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From Postmodernism to Post-postmodernism: An Aesthetic of Trust in Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies*

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Key words: zombieism, post-postmodernism, social trust, otherness, neo-realism

Abstract

You know things are moving. You're changing, you fellow Dead are changing, the world is ready for something miraculous. What are we waiting for?

Isaac Marion

In Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* (WB), the present article examines the role of the Post-postmodern Gothic genre in mobilizing and normalizing the conception of "Otherness". It analyzes the zombie, the recognition of horror, in terms of social trust within the new context of Post-postmodernism. The article would argue that the social relation between "self" and "other" is restored and the gap between them is bridged by the new thinking of the young generation of 21st century. The discussion is being developed from the zombie's attempt to acquire a name to full assimilation in human society. The main intention here is not to describe the stereotypical zombie's horror, as in the traditional sense. Instead, the article offers an insight of the change within the notion of zombieism as it loses its cannibalistic way of living in favor of trust. The paper concluded that the novel is nothing to do with postmodern world-play, rather it focused on the emergence of a new kind of Gothic narratives that once again seeks to participate in critiquing and solving the prevailing social problems and that Isaac Marion is more serious in addressing the real world of social and cultural values and ethics.

من ما بعد الحداثة إلى ما بعد الحداثة: جمالية الثقة في أجساد إسحاق ماريون

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الكلمات الأساسية: الزومبي ، ما بعد الحداثة ، الثقة الاجتماعية ، الآخر ، الواقعية الجديدة

المستخلص

أنت تعلم أن الأشياء تتحرك. أنت تتغير ، رفاق الموتى يتغيرون ، العالم جاهز لشيء من المعجزة. ما الذي ننتظره؟

إسحاق ماريون

في أجساد دافئة إسحاق ماريون ، المقالة الحالية تتناول دور النوع القوطي ما بعد الحداثي في تعبئة وتطبيع مفهوم "الآخر". تحلل المقالة الزومبي ، الاعتراف بالرعب ، من حيث الثقة الاجتماعية في السياق الجديد لما بعد الحداثة. ستجادل المقالة بأن العلاقة الاجتماعية بين "الذات" و "الآخر" قد تمت استعادتها وأن الفجوة بينهما سيتم تداركها من خلال التفكير الجديد لجيل الشباب في القرن الحادي والعشرين. يتم تطوير المناقشة من محاولة الزومبي لاكتساب اسم للولوج الكامل في المجتمع البشري. الهدف الرئيسي هنا ليس وصف رعب الزومبي النمطي ، كما هو الحال في المعنى التقليدي. عوضاً على ذلك ، يقدم المقال نظرة ثاقبة للتغيير داخل مفهوم الزومبي لأنه يتخلص من طريقة أكلي لحوم البشر في العيش لينال الثقة. خلصت الورقة إلى أن الرواية لا علاقة لها بعالم ما بعد الحداثة ، بل ركزت على ظهور نوع جديد من السرديات القوطية التي تسعى مرة أخرى للمشاركة في نقد وحل المشكلات الاجتماعية السائدة وأن إسحاق ماريون أكثر جدية في معالجة العالم الحقيقي للقيم والأخلاق الاجتماعية والثقافية.

Introduction

For better understanding Marion's creation of zombification, I would like to give a brief account of the Post- postmodern context which participates in creating the new image of zombieism and how trust is built between "self" and "other". So, in what follows and in order to understand the apparent shift in zombieism, I would, then, critically examine Marion's zombie as a social trust figure within the Post-postmodern thought which contributes to understand the novel as a neo-realist fiction.

The fragmentation and shallowness of the social world may be the most distinctive features of postmodernism. Postmodern writers with no doubts distance themselves from social and political life. They believe that certainties such as reality and truth do not participate in the absolute truth, and therefore is "challenging and deconstructing traditional certainties" (Krijnen 149). However, in contemporary art and literature, there has been a growing departure, by many writers and critics, from the postmodernism and its uncertainties. Those writers, Isaac Marion is among them, believe that postmodernism had created a negative world with nihilist social relations and cynical irony and that "the world is over. It can't be cured, it can't be salvaged, it can't be saved" (Marion198). They, also, believe that postmodernism worn out and it is a time to replace it with something more positive. To cope with the current cultural demands many critics announce the end /death of the era (postmodernism) addressing the new era with different views beyond the postmodern characteristics. Among those new views, "Otherness" is no longer seen as an absolute other and that the aesthetic of trust is the main theme of current fiction. The new epoch is also defined, to a certain degree, by the works of the young writers who seek to find a trustful relation between the reader and the text. This relation mirrors the way the text deals with existing social problems such as climate change, economic recession, racism etc.

In describing the era after the postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon in the epilogue of her seminal work *Politics of postmodernism*(2001) proposes to label the new epoch. She believes in the exhaustion of the postmodernism era calling for the young writers to describe and label the consequent era. But it seems that Hutcheon has recognizes the death of postmodernism quiet lately. Before, in 1991 a conference held in Cultural Studies overtly announced the first seed of shift. Writers such as Ihab Hassan, William Gass, John Barth and others

explicitly entitled their seminar in a conference “The End of Postmodernism: New Directions”. Since then writers began to speak confidently about the failure of postmodernism in favor of the neo-directions. Consequently, Ihab Hassan in his article “Beyond Postmodernism: Toward an Aesthetic of Trust” (2003), argues that what comes after postmodernism, is perhaps quite different. He accuses postmodernism as an era of nihilism and potential play; therefore, he, also, calls for a new positive discourse “a rupture” that based on respect and trust. Indeed Hassan’s reaffirmation of trust triumphs much on realism. He writes:

We need to discover new relations between selves and others, margins and centers, fragments and wholes – indeed, new relations between selves and selves, margins, and margins, centers, and centers – discover what I call a new, pragmatic and planetary civility. (307)

Above, is an overt announcement for renewing the old notion of faith and belief instead of the hegemonic relation and the world play and ironic treatment of difference of postmodernism, has cannibalized the beauty of the world. Of course, the difference may be essential for the symbolic order or to distinguish between what is normal and what is not, yet it seems nowadays less primal need. Our contemporary culture seems to need difference for shaping a global discourse. In other words, life will be stopped at any point in history if the difference is not included. This is what Hassan terms it as “postmodernity” to distinguish it from postmodernism. The new relations of our ethical and moral norms should be stretched to include “Otherness”.

Hassan, therefore, puts more hope on the role of art and literature to find ways of understanding between the self and other shaping a neo-realism. What we need, he argues, that art and literature able to reform the damaged relation of postmodernism. This is done only by courage and will to speak the truth to ourselves and to other cultures, he adds:

Beyond that, we need to cultivate a keener, livelier, more dialogical sense of ourselves in relation to diverse cultures, diverse natures, the whole universe itself. We need to discover modes of self-transcendence, especially for the “wretched of the earth,” that avoid

blind identification with collectives premised on the exclusion of other groups. (From Postmodernism to Postmodernity. 13)

The real truth, for Hassan, is to find a fruitful dialogue between center and margin and between local and universal and this is the core of the new era. So, aesthetic and imagination can release us from the prison-house of self-concern. Hassan, as a renewalist, offers much serious argument against postmodernism which is based on the ground that postmodern nihilism has damaged the ability to have the literature of social concern. It, moreover, withdraws from the public sphere to become “utterly private”; therefore there is a need for a new paradigm of realism and trust.

In a parallel gesture with Hassan, Postmodern twilight and the dawn of the new era is also promoted in the works of Robert McLaughlin. The arena of McLaughlin is the self-referential realism of postmodernism, in which reality is never outside the text. He finds that postmodern art and literature were departed from the outside world and that language (literature and art) should be re-connected to society. The reason behind divesting postmodern fictions from society is the fragmentation and deep-rooted differences. McLaughlin describes the works of the 1980s and 1990s American novelists as “an aesthetic sea change” to demonstrate the “desire to reconnect language to the social sphere” and in “responding to the perceived dead end of postmodernism, a dead-end that has been reached because of postmodernism’s detachment from the social world and immersion in a world of non-referential language.” (54-55). McLaughlin’s belief in the contemporary literary shift, emphasizing the expected “return to the discourse of the realistic enterprise” (329–30) which this paper would like to explain here in this paper.

Beside Hassan and McLaughlin, Jonathon Franzen, also, puts more hope on the capacity of literature for cultural therapy, siding the realist tradition. He believes that the writer like a physician has the capacity to engage with problems of society in the language of art. Ecological crises of the present world, for instance, is strongly present in the work of many contemporary writers. Those crises invoke the sensibilities of the young writers and readers to contribute to diagnosing the reasons behind global warm and find solutions. Franzen strongly believes insoluble problems in terms of “therapeutic optimism”. This view is supported also by J. Green, believing that Franzen’s

“therapeutic optimism” of literature supports the traditional and religious view for serving a social purpose, permitting “reading good fiction is like reading a particularly rich section of a religious text.”(qt in Green:94) and that “art in general and literature, in particular, have basically replaced the Christianity of [his] parents’ generation.”(qt in Neil Brooks and Josh Toth: 210) . He takes a serious step away from postmodern aesthetics. “I liked the idea of socially engaged fiction” (Ibid: 203) he notes. Thus seriousness of the late postmodernism is a cornerstone of the next age fiction.

Zygmunt Bauman, moreover, criticizes postmodern selfish privilege of social issues. Bauman claims that postmodernism encourages “moral self” other than modern universal ethical codes that are guided by social domination and therefore “moral self-precedes society”. For him, a literature of postmodernism demonstrates the privilege between self and other rejecting any totalization that suppresses human emotions and freedom. Bauman, thus, rejects the “universalizing project of modernity”. The appeal of postmodernism, he argues, lies in “the rejection of the... philosophical search for absolutes, universals, and foundations in theory” (2009:p4). The society is then isolated from individuals in terms of subjectivity and relativism that become grounds of criticism even by the postmodernists themselves who believe that society is a framework of any ethics which shapes the relation between self and other. As a result, the post-postmodernist era entails a return to totalization and grand narratives.

Within the social theory, Ruth Levitas’s contribution is of crucial importance to the literature of realism. Levitas highlights a mode of disagreement and divergence with capitalism, showing that there must be a substitution for the old system and to propose a new in which the self must be reconciled with itself to build new trust. She argues that the positive belief in the prosperity of social change and “hope – the ability to believe that the future will be unspecifiably different from, and unspecifiably freer than, the past – is the condition of [its] growth.” (qt in Levitas,2014: 133) Historical narratives and utopian imagination are necessary for any political program for the future and that “a utopian scenario about how we can get from the present to a better future’; and that the excision of this kind of narratively from political and social theory results in, and represents, a loss of hope”(Levitas,2014: 133). It is the utopian desire and impulse which distinguishes the human being and that the knowledge that we acquire should be an end for human happiness and trust.

Richard Rorty, on the other hand, as Levitas demonstrated, hopes for a social justice that deconstructs the class and race discrimination putting all people in the same boat and equal representation. Utopian imagination is an individual and collective with a sense of hope, as Rorty believes that “someday we shall be willing and able to treat the needs of all human beings with the respect and consideration with which we treat the needs of those closest to us, those whom we love.”(qt in Levitas: 133) Indeed, human desire is marked by the desire to re-motivate ethics which are neglected by the postmodernism such as meaning in life, faith in human values, sense of hope and ethical responsibility. It is the renew the realist impulse.

The present paper, therefore, aims at relating the fiction of Gothicism to the current context of the Post-postmodernism, so that to pluralize and expand the field of criticism in the existing Gothic studies. By introducing a new image of gothic figure the paper helps to explain the re-emergence of the neo-aesthetic of trust in the work of Isaac Marion’s WB. The study, moreover, follows-up the shift in zombie representation, as an ideological shift concerning Otherness, as key features in the addressed novel. This shows the significance of art and literature for giving a new and alternative spirit to the dominant culture, and to participate in reframing social and cultural change.

Analysis

Zombie in literature is usually portrayed as a metaphor for cultural unrest or un-welcomed other. Its figure, as Jerrold E. Hogle believes, “helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural.”(Hogle: 4), or as seen by Jeffery Jerome Cohen, is a threat to the boundaries and symbolic order. Because of this the zombie, as an “other”, is cast-off to the margins of society. The terrifying violation of social order leads to one of the more curious attractions of zombie narratives. However, in the last

two decades, there has been a growing interest in creating a new generation zombie in media and literature. The change is significant to show how that figure shadows the contemporary culture. The change is also supported by many cultural theorists who believe that a “sea change” echoes in the heart of young people. Concerning the new image of a zombie, Fred Botting has recognized the shift in contemporary mainstream of zombification. He argues that “once[zombie] represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant,” is now moved to romantic, attractive and more humane (Botting 286). Kyle William Bishop also notes that the appearance of the new image of the monster is dated to the last three decades of the 20th century and exactly to Anna Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). According to Rice as Bishop observes, the monster is no longer a fiend or something to be avoided in order to restore the system, rather it is a romantic, attractive, sympathetic and has more humanistic traits. To avoid the traditional conception of the zombie as “pure negativity”, the following discusses that the zombie in *WB* is not an “alienated human” and it can literary re-humanize or restored to human status. Bishop adds that “the next step in the evolution of this highly specially subgenre will likely literalize the metaphor, presenting narratives in which the zombies tell their own stories, acting as true protagonists and even heroes” (Bishop: 196). Thus the traditional figure is recycled to new monster figures.

One way to approach Isaac Marion’s gothic principle in *WB* seems to earn nothing to postmodernist characteristics. The novel’s macroscopic vision is meant to address a deep-rooted social problem of the difference. The appearance of Marion’s post-postmodern monster is not primarily “othered” creature, rather it has his own identity, feeling, and motivation. Those possessing human qualities encourage the psychological suture of the reader. In the *WB* the reader, thus, is not horrified by the physical appearance of the zombie R, because he has a rather acceptable look with humane thoughts and feelings.

In comparing between postmodern novel and post-postmodern novel, Nicoline Timmer, argues, that the latter “turn[s] to the ‘human’, salient not only in recent fiction but also in recent theory, stems from a desire to attend to aspects of subjectivity that were repressed in postmodern literature and theory” (51). His effort to define post-postmodern literature as literary theory and practice which concern much about the social referentiality. In other words, post-postmodern literature is more human because it glorifies trust and realism

in art and literature as a way of bridging the gap between fiction and life. It is an attempt to reconstruct, instead of deconstructing, values and ethics.

The end of the 20th c. has witnessed a break in the literary aesthetics which is represented by the oscillation between ethics and politics. This new trend can be accomplished only if literature takes part in social realism (Herrmann et al: 11). The responsibilities towards climate change are one of the best examples. This crisis is well addressed by many contemporary writers to warn people for this serious problem. Within the scope of realism, language plays a crucial role in social life as McLaughlin argues that contemporary writers have a “desire to reconstruct language[literature] to the social sphere, to recognize literature’s social mission, its ability to intervene in social world.”(55). The social mission in *WB* is conducted, therefore, by the young protagonists, R and Julie. They start a sincere and truthful dialogue as they are well recognized that hatred and cynicism are fruitless, saying the zombie R that:

Everyone is working now; Julie and I are just pausing for a moment to enjoy the view because it's a beautiful day. The sky is blue. The grass is green. The sun is warm on our skin. We smile because this is how we save the world. We will not let Earth become a tomb, a mass grave spinning through space. We will exhume ourselves. We will fight the curse and break it. We will cry and bleed and lust and love, and we will cure death. We will be the cure. Because we want it. (WB 239)

The transformation within the zombie R can be recognized through three steps that enable him to be acceptable in the social sphere of humanism.

Linguistic ability and zombie’s social awareness

Denis J. Galligan defines the social sphere “as an area of activity in which almost all participants share understandings and conventions about the activity, and which guide and influence the way they engage in it.”(2010: vi) Post-postmodern art and literature, with no doubts, witness a return to realism to establish a connection between language and its role in the external world. In the domain of the linguistic awareness and its role in the social sphere, the zombie R. is aware that language has a significant social tie and lacking language, therefore, means lacking thought, feeling and meaning in life that the

zombie R refuses. For R the social sphere indicates the way a person relates language to the social existing relationship with others to avoid violence and maybe the hierarchical discrimination.

The Post-postmodern American cultural theorist, Eric Gans, explains in his internet chronicles “Love and Resentment” the role of language within a social group, that the first social function of language is to dismiss any form of violence, based on the hierarchal discrimination, within the primitive social group. Although Gans believes, that the hierarchical social system brings ongoing stability of society, language or understanding generates an “anti-hierarchical scenes of culture” participating in social equality within one group. Within the same chronicles, Gans’s cites the term of the “Orinary Thinking”. It is understood as a form of collective understanding re-appears in contemporary literary texts. Those social networks of mutual understanding which perfumed by language permit the participants in the public sphere of taking certain decisions. In other words, the deferral violence or hatred is achieved by the original use of dialogue. Moral and social equality lies in the ability of a human to emit and exchange “linguistic signs”. Those linguistic signs express the moral basis for the social system. Originally the language was first, in Gans hypothesis of language, used as a system for a utopian desire for being better. Originally human, first, emitted signs to stand for the desired object and to have a position in the social group. Signs are also reflections of the emergence of “human consciousness” expressing the human desire for abandoning violence and understanding others rather than using physical forces. Using a language among people is considered as the first sign of human culture. (Gans, Internet chronicles) In *WB*, R. therefore, tries his best to achieve a space in human society, first by language. By attributing or trying to remember his name, R, unlike zombie stereotype, explicitly shows his capability of rational thought and language use. The contemporary zombie, Peter Dendle argues, has a “successful subject of behavioral conditioning that trains him to recognize objects, to interact civilly with some humans, and to gutturally parrot phrase” (2011:176) The zombie R, first, excuses himself because he has lost his name.

I’m sorry I can’t properly introduce myself, but I don’t have a name any more... Mine might have started with an ‘R’, but that’s all I have now.... But it does make me sad that we’ve forgotten our names. Out of everything, this seems to be the most tragic. (WB 4)

This transition of using language refers to the social position that everyone acquires. Language, written or spoken, used as a marker for humanity and livingness. Thus being accepted and assimilated in a society, the zombie R uses language as a means of acquiring a position in humanity and then to be accepted in society. This leads the discussion to the modern theories of unnameable and how the unnameable thing produces a sense of “lack” and then horror. Briefly, those theories are based on the idea that if we fail to name an object, we push it towards a “lack” or “unknowable” or “thing” or “margins of society”. In her seminal book *The Unnameable Monster In Literature And Film*(2010), Maria Beville draws upon on the psychological process of representing the unrepresentable. In the process of signification, a gap or what Lacan calls a ‘Thing’ “remains unrepresentable” and it “cannot be represented by something else”(70). It is our desire, then, that is responsible to represent or imagine something to end up the nothingness and leads to “fashion this signifier and introduce it into the world ... Fashion it into an image of the Thing” (ibid). To imagine a thing is then “a matter of taking a certain stance with respect to the problematic of the Other” in which the subject “addresses himself and orders himself on the basis of his imaginary other.”(qt in Beville:71) Because of those zombies, the undead, are always unchangeable as Julie’s father observes “The Dead don't change, Julie – They are not people, they are things!” (WB, 198.) This is, in turn, separates the “self” from “other”. In other words, a culture or a society excludes “otherness” or “lack” from any symbolic order as it “seek[s] to reposition the monster outside binary approaches to human ontology and subjectivity.”(Beville 52) There is, of course, a discernible connection between the name/knowability and social trust. To have an acceptable name means to avoid otherness; therefore, a “thing” is nothing without a social signification. The name of zombie R means much to Julie to rethink about a sociable monster/human. R wishes to introduce, though one letter, his name in the hope of social acceptance and love, in the hope of reintegrating into the human community.

In Lacanian psychological theory, moreover, language and its manifestations offer an important factor for including and excluding a “thing” in the symbolic order. It is by language an individual enters the mirror stage. In the novel language plays an important role in R’s struggle to be re-humanized. R expresses his wishes to use the language as a human mannerism to communicate his past memories; therefore, he feels sorry as he saying: “There is a chasm

between me and the world outside of me. A gap so wide my feelings can't cross it. By the time my screams reach the other side"(WB:1). Here, language is not only a means for communication and interaction but also for establishing and maintaining human relationships. By using language R feels that he belongs to the human society in which trust is re-built with Julie, R thinks that "she[Julie] is Living[because she can speak] and I'm Dead, but I'd like to believe we're both human"(WB:70). Indeed, in this way, the figure of a zombie is no longer violets the binary of human self / the zombie other or homely/unhomely, but he participates in restoring peace. It is, actually, strong trust and belief provided by the language to the outside world—instead of postmodern self- preferentiality—since it has the ability to have an impact on individuals and society. R desires to communicate with others comes first to lament his inability to communicate with other zombies around him. Throughout his nostalgic memory, he compares his present situation with the past. He admits that "[i]t must have been so much better before when everyone could express themselves and communicate their feelings and just enjoy each other's company."(WB:3) R criticizes how people are detached from each other and lived a nihilist life, so he realizes the role of linguistic competence for achieving life trust. Throughout the novel, the zombie R develops his linguistic competence to include words and phrases. At the end of the novel R's identity is reshaped by using the linguistic ability enameling him to connect with the social life of humans. The new identity is called by McLaughlin an "aesthetic sea change" in art and its representation on contemporary social life. There is, then, a kind of art or literature (language), other than of that of postmodernist self-referential, to re-connect people to the social sphere. For McLaughlin, the "aesthetic sea change" is "being inspired by a desire to reconnect language to the social sphere".(McLaughlin: 55). R realizes how he has wasted his time not knowing the language. He also realizes that he will be not accepted into the anthropocentric human system because of the species liminality.

Why do I want to know the names and functions of all the beautiful structures I've spent my years violating? Because I don't deserve to keep them anonymous. I want the pain of knowing them and, by extension, myself: who and what I really am. Maybe with that scalpel, red hot and sterilized in tears, I can begin to carve out the rot inside me. (WB:141)

Ethics of eating and social interaction

Secondly, R's social awareness is achieved by what/how a good zombie eats. Food indeed has a significant role to convey social solidarity and has "an ability to last longer as a signifier for ethnicity than other markers, such as language and fashion." (Sublette & Martin 15) The social interaction of eating is also deeply inscribed in the human psyche. It contributes to distinguishing between human and animal. Biologically both human and animal are in need to survive, and so they eat. Yet, they differ in the way and the object they eat that is more related to social and cultural context. In "Limits of Digestion", Jacques Derrida explains the distinction between human and non-human in terms of the eating process. Violence and blood, as he notes, is often connected with animals as they "have a negative relation to the object because they simply swallow it." (2) In the *WB*, the dead fail to communicate with human and distinguish themselves from humans as they "eat anyone, anything, anywhere, because they can't fathom any other way to interact." (WB:104.) Following the human civilization this cannibalistic nature is taken as a monstrous way of living, therefore, it constructs taboos. It is also a moment of threatening the boundaries separating the subject from others; therefore the other cast-off to the margins of the society. The biological similarity between human and other fails to achieve peace. Indeed, this cannibalistic desire keeps R and other zombies, as they are dead, away from the living place, the stadium. In his imagination, R "assumed it was perfect, that everyone was happy and beautiful and wanted for nothing, and in my numb, limited way [he] felt envy and wanted to eat them all the more." (WB:147) He, therefore, longs to eradicate the social and cultural difference as his inner conflict lies in his attempts to intimate a social connection with others. For being accepted in human society, R is aware that he must change not only the type of his food but the way of eating as well.

Throughout the novel eating, human brains is a common celebration of horde zombies and the way to express their belonging to the same group. Cannibalization is, thus, a matter of individual's acceptance within the group and seems to be a barometer of a non-human act. However, a way that the Gothic figure can begin to "eat well" can be seen early in the novel *WB*. The zombie R is conscious of his cannibalistic way of eating which is usually connected with violence. He is really conflicted saying that "[e]ating is not a pleasant business. I chew off a man's arm, and I hate it. I hate his screams

because I don't like pain, I don't like hurting people.” (WB 7) In this sense, the act of cannibalism is mobilized and subjected to change due to the process of humanization. It is a crucial changed in zombification since R has a rich desire to form a channel of understanding with humanity. He intentionally paradoxes his cannibalistic appetite, though it is a biological demand for sustaining the zombie's life, “the new hunger is a lonely monster.” (WB. 8) He recognizes that abandoning violence provides life balance to him and to others. As a human, Julie is also astonish of R's new behavior because to live a zombie must eat human flesh. R, instead, has rescued and protected Julie. This paradoxical image is seen by Julie, and even by the zombie M (R's closest friend) as a moment of change. The new R is not negative to the human in a binary relation, Julie asks R:

Do you ... have to eat people?

Yes [R replies]

But why you didn't eat me... and you haven't eaten anyone since then,

You're kind of ... changing, aren't you? (WB. 89)

Those creatures of horror that Fred Botting addresses with fear and alienation, now becoming, as Kyle Bishop thinks, more “fascinating, attractive, and more human.”(Bishop, 159) The new creatures “obey[s] human laws, respects Western society's norms, and shares its values.”(Tenga and Zimmerman,77) Julie, as a human, tries to re-humanize the zombie R based on his abandoning of cannibalistic desire. She negotiates her father saying that the corpses are changing and they are willing to be human again. However, as an old generation, her father Grigio strongly believes that the Dead do not change and eat vegetables, but their favorite food is human brains. R and Julie become the integral part of the idealized and natural world in which peace is restored over resentment. Julie's desire, against her father, is to re-establish a moral connection through love and respect with others. She wants to discover, beyond horror and fear: “new relations between selves and others, margins and centers, fragments and wholes”(Hassan beyond pm. 308) based on understanding and tolerance. This relation is, indeed, meant against postmodern or father's hegemony. In a conversation between Julie and her father. The father has been

disappointed and has a gloomy picture of the world, whereas Julie observes that there is still hope and the world can be better if we think differently:

Father says “The world is over. It can’t be cured, it can’t be salvaged, it can’t be saved.”

Yes, it can!’ Julie screams at him, losing all composure. ‘Who decided life has to be a nightmare? Who wrote that fucking rule? We can fix it, we’ve just never tried before! We’ve always been too busy and selfish and scared!’(WB 198)

Love as a social tie

The third issue of the social trust between the self and other is the power of love. It shares the same strategy as social assimilation and trust besides language and food. Many critics agree that WB is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet. It is a story of a complex true love against the existing social status- quo and against traditional fathers. The two couples, Romeo and Juliet and R and Julie, are ruled by what society and others beliefs. Pursuing individual fulfillment as opposed to social traditions, both R and Julie, like Romeo and Juliet, refuse to follow the commands of their society. Social rules as Marion believes, through his novel, can be stretched and modified by young lovers: “If there are rules, we’re the ones making them. We can change them whenever we want to.” (WB:178-9) Indeed, it shows how the two individuals, by their love, attempt to sustain life. “I want life and in all its stupid sticky rawness.”(WB 229), R claims. The ideological gap between the young and the old generation is also present in this relation. R and Julie’s romantic relation crosses the traditional boundaries of the exciting rules. Both, as a young generation, R and Julie deconstruct the traditional rules of what others believe and put a plan to re-save the world. Of course, they will save it with true love.

Because this is how we save the world. We will not let Earth become a tomb, a mass grave spinning through space. We will exhume ourselves. We will fight the curse and break it. We will cry

and bleed and lust and love, and we will cure death. We will be the cure. Because we want it. (WB:229)

R gets another chance to assess his life through love relation with a human. He is motivated by his love for Julie to improve his linguistic capability and his social acceptability. He expresses his feelings for the human to avoid social abstractness. Through the power of love, the zombie R starts to have a significant step to be re-humanized, developing a place in human society as a normal creature, he adds that he “want[s] a new past, new memories, a new first handshake with love. [he] want[s] to start over, in every possible way.” (WB 173) The zombie R, though he devours human brains, is radically different from other zombies in the novel, or even different from his ancestor, Haitian zombie. This zombieism in Marion’s opinion is transitional and it can be cured by love. Thus the love affair between R and Julie does not only cure R, but humans as well((Buckley 2013, 216). R is also aware of the need for physical interaction with human as a social connection: “I reach out and take her hand. We walk off the conveyers with our arms stretched across the divider. /--/ This female and I have fallen in love. Or what's left of it.” (WB: 10) This is to say, quite confidently, that with true love, R starts a journey of transformation and a self-realization towards a romantic hero incarnation. Beyond the pretensions of postmodern fathers, renewalists are much concerned with social and ethical responsibilities by which a reader “can only know the world through a network of socially established meaning systems” (Hutcheon:7). Julie’s love for R, also, leads her to forgive killing and eating her fiancé Perry. It is the power of love brings forgiveness and trust and then save the world, he says “With her eyes closed, her voice muffled by my shirt, she says, ‘I forgive you.’” (WB 225)

In *Disturbing the Universe*, on the other hand, Roberta Trites argues that the contemporary adolescent novels, as social education fiction, are meant to “measure of social acceptance” in the “belief that they[adult young people] have the power to improve the world”(2000: 27). In *WB* the complex culture and society that R and Julie find themselves to fight for sustaining life in a world which is filled with destruction. Both societies, zombies, and humans are kept themselves in destructive areas and each group tries, by violence, to control: “What is a city and why do we keep building them? Take away the culture, the commerce, the business, and pleasure, is there anything left? Just a grid of nameless streets filled with nameless people?” (WB:145)

Moreover, the power of love finds its way critiquing the violence which is found in the educational system. Both zombies and humans teach their children to kill the opposite side. In sustaining the race, zombie children are taught how to kill and eat humans in the same way the living schools teach children violence before reading and writing. Each side claims its own right to live and to attack the other side.

Jewel Street, where we built the schools once we finally accepted that this was a reality, that this was the world our children would inherit. We taught them how to shoot, how to pour concrete, how to kill and how to survive, and if they made it that far, if they mastered those skills and had time to spare, then we taught them how to read and write, to reason and relate and understand their world.[italics in original](WB:122)

The couple works together, in spite of their societies rejection for the pairing, to restore peace and to unite the two different societies. As a zombie and as a human, R and Julie recreate a life for both. Their hope is to find a beautiful world, against those who believe at the end of civilization, capable of accepting the difference or otherness. They put their differences aside to find what they have in common:

You and I are victims of the same disease. We're fighting the same war, just different battles in different theaters, and it's way too late for me to hate you for anything because we're the same damn thing. My soul, your conscience, whatever's left of me woven into whatever's left of you, all tangled up and conjoined. We're in this together, corpse. (WB:161)

It seems that Marion's creation, as a young generation writer, of the zombie, is more related to the social tolerance than horror "[w]e[zombies] may appear mindless, but we aren't. The rusty cogs of cogency still spin, just geared down and down till the outer motion is barely visible." (WB:4) The novel seeks to reconstruct the image of the new world on the ashes of the old. On the ashes of the cynical postmodern irony, the post-postmodern world symbolizes by faith and trust. At the end of the novel, R is being satisfied with humans because they began to accept zombies, teach them and cure them.

Conclusion

With the above argument, the paper has identified a particular kind of trust between self and other which is discernible in the contemporary Gothic novel *WB*. Using the post-postmodern context, with and return to issues of realism and trust, for the subject, the paper has constructed a new model of contemporary Gothic narrative that has been used to investigate the aesthetic trust and change in zombiesim under the headings of linguistic ability, eating/ food and love. Those notions have been analyzed to be a concern with truth and realism. The term post-postmodern has proven, also, to be useful in that it invokes a new aesthetic direction of social trust.

Marion's *WB* as a contemporary text is meant to be a social document of critiquing the social perception of "otherness" and how the exclusion of the different results in disorder and destruction. It is seen as an aesthetic promising premise to reveal signals of growing respect for otherness. It takes a different route of its predecessor of Gothic fiction, in abandoning horror in favor of love and respect. By examining the three fields, in turn, we can see that each has its step towards social acceptance and assimilation. The zombie's linguistic awareness is milked of its usefulness for the nourishment of trust. It provides a connection between the individual and his/her role in the external world. That is why *R* is aware of the important role of language in human social life and in order to avoid being a "thing", *R* has attempted to utter or remember his name. "Eating well" has also been discussed under the term of social change. For social inclusion, *R* has abandoned the way and the type of his eating. In this sense, zombie dehumanization seems to constitute a form of "eating well" because this aesthetic device nourishes only the humanist "self". "Eating well", also, explores the idea of a symbiotic relationship between the human and nonhuman other.

A desire to change and to think otherwise has been also motivated by the power of love. R and Julie, as a young generation, take the moral responsibility to change the world for better. They are aware that to represent the world constructively is find ways of love. The analysis also perused the role of love as a civil right in humanizing both human and non-human which is led by the young. Like Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, R and Julie have brought the opposite two societies into contact. Both believe that faithful love can cure hatred and bring the world into peace.

Finally and at the end of the novel, "Otherness" has become so common and familiar to humanity. So there is a demand to adopt new ethical strategies to include nonhuman otherness and revaluating the very idea of humanity itself on posthuman grounds. Within the two campuses, zombie's and human's, social diversity that has emerged out of change and assimilation may be a source of celebratory futuristic hope. The truth of this kind cannot be established on purely abstract or nihilist relation, but with seriousness and understanding.

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