy, consumer goods provide the psychological protection against any pricks of conscience. The scene dramatizes, perhaps better than any other scene in contemporary cinema, the senses in which consumers become guiltily aware not only of their own pleasures, but of the social costs of consumerism (Harper, 2002: 8).

Finding issue with Marxist readings of post-*Night of the Living Dead* zombies is not a counter to the zombie-consumerist analogue, but perhaps a suggestion that the reading doesn’t function as perfectly as its vampiric predecessor. The tendency to try to fit zombies into the same sort of capitalist analogue as Dracula is due in part to the pre- Romero depictions of zombies in cinema, most notably *White Zombie* (1932). The story of a young woman placed under a spell by a voodoo priest, the zombies of this film are “subservient, producer zombies” of the type prevalent before *Night of the Living Dead* gave us the “evolved zombie figure [which] appeared on the screen in response to the cultural anxieties prevalent in a consumer society” (Moore, 2006: 21). Zombies of this sort are a better analogue for the factory worker, performing an unthinking, endless task at an assembly line. Another is very likely the work of such critics as Franco Moretti, who made a convincing case that vampirism serves as a perfect metaphor for the necessarily endless cycle of capitalistic wealth accumulation outlined by Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*. Marx himself made the connection between capital and vampires, and numerous critics have applied that idea to vampires in literature and film. Specifically, Moretti argues that the Count Dracula of Bram Stoker’s novel embodies anxieties, unique to late Victorian England, about its own system of capitalism. Moretti observes that Dracula’s goal in his predation is “not to destroy the lives of others

according to whim, to waste them, but to use them” (431). Like the capitalist, he is driven by a need “inherent in his nature”; he drinks the blood of his victims not out of enjoyment, but out of necessity because without their lives he cannot continue his own. Dracula is, like capital, “dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more it sucks” (Moretti, 1982: 432). Moretti finds explicit confirmation of his analogy in the passage from *Das Kapital* in which Marx writes, “the capitalist gets rich, not ... in proportion to his personal labour ... but at the same rate has he squeezes out labour power from others” (432). Both Dracula and the capitalist have the same goal, according to Moretti: “continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of ... domain” (432).

The similarities between zombies and vampires alluded to earlier make a simple continuation of a Marxist reading seem like a natural fit, as Jen Webb and Sam Byrland point out in “The Zombie as Body and as Trope”, an examination of various recurrent manifestations of zombie-ism in cinema and literature. “Capitalism”, Webb and Byrland suggest, “works as an analogue of zombiedom because it too is predicated on insatiable appetite, and the drive to consume” (89). However, they point out that the metaphor does not work perfectly, due to what is also a crucial difference between vampires and zombies: “[capitalism] is not necessarily the mindless consumption of the zombie [...] There is something unthinking, unthought about zombie consumption; there is something organized, systematic, about capitalist consumption” (89). The key difference here is one of sustainability; while capitalism does demand never-ending consumption to continue, it also must seek to sustain that consumption. Without consumption, the endless cycle of money used to purchase commodities, sold for more money, will shut down. As Marx himself points out, “the mass of living labour applied continuously declines in relation to the mass of objectified labour that it sets in motion” – capitalism must expand to survive. Dracula, however, cannot allow too great an expansion of vampires, lest the population reach a tipping point and outstrip the available food supply. In this light, Moretti’s point that the inevitable end of Dracula’s predation is a world of vampires doesn’t quite work. It’s an observation better suited to Zombie films, as Horne points out: “In Romero, on the other hand, the few surviving individuals are in danger of going the same bad way as almost the whole of the rest of society; it’s a *world* of zombies” (99). Dracula, a thinking being, must operate so as perpetuate the cycle of victimization; zombies operate so as to make the cycle irrelevant.

Zombies have no interest in sustainability and as such cannot function as a perfect stand-in for consumerism. Because consumerism is ultimately subject to the needs of capitalism, it cannot be its downfall. It is precisely the cessation of consumption, however, and of a plateau in zombie creation, that is inevitable in *Dawn of the Dead*. Indeed, in *Day of the Dead*, this is exactly the case, as Dr. Logan explains that the survivors are “outnumbered now, 400,000 to 1, by my estimation”. The zombie population is now essentially stagnant; doomed to slowly rot and “die” off while hunting for the few remaining humans. The analogue here is clear; zombies do not function as a metaphor for simple consumerism, itself merely a symptom of a larger illness. Zombies are the embodiment of our destruction of the natural environment, subjugated to support a massively bloated population. In *Day of the Dead*, we see a biological population in an extreme state of what William Catton, Jr. termed “overshoot” in his 1980 text of the same name. In that book, Catton articulates the idea of „phantom carrying capacity,” on which he argues humanity has grown dependent. The phantom carrying capacity is a greatly inflated figure describing the “maximum permanently supportable population” (34). Phantom carrying capacity is inflated by the elimination of predators, the destruction of forests to create crop land and the depletion of fish stocks and the use of fossil fuels. The result is overpopulation, which supports itself by consuming at an unsustainable rate, and the consequences, he argues, are inevitable. Catton writes that, “whatever the species, irruptions that overshoot carrying capacity lead inexorably to die-offs” (213). The die-off is inevitable; it is only a matter of time before the tricks used to support phantom carrying capacity catch up to the species in question. Tricks of science and subjugation of environment cannot delay die offs permanently. In *Day of the Dead*, the zombie population, having succeeded in subjugating all of humanity in service of its virus-like spread, is now doomed to settle in for a long, slow, die-off.

Thus, while critical and film theorists have been correct in identifying a working analogue between Romero zombies and consumerism, the connection has not been carried to its logical extreme, one which maps the inevitable end of a worldwide zombification onto real-life consumer culture: the effect of human destruction of the environment. The philosophy of deep ecology, articulated by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973, provides the framework for just such a mapping. Bill Devall and George Sessions included an interview with Naess in their 1984 work, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, in which Naess tried to define the movement: “The essence of deep

ecology is to ask deeper questions. The adjective ‘deep’ stresses that we ask why and how, where others do not. For instance, ecology as a science does not ask what kind of a society would be the best for maintaining a particular ecosystem – that is considered a question for value theory, for politics, for ethics” (Devall; Sessions, 1985: 74).

In the context of dominant ideology, deep ecology is rejection of what Devall and Sessions call „the dominant world view”, which holds that “people are fundamentally different from all other creatures on the Earth, over which they have dominion” (43). Contemporary environmentalism, which typically limits itself to opposing pollution and advocating conservation, is considered “shallow ecology”. This operates merely as a stopgap measure and sometimes in service of the continued destruction of the environment that has come about due to the dominant worldview. This because both environmentalist and conservation movements take for granted humanity’s rightful dominance over the planet. In the specialized language of contemporary conservation, the Earth becomes, essentially, “a collection of natural resources. Some of these resources are infinite; for those which are limited; substitutes can be created by technological society. There is an overriding faith that human civilization will survive” (Devall, Sessions, 1985: 42). Ecologist David Ehrenfeld breaks down the assumptions of this technological worldview into five fallacies, which build upon the preceding into a justification for subjugating the natural environment:

1. All problems are soluble.
2. All problems are soluble by people.
3. Many problems are soluble by technology.
4. Those problems that are not soluble by technology or by technology alone have solutions in the social world.
5. When the chips are down, we will apply ourselves and work together for a solution before it is too late (Ehrenfeld, 1981: 17).

Despite the near-universality of these assumptions, there is evidence that they can or will alleviate the effects of environmental destruction. This a point Devall and Sessions are adamant about, writing “The technological worldview has as its ultimate vision the total conquest and domination of Nature and spontaneous natural processes – a vision of a ‘totally artificial environment’ remodelled to human specification and manage by humans *for* humans” (48). Frederic bender updates these assumptions in *The Culture of Extinction: Toward a Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, and identifies how to schools of thought generally thought to be antagonistic, theistic and secular, operate more-or-less identically in

regard to the environment. These he terms the “The Natural Need Argument” and the “Human Superiority Argument”. The first holds that since interspecies predation and competition is a fact of nature, all species are morally justified in placing their own needs before those of other species, and therefore we have are justified in exerting human domination over nature and exterminating competitor species, something no other life form on the planet attempts (70). The second strongly rooted in Judeo-Christian theology, holds that, having been created in God’s image, are the only “morally considerable beings” and “nonhuman beings are mere means (resources) for human use” (70). Therefore, we are again justified in exerting human domination over nature. The secular and theistic arguments share a common goal; that of justifying any exploitation and Bender argues that the end result is the same. He also argues that adherents to either are likely to subscribe to a third argument, that of the Sanctity of Capitalism, which holds that “progress, i.e., ever-increasing material production and consumption, increases human happiness without limit, progress is a direct effect of capitalism”, and “unlimited economic growth requires unlimited exploitation of nature” (88).

The aftermath of World War II, Catton writes, first saw the articulation of this “belief that the limits to human activity had been or would soon be removed inspired exuberant prediction. We came to expect a flow of goods and machines and technical innovations that would lift standards of living everywhere” (xi). This rosy, optimistic faith in science and capitalism continues to be an important component of our worldview, and one which, for Catton, can only end in societal collapse as we continue the cycle of greater population growth demanding greater environmental sublimation, all justified by the belief that in the next generation fabulous new technologies will fix everything before it’s too late. Catton argues that “the alternative to chaos is to abandon the illusion that all things are possible. Mankind has learned to manipulate many of nature’s forces, but neither as individuals nor as organized societies can human beings attain outright omnipotence”(9). This is exactly the argument Franco Moretti articulates about *Dracula*: that the Count Dracula of Bram Stoker’s novel embodies anxieties, unique to late Victorian England, about its own system of capitalism. It is a system, Moretti writes, that is “ashamed of itself and which hides factories and stations beneath cumbrous Gothic superstructures (434–435). Dracula’s unquenchable thirst for human blood embodies the true nature of capitalism, is “capital that is not ashamed of itself, true to its own nature, an end in itself” and the Dracula’s presence in London

exposes the “great ideological lie of Victorian capitalism”, that the system *may be used toward meritorious ends*; that is, any end other than the accumulation of more money (Moretti, 1982: 435).

If Moretti is correct, and the success of vampires in literature and film has been in large part due to the fact that it exposed the true nature of Victorian capitalism, then it might we not also argue that the success of zombies in popular culture since 1968 is because they expose as a lie another dearly-beloved economic lie? Shaviro makes this connection when he observes that while “*Dracula* personified the classic regime of industrial capitalism [...] the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries is rather characterized by a plague of zombies” (282). The key word is here plague. In movement and mental ability the basic physical attributes of the zombie, what Kyle Bishop, writing of pre-war zombie films describes as “not monsters but rather hypnotized slaves”, changed little (199). Both are slow, lumbering capable of only basic movement or tasks. Romero’s innovation, however, was to have the zombies come as a horde, an unstoppable wave. For Bishop, the most striking aspect of zombies as a monster genre is also that which has led to the articulation of the zombie-consumerist analogue: the loss of individuality. Bishop writes that “it is the essentially *human* behaviour that explains the success of such fiends in nineteenth-century literature [...] Although undead, Bram Stoker’s archetypal Count acts as though still alive, using his immortality to pursue rather carnal desires” (200). Zombies become lost in the crowd, however, subject to a larger homogenizing force. Furthermore, what they do, they do unthinking, communally, and without thought to consequences.

Recall that the extermination of humanity would have consequences for the zombie population: while Romero zombies do not need to eat people to “live”, said eaten people return from the dead to sustain the population. Once every last person on earth is killed, the zombies begin a slow countdown to extinction. The analogue between zombies and Catton’s idea of carrying capacity is striking, but the reason why audiences do not pick up on it is because of the internalized assumptions which drive our slow, continual domination and destruction of the environment. If we do not recognize the fallacies of the dominant worldview, then we do not recognize exactly why the image of the zombie horde, which reveals these fallacies, terrifies us so. It is not the gory image of people torn asunder by undead cannibals; that is merely the message which obscures the messenger. Bishop points out that “zombies movies have no direct antecedent in the Written word because of the zombies’ essentially visual nature; zombies don’t think or speak –

they simply act” (196). The extreme visibility of zombies obscures the larger and inevitable effect of the zombie dynamic. As Marshall McLuhan writes in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, because we tend to focus on content of a medium, not the “social consequences... [that] ... result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves” (McLuhan, 1994: 7). An example he uses is that the content of a novel is print, and so we focus on the plot, not the effect of the novel on society. McLuhan did not believe that we extend ourselves randomly; it is when faced with the “physical stress of super stimulation of various kinds [that] the central nervous system acts to protect itself by a strategy of auto-amputation”, or the creation of a new medium (McLuhan, 1994: 42). With this in mind, we may understand that the origin of any “invention is the stress of acceleration of pace and increase of load” (42). Any sustained irritation, then, requires a new medium to alleviate it. This provides us with a partial explanation for the evolution of zombies as a capitalist monster.

Vampires, which functioned well as an analogue for capitalism for decades, was no longer able to fulfil that function with the rise of consumer culture and the wholesale ecocide we began to perpetrate after World War II. Shaviro recognized this when he wrote, that “the nineteenth century, with its classic regime of industrial capitalism, was the age of the vampire, but the network society of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries is rather characterized by a plague of zombies” (282). He was trying to apply it to the rigid Marxist framework, however, and zombies do not really fit that. Marxism is as much a part of the dominant worldview as is rampant capitalism, promoting an anthropocentric approach to nature. Devall and Sessions quote philosopher Pete Gunter rather acerbically condemning humanistic philosophies as simply cloaking the dominant worldview in different disguises: “Pragmatism, Marxism, scientific humanism, French positivism, German mechanism, the whole swarm of smug anti-religious dogmas [...] really do not, as they claim, make man a part of nature. If anything they make nature an extension of raw material for man” (54). He raises a fair point; both capitalism and Marxism take for granted humanity’s inherent supremacy. Marxist theory cannot fully account for the phenomenon of zombie films because Marxist theory is ultimately in service of the environmental destruction for which zombies are a metaphor. That the destruction of the natural environment is steadily increasing as ever more people compete for ever fewer resources explains the shift from vampire to zombie. Vampires prey on

individuals; they operate on a small scale, too small to embody the societal anxieties engendered by the human-perpetuated extinction of nearly 10,000 plant and animal species annually. Bender provides a striking example of the increased pace of environmental destruction that accompanied Catton's post-war optimism: "before humans invented agriculture, Earth was home to six billion hectares (14.8 million hectares) of forest. Today only 4 billion hectares remain [...] Half that forest loss occurred between 1950 and 1990" (53).

Part of Moretti's argument rests on the assumption that *Dracula* embodied anxieties about capitalism specific to the late 19th century, and it is to this that the novel partially owed its success. I argue that a similar dynamic is at work regarding the genre of zombie films, that moviegoers have looked into ravenous hunger of the zombie horde fighting to eat the last few humans on earth and saw, in those pathetic and dumb faces, our own future. The terror of zombies is the realization that the dominant worldview is a lie, that technology cannot save us, that we will not pull together and fix things before it's too late. We do not look at zombies and see how consumer culture has forced us to commodify our identities, or how it compels us to buy more, more ever more in search of material happiness. We see ourselves in the future, an ever growing population propping itself up by subjugating more of the natural environment. It is not the extinction of humans in zombie films that terrifies; it is the extinction of the zombies. We know what must inevitably happen to them after the last survivors holed up in shopping malls and farmhouses are devoured and join the horde. Devall and Sessions might say that zombie films prick our "deep ecological consciousness", an intuitive awareness of imbalance in the ecosphere. They argue for a revaluation of the Western sense of self, "defined as an isolated ego striving primarily for hedonistic gratification or for a narrow sense of individual salvation in this life or the next" (67). They argue that this social programming dislocates us from nature and each other, "leaving us prey to whatever fad or fashion is prevalent in our society or social reference group and [...] are thus robbed of beginning the search for our unique spiritual/biological personhood" (67). The strange attraction to the zombie is not as simple as Bishops summation that "the horror of the zombie movie comes from recognizing the human in the monster" (204), but from a deep, intuitive awareness as the loss of that spiritual/biological personhood. Anthropocentric societies consume and destroy the natural environment at a rate which suggests either a belief that supplies or inexhaustible or humanity will not ultimately suffer because of it. While our population grows the natural

environment shrinks, and like the zombie horde in *Dawn of the Dead*, many mouths to feed, not enough food to feed them. Of course the end result of both is inevitable and the same.

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