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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Modern Zombies as Subaltern in Max Brooks's *World War Z*: An Oral History of The Zombie War (2006)

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ABSTRACT

Max Brooks's *World War Z* (2006) has made many contributions to the zombie genre, particularly in making it an international plague. With key situations occurring in the Middle East, which in the Christian tradition will be the location of the "End of Days," the Apocalypse, the Armageddon at the Megiddo. While Brooks was not the first to assign infectious disease/plague/epidemiology as the cause of zombies, he emphasized that explanation for the 21st-century culture that has been rife with fears of disease and pandemics, from Ebola, Bird flu, etc. This study aims to show the image of the modern zombie as the postcolonial subject who has no voice and this is the subaltern character, devoid of a voice in society. The most marginalized in society, so often the poor, are the outcasts. Spivak sees the subaltern as oppressed individuals, of course, we can see it in the form of various minorities, the Uyghurs in China, for example, so zombies are a fictional example of the subaltern, the people without a voice in society, without a place, other than to be used and abused, to be disdained or ignored. The current study analyzes Brooks's *World War Z* from a cultural and postcolonial perspective, concentrating on the historical context of the times. The study uses Gayatri Spivak's concepts of "Subaltern" and "Subsubaltern". The study concludes that Spivak's whole point is that people shouldn't speak for other people, especially if it's a white person speaking for a person of colour, a man speaking for a woman, or someone from the West speaking for someone from the East. It is all about colonial appropriation. So, it could work on two levels: a white Western narrator in the book or just Max Brooks as the author, a white Westerner.

Keywords: Pandemics, Subaltern, Cultural materialism, Postcolonialism, Zombies

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Introduction

In 1968, American director George A. Romero, the godfather of modern zombies presented a turning point in the history of the American gothic genre, especially the zombie myth or genre. Romero changed the concept of the zombie forever from being sugar-eating to a flesh-eater. This change happened because Romero wanted to change the reader's brain, mind, set of thinking, ideas, and culture as well. It is worth mentioning that American society was afraid because of the Cold War that happened during the 1950s. Rather than being led, the zombie figure became a leader. It was a period of great fear: the onset of World War II launched, threatening widespread genocide, atomic warfare, and the rise of communist dictatorships (Rhodes, 2024).

Max Brooks was the son of the famous comedian, American actor, writer, and director Mel Brooks, and his mother was an actress, Anne Bancroft. Brooks used these terms for the modern zombie interchangeably, 'the zombie, ghoul, or Zack' for the walking dead varied significantly from the Haitian zombie; an obedient slave sentenced to a life of servitude under the control of an evil master (bokor). Brooks draws from the godfather of modern zombies, George A. Romero's contagious zombies, and the latter was inspired by the vampire-like hordes of Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) (Saunders, 2012, p. 53).

From his childhood, Brooks would mix his highly creative ideas with historical knowledge, giving an air of authenticity regardless of how imaginative they were. A really good example of that is his text, *World War Z*: "Because of this tone of people carrying out the logistics of a war, and except for that, it's a crazy idea" (Brodesser-Akner, 2013).

As shown by Brooks's 'geographical imagination', nearly every interview of zombiism that has been done includes a resisting area of the political or racial region. Specifically, related instances of zombies include initial communicating accounts in colonial environments, from Roman Britannia to German Southwest Africa. By presenting the modern zombies as a flesh-eating protector of the solid ground against the covetousness of imperialism, Brooks' zombies take the role of subaltern retaliators, devouring the flesh of those European subjugators and detaining (nonetheless not rejecting) the troops of colonialism over the world. Brooks, in doing so, directly and cleverly writes down our real-life accounts and experiences (Saunders, 2012, p. 52).

Brooks's novel, *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* (2006) is about real interviews of survivors, it presents "a series of individual accounts of survival in a decade-long war against zombies. A "book of memories" (3) as the nameless storyteller of Brooks' novel calls it" (Lanzendörfer, 2015, p. 112). *World War Z* is regarded to be the remaining part of the information gathered by the storyteller for the United Nation's Postwar Commission Report; if that announcement has all the "clear facts and figures" and the "cold, hard data" (Ibid).

The characters of Brooks' writings are used as eyewitnesses, not human beings; even those interview topics that he conducted with the most face time have perhaps twenty-five pages. These things are done intentionally. Brooks knows that his power is not in storytelling and characterization but in comprehending not just the true nature of zombies but the true nature of people (The Eagle, 2024).

Brooks tells one of the interviewers: "As I got older, I realized that zombie stories were a powerful tool for examining real-world issues" (Khan, 2011) because the living dead is a macro-threat (in contrast to the werewolves and vampires' micro threat), they can murder human beings by disordering the thin thread that binds the society together. Brooks adds that the living dead are like AIDS because of their nature, they are very stoppable, and with clear-minded leadership, those zombies will be eradicated even before they become

a serious threat. However, in the undead tales, the audience does not have that type of leadership, education, or institution. The human race commits one mistake after another, and even before people know it, there would be a global pandemic (Khan, 2011).

Zombie literature has been the interest of many scholars. Many studies have been conducted about zombie literature, for example (Cussans, 2004, Koven, 2008, Dendle, 2001 and Platts, 2013) none of them has dealt with this under-researched topic.

The current study tackles Max Brooks's *World War Z* (2006), utilizing both cultural materialist and postcolonial perspectives that really consider the political and cultural which were present in the cultural and historical age that contributed to and helped in the appearance of Max Brooks's novel. Furthermore, the current study investigates one of the most important critical concepts of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 'Subaltern' and 'Sub-subaltern' as key terms that refer to the oppressed and exploited type of people in literary texts. As a result, the reader will get the idea that what is crucial here is not just the text, but the political, cultural, social and religious aspects of life as well.

Theoretical framework

Prominent figures such as Raymond Williams and Louis Althusser viewed literature as a reflection of societal change, challenging the enduring dominance of Culture's hegemony. Their recognition that literary works convey significant meanings led to a critical approach focused on unravelling dissident or subversive perspectives within texts. Critics try to unveil the implicit politics within literature, seeking to comprehend the pervasive cultural hegemony and get a deeper understanding of the texts under critical observation (Bressler, 1999, p. 187).

According to Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory* (2002), Cultural Materialism uses four methods to analyze texts. First, it emphasizes examining the historical context within which a work was produced. Second, it delves into the political commitment expressed within literary works, identifying the circumstances of their creation and capturing critical junctures. The combination of these methods can reveal insightful conditions. Third, Cultural Materialism scrutinizes the structure, techniques, and various genres of literary works to show their meanings. Finally, textual analysis extracts examples from chosen texts to hone in on specific aspects of social, economic, cultural, and religious life (p.187).

Raymond Williams, in *Long Revolution* (1961), explains the cultural theory as "the study of a whole way of life," (p.67) and suggests that the value of art should be assessed within the entire context in which these works are created. Therefore, art should be regarded as an activity akin to other societal pursuits such as production, politics, and family life. Williams emphasizes that when studying art, we should not isolate it from society, but rather analyze all activities and their interconnections without prioritizing any particular one (p.66).

The use of the cultural materialism approach is essential because the image zombie character from its introduction to American literature and nowadays is due to the change in the culture or the elements of culture, including politics, economy, social life and the author's perspective. The culture of the time participated in producing such kind of literature. In American culture, there are such kinds of zombies who reflect the culture of the times. When it was introduced there, the American culture affected by the policy saw that this was dangerous because it hinted at postcolonialism. So, cultural materialism shows the cultural influences that participated in presenting the character of the zombie into the American culture and the deviation that this character takes after being introduced to the American culture.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism drew significant Western interest following the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the influential work *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. These publications helped in raising the voices and issues of many marginalized cultures, gaining recognition in academic and social spheres. The terms "postcolonial" and "postcolonialism" made their first scholarly journal appearances in the mid-1980s, appearing as subtitles in works such as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's aforementioned influential text and in (1990) in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin's *Past The Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. By the early and mid-1990s, both terms had become firmly established in academic and popular discussions (Loomba, 2005, p.1).

Many argue that postcolonialism has two branches. The first branch sees postcolonialism as a collection of diverse methodologies without a singular quality, as noted by Homi Bhabha and Arun Mukherjee. The second branch includes critics like Edward Said, Barbara Harlow, and Gayatri Spivak, who regard postcolonialism as a collection of cultural strategies "rooted in history". As postcolonial critics point out, to be colonized is "to be removed from history." When encountering the dominant culture, the colonized or native culture is forced to either go into hiding or face extinction (Bressler, 1999, p. 202).

The term was further developed by influential postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), she argues that the subaltern is mainly disempowered and silenced within the frameworks of existing power dynamics. The subaltern's inability to truly speak and be heard in their terms is not just about the lack of access to cultural and social institutions but also about how their narratives are shaped and restricted by the overwhelmingly dominant historical and cultural discourse (p.66–98).

Spivak's whole point is that people shouldn't speak for other people, especially if it's a white person speaking for a person of colour, a man speaking for a woman, or someone from the West speaking for someone from the East. It's all about colonial appropriation. Whereas the zombie body may be seen as "speaking," especially if the white West is taking advantage or possession of a black or otherwise ethnic body, it also applies to telling stories, even if those stories are fictional. So, it could work on two levels: a white Western narrator in the book or just Max Brooks as the author (a white Westerner). The researcher is going to use Spivak's concepts of subaltern and sub-subaltern to analyze this character.

Historical background of the (1960s) till the present day

The American history of the 1960s did, very definitely, address the fears over apocalypse, the additional apocalypse would be the apocalypse of contagion which was most notable in American history and at least until Covid was most noticeable with the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic, and the germs and microbes, the unseen world of bacteria, virus that these could cause hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of deaths (Rhodes, 2024).

Even before the Spanish Flu epidemic, there was ongoing fear from Europe and so many Americans being European immigrants or their descendants of the bubonic plague, the black death was called in Europe (Ibid).

To the present day, for example, there is a children's rhyme; Very Young Children, the nursery rhyme is a rhyme which based on the "Bubonic Plague" of the Middle Ages, ashes, is how the nursery rhyme, and ashes of humans are falling dead from the Black Death. So, there have been hundreds of years of fear about contagion and then of course we

started to become increasingly concerned perhaps in part because in the past there was the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, there was the concern about various other communicable diseases, Avian Bird Flu, and Ebola. None of those killed a thousand or millions of people, but Rhode's does think that people had and by the time Covid hit, there had already been long-standing concerns about the epidemic and pandemic (Ibid).

This is also very sociopolitical because there is concern over epidemic and pandemic and this is happening in America, some people from different political parties; Republican vs. Democrats in America's system, some people believe that the movement should be very involved in prospecting the American people against disease and some people do not, some people believe in vaccination, and some do not. This has been a major concern recently because of COVID-19 but it has been a long concern that some people wither they regard the polio shot of the 1950s as small pots of vaccination and even things like measles, some of these communicable diseases, in other words, some can be inoculated against. Some people very much have a fear that the government should not do that, not giving us vaccinations. Or they fear that the vaccination is not what the government says it is, a conspiracy. Some people are more scared of the vaccination, and they believe that the shot is the danger and not the virus (Rhodes, 2024).

Furthermore, Rhodes (2024) believes that one of the key reasons for flesh-eating is a larger movement in American literature towards increased violence on screen and part of a larger movement in horror novels particularly films goes from black and white to colour, to show red blood, body parts are being ripped off and entrails, so there is an emphasis on that violence and manner that has sometimes rightly been described as almost pornographic, not in the sexual sense but in the sense of glorifying violence and showing on screen what would not have been possible without censorship in the days of Seabrook and *White Zombie*. Romero's zombies are genuinely accidental of whatever type of pandemic and very much speak to the kind of concern we live through with Covid concerned about pandemics that we could say would date to the black death and bubonic plague. So, the fear that there would be this heavy loss of lives through accidents and not through warfare, is impossible to control and very difficult (Ibid).

One interesting thing about the horror genre and particularly zombie literature is that it extends to all the horror genres and it can cover so many different human emotions, events and our daily lives as well as major problems such as wars. Horror always had a cultural and sometimes social and historical message. There was another 1932 work called *Freaks* about people who were different and foreign because in the work they were missing their limbs and had no legs. It is not unique for what happened after WWI and many veterans of WWI had lost limbs in the war. So, horror has often echoed the world's events and culture, sometimes five or ten years later, some people would specifically talk about this in terms of horror novels and movies of the late 1970s and 1980s often echoing the Vietnam war.

Many Americans promote the word 'Other', and they cause in spreading it across the ocean, so why should we even help? Why should our people die? And whatever problem happens it is the 'Other', the 'Foreigners' behind it. So, there is a hidden and terrible message behind the zombie literature, and this is very true while the zombie genre has evolved from the Haitian zombies (i.e., *salve* zombies) into modern zombies (i.e., flesh-eating). First, it was this concern about the 'Other', then it became a concern about epidemics and pandemics that very concern of the 'Other' remains because there is the concern that the epidemics have been caused by others, other countries, foreigners, non-white, non-Christians and inferior people as would be seen. And again, we see this with the way some people talked about Covid-19, AIDS, The Bird Flu, and Ebola. These are all originating in what would be perceived by some white Americans as less civilized

people in a less civilized part of the world and sometimes referred to as the “Third World”, less developed, civilized, non-white, non-Christian (Kee, 2017, p.12).

World War Z: Textual analysis

It is proper to tackle Brook’s *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* (2006), as a critical novel of modern environmental issues. The novel unfolds in China; the country that combines both, the highest inhalations on the planet and one of the globe’s rapidly increasing economies. The first news of the living dead was in reservoir waters place called the Three Gorges Dam where they attacked many rummages “among the drowned villages” (Phillips, 2011, p. 116). Brooks’ selection of the dam area is international. This place is not just one of the globe’s biggest mankind projects to supply water and power for the utilization of humans, it is also one of the most bionomic disputable projects that were ever built, to the extent that even the Chinese people are aware of (Ibid).

The novel is arranged as a report that is conducted by the UN to encapsulate and sum up the zombie war that was most likely ended in the past. The person who was interviewed goes around the world from one place to another to pay attention and listen to humans’ stories to grasp how the apocalypse happened, how each nation fought this outbreak, and how the wipeout is taking place. Anne Logan adds that the zombie war is launched by some virus that transforms human beings into zombies when they are bitten by an infectious person. So, the world is gradually seized by zombies. The lone way of killing those undead is a bullet in the head. Thus, in the book, there are many grisly scenes. Nonetheless, there are also many political problems tackled in the book, in this sense this former point not only makes the novel unputdownable, but engaging and fascinating as well. Brooks’ anticipation is interesting. Brooks discusses the issues of animals and neglected pets; the present-day population, trains sniffer dogs, “that are put to use on canine teams to aid the greater fight against the zombies” (Logan, 2014).

Gin Jenny declares that *World War Z* is a post-apocalyptic in the history of process dystopias. The author exhibits his book as an oral history of the war that was ongoing against the living dead, with almost forty storytellers to convey their stories to people. Brooks describes the influence of the zombie war on the whole planet, the novel is a masterpiece about tackling what was happening in various countries, beginning from the very start of the novel that something awful is happening and preceding the initial fight against the living dead, the first loss, the various issues that faced each nation, and the tactics the invent to face that danger.

Sara Pevehouse O’Neill mentions that *World War Z* takes place in the real world and along with our own historical timeline. References to real-world nations and historical events such as WWII, the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the American Civil War discredit a reading that would displace the action of the novel to a similar but parallel universe (2013, p.11). The known and exact year of the zombie apocalypse was not mentioned, however, the information from famous political and the celebrity industry gives us an idea and proof that the zombie apocalypse happened at the beginning of the twenty-first century (O’Neill, 2013, p. 11).

Rooted in the societal engagement of the Haitian voodoo religious practices enslavement, it changed into a portrayal of the atrocity that is regarded as ‘Other’, in the vision of white culture (American people), and lately has been seized by men of letters and naysayers as a criticism of modern imperialism. Brooks’ compiling and very successful novel, *World War Z*, can be understood in the sense of its place in the American lore of undead mythmaking. On the one hand, the novel keeps the literary traditions of inspecting the true meaning behind

the living dead as a metaphor for present-day life. On the contrary, the zombie depiction of societal and political responses of different countries to the undead war shows much about what shapes the white culture's imagination (American people), of global links to post 9/11 world (McAlister, 2012, p. 462).

From the very start, the zombie is an embodiment of the 'Other', in the minds of the white culture (Americans) for its breaking of the human spirit (Ibid:442). Brooks's novel, *World War Z*, carries on with this tradition of Othering by forming an 'exotic (translate 'remote and superstitious') area of China (Baldwin, 2007, p. 413) as the origin of the spreading of the virus. Additionally, "Brooks by all of his being is mentioned in his book and quoted to regard the East, especially Islamic people as terrorists and the mindless extremism, of terrorist forces of nature: "The lack of rational thought has always scared me when it came to zombies, the idea that there is no middle ground, no room of negotiation...of course, that applies to terrorists, but to can also apply to hurricane or flue pandemic, or ... earthquake..." (Wilkinson, 2020, p. 12), such a notion along with the American famous culture's denial accurately acknowledged the Other, to some extent, elucidating the zombie's symbol of mass culture.

The zombies as shown in Brooks' novel are monsters that are going beyond the limits of what is social and moral concerning the zombies and the living, "they are neither/both dead nor/and alive" (Crofts, 2019, p. 5). The living dead create terror and enchantment because they are not just transgressing the limits and crossing borders, but due to their daring and challenging the limits themselves "by being both and neither one thing nor another" (Ibid). They represent and let loose the disorder that "exists on the other side of cultural and categorical boundaries" (Ibid).

Gary Rhodes believes that it is possible to consider *World War Z* as a postcolonial novel and it is part of the colonial desire at that time to be a civilizing influence on people that seems uncivilized, specifically, we could say that the character of the scientist is a white American who is going to other places in the world outside of the United States including the middle east trying to solve an apparent problem (Rhodes, 2024).

In Brooks' novel *World War Z*, the reader can also see a passing over of geographical borders that can show the political unrest and concerns felt by the Americans. Those undead are not only restricted to one nation and Brooks gives the feeling to the reader that the release of the plague was in a nameless village in China. The worldwide nature of the zombie war texts can be credited to two major concerns. The first concern has to do with capitalism, whereas the second one regards the effects of dislocating humans (Yuasa, 2013, p. 3).

McKenzie Yuasa believes that "Global capitalism, and its virulent nature when considering advances in technology, is an anxiety associated with how economic spaces are changing. Consider the country that is attributed as the source of the outbreak: China" (2006, p.3). As a nation that has hugely gotten bigger via global capitalism and its financial ties to the United States, it is no wonder that China would be the target of concerns that the American people possess about global capitalism. Brooks stated from the very beginning of the outbreak of the plague in a remote village that officially has no name, the place is called "New Dachang",

After centuries of foreign oppression, exploitation, and humiliation, we were finally reclaiming our rightful place as humanity's middle kingdom. We were the world's richest and most dynamic superpower, masters of everything from outer space to cyber space. It was the dawn of what the world was finally acknowledging as "The Chinese Century" and yet so many of us still lived like

these ignorant peasants, as stagnant and superstitious as the earliest Yangshao savages (Brooks, 2006, p. 6).

According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), she argued that “Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has ‘no geopolitical determinations. The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject’” (p.66). The narrator in the novel is a doctor who checked one of the first victims of the infection. The narrator bemoans the worst state of China’s power, in the past, they were the most advanced and powerful country. Currently, many American people fear and are concerned about the possibility that China might surpass the United States concerning economic power. Brooks’ selection of China as the source or origin of the outbreak of the virus shows the deep association of the United States’ economic dominance with its societal identity and threatens that notion by depicting the zombies as symbols of abject (Yuasa, 2013, p. 3).

This is very much postcolonial in the modern sense as well as the historical sense. We know that Max Brooks himself is Jewish and the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt. Historically, the oppression they would say they felt for thousands of years but we know slavery existed in so much of the world and then of course it becomes something greater with seafaring navies, the Spanish Armada, everybody in Mexico speaks Spanish now but that was not the historic language that was being conquered from without. The North American peoples were conquered by white Europeans (Rhodes, 2024).

Gary D. Rhodes thinks that we can see this oppression in Brooks’s statement above from the beginning of the novel, that for a lot of us that there are certain texts whether it would be the Bhagavad Gita in India, the Quran, the Bible and the Torah for the Jews but some of the most ancient texts we see one person being oppressed by another. Whether it was slavery or ancient Greek tragedies, the caste system in India still existed so strongly for thousands of years. In all these texts, we see one group of people oppressing another and it used to be thousands of years ago normally that one would oppress generally geographically nearby people because travel was more difficult, and we can mention Alexander the Great and the Vikings. So, this oppression and what Brooks is talking about is that the oppressed have finally become in charge and more free. This is very much what a lot of people and even American students in the 1960s and 70s wanted when they saw Castro overthrow Batista in Cuba, many American students were interested in Che Guevara, the revolutionary who left Cuba and went to Bolivia. This notion is that those who have been oppressed are now in charge or liberated (Rhodes, 2024).

This is a very progressive view of history and actually, it starts in England with Thomas Babington Macaulay and the wig style of History that put in the colloquial American slang as ‘things are getting better all the times’, but by the 1980s to the present that dream seems to be despairing and the reverse is what many others believe that our children will be worse off than their parents; they won’t have the opportunities, things will be worse economically for them. In modern culture, there is the fact that the American dream is no longer possible, and many American writers have talked about this, like Hunter S. Thompson in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) and graphic novels like Allen Moor’s *Watchmen* (1986), where the American dream is dead and dying. Very different in how people felt in the 1960s. This is very much what a lot of people in modern America today think (Rhodes, 2024).

The narrator kept telling in realistic details about that massacre in the wadi, “At the end of the room we found a headless. . . I’m guessing, doctor, lying on the dirt floor next to a cot with soiled sheets and clothes and an old, left-footed, worn out Nike high-top”

(Brooks, 2006, p. 20). The intrinsic problem of a white European is not seeing the “other” as a shadow of himself. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak supports this by saying, “It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary not only by ideological and scientific production but also by the institution of the law (2006, p.75). Brooks when describing the terrifying scene of the chaotic and frightening massacre as if he represents the virus that caused those human beings to turn into zombies as symbolically as the ‘Other’ because wow cannot control and negate something that is uncontrollable and contagious.

In the first chapter entitled “Warnings” one of the interviewees said about the overland smuggling,

They used to have this saying, “every rich man’s house has a servant’s entrance.”, If western Europe has increased its security, go through eastern Europe. If the U.S. won’t let you in, go through Mexico. I’m sure it helped make the rich white countries feel safer, even though they had infestations already bubbling within their borders (Brooks, 2006, p. 15–16).

The statement above works just perfectly with Spivak’s argument concerning the crisis of the “white savior” as it is sometimes called, meaning a white person must “save” the Others of the world, “In the face of the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self’s shadow, a possibility of political practice for the intellectual would be to put the economic ‘under erasure’, to see the economic factor as irreducibly as it reinscribes the social text” (1994, p.75). This really shows and gives an idea of how the government and white people were corrupted and they only care about their matters, especially in times of fear and a shambling economy. They just neglect their own people even though they are shepherds in times of need.

Travis D’Ambrosia is being interviewed by the narrator who told the story of letting the American people down,

Do you know the price tag of putting just one American citizen in uniform? And I don’t just mean the time that he’s actively in that uniform: the training, the equipment, the food, the housing, the transport, the medical care. I’m talking about the long-term dollar value that the country, the American taxpayer, has to shell out to that person for the rest of their natural life. This is a crushing financial burden, and in those days, we barely had enough funding to maintain what we had (Brooks, 2006, p. 51).

The statement above is clearly aligned with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s critique of the colonial power or the working class; those marginalized people as “The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (1994, p.76). The speaker is expressing his point of view regarding the money crisis burden. Those poor soldiers who put into the services to serve a corrupted country who spent a lot of money on trivial things instead should invest those amounts of money on important things like developing medicine. Those who are in charge exploit these poor soldiers for their own sake and ultimately, they are leftover.

The zombies in WWZ can be seen as an embodiment of displaced people due to the similar conditions of living in between limits or not being included as part of the controlling cultural definition. This problem of the displaced people is related to the undead metaphor of worry and fear that has roots in the historical experiences of slavery and imperialism in America. Displaced human beings are the miserable ones in society; in simple terms,

there is no suitable place for them within their culture and they are constantly seen as foreigners. Zombies are similar to the undead and can be read as an embodiment of the fear of whoever can be viewed as a person. When humans such as slaves do not own citizenship, they become mindless people and not legitimately acknowledged by the government, nevertheless, the same authority tries to dominate them (Yuasa, 2013, p. 4).

Saladin Kader told the story of the outbreak of this virus,

Of course, we thought it was a Zionist lie, who didn't? When the Israeli ambassador announced to the UN General Assembly that his country was enacting a policy of "voluntary quarantine," what was I supposed to think? Was I supposed to really believe his crazy story that African rabies was actually some new plague that transformed dead bodies into bloodthirsty cannibals? How can you possibly believe that kind of foolishness, especially when it comes from your most hated enemy? (Brooks, 2006, p. 37).

Gary Don Rhodes comments on the statement above, he said, however, we can say that this can also date to William Seabrook with the superstitions of the Haitians, it is always about the other, and the other or othering has racist components. And it is possible to say that his book is racist even if we don't know that he from the inside is racist. He is not mistaken to believe that some diseases have originated in Africa and that is a matter of history like Ebola. The underdeveloped country that maybe doesn't have proper clean water and a good standard of living. At the same time, we could very quickly say that the "civilized versus uncivilized", is exactly what William Seabrook is doing (Rhodes, 2024).

One of the interviewee is called Grover Carlson who was working as a fuel collector, told the story of survival about his family stating:

It was about five foot ten, slumped, narrow shoulders with this puffy, wagging belly. It wasn't wearing a shirt, and its mottled gray flesh was all torn and pockmarked. . . Tim looked frantically around the room for a weapon just as it grabbed him by the shirt. They fell on the carpet, wrestling. He shouted for us to get in the bedroom, for me to get the gun. . . Another one, big, I'd say six and a half feet with giant shoulders and bulging arms. The window was broken, and it had Jenna by the hair. She was screaming "Mommymommymommy!" (Brooks, 2006, p. 67)

According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe. It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe" (1994, p.74). In this way, zombies show a real phenomenon that "modern science" cannot beat, reduce, or adapt (Lamming, 1960, p. 61). The main drive and desire of those zombies are to infect colonize and conquer new places just like how the colonial system works, where there are masters and slaves. Symbolically this infection affects a great population just like colonization affects an entire population in other words, the virus or the infection of the virus is the power of the colonization itself because the main purpose of this virus is to infect as many people as possible and those people are objectives of colonization, this virus wants to spread, dominate and exploit those people.

Mukherjee also said depicting the horrible scene of bombing the place, "I could barely see. I heard the approaching zombies. I guessed that they couldn't be more than two hundred meters away. I swore I wouldn't die like the others, all those victims torn to pieces, that cow I saw struggling and bleeding on the banks of the Satluj River in Rupnaga" (Brooks, 2006, p. 135). Franco Moretti argued that by Brooks's statement that "the representation of Frankenstein-like monsters recalls that of proletarians, who are frequently

portrayed as unspeaking and hungry masses” (2006, p.109). Then, came John Cussan and his explanation of the present-day zombies to reinforce Franco Moretti’s argument, stating that the idea of the present-day zombies could be observed as a symbol or metaphor of the working class of people versus capitalism or colonialism (2004, p.212). According to Simone Brioni, Adam Simons’ documentary *The American Nightmare* (2002), and Goerge Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), works bring the idea of slavery in the US. Romero’s work appears to give the idea that the real and lone enemies are not the undead, but rather the United States government that kept its policy of racism and discrimination against black people (p. 168).

In an interview conducted by the researcher with the zombie expert Dr. Kyle William Bishop who thinks that the best way to understand the virus or the zombie as a colonizing force is like this; when we get sick when a virus invades our system, it is a colonizing force, our bodies are being colonized by the virus and if that virus makes us behave in certain ways which some real world crisis do, then yes it that becomes like our master, it overpowers our psychological functions, it makes us do things for this gain and preservation. And making a case that a virus itself is a colonizing force like a voodoo master or a voodoo priest that does tie Seabrook’s novel and Max Brooks’s novel. Seabrook said that wicked bokors in Vodun traditions are taking over people’s bodies and a hundred years later, we have the virus undertaking people’s bodies and making them do what is best for the virus in the same way that the voodoo master is doing what is best for him (Bishop, 2024).

Conclusion

WWZ is a novel that is basically about the American Civil War. The idea is this, because of the presence of this virus it turns part of the American citizenry into soldiers trying to further the cause of the virus, which is right to expand, reproduce, and take over. And in terms of kind of geopolitical ideas, we have the master-slave uprising, and suddenly the humans become the slaves, and the virus becomes the master, and it results in this armed conflict between the two. When Brooks talks about the zombie war, it’s really a civil war, it’s a war among one group where one group is being infiltrated and overpowered by this viral force that is taking things under control. That aligns in an interesting way with Seabrook because Seabrook is talking about economic terms, we are going to enslave people for labour whereas in WWZ, we are enslaving people for warfare; it is this existential struggle to the presumption who is going to survive, i.e. the humans or the virus. Ultimately, there is the sense that the war is over, and this book is sampled from different interviews newspaper articles, and historical records, and the idea of the book is the record of the war, it is a record of the war that was ultimately won by the humans, they fought against the enslavement of the viral and colonizer and they reestablish independence. So, there is a hopefully happy ending whereas, the Seabrook doesn’t necessarily have that because Seabrook is saying like do not get to Haiti because Haiti is very dangerous, and you will be turned into a zombie if you get to Haiti. So, there is more of a pessimistic sense of what is going on in Haiti, it’s really alarming and reactionary, the sense of kind of superiority in the sense that the US is superior, and Haiti is this backward, dangerous country. So, Seabrook is negative almost to the point of racism.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contribution

The first author wrote the research details, including its methodology, procedures, results, and conclusions, while the second author (the supervisor) provided supervision and guidance.

Data availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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الزومبي المعاصر صوت المهمشين في رواية ماكس بروكس الحرب العالمية زي: تاريخ شفهي لحرب الزومبي (2006)

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المستخلص

قدم ماكس بروكس في "الحرب العالمية زي" (2006) مساهمات عدة في كتابات الزومبي، ولاسيما في جعله وباءً دوليًا، مع حدوث مواقف رئيسة في الشرق الأوسط، ممّا سيكون في التقاليد المسيحية يعرف "يوم الحساب"، نهاية العالم، الهَرْمَجْدُون في مجدو. في حين أنّ بروكس لم يكن أوّل من حدد الأمراض المعدية/ الطاعون/ علم الأوبئة بوصفها سببًا للزومبي، فقد شدد على أنّ هذا التفسير لتقافة القرن الحادي والعشرين التي كانت مليئة بالمخاوف واحدًا من الأمراض والأوبئة، مثل الإيبولا وإنفلونزا الطيور، إلى غير ذلك. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إظهار صورة الزومبي الحديث بوصفه موضوع ما بعد الاستعمار الذي ليس له صوت، وهذه هي الشخصية التابعة، الأكثر تهميشًا في المجتمع، وغالبًا ما تتكون من الفقراء والمندوبين.

إذ سيتم تناول سيففاك الشكل التابع للأشخاص المهمشين والمستغلين، بالطبع يمكننا رؤيته في شكل أقبليات مختلفة، وكذلك الأويغور في الصين، على سبيل المثال، لذا فإن الزومبي هم مثال خيالي على الشكل التابع، هم الأشخاص الذين ليس لديهم صوت في المجتمع، من دون مكان، وكثيرًا ما يتم استخدامه وإساءة معاملته، ويتم ازدراؤه أو تجاهله. ستحلل هذه الدراسة بروكس في "الحرب العالمية زي" من منظور المادية الثقافية وما بعد الاستعماري، مع التركيز على السياق التاريخي للعصر. علاوةً على ذلك، سيذهب الباحث تجاه استخدام مفاهيم أخرى في الدراسة، مثل جاياتري سيففاك "التابع" و "أسوأ من التابع".

توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى أن بيت القصيد من سيففاك هو أنه لا ينبغي للناس التحدث نيابة عن الآخرين، ولاسيما إذا كان شخصًا أبيض يتحدث بالنيابة عن شخص ملون، أو رجلًا يتحدث نيابة عن امرأة، أو شخصًا من الغرب يتحدث نيابة عن شخص من الشرق الأوسط. الأمر كله يتعلق بالاستيلاء الاستعماري. لذلك، يمكن أن يعمل على مستويين: راوي غربي أبيض في الرواية أو مجرد ماكس بروكس بوصفه مؤلفًا غربيًا أبيض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأوبئة، التابع، المادية الثقافية، ما بعد الاستعمار، الزومبي،