American Zombielore:
Voodoo, Cinema, and the Undeath of Race

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Anna Brooks Creagh

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance
University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Donald J. Cosentino, Co-Chair
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This dissertation undertakes a close examination of zombielore in the United States from the early nineteenth century through the 1940s. While many other scholars have engaged with the history and material of zombielore, relatively few have deeply considered the issues of race, rebellion, and revolution at work in such folklore. Born during the Haitian Revolution and brought to Southern plantations by French refugees, early zombielore reflected a fear that "Black magic" could and would be used against white Americans in the struggle for Black liberation. Ethnographic explorations of Haiti, beginning after the U.S. Civil War and continuing through the U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), exacerbated popular fascination with the idea of an "authentic monster" and affirmed racist ideology about the dangers of racial integration. Upon their translation to film, Voodoo-zombie narratives often served to reconcile white-guilt
over slavery with ongoing racism against African Americans. Exploring the social contingencies and historical vicissitudes that have shaped zombielore, my research is premised on archival studies of folklore and film, and includes close-text analysis of primary materials to argue that the zombie figure in American culture is not only historically racialized, but operates as a symbol of postcolonial memory. Divided into sections on Authenticity and Memory, the dissertation explores the historical development of the zombie figure through the lenses of folkloric and anthropological discourse, postcolonial Gothic literary theory, film analysis, and theories of memory. The history of zombielore illustrates how the zombie gets reanimated and rearticulated at moments of significant social upheaval and racial conflict associated with the end of slavery; with each successive transformation, the zombie accumulates additional connotations that layer upon previous ones. I argue that the American zombie has always been a palimpsest of postcolonial memory, so the idea that there's any one 'authentic monster' -- in Haiti, in Africa, or the U.S. -- ignores how the figure has been constructed not in any one of these places, but between them. Rather than taking a single disciplinary approach, my research brings together theories from Folklore and Film Studies to demonstrate what each disciplinary perspective reveals in light of the other. Unlike other zombie scholarship, this interdisciplinary approach illuminates how the figure has been employed by both dominant and oppressed groups, leading to a theorization of "undeath" as a mnemonic that works in the service of postcolonial imagination. I argue that as our society moves into an increasingly multicultural age, the zombie comes to symbolize a past that refuses to die, or to stay dead.
The dissertation of Anna Brooks Creagh is approved.

Peter Nabokov

Allyson Nadia Field

Aparna Sharma, Committee Co-Chair

Donald J. Cosentino, Committee Co-Chair

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2015
Slavery is everywhere the pet monster of the American people.

- Fredrick Douglass
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When I was about nine years old, my father took me to hear Wade Davis speak at Meredith College. I was fascinated by Davis's account of zombis in Haiti, and as a fan of horror films I quickly rushed to the video store to rent Wes Craven's *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. With no real context for what I was seeing beyond Davis's brief lecture, the movie terrified me. To allay my fears, my dad bought me a copy of Davis's book so that I could read and understand his story beyond what made it into Craven's film. The difference between these two narratives -- which were supposedly based on the same events -- shocked me. Although I didn't think about zombies again for many years, I believe this is where my fascination with zombilore, cultural anthropology, and horror film began.

I actually started researching zombielore in 2007, the same year I lost my father to cancer. Upon joining the Folklore M.A. program at the University of California Berkeley I had no concrete plans for my thesis project, but the experience of watching my father die had made me obsessed with death, and specifically different cultural relationships to death. As an undergraduate I had studied abroad in Ghana, so I naturally gravitated towards West African Vodun and the Afro-Caribbean spiritual traditions emanating from it. While I'd been passively interested in the zombie figure as a cultural phenomenon, I never considered it seriously as a potential thesis topic until Valdimar Hafstein encouraged me to look at *The Serpent and the Rainbow* vis-a-vis intangible cultural heritage. Though terrified of being pigeon-holed as “zombie-girl,” I committed myself to the project largely because Valdimar convinced me this was a viable and even important area of inquiry.

As I continued to research and write about zombielore in Haiti and the U.S., Charles Briggs helped me broaden the scope of my inquiry and provided invaluable support and guidance throughout the development of my thesis. To him I owe an enormous debt of gratitude, not only for his suggestions and recommendations, but also for his unwavering support for a theoretical argument about zombies, a topic which in 2008 was dismissed by many faculty members as uninteresting or
unworthy of study. I am also thankful for the guidance and encouragement of my other committee members at UC Berkeley. Darieck Scott's seminar, “Masculine/Abj ect: The Black Male Figure, Subjection and Power” was hugely influential during my early research stages, while Marina Levina -- another “zombie girl” -- provided an invaluable perspective on contemporary zombies and showed me that there is a place in academia for interdisciplinary scholars like me. Most of all, Katharine Galloway Young's mentorship as well as her courses on narrative theory have profoundly influenced my work over the years.

At UCLA I have been fortunate to have not one but two committee chairs who have shaped and strengthened this research project over the past five years. I was initially attracted to UCLA's Culture and Performance program in part because of the opportunity to work with Donald Cosentino, one of the leading experts on Vodou and Haitian folklore. However, I also wanted to continue the work in film studies that I had begun at UC Berkeley. Aparna Sharma championed my interdisciplinary perspective on folklore and film from early on, and I'm thankful to have been awarded two Graduate Research Mentorship opportunities to work closely with her. While studying formalist and contemporary film theory with Aparna, I also had the opportunity to work with Don as his TA for "African Oral Traditions" and to take his graduate seminars on "Trickster Figures" and "Black Atlantic Ritual Arts: Vodou and Santeria." Working in such disparate fields simultaneously ignited my thinking about the relationship between folklore and film. While Don mentored me on what it meant to be a folklorist in an academic world more comfortable with disciplines like literature and anthropology, Aparna pushed me to think more deeply about film as an art form whose mode of storytelling far exceeds the narrative or plot. Although Don initially told me that he could not be my dissertation chair because he was retiring, he eventually agreed to co-chair my committee because he believed in my project. That endorsement energized me, and I have been grateful for every meeting I've had with him since. When Don retired, Aparna took on the extra burden of coordinating committee feedback and advocating for me and my research in departmental meetings, and I am very
grateful to her for that. Throughout my five years in the program, both of my chairs were always willing to chat with me, offering conceptual guidance and feedback on different parts of my dissertation. I will always fondly remember sipping tea with Aparna while we seriously discussed the minutiae of Classical Hollywood zombie films, and Don's uncanny ability to make me laugh even while tearing apart one of my arguments. In very different ways, Don and Aparna made this project what it is today.

My other dissertation committee members, Allyson Nadia Field and Peter Nabokov, have also influenced my thinking and shaped the trajectory of my research. I first worked with Ally in an interdisciplinary graduate seminar called, "Gone With the Wind: Remixed." She challenged me to think more deeply and critically not only about the life of a film beyond the screen, but about the Marxist, Feminist, and Critical Race discourses that intersect in film studies and must layer on top of one another in the analysis of any film. Her own work in African American film studies has been inspiring, and she taught me much about what it means to do archival research in film studies. Similarly, Peter Nabokov helped me realize that archival research is a form of fieldwork unto itself, and catalyzed my thinking about what it means to be a folklorist so squarely engaged with film studies. As an anthropologist with strong associations in the world of academic Folklore, Peter pushed me to think about the capitalist influences on film production and what that meant for the consideration of film through the lens of folkloric analysis. Without his skepticism and informed critiques of my folkloric arguments, I would not have been able to make many of the claims about "film as folklore" outlined in my introduction.

Several other professors deserve recognition for the time and effort they spent helping me become the scholar I am today. Vivian Sobchack's gracious decision to take me on as a student despite my lack of the appropriate departmental affiliation meant that I got to learn about historiography and film archive research at a much higher level. In my own department, Al Roberts encouraged me to think of how my fieldwork in Africa related to this project about American film,
while Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts' seminar, "Performing Memory" served as the inspiration for the second half of this dissertation. Although Patrick Polk couldn't officially be a member of my committee, I worked closely with him for five years, serving as his TA for "Intro to American Folklore Studies" too many times to count and frequently debating the finer points of Afro-Caribbean folklore scholarship in his office hours or on the way to class. Not only did our (sometimes heated) arguments about authenticity inform the evolution of the first half of this dissertation, but Patrick also helped me find professional opportunities presenting my work publically and guest-lecturing at other universities. He introduced me to the president of the Western States Folklore Society, Sabina Magliocco, who subsequently invited me to present my research at the California State University Northridge. In terms of professional development, I also want to acknowledge Elliott Oring. He nominated me for Student Vice President of WSFS, and taking on that position has meant that I have even stronger footing in the world of Folklore.

My research has been financially supported through every stage of its development by the University of California, which has generously funded my graduate education through a variety of fellowships at both Berkeley and UCLA. In addition to the Graduate Research Mentorship awards that supported my studies with Aparna Sharma, UCLA provided funding for my fieldwork in Ghana, Togo, and Benin through their Travel Grant Pilot Program. The Department of World Arts and Cultures provided supplementary funding through fellowships such as the Wayland D. Hand Award for Folklore Scholarship, and numerous travel and research grants to present my research at conferences around the country. I also received funding to participate in conferences that required international travel from the UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies, the Gothic Studies Association at St. Mary's University College London, and the American Folklore Society. The Collegium of University Teaching Fellows at UCLA awarded me the opportunity to design and teach my own seminar, "Film as Folklore: Ideology and Inequality," an experience which shaped and strengthened my thinking about the relationship between folklore and media studies. Finally, my
archival research in New Orleans was financially supported by Tulane University through their Fellowship for the Study of the Global South. At Tulane, I'm especially grateful to Joel Dinerstein, Sean Benjamin, and Samantha Bruner.

Carl Schottmiller and Sean O'Neil were both part of my cohort at UC Berkeley, and Carl is currently part of the WAC/D department at UCLA. They counseled me through my decision to become "zombie-girl," read my drafts and provided valuable feedback, and even served as bridesfolk in my wedding. I am forever grateful for both their academic support and their friendship.

Finally I must acknowledge Theo, my love, without whom not. This is for you.
VITA

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“Folklore Pedagogy and Diversity Education”
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“Gothic Bodies in American Zombie-lore”
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American Folklore Society, New Orleans, October 2012
“Film And/As Folklore”
Western States Folklore Society, Sacramento, April 2012
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Hawai’i International Conference on Arts and Humanities, Honolulu, January 2011
“Contemporary Zombie-lore: Bounding Communities in the Age of Globalization”
Western States Folklore Society, Salem, April 2010.
“Calibanic Discourse: African Corpo(reality) and Abjection in the Literary Imagination”
Western States Folklore Society, Los Angeles, April 2009.
“The Imperial Virus: Reading Colonialism as a Disease in Zombie Narratives”
American Folklore Society, Louisville, October 2008
“Literature as Folklore: Narrative Desire and the Vernacular Formulaic”
Western States Folklore Society, Davis, April 2008
“Thank the Gods for Jesus! Christian Missionaries and Indigenous Religion in Ghana”
National Conference for Undergraduate Research, Asheville, November 2005

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Introduction

Race, Rebellion, and Revolution

In 1791 a group of slaves, fed up with the being abused and treated as less than human in Haiti's plantation economy, came together as a community and rose up against their oppressors. The leaders of the revolt were demonized and their rebel followers cast as ignorant, savage, and even racist in propaganda against them, their insurrection deemed reflective of an uncivilized nature that effectively justified their position at the bottom rung of racial hierarchy. In 2015 a group of mostly Black people, fed up with being abused and treated as less than human by cops in Baltimore's poorest neighborhood, came together as a community and rose up against the police, whose use of racial profiling and excessive force seemed to disavow Black dignity and even personhood. Like the Haitian slaves, the Baltimore rioters were demonized in the attendant press and cast as ignorant, savage, and even racist, their protest methodology deemed symbolic of some deep-seated cultural flaw that could somehow be used to justify their poverty and inhumane treatment by the same law enforcement officers tasked with their protection.

The two incidents are not neatly parallel -- the Haitian uprising, for instance, sought to end the institution of slavery in Haiti while in Baltimore the goal was to protest the inequitable distribution of justice for white vs. Black U.S. citizens. In both cases people Black people destroyed their own homes and neighborhoods as they tore down symbols of white capitalist oppression, the plantation house as potent a symbol as the CVS for conditional sustenance and
economic inequality.\(^1\) While Black Haitians scavenged materials from their destructive efforts as they prepared for a long and protracted war amidst the forests and mountains of Haiti, the Baltimoreans scavenged materials from the chaos for their continued daily survival in the urban jungle. In both cases disenfranchised Black people were misunderstood and criticized for destroying "their own places," the white-centered discourse failing to recognize that those places were not, and had never been, "their own." While the Haitian rebellion was in some ways galvanized by the public execution of François Macandal, a Maroon leader who advocated the overthrow of white authority via the poisoning of white masters, the Baltimore uprising responded to the death of non-activist cum everyman Freddie Gray while in police custody. Both riots were incited by the death of a Black man at the hands of white authority figures -- a single death which came to symbolize myriad deaths under similar circumstances -- and both riots reflected a sort of critical mass of Black anger and resentment at being treated as less than human for more than a century. The Western world watched Haiti and Baltimore as news of their uprisings unfolded, widely condemning the behavior of the rioters but holding bated breath to see what such violent challenges to the dominant system of authority might portend. Separated by more than two hundred years and several thousand miles, these incidents comprise two nodes on a lineage of racial upheaval in the United States, and the similarities between the cases could as easily be mapped onto other racially-inflected riots in our nation's history, from Emmett Till and Rodney King to Oscar Grant and Michael Brown.

The most significant difference between what happened in Haiti and what happened in Baltimore, however, has less to do with temporality, nationality, or demonstrative objectives than

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\(^1\) Louis Hyman, “Why the CVS Burned,” *Slate*, May 1, 2015, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2015/05/baltimore_riots_it_wasn_t_thugs_looting_for_profit_it_was_a_protest_against.html.
it does the global impact of the event. While news of the Baltimore riots quieted down after just two weeks, the Haitian riot inaugurated the Haitian Revolution, which, after fourteen years, abolished slavery in Haiti and led to a complete overturn of the colonial authority. At a time when Black people were enslaved in the U.S. and throughout the Western world, Haiti dared to declare its independence as a nation in the Western Hemisphere governed entirely by Black people. As the only successful slave revolt in the common era it's impossible to overstate the significance of the event for world history, which is why it's so problematic that the Haitian Revolution is rarely if ever taught in U.S. schools.

Although most of us don't learn about the Haitian Revolution until college or beyond, if ever, almost all Americans unwittingly feel the reverberations of it in our culture. These reverberations have taken many forms over the past two hundred years, from rumors and fears about the possibility of U.S. slave revolts in the nineteenth century, to stereotypes and anti-Black propaganda in the twentieth century, to modern-day social justice movements that look to the Haitian example for inspiration. Memories of the Haitian Revolution have survived in folklore surrounding Black life and culture in the U.S., including but not limited to rumors, legends, folk beliefs, folk ideas, folk narratives, parables, proverbs, folk speech/verbal lore, folk music, folk art, material culture, and, my personal favorite, monster lore. It may seem fairly obvious that monsters reflect latent social and/or psychological fears, but monsters are often culturally specific and, treated through the lens of folkloric analysis, can provide unique insight into how people understand and grapple with social and cultural differences at specific historical moments. The zombie is a particularly potent example of this because it both circumscribes and is circumscribed by the Haitian Revolution, compounding inherited folklore from Africa, its transformation in the context of Haitian slavery, and the white perception of Black and Afro-
Caribbean Others in light of this lore. For those most familiar with the rapacious and cannibalistic monsters that characterize the bulk of today's zombie cinema, it may seem strange to suggest that zombies have always been about slavery and racial oppression. In fact, the entire body of zombielore is unthinkable without the Haitian Revolution, the African principles that guided it, and its postcolonial aftermath -- all of which forced white Americans to contend with Black subjectivity, autonomy, and humanity during periods of great racial and economical upheaval in the U.S.

The Body of Zombielore

This dissertation investigates the history of zombielore in the United States from the time of the Haitian Revolution through the 1940s, with attention to the dynamic folkloric processes by which the zombie transforms and accumulates meaning at specific historical moments. In particular, I unpack complex relationships between popular folklore, Gothic fiction, ethnographic writing, anthropological discourse, Classical Hollywood cinema, and cultural memory to understand how and why the zombie developed the way that it did during this time period. In my M.A. thesis, I took a broader approach to the study of zombielore and considered how certain representations of Black masculinity from the early seventeenth century gave rise to the zombie as we know it today. While that work was more focused on literary and rhetorical analysis, it revealed that the history of zombielore in the United States tracks closely with histories of racial conflict. In fact, if we were to quantitatively chart the history of zombielore in the U.S. over the centuries, we would notice significant spikes just following the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), Nat Turner's rebellion (1834), the end of the Civil War (1865), The U.S. Military Occupation of

Haiti (1915-34), the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcom X (1960s), the fall of 'Baby Doc' Duvalier in Haiti (1986), the Rodney King beating and riots (1992), and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Rather than an overview of this entire history, this dissertation focuses narrowly on the first hundred and fifty years of zombielore in the United States. This is the period during which zombielore's primary medium shifted from oral tradition to written material to Hollywood film. As a folklorist with a background in literature and a special interest in film and media studies, I closely analyze various forms of zombielore to explicate the meaning of this monster and its rise to prominence in our cultural consciousness.

I take as my starting point the legend of Jean Zombi, a Haitian Revolutionary leader whose purported ferocity on the battlefield is sometimes credited with leading the enslaved Haitians to victory over their oppressors. As I will demonstrate, eighteenth century African slaves on the island of Saint Domingue (now Haiti) retained memories of their indigenous African folklore, which included the notion of the *zambi* as a fetish and/or deity. When the slave uprising began in 1791, rebel leaders invoked the term *zambi* and associated it with François Macandal, a folk hero and rebel slave who practiced Vodou and was martyred for the cause of Black liberation in 1758. After a brutal and protracted thirteen year war, the rebel slaves won their freedom and declared independence from the French, whom they subsequently banished from the island. The first concrete example of a zombie narrative in the Americas comes in the form of a Haitian legend from 1804, which claims that the rebel army surged to victory thanks to the intervention of a supernatural warrior named Jean Zombi. According to the legend, Jean Zombi was a Black ancestor-spirit (*lwa*) who had returned from Guinea to liberate

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3 Ibid.

4 Homophonic spellings of *zombie* exist in several African languages, and their subtle variations in meaning will be addressed in the first chapter.
his people from bondage. Like the historic figure of François Macandal, the merciless Jean Zombi advocated for Black liberation via the murders of white colonialists and slaveholders, inciting slaves to take revenge against their masters by killing them. Black Haitians and French exiles from Haiti in the early nineteenth century spread lore about Jean Zombi in their respective locales, and, as I will demonstrate, it was this legend that brought the term ‘Zombi’ to the United States.

Between the Haitian Revolution and the Civil War, stories about a slave leader named Zombi cropped up on plantations throughout the southern U.S. and even made their way into some northern abolitionist newspapers. The American Zombi was said to be a former slave or freedman who visited plantations at night, encouraging slaves to escape and, in some cases, to kill their masters. It's unclear whether this figure was directly associated with Jean Zombi in the oral narratives that circulated in the U.S., but as I will discuss, the related themes of slave revolt, revenge, and revolution make a connection seem likely. In the 1860s the lowercase "zombi" first appeared in a dictionary of Southern American folk speech and was defined as a Black phantom or ghost associated with the kidnap of white children from plantation nurseries, foreshadowing a concern with miscegenation that became prominent much later in filmic zombielore.

After the Civil War and through the early twentieth century, Western writers traveled to Haiti and wrote about their experiences, often including their encounters with local lore concerning zombis -- people who had been killed and resurrected through the power of Vodou. This quasi-ethnographic writing at the turn of the century re-associated the zombi figure with

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5 Mederic Louis Elie Moreau de Saint Mery, Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie francaise de l’isle Saint Domingue (etc.) (Moreau de Saint-Mery, 1798).
7 Maximilian Schele de Vere, Americanisms: The English of the New World (C. Scribner, 1872).
Haiti and inaugurated the understanding of zombis as undead creatures rather than as subversive miscreants. American interest in Haitian zombis escalated throughout the U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), when marines and travel writers widely introduced American audiences to the idea that zombis had not only been resurrected from death, but had been resurrected as slaves. My close analysis of the oral and written lore from this period illuminates the close relationship between zombielore and slavery.

At the same time, I explore how Gothic fiction of the nineteenth century and ethnographic nonfiction of the early twentieth century precipitated the notion that Haiti's zombis were the world's first "authentic monsters." I argue that Anthropological and Folkloric interest in ethnographic authenticity dovetailed with the American public's fascination with "seeing" other cultures for the first time through the magic of cinema, and that early horror films drew inspiration from older works of Gothic literature. For example, the first major Hollywood film to feature zombies was directly inspired by an account of Haitian zombilore written during the U.S. military occupation and invoked Gothic literary themes to imbue its "authentic" narrative with a sense of supernatural horror. White Zombie (1932) illustrated in vivid detail the "reality" of Voodoo zombi slaves laboring on sugar plantations in Haiti just as it had been described in William Seabrook's bestselling travelogue, The Magic Island (1929). However, the film imagined that these Black zombies were controlled entirely by a European plantation owner -- played by Béla Lugosi, fresh off his turn as Dracula -- who uses Voodoo to make slaves of his enemies and to entrap a young white woman in his Gothic colonial manse. The very title White Zombie was meant to be provocative since, up to this point, all zombies were understood to be
As I will argue, the notion that Haiti's authentic monsters were people made into slaves through Voodoo implied that Voodoo might be capable of transforming whites into slaves as well. In an age of separate but equal, when Black and white Americans were coming to terms with their country's history of slavery and the prospects of racial integration, the thought that "Black magic" could be used to enslave white Americans was a major source of horror -- not only because being a slave is horrific in itself, but because Black revenge in the form of white slavery would be in some ways justified. Thus the Voodoo zombie slave, vividly illustrated in White Zombie, both reflected and fomented white anxiety concerning the end of colonialism and the attendant loss of white power. White Zombie's success catapulted the figure of the Voodoo zombie slave to unprecedented notoriety, and the zombie quickly became Classical Hollywood's most popular monster-type.9

The majority of films in the Voodoo zombie genre followed a similar pattern: white Americans travel to an exotic tropical locale (frequently Haiti), they discover that a white or European person has mastered the "magic" of the indigenous religion (usually Voodoo) and has made native people into zombie slaves, and -- despite the fact that they're represented as hopeless and inautonomous -- these zombie slaves somehow end up rebelling and taking revenge against the master who killed and enslaved them. Against this backdrop we usually find a white woman imperiled by her proximity to Voodoo. In White Zombie, for instance, the young white ingénue who chose to elope in Haiti is soon killed and transformed into a zombie slave. In Black Moon (1934), a white woman becomes obsessed with Haitian Voodoo and leaves her husband to join Black islanders in their revolt against her family's plantation, and even offers to sacrifice her own

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white daughter for the cause. *Ouanga* (1935) and its remake *The Devil's Daughter* (1939) see white female plantation owners in the Caribbean use the power of Voodoo to kill and zombify other white women. In *King of the Zombies* (1941) and *Voodoo Man* (1944), white male plantation owners sacrifice their young white female relatives as they create hordes of Voodoo zombie slaves. And a host of other films, such as *I Walked With a Zombie* (1942), *Weird Woman* (1944), *Zombies on Broadway* (1945), and *The Vampire's Ghost* (1945), feature sexually suggestive imagery in which a white woman is carried through the jungle by a large Black male Voodoo zombie slave. At the time, images that implied miscegenation were considered taboo and in many cases censored to prevent them from reaching movie screens. As I pointed out in my M.A. thesis, however, Classical-era zombie films often skirted the prohibition against such images because the Black zombies in question were not considered men, but monsters.

Salacious interest in visualizing white-Black sexual relations was likely one reason for the Voodoo zombie film's rising popularity, but miscegenation and zombification went hand in hand for other reasons as well. The implied result of miscegenation is mixed-race children, while these films suggest that the result of a white person's contact with Voodoo is zombification. As I will elaborate in this dissertation, since zombis up to this point were associated solely with Afro-Caribbean cultures and thought of exclusively as undead Black people, the zombification of a white person implied that they had been, in some way, Blackened. Biracial progeny and white zombie slaves each represent a loss of whiteness, at least in terms of how it was understood in this time period as something absolute, immutable, and socially privileging. In other words, both miscegenation and zombification metaphorized the ways whiteness itself could be corrupted or contaminated by contact with Blackness.

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While the fragility of white femininity is a thread running through the majority of Voodoo zombie films from the 1930s-40s, themes of slave rebellion and revenge run just as rampant throughout the genre. *White Zombie*'s Voodoo slaves ultimately turn against their master, helping the white male hero kill him before throwing themselves from the castle's balustrades; and a Black Haitian uprising against white plantation owners is the primary focus of *Black Moon*. The same year that film came out, *Chloe, Love is Calling You* (1934) depicted a former slave in Louisiana employing Voodoo magic in her quest for revenge against the white plantation owner who killed her husband. Other films transposed Voodoo to exotic locales in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, playing with the theme of "restless natives" in open rebellion against white interlopers. *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), for instance, depicts Western colonialists in Cambodia looking for a "dead civilization's" secret to making zombies; during excavation the native workers -- who clearly resemble zombie slaves -- revolt against the white imperialists. Similarly, *Obeah!* (1935) features a white colonial adventurer in the South Seas whose contact with native islanders quickly makes him the target of a vengeful Voodoo curse. It turns out the missing white explorer he was looking for had previously made enemies of the natives, so when the adventurer lands they force him to flee the island. After he kidnaps the white daughter of the explorer and the native daughter of the chief, the Voodoo curse follows them all across the ocean. Towards the end of World War Two, zombie films of the 1940s often conflated Voodoo and zombification with concerns about ideological dangers such as Nazism. In *King of the Zombies*, for example, the Haitian plantation is run by a Fifth Columnist spy who is secretly using Voodoo to create an army of Black zombie slaves for a Nazi attack against the U.S. *Revenge of the Zombies* (1943) continues that story line, even using some of the same actors, as it depicts the rise of this Black zombie army in service to the Third Reich. At the end
of both of those films, however, something triggers the Black Voodoo zombie slaves to defy their masters, attacking and killing them. Although revenge takes many forms in these films, they all articulate a fear that people of color will not only refuse to be subservient to whites any longer, but will seek retribution for the times that they were.

In my M.A. thesis, I painstakingly unpacked more than a dozen of these Classical-era zombie films to argue that the popularity of the Voodoo zombie during the 1930s and 1940s was directly tied to the culture of Jim Crow and a white American impulse to "Otherize" Black people in the United States during this time period. I concluded that the specific representations of Black men and women in zombie cinema during the 1930s and 40s constituted an attempt to reconcile white guilt over the history of slavery with ongoing racism against African Americans. That conclusion will be discussed and elaborated in this work, but rather than glossing all zombie films made during this time period as reflective of Hollywood racism I take a narrower approach to the study of Classical-era Voodoo zombie films. Specifically, I focus on how the notion of an "authentic monster" drove American interest in the undead creatures and how these films both consciously and unconsciously engage with racially specific "memories" of slavery, insurrection, and revolution. This dissertation therefore undertakes a close examination of two of the most famous films in the genre, *White Zombie* (1932) and *I Walked With a Zombie* (1942), to demonstrate how these films were about more than just the demonization of Voodoo and Black people. Though I still engage with issues such as miscegenation and revolt/revenge, I take a new historicist approach and argue that these particular films represent complex articulations of U.S. cultural memories stemming from the Haitian Revolution, the abolition of slavery, and the U.S. occupation of Haiti.

\[12\] Ibid.
Zombielore obviously continued to proliferate after the 1940s, but I truncate my analysis there so that I may deeply address the issues of authenticity and memory that permeate zombielore's rise to cultural prominence in the U.S. After the 1940s, the zombie began to lose its characterization as a creature that was explicitly Black, explicitly Voodoo in origin, and explicitly a slave. Though such constructions of the zombie figure remain endemic to the genre even today, starting in the 1950s they became diffused amidst a proliferation of zombies whose undeath was caused by nuclear fallout, radioactivity, or disease. By focusing on the earlier history, I deeply investigate the significance of the zombie figure as an expression of cultural anxiety directly related to the death of colonialism and institutional white supremacy. Not only do I demonstrate how the figure was born out of racial conflict and revolution in Haiti, but I argue that zombielore only gained traction in the U.S. thanks to the collusion of Afro-Caribbean folklore and white racist attitudes concerning racial integration. In the end, I suggest that zombies evolved as fantastic figments of past and present race relations in the United States.

What is a zombie?

It seems like a simple question. Contemporary cinema is filled with the undead creatures, beings who were once just like you and me but whose death and resurrection have made them into monsters that threaten everything about our modern way of life. This seemingly simple premise has spawned thousands of iterations in popular culture, yet the zombie remains a mutable concept, one that theorists have had a difficult time pinning down. Scholars such as Slavoj Žižek, Marc Leverette, Shawn McIntosh, and David Flint have argued that the zombie has
become a kind of blank screen against which any cultural fear might be projected.\textsuperscript{13} This perspective is illustrated by the case of \textit{King of the Zombies}, which clearly used the Voodoo zombie slave as a smokescreen for anti-Nazi propaganda. Others zombie scholars have accepted the "blank screen" premise but attempted to nuance that understanding of the figure via the critical lenses offered by Marxism, feminism, and postcolonial theory.\textsuperscript{14} Annalee Newitz, Sarah Juliet Lauro and Deborah Christie, for example, agree with the critique of the modern zombie as a canvas that can be made to illustrate a host of different fears related to contemporary life, but suggest that issues of class warfare and identity politics permeate all manifestations of zombielore. Literary scholars such as Kyle William Bishop, Justin Edwards, Ruth Anolik and Judith (Jack) Halberstam consider the zombie figure through the lens of Gothic discourse, arguing in various ways that zombielore "haunts" white American culture as an embodiment of Otherness and the threat it poses to systems of white social dominance.\textsuperscript{15} Folklorists with an interest in film and literature, such as Mikel Koven and Julia George, take a taxonomical approach to the development of zombielore and chart its relationship to other established folkloric traditions, seeing zombie narratives as a new "tale type" with its own set of "motifs" that can be catalogued alongside those of other folk and fairy tales.\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, anthropologists such as Elizabeth McAlister, Hans Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier, consider the differences between American zombielore and zombilore found among various cultures in

\textsuperscript{13} Kyle William Bishop, \textit{American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture} (McFarland, 2010); Shawn McIntosh and Marc Leverette, \textit{Zombie Culture: Autopsies of the Living Dead} (Scarecrow Press, 2008); David Flint, \textit{Zombie Holocaust: How the Living Dead Devoured Pop Culture} (Plexus, 2009).

\textsuperscript{14} Annalee Newitz, \textit{Pretend We’re Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture} (Duke University Press, 2006); Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro, \textit{Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human} (Fordham Univ Press, 2011); Moreman, \textit{Race, Oppression and the Zombie}.


Africa and the Caribbean, concerning themselves with issues such as cultural appropriation, cultural relativism, and intangible cultural heritage. While all of these approaches to understanding zombies will be addressed throughout this dissertation, the current state of zombie scholarship reveals a fundamental problem in its theorization: by its very nature, the zombie resists classification.

In the most basic sense of definition, zombies are neither alive nor dead, and yet both. Explanations of their existence range from the supernatural to the scientific, and at various points in history they have been understood as the products of necromancy, nuclear fallout, scientific and military experimentation, and/or pandemic viruses. Zombies are humanoid (but not quite human), and are often perceived as both pitiable victims and perpetrators of unconscionable crimes against humanity even within the same narrative. The term "zombie" derives from the Ki-Kongo language and indigenous African spiritual practices, yet the zombie as we know it today is undoubtedly a product of American culture and U.S. cultural history. Until the 1960s nearly all filmic zombies were Black, but today's multiracial zombie hordes feature far more white actors than those from any other ethnic background. As a monster-type zombis belong primarily to Afro-Caribbean folklore, but U.S. cinema revivified them as zombies and shaped them into a monster of a different meaning. As beings who were once our friends and family members but who have transformed into vicious monsters who threaten to kill us, zombies represent both "us" and "them." As beings who have ostensibly died but still persist, they are both past and present. The trouble with defining the zombie manifests in its embodiment of these seemingly

contradictory principles: life and death, natural and supernatural, victim and violator, Africa and the U.S., Black and White, us and them, past and present, folklore and film.

Since the zombie's multivalent definition allows it to be understood in numerous ways, zombie scholarship is rightfully interdisciplinary and diverse in its interpretation of the figure. However, disciplinary boundaries often inform how scholars approach zombies and zombielore. This leads to a problem when one theorization of the zombie omits certain histories of the figure because it fails to account for them. Most recent zombie scholars correctly identify the zombie as a product of nineteenth or early twentieth century Haitian lore, typically recognizing that in Haiti the creatures persist in folklore as dumb, inautonomous slaves associated with Vodou. Beyond that, however, zombie scholarship varies widely in terms of depth, breadth, and orientation. Historians, anthropologists, and folklorists (and those who engage with those disciplines) typically spend more time on Haitian history and culture than do their counterparts in other disciplines, often focusing their attention on the ways Vodou has been unfairly maligned in the Western imagination (and why).\(^{18}\) If they engage with film studies, they do so primarily through the identification and cursory analyses of Voodoo zombie films from the 1930s-60s, during which time the Black zombie slave was enjoying its heyday as Hollywood's most ubiquitous monster-type. Film theorists and media scholars may engage with Haitian history and lore to varying degrees (usually in their introductions), but are more likely to emphasize later films in which the zombie figure has seemingly lost its associations with Haiti, Voodoo, and/or racial difference.\(^{19}\) They analyze certain films or film trends to illustrate how the zombie comes


to embody a multitude of cultural fears, including but not limited to: communism, capitalism, globalization, neo-liberalism, corporatization, pandemics, technological innovation and military overreach. Sociologists and performance scholars have questioned the popularity of the figure in extra-narrative media, such as their manifestations in commercial products, video games and other forms of play, organized zombie-walks, political protests, performance art, and even "Zombie Hunting" summer camps for adults. Literary theorists, fiction authors, psychoanalysts and scholars of rhetoric have explored the potential of the zombie as "meaning machine" that can uniquely symbolize a variety of threats to the sanctity of the self. Philosophers question the ontology of such imaginary beings, asking whether and how their potential existence transforms our perception of what it means to be human. STEM field researchers have put forth various theories as to the scientific plausibility of zombies, and even academics from Political Science, Demographics and Public Health have considered how international governments and the CDC might respond to an actual zombie outbreak. While those who engage with historical and anthropological understandings of zombies are likely to associate zombielore with slavery and inequitable racial relationships, the further academics get from the supposed origins of the figure the less the zombie appears to be a symptom of racial conflict. In other words, while scholars

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20 The majority of contemporary zombie criticism engages with one or more of these issues, identifying them as the "cultural fear" which drives the zombie film in question or genre as a whole.

21 Here I'm glossing the work of dozens of scholars I've encountered over the past seven years at academic conferences such as the American Folklore Society, the Western States Folklore Society, the American Cultures Association, the Popular Culture Association, the Hawai‘i International Conference on Arts and Humanities, the American Anthropological Association, the African American Studies Association, and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

22 Halberstam, Skin Shows, 1995; Christie and Lauro, Better Off Dead; Bishop, American Zombie Gothic, 2010; McIntosh and Leverette, Zombie Culture.


from all corners of academe take interest in the zombie and acknowledge its debt to Haitian folklore, very few think of that history as endemic to the creatures' meaning in society.

One of the difficulties in satisfactorily theorizing zombies as a monster-type stems from the fact that, at least in academe, they defy disciplinarity. The recent flurry of academic interest in zombies illustrates how they straddle realms of history, anthropology, literature, film and media studies, sociology, philosophy, rhetoric, performance studies, political science, public policy and even STEM fields. While this dissertation draws on the vast body of academic discourse surrounding the zombie -- most forthrightly from the humanities -- the specific intervention of this work is to put in conversation two disciplinary perspectives on zombielore in order to explore what each reveals in light of the other. My primary orientation towards zombie scholarship is as a folklorist, but I turn to film studies to understand how that medium has shaped the evolution of zombielore in the United States.

With Folklore and Film theory as the dominant thrusts of this intervention, I buttress my reading of certain texts with specific literary and historiographic theories that illuminate complex dynamics of this seemingly-simple lore. Postcolonial Gothic literary theory, for example, augments the understanding of zombie folklore and film by providing a framework to understand how historic fictional narratives grappled with the sociopsychological ramifications of decolonization. The already interdisciplinary field of Memory Studies further provides the scaffolding to understand how zombie narratives in multiple mediums dealt with conflicting interpretations of the same colonial history. The mutability of the zombie necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, and this dissertation aims to demonstrate how Folklore and Film studies can nuance understandings of the historical development of the zombie figure, with far-reaching implications for the theorization of this monster-type.
**Folklore and Film**

The zombie is a vernacular monster. While the figure currently thrives in popular media more than in the oral tradition, stories about zombies -- wherever they appear -- function as folklore. However, traditional folklorists sometimes eschew the idea that products of corporate culture made for mass consumption can be considered folklore, and therefore reject the interpretation of popular films as objects ripe for folkloric analysis. At the same time, film scholars frequently focus on all the circumstances of production related to a particular film, making it difficult for them to see how specific films fit into larger narrative trends than span beyond the purview of film studies. Treatment of the zombie figure through folkloric analysis necessarily yields different results than those devised through literary or film theory, so combining multiple methods of analysis informs a more nuanced appreciation for how the zombie operates in U.S. culture. Two main lines of inquiry into the history of zombielore reveal how various folk groups repeatedly reanimate the zombie and why folkloric readings endure despite the zombie's potential situatedness in a capitalist market economy. First, the concepts of "cultural haunting" and "undeath" account for the continued resurgence of extant folklore in new mediums at particular historical moments. Second, it can be argued that film itself operates as contemporary folklore in terms of the practice of its material production, its narrative drive, and its expression of cultural values within a culturally specific artistic medium.

Barre Toelken’s dual laws of folkloristics, *conservatism* and *dynamism*, help to explain iterations of zombie narratives in literature and film as both static and constantly in flux. Since the eighteenth century, zombies appear in fantastic narratives of (post)colonial conflict, where

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the horrific or terrifying monsters are "dead" Others seeking revenge for crimes wrought against them by "living" white imperialists. While the majority of contemporary zombie scholars discuss the figures' origins in Haitian folklore and their evolution in American cinema, a folkloric approach to the history of zombie narratives demonstrates the deep-seated and historically conditioned impulse to narrativize postcolonial anxieties in terms of vengeful undead creatures. Although the prototypical zombie narrative involves a community of undead slaves who rebel against their oppressive system, elements of the narrative such as locale, villain(s), hero/ines, victims, and methods of zombification can vary wildly from text to text. The zombie narrative, then, is conservative in its morphological narrative qualities (much like the folktales analyzed by Vladimir Propp) but dynamic in its socio-historic manifestations (like the multiple existence and variation of such tales catalogued by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson). Toelken's definition of folklore as "culturally constructed communicative traditions informally exchanged in dynamic variation through time and space," proves useful because, as I will demonstrate, the variations of Haitian zombi folklore excavated by different ethnographers influenced disparate filmic iterations of the zombie. Moreover, theory concerning the production of folklore can be applied to filmmaking. Adopting a folkloric lens allows us to see not only the impact of anthropological discourse on popular media, but also how zombie narratives become a kind of mythology that informs not only our perception of racial difference, but the understanding of our own colonial past and the ways it continues to function in the present.

The processes by which the past is brought to bear on the present might be considered a foundational inquiry of Folklore studies. Folklorists look to the vernacular cultural expressions

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of a given community to understand not only what they value, but why and how they value it. They also consider how both extant and emergent folkloric forms among a group of people convey and reinforce dominant understandings of that community's history and ideology. Within this approach to the study of culture is the tacit acknowledgement that what other types of scholars might dismiss as "just folklore" -- jokes, stories, superstitions, etc -- actually provide valuable insight into cultural development as experienced by the people themselves. Folklorists are most associated with the larger field of Anthropology, but typically enmesh themselves with other disciplines such as Literature and History in their approach to folkloric analysis, a central tenet of which is that contemporary manifestations of folklore find their roots in older forms.

Zombies are creatures of memory in that they consistently reference older forms of folklore. Before the Haitian Revolution, memories of African lore remained with the slaves as they plotted to rise up against the French imperialists. Their extant folk belief regarding the zambi as a sacred fetish soon transformed into narrative lore about a folk hero, an ancestor-deity from Guinea who could not be killed (because he was already dead). When the French were eventually exiled from Haiti, they shared their memories of the brutal war with others, promulgating the legend of Jean Zombi outside of Haiti. Later in the century, the popularity of rumors about a rebellious slave named Zombi suggest that the memory of the Haitian Revolution and French defeat was still alive in the American cultural consciousness of the antebellum South. Subsequent ethnographic descriptions of zombis in Haiti not only recalled the memory of the zombi as a being whose undeath made it impossible to kill, but conjured memories of U.S. slavery and the horrors it inflicted against African Americans. The first zombie films took their inspiration directly from those ethnographic accounts, thus reanimating memories of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, the American Civil War and the Haitian Revolution, and serving as a
continuation of the folkloric tradition. This dissertation reveals that as the history of zombielore unfolds, each new manifestation in some way "remembers" older forms of zombielore.

In the most basic sense, a zombie is a being who is simultaneously living and dead. The paradoxical embodiment of these opposing conditions can be referred to as undeath, but I propose that the zombie's undeath implies more than this. As both living and dead, the zombie is both past and present at the same time. Undeath thus represents the persistence of the past into a present that disavows it. While we tend to think of undeath in terms of the zombie's literal state of being in the world, memory also constitutes a form of undeath. That is, memories are active in the present even though their substance belongs to the past. Like zombies, memories disrupt the comfortable binary of then and now, operating as figments of the past that force themselves upon the present. As a vehicle of memory, zombielore surges at specific historical moments because those moments cause "the folk" to reminisce about a similar event in the past. However, with each reanimation the zombie adjusts to suit the exigencies of the political moment, not unlike the way memories can subtly transform over time and manipulate themselves to help the rememberer work out some pressing concern. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, zombielore can frequently be understood as an expression of cultural anxiety that stems from the paradoxical conflation of memories of slavery that engender feelings of white guilt and current racial attitudes that maintain the ideology of white racial superiority. In other words, the specific articulation of the zombie figure at any point throughout history serves as a reflection of how people during that time were grappling with their memories of slavery in light of present-day race relations. Like the figure of the zombie itself, zombielore gets reanimated and put to specific uses within a culture struggling to overcome histories of past racial conflict.

27 The mutable nature of memory will be discussed in depth in the second section of this dissertation.
In her analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century zombie narratives, Annalee Newitz argues that

Undead narratives circulated before the 1960’s and 1970’s—before widespread political challenges to white supremacy—are filled with anxieties about what will happen to racial categories in the United States when colonialism dies out. Later in the century, as postcolonial writers and pundits begin to generate their own narratives about what bell hooks calls the “terrorism” of white power, the dead past that threatens to destroy our heroes is always associated with the colonial period. Undead narratives of the 1980’s, 90’s and 2000s are preoccupied with the way anachronistic race relations exist alongside those of the present day, like zombies among the living.\(^{28}\)

As a media scholar, Newitz recognizes the value in analyzing multiple types of narratives on the same terms, regardless of whether they originated in oral traditions, literature, or film. Her assertion that a "dead past" threatens the present status quo illustrates a profound truth about zombies: that their undeath in some way signifies the horror of a past that refuses to die, or to stay dead. That is, no matter how much an individual or a culture desires to move on from the past, their memories of a history that cannot be undone will continue to terrorize them in the present. Some literary and social theorists have analyzed this phenomenon in terms of what they describe as "cultural haunting."\(^{29}\) Influenced by Gothic literary discourse, scholars such as Kathleen Brogan and Sinikka Grant argue that undead creatures such as ghosts and zombies represent ways in which our culture struggles to shake the troubling memories from our past.\(^{30}\)

As I will discuss later in the dissertation, many works of classic Gothic literature have been linked to the Haitian Revolution and interpreted as attempts to make sense of a successful Black slave revolt given the reigning ideology of white racial superiority. For Brogan, ghosts in Gothic literature often represent anxieties about the nature of ethnicity and whiteness during a period of

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\(^{28}\) Newitz, 1993. p. 91.


\(^{30}\) *Haunted Heritage: History, Memory, and Violence in the Drama of August Wilson and Suzan-Lori Parks* (ProQuest, 2006).
increasing cultural contact and exchange. Grant, by contrast, investigates the relationship between cultural haunting and cultural trauma, arguing that cultural haunting is typically provoked by a traumatic event in the cultural consciousness. As literary scholars, Brogan and Grant both think of undead figures as means by which writers access forgotten or unwritten aspects of the past. Other theorists who employ the notion of cultural haunting, however, do so through the lens of sociological discourse. Avery Gordon, for instance, suggests that tensions between conflicting feelings about Others -- such as white guilt and racist ideology -- give rise to a sense of cultural haunting. Following Gordon, Adam Gussow points that cultural haunting can also mean a sense of collective resonance felt among people when an artistic production conjures shared memories from that group’s past. In all of these cases, cultural haunting accounts for why moments of significant racial conflict and upheaval foment new forms of zombielore. If haunting in the folkloric and literary imagination is a way to engage with the past without confronting it directly, then zombielore haunts people by consistently reminding them of how historic slavery continues to shape their cultural present.

The difference between zombielore and Gothic literature, however, has much to do with notion of ethnographic authenticity. As I argue throughout this dissertation, one of the reasons the zombie's popularity escalated in the early twentieth century was because of ethnographic discourse suggesting that the Haitian zombi was an authentic monster. Ghosts and other undead creatures of Gothic literature were clearly the imaginative figments of the author's imagination, but writers such as Spencer St. Jean, Lafcadio Hearn, and Hesketh Prichard proclaimed that Haiti's undead zombis were real and verifiable beings. As folklorist Regina Bendix has pointed out, in this time period Folklore was establishing itself as an academic discipline alongside Anthropology, and as such folklorists were eager to discern the "authenticity" of a cultural item.

31 Gordon, Ghostly Matters.
to justify their treatment of it through the lens of folkloric analysis. At the time, folklore was primarily thought of something that belonged to the past -- either in terms of antiquated European traditions or the contemporary folklore of less-advanced peoples or civilizations (which the anthropological racism of this era cast as symbols of a bygone stage of humanity) -- and Western folklorists had yet to recognize that their own cultural forms also fit the definition of folklore. Something that was authentic, then, was something that belonged to another culture, time, or place, but which could be documented and analyzed via the cultural logic of Western scientific reason. Moreover, something that was authentic necessarily existed exclusively among "the folk" and had not been "contaminated" by outside forces such as people from another culture, corporate or capitalist interest in marketing the lore, or any aspect of "official" culture. Thus, works of literature and film were not considered folkloric in any sense of the term since, as published documents, they were both part of "official" culture as well as subject to the market demands of capitalism. Unfortunately, despite major revolutions in the discipline of Folklore since that time, this archaic understanding of what folklore is continues to plague folklorists to this day. The genres of folk belief, rumor, and legend that characterize zombielore in the nineteenth century are clearly folklore by anyone's definition of the term, while the ethnographic discourse that generated so much American interest in the undead creatures represents the kind of work folklorists were doing at the time. The introduction of literary and filmic representations of zombies, however, trouble the waters of zombielore's theorization.

In his analysis of the processes that generate folklore, Toelken argues that the study of folklore must begin with the understanding of a "cultural metaphor," a mutual awareness that meaning runs deeper than its surface content in a particular cultural context. Following Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, the cultural metaphor of early zombie films -- and indeed, the
horror -- lies in the fantasy that African Americans will somehow reclaim the magic of their indigenous African religion and use it to exact a fitting revenge for slavery, ultimately enslaving whites by turning them into zombies. Zora Neale Hurston's ethnography of Haiti, written under the guidance of anthropologist Franz Boas, has been heavily critiqued by recent critics for its demonization of Haitian religious practices. In 1938, however, many considered Tell My Horse to offer a more sympathetic view of Voodoo and zombies than Seabrook's account, and films such as I Walked With a Zombie (1943) and Valley of the Zombies (1946) took their inspiration from it. Literally hundreds of filmic iterations of zombie narratives emanated throughout the twentieth century, sometimes drawing on and sometimes eliding the ethnographic histories wrought by Seabrook, Hurston, and others. Yet nearly all zombie films maintained the "cultural metaphor" of the zombie as the oppressed undead -- as the tangible symbol of historical oppression that returns to take its revenge on contemporary society, "enslaving" innocent people by making them into "one of them." In Toelken's terminology, the "cultural metaphor" that recurs is conservative in its meaning yet dynamic in its content. Understanding how zombi(e)s find footing first in the folklore genres of belief, legend, and rumor and subsequently in

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33 The anxiety evinced in these zombie narratives, then, also reflects a problematic version of "white guilt." The punishment of being made a Voodoo-zombie forced to toil on the plantations of a foreign land would fit the crime of African slavery in America, which was often justified in terms of Biblical slavery. The zombie narrative thus illustrates an appropriate symbolic reversal of slavery in terms race and religion. The horror of these narratives, then, lies not only in the idea that slaves might successfully rebel and castigate their oppressors, but that such rebellion and revenge would be justified.

34 Michael Dash has called it "a dismaying apology for the occupation," (J. Michael Dash, Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 59.) and criticized Hurston's depiction of Haitians who are "gentle and loveable except for their enormous and unconscious cruelty." (Zora Neale Hurston, Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1938), 82.)

35 More could be said about the fact that Hurston's ethnography is not, in fact, very sympathetic, yet her relative status as an African American leads many of her readers to interpret it as such.

36 As I will discuss in Chapter Four, after reading Hurston's narrative director Jacques Tourneur became so concerned with accurately representing an "authentic" colonial situation in I Walked With a Zombie that he employed LeRoy Antoine, "who had studied the voodooism of his native Haiti," as an advisor on the film. (Ann Kordas, "New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies: The Historical Development of the Zombie in American Popular Culture," in Race, Oppression and the Zombie, ed. Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton (McFarland, 2011), 27.)
ethnographic discourse on Haiti, we can now move on to address concerns about the status of film as a commodity and the influence of capitalist, hegemonic interests.

**Film as Folklore**

The long history of folklorists studying film corroborates folklore as a methodology for approaching zombie cinema. Still, there remain some folklorists who decry the conflation of folklore with popular culture and adhere to the outmoded belief that popular media constitutes a type of “fakelore.” Fakelore, according to Richard Dorson, masquerades as folklore but lacks the authenticity needed to define it as such. However, as Rosemary Zumwalt, Michael Scully, and Regina Bendix have illuminated, Dorson’s charge against fakelore has been dismantled repeatedly since it was first put forth in 1950. Alan Dundes argued against Dorson, advancing the idea that as members of distinct and multifaceted folk groups we all participate in the production and perpetuation of folklore. In the 1960s Dundes inaugurated what became known as "the Folklore Revolution" by proclaiming the relatively simple premise that "We are the folk!", thus encouraging folklorists everywhere to eschew the concept of fakelore and approach their own vernacular cultural forms through the lens of anthropological and folkloric analysis. His disagreement with Dorson continued, however, and Dundes eventually conceded that if one must cling to the category of fakelore they should at least recognize it as an object susceptible to folkloric exploration and intervention. While cinema has alternately been considered "high art"

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by film theorists who see it as the imbrication of classic artistic forms and as "low culture" by those who doubt its power and relevance as a social mechanism, these distinctions reinforce the bourgeois ideology of aesthetics that folklorists have long disavowed. A nuanced understanding of the elements of film's collective production and use of folk wisdom (both onscreen and behind the scenes) demands a rethinking of film solely in terms of capitalist or "official" culture. As Bruce Jackson has convincingly argued,

Film is the dominant narrative mode of our time. Film and television provide much of the sense of community in a mobile and electronic world: the verbal and imaginative referents we utilize in ordinary, face-to-face encounters are as likely to come from our separate-but-shared media experiences as anywhere else. Film and television are far too important to be left to the media studies and literature scholars alone.  

Employing Dundesian rather than Dorsonian definitions of folklore and models of folklore scholarship, we can see how film itself represents the culturally specific artistic practice of a particular folk group, even within the Hollywood system.

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu discusses the complex roles of the artist and of art within a capitalist market system. While Bourdieu argues that "every literary field is the site of struggle over the definition of the writer," Bendix's analysis of authenticity forces us to consider how every folkloric field may realize a struggle over the definition of the "folk." Folklorists long refrained from conceptualizing film as a type of vernacular artistic production primarily because mainstream movies were seen as emanating from a singular artistic vision, fueled in part by the forces of capitalism within the Hollywood studio system. On the contrary, some of the most prominent film theorists describe the form as a collective artistic

practice that depends on the combined energies and talents of numerous individuals. Every film, whether produced within a studio system or independently, gets made by a unique folk group consisting of writers, directors, choreographers, musicians, actors, editors, artistic designers, photographers, carpenters, seamstresses, etc. While certain of these artists may play larger roles in the vision of the film as a whole, the film ultimately depends on the combined efforts of a folk group that takes its unity from the very artistic production it creates.

The practice of a film's construction by a particular folk group, then, may be seen as *folklife* of the ilk described by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, which "preserves the concerns of statistics and geography in the specificities of locale, habitat, and material culture." Filmmaking, and the folklife therein, must necessarily be considered culturally specific. Not only do technological conventions and film codes differ from country to country, but the politics and praxis of filmmaking are endemic to their national and temporal milieus. Comparing the folklife of the Classical-era moving-picture industry to that of the nineteenth century plantation, for example, film theorist Gwendolyn Foster argues that the American filmmaking folk group of Classical cinema, what she calls the *Hollywood Plantocracy*, actually "acted as an ethnographer of its own domain." She explains,

> The insularity of these systems, coupled with many other attributes, suggests a compelling reason for an analysis of Hollywood through the lens and the language of the Plantocracy, from its roots in the commodification of the body to its perpetuation of the narratives and power/knowledge systems of hierarchy in terms of race, class, gender, and sexualities.

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42 Ex. "Films are never the product of an individual," (Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton University Press, 1947), 5.); "Film is a communal activity," Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (University of California Press, 1957), 140.
45 Ibid., 47.
The power dynamics which structure the folklife of a filmmaking group, then, can be seen refracted in the film itself. Folklorists often explore how systems of hegemony, power, heritage, and ideology, which function in the folklife of a cultural group, inevitably get encoded in their folkloric productions.\textsuperscript{46} From the folklorist’s point of view, then, we can understand Hollywood iterations of classic narrative themes as part of particular folkloric traditions. Moreover, since zombies are autochthonous to specific folk groups (Haitian Vodouisants, the makers of zombie films), "any scholarly investigation must be concerned with the social, religious," ideological, economic, "and even geographic environment that produced zombie mythology, rather than merely the oral traditions and artistic productions emphasized by most mainstream folklorists."\textsuperscript{47}

By referring to the zombie as "mythology," Kyle Bishop implicates such narratives in foundational imaginaries of social life, a proposition to which I will return multiple times throughout this dissertation.

At this point, however, the valid criticism emerges that most Hollywood films made within a studio system are therefore subject to "corruption" by capitalist goals and tactics.\textsuperscript{48} Arguably, the aims of an individual director or auteur sometimes eclipse the combined artistic efforts of other individuals involved in the production of a film. The signature of the director, in other words, seems to mark the film as an artistic production of a single individual. However, as Bourdieu reminds us, "the quasi-magical potency of the signature is nothing other than the power, bestowed on certain individuals, to mobilize the symbolic energy produced by the


\textsuperscript{47} Kyle William Bishop, \textit{American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (And Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture} (McFarland, 2010), 39. To Bishop’s list I have added "ideological" and "economic" because he discuss those issues elsewhere in the chapter but strangely leaves them out of this succinct quote.

\textsuperscript{48} Although, it should be mentioned that since the 1960s the studio system’s function has been mainly marketing, as ninety-five percent of films are made outside of studios and then sold to them for distribution. (Vivian Sobchack, UCLA Film Studies graduate seminar, \textit{Historiography}. February 21, 2012.)
functioning of the whole field.” 49 Moreover, as folklorists Sharon Sherman and Mikel Koven have argued in their landmark book, "Folklore/Cinema: Popular Film as Vernacular Culture," many filmmakers channel the power of the Hollywood system to subvert dominant paradigms. Zombie films from African American filmmaking folk groups, such as Scream, Blacula, Scream! (1973) and Sugar Hill (1974), for example, maintain basic elements of the classic zombie narrative while reversing the races of the heroes and villains, thereby reclaiming the folkloric heritage and power of Voodoo and reorienting the meaning of the "cultural metaphor" toward African American success and pride. Underscored by the ideology of the Black Power movement, these films see Black authority figures and zombies successfully defeat white villains who threaten the black community, not unlike Jean Zombi in the Haitian legend. Because a film's production financing depends on the expectation that people will pay to see it, many theorists of film argue that popular attitudes, beliefs, and tastes have as much to do with the selection of films being produced as the interests of the producers. 50 Blaxploitation films enjoyed popularity in the 1970s because they represented the shared dreams and desires (nightmares and fears) of African Americans struggling in an integrated yet still racially oppressive American community. Contributors to these zombie films, then, "mobilized the symbolic energy" of Blaxploitation cinema to "subvert the dominant paradigms" of race relationships and representations.

Folklorists such as Michael Taussig, Dierdre Evans-Pritchard, and Charles Briggs have illustrated how the transmission or commodification of folk materials in a market economy does

49 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 81. So, while the economic interests of the Hollywood financiers may lead them to support one director or type of film over another, that support is what enables and "mobilizes the symbolic energy" of a film's collective creators.

not prohibit them from being considered folklore.\textsuperscript{51} In fact, as Bourdieu's writing suggests, in a capitalist society we should \textit{expect} works of cultural production to reflect, react to, and participate in that capitalist market economy.\textsuperscript{52} This crucial argument reconciles the conception of folklore as anti-commercial with the commercialism inherent in the Hollywood system. Indeed, the identification and manipulation of folklore in the service of capitalist interests has a long history. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett attests, "folklore is not only a disciplinary subject and disciplinary formation (we use one and the same term for both), but also a mode of \textit{cultural production}...folklorists produce folklore through a process of identification."\textsuperscript{53} The ethnographic writing about Haitian religiosity and its associations with the undead during the U.S. occupation of Haiti both confirmed the "authenticity" of folkloric accounts and capitalized on hyperbolic representations of zombi slaves. Wade Davis's infamous study of Haitian zombies in the 1980s received funding directly from pharmaceutical companies who sought to discover and market "the zombi drug" as a medical innovation. When Davis published the results of his research the book was advertised as an Indiana Jones-type thriller,\textsuperscript{54} and Wes Craven's Hollywood producers quickly bought the rights to Davis's "sensational ethnography" to make the embarrassingly misrepresentational film \textit{The Serpent and the Rainbow} (1988), which was in turn marketed as a "true story." Despite these obvious capitalist influences on his work, Davis's is the research most cited by both contemporary folklorists and film theorists writing about zombi(e)s. As \textit{cultural productions} (whose narratives in turn depict the ravages and horrors of unequal systems of labor


\textsuperscript{52} Bourdieu, \textit{The Field of Cultural Production}, Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{53}Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Folklore’s Crisis,” July 1, 1998, 305 emphasis mine.

and authority), then, zombie folklore and films inhabit a unique matrix of capitalist economic interests.

Zombie films come from both hegemonic and oppressed communities and function as folklore in terms of their source material, their fabrication by collaborators within a folk group, and their narrative and thematic construction. Turning now to narrative, we can explore issues of structures and variations within zombie history, correlatives to Toelken's laws of conservatism and dynamism. The classic formalists of film theory understood cinema as a collectively produced fusing of traditional artistic forms such as storytelling, theatre, and photography. Authors such as Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolph Arnheim, André Bazin, and Sigfried Kracauer were among the first to define "film language," which remains a central concept in film theory and criticism. Film language consists of the various tactics and methods of constructing filmic moments (what film semiologists call cinemes), including lighting, sound, depth of field, modes of shooting, mise-en-scene, and montage editing, which foster particular audience understandings and responses. While oral narratives comprise words and sentences which construct thematic elements and plot, film language consists of cinemes which combine various types of film language to make plots and "cultural metaphors" intelligible to spectators. Film not only has its own language, then, but its very intelligibility depends on an audience's sufficiency in that language. As Dell Hymes suggests,

performer and audience must share an implicit knowledge of language and ways of speaking languages. For folklorists, there is no alternative to explicit analysis. As with the grammar of these languages, so with the verbal art underlying relationships, taken for granted by their users, they must be brought to light by conscious effort. Once brought to light, they can enable us to understand the creativity and cogency of the discourse in which they occur.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{55}\) Dell Hymes, “In Vain I Tried to Tell You”: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics (U of Nebraska Press, 2004), 6; Bendix, In Search of Authenticity, 199.
If filmmakers and audience members share a mutually intelligible knowledge of film language, then meaning must be made in the space between the filmmakers' use of that language and the spectators' interpretation of it. As film theorist Michael Punt argues, "the audience is not passive -- they are historically specific and equally as complicit in the process of developing and inventing cinema as they are in the meaning-making processes when watching a film." Just as the resonance of folk-narrative depends on both a competent storyteller and the audience's capacity to interpret his or her use of language, metaphor, archetypes, and cultural themes, so too does film depend on the competency of both its performers and its audience. Although this dissertation does not engage in any kind of audience research, it does consider the fact that zombie films were always intended to be shown to audiences.

Scholars interested in the relationship between oral performance and film are quick to point out that oral narratives are mutable and living whereas film texts are "fixed" and cannot vary from performance to performance. Much contemporary folklore scholarship on film, however, challenges the idea that film texts are fixed. Koven discusses the various "cuts" of a film created to avoid censorship in different countries, to speak more directly to a director's vision, or to bolster DVD "extras." And Bruce Jackson complains that "the assumption seems to have been made that since filmmaking is a highly technical occupation, one [that] results in a fixed text, the 'folk' don't have a chance to influence it." Dependent on an overly determined and anachronistic conception of the 'folk,' as Jackson concludes, "that assumption isn't useful, neither is it valid." As Blaxploitation zombie films illustrate, the continuity of the zombie

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56 Consider also Eisenstein's theory of montage, which holds that meaning is lodged in the juxtaposition of successive shots and the interpretation of that juxtaposition by spectators (to be discussed elsewhere). (Sergei Eisenstein, The Film Sense (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1969), 12–3.)

57 Punt, Early Cinema and the Technological Imaginary, 10–2.

58 Mikel J. Koven, Film, Folklore, and Urban Legends (Scarecrow Press, 2008), 15.

59 Jackson, “From the Editor,” 388.
narrative provides ample space for challenges to the dominant "cultural metaphor." That's something I will discuss in my conclusion, but I also suggest that the conventions of the Voodoo zombie genre set during the Classical-era created remarkably fecund ground for filmmakers to engage with and challenge dominant representations of race in horror films. As Foster emphasizes, "horror films are much like folktales, telling the same stories repeatedly...yet these stories can be rendered with remarkably different emphasis." The mutability of the zombie narrative, then, makes the zombie a fecund cultural metaphor and a fundamentally vernacular monster.

The structuralist folkloristics of Levi-Strauss, Propp, Aarne and Thompson clarify how films both follow and create vernacular formulas. In 1946, folklorist Stith Thompson recognized "cinema as both a marvelous channel of tale dissemination and a kind of storytelling event." Yet in 1913 Georg Lukács, who in his life writes passionately on behalf of both bourgeois aesthetes and Marxist revolutionaries, described film as "tantamount to the fairy tale and the dream." Years before Thompson, then, Lukács saw film's potential as a storytelling device and, like Levi-Strauss in his interpretation of myth, its capacity to represent internal structures of the mind. Similarly, Kracauer argued that "the films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than any other artistic medium" and advanced the idea that popular films are popular - and powerful -- because they represent the dreams (or, I would add, fears) shared by a people at any given historical moment.

While European folktales can be classified according to the Aarne-Thompson Index, Koven argues that the Index's lack of reference to African or Caribbean zombies underscores its

60 Foster, Captive Bodies, 1999, 36.
61 Koven, Film, Folklore, and Urban Legends, 2008, 4; Thompson and Aarne, The Types of the Folktale, 461.
63 Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, 5.
Eurocentric bias; yet Koven still finds room within the tale-types to classify zombielore as analogous to certain European traditions.\textsuperscript{64} In another structural-folkloristic take on film, anthropologist Sherry Ortner cites Propp’s \textit{Morphology of the Folktale} to argue that Hollywood films both draw on historic folklore tropes and follow their own "vernacular formulas."\textsuperscript{65} The vernacular formula of the zombie recurs throughout the twentieth century, remaining structurally similar across decades but altering slightly to articulate the specific "Otherness" perceived as posing the greatest threat to a cultural group at a particular historic moment. For example, films of the 1930s reflected the fear of a growing African American population, the mysterious power of Voodoo to create zombie slaves, and white poverty and loss of power in the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{66} In the 1940s and 50s, zombie films demonstrated anxieties about the resurrection of Nazism, the rise of communism, and the tremulous stability of Jim Crow.\textsuperscript{67} Early 1960s zombies compounded threats of Otherness from the previous eras with fearsome nuclear power, while in the late 60s and 70s they articulated anxieties of integration, racism, violence, and growing consumerism.\textsuperscript{68} Following Davis’s sensational ethnography, white American films of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnoteref{66} Footnotes 61-65 provide a sample of zombie films reflecting the themes I describe. In no way do they constitute complete lists of zombie films from their respective eras, nor does each film listed completely embody all of the anxieties I identify as endemic to a particular period or those anxieties alone. The lists merely serve to illustrate the prolific nature of zombie films and the remarkable dynamism of this conservative genre. In the 1930s, see, for example, \textit{Ingagi} (1931), \textit{White Zombie} (1931), \textit{Voodoo} (1933), \textit{Drums O’ Voodoo} (1934), \textit{Chloe} (1934), \textit{Black Moon} (1934), \textit{The Devil’s Daughter} (1934), \textit{Ouanga} (1935), \textit{Obeah!} (1936), \textit{The Love Wanga} (1936), \textit{Revolv of the Zombies} (1936), et al.
\end{footnotes}
the 1980s and 90s returned to the "real" zombies of Haiti while African American filmmakers continued to celebrate the power of vengeful Voodoo in urban Black communities. Finally, following the 9/11/2001 attacks on the U.S., mainstream zombie films often dealt with terrorist zombies, diseases of mass destruction, and the dangers of "foreign bodies" in the age of globalization. Zombie films, then, represent a potent example of Bakhtin's "chronotope," a spatiotemporal narrative structure which "mediates between two orders of experience and discourse: the historical and the artistic, providing fictional environments where historically specific constellations of power are made visible."

Understanding zombie films as chronotopes allows us to see their conservatism and dynamism not only on a continuum with zombie narratives from the nineteenth-century, but as subject to the same kinds of structural and mythological analysis employed in the study of oral and literary folktales. Scholars of film and folklore have also pointed to the ways film now constitutes a kind of mythology, demonstrating that classic films provide the foundational narratives of American cultural imaginaries for those in the late twentieth and early twenty-first


centuries. Film theorists Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni confirm this interpretation, arguing that "cinema is one of the languages through which the world communicates itself to itself," and contending that cinema plays such a role in creating the social imaginary that films become "the mythology of their own myths." Folklorists agree, and studies by Sherman, Koven, Dégh, Bird, George, Stone, and Grider illustrate in unique ways how film and television have come to replace both oral and literary transmission as the dominant means by which most Americans understand the world and its social relationships through creative narrative. Seeing zombie films as reflections and reifications of complex ideologies in the wake of social upheavals, then, allows us to understand how they participate in political mythologies of racial difference and hegemonic regimes of power.

Following Bazin, film theorist Laura Mulvey understands film as a "complex cultural artifact" (akin to Bakhtin's chronotope) that has the potential to "embalm time," preserving for eternity the combination of narrative and artistic practices that embody a cultural ethos in a given historical moment. And, as Bourdieu and Ortner indicate, a film's meaning and impact only increases by the discourse surrounding it in the time elapsed since its release. For example,

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75 I use this term, here, in Bata's sense of myth as a "special sort of sign," a third level of semiological structure that takes on such profound and unconscious meaning as to shape the social world. I discuss this further later in the introduction. (Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers, 1st ed. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972).)
landmark films such as *White Zombie* (1932), *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Blacula* (1972), and *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988) inspired countless studies of their meaning and influence on American cultural perceptions of racial and cultural difference. In many ways these films and their zombies operate as "barometers of cultural anxieties."  

Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath demonstrate how cinematic representations reflect, construct, and energize complex social imaginaries, much like traditional mythologies explicated by folklorists. Zombie films' selective reinforcement of cultural values and social organization can be seen as type of "tradition" in its own right. Raymond Williams considers tradition to be the most powerful means of incorporation, provided we understand tradition not in the classic Marxist fashion but as an "active process of selection,"

…an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification. [...] From a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and other certain meanings and practices are neglected or excluded. Yet within a particular hegemony, and as one of its decisive processes, this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as 'the tradition,' the significant past.

Therefore films, like folklore, are at once static objects and dynamic devices which record and reify particular visions of history. In many ways, then, accepting films as "complex cultural artifacts" is to recognize them as material culture with profound mythmaking potential.

When folklorists study a particular object or iteration of a cultural form, they consider the item's text, texture, and context in order to provide a cogent analysis. The text represents the item itself, such as the legend of Jean Zombi or the rumor that zombi slaves were working on Haitian plantations. The context refers to the circumstances surrounding the lore in question, so

for Jean Zombi that would mean the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath while for the zombi slaves it would be the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Context for folklorists is in some ways related to the Bakhtinian chronotope, then, in that it reveals how the cultural production in question relates to its specific geographic and temporal situation. Texture is more complicated, and refers to the manner in which an item of folklore is performed or articulated. If one were documenting a recitation of the Jean Zombi legend, for example, the texture would be the intonation, gestures, and overall characterization of the performer. Together, text, texture, and context form the basis upon which folklorists build their analysis, which is their subjective interpretation of the lore and its meaning within its particular cultural context. Analysis frequently hinges on the function(s) of folklore, and contemporary folkloric analysis typically engages with one or more critical discourses such as Marxism, feminism, or critical race theory. William Bascom famously suggested that all folklore serves four discrete functions: it "lets people escape from repressions imposed on them by society"; it "validates culture, justifying its rituals and beliefs to those who practice and observe them"; it "operates as pedagogical device which reinforces morals and builds wit"; and it serves as a "means of applying pressure and exerting social control."

To apply the model of text, texture, context, and analysis to the study of Voodoo zombie films, I begin with the premise that the film itself represents the text. The context, then, includes not only the time and place in which the film was made, but also aspects of production such as the filmmakers and their backgrounds, the studio and its demands, and the marketing of the film in popular culture. For texture I turn to the formalist study of film language, arguing that aspects of a film such as sound, lighting, and mise-en-scene correspond to performative textures such as vocality, gesticulation, bodily comportment. Textual analysis of these films thus draws on my
background in literary theory and narrative analysis, my archival research into the production of these films, and my understanding of film formalism and film language.

Finally, I argue films can be understood as folklore in terms of the functions they serve in society. Bascom’s four primary functions of folklore\textsuperscript{80} hold remarkably true for zombie cinema. First, like folklore, zombie films "let people escape from repressions imposed on them by society." Phenomenologically speaking, cinema provides a space in which, for a set period of time, individuals can "escape" daily realities and indulge in the fantasy of a storytelling event. Moreover, contemporary zombie films often celebrate the symbolic "freedom" of zombies, who are finally able to throw off the shackles of their repressive capitalist civilization and live according to their most basic and base human instincts. Second, zombie cinema "validates culture, justifying its rituals and beliefs to those who practice and observe them." Zombie films legitimize the social imaginary of the group from which they emerge; even films that challenge hegemonic systems of thought in turn authorize counter-hegemonies, and are thus made for and marketed to those for whom those counter-hegemonies speak. While earlier zombie films from white filmmakers justified racism and xenophobia by giving imaginative force to the cultural metaphor of a colonial past that returns in revenge, many later African American zombie films drew on the same themes and tropes to express the belief that white culture preys on and brutally oppresses Black people. Third, zombie media serves as a modern "pedagogical device which reinforces morals and builds wit." As the folklore research of Tucker and Grider demonstrate, our contemporary repertoires for storytelling come as much or more from popular film and television as oral or literary sources.\textsuperscript{81} Grider coined the term "media-narraform" to refer to


conventions so established within a certain genre that any individual might use them to create an original tale that would fit into that genre. The "media-narraform" of the zombie tale reinforces an ideology wherein Others are seen as fundamentally immoral and inhuman. Finally, like folklore, zombie films represent "means of applying pressure and exerting social control." In a society dominated by white male capitalist interests, films reinforce hegemonic "ways of being" through a rare form of storytelling akin to dreams. Though film theorists argue that mass desires largely inform the nature of filmic narratives, Bourdieu would remind us that "in the end, it could be said that grande bourgeoisie turns to its composers and their dream-factories to provide the fantasies it politically and socially needs."82 In terms of this final function, there are strong similarities between the Hollywood executive choosing which films to finance based on the perceived desires of the cinema-going public and the traditional performer of oral narratives who chooses which story to tell based on what he or she perceives to be the needs (and/or preferences) of those in the audience.

While film was once considered "high art," today nearly everyone in the U.S. has access to both cinematic experiences and the tools with which to make their own films. Movie-going and home-viewing of film and television have become substantive parts of our collective experience of culture. As the extraordinary presence of amateur zombie films and festivals illustrates, the zombie narrative far exceeds any economic or political constraints imposed on it by the Hollywood system. Though many of these amateur films may recall Hollywood conventions and themes, we must also consider how Hollywood co-opted those very narrative and representational conventions from sensationalist ethnographic accounts of Haitian folklore. From the eighteenth century to the present, the zombie wanders interdiscursively through folk belief, legend, rumor, ethnography, material culture, and even mythology, emerging as an

82 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 57.
inherently vernacular monster. Film represents but one manifestation of the zombie, yet televi
sual media has become by far the most prominent vehicle for zombielore in American
culture. As a medium it both draws on the history of folkloric traditions and, through its
collaborative production and development of vernacular formulas, creates folklore in its own
right. Zombie narratives are simultaneously conservative and dynamic in their iterations of
cultural metaphors, reflecting and shaping social attitudes, customs, and beliefs about race
relations in the U.S. Though classic film theory substantiates folkloric readings of filmic history,
the tools and methods of folkloric analysis inspire epistemologies of the zombie genre that
cannot be approached by other means. By adhering to outmoded conceptions of "fakelore" and
"authenticity" we disenfranchise our own discipline. Zombie film, and perhaps all cinema, is
profoundly folkloric.

Zombilore and the Rise of U.S. Cinema

Film, like folklore, is a form of cultural production. Unlike folklore, however, the art of
filmmaking is intimately bound up with capitalist endeavors. Bourdieu's theorization of artistic
cultural forms has relevance for those who understand both folklore and filmmaking as
aesthetically-marked modes of cultural production. While individual filmmakers may have been
personally fascinated by the pseudo-ethnographic writings on Haiti, their forays into this field
were no doubt driven by a desire to market their films to a public equally fascinated with these
"exotic" Others and their supposedly authentic monsters. Capitalism complicates the
understanding of pseudo-ethnographic fiction and American-authored zombie narratives as
authentic folklore because early films featuring Haiti or Voodoo -- regardless of their
authenticity and perhaps because of their claims to it -- became part of the canon of zombielore
in the U.S. That is, even films such as The Conjure Woman (1926) or Black Moon (1931),
neither of which called zombies by name, have (rightfully) been subsumed under the genre of zombie cinema by virtue of their subject matter, which includes Voodoo, hypnotic possession, and zombie-like creatures. While Bourdieu argues that "every literary field is the site of struggle over the definition of the writer," Bendix's analysis of authenticity forces us to consider how every folkloric field may realize a struggle over the definition of the "folk." Considering the fraught nature of zombielore in this time period as a hybrid product of Haitian folklife, Western "ethnographic" fiction, and/or creative nonfiction, and filmic fantasy begs the question, to whom does zombie folklore belong? The Haitians or the Americans? Who are the folk?

As David MacDougall has argued, "one of the functions of art, and often of science, is to help us understand the being of others in the world." In the nineteen-tens, the nascent art of film and the burgeoning science of anthropology spoke to and about postcolonial anxieties of racial coexistence in the United States, though often in the guise of documentary-style (authentic) depictions of distant people and places. The science and art of cinema developed partially as means to "capture" the being-of-others in the world so that they could be represented to a curious American public; in this way, the camera has been compared to the colonialist's gun in that it "shoots" a subject, thereby turning the being into an object which can then be mounted and put on display as spectacle. Indeed, as Ella Shoat and Robert Stam have pointed out, the nascence of cinema coincided with the giddy heights of the imperial project, and the "imperial

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83 Ibid., 42.
power shaped the uses to which both apparatus and celluloid were put."86 The presumed objectivity of the camera imbued such cinematic images of foreign peoples and places with a self-evident authenticity. Cinema and anthropology, then, shared an affiliation in their endeavors to find, apprehend, and represent distant cultures in the most authentic way possible. Both methodologies for representing culture, however, remained ignorant of their own Eurocentric positionality and the ways their ethnographic or documentarian representations actually encoded self-aggrandizing notions of white power and supremacy. Cinema was an especially valuable tool for the production of Eurocentric ideology that reinforced the U.S.'s belief in Manifest Destiny:

The 'spatially-mobilized visuality' of the I/eye of empire spiraled outward around the globe, creating a visceral, kinetic sense of imperial travel and conquest, transforming European spectators into armchair conquistadors, affirming their sense of power while turning the colonies into spectacle for the metropole's voyeuristic gaze.87

While Shohat and Stam describe the imperial imaginary that developed through the colonialist-cinematic project of Europeans, Americans were engaged in similar projects of their own. With the racial tension mounting between whites and African Americans in the U.S., white filmmakers often focused their lenses on colonized spaces in Africa and the Caribbean; through their ethnocentric depictions of native culture, they contributed to a developing imaginary of Blackness.

Even before D.W. Griffith's infamous Birth of a Nation became the first feature-length film in American history (1915), short films such as Hallowe'en in Coontown (1897), Voodoo Fires (1913), The Ghost of Twisted Oak (1914), and In Zululand (1915) linked images of Blackness.

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86 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (Routledge, 2013), 100, 104.
87 Ibid., 104.
people to ghosts, hauntings, and occult practices through references to Voodoo and monstrous representations of Black corporeality. While many of these early films have been lost, others such as *Hoodoo Ann* (1916) and *Unconquered* (1917) drew from the ethnographic writings of Hearn, St. John, and Prichard and projected fantasies of primitive peoples engaged in witchcraft, human sacrifice, and devil worship. The colonialist gaze inherent in these films saw Black bodies not only as exotic and erotic, but as vestiges of a less civilized state of humanity. As Fatimah Rony argues,

> Cinema appears to bring the past and that which is culturally distant closer; likewise, [classical] anthropology, which posits that indigenous peoples are remnants of earlier ages, has been largely concerned with the description and preservation or reconstruction of the spatially and historically distant.

Folklore, literature, and early films about Voodoo practitioners collapsed the distance between "here" and "there" and articulated specific constructions of Black people as symbols of the past, ultimately bringing that past back into the present through the 'magic' of the cinema.

Whether in folklore, literature, or film, the ways in which the past gets reconstructed contribute to a cultural imaginary, forming the foundational ideology for how subjects’ view themselves and Others and for how they understand their own history. These ideological constructions of the world enforce boundaries between social and cultural groups, shaping notions of group identity and offering instruction in how to identify and maintain boundaries between "us" and "them." Considering the geographically inconsistent nature of the U.S. empire, cinema helped to cultivate a national and imperial sense of belonging among many disparate peoples. Cinema thus created what we might call a communitas of spectatorship (following

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anthropologist Victor Turner's theorization of communitas as the intense feelings of togetherness felt by a group of people share the same experience), which provided collective spectators with an imagined sense of unity. Such a communitas of spectatorship intensified and concretized Eurocentric understandings of cultural difference, validating dominant and hegemonic understandings of the nation's history in terms of racial hierarchies, the white man's burden, and Manifest Destiny. As Rony suggests, bringing the Other closer through the magic of cinema was also an attempt to bring the past back into the present and to frame it in terms of an inherent white racial superiority.

The Zombie Myth

In 1984 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously described zombies as, "the only modern myth." By that they referred not only to the zombie's nascence in the modern period, but also to its impact in the psychological consciousness of Westerners throughout the twentieth century. The seminal folklorist Alan Dundes succinctly defined myth as "sacred narrative," which he maintained would be culturally specific and held to be true by the people of that culture. While Dundes' definition drew from the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, the practical ethnography of Bronislaw Malinowski and the archetypal schematics of Carl Jung, it rigidly depended on the notion of the sacred in a religious context. French literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes augmented that understanding of myth by suggesting that the sacred could also be secular, arguing that certain ideological structures -- for example, a belief in white racial superiority -- might be so closely held and guarded by certain people as to be considered sacred to them. Deleuze and Guattari's designation of the zombie as "the only modern myth"

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seems to draw primarily on the Barthesian notion of myth, yet closer analysis of the history of zombielore suggests that the Dundesian conception of myth is just as vital for a holistic understanding of the zombie figure in multiple cultural and historical contexts.

The zombie figure as we know it today was conceived in the folklore of ancestor worship in pre-colonial West Africa, gestated in Diasporic racial conflicts in the Caribbean, and born on an eighteenth century sugar plantation in Haiti. The strange thing toddled through nineteenth century U.S. rumors and legends, saw itself in the mirror of Gothic literature, came into adolescence through the ethnographic discourse of Haitian travelogues, and reached adulthood on the silver screen. While all of these (r)evolutions of zombielore will be addressed in detail throughout this dissertation, what's important to note is how the zombie figure reflects different kinds of mythmaking at various stages of its development, from the beliefs and rituals of West African slaves to the Classical Hollywood horror films that depicted 'Black magic' as the antithesis of white authority. At all stages of its development, zombielore reveals something about the consciousness of people grappling with the disillusion of slavery and white racial dominance. As Liza McAlister recently put it, the zombie always gestures towards slavery and revolution:

… its figure, its story, its mythology are at once part of the mystical arts that have developed since that time, and comprise a form of mythmaking that effects the mystification of slavery and ongoing political repression. That is, the zombie represents, responds to, and mystifies fear of slavery, collusion with it, and rebellion against it.  

McAlister's understanding of the zombie's mythmaking potential in terms of race-based oppression and rebellion seems all the more plausible given the historical development of the

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figure. As I previously mentioned, the U.S. has witnessed quantitative surges in zombielore following periods of intense racial conflict, including the Haitian Revolution, Nat Turner's rebellion, the end of the Civil War, the U.S. military occupation of Haiti, the Civil Rights movement, the Rodney King beating and riots, and 9/11.

Though not perfectly coherent in every case, eerily similar circumstances often precipitate a boom in zombielore: the murder or abuse of a symbolic Black man at white hands, an ensuing riot or revolt against white authority, the perceived endangerment of white femininity offered as some kind imperative to keep Black people subjugated, a shift towards victim-blaming in the national discourse surrounding the rebels, Black death as a galvanizing symbol for both Black Power and White Power activists, an escalation of racial conflict that manifests in a variety of cultural spheres, and in many cases a token legislative response that symbolically but weakly addresses racial inequality. While this set of circumstances may seem to be ripped from today's headlines surrounding the #BlackLivesMatter movement, they also refer to specific historical moments that renewed interest and induced new forms of zombielore in the subsequent years. In particular, they map sufficiently onto the case of François Macandal and the Haitian Revolution, Nat Turner's slave rebellion, Black deaths during the Civil Rights Movement, and of course Rodney King. In other cases the "spikes" can often be attributed to U.S. cultural exchanges with Haiti, which have repeatedly inspired generic hybrids of ethnographic and Gothic literature. Every period of renewed interest in zombielore sees a change in the nature of that lore, slight modifications that subtly make the monster fit the current historical moment. For example, zombielore from the nineteenth century dealt directly with white fears of a slave uprising in the U.S. that would mirror circumstances of the Haitian Revolution, while zombielore during the U.S. occupation of Haiti expressed concern for American marines stationed in an exotic and
unforgiving land. At the same time, every reanimation of zombielore in a new era evinces a return of certain themes endemic to the zombielore of previous eras, making all zombielore a palimpsestic memoryscape of past racial conflict and revolution. Zombielore reflecting concern for U.S. marines during the occupation, for instance, hinged on the perceived possibility of white slavery, a fear that also lurked at the heart of nineteenth century zombielore surrounding slave revolts. A detailed analysis of how and why zombielore has transformed in certain historical periods is the primary topic of this dissertation.

**Outline of the Dissertation**

This work is divided into two sections of two chapters each. Taking a somewhat chronological approach, the first section explores the rise of zombielore in the Americas in terms of authenticity and folklore. Chapter One tackles the Haitian Revolution and its reverberations in literary and folkloric discourse through the 1920s, specifically focusing on the genre of postcolonial Gothic fiction and the burgeoning field of anthropology. The second chapter offers close readings of William Seabrook's pseudo-ethnography, *The Magic Island* (1929), and Victor Halperin's film, *White Zombie* (1932), demonstrating how zombielore in this era depended on the idea of an exotic "authentic monster" inflected through the familiar lens of literary Gothicism. The second section deals with questions of memory and how filmic zombie narratives evince an apparent rupture between memory and history in U.S. cultural consciousness. Chapter three explores the theoretical framework necessary to understand these processes of memory within a U.S. cultural framework, while Chapter Four applies that theory via a close reading of Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur's iconic film, *I Walked With a Zombie* (1942). The conclusion reflects on the relationship between zombielore and cultural memory through an analysis of
Blaxploitation horror films that parodied Classical-era zombie movies, which reclaimed the Voodoo zombie as a symbol of Black power and resilience in the face of white oppression. Through this reflection and analysis I conclude that zombie narratives continually operate as palimpsests for earlier iterations of zombielore, retaining historical connotations but accumulating additional meanings with every reanimation.

While by no means an exhaustive study of zombielore, this dissertation explores the historical development of zombies from the late eighteenth century to the mid twentieth century, offering a qualitative analysis of how the lore responded to, colluded with, and rebelled against slavery and racial oppression. In many ways, this qualitative analysis explicates and accounts for the quantitative evidence that zombielore surged in American consciousness at particular moments in history. Although contemporary zombie aficionados may have a particular vision of what a zombie is, for the first hundred and fifty years of American zombielore the figure was exclusively associated with Afro-Caribbean cultures and people. Many zombie scholars argue that the Black zombie of yore is of a different species than today's dominant zombie paradigm, yet, as my analysis will reveal, these monsters have more in common than might first appear.

A Note About Nomenclature

When I use the term 'Voodoo' I refer to the Americanized misconception and misrepresentation of spiritual practices associated with Vodou in Haiti, and, to a lesser extent, Vodun in West Africa. Other spellings, typically appearing in quotations, reflect the inconsistent spellings found in older texts, including but not limited to: Vaudaux, Voudou, Voudoun, Vodoun, et al. On occasion I may refer to the contemporary practice of Voodoo in Louisiana,
where the 'oo' spelling eventually became dominant amongst practitioners thanks to its collusion with the Native American spirituality-inflected 'Hoodoo,' but this will be made clear in the text.

In Haiti, the 'zonbi' or 'zombi' is not the same as what people in the contemporary U.S. call a 'zombie.' Following the convention set by other zombie scholars, I use the spelling 'zombi' when referring exclusively to the figures as they exist in Haitian lore and the spelling 'zombie' when referring more generally to the monster-type as a whole. Similarly, I switch between 'zombilore' and 'zombielore' to distinguish between lore specifically about Vodou zombies in Haiti and the more general corpus of lore that encompasses all manifestations of the undead creatures in any cultural context.

From time to time I reference Haitian Kreyol terms that describe elements of Vodou practice, such as ounfò (Vodou congregation site), and lwa (Vodou ancestor-spirit). In cases where I am quoting writers, filmmakers, or screenplays, I maintain the now-anachronistic spellings used by the original authors: houn'gan, mambo, houmfort, and loa.

Undeath Today

Zombie narratives, at least through the late 1990s, evince a U.S. cultural discomfort at the idea that the past wields some power in the present -- a latent cultural suspicion that our history of racial subjugation and inequality is not simply "dead," as we might like to think, but continues to plague us, offering new and ever evolving forms of terror. There's an inherent cultural anxiety that our way of life in the past somehow threatens our way of life in the present.

Some other theorists have called this "haunting."
Haunting. Perhaps… but haunting implies something ethereal, lurking around the corner or hovering behind, threatening to sneak up and take you by surprise. Zombies, by contrast, are in front of you, quietly insisting upon themselves and their visibility, immediately threatening to make you one of them. Similarly, the faces of more contemporary riots and rebellions -- Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, etc -- insist upon themselves in viral imagery, each pleading to be seen and demanding to be confronted. They take on new lives after their deaths, mobilizing both white and Black communities towards conflict and revolution. I have glossed the "cultural haunting" described by Brogan and other critical theorists as a seemingly-paradoxical combination of white guilt and racist ideology, and those theorists would probably say that the contemporary images of these dead Black men "haunt" white Americans, particularly in that they recall the images of Rodney King and Emmitt Till. Maybe. But I think there's something more to it than that. Is the haunted person angry at that which haunts them? Do they even understand it? Feeling haunted by these images rather than bereaved and/or terrorized seems to be yet another example of white privilege.

No. The metaphor of haunting cannot hold. Zombies are intimately entwined with histories of racial inequality, conflict, and revolution. They do not haunt. They approach. They terrify. They are not figments or phantoms. They are not even dead; at least not anymore.

Zombies are undead, their lives having ended though their animatedness persists. The zombie's undeath seems to be a more apt metaphor than haunting for how the past shakes and shapes present epistemologies of power.

Many people have blamed the contemporary riots and ongoing demonstrations of #BlackLivesMatter as a consequence of Obama's presidency, the first Black man in the white
house energizing racial conflict in a way we haven't seen since the Civil Rights era. But we have to understand that what's happening now is not new. It's not Obama's fault. It's happened before dozens of times, and at near-regular intervals in our nation's history of racial revolution. A huge part of the problem is that people think this history is dead. A huger part of the problem is that it isn't.

While zombies have taken on exponentially new meanings in the 21st century as opposed to the 20th, the circumstances that have regularly induced zombielore "spikes" in the past are very much present in today's U.S. cultural landscape. Zombielore is the residue left over after the riots and (attempted) revolutions, but the circumstances that provoke them have changed very little in the past 225 years. Those circumstances may seem far more pressing than the issue of historic folklore, but it's important to understand the complexities of that peculiar residue -- zombielore -- and where it came from. As the zombie continues to transform in our cultural consciousness it retains traces of its former lives, and thus offers lessons for a culture trying to overcome its history even as it clings to its past.

The past IS present -- that's the whole point of zombies.
A Revolutionary Monster: Afro-Caribbean Zombilore and its Transformations

While terms such as *zambi*, *zumbi* and *nzambi* have been traced to pre-colonial African languages, this chapter will demonstrate why the emergence of zombi lore in the Americas must be tied to the histories of slavery and rebellion on the Caribbean island of Saint Domingue, now Haiti. Fought between 1791 and 1804, the Haitian Revolution stands as the only successful slave revolt in the common era, and led to the founding of an independent nation of Black people in the Western hemisphere at a time when people of African descent were still enslaved throughout the Western world. The word *zonbi* (as it is often spelled in the Haitian context, even today) appeared first in early colonialist writings about the history of Saint Domingue, which indicated the figure was best understood as a revenant or non-corporeal spirit. Throughout the revolution and well into the nineteenth century the figure took on new meanings for those on both sides of the colonial divide. The first narratives of a Black zombi can be found in the diaries and family papers documenting this brutal conflict between Black and Creole slaves and French

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94 Mery, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie françaie de l’île Saint Domingue* (etc.)
colonizers, and it is from here that we can begin to trace the trajectory of zombielore in the United States.

Before examining that history in detail, however, it's important to understand the mutable meanings of the term "zombi" in various geographical and temporal contexts. In the Bantu language of Kikongo, nzambi means "soul" or "spirit of a dead person," and zambi "god," while zumbi refers to a fetish object used for rituals. As Melville Herskovits and Alfred Metraux have illuminated, the idea of the zombi in Dahomean folk belief was once a prominent component of ancestor worship that specifically addressed the power of a spirit or soul apart from the body. Surviving the Middle Passage, in Saint Domingue this zombi became a zonbi and took on new meaning for African slaves and the indigenous population of Arawak enslaved along with them. While that new meaning will be a primary focus of this chapter, it's also important to consider more contemporary understandings of the zonbi or zombi in African and Caribbean contexts to better understand the historical development of this complex figure.

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95 Hans W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier have explored the persistence of zombi folklore in contemporary African societies. In the late twentieth century, they found evidence of zombi beliefs in Ghana, Benin, Zambia and Tanzania, where the term(s) sometimes referred to the disembodied soul of a dead person but more often to a corpse reanimated through witchcraft and employed as a slave. (Ackermann and Gauthier, “The Ways and Nature of the Zombi,” *Journal of American Folklore* 104, no. 414 (Autumn 1991): 466–94.)

96 Although this chapter investigates several postcolonial manifestations of zombielore, it should be noted that this work approaches postcolonialism solely through the lens of folklore and folklore scholarship. As outlined in the introduction, the aim here is to explore that which is static and that which is mutable, thematically speaking, in a history of zombielore spanning more than two hundred years. For reasons which will become obvious as this history unfolds, postcoloniality necessarily becomes a focus of this study despite the dissertation's guiding schema of folkloristics as opposed to postcolonial or subaltern studies. To foreground the folklore, then, I resist a singularly chronological approach to the history of zombielore, suggesting that more recent understandings of Afro-Caribbean zombielore reveal something about historic zombielore, even as that history illuminates the multifaceted significance of contemporary zombielore. Underpinning this approach, then, is the idea that the present helps us understand the past nearly as much as the past helps us understand the present. The project is invested in postcolonialism only insofar as it explores linkages between slavery and zombielore as enacted in colonial and postcolonial contexts.
Contemporary Zombilore in Haitian Vodou and West African Vodun

Wade Davis, a twentieth century ethnobotanist made famous by his exploits in Haiti, documented in great detail the folklore surrounding zombis in the 1980s, promulgating the existence of a dark ritual wherein the soul of a person may be separated from the body it once inhabited. As Davis explains, the process of separating body from soul results in two types of zombi: the *zombi jardin* (more widely known as *zombi astral*), or spirit zombi, and the *zombi corps cadaver*, the corporeal zombie. The *zombi astral* is far more common than the *zombi corps cadaver*, as Davis acknowledges partly by his preferential use of the synonym *zombi jardin* (literally "garden variety zombi") when discussing the disembodied entities. For Vodouisants in Haiti and Voduns in West Africa the spirit zombie is also far more powerful than the corporeal zombi, yet there exists some variation in its manifestation.

In West African Vodun, for example, the zombi may appear analogous to the Western concept of a ghost since it is often viewed as an ancestor spirit who lingers, on the edges of the village and -- in a metaphysical sense -- on the edges of consciousness. This reflects the most common understanding I encountered when conducting fieldwork in Ghana, Togo, and Benin (however there were subtle differences within that framework of understanding, and willingness to engage in discussions about zombis or Vodun at all, varied across the three countries). In and

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98 Personal fieldwork undertaken with support from a travel grant provided by the UCLA Graduate Division, 2012. In Ghana the missionary presence over the past hundred years has led to great suspicion of and reluctance to openly discuss Vodun (or even to call it by that name), especially with cultural outsiders. My undergraduate thesis in Anthropology documented and explored this phenomenon in Accra and the surrounding areas, as well as in Kumasi and Cape Coast (“Thank the Gods for Jesus! Christian Missionaries and Indigenous Religion in Southern Ghana.” Senior thesis. University of North Carolina Asheville, 2007). In 2012 I returned to Ghana to continue this fieldwork and took several trips to Togo and Benin to learn about the perception of zombi lore in those places. The relative secrecy surrounding Vodun in Ghana is countered by the nationalistic embrace of Vodun in Benin. Since this dissertation focuses on film and folklore in the U.S. rather than at any of these sites, however, I include this detail only to provide a broad understanding of Vodun in indigenous contexts and to offer insight into the mutable
around the Volta region of Ghana, the base of my field study, for instance, zombis may be understood as the recently deceased ancestors of the Ewe people. These zombis warn their descendents of impending dangers, protect children and hunters, and sanction those who have wronged the family, the ancestors, or the gods. They are said to be neither entirely benevolent nor solely mischievous, and some of the younger generations question whether they exist at all. Still, the villages often observe taboos against going into the bush at night, as they recognize that a zombi is not something one would want to encounter on their own.\footnote{This superstition or folk belief\textsuperscript{100} regarding zombis differs from the figures' manifestation in Caribbean and U.S. contexts, where zombis take on a more corporeal and pathetic form.}

In Haitian Vodou, ancestor spirits act as free agents and have the power to reward or punish their descendents, much like the bush-dwelling zombis of Ewe Vodun. They are the first tier in a hierarchy of spirits between living humans and Bondye (\textit{Bon Dieu}, a creator-god who is distant from humanity), the second and most important tier being the \textit{lwa} (also \textit{loa}). The lwa are semi-divine beings who serve as intercessors between Vodouisants and Bondye, while the ancestor spirits serve no such purpose and commune primarily with one another. None of these spiritual beings, however, would be referred to as a zombi in Haiti. There, \textit{zombis astral} and \textit{corps cadaver} are created at once, on purpose, by a malevolent houngan (Vodou priest) known as a bokor. While this ceremony has been documented by several ethnographers -- most notably Zora Neale Hurston in the 1930s and Wade Davis in the 1980s -- folklorists and anthropologists


\footnote{Folklorists in the 21st century typically eschew the term "superstition" because it connotes ignorance and is often used condescendingly. In actuality, almost all humans -- all folk -- engage in some sort of superstitious thinking or belief. Thus the term "folk belief" has come to replace "superstition" in most contemporary folkloric discourse.}
continue to debate the authenticity of their accounts vis a vis actual Vodou practice. Davis famously revealed that the zombification ceremony begins when the victim is put into a death-like sleep using a concoction of more than twenty-seven herbs, plants, and animal toxins.\textsuperscript{101} The victim is then buried in a traditional funeral, with most attendees unaware of the bokor's involvement. The following evening the body is exhumed and another concoction administered to revive the "deceased" person, during which revival the soul is separated from the body and sealed in a ceremonial vessel. This vessel contains the \textit{zombi astral} while the body, now deprived of its soul, becomes the \textit{zombi corps cadaver}.\textsuperscript{102} The \textit{corps cadaver} must live at the behest of the bokor who made him (or -- more rarely -- her), laboring as a menial slave, physically and mentally incapable of anything beyond obeying simple commands. While this may seem horrifying, the corporeal zombi commands less respect in Haiti than the captive spirit, which is considered extremely powerful and gets put to work in a variety of rituals, strengthening the overall power of the bokor. To be made into a zombi may be seen as a form of punishment for the guilty or as a tragic and unjust attack against the innocent, but zombification is always considered a fate worse than death.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Despite Davis's emphasis on the biopharmacological necessity of these copious ingredients being administered in tandem, his mention of tetrodotoxin and the pufferfish from which it comes have become nearly synonymous with contemporary Western understandings of Haitian zombis. Many if not most laypeople who claim to know about Haitian zombis will readily invoke the neurotoxin (or at least the pufferfish) in their rational explanations of the creatures' existence, but in my experience very few of those who indict tetrodotoxin express knowledge of any of the other twenty-six ingredients, their ritualistic combination and administration, or the spiritual components of the transformation as perceived by Haitian Vodouisants. This is, perhaps, a testament to the enduring legacy of \textit{The Serpent and the Rainbow} (Wes Craven, 1987), a horror film which grossly fictionalized Wade Davis's ethnography but marketed itself as a faithful adaptation of his work. Unfortunately, a discussion of that film and its legacy is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{102} The \textit{zombi corps cadaver} is an interesting Francophone Creole phrase. While \textit{cadaver} means "corpse" in the singular, the plural \textit{corps} indicates a body of people or even a military unit, suggesting that the \textit{zombi corps cadaver} will always necessarily be part of a group of zombis.

This zombilore obviously differs starkly from that found in West Africa, where the idea of a corporeal zombi (much less the specific connotation of the Haitian *corps cadaver*) is rarely if ever a common facet of folk belief. While the prevailing discourse rightfully presumes that the term "zombi" and some of its underlying principles migrated to Haiti with slaves during the Diaspora, the zombilore of West African Vodun is a metonymic form of ancestor-worship, a traditional folk belief having nothing to do with slavery of subjugation. In the Volta region, for example, zombis are spiritual figures who wield more power than the humans who can perceive them.\(^{104}\) They are potent but ethereal, and have no corporeal counterpart like their Caribbean namesakes. In Haiti, however, both types of zombi are revered and feared. The spirit zombie is still considered the more powerful of the two, but does not operate in the same way as the West African *zombi*, *zumbi* or *nzambi*. Moreover, in twentieth century Haitian lore the corporeal zombi is a pitiful creature, deserving of sympathy and compassion rather than fear or scorn.\(^{105}\) Both types of zombi are -- by definition -- slaves, and neither has the autonomy or ability to create another zombi. How, then, did the powerful West African spirit zombi transform into the pathetic corporeal zombi of Haiti? As it turns out, the answer to that question has as much to do with France and the U.S. as it does with Africa and the Caribbean.

**The Birth of American Zombilore**

The term *zonbi* emerged as an element of Diasporic folklore, traveling to the "New World" along with the Dahomean slaves who were brought to Saint Domingue from West Africa.

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in the 16th and 17th centuries. How the African zombi was remembered and recounted by those early slaves remains uncertain, since such processes of remembrance took place primarily in the unrecorded folklore of illiterate people. The nature of oral history prevents us from reaching far enough into the past to glean an understanding of this lore, and colonialism's forced-illiteracy via limited education means that we have no written records of Haitian slaves' own accounts. Many scholars have tackled the problems of oral histories and the folklore of enslaved peoples, largely concluding that colonial systems of oppression in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries obstructed the documentation of slaves' oral histories apart from those recorded by colonialists, which are accordingly treated with a degree of skepticism due to the motivated biases of the writers. From our current historical perspective, then, we can only conjecture as to the reasons and processes by which the zombi took on new meaning for those enslaved by the French in Saint Domingue. What we do know is that throughout the Haitian Revolution surviving folk beliefs regarding zombis were transformed to suit the exigencies of the political moment. These folk beliefs are reflected in narrative lore surrounding the infamous insurrection, which were recorded primarily by white and Creole survivors of the Revolution and their descendents.

Marie Augustin's *Le Macandal* recounts the story of François Macandal, perhaps the first Haitian Maroon leader to be associated with the revolution in Saint Domingue, and provides

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108 Maroons (from the Latin American Spanish word cimarrón: "feral animal, fugitive, runaway") were African refugees who escaped from slavery in the Americas and formed independent settlements. The term can also be applied to their descendants.
insight into 18th century Haitian zombilore. This text was published locally in New Orleans in the late nineteenth century, in French. While it's extremely unlikely that any popular 20th century literary or filmic zombielore derived from Le Macandal, the text provides insight into the historical development of zombilore in Haiti prior to the Revolution. Marie Augustin came from a family of Saint Domingian refugees who settled in New Orleans after feeling the war-torn island, and her fictionalized account combines oral and written histories passed down through several generations of her family and friends. Augustin's forebears were plantation owners in Saint Domingue and lived there from at least the early eighteenth century, thus bearing witness to the incidents surrounding the life and death of François Macandal, who died in 1758 but is nonetheless associated with the uprising in 1791.

Augustin claims that Macandal was born in Madagascar or Zanzibar, although his alleged Muslim religiosity and fluency in Arabic have led other historians to speculate that he came from Senegal, Mali, or Guinea. As an escaped slave in Saint Domingue, Macandal earned a reputation for his knowledge of medicinal plants and herbs, and began performing Vodou rites with malicious intent (Augustin calls it "black magic") as early as 1750. Historians remember him as a subversive rebel who taught fellow slaves many processes for making and disguising poisons, encouraging them to kill their masters (along with other white and Creole Saint Dominguans). His plot was discovered after many slaveholders lost their lives, and Macandal was burned at the stake in 1758. Augustin's story picks up in 1791 when, as she claims,

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109 While some condensed versions can be found in online archives, a complete (albeit slightly damaged) copy can be found in the Louisiana Research Collection archive at Tulane University. (Toler and Archinard Collection, Box 1, Folders 1-4, and in the Augustin and Wogan Family Papers, Box1, Folders 12-17. Accessed 11 July 2014).
Macandal's "children" ignited the revolution when they performed an invocation ceremony, calling on their ancestors to aid them in a coming battle.\(^{112}\) Inspired by the French Revolution and the late Macandal's example, slaves throughout Saint Domingue began to revolt.\(^{113}\) In *Le Macandal*, Augustin implicates a serpent-god named Zambi in the worship-practices of these rebellious slaves, representing one of the earliest understandings of the term *zombi* in discourse about the Americas.\(^{114}\)

Marie Augustin creates two characters through whom Macandal lives on after his death: Wamba, his wife, and Dominique, his son. The former, a Vodou priestess, riles the assembled slaves who congregate on eve of the Revolution: “They have whipped you — you will whip them; they have burned you, you will burn them; they have made your blood flow, it is your turn now, oh my children! Macandal promised it to you, you will drink the blood of your torturers.” Later, Wamba performs necromancy and Zambi takes on human form. The text declares, "*Macandal -- revenu pour les libérer!"* ("Macandal -- returned for their freedom!"). While it is unclear if Augustin's description of the being is meant to be taken metaphorically or literally, it nevertheless suggests that this corporeal Zambi is in fact Macandal himself, resurrected from the

\(^{112}\) The text actually states 1793, but the historical events referred to therein took place in 1791.


\(^{114}\) Indeed, in many 18th and early 19th century US texts, *Zombi, Zambi, or The Great Zombi (Le Grand Zombi)* are used to refer to a powerful god and/or a serpent worshipped as a god in Voodoo rituals. Marie Laveau, New Orleans’s infamous "Voodoo Queen," was said to keep a pet snake named Zombi or Zambi; other accounts suggest the more-likely explanation that she called forth *Le Grand Zombi* on St. John’s Eve and induced him to possess a living snake, which she kept year-round as a sacred embodiment of her belief, not a pet. For more detailed discussions of Marie Laveau and the St. John’s Eve ceremonies, see: Robert Tallant, *Voodoo in New Orleans*, Reissue edition (Gretna, La: Pelican Publishing, 1984); Blake Touchstone, “‘Voodoo in New Orleans,’” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 13, no. 4 (October 1, 1972): 371–86; Martha Ward, *Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie Laveau* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2009); John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). More accounts of Marie Laveau and mentions of *Le Grand Zombi* can be found in the Louisiana Research Archive Collection at Tulane University.
dead to liberate his people. Macandal/Zambi then addresses his so-called children, warning of a 'great tempest' to come and issuing an imperative to persevere through the storm at all costs. While *Le Macandal* was not published until 1892, Augustin credits the narrative to her grandfather and great-grandfather, who lived in Saint Domingue until 1801 when they were forced to flee.¹¹⁵

If Marie Augustin's assertion that the corporeal-god Zambi was a resurrected form of François Macandal is taken literally and we accept her claim that these were the direct accounts of her ancestors, then *Le Macandal* can be understood as describing the first manifestation of corporeal-zombi lore in the Americas.¹¹⁶ Even without such credulity, many facets of Augustin's account square with those of other nineteenth century family historians who documented their ancestors' memories of the insurrection. Helene d'Aquin Allain, for instance, typed up her great-grandfather's journals from the 1790s, preserving details about a god or serpent named Zambi, as well as the story of a frightening slave who had "made a pact with the devil" and could not die. She also noted a curious folk belief held by white Saint Domingians that mere belief in zombis would actually protect one at night and/or in vulnerable situations by giving the believer courage and strength.¹¹⁷ Allain's great-grandfather also wrote about his father's experiences in Saint Domingue, including his witness of François Macandal's immolation in 1758. He laments that

¹¹⁵ *Le Macandal* and many of Augustin's family papers can be found in the Toler and Archinard Collection, Box 1, Folders 1-4, and in the Augustin and Wogan Family Papers, Box1, Folders 12-17; University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

¹¹⁶ Other mentions of "Zombi" can be found earlier than this (for example, Patrick Polk has identified the first use of the term 'zombi' by a European as the 1697 play *Le Zombi du Grand Perou de La Comtesse de Coragne* by Pierre-Corneille Blessebois), but they do not reflect the specific idea of a corporeal being, resurrected and rebellious. Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, 2010, 60.

¹¹⁷ Sadly, many of the Allain family journals were lost in a fire in the 1870s. According to her notes, Helene d'Aquin Allain was in the process of transcribing those journals when the fire occurred. Her memoir, *Souvenirs of America and France by a Creole*, combines that which she had already recorded and her memories of reading those papers and journals which were lost in the fire. (Helene d'Aquin Allain Memoires and Papers; University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.)
several of his male relatives were poisoned by Macandal, and although he never associates Macandal with the 1791 rebellion or the name Zambi -- at least not in the portions of his journal recorded for posterity by his great-great-granddaughter -- his experiences would seem to corroborate much of the folklore depicted in Augustin's *Le Macandal*. While these accounts and others like them may not have been formally published until the late nineteenth century, they are attributed to those writing before and during the Revolution. That would seem to indicate that they predate the earliest zombilore identified by most historians of Haiti,\(^{118}\) which is significant because it provides insight into the development of the legend in oral history.

A historian committed to provable facts might be reticent to accept Augustin's or Allain's work as authentic evidence of revolutionary perspectives since their narratives come to us filtered through decades of oral history and family memories, rendered in the literary prose of these educated women. As will be discussed further in this chapter, however, folklorists often have a different relationship to the idea of authenticity than do many historians because we so frequently deal with forms whose origins are unknown or unknowable. For example, we understand that pioneer folklorists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm augmented the stories they collected from the folk before publication so as to appeal to their literary audiences (continually editing and embellishing them through at least seven editions), but we readily accept that the published versions represent the oral narratives in question. Moreover, we know that those oral narratives circulated in Germany long before the Grimm brothers took it upon themselves to preserve them, and that they were consistently reimagined in both oral and literary traditions

before and after the Grimms. Despite the multiple existence and variation endemic to this corpus of lore, and despite the literary flourishes that shaped these tales long after they began circulating in the oral tradition, the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* is still appreciated as an index of popular German folk narrative in the nineteenth century. Without asserting the indisputable veracity of the Augustin and Allain accounts, then, we can still understand them as artifacts of oral history because they reflect their folkloric source material and, crucially, demonstrate that the ideas in question were circulating in the popular imagination.

Although Augustin admittedly took liberties with Macandal's story as she tried to give it a literary life, her description of the resurrected Maroon leader reflects her understanding of the historic events which catalyzed the Revolution. She imagines that this escaped slave, made famous for his mastery of African spiritual arts and executed for sharing that knowledge in an attempt to liberate his people, was resurrected decades later via a Vodou ceremony so that he could lead the insurrection. François Macandal was a real person, and the symbolic themes of his life and death clearly resonated with Augustin as she attempted to narrate the nascence of the Revolution. Her erroneous details about his birthplace and life in Africa suggest that she sought to exoticize Macandal, emphasizing his connections to Africa and to systems of spiritual knowledge unknown and potentially dangerous to non-Africans, thereby making him into an emblem of Black identity before colonialist intervention. Historic details about Macandal's subversive plots against white masters are thus represented in Augustin's text as consequences of this innate African-ness, and Macandal's particular use of medicinal folk knowledge as an anti-colonial weapon comes to cast Vodou as an inherently evil facet of African identity. The scene of Macandal's capture and immolation thus becomes a fantasy of colonial victory, as that which is most African and most threatening to white power is first contained and then extinguished.
The French conquer and kill the slaves' most powerful leader, affirming their own dominance and making the rebel's death an example of their colonialist imperative for Black Saint Dominguans to accept slavery or die. When Augustin suggests that Macandal was literally resurrected to incite the Revolution, then, she figuratively suggests that his immolation had been a baptism of fire: years later, it turns out that murdering a respected slave leader in a public display of colonial power had inadvertently ignited, rather than extinguished, anti-colonial fervor. Slaves continued to practice Vodou after Macandal's death despite sanctions against it, as evident in Augustin's assertion that Macandal's posthumous return was wrought through a Vodou ritual in the early 1790s. This detail in her text reflects folkloric and historic evidence that the Revolution officially commenced with a Vodou ceremony on the night of August 14, 1791, when ougan and Maroon leader Dutty Boukman led congregants in an invocation of the ancestor spirits, beseeching them to come to their descendants' aid. Macandal's resurrection a generation after his death thus symbolizes for Augustin the return of a powerful African identity, one that could be claimed by all of Macandal's 'children' at this pivotal historic moment, and the visceral threat that posed to colonial authorities.

Accounts of Macandal's life and death from both Augustin and Allain suggest that he was an important historic figure who was continually associated with the Haitian Revolution despite having died more than thirty years before it began. While Allain's descriptions of Macandal focused on his subversive actions and the deaths he caused within her family and their ancestral community, Augustin underscores the importance of Macandal's legacy in Saint Domingue by suggesting that he literally returned from death to incite the Revolution. Allain and Augustin

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both refer to Macandal as a "monster" multiple times in their texts for his defiance of the colonial order, but Augustin emphasizes this monstrosity by alleging that Vodou has the power to return people from the dead. Where Allain merely references the memory of Macandal when describing the early days of the uprising, Augustin squarely yokes the insurrection to necromancy and Macandal's physical resurrection. Despite its nineteenth century publication the narrative places this resurrection in 1791, which would seem to represent the earliest-attributed manifestation of a being resurrected through the power of Vodou (in other words, a corporeal zombi). In the case of _Le Macandal_, the earliest-dated description of a corporeal zombie is important because it indexes the moment at which a removed facet of African spirituality that had only survived through slaves' memories transformed into a tangible being, a visceral embodiment of their struggle for freedom.

The temporality of that moment, however, is complicated by the several aspects of _Le Macandal_ itself, from Augustin's literary embellishments to the nearly hundred year disparity between the events described and the novella's publication. So when -- exactly -- did this intangible memory of African folklore become a tangible embodiment of the struggle for freedom? This is a question at the heart of this dissertation, yet it has no satisfying answer. This pivotal moment cannot be understood solely as 1791 (or even simply as the Revolution) because Augustin's description of Macandal's resurrection was not published until the nineteenth century, and was evidently fictionalized to some extent in order to emphasize symbolic themes. Neither can the late nineteenth century be identified as the turning point, since Allain and Augustin's

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120 _Le Macandal_ is considered a work of fiction, despite being informed by the written and oral histories of white colonials who survived the Revolution. The fictional nature of the work is evident by virtue of the fact that the main characters, Macandal's wife Wamba and son Dominique, are not historical figures but literary inventions. While they were likely based in part on Dutty Boukman, there is no evidence to support the idea that Macandal's family was involved in the 1791 ceremony that incited the Revolution, or even that he had a wife and son.
narratives are set in the eighteenth century and the authors based their accounts on oral and written materials from that time. Both time periods, then, must be considered mutually constitutive of this turning point in the history of zombilore. The late nineteenth century perspectives of these women from the American South regarding the Haitian Revolution were almost certainly colored by their experiences witnessing slavery's demise in the U.S., yet in many ways they substantiate their claims to the veracity of their eighteenth century source material. This suggests that the conflation of Vodou with necromancy and revolt against white authority comes about through the imbrication of folklore from before, during, and after the Revolution. Taking Le Macandal as an index of that transformative moment in the meaning of the zombilore, then, we can understand Macandal's undeath as the multivalent embodiment of Afro-Caribbean and White/Creole perceptions of the Haitian Revolution's context and aftermath.

The real Macandal's immolation in 1758 has been remembered and preserved in various forms of Haitian folklore, paintings, and popular art. He has become a legendary figure in Haiti, especially insofar as the circumstances surrounding his capture and execution have taken on varied and supernatural explanations, including the possibility that he used magic to escape death (or at least to escape French authorities) on the date of his execution.\(^{121}\) Moreover, the literary remembrances and reconstructions of his role vis a vis the Revolution have not only kept his memory alive, but circumscribed it as a foundational aspect of both Haiti’s rise to nationhood and abolition itself. Macandal's undeath, then, need not be understood as a literal return from the grave. Rather, Macandal has become an undead figure through the folklore, literature, oral and written histories surrounding the Haitian Revolution. While in Haiti his memory took on legendary qualities that elevated him to the status of folk hero, in New Orleans white

\(^{121}\) Fick, *The Making of Haiti*. 
descendents of San Dominguan colonials remembered him as a monstrous figure who sought revenge for slavery. In both cases, his knowledge of African Vodun and medicinal botany led subsequent generations to cast him as a supernatural figure associated with Black liberation. Macandal's memory has not only survived through the years, then, but taken on new meanings for the different people who have narrated his story while grappling with their own history and what it means for them in the present. In a figurative sense, then, Macandal did not die in 1758. Through various forms of written and oral folklore, he has returned at certain historic moments -- often in violent form -- to trouble the waters of colonial memory. His after-life, or undeath, has thus assumed greater meaning and significance than either his life or his death ever could.

Jean Zombi

The descriptions of Macandal offered by Augustin and Allain suggest an early affiliation between the Haitian Revolution and the concept of undeath. The most significant zombilore of the Revolution, however, did not appear until the nineteenth century.\(^\text{122}\) A legend recorded in 1805 by Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry suggests that a revolutionary leader named Jean Zombi was in fact a resurrected ancestor spirit (or lwa) from Guinea.\(^\text{123}\) After Toussaint L'ouverture, the first leader of the Haitian Revolution, was deported to France (1802), his lieutenant Jean-Jacques Dessalines took up his mantel and led the Haitian army in revolt against the French. According to Moreau de Saint-Méry (and elaborated by historians such as Thomas


\(^\text{123}\) Saint-Méry was a Martiniquan who wrote about Saint Domingue and the Haitian Revolution. It should be noted that lore surrounding Jean Zombi often mentions that he came from either "Guinea" or "Guinee," which, while homonyms that derive from the same root-word, are not exactly the same place. "Guinea" refers to a physical territory in West Africa, perhaps even to the land as it existed before slavery, but nonetheless to a country defined by its national borders. "Guinee," by contrast, is a Kreyol term referencing a mythical Africa which does not correspond to any contemporary country or region. Additionally, another homonym -- "Ginen" -- is sometimes used to refer to an otherworldly space where the spirits of ancestors and demi-gods of the Vodou pantheon mingle before interacting with the living.
Madiou, Hénock Trouillot, and Joan Dayan), Jean Zombi emerged as a fearsome warrior who fought alongside Dessalines during the bloodiest and final battles of the revolution, and has been credited with killing more French soldiers than any other officer during the Haitian struggle for freedom. In November of 1803, the Haitian Revolution officially ended when the French forces were defeated at the battle of Vertières. The Republic of Haiti became an independent nation on January 1st, 1804, and remaining French colonists were forced to abandon their homes and property and leave the island. At the first stirrings of a Voodoo-inspired insurrection -- likely engendered in some part by Macandal's death -- in 1782 the U.S. had taken precautions to safeguard their plantocracy by banning the importation of slaves from the West Indies. The ban was lifted in 1803 to allow exiled French families to bring trustworthy slaves with them as they resettled in the U.S. By 1809, thousands of Saint Dominguan slaves had landed in New Orleans with their masters and integrated with local populations, thus bringing Vodou and zombilore to the United States.

"Born out of slavery…and revolution," as Dayan puts it, "the zombi tells the story of colonization." According to the Haitian legend, Jean Zombi was both a rebel slave and the corporeal embodiment of an ancestor-spirit or lwa, who avenged his people in a violent overthrow of the colonial power. Most of what we know about Jean Zombi comes from his legacy in modern Vodou practice, and suggests a more gradual beatification from human to divine being:

124 Dayan, 36.
125 A slave-based economy centered around plantations.
126 Edna Freiberg Papers, Boxes 12-13; University Archives, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. See also Robert Tallant, Voodoo in New Orleans, Gretna: LA, 1946, p.21. Freiberg also asserts that "by 1820 Voudou [sic] was firmly rooted in Louisiana."
The dispossession accomplished by slavery became the model for possession in vodou: for making a man not into a thing but into a spirit. In 1804, during Dessalines's massacre of the whites, Jean Zombi, a mulatto of Port-au-Prince, earned a reputation for brutality. Known to be one of the fiercest slaughterers, Madiou described his 'vile face,' 'red hair,' and 'wild eyes.' He would leave his house, wild with fury, stop a white, then strip him naked. In Madiou's words, he 'led him then to the steps of the government palace and thrust a dagger in his chest. This gesture horrified all the spectators, including Dessalines.'

Jean Zombi was also mentioned by Hénock Trouillot as one of the takos who had earlier threatened Dessalines in Plaisance. Variously reconstituted and adaptable to varying events, Zombi crystallizes the crossing not only of spirit and man in vodou practices but the intertwining of black and yellow, African and Creole in the struggle for independence.

When the legend (technically a rumor, at that point) actually began to circulate among Haitians cannot be pinpointed with accuracy since we only have one written account of it from the early nineteenth century; we also cannot know for whom this rumor was intended -- the colonizers or the colonized. Rumors about Jean Zombi may have circulated quietly among Black Haitians who, after years of fighting, needed to believe that their powerful African ancestors had (finally) come to their aid. Bolstered by the rumor, they may have been emboldened to fight more fiercely and with greater confidence in their eventual success during those final battles. Alternatively, the rumor may have developed as a deliberate attempt by Black Haitians to frighten enemy combatants, who might have been intimidated or less confident in their fighting abilities if they believed Dessalines had the power of the dead on his side. In either case -- or perhaps both -- the story of Jean Zombi was brought into being by members of an oppressed community who employed the power of rumor as a wartime strategy. The legend was subsequently kept alive by those (on both sides) who used the figure of Jean Zombi to narrate the terrible and terrifying colonial histories of Haiti and its Revolution. Lore surrounding Jean Zombi was thus constructed by both white colonialists and Black Haitians as two counter strategies in relation to colonialism.

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128 Madiou, Histoire d’Haïti.
In folklore studies, the difference between a legend and a rumor hinges on the fixity and endurance of the text.\footnote{While a complete analysis of legend and rumor scholarship is beyond the purview of this dissertation, many folklorists have undertaken these topics. Please see Linda Dégh, Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Gary Alan Fine and Patricia A. Turner, Whispers on the Color Line: Rumor and Race in America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Chip Heath, Veronique Campion-Vincent, and Gary A. Fine, eds., Rumor Mills: The Social Impact of Rumor and Legend (New York: Aldine Transaction, 2005); Jean-Bruno; Thomas Jeannie; Gottlieb, Richard; Ellis, Bill; Degh, Linda Renard, Folklore Forum: Legend Studies, ed. Greg Kelley, 1ST edition (Folklore Publications Group, 1991); Patricia A. Turner, I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture (University of California Press, 1993).}

Rumors are often inchoate and non-narrative in form, more structured than gossip but less carefully crafted than political rhetoric, and typically address present circumstances. Legends, by contrast, describe a series of specific details or sequence of events, often become fixed-texts over time, and address circumstances of the past. We have no direct access to the rumors regarding Jean Zombi that circulated orally during or immediately following the Revolution, but because the legend endures we can assume that it developed out of rumor. While difficult to address rumors of this age, when considering the figure of Jean Zombi it is important to try because rumors constitute an important means of cultural expression,\footnote{For further analysis of rumor as cultural expression, see one of the previously mentioned folklore texts or the work of historian Steven Hahn. For example, Hahn, Steven. "'Extravagant Expectations' of Freedom: Rumour, Political Struggle, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865 in the American South." Past and Present (1997): 122-158.} and Jean Zombi represents a far more perspicuous example of how ancestral memory and contemporary struggles for freedom were embodied by an undead revolutionary leader than did Augustin's Macandal. Whatever the specifics of the rumors surrounding Jean Zombi were, however, we can be certain that his characterization was born in slaves' inherited memories of African freedom, ancestor worship, and power. Rumors are, as Bryant Simon puts it, "a special form of speech," which allows the people spreading them to establish their own identity and the identities of others, thereby giving meaning to ambiguous information and actions.\footnote{Howard W. Odum, Race and Rumors of Race: The American South in the Early Forties (JHU Press, 1997), ix.} In the later years of the Revolution, how one understood or depicted the character of Jean Zombi -- as a hero
or a monster -- informed their understanding of the conflict and motivated their actions in battle. Scholars of rumor such as Gary Allen Fine and Patricia Turner have demonstrated how people from all social strata employ and respond to rumors as they make sense of current events,\textsuperscript{133} while ethnographer James Scott has argued that rumors become vehicles for anxieties and aspirations that may not be openly expressed.\textsuperscript{134} From his characterization in the legend texts, it's apparent that the figure of Jean Zombi reflected the slaves' desperate hopes for liberation as much as it did their fears of losing the war in which they were entrenched. For the French and Creole combatants, Jean Zombi represented the reverse fears and desires: the horror of a successful slave revolt (aided by forces beyond white understanding), and the hope that French forces could still quash the rebellion. Both sides, it would seem, credited some of their respective successes and failures to the intervention attributed to Jean Zombi. As the rumors migrated to the US, en route to becoming the stuff of legend, they followed a "rough map of social and psychological pressure points,"\textsuperscript{135} and Zombilore began to crystallize as something terrifying, powerful, and revolutionary.

The character of Jean Zombi, or rather, the fact that he is a character at all, challenges modern conceptions of the zombi(e) in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. Today, zombi(e)lore in all those places affirms the anonymous nature of the zombi(e), which could have been anyone in life and persists only as a mindless and inautonomous slave in death. Moreover, the threat of zombies usually stems from their plurality; it is never just one zombie that encroaches upon the living, but many, homogenous and non-sentient, and none of them an individual with the kind of personality or purpose embodied by Jean Zombi. Those details make

\textsuperscript{133} Fine and Turner, \textit{Whispers on the Color Line}.
\textsuperscript{134} Odum, \textit{Race and Rumors of Race}.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., ix.
Jean Zombi a legendary figure, whereas, in folkloristic terms, the zombi is primarily an element of folk belief with no one traditional narrative (myth, legend, or folktale) inherent to its existence. The folk belief in spirit zombis and/or Zambi as a god was documented in Africa and South America long before the Haitian Revolution began, and the folk beliefs regarding zombis astral and corps cadaver have been found to persist among certain contemporary African and Afro-Caribbean people who have no memory or knowledge of Jean Zombi. Thus, the legend of Jean Zombi that emerged during the Haitian Revolution belongs utterly to that geographical and temporal milieu, and cannot be seen as the foundational narrative for all zombielore. Despite that fact, the legend of Jean Zombi can be credited, in many ways, with inaugurating the tradition of zombielore in the United States.

In Haiti, Jean Zombi lost his corporeal form and became a revered lwa following the revolution, and is still honored (as Jan Zonbi) in sacred Vodou arts to this day. His legend, however, resurfaced in the U.S. just a few years after the Revolution, in 1806. French-speaking exiles from Haiti who made their homes in the southern states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida told the terrifying tale of Jean Zombi, a brutal Black warrior who fought on behalf of slaves and could not be killed -- because he was already dead. In some versions,

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136 In addition to Patrick Polk’s notes concerning Le Zombi of Grand Perou, in the late eighteenth century Samuel Coleridge wrote in the margin of his friend Robert Southey’s History of Brazil a brief passage about the Zambi, which he identified as an Angolan god and later clarified as the devil (Marina Warner. Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Other folklorists and historians have addressed pre-nineteenth century zombilore in Africa. See, for example, Luise White, Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa (University of California Press, 2000); Harold Courlander, A Treasury of Afro-American Folklore: The Oral Literature, Traditions, Recollections, Legends, Tales, Songs, Religious Beliefs, Customs, Sayings, and Humor of Peoples of African Descent in the Americas (Da Capo Press, 2002); Melville Jean Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007); Melville Jean Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (Beacon Press, 1990); Hurston, Tell My Horse; Davis, Passage of Darkness, 1988; Ackermann and Gauthier, “The Ways and Nature of the Zombi,” Autumn 1991.

137 Personal fieldwork in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Zambia, and Tanzania (2012) undertaken with support from a UCLA Travel Grant; lectures and personal conversations with Donald Cosentino and Patrick Polk at UCLA (2011-2013).

Jean Zombi was seen as more god-like than as a zombi in any contemporary sense, which follows more closely to Vodou epistemology given his recognition as a lwa. The nature of oral history and particularly of slaves’ oral histories prevents us from achieving a comprehensive understanding of how the Jean Zombi legend took shape in the United States. What is clear, however, is that this figure existed in the popular imagination as a supernatural being that arose from Haitian Vodou or "Black magic" and took on human form.

Despite such a fantastic conception amidst the Haitian uprising, the legend of Jean Zombi was lent a sense of verisimilitude in the U.S. precisely because of the racist thinking and dominant prejudices of southern whites: the outcome of the Revolution was nearly inconceivable to such audiences, so the legend was believable because they could only reckon the Haitians' victory in terms of an intervention made "by their Black gods." While the predominantly Christian slaveholders of the South might have been credulous that a monstrous being such as Jean Zombi could actually exist, the legend acquired a somewhat credible truth-value because it accounted for an otherwise unthinkable and unfaceable loss: that of white slaveholders to their own slaves. Blaming Voodoo or "Black magic" for the outcome of the Revolution might have actually ameliorated some of the threat that white slaveholders felt regarding the propensity of their slaves to rise up and revolt in their own revolutionary rebellion. Following the Revolution, many plantations forbid the congregation of slaves apart from masters so that no Black spiritual practice or other incendiary communal behavior might precipitate insurrection. In this case, the legend of Jean Zombi may have served as both a warning and a reassurance to white slaveholders, suggesting that such measures were enough to keep the "Black gods" at bay while still insisting on their necessity.
American Zombi(s)

In the United States the legend of Jean Zombi probably gave rise to the character known simply as Zombi, who began appearing in various forms of folklore throughout the south in the decades following the Haitian Revolution. As Ann Kordas asserts, "Zombi was the name attributed to the leader of various pre-nineteenth-century, non-American slave revolts. The date and location of these revolts differed (and it is unclear if a rebellious slave named Zombi ever actually existed or was simply a folk hero created by unfree African laborers), but the character of Zombi remained the same." Rumors of Zombi and, eventually, zombis, gained momentum after Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, and continued to manifest throughout the Civil War. In some abolitionist publications, Zombi was described as a freed Black man who visited southern plantations in the night, sowing insurrection and helping slaves escape via the underground railroad. While there is no indication that Zombi was considered a supernatural being in those northern accounts, the stories sometimes mentioned mysterious protection charms given to escaping slaves by the benevolent Zombi, which would seem to indicate some affiliation with Vodou (though not by that name). In the South, similar rumors about a rebellious slave named Zombi accompanied stories of the 1831 uprising, and the association of Zombi with 'Black gods' probably helped justify the strict enforcement of prohibition against African American religious practice. Even Christianity was forbidden among slaves on many

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140 The term "zombies" appears in an early dictionary of American folk speech which claims it was in common usage in the "Southern States" during and after the Civil War (Maximilian Schele de Vere, *Americanisms: The English of the New World* (C. Scribner & company, 1860, 1872), 138.) The term will be further discussed later in this chapter.

141 Kordas, 18.

142 Kordas, 19.
plantations, as it was thought that any kind of spiritual communion created an opportunity for the congregation to organize and plot their rebellion or escape (as it had with Nat Turner).

The relationship between Haiti's Jean Zombi and the U.S.'s Zombi remains somewhat ambiguous despite strong similarities between their characterizations and their coincident appearance in oral folklore following the arrival of Saint Dominguan exiles in the U.S. While some French accounts of the insurrection forthrightly credit a slave named Jean Zombi with a leadership role in the Revolution, Jean Zombi did not appear in any English-language publications of the nineteenth century.\(^\text{143}\) Zombi, on the other hand, was known to some Americans as a rebellious slave who aided others in their quests to escape bondage. Although it is unclear whether the story was meant to be taken as fiction or non-fiction, "Extracts from the Modern Traveler" describes a seventeenth-century slave rebellion in Pernambuco, Brazil, detailing the exploits of a heroic figure named Zombi who led a group of fellow slaves out of captivity.\(^\text{144}\) The story was popular enough in the early nineteenth century for abbreviated forms to be published in newspapers such as Wisconsin's *American Freeman* (1845) and Tennessee's *The Emancipator* (1831).\(^\text{145}\) In this narrative, Zombi and his fellow subversive slaves escape from their Portuguese masters and found their own "black kingdom in the New World," an idea which in the early nineteenth century would have resonated with those aware of Haiti's efforts towards nationhood.

Zombi's followers, readers learn in the *American Freeman* version of the tale, built a city which "possessed a certain degree of magnificence" and consecrated Zombi as their "elective

\(^{143}\) Rhodes, *White Zombie*, 75.
\(^{144}\) Kordas, “New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies: The Historical Development of the Zombie in American Popular Culture.”
\(^{145}\) Ibid.
monarch. " The newspaper compares Zombi's disciples to "the founders of Rome" because -- like the earliest Romans who kidnapped Sabine women for their wives -- the rebel slaves wed women they had abducted from Portuguese estates. However, the Wisconsin paper anticipated the potential for such a claim to alienate otherwise sympathetic white readers who might be averse to the thought of miscegenation, and specified that Zombi's men raided "the neighboring plantations for every woman of color." The cultural material of zombilore thus assumed values specific to the location in which it was circulating, in this case the values of burgeoning abolitionists who were still skeptical about the prognostics of racial integration.

According to the newspaper, these self-liberated slaves died bravely and righteously. When the Portuguese eventually succeeded in recapturing their capital, Zombi and his followers hurled "themselves down the rocky side of the fort," choosing to kill themselves rather than risk re-enslavement. To emphasize Zombi's noble nature, the newspaper report ended by acknowledging that "had their success been equal to their bravery, their right to make slaves of the whites would have been...as good as that which the Portuguese had to enslave them." As with the legend of Jean Zombi, the underlying threat of Black revenge in the form of white slavery permeates the text, imbuing it with a sense of horror that stems from its believability. Unlike Jean Zombi, however, this may be the among the first examples of American zombielore in which miscegenation is figured as a potent threat associated with end of slavery. This seems to indicate that the fear of miscegenation was a uniquely American concern, or at least that that issue was more important to American audiences than it was to French or Haitian ones. While U.S. interest in the Brazilian Zombi was eventually replaced by stories about a Black American

\[146\text{ Ibid.}
147\text{ Ibid.}
148\text{ Ibid.}
149\text{ Ibid.} \]
folk hero named Zombi, the themes of miscegenation and white slavery continued to haunt American zombielore throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Alongside various other narratives, as indicated above, the Brazilian Zombi probably helped inspire the U.S. Zombi, though both Zombi traditions seem to dovetail with that of Jean Zombi and his role in the Haitian Revolution. After all, in the U.S. Zombi was figured both as a foreign revolutionary working against European forces and as a local rebel helping liberate slaves from American plantations. Yet while French written accounts of the Saint Dominguan insurrection and its aftermath included the legend of Jean Zombi, Kordas still argues that it is "unclear whether Jean Zombi was ever conflated with Zombi" in the United States. Given the striking thematic similarities in the lore, however, significant connections can be plotted between the two folkloric traditions. Both Jean Zombi and the U.S. Zombi were depicted as free Black men dedicated to the cause of liberating African peoples from bondage. Both had "come back" from a place of freedom -- Guinea, the northern states -- in order to help their enslaved brethren. Both were associated with Vodou (or Voodoo) and perceived to have supernatural abilities or knowledge. Both psychically and physically aided slaves escaping or overthrowing their masters by giving them the idea to do so and then literally helping them achieve that aim though violence and subterfuge. And both were rumored to exist but never confirmed to be actual, living beings. While Kordas seems reluctant to claim a definitive relationship between the two figures, there is sufficient similarity between the these rumors and legends to suggest that they were not simply polygenetic folkloric traditions (in which similar narratives emerge independently of one another, such as with mythological flood stories). Moreover, the fact that Zombi folklore became more prolific after that rebellion and leading up to the Civil War

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suggests that zombielore in nineteenth century American culture was very much tied to anxieties concerning the stability of their slave system. Both Zombi and Jean Zombi, then, operated as anti-colonial revolutionaries and folk heroes in their respective hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses.

In any case, by 1872 both Zombi and Jean Zombi had fallen out of popular discourse and their distinction as individuals was suffused amidst a growing body of lore concerning monstrous beings and Afro-Caribbean spirituality. The term *zombies*, lowercase and plural with an "e", appeared first in a dictionary of Americanisms and was defined as a "negro being," "not unlike a ghost," but with the power and prerogative to steal white children from their nurseries. The brief dictionary description notes that these "phantoms" were known primarily to the negroes or servants, who warned that they would kidnap white babies when no one was looking. This definition becomes especially interesting when considering the fantasies of miscegenation encoded within much early Voodoo-zombie cinema, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Those later narratives concerning miscegenation reveal an irrational fear that biracial progeny will eventually lead to the extermination of the white race. This early definition of zombies can be seen as a precursor to that lore because, if we think in terms of metaphor, the white children -- which are the future of the white race -- were being "stolen" by Black male monsters. In other words, undead supernatural beings who were also Black men threatened not only white supremacy, but the continuity of whiteness itself. This theme repeats in multiple works that will be addressed in the following pages, including literature such as H. P. Lovecraft's *Cthulhu Mythos* series and films such as *Black Moon* (1931) and *White Zombie* (1932).

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151 Schele de Vere, 138.
While Haiti declared its independence in 1804, the U.S. refused to acknowledge its nationhood until after the Civil War ended, and it wasn't until 1884 that the first discussion of Haitian spiritual practice (then called "Vaudoux") appeared in U.S. literature outside of Louisiana.\footnote{Sir Spenser St John, \textit{Hayti; Or, The Black Republic} (Smith, Elder, 1884). St. John's contribution to Haitian ethnography will be discussed in the next section.} While there are many archival sources from the early nineteenth century -- family papers, diaries, and memoires -- that suggest a strong interest in Voodoo in and around New Orleans, none of these accounts were published or made available to the public in any form other than word-of-mouth, which limited circulation of the lore to Louisiana and select plantations in neighboring states.\footnote{In 1877 Lafcadio Hearn did write about "Voodoo" in New Orleans; however, his work was not widely published until the late 1890s. Hearn also authored "The Country of the Comers Back," a sensational travelogue about his brief stay in Haiti in the 1880s, published in 1901. None of these materials address zombis or zombies by name, however, though they may occasionally allude to mysterious or spiritual beings conjured by practitioners of an Afro-Caribbean spiritual tradition. Hearn's work will be discussed in the next section.} For eighty years, then, zombielore in the greater U.S. developed independent of any popular knowledge of Haitian Vodou or zombification processes, and can most convincingly be interpreted as a series of phylogenic variations on the Jean Zombi theme. Even so, the hagiographic recognition of Jean Zombi as a champion for enslaved Black people can only be found in the Haitian legend as recorded by St. Mery, or possibly gleaned from oppositional readings of Zombi folklore in the U.S. that would interpret the character as a hero rather than as a monstrous miscreant. The dominant reading of this lore, then, suggests that zombilore in the U.S. developed primarily as a means for whites to warn each other about potential dangers associated with Black people and their freedom. Since the stories popularized in the U.S. came directly from the former colonizers of Haiti and transformed in the imaginations of white southerners to reflect their own ideology, for most of the nineteenth century the narrative trajectory and implied meaning of the zombie was controlled almost entirely by a white
hegemonic power that sought to maintain the status quo of Black subjugation and white supremacy.

Haitian Ethnography and Gothic Fiction

To this point I have illustrated how three intangible-folklore genres -- African folk belief, Haitian legend, and American rumor -- collaborated in the development of zombielore and its first manifestations in U.S. popular culture. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, written forms such as travel writing, ethnography and literary fiction propelled the figure to its prominent place in U.S. consciousness. While Lafcadio Hearn wrote about Voodoo during his time in New Orleans (1877-1880), it was with Spencer St. John's sensational *Hayti, or the Black Republic* (1884) that literal "bodies raised from the dead" through the power of "Vaudoux" were widely introduced to American audiences. St. John served as the British chargé d'affaires of Haiti beginning in 1863, and his account of his time there is filled with chagrinned fascination and condescending incredulity at the nation's ability to self-govern. He wrote with disgust about Vaudoux rituals that involved the sacrifice of animals, hypothesizing (incorrectly) that human sacrifices were also common. His lurid imagination of human sacrifice was made all the more sensational by his inclusion of a local folk belief in the ability of Vaudoux priests ("houngans" or "bokors") to resurrect a body after death. This

155 Sir Spenser St John, *Hayti; or, The Black Republic* (Smith, Elder, 1884), 205-19.
156 Contemporary Kreyol spellings would be *ougans* and *bokos*, and, of course, *Vodou*.
157 Notably, after St. John's text gained wider circulation, some Black individuals in Louisiana claimed to have this power. Well publicized cases included that of Dr. Antonio Dicano (not actually a doctor), who claimed to have the power of resurrection but denied his involvement in Voodoo when questioned at trial; and self-proclaimed Voodoo queen Bertha Bernard, who was fined $15 for practicing Voodoo and attempting necromancy after she accepted
brief mention was the first *ethnographic* reference to beings that were simultaneously animate and deceased -- undead -- and was made by a person with the reasonable credibility to justify such a claim. It was also the first published mention of such beings that can firmly be identified as nonfictional and non-metaphoric.

Although St. John never called these resurrected bodies zombies, the very notion of such undead creatures struck a chord with U.S. audiences who had already been introduced to the concept undeath in a postcolonial context through popular fiction literature of the day. By undeath here I refer to the uncanny juxtaposition of life and death contained in a single body, as with ghosts, vampires, revenants, Frankenstein's monster, et al. In the nineteenth century these undead creatures fascinated literary audiences who were used to more traditional character types, in part because they collapsed seemingly contradictory elements of ipseity beyond simply living and dead -- they were human but inhuman, natural but supernatural, imaginary but real. 'Doubling' is considered a hallmark of the Gothic genre and one of its primary strategies because the paradoxical union of oppositional elements unsettles the reader, producing a sense of anxiety or disquietude.\(^{158}\) As will be discussed in this section, the Gothic undead also seem to reflect growing concerns about the insecurity of race and class as privileging facets of identity at a time when wealthy white men were seeing their power routinely challenged by class uprisings (in Europe) and slave revolts (in the Americas). Indeed, Gothic literature evinces a strong preoccupation with postcolonial notions of identity, and, specifically, the dangers perceived to be lurking around the corners of colonialism's demise. Marked by the combination of romantic and horrific tropes, Gothic fictions unsettle comfortable binarisms between here and there, past and

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present, self and Other. The genre is typically associated first and foremost with nineteenth century British literature, in which England's colonized subjects literally or symbolically invade the homeland and challenge the boundaries of colonial authority.\(^{159}\)

British Gothic novels such as *Zofloya or the Moor* (1806), *Frankenstein* (1818, 1831), *The Vampyre* (1819), *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and *Dracula* (1897) have recently been analyzed by postcolonial theorists as being heavily influenced by the Haitian Revolution, and as each dealing with, in their own ways, the topic a racialized, undead monster. Jack (nee Judith) Halberstam's influential book *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* analyzes classic works of Gothic fiction to argue that monsters are cultural manifestations which themselves address fears and desires concerning "foreign bodies," and that the body of the monster, in turn, becomes a technology of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. Taking a different approach, Tabish Khair traces the postcolonial lineage of Gothic fiction in his book *The Gothic, Postcolonialism, and Otherness* to identify strong linkages between postcoloniality and the rise of Gothic fiction in Britain. Similar to Halberstam, Khair identifies the threatening presence of a foreign Other as an essential facet of Gothic discourse. He focuses on nineteenth century texts set in both Britain and the ex-colonies, particularly the Caribbean, arguing that there is an inherent affiliation between British postcolonial anxiety and the formation of the Gothic as a literary genre. To address the relationship between postcolonialism and Gothicism in the United States, however, Justin Edwards explores Southern Gothic fiction and its affiliation with race-based anxieties of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in *Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic*. He argues that major themes of the Gothic -- including issues surrounding the

threatening Other and postcolonial anxiety illuminated by Halberstam and Khair -- transform in an American context and become explicitly about white-Black race relations in the wake of emancipation. Other scholars such as Ruth Bienstock Anolik, Douglas Howard, Eugenia DeLamotte, Steven Schneider, Soledad Caballero, Stephanie Burley, and Erik Marshall have taken interest in specific works of Gothic fiction and have charted their histories, themes, and cultural resonances through the lens of postcolonial studies. In different ways, all of these authors argue that the popularity of Gothic fiction in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflects widespread cultural attention to the consequences of colonialism, invariably recognizing the undead monsters at the center of these tales as expressions of an epistemological breakdown in the Western understanding of self and Other.

The Haitian Revolution was a major catalyst for the production of Gothic literature, and one of the most seminal texts in this genre is Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya, or the Moor, which influenced writers such as Percy B. Shelley, Mary Shelley, and Bram Stoker. Published in 1806, two years after Haiti declared its nationhood, Zofloya gives no credit to the earlier work of Caribbean fiction that it reimagines. Jean-Baptiste Picquenard's Zoflora; ou la bonne négresse (1804), itself adapted from an earlier text (1697), takes place before and during Haiti's revolution and follows the life of a persecuted Creole slave. Dacre's 1806 adaptation transforms the abused Haitian slave-girl, Zoflora, into the abusive former slave, Zofloya. Like his contemporaries Macandal and Jean Zombi, Zofloya seeks revenge for the crimes wrought against his people during slavery. His story anticipates many of the fears that find expression in later

zombie narratives; Zofloya is a Black man -- a former slave -- with murderous designs on his white master and miscegenetic desires for his white mistress. In "The Death of Zofloya, or The Moor as Epistemological Limit", Stephanie Burley identifies a Gothic danger emanating from the figure of the Moorish slave as the danger of powerful knowledge, appropriated by a racial and social subordinate.\textsuperscript{163} Although Darce's text makes no direct reference to Voodoo or even Black magic, this absence is conspicuous given its prominence in the Picquenard text from which Darce drew her inspiration.\textsuperscript{164} Zofloya enjoyed great popularity in England, and its themes reverberate in later works of Gothic fiction which reached a wide literary audience in the U.S.

Though the Haitian Revolution may not have been directly referenced in the texts themselves, when viewed through a postcolonial lens key works of nineteenth century English literature appear littered with related themes such as monstrosity, Otherness, and miscegenation. For example, several scholars have illuminated how Mary Shelley's \textit{Frankenstein} was inspired partly by the Haitian Revolution,\textsuperscript{165} and was even modified for its second printing to make themes of miscegenation and racial hierarchies clearer to European audiences.\textsuperscript{166} Halberstam, Khair, and Anolik identify in Frankenstein's monster the figure of the West Indian slave, seeing

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{163} Anolik and Howard, \textit{The Gothic Other}, 2004, 9, 197–212.
\textsuperscript{164} Much more could be said here about genealogies of Gothic fiction. As Eugenia DeLemotte points out in "White Terror, Black Dreams," Zofloya seems to engage directly with William Shakespeare's \textit{Othello} and \textit{The Tempest}. As she puts it, "A story about a Moor set in Venice in the Renaissance can hardly fail to evoke [Shakespeare's plays], so the treatment of racial difference here in an early Gothic work is especially interesting as an index of what has changed, and not changed, since the Renaissance in terms of racial theory. In this regard it is interesting to think about the conscious grounding of much late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Gothic in the literature of the Renaissance, which -- because it was the period of the Encounter -- is the other great turning point in the history of modern racial formation" (in Anolik, \textit{The Gothic Other}, 29). Since Zofloya is both continuing a Shakespearean tradition of racial representation and appropriating the circumstances and plot of a Caribbean novel, its influence on subsequent works of Gothic fiction suggests that they, too, are engaged with this history.
\textsuperscript{166} For instance, the second edition changed Elizabeth's hair color from brown to blonde and her eyes from hazel to blue, and noted that her mother was German (a stereotypical European, Teutonic beauty). Malchow, \textit{Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain}, 25; Khair, \textit{The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness}, 2009, 90.
\end{quote}
the undead creature's "life" as the gift of Western civilization, his crimes as indicative of his true "savage" nature, and reading the whole work as a meditation on the consequences of attempting to civilize racial Others.\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Jane Eyre} has been read by the same theorists as a postcolonial text that circumscribes West Indian identity as monstrous, noting that the Creole Madwoman in the attic "is narrated indirectly or directly as a revenant and vampire: a matter made evident in early illustrations…depicting a large, racially foreign, manly woman, with distorted features and big teeth, gazing at a sleeping and virginal Jane."\textsuperscript{168}

Later in the century, Gothic literature continued to explore the nature of race and the impact of contact with racial Others on white notions of selfhood. \textit{The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde} interrogated the meaning of race beyond a lexical notion of skin color, and suggested the potential capacity of racial otherness to infiltrate the white body. Mr. Hyde, whose very name bears multiple puns on skin color and the notion of concealing a true identity or "passing," is widely agreed to be a racial stereotype fixing "sexual and racial difference within a body which combines horrific effect with Semitic and African [Negroid] features."\textsuperscript{169} Finally, \textit{Dracula} is likely the most widely theorized of all postcolonial Gothic novels of the nineteenth century. Diverse analytical arguments agree that he represents an amalgam of social stereotypes perceived to be threatening Europeans in the nineteenth century, casting him alternately as a usurious Jewish lender, a degenerate Irish parasite, a cruel tyrant of the aristocracy, and a rapacious sexual predator. As Gothic historian Howard Malchow argues, the fear of a racial or cultural other is buried throughout the entire genre of English Gothic horror.\textsuperscript{170}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{168}Khair, \textit{The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness}, 2009, 60.
\item \textsuperscript{169}Halberstam, \textit{Skin Shows}, 1995, 82.
\item \textsuperscript{170}Malchow, \textit{Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain}.
\end{itemize}
While Gothic literature was captivating literary audiences around the world, the scientific discourse of Anthropology was developing into a field unto itself and introducing diverse readers to the concept of ethnography. In the early days of ethnography, however, there were few to no controls in place to help readers distinguish between objective information and the creative embellishments often associated with travel writing. Although no one is likely to have confused a Gothic novel for an ethnography, the nascence of Anthropology meant that travel writers and diarists could easily make claims about the authenticity of their texts without being questioned, and fact could easily blend with fiction in the description of Other people and places. For the literate consumers of Spencer St. John's account at the end of the nineteenth century, his depiction of Haiti's animate dead would have seemed at home with the literary renderings of similar monsters in the postcolonial Gothic fictions described above. The difference, however, was that St. John's descriptions came from a supposedly ethnographic perspective and were presented as fact rather than fiction. So while the Gothic, racialized, undead monster was enjoying popularity as a literary trope in the U.S. and Britain, St. John's *Hayti* proposed that such a being could and did exist beyond the bounds of imagination, in the real world. Thus, the undead beings of Haitian folklore and U.S. fantasy became, in the minds of many Americans, the first "authentic" monsters.  

**Authenticity**

In her landmark book *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Regina Bendix demonstrates how the pursuit of so-called authenticity was a driving force behind

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171 Marina Levina, personal communication throughout the period in which I was her Graduate Student Researcher at the University of California, Berkeley (2009). She also addresses the topic in her recent book, *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).
both folklore and folklore scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In her analysis, the turn of the twentieth century saw an academic and popular obsession with the "discovery" of other peoples and their cultural forms, and the exotic item (or idea) which could unequivocally be deemed "authentic" held particular value. The discipline of Folklore ('Volkskunde' in Germany and 'Ethnology' in other parts of Europe) grew up alongside Anthropology in the U.S., and subscribed to many of the same primitivist and evolutionary theories of white racial superiority. Taking aesthetic cultural forms as their unique objects of study, folklorists were keen to prove the authenticity of an item in order to justify their treatment of it through the lens of this newly-minted "scientific" discourse. St. John's assertions about the supernatural elements of Haitian folk life likely excited folklorists who were eager to explore the issue further. However, St. John's writing about Haiti had contributed to a popular understanding of the country as a place that was not only unsafe but outwardly hostile to white people, and folklorists largely contented themselves to study St. John's *Hayti* and glean what they could about Haitian lore from his accounts.

The public hungered for more, however, and in 1899 press baron Cyril Arthur Pearson hired the science-fiction writer and self-proclaimed adventurer Hesketh Prichard to travel across Haiti and write about his experiences for an eager American audience. Prichard's *Where Black Rules White: A Journey Across and About Hayti* was published first as a series of articles in the *Daily Express*, and armchair-folklorists and science fiction aficionados quickly picked up on the

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172 Prichard was a known associate of Arthur Conan Doyle and J.M. Barrie, and he became famous in the publishing world for his dramatic and harrowing ghost stories. Though Pearson had published many of Prichard's ghost stories in his *Pearson's Magazine*, Pearson chose Prichard for this "exploration" of Haiti precisely because he wanted something fantastic and lurid to launch his forthcoming *Daily Express*. Parker, Eric. *Hesketh Prichard*. pp. 36–50.
sensational depictions of "Vaudoux" and Prichard's supposedly authentic illustrations of its "secret rites and rituals."\textsuperscript{173}

In her treatment of folklore scholarship at the turn of the century, Bendix emphasizes how "processes of authentication bring about material representations by elevating the authenticated into the category of the noteworthy."\textsuperscript{174} Authenticating discourse about the existence of undead beings of the sort found in non-fictional travel writing, ethnography, and newspapers piqued the interest of curious American audiences, bringing about "material representations" of the creatures in fiction literature and, eventually, film. While corporeal Gothic monsters such as vampires and revenants may have frightened literary audiences of the past, those creatures were lumped together with their ethereal literary brethren -- ghosts -- and as such were dismissed as objects of fantasy and literary invention. By contrast, the corporealization of undead beings in Haiti as reported by the reputable government official Spencer St. John was neither literary nor metaphoric, and could not easily be dismissed as an item of superstitious folklore nor disregarded as mere fantasy. Moreover, their alleged corporeality -- as opposed to the intangibility of a spirit or phantom (as zombie had been defined previously) -- seemed to corroborate the veracity of St. John's claims, who did not appear to be drawing on extant folklore when he made his report. Thus his description of life in Haiti not only verified the real-life existence of supernatural beings, it galvanized growing suspicions and distrust concerning Black (non-Christian) spiritual practices in the U.S. In other words, Haiti's (purported) animate dead became noteworthy because they were seen to be authentic, and that noteworthiness catapulted them to a prominent place in the U.S. imaginary of Afro-Caribbean race, nation, and religion. Vaudoux (Vodou) became an object of fascination for folklorists and

\textsuperscript{174} Bendix, \textit{In Search of Authenticity}, 7.
fiction writers alike, and while no one yet had called the raised-dead by the name zombie, the idea that such supernatural beings might actually exist -- as authentic monsters -- permeated U.S. discourse about Haiti.

These non-fiction accounts of Haitian life and lore inspired Lafcadio Hearn to resume his study of Voodoo in a more "authentic" locale. He spent several weeks in the French West Indies working on his non-fiction novella, *The Country of the Comers Back* (1901), which explored belief in zombification, mainly on the isle of Martinique. While not technically set in Haiti, Hearn's novella was the first U.S. literature to ascribe the name zombie to the pathetic, undead creatures of Haitian lore. Hearn is widely credited with popularizing the term and promoting the figures as authentic beings that could be found in Black communities, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean but also (by extension) in New Orleans, where Hearn's folkloric interest in Voodoo began. Zombies soon became popular topics for writers of "niche fiction" such as ghost stories and other horror literature, the idea of the authentic monster being at the heart of all these tales of terror.

The burgeoning fields of Folklore and Anthropology in the early twentieth century ran parallel to the rise of science fiction in the same era, and stories published in serial magazines such as the *Daily Express* (1900-2011) and *Weird Tales* (1923-1954) reflected the influence of

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175 Many zombie scholars cite this text as having been published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1889. I have been through all the back issues of both *Harper's* and *Harper's Monthly* from 1888-1890, however, and while Hearn did publish some stories on Martinique and the French West Indies none of them are titled "The Country of the Comers Back" nor do they feature zombies. Sources that claim the original publication date was 1889 -- including the "official" republication from 2011 -- also incorrectly assert that the novella is set on "the island of Mozambique," which is of course neither an island nor in the French West Indies (where Hearn's tale unfolds). I therefore provide the date 1901 because that is the first date for which I can confirm publication, albeit by a London press. However, if it were to be discovered that Hearn actually did publish *The Country of the Comers Back* in the U.S. circa 1889, that would suggest that Hesketh Prichard was likely aware of the term "zombie" at the time of his voyage to Haiti in 1889, making his omission of the word all the more suspect.

(supposedly) anthropological accounts describing "authentic" encounters with non-Western Others. This relationship between ethnographic and fiction writing about Haiti (or Voodoo) may have been inevitable, as Bernard McGrane explains:

By the nineteenth century 'anthropology' became, to a large degree, a discursive practice whose systematic administrative function was to maintain belief in the existence of exotic and alien worlds without fusing the alien with our world. It became exactly, in this respect, terrestrial science fiction… There is a great similarity, from an archaeological perspective, between what we term modern 'anthropological discourse' and what we term modern 'science fiction': for with the non-European Other as with aliens-from-other-planets, what is significant is not whether such beings exist or not, but, rather, the fact that they are conceivable.177

When zombies became conceivable as literal, authentic monsters, they took hold of the American imagination because they uniquely symbolized and therefore justified a racist imaginary of African peoples that had been developing for three centuries. As McGrane outlines in his preface, thinking about Otherness in popular discourse began with racialized "demonology" in the literature and theatre of the Renaissance, continued through Enlightenment epistemologies of racial difference reckoned in terms of monstrosity and grotesque corporeality, and crystallized in the primitivist anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The creative travelogues of writers like Hearn, St. John, and Prichard were mistaken by many sci-fi authors for anthropological ethnographies,178 and they, along with William Seabrook’s equally problematic and even more sensational The Magic Island (1929)179 (discussed in the following chapter), inspired the earliest cinematic depictions of the racialized undead.

177 Bernard McGrane, Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other (Columbia University Press, 1989), 3 emphasis his.
178 Annalee Newitz, Pretend We’re Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture (Duke University Press, 2006), 91-103.
The tenuous relationship between ethnography and fiction in the early twentieth century was one of inspiration and exchange. When considering Bendix's theorization of authenticity as a driving force in folklore and folklore scholarship, it's important to remember that the most well-known zombie narratives -- from this historical period up until the present day -- are not produced by the folk group that actually practices Vodou or believes in zombification, but rather by those who have studied or experienced Haitian culture only proximately. This distance produces an inevitable fissure: the scholar's folklore versus the folk's reality. Folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett addresses this schism, revealing how "folklore is not only a disciplinary subject and a disciplinary formation (we use one and the same term for both), but also a mode of cultural production... folklorists produce folklore through a process of identification and designation."\textsuperscript{180} The work of other prominent folklorists such as Alan Dundes, Linda Dégh, Robert Georges and Steven Zeitlin affirms Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's argument that Folklore as an academic subject depends upon a given object of study being authenticated as folklore by a practicing folklorist.\textsuperscript{181} If we understand folklore as a means of cultural production, then by identifying and designating certain items as folklore and others as not-folklore, the folklorist is in a curious position of power as an arbiter of cultural production and, in a sense, as an authenticator of culture, cultural values, and cultural forms. That is not to say that folklore would


\textsuperscript{181} The problematic nature of "authenticity" as a defining attribute of folklore was brought to light first in the 1960s by Alan Dundes, whose emblematic declaration that, "We are the folk!" changed the nature of folklore scholarship forever. Those four words challenged conventional folkloristics which, at the time, held folklore to be the province of those who were poor, illiterate, uncivilized or underclass, and studied with the academic distance of primitivist anthropology. Dundes' declaration challenged folklorists to recognize that all human beings create folklore, and that therefore 'folklore' cannot be understood as something distinct from the modern, contemporary life of educated, Western people. Dozens of folklorists took their cue from Dundes' influential work, instigating what some academic folklorists have called the "Folklore Revolution" of the 1960s-70s (for example, Charles Briggs, who controversially succeeded Dundes as head of the Folklore program at UC Berkeley, teaches an entire unit called "The Folklore Revolution" in his undergraduate and graduate Folklore courses). Despite Dundes' discipline-shaking revelation, a stubborn reluctance to abandon authenticity as a guiding framework for defining folklore held through the 1990s, prompting Bendix to publish In Search of Authenticity in 1997.
not exist without the folklorist -- of course it does -- but that the study of folklore as a form of culture depends on the principle of authenticity, however problematic that principle may be. In the early twentieth century, the authentication of an item of lore through documentation affirmed its status as an extant cultural form for both lay people and for the professional folklorist who might wish to take such an item as their object of study. Those who recorded such forms for posterity, then, produced culture through their twin processes of documentation and authentication.

Although neither ethnographers nor folklorists, the writers who traveled to Haiti nonetheless documented -- albeit in dubious form -- the living cultural system that exists there. In doing so, they made the zombie into a thing of folklore, rather than simply affirming its existence as an aspect of Haitian folklife.\textsuperscript{182} If we extend Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's understanding of folklore as a mode of cultural production to these nonfictional accounts of zombies, then zombielore itself appears to be a mode of cultural production in the early twentieth century. What it produces has as much or more to do with the U.S. national imaginary as it does with Haitian folklore or folklife, encapsulating American values, attitudes and beliefs concerning race and racial polemics in dominant understandings of U.S. nationhood and national identity. It cannot be denied that these works of 'ethnographic' fiction played a role in the earliest cinematic productions. For instance, Biograph's \textit{Hallowe'en in Coontown} (1897) was one of the earliest short films ever made, and featured white people in blackface wandering through graveyards and castles while dressed as undead beings such as skeletons and ghosts. The 68mm silent film ran for only a few minutes in a 1:36 aspect ratio, and was produced by the American Mutoscope Company. Amidst all the Gothic iconography, it encouraged spectators to laugh at the

\textsuperscript{182} Bishop, \textit{American Zombie Gothic}, 2010, 41.
protagonists' plight, featuring four men in blackface burying their faces in a flour basin while looking for coins. Despite the degradation of Black people played for comedic effect, the main theme of the film, as Robin Means Coleman points out in *Horror Noire: Blacks in American Horror Films from 1890 to Present*, was horror. The celluloid was haunted by ghostly figures both ethereal and corporeal, including the multivalent masking of white men in blackface representing Black men in whiteface as they try to escape from the situation in which they find themselves. Thus one of the earliest cinematic pursuits conflated Blackness with haunting, the filmmakers deeming this subject significant enough to spend significant time and resources producing it. Following Bendix and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, by understanding folklore as a cultural production and recognizing its influence on cinema we can understand this type of filmmaking as part of the cultural production of folklore.\(^{183}\) At the turn of the twentieth century, film was a new art and filmmakers new types of artists; they, in turn, produced new types of folklore.

**Zombilore and the Rise of U.S. Cinema**

Film, like folklore, is a form of cultural production. Unlike folklore, however, the art of filmmaking is intimately bound up with capitalist endeavors. Pierre Bourdieu's influential text, *The Field of Cultural Production*, discusses the complex roles of the artist and of art within a capitalist market system, and his conclusions have relevance for those who understand both folklore and filmmaking as aesthetically-marked modes of cultural production. While individual filmmakers may have been personally fascinated by the pseudo-ethnographic writings on Haiti,\(^{183}\) by the same token (as will be illuminated in the forthcoming chapters), popular cinema can eventually produce folklore. The relationship between film and folklore in terms of cultural production is cyclical. Cinema becomes part of the cultural production of folklore and, in turn, folklore becomes part of the cultural production of cinema.
their forays into this field were no doubt driven by a desire to market their films to a public equally fascinated with these "exotic" Others and their supposedly authentic monsters. The capitalist nature of cinema complicates the understanding of ethnographic fiction and American-authored zombie narratives as authentic folklore because early films featuring Haiti or Voodoo -- regardless of their authenticity and perhaps because of their claims to it -- became part of the canon of zombielore in the U.S. Even films such as *The Conjure Woman* (1926) or *Black Moon* (1931), neither of which called zombies by name, have (rightfully) been subsumed under the genre of zombie cinema by virtue of their subject matter, which includes Voodoo, hypnotic possession, and zombie-like creatures. These narratives may not have emerged organically among the folk as an expression of their cultural anxieties, but they nonetheless expressed those anxieties and, in doing so, catapulted the zombie to an unprecedented status in U.S. folklore. That is, despite the fact that these films were made for the purpose of generating money rather than for faithfully documenting aspects of Haitian culture in an authentic manner, they might still be considered authentic folklore, in a sense, because of their contribution to the corpus of American zombielore. The question then becomes, *Authentic to what?* Although perhaps not authentic to Haitian folklife, they might be considered authentic to the dominant *U.S. imagination* of Haitian folklife. While Bourdieu argues that "every literary field is the site of struggle over the definition of the writer,"\(^{184}\) Bendix's analysis of authenticity forces us to consider how every folkloric field may realize a struggle over the definition of the "folk." Considering the fraught nature of zombielore in this time period as a hybrid product of Haitian folklife, Western ethnographic fiction, and/or creative nonfiction, and filmic fantasy begs the question, to whom does zombie folklore belong? The Haitians or the Americans? Who are the folk?

\(^{184}\) Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 42.
As documentarian and film theorist David MacDougall has argued, "one of the functions of art, and often of science, is to help us understand the being of others in the world." In the nineteen-tens, the nascent art of film and the burgeoning science of anthropology spoke to and about postcolonial anxieties of racial coexistence in the United States, though often in the guise of documentary-style (authentic) depictions of distant people and places. The science and art of cinema developed partially as means to "capture" the being-of-others in the world so that they could be represented to a curious American public; in this way, the camera has been compared to the colonialist's gun in that it "shoots" a subject, thereby turning the being into an object which can then be mounted and put on display as spectacle. Indeed, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have pointed out, the nascence of cinema coincided with the giddy heights of the imperial project, and the "imperial power shaped the uses to which both apparatus and celluloid were put." The presumed objectivity of the camera imbued such cinematic images of foreign peoples and places with a self-evident authenticity. Cinema and anthropology, then, shared an affiliation in their endeavors to find, apprehend, and represent distant cultures in the most authentic way possible. Both methodologies for representing culture, however, remained ignorant of their own Eurocentric positionality and the ways their ethnographic or documentarian representations actually encoded self-aggrandizing notions of white power and supremacy. Cinema was an especially valuable tool for the production of Eurocentric ideology that reinforced the U.S.'s belief in Manifest Destiny:

The 'spatially-mobilized visuality' of the I/eye of empire spiraled outward around the globe, creating a visceral, kinetic sense of imperial travel and conquest, transforming European spectators into armchair conquistadors.

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185 MacDougall, The Corporeal Image, 1.
186 See Shohat and Stam, Rony, Young, Grimshaw, or Foster (Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism; Rony, The Third Eye; Young, Fear of the Dark; Grimshaw, The Ethnographer’s Eye; Foster, Captive Bodies, 1999.
187 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (Routledge, 2013), 100, 104.
affirming their sense of power while turning the colonies into spectacle for the metropole’s voyeuristic gaze.188

While Shohat and Stam describe the imperial imaginary that developed through the colonialist-cinematic project of Europeans, Americans were engaged in similar projects of their own. With the racial tension mounting between whites and African Americans in the U.S., white filmmakers often focused their lenses on colonized spaces in Africa and the Caribbean; through their ethnocentric depictions of native culture, they contributed to a developing imaginary of Blackness.

Even before D.W. Griffith’s infamous Birth of a Nation became the first feature-length film in American history (1915), short films such as Hallowe’en in Coontown (1897), Voodoo Fires (1913), The Ghost of Twisted Oak (1914), and In Zululand (1915) linked images of Black people to ghosts, hauntings, and occult practices through references to Voodoo and monstrous representations of Black corporeality.189 While many of these early films have been lost, others such as Hoodoo Ann (1916) and Unconquered (1917) drew from the ethnographic writings of Hearn, St. John, and Prichard and projected fantasies of primitive peoples engaged in witchcraft, human sacrifice, and devil worship. The colonialist gaze inherent in these films saw Black bodies not only as exotic and erotic, but as vestiges of a less civilized state of humanity. As Fatimah Rony argues,

Cinema appears to bring the past and that which is culturally distant closer; likewise, [classical] anthropology, which posits that indigenous peoples are remnants of earlier ages, has been largely concerned with the description and preservation or reconstruction of the spatially and historically distant.190

188 Ibid., 104.
190 Rony, The Third Eye, 9.
Folklore, literature, and early films about Voodoo practitioners collapsed the distance between "here" and "there" and articulated specific constructions of Black people as symbols of the past, ultimately bringing that past back into the present through the 'magic' of the cinema.

The processes by which the past is brought to bear on the present might be considered a foundational inquiry of Folklore studies. Whether in folklore, literature, or film, the ways in which the past gets reconstructed contribute to a national imaginary, forming the foundational ideology for how subjects' view themselves and Others and for how they understand their own history. These ideological constructions of the world enforce boundaries between social and cultural groups, shaping notions of group identity and offering instruction in how to identify and maintain boundaries between "us" and "them." Considering the geographically inconsistent nature of the U.S. empire, cinema helped to cultivate a national and imperial sense of belonging among many disparate peoples.\textsuperscript{191} Cinema thus created what we might call a communitas of spectatorship (following anthropologist Victor Turner's theorization of communitas as the intense feelings of togetherness felt by a group of people share the same experience), which provided collective spectators with an imagined sense of unity (or, as Benedict Anderson might have it, an imagined community). Such a communitas of spectatorship intensified and concretized Eurocentric understandings of cultural difference, validating dominant and hegemonic understandings of the nation's history in terms of racial hierarchies, the white man's burden, and Manifest Destiny. As Rony suggests, bringing the Other closer through the magic of cinema was also an attempt to bring the past back into the present and to frame it in terms of an inherent white racial superiority.

\textsuperscript{191} Shohat and Stam, \textit{Unthinking Eurocentrism}, 102.
The Past in the Present

For Hayden White, "beliefs about the origins and evolution of nations often crystallize in the form of stories." In Haiti, the legend of Jean Zombi circumscribed the birth of that nation as part of the divine will of African ancestors and gods to liberate their people from bondage. The story articulated its own sense of a Haitian Manifest Destiny, and forever linked the Haitians' freedom and independence to belief in Vodou, African ancestor worship, and, indeed, the zombi. While zombie stories in the U.S. held less mythological gravitas, they nonetheless contributed to an imaginary of Blackness and served as 'chronotopes' in the development of national identity. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, chronotopes materialize in time and space, "mediating between the historical and the discursive, providing fictional environments where historically specific constellations of power can be made visible." In this way, nineteenth century narratives featuring zombies and/or Voodoo can be seen appropriating Haitian folklore and refashioning its meaning in the context of slavery and white supremacy in the U.S. Jean Zombi and Zombi operated in similarly subversive ways, yet the zombi(e) serves opposing purposes in the national imaginaries of Haiti and the U.S. By "national imaginary," I draw on the Althusserian distinction between repressive state apparatuses and ideological state

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192 Ibid., 101.
193 In Folklore studies, the term "myth" refers very specifically to sacred narrative. These multi-episodic narratives, which usually include cultural origin stories, divine or semi-divine beings, and/or explanations of cosmogony or cosmology, are by definition held to be sacred and true among the primary people who created and participate in the narrative tradition. Literary scholars such as Roland Barthes have challenged this understanding of myth by arguing that many texts which would not be considered literally sacred in a religious or cultural context have, in fact, become "sacred" narratives of our modern consumerist Western culture. While it might be argued that the racist imaginary encouraged and illustrated by the zombie figure became a type of myth in the Barthesian sense, that is not my intention in this paragraph. By saying that zombie stories held less mythological gravitas in the U.S. than in Haiti I mean that these are not narratives that a typical mythologist would consider sacred or even religious in nature. Haitian narratives concerning Jean Zombi, on the other hand, relate to both Vodou religiosity and the origin of the Haitian nation (including the depiction of a semi-divine being who participates in the cosmology of modern Haiti), and therefore hold mythological gravitas in both the folkloric and the Barthesian senses of the term "myth."

apparatuses as well as Benedict Anderson's explication of "imagined communities" to suggest that nations exist as conceptual or mental territories, and promote the internalization of a set of cultural meanings. ¹⁹⁵ This motivating ideological set can be shared among a national community, with nationalism entailing the perception of oneself "as a member of a common group bound by some set of shared cultural and historical experiences and traits which will ideally, but not always, coincide with the origin or residence within the physical boundaries of a state." ¹⁹⁶ The national imaginary, then, takes its power from the ideologically motivated stories and implied meanings of narrative folklore that serve to distinguish and keep separate those within and without a national community. In suggesting that Jean Zombi and Zombi serve different purposes in the national imaginaries of the U.S. and Haiti, I wish to call attention to how nationhood is itself a cultural construction, and to illustrate how certain meanings and groups are privileged within the cultural formation of a national imaginary. ¹⁹⁷ Jean Zombi is a hero and composite image of the success of the Haitian Revolution and of Haitian national identity. Zombi in the U.S., on the other hand, represents a depraved malefactor who seeks to undermine the white American way of life, motivating a racist bias against Black people and African or Afro-Caribbean spiritual practice. As revolutionary hero or subversive miscreant, the figure's

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.
¹⁹⁷ Many cultural theorists have written about various forms of communal imaginaries. Benedict Anderson has perhaps been the most influential in linking internalized facets of collective identity to media representations, but others have developed their own explorations of imaginaries as cultivated in film and popular media. Shohat and Stam outline an Imperial Imaginary, Sumita Chakravarty explores the development of Cultural Imaginaries, Thomas Elsaesser discusses the Social Imaginary, and Ismail Xavier and Anthony Widen lay the groundwork for National Imaginaries that are often discussed in the politics of national cinema, such as Susan Hayward has explored in depth. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition, Revised edition (London ; New York: Verso, 2006); Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism; Sumita S. Chakravarty, National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987 (University of Texas Press, 2011); Thomas Elsaesser, European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood (Amsterdam University Press, 2005); Ismail Xavier, Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema (U of Minnesota Press, 1997); Susan Hayward, French National Cinema (Psychology Press, 2005).
representation within a given narrative became a chronotope of the nation's historical development and a potent symbol of its national imaginary.

When Zombi became zombies in the U.S., largely through the writings of Hearn, and, to a lesser degree, St. John and Prichard, the monsters also came to symbolize America’s underclass of former slaves and their descendents. Further, the narrative development of these Afro-Caribbean monsters as slaves and threats to dominant systems of power and authority helped to circumscribe ways in which African Americans could be expected to interact with white culture. From rebellious slaves terrorizing white plantation owners in the nineteenth century to mindless slaves working at the behest of a single Haitian "witch doctor" (Vodou priest) in the early twentieth century, the refabulation of the zombi's story tracks changes in the white-imagination of Black Americans before and after the Civil War. While the antebellum lore (inspired by the Haitian Revolution) focused on the mentally-autonomous and physically-powerful Black man who would rape, kill, and exercise his power to subvert the system of white authority under slavery, the postbellum lore (inspired by ethnographic literature) reflected the somewhat comforting logic that a Black person's most natural state was as a submissive slave -- a being to be pitied -- and that such exotic creatures existed only in a faraway land, not on U.S. soil. Hayden White calls the mutable potential of a character or theme emplotment, emphasizing the importance of narrative structure in the analysis of literature, history, and everything in between. The narrative emplotment(s) of zombies, then, could be seen as key components in the development of national and racial imaginaries. Moreover, as will be detailed below, the evolution of the zombi(e) in the U.S. reveals how ethnographic descriptions of this authentic monster helped shape attitudes regarding racial integration in the first half of the twentieth century.
The military occupation of Haiti (1915-34), described by President Woodrow Wilson as a "civilizing mission," coincided with the rise of science fiction literature and early films featuring Voodoo. With U.S. newspapers reporting on the exploits of marines in Haiti and their attempts to safeguard the interests of U.S. corporations (notably the sugar plantations), Haiti became part of the national consciousness in a more prominent way than ever before. As early as 1923, the science-fiction serials *Weird Tales* and *Unknown Worlds* began publishing stories obviously inspired by Haiti, many of which featured themes of interracial relationships, taboo sexual fantasies, and the undead. The most notable author in this genre, H.P. Lovecraft, remained a fixture of horror literature throughout the twentieth century and his most famous creature, Cthulhu, regularly appears in twenty-first century popular culture.  

Lovecraft's Cthulhu tales metaphorized the fall of the white race due to the miscegenetic weaknesses of white women and the sexual aggression of racially-Other men in the early nineteenth century. In these stories, an ancient race of aliens who inhabited Earth before being expelled by humans discover a way to resurrect their species -- by impregnating white women. Their sexual assaults eventually result in mixed-race progeny who worship the racially impure monster, Cthulhu, an ancestral god of the aliens who, since his peoples' extinction, has retreated under the sea.  

"Tellingly," as Annalee Newitz argues in her sophisticated analysis of the 'Cthulhu Mythos' series, "it's only after the Civil War that these mixed children are born and grow up, as if they represent the mixed-race 'spawn' of a nation which

198 Cthulhu appears regularly on Comedy Central's *South Park* and is the subject of no fewer than thirty graphic novels and serials, as well as a popular manifestation in material culture ranging from Halloween costumes to keychains. Graphic novels and serials of note include: *Fall of Cthulhu* (Michael Nelson), *Cthulhu Tales* (various authors), *Yuggoth Cultures* (Alan Moore), *Necronomicon* (William Meissner-Loebs and Alan Moore), *The Chronicles of Dr. Herbert West* (various authors), *Nightmare World* (Dirk Manning), *Fatale* (Ed Brubaker), *Witch Doctor* (Brandon Seifert), *The Calling: Cthulhu Chronicles* (various authors), *The Sum of Light* (Brian McCranie), *Cthulhu Cthulhu* (Spanish language, various authors), and *Infestation* (various authors).

199 Cthulhu's resting place under the sea is reminiscent of Vodou's Ginen, the mythical place under the water where the spirits of ancestors reside until they can be "resurrected," as it were.
As his mixed race congregation grows more powerful, the remaining white population of Earth dwindles, and Cthulhu worshippers enslave them. Lovecraft never attempted to hide his racism, and openly discussed his belief that, because of the one-drop rule, whites were the only race that could truly die.\textsuperscript{201} While Lovecraft did not refer to his creatures as zombies until much later in his career, the stories' obvious analogues to Haiti and the similarities between his aliens and Hearn's zombies likely catalyzed the success of Lovecraft's stories during the military occupation.

Drawing on St. John, Hearn, and Prichard's accounts of "Vaudoux\textsuperscript{202}" and the "risen dead,"\textsuperscript{203} and capitalizing on the U.S.'s renewed interest in Haiti during the occupation, Lovecraft's prolific writings gave imaginative force to the idea that former slaves or their decedents could return to exact revenge on the living whites who once enslaved them. His popular short stories and novels inspired other "revenge of the negroes"\textsuperscript{204} tales, wherein Black men were depicted as monsters according to a set of very specific stereotypes: they were corporally grotesque, hypersexual, intellectually and linguistically deficient, vengefully aggressive, exceptionally strong, and, most important, undead.\textsuperscript{205} Cthulhu's once-dominated race rises from death, employs ancestral magic, sexually assaults white women, reverses the "natural" order of racial hierarchy by enslaveing white men, and ultimately exterminates the white race, thus embodying the horror of a successful zombie slave revolt (and eerily paralleling circumstances of the Haitian Revolution). These tales

\textsuperscript{200} Newitz, \textit{Pretend We’re Dead}, 2006, 97.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 94–6.
\textsuperscript{202} St John, \textit{Hayti; Or, The Black Republic}.
\textsuperscript{203} William Seabrook, \textit{The Magic Island}, (Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1929), 97, et al.
\textsuperscript{204} Newitz, \textit{Pretend We’re Dead}, 2006, 99.
\textsuperscript{205} This very specific set of representational stereotypes form the basis of "Calibanic Discourse," an Afro-Caribbean literary theory excavated by postcolonial scholars such as Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, James Coleman, Jonathon Goldberg, Virginia Vaughan, Chantal Zabus, Mimi Sheller, Alden T. Vaughan, Roberto Retamar, and Philip Bryan Harper (who have written books on the topic), and by dozens of Caribbean scholars who have published their work in the Cuban journal of \textit{Caliban Studies}. 

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and others like them capitalized on the horror of a past that was not dead, despite its dormancy, and which could not die, despite the best efforts of white protagonists who attempted to wrest it back into its grave. These undead beings operated as symbols of undead social systems like slavery, the effects of which still lingered in the form of racial segregation and widespread racial inequality. Interestingly, the horror of this past-occupying-the-present was directed not at the Black people living in the nightmarish incongruity of "separate but equal," as one might think, but at the white Americans who had to live alongside these descendents of former slaves, living emblems of their own ancestors' heinous crimes. As the US occupied Haiti, these fictional worlds imagined that white space was occupied by Black history, the threat of vengeance looming over everyone who enjoyed their racial and socioeconomic privilege. The popularity of the Cthulhu Mythos series grew after marines who had been stationed in Haiti returned home and published sensational accounts of zombie folklore, suggesting that such reports bolstered Lovecraft's science-fiction with an even greater sense of verisimilitude, or authenticity. Thus the metaphor of a past reaching through history to terrorize the present was given a literal, believable form.

206 For example: John Houston Craige, Black Bagdad (Minton, Balch, 1933); John Houston Craige, Cannibal Cousins. Reminiscences of Haiti. (London, 1935); Faustin Wirkus and Mrs Taney (Keplinger) Dudley, The White King of La Gonave (Doubleday, Doran, 1931); Edna Taft, A Puritan in Voodoo Land (Literary Licensing, LLC, 1934, 2013), Bedford Jones, Drums of Damballah. (New York, 1931); et al.
Authenticity

An Authentic Monster:
Fact, Fiction, and the Zombies in Between

Stories such as those found in the Cthulhu Mythos series were written primarily for niche audiences of science fiction, while nonfiction accounts such as Prichard's Hayti were more likely to be consumed by those with specialized interests in anthropology or Caribbean history and culture. At the end of the 1920's, however, William Seabrook published a book about his experiences in Haiti which seemed to bridge this gap, presenting an autoethnographical narrative that simultaneously employed the literary tropes expected from travel writing, fantasy, and horror genres. Published the same year as the 1929 Haitian uprisings against the U.S. occupation, The Magic Island was popularly received by at least half a million U.S. readers and critically engaged by many ethnographers before being republished as pulp paperback The Voodoo Island in 1930. Steven Gregory's article, "Voodoo, Ethnography, and the American Occupation of Haiti" provides a particularly cogent analysis of The Magic Island's place within the historical transition between travel narratives and codified ethnography. Gregory argues that the importance of Seabrook's text lies in its ruptures, revealing "the ethnographic process in its most subversive and critical aspects" because Seabrook often drew attention to his own subjectivity even while laying claims to

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207 This is evident by the fact that science fiction stories were written with the intent of publishing in science fiction magazines, whereas ethnographic accounts were written to be published in books destined for academic libraries.
This hybrid-genre piece of work has often been considered the lightning-rod for zombielore in the United States, and with good reason. As will be revealed, the unprecedented success of Seabrook’s sensational travelogue is what inspired Hollywood producers to tackle the subject of zombies pointedly for the first time. In this chapter I will discuss the uneasy relationship between ethnography and fiction that collapses in Seabrook’s tale and in the subsequent films which took their inspiration from it.

The Magic Island

William Seabrook was a veteran of the first world war and a noted traveler and journalist. He had a penchant for the surreal or fantastic, and counted the well-known occultist Aleister Crowley as well as the French intellectual George Bataille among his closest associates. While later in life Seabrook would come to be known as a raving alcoholic and a sadist -- a reputation he seemed to enjoy -- in the 1920s he was seen as an adventurous but reputable public figure. One portion of The Magic Island purports to tell the "true story" of zombie slaves in Haiti during the U.S. occupation, and its publication in 1929 ignited American fervor for the pathetic yet horrific creatures. In his account, Seabrook describes his misadventures traveling in Haiti through the frame of his conversations with a man named Polynice, a local farmer who

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211 While The Magic Island owes its popularity to its characterization of zombies, the 336 page book only devoted a scant twelve pages exclusively to the creatures, a single chapter titled “...Dead Men Working in the Cane Fields,” which attributes their existence to le culte des morts’ mysterious operations. While zombies are mentioned briefly elsewhere in the book, most of the other chapters offer sensational tales of ritual, magic, sacrifice, potions, and feverish midnight sex-dances, which further contributed to the exoticization of Haiti.
befriends Seabrook and weaves a tapestry of wild tales about life on the island for him. While zombies had already been introduced to select U.S. audiences in the narratives previously mentioned, Seabrook’s popular and well-publicized book spoke candidly about folk beliefs concerning zombies, depicting them as commonplace and ubiquitous facets of Haitian folklife.

He offers this description of the miserable beings:

It seemed… that while the zombie came from the grave, it was neither a ghost, nor yet a person who had been raised like Lazarus from the dead. The zombie, they say, is a soulless human corpse, still dead, but taken from the grave and endowed by sorcery with a mechanical semblance of life -- it is a dead body which is made to walk and act and move as if it were alive. People who have the power to do this go to a fresh grave, dig up the body before it has had time to rot, galvanize it into movement, and then make it a servant or slave, occasionally for the commission of some crime, more often simply as a drudge around the habitation or the farm, setting it dull heavy tasks, and beating it like a dumb beast if it slackens.

Having gleaned this understanding of zombies from several other islanders, Seabrook asks Polynice for his interpretation of the superstition. Polynice soundly denounces the question because, he claims, zombies are no mere superstition but true and verifiable beings. As the two men engage in this fireside chat, Polynice describes his own fear of zombies, noting that Haitians often bury their dead by the roadside or very close to the home so as to keep a lookout for anyone who might try to abscond with their loved one’s corpse. Seabrook expresses his

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212 The exact timeline of Seabrook’s travels in Haiti is not certain, though his claim that he spent "two years in the field" seems unlikely. The Magic Island is written as if to reflect a single uninterrupted trip, however his autobiography indicates that his "fieldwork" was split into two separate visits, with his initial arrival in Haiti occurring in late Autumn 1927 at the earliest since his first book, Adventures in Arabia, was published in September 1927. In his autobiographical account of the trip, it is only after a friend congratulates him for finally becoming a published author that Seabrook boasts his next project will be about Voodoo (William Seabrook, No Hiding Place (J.B. Lippincott, 1942). Seabrook describes how after being challenged by his friend that "no white man can write a book that's any good about voodoo," he quickly learned Haitian Kreyol and then went into Haiti’s mountains for a year. Realizing that this was "not enough," Seabrook notes that he returned for a second year. Seabrook relates that, although he was excited about his material, he had a difficult time writing the manuscript when he returned to the U.S. He finally isolated himself in a Connecticut farmhouse for a "long winter" in order to complete his manuscript. Dated notations included in The Magic Island’s foreword and appendix indicate that Seabrook was in New York in September and November 1928, and the book was published at the beginning of January 1929. All of this suggests that Seabrook’s time in Haiti could not have extended for the length of two calendar years. Ibid., 272–3; Lindsay J. Tw, Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture, 1910–1950 (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 99.

213 Seabrook, The Magic Island, 93.
incredulity (as much for his own sake as to reassure readers of his ethnographic distance), but Polynice assures him that even as they speak, "zombies are everywhere in the cane fields," working silently beneath the moonlight.

In the following pages Polynice unfolds the story of Ti Joseph, an overseer at a plantation who, in 1918, showed up to work with a cadre of "ragged creatures, shuffling along behind him, staring dumbly, like people in a daze." Polynice tells Seabrook Ti Joseph and his wife Croyance had dragged these bodies "from their peaceful graves" and reanimated them "to slave in the sun." Now bound to him through this Voodoo magic, Ti Joseph's zombies toiled at his behest, mindless, menial, and unaware of their status as undead-slaves. At the HASCO plantation, Ti Joseph would collect the wages for all of his "workers," avoiding suspicion of their zombification by claiming they were ignorant people from another part of the island and unfamiliar with the local language. Croyance tended the zombies at home, taking care never to feed them salt. Although she evidently had no qualms about their enslavement or forced labor, watching them eat bland, tasteless food without complaint engendered her compassion for the lifeless beings. On Mardi Gras day, Croyance took several zombies with her to the market, and, pitying their inability to join in the festivities, bought them some pistaches (peanuts seasoned with coriander). It turns out the nuts had been salted, and upon tasting them the zombies gained recognition of their own undeath. The spell apparently broken, the zombies wandered back to their graves where, upon touching the soil of their previous burial places, they died again.

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214 Ibid., 95.
215 Ibid., 96.
216 Interestingly, revenge is at the heart of this tale, though not in the form of a slave revolt. The story goes on to explain that the zombies' relatives recognized their loved ones in the market and plotted to attack Ti Joseph, ultimately punishing him for his crimes by decapitating him with a machete. While many U.S. zombie narratives imagined the horror of vengeful slaves rising up against their masters, this zombi narrative credited to a local Haitian man imagines free Black people avenging their murdered and enslaved relatives.
217 Haitian American Sugar Company
Significantly, Seabrook identifies Ti Joseph's slaves as laborers on the HASCO (Haitian American Sugar Company) plantation, suggesting that part of the horror of zombies has to do with the economic relationship between Haiti and the U.S. After more than a century of distrust and refusal to trade with Haiti, the U.S. found itself in need of a partnership with the country in order to exploit their vast sugar cane fields and cheap labor. At the same time, U.S. military endeavors to control Haiti gave rise to stories about the island and its native inhabitants, fueling suspicions about the safety of U.S. citizens in this exotic territory. As a result, U.S. zombielore of this period appears almost as a symptom of the apprehension regarding both civil and military involvement in Haiti. Compounding the issue was the U.S.'s own economic hardship and the anxiety of its workforce regarding their job security. Speaking almost directly to these fears, Seabrook describes the shock he felt upon learning that the mundane, run-of-the-mill (pun intended) HASCO factory/plantation has a reputation for employing zombies in their labor practices:

The word [Hasco] is American-commercial-synthetic, like Nabisco, Delco, Socony. It stands for the Haitian-American Sugar Company -- an immense factory plant, dominated by a huge chimney, with clanging machinery, steam whistles, freight cars. It is like a chunk of Hoboken. It lies in the eastern suburbs of Port-au-Prince, and beyond it stretch the cane fields of the Cul-de-Sac. Hasco makes rum when the sugar market is off, pays low wages, twenty or thirty cents a day, and gives steady work. It is modern big business, and it sounds it, looks it, smells it.  

Although Seabrook does not explicitly articulate the association between poorly-paid factory workers and undead slaves, the comparison was likely not lost on his audience. Coming at the beginning of the Great Depression, when many U.S. workers were facing the prospect of a dismal future and suffering at sporadic, menial jobs or factory unemployment, Seabrook's stark depiction of mindless slave labor resonated with his readers. As zombie scholar Jamie Russell

218 Seabrook, The Magic Island, 95.
emphasizes, "a dead worker resurrected as a slave into a hellish afterlife of endless toil…was the perfect monster for the age."219 Not only could one pity the monster, seeing their own situation reflected in far more gruesome terms, but they might fear the monster as a threat to their job security -- recognizing the zombie as a kind of scab worker, and one that would never tire or complain about overtime.

Zombies represent the lowest level of the economic system; they are the ultimate slaves, or in industrial terms, the downtrodden, unrepresented proletariat labor force -- what Marx calls the *Lumpenproletariat*. No political power, labor union, or social activist exists to plead their case, for they themselves lack the cognitive ability to even articulate their plight. While it's impossible to know for certain that his readers were making these connections, by revealing a parallel between Black zombie-slaves and an industrial underclass of white workers Seabrook unwittingly articulated anxieties concerning the security of whiteness as a privileging category. Lower-class whites could now see themselves in the image of the Black zombie slave, suggesting all kinds of uneasy equivalences between differently raced individuals in a capitalist economy and conjuring, once again, a paranoid fear of white slavery -- the fear that the "dead" system of slavery could not only return, but might evince an upheaval of the so-called natural order. Describing the social scene in Port-au-Prince, where "there are Haitians who draw a reverse color line and dare to despise white people" in a "topsy-turvy reversal of natural phenomena," Seabrook drew indirect parallels between life and whiteness, death and Blackness. That is, just as death became life and life became death in Polynice's story, that unnatural reversal might extend to racial hierarchies as well: if Black people could become slave masters, then white people might become their slaves. After all, Ti Joseph was a relatively poor Black

man whose Afro-Caribbean religiosity allowed him to wield some power over life and death. What would stop him from enslaving those of a different race from his own, when he had already been eager to enslave his own kind? If a Haitian man would be callous enough to murder and indenture his own people for a modicum of financial gain, what would stop him if his motive were as righteous as revenge?

Although Seabrook does not elucidate these fears, they lurk beneath the surface of his narrative and in some ways account for the unprecedented success of this ethnography-horror hybrid. Like Lovecraft's fictional *Cthulhu Mythos* series, Seabrook's ethnographic travelogue capitalizes on the perception of racial difference as a form of conflict between dead and living cultures. The major difference, of course, was that *The Magic Island* purported to be a work of non-fiction, an authentic account. Seabrook played to the latent fears of his U.S. audience by invoking such Gothic tropes as misty evening strolls through unfamiliar terrain and eerie warnings of "the trusted outsider" and even by alluding to Lovecraftian science fiction ("I might have been on another planet"), but he also maintained and insisted upon the veracity of his account throughout his retelling of events. As Steven Gregory illuminates, "these constitutive tensions" between fiction and ethnography in *The Magic Island* "enable us to steal a glimpse of an extraordinary moment in the representation of the Other through the discourse of Western civilization: a moment when ethnography, as yet undisciplined by the conventions of ethnographic realism, erupts within the discursive configuration of colonialism." Seabrook's literary exoticism sensationalized his work (and contributed to its popularity) primarily because he employed themes from Gothic literature and science fiction alongside his insistence of ethnographic authenticity. *The Magic Island* is a colonialist fantasy run amok, yet Seabrook took

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221 Gregory, 169.
pains to highlight his own subjectivity when describing in detail his encounters. In doing so, he simultaneously authenticated the events in question while disclaiming anthropological objectivity, deftly moving between the roles of scientist and storyteller and serving as a colonial apologist.

While on its face the truth of Polynice's tale about Ti Joseph might have been called into question (particularly since it was attributed to a local Haitian, or "native", whose credibility among white audiences might have been impugned by virtue of his skin color alone), Seabrook assured readers of the authenticity of Polynice's anecdote by including his own, first-hand experience. He claims to have seen zombies working in the fields in broad daylight, and describes one close encounter with them:

My first impression of the three supposed zombies, who continued dumbly at work, was that there was something about them unnatural and strange. They were plodding like brutes, like automatons. Without stooping down, I could not fully see their faces, which were bent expressionless over their work. Polynice touched one of them on the shoulder, motioned him to get up. Obediently, like an animal, he slowly stood erect -- and what I saw then, coupled with what I had heard previously, or despite it, came as a rather sickening shock. Their eyes were the worst. It was not my imagination. They were in truth like the eyes of a dead man, not blind, but staring, unfocused, unseeing. The whole face, for that matter, was bad enough. It was vacant, as if there was nothing behind it. It seemed not only expressionless, but incapable of expression. I had seen so much previously in Haiti that was outside ordinary normal experience that for a flash of a second I had a sickening, almost panicky lapse in which I thought, or rather felt, 'Great God, maybe this stuff is really true, and if it is true, it is rather awful, for it upsets everything.' By 'everything' I meant the natural and fixed laws and processes on which all modern human thought and actions are based. Then suddenly I remembered -- and my mind seized the memory as a man sinking in water clutches a solid plank -- the face of a dog I had once seen in the histological laboratory at Columbia. Its entire front brain had been removed in an experimental operation weeks before; it moved about, it was alive, but its eyes were like the eyes I now saw staring.222

As a reputable white man's account, Seabrook's personal anecdote not only authenticates the existence of these beings in Haiti, but also as scientifically plausible. Along with his subjective description of the mindless and inautonomous beings, he cites a reputable university's laboratory

experiment to support his claim that such creatures actually exist. Moreover, his report affirms the zombies' condition as slaves and compares them to animals, using much the same bestializing rhetoric as that which white supremacists used to describe Black people in the same era (and before). At various points he refers to the zombies as, "vacant-eyed like cattle," "dumb creatures," and "beasts," resurrecting the nineteenth century language that helped to justify the enslavement of Black people and the criminalization of their spiritual practices on the basis that they did not have souls. Still, fear and sympathy ran parallel, as Seabrook confirms that the proper emotion to feel towards these undead beings is not contempt but pity. Despite their evident humanity they have become -- for all intents and purposes -- animals. Gregory points out that "necromancy, like cannibalism in the imagination of nineteenth-century European travel writers, occupies a narrative site where the violence of the colonial system is projected onto the victim as an imminent bestiality." In this circular colonial logic the animalistic "nature" of Black people justifies their treatment as slaves (or inferior beings), while their status (or former status) as slaves justifies the characterization of them as animalistic. Moreover, Seabrook's anthropomorphic beasts -- or monsters -- do not even have the ability to hope for the release of death because they have no deity to guide them. As he attests, "the poor zombies prayed neither to Papa Legba nor to Brother Jesus, for they were dead bodies walking, without souls or minds." Seabrook's zombies are slaves both literally and figuratively, and his characterization of them as animals lacking souls and minds fit squarely within the racist imaginary of Blackness that had helped legitimize the enslavement and unequal treatment of African Americans in the U.S. since the 17th century.

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224 Gregory, 193.
225 Seabrook, 97.
Elsewhere in his book, Seabrook also writes in detail about the exotic rites and rituals he witnessed among the Voodoo practitioners, describing naked, orgy-like dances, trance possessions, unholy pacts with spirits, and tales of animal and human sacrifice. Almost everything about his descriptions of Voodoo reinforce a binaristic opposition between the people and customs of white Americans and those of Black Haitians. Where sex and (especially female) sexuality were taboo in the U.S. and something to be explored only behind closed doors, in Haiti such sexuality was to be celebrated and put on display. Where white American Christians went to church to commune with their single God, Black Vodouisants sought their many deities in the mountains and forests or even their own homes. If prayer was typically thought of as a one-sided ritual in the U.S., in Haiti worshippers expected spirits to speak back to them and to take direct action in their affairs. While in the U.S. Catholic transubstantiation was probably the only familiar form of cannibalistic ritual or sacrifice, in Haiti live animals were sacrificed in front of congregations before being eaten by them -- a ritual that carried its own visceral symbolism of life and death, opening up a channel between two planes of spiritual existence -- reflecting a spiritual possibility totally foreign and potentially inconceivable to Seabrook's primary audience. Perhaps most significant, however, was Seabrook's assertion that Catholicism itself was alive and well within the practice of Voodoo. In several places he describes twin altars to Papa Legba (or another lwa) and Brother Jesus, noting that a devotee will spend equal time praying and make offerings at each. While such syncretism is inherent to the practice of Vodou, the idea would have been relatively alien to anyone indoctrinated in one of the Abrahamic faiths, all of which disavow the worship of any God but their own.\(^{226}\) Despite the close relationship between Vodou and Catholicism in Haiti, Seabrook's zombielore crystallizes seemingly binaristic divisions

\(^{226}\) While Catholic belief in the communion of saints provides a ready niche for the veneration of demigods, the idea that any figures -- no matter how holy -- would be honored on par with Jesus Christ would seem to fly in the face of the most sacred tenets of Christianity.
between Vodou and Christianity, proposing that -- more than a difference in culture of customs -- Haitians actually possess a power only dreamed of by whites in their most fantastic fiction: power over life and death. Against the backdrop of the U.S. military occupation of Haiti and the uprisings against that occupation, the power of necromancy became a symbol of Haitian strength and resilience that flew in the face of bestializing and dehumanizing imaginaries of Blackness.

Jean-Paul Sartre has noted that the vulnerability of the numerically weaker colonists, in the face of the potential unity of the "absolute Other," is often expressed by attributing a "magical power" to the colonized.

They are oppressed and, in a way, still impotent -- otherwise the colonists would no longer be there; but, at the same time, 'they know everything, they see everything, they communicate among themselves instantly, etc.'

From the time of the Haitian Revolution, white or European forces who confronted Black Haitians in during colonial conflicts described them as monstrous and magical beings, noting in particular how their familiarity with Haiti's difficult terrain made it seem as though "they were everywhere," "always watching," and somehow able to communicate attack plans without making a sound. Ascribing to them the ability to reanimate the dead would seem to be another example of white combatants attributing magical powers to Haitians who defied colonial authority. Seabrook's zombies collapse the negative stereotypes of Blackness that substantiated slavery with a magical power that challenges that very characterization. Zombie slaves may be animalistic, mindless, and weak, but they were made that way by a powerful bokor who wields supernatural power over life and death. The strength of African spirituality is contrasted with the perceived inferiority Blackness, but both are contained in a single body. Voodoo zombielore in

Seabrook's imagination thus symbolizes the mystical power of Haitians to resist colonialism, as well as the vulnerability of the occupation.

Such strong literary symbolism notwithstanding, *The Magic Island* captivated audiences first and foremost as an ethnographic document due to the nonfictional nature of the material. Seabrook's literary style necessitated some of the "thick description" that ethnographic writing is known for, which further bolstered his claims concerning the authenticity of his detailed descriptions of Haitian life. During his encounter with the zombies --which, he assures readers, took place "in broad daylight" -- Seabrook touches one of the beings himself: "I reached out and grasped one of the dangling hands. It was calloused, solid, human."229 While the story of Ti Joseph was told at night as a sort of campfire tale full of the darkly Gothic elements readers might have come to expect from the horror and fantasy genres, Seabrook corroborates Polynice's claims by following up with his much more rational and less literary chronicle. He notes that he encountered the zombies in daylight, precluding the possibility that his eyes were mistaken or that he otherwise misinterpreted his experience under cover of darkness. Seabrook also attests that he physically grasped the hand of a zombie himself, eliminating the possibility that he misinterpreted the sight of living Black laborers he saw from a distance. Finally, he asserts that despite all suspicion to the contrary, the hand he grasps is human. In other words, he verifies that these beings are neither figments nor fantasies, but actual people, undead and suffering. By systematically dismissing elements of Polynice's narrative that could be called into question or construed as literary conventions -- such as the trope of a late-night fireside chat or the premonitory warnings about zombies lurking in the darkness of moon-lit cane fields -- Seabrook authenticates his own narrative and verifies the existence of these undead beings by virtue of his

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first-person encounter. The authenticity of Haitian zombielore becomes believable for U.S. readers, then, at precisely that moment when a White, Western, rational man of science takes the hand of a Black Haitian zombie.

"Holding it, I said, 'Bonjour, compère,'" Seabrook continues. "The zombie stared without responding. The black wench, Lamercie, who was their keeper...pushed me away -- "Z'affai' nèg' pas z'affai' blanc" (Negroes' affairs are not for whites)." Coming from a Black woman, Lamercie's warning to Seabrook communicates her authority and dominance over the situation, as well as her confident temerity in speaking boldly and even threateningly to a white man. Lamercie's command of the situation (both in terms of the zombis' labor and her interaction with Seabrook) forms another plank in Seabrook's scaffolding of symbolic reversals in Haiti, in which a Black native woman enacts dominance over a white Western man, even as she presides over the lucre of a topsy-turvy reversal of life and death. Moreover, her statement suggests that her ability to command the zombis (as well as to dictate the bounds of any conversation about them) hinges on secret or carefully guarded knowledge exclusive to Black people. In the era of separate but equal, Seabrook's description of his encounters with Lamercie and other local Haitians affirmed white attitudes regarding segregation in the U.S. while conceding that Black people had power beyond that granted them by whites.

Constructing Black Haitian-ness in opposition to white American-ness -- making them the "absolute Other," in Sartre's terms -- meant creating a full picture of that Other, one that would encapsulate enough familiar stereotypes to be believable but which would flamboyantly

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230 Ibid., 101–2.
exoticize the people and practices by imagining them as symbolically opposite from White Americans in every significant way. Written for a literary public newly invested in anthropology but similarly captivated by science fiction, *The Magic Island*'s sensational imagination of the culture, people, and land of Haiti not only made for good publishing returns, but galvanized an extant racial imaginary of Blackness. By ascribing magical powers to people who were still represented as under-civilized plantation workers and slaves (while insisting upon the authenticity of that magic), Seabrook's narrative formed the basis for an image of Haitian people as the "absolute Other."

**Imag(in)ing Haitian Folklife**

While Seabrook's ethnographic descriptions and literary sensibilities may have yoked science to the supernatural in the Western imagination of Haiti, his narrative image of Haitian folklife would not have been complete without the key of visuality. Among his stories of Voodoo, zombies, friendly and unfriendly locals, Seabrook interspersed stark and foreboding illustrations by the artist Alexander King. While King became better-known for his work on late-night television in the 1950s, his earlier artwork propelled him to the influential status that sustained his career. He may have been chosen as an illustrator for Seabrook's book because of his surrealist style (of which Seabrook was a fan), or because he had developed a reputation as an illustrator of African peoples through works like Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1928) and *The Hairy Ape* (1929) or Claude Farrère's *Black Opium* (1929).\(^{231}\) In any case, his controversial illustrations for *The Magic Island* earned him accolades as well as infamy, both of

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\(^{231}\) Twa, *Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture, 1910–1950.*
which helped to establish him as a prominent visual artist. King never traveled to Haiti and based his illustrations entirely on Seabrook’s narrative and descriptions of the people, places, and events that he thought would be of most interest to the American public. A disproportionate number of these images involve zombies or necromancers, suggesting a heightened interest in that subject matter compared to other topics the book addressed in greater detail. King’s unabashedly racist images of Haitian folklife might easily (and rightly) be denounced as offensive caricatures, but they represent the first widespread images of zombies to reach the U.S. public.

King notes that *The Magic Island* helped him get into the advertising business because several agents sought him out after seeing his work in Seabrook’s book (Ibid., 114.). At the same time, anthropologist Katherine Dunham wrote in 1969 that King’s racist illustrations made him and Seabrook both "persona non grata" in Haiti, particularly since the caricatures made no distinction between peasants and elites (Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4.) Today, King is best remembered as a recurring guest on *The Tonight Show* hosted by Jack Paar (IMDB).
"Croyance, leading the nine dead men and women."

"No one dared to stop them, for they were corpses walking in the sunlight."

"...but marked for death by the Voodoo curse, they died."

"...the mambo in a scarlet robe."
King's illustrations capitalize on both dominant racial attitudes in the U.S. and the presumed anthropological authenticity of Seabrook's ethnographic narrative. In all of these images, King realizes the racist fantasies likely anticipated by Seabrook's white readers while heightening their salacious potential. In particular, these images reinforce the symbolic reversals and binaristic divisions between white American and Black Haitian cultures that *The Magic Island* circumscribes. Note, for instance, that every Black man depicted in King's illustrations is associated with death, either appearing as a zombie slave or a zombie master. Black men are thus confined to two discrete roles; as slaves they are monsters, and as leaders they are evil. Black women, by contrast, display forms of religious and sexual power that appear in stark opposition to the ideal frail white femininity of obedient wives in the U.S. King emphasizes the exposed breasts of women engaging in Voodoo rituals, despite Seabrook's acknowledgement that female devotees were most often clad in simple and relatively modest white clothing of the sort
one might expect to see at a Christian baptism in the U.S.\textsuperscript{233} In fact, as Lindsay Twa points out in her book, \textit{Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture 1910-1950},

King may have borrowed and exaggerated this breast-grabbing gesture from examples of African sculpture, such as in Yoruba ceremonial carvings where female figures are depicted holding their bare breasts as a symbol of their nurturing and life-sustaining generosity and power. King co-opts this pose, however, purely for titillating purposes.\textsuperscript{234}

Just as Seabrook misunderstands Vodou religiosity because he cannot grasp it through his Western frame, King misappropriates an African gesture because he cannot imagine Black femininity beyond a racist stereotype. Both men appropriate aspects of Afro-Caribbean religiosity to imbue their images with authenticity, but resort to extant understandings of racial difference in terms of bestialization (whether male zombies as chattel or unbridled female sexuality) and symbolic reversals of race and gender power dynamics (the mamaloi’s power over men or Croyance leading the male zombie slaves, for instance). King’s illustrations of common Black people thus turn on weak and/or monstrous masculinity and independent and/or hypersexual femininity. Strong Black men and women, by contrast, are represented as Voodoo priests and priestesses, their countenances and implied command of zombies connoting an evil nature. Without any visual representations of Polynice or the kind and helpful Haitian men Seabrook encountered, King’s illustrations trap Black people in visceral and essentializing images: they are slaves or they are evil, and often both. Although Seabrook’s colorful writing undoubtedly provoked King’s imagination, \textit{The Magic Island} does not typically describe Haitian people in terms that correspond with the exaggerated or grotesque imagery of King’s wood-block prints. Rather, those exotic and erotic images -- paired with excerpts from the text they purport to illustrate -- palpably intensify the gruesome and horrific aspects of Seabrook’s tale. The

\textsuperscript{233} Seabrook, \textit{The Magic Island}, 72.
\textsuperscript{234} Twa, \textit{Visualizing Haiti in U.S. Culture}, 1910–1950, 98.
perception of a dualistic opposition between Black Haitian culture and white U.S. culture was reinforced by these images depicting Haitian folklife, which were seemingly designed to elicit horror, disgust, and perhaps even titillation. The implicit suggestion that such scenes represented commonplace or typical behaviors of Voodoo practitioners would have intensified the perceived contrariety between white and Black cultures. King not only chose the most lurid aspects of Seabrook's tale to illustrate, but he did so using imagery that heightened the already-racist undertones of Seabrook's depiction of Black Haitians. Further, King's sensationalism was likely intentional. While Seabrook documented his experiences with many photographs which were published along with the text, publishers perhaps felt that those images were too tame, and thus hired King to produce his own artistic renderings of scenes from Seabrook's account. Since more than half of King's drawings depict moments from Seabrook's chapter on zombies -- a section which comprises no more than four percent of *The Magic Island* -- it's possible to infer that King was instructed (if not hired) to provide the first illustrations of zombielore for an eager American audience. Such illustrations would, and did, help substantiate Seabrook's claims regarding the existence of these authentic monsters. By providing a visualization of zombies, King planted certain images in the minds of readers so that they were not reliant on conjuring images by reading Seabrook's words alone. King's racist imagination of Black people thus became forever linked with Haiti, Vodou, and the very notion of an authentic monster.

Those images, however, were widely praised in press surrounding *The Magic Island*, even in unfavorable reviews of the text itself, and are often credited in discussions of the book's success to this day. As previously mentioned, King was a well known artist who was especially renowned for his unique style that used wood-block prints to create stark images of exotic people and places. As some biographers have noted, it is likely that many people purchased *The Magic
Island because they were attracted to King's artwork. While King and Seabrook developed a close friendship after the book was published, in his autobiography King noted that the relationship was always uneasy due to Seabrook's jealousy of the role King's illustrations played in achieving the The Magic Island's fame and fortune.

Seabrook's narrative reached such a wide audience in no small part because it visually introduced zombielore to American consciousness. The prevalence of zombies within the book's illustrations also reveals something about how Voodoo zombielore both reflected and participated in a racial imaginary. While The Magic Island devoted only a single chapter to zombies, images of them appear throughout the book even in Seabrook's more mundane descriptions of daily life, suggesting for readers that zombies are, as Polynice implies, everywhere in the background of Haiti. Not only are there more images of the undead slaves than would seem warranted by the text, but the images themselves affect the tone of Seabrook's zombielore. While Seabrook may have employed some Gothic literary tropes for dramatic effect, their capacity to incite horror in the reader pales in comparison to the visceral images provided by King. Seabrook's tone when describing zombies is one of distanced curiosity, incredulous fascination, disquietude and wonder. Paired with King's salacious illustrations, however, The Magic Island's zombies transform from pitiable victims that should be avoided to abject monsters that should be feared. The image of Haitians as the absolute Other, then, depends on the combination of narrative and visuality. In turn, the combination of that narrative and visuality is made all the more powerful by The Magic Island's claim to authenticity.

After providing readers with shocking descriptions and illustrations of zombies that together form an image of life in Haiti, Seabrook makes one final appeal to a Western authority to justify his supernatural claims. He authenticates his incredible depiction of zombielore for good and all by relating the details of his meeting with a local authority, claiming that "in all Haiti, there is no clearer scientifically trained mind, no sounder rationalist, than Dr. Antoine Villiers." They meet in Dr. Villiers's study, described as a veritable library of scientific books in French, German, and English. Although Villiers claims to be such a skeptic of the supernatural that he does not even believe in Jesus' resurrection, he admits that he does believe in zombies and the "criminal sorcery" that animates them. He then appraises Seabrook of the current official *Code Pénal* (Criminal Code) of the Republic of Haiti, noting this passage:

*Article 249. Also shall be qualified as attempted murder the employment which may be made against any person of substances which, without causing actual death, produce a lethargic coma more or less prolonged. If, after the administering of such substances, the person has been buried, the act shall be considered murder no matter what result follows.*

Seabrook's chapter on zombies ends abruptly with the recitation of this law, suggesting that its legal authority makes it the final word -- the final nail in the coffin -- on the question of whether zombies are authentic beings. Most significantly, the last words, "no matter what result follows," suggest that a person can be murdered without remaining dead. Just as Seabrook's details about the dog at Columbia affirmed with Western logic the possible existence of mindless and inautonomous creatures, his consultation with a Western doctor and quotation of an official legal document corroborates his claim that Voodoo can resurrect the dead. In other words, he does not expect his white readers to believe Polynice or any other Black Haitian's account of zombielore,

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238 Ibid.
but authenticates such beliefs and such creatures by citing Western authorities. Much has been made of Article 249 of Haitian law, both at the time of The Magic Island's publication and in subsequent writings about Haiti. In fact, it is difficult to find a scholar writing about Haitian zombis who does not mention it, even in passing, and it makes an appearance in many Voodoo-zombie films throughout the twentieth century. Although only a minor aspect of the Code Pénal, it has gained widespread notoriety almost certainly thanks to Seabrook's introduction of it to American audiences. Further, in The Magic Island this passage comes on the heels of one of King's most widely circulated images, that of five zombies being led through a field by a bokor with a skeletal face. The veracity of Seabrook's account crystallizes in the juxtaposition of such rational and objective evidence as an article of law with the fantastic visual imagery of zombie slaves, validating the perception of Haiti as home to the first authentic monsters.

White Zombie

The Magic Island was an instant bestseller and remained a fixture of popular literature through the 1930s and 40s. While others had written about Haiti and zombies long before Seabrook, it was The Magic Island's unique combination of a claim to ethnographic authenticity

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239 Elsewhere in his book, Seabrook also spoke in detail about the Haitians' penchant for powders and charms, or ouangas, common to Voodoo practices. Rather than casting such substances and their ritual uses as therapeutic or crediting the indigenous knowledge of medicinal botany, Seabrook compares them to a sorcerer's toolkit. Still, he acknowledges their efficacy, and notes that "primitive" cures for minor illnesses might well appear as magic to those who do not understand the nature of medicine.

240 The book's continued success was also owed in part to Seabrook's ever-more-outlandish antics abroad. As a follow-up to The Magic Island, Seabrook vowed to devote himself to the project of understanding cannibalism. He traveled to West Africa to live with the Guere and write his next book, Jungle Ways. Unfortunately (for him) he could find no tribe member to help him understand what human meat tasted like, nor did he document any cannibalism within the tribe. To save face, he convinced a doctor from Cote d'Ivoire to provide him with a chunk of human flesh from a cadaver, which he cooked and consumed so as to have something to write about in his book. He famously described the meat as tasting "like good, fully developed veal." (William Seabrook, Jungle Ways (Harcourt, Brace, 1931).
and fantastic motifs-- both in terms of narrative and imagery -- that captivated U.S. audiences. In fact, its narrative and visual images of Voodoo zombie slaves in Haiti directly informed the story-arc of the first zombie film, *White Zombie* (1932). The impact of that film on the landscape of horror cinema in Classical Hollywood cannot be overstated; following the moderate success of *White Zombie*, silver screens across the U.S. began to erupt with Black Voodoo zombie slaves.

Typically credited as the first zombie film, Edward and Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* realized the fear underlying Seabrook's text that a white person might somehow be made into a zombie slave through the magic of Voodoo. In 1931 The Halperin brothers bought the rights to the short story, "Salt is not for Slaves" by Garnett Weston, who adapted it into the screenplay for *White Zombie*. While Weston officially claimed that he was inspired by Kenneth Webb's 1931 play, *Zombie*, both the Broadway production and the film clearly drew from Seabrook's account, even featuring many of the same characters and scenes. Attempting to recreate the circumstances which led to *Dracula's* (1931) financial success, the filmmakers hired Béla Lugosi to play Voodoo-master Murder Legendre and filmed on rented sets from Universal Studios' Gothic screen adaptations, including the great halls from *Dracula*, pillars and a hanging balcony from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), the dark corridors from *Frankenstein* (1931), and chairs from *The Cat and the Canary* (1927). The film thus combined the Gothic influences of these earlier works with the newly-minted "authentic" discourse surrounding Voodoo zombies in Haiti engendered by *The Magic Island's* success.

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242 Rhodes, *White Zombie*.
243 Ibid.
In the film, a young white couple journeys to Haiti to be married at the home of their benefactor, Charles Beaumont. We encounter Haiti entirely through the eyes of these naïve tourists, mirroring the way audiences encountered Haiti through the white lenses of Seabrook, King, and their predecessors. Before the wedding Beaumont falls in love with the frail bride and enlists the help of plantation owner Murder Legendre to lure her away from her betrothed. With a cadre of zombies never far behind him and clad in a tuxedo and cape, Lugosi's Legendre cuts an imposing figure, much like his Dracula, and uses powders, charms, and a hypnotic gaze to manipulate the people around him. When Madeline will not leave her fiancé willingly, Beaumont reluctantly employs Legendre's potent magic to transform her into a zombie. Unsatisfied that this once bright and happy young woman has become a dull and incommunicative automaton, Beaumont repents his crime. Rather than undoing the spell, however, Legendre turns his magic against Beaumont. The bewildered and bereaved fiancé turns to a missionary scholar for help, and together they defeat Legendre and free his zombie slaves.

On its surface White Zombie may appear to share little in common with The Magic Island beyond the theme of zombie slaves in Haiti. A closer reading of the film, however, reveals how it engages with the same processes of narrative and visual image-making as did Seabrook's text, and how its success hinged in many ways on its stake as a depiction of authentic monsters. To track these processes and to explicate their meaning both within and without the context of the film itself it is necessary to explore White Zombie's narrative trajectory in tandem with its visuality. As with The Magic Island, the narrative and its illustration work together to produce images of Otherness. Close reading of the text exposes a significant thematic and material relationship between The Magic Island and White Zombie, including the profound implications of their sensational conflation of ethnographic authenticity with fantastic visuality.
White Zombie opens with drumming and chanting, and through the haze we see a congregation of people gathered in the roadway, digging a grave. Madeline and Neal ride in a carriage past the commotion. Their driver -- the only featured Black actor in the film -- informs them that Haitians bury their dead in the road to protect the bodies from those who might wish to dig them up. In the driver we see the refracted image of Polynice, matter-of-factly explaining the same account he gave to Seabrook to these curious white interlopers. This filmic moment thus encapsulates the folkloric processes of transmission and variation: an extant Haitian folk practice -- burying dead by the roadside -- was at some point related to Seabrook, who explained it to his readers in terms of superstition (folk belief) surrounding Voodoo and necromancy, which explanation in turn found expression on the screen (albeit modified slightly to place the corpses in the road rather than beside it). From folklore to literature to film, then, the lore surrounding roadside burial in Haiti traveled to the U.S. through the lenses of ethnographic realism and Gothic style, both literary and cinematic. What cannot be gleaned from Seabrook or the Halperins' representations of this lore, however, is whether and how Haitians relate to it themselves: do they actually bury their dead by (or in) the road? If so, how widespread is this practice? Does the custom reflect folk belief in zombis, as Seabrook and the carriage driver imply, or possibly something else? The process of transmission obscures the origins and emic meaning of the lore, but the enactment of ethnographic verisimilitude with which it is related imbues the Western-authored texts with an air of authenticity. As the opening scene of the film, inclusion of this detail which clearly references The Magic Island conveys the premise that White Zombie is based more on fact than fiction. At the same time, the subtle change from by the road to in the road suggests that the filmmakers were less concerned with accurate representation of Haitian culture than they were with exoticizing Haitians for the sake of horror. Contrasted with
the young white lovers, part of that horror had to come from the depiction of Haitians as the absolute Other; while people in the southern United States often observe a taboo against walking over someone's grave, in Haiti they literally bury people in the middle of the road where their graves are sure to be trampled in perpetuity. Ancient Greco-Romans also buried their dead by the roadside, so even if the custom were not totally unfamiliar to a Western spectator they might still equate the practice with an ancient -- or dead -- civilization. This "authentic" detail thus perpetuates the ideology of an absolute opposition between white American and Black Haitian culture which had previously pervaded Seabrook's text. Moreover, King's striking illustrations are now replaced with *White Zombie's* filmic artwork, producing another kind of stark visuality that combines with this lore to effectuate an image of the absolute Other.

Although the film begins with the familiar or even comforting construct of a Black carriage driver taking care of his white patrons, the scene of roadway burial quickly disrupts the security of white privilege in Haiti. First the white protagonists are stranded in a place that violates their customs and taboos, and then they are surrounded by Black Others who do not acknowledge or respect their racial authority. Mourners clamor around the carriage until the driver urgently spurs his horses on, clearly concerned for the safety of his patrons. Further down the road, Legendre stops the carriage, locking Madeline in place with his gaze as he reaches through the window to grab hold of the scarf around her neck. From behind him zombies lumber down the hill towards the carriage, and once again the driver fearfully incites his horses to keep moving. His evident terror at the sight of Legendre and his zombies immediately situates the couple (and through them the white subjects they stand for) in danger. The sequence creates a Gothic sense of foreboding by rendering impotent the one Black person who had shown Madeline and Neal deference in Haiti, and who had been charged with their care. Their safety is
no longer assured by their status, as even the servant who respects their race and wealth cannot protect them from Others like himself. Binaristic opposition, then, becomes a source of danger unto itself.

When they arrive at their destination, Neal admonishes the driver, shouting that they could have been killed. Unfazed, the driver replies, "Worse than killed. We might have been caught." He explains that the creatures they saw by the road were "not men" but "dead bodies…zombies forced to work the sugar fields at night." Here again Haitian zombilore trickles down through the sieves of ethnographic realism, Gothic literary influence and filmic imagery, locating horror in the topsy-turvy reversals of life and death, here and there, us and them. Reflecting Seabrook's understanding of zombilore, the driver's claim that being caught would be worse than being killed conveys to his listeners that the threat of a zombi is not in fact death, but undeath. Undeath, in this sense, involves not just a symbolic reversal of power dynamics within Western cultural hierarchies, but a literal reversal in which the self dies and is resurrected as that absolute Other. The implication is that if a white person becomes a zombi, then they become a slave. The association with slavery and Blackness thus leads to a question which underlies the text and produces a sort of anxious terror in the white spectator: if the white person becomes a zombi, and zombis are slaves, and slaves are Black…does that mean a white person can be made Black? Anthropological discourse had established race as an essential biological fact, but just

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244 Today anthropologists, like most social theorists, understand that race is not a biological fact at all but a socially and culturally constructed concept. However, at this point in history scientists and laypeople took for granted the idea that race was both biological and essential. While unfortunately a full discussion of the evolution of scientific discourse on race is beyond the scope of this project, there are many good books on the topic. Please see: Michael Banton, Racial Theories (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Stephen Jay Gould, The Mismeasure of Man (W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); Theodore W. Allen, The Invention of the White Race (Verso, 1994); Richard Dyer, White: Essays on Race and Culture (Routledge, 2013); Colin Kidd, The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000 (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Benjamin Isaac, The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity (Princeton University Press, 2013); Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader (Wiley, 1997).
as undeath challenges the biological truth that death is final, it also challenges the idea that race is essentially biological. If it's possible for a person to be transformed into the absolute Other -- contrary to the accepted wisdom of scientific reason at the time -- can Western science still be trusted as an authority on objective truth? The very idea of zombis undermines the epistemology of race itself.

While such an existential challenge to dominant beliefs about race arouses a Gothic sense of disquietude, at the same time *White Zombie* raises more immediate concerns related to the U.S. occupation of Haiti, which was still in full force when the film was released in 1931. In the colonial imagination Black Haitians are constructed as the absolute Other, so Haiti's national autonomy therefore threatens U.S. political dominance as well as the ideology of white racial superiority. The history of U.S.-Haiti relationships underscores the threat of this symbolic reversal; the Haitian Revolution demonstrated faults in the logic of white cultural superiority and brought an entire colonial economy crashing to a halt. The Haitians' successful overthrow of the colonial power not only proclaimed the strength and determination of disenfranchised Black people, but suggested that slaves could and would seek revenge against those who had subjugated them. As has already been discussed, legends and rumors about Jean Zombi (and his folkloric offspring) fomented the latent fear that Black people might someday take revenge by making white Americans their slaves. Both *The Magic Island* and *White Zombie* reached U.S. audiences during the military occupation of Haiti, the presence of marines stationed there fanning the flames for a phoenix-like resurrection of revolutionary zombielore. This time, however, zombies were less subversive miscreants and more symbols of a racist stereotype of Blackness, constructed entirely in opposition to a glorified conception of whiteness. That stereotype was reified by Seabrook's claims regarding the authenticity of Haitian zombielore,
which when he encountered it understood zombies as pitiable slaves rather than revolutionary heroes.\textsuperscript{245} Reflecting the Haitian lore, Seabrook and the driver both emphasize the threat of undeath over that of death. Zombies are not frightening for what they can do, but frightening because of what they represent: the possibility that a person's autonomy could be stolen, that they could be made into a slave, that they could become "one of them."

The first scene of \textit{White Zombie} depicts the unsettling interactions between a young white couple and Black Haitians, referencing Seabrook's ethnographic details about zombielore at the very beginning to proclaim the authentic source material of this horror film. In doing so \textit{White Zombie} heightens its horrific potential by claiming a level of authenticity. However, it also both reflects and constructs an image of Haiti in opposition to the U.S., imagining it as a land full of authentic monsters. Arriving at Beaumont's home Madeline and Neal are greeted by his friend, a missionary who has lived in Haiti for nearly twenty years. When they describe their encounter on

\textsuperscript{245} Much more could be said here about the transformation of the zombie figure in Haitian lore. No one published on this topic before the archives in Port-au-Prince were all but destroyed in the 2010 earthquake, so at this time it's nearly impossible to research Haitian zombilore from the nineteenth century. However, it is possible to speculate about why the nature of zombis differs in Haitian rumors from the nineteenth century versus those from the twentieth. In the previous chapter I explained how rumors about Jean Zombi may have been employed as a wartime strategy, purposely spread from Black to white military camps (and circulated among Black regimes) to proclaim the superior and even supernatural power of the rebel forces. This, I argued, served the twin purposes of sowing doubt among the enemy and buttressing the rebels' hopes for success after a long and embittered battle. In the case of the military occupation of Haiti, which may have reanimated historic fears on both sides of the colonial divide, the zombi slave served as another means by which to proclaim the Haitians' supernatural power over death. For Haitians it conjured the fear of being a slave that was leftover in the national consciousness since the Revolution, but it also played into the U.S. fear of white slavery that emerged following both the Revolution and the Civil War. Without impugning the potential that Vodouisants actually do believe in zombis and their attendant folklore, it's possible to imagine that rumors about zombi slaves were purposely spread to occupying forces during the military intervention by those who remembered the success of the earlier rumor campaign. In 1928, when Seabrook encountered lore surrounding zombi slaves, Haiti had already been occupied for thirteen years -- roughly the same period of time as that from the start of the Haitian Revolution to the first document mentioning Jean Zombi. While purely speculative, it would make sense if Haitians had purposely related these rumors to Seabrook, knowing that as a famous white author he would disseminate them widely to his people. Haitians conveyed similar zombilore to other U.S. writers and marines, possibly suggesting that they remembered their previous success with zombi rumors during colonial conflict and hoped to similarly quell U.S. investment in Haiti and/or encourage troops to withdraw. Being conceived of as the "absolute Other" and a cogent threat to white American autonomy, then, may have been exactly what the Haitians wanted.
the road Dr. Bruner is unsurprised. He tells them that Haiti is a strange place, full of magic and superstition, and notes that even for the most rationally-minded it can be hard to tell fact from fiction. Like Seabrook, he depicts the island itself as a magical place -- a place where the natural laws of logic, science, and religion do not always apply. And, like Seabrook, he articulates his belief in zombies through the shield of scientific rationality and his own Christian religiosity. The idea that Vodou entails supernatural powers can no longer be dismissed as superstitious folklore belonging only to ignorant natives, because it has now been confirmed by a trustworthy Western man -- one who is white, wealthy, Christian, and scientifically-astute. Dr. Bruner's corroboration of Haitian folk beliefs thus authenticates Vodou and zombies as real and immediate threats to the white interlopers (and, by extension, the white Americans they represent). Such authentication heightens the growing sense of terror or foreboding because rather than filmic fantasies the zombies can now be understood as foreign facts.

While Dr. Bruner engages Beaumont's guests, Beaumont finds Lugosi at his sugar mill. In the dark of night, the mill runs in full force like clockwork, dozens of Black zombie slaves laboring silently, expressionless and mechanical. At one point a zombie tumbles into the giant grinder. Beaumont watches in horror, but the other zombies keep pushing the wheel, monotonous as ever, implying that this undead corpse will be ground into the sugar and eventually consumed. Cannibalism isn't the focus of the scene, however, and is left unspoken but implied -- just as it was in Seabrook's account. Legendre enumerates the benefits of zombification to the horrified Beaumont, noting that unlike traditional workers his zombies are "not worried about long hours." As discussed previously in the analysis of Seabrook's factory zombies, the idea of undead workers as scabs or *lumpenproletariat* reflects concerns about job security during the Great Depression. It also illustrates how concerns about race and class were closely intertwined with
the death of colonialism, particularly in light of Haiti's rising economic potential as a sugar-producer and their national autonomy, which was won by overthrowing white powers. Clearly a member of the upper class if not the aristocracy -- as evidenced by his castle-like abode, fancy dress, and patrician demeanor -- Legendre sits atop a cultural hierarchy. Having made zombies of all his enemies, from rival Voodoo-masters to thieves and politicians, Legendre embodies a certain brand of postcolonial nationalism. Following Fanon, Legendre appears to be an agent of "the national bourgeoisies and their specialized elites, whose system of governance tended to replace outmoded colonial models with new class-based and ultimately exploitative ones, thereby reanimating old colonial structures in new terms."246 By virtue of the Revolution there should be no slaves in Haiti, and certainly no white slave masters. Yet Legendre symbolizes a postcolonial system of governance which allows the exploitation of Black people and their labor to continue under the aegis of the U.S. occupation. I do not mean to suggest that Legendre is an American; he is not. However, the film was made and released during the time of the U.S. military occupation and was inspired by The Magic Island, which allows us to understand that a white man in control of a sugar plantation in Haiti likely reflected white ownership of the HASCO plantation (and its zombie laborers), as described by Seabrook. Given White Zombie's adherence to a binaristic division between Haitian and U.S. culture, it would not have been fitting for the villain of the film to be an American. Legendre thus appears to be of Eastern European descent or origin, a cultural identity likely chosen to piggy-back on Lugosi's popular portrayal of Dracula the previous year. Legendre's sugar mill not only symbolizes U.S. economic interest in Haiti, then, but revives a "dead" aspect of Haitian political governance and folk life: slavery. The exploitation of Black bodies is articulated in new terms since the slaves are no longer living beings but undead automatons -- no longer people but monsters. In this light,

Legendre's role in *White Zombie* assumes greater meaning than his characterization as a Dracula knock-off might imply. Although the imperialist French have left Haiti to its own rule and independence, a powerful Voodoo-master has seized control and perpetuates the same system of colonial domination over native Haitians that was previously undone by the Revolution. The imperialist colonial master has been, in effect, reanimated.

Legendre offers Beaumont a powder that he can sprinkle "in a flower, or a glass of wine" to begin the process of Madeline's zombification. Although he initially refuses, Beaumont eventually takes the powder at Legendre's insistence, promising himself to use it only as a last resort. A close up on Legendre's eyes serves as a transition to the next scene, where Madeline dresses for her wedding as drums beat outside her window. As with the opening sequence of the film, the sound of drumming offscreen indexes the foreignness of the landscape and the foreboding proximity of Black people and their mysterious religion, which surrounds the vulnerable white ingénue and seems to close in around her, trapping her in the castle-like plantation manse. Beaumont walks Madeline down the aisle of a Gothic staircase, pleading with her the whole time to abandon Neal and elope with him instead. She refuses, and Beaumont reluctantly administers the powder by slipping it into her drink at the wedding reception. As Madeline lifts a cup of wine to her lips she sees the face of Legendre reflected in the dark liquid, his eyes again forming a focal point. Captivated, she appears to fall into a trance before collapsing, apparently dead, into Neal's arms.

As Gary Rhodes points out in his book about the film, *White Zombie*'s primary literary antecedents were Goethe's *Faust* (1808) and George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), to say nothing
of Seabrook or Webb.\textsuperscript{247} Since explicit details of the resurrection ritual had not been included in \textit{The Magic Island} and were for all intents and purposes unknown to the filmmakers, they drew from Maurier's use of hypnotism and mesmerism, returning repeatedly to close-ups on Legendre's eyes to imply that his zombifiying powers somehow lie in his gaze -- in effect, his visuality. The image of Legendre's eyes in Madeline's cup not only indicate that he is responsible for her apparent death (rather than Beaumont), but reinforces a connection the film seems to draw between the colonial gaze and undeath. As a "specialized elite" of Haiti's "national bourgeoisie," Legendre sees -- and controls -- everyone on the island from Black Haitian peasants to Voodoo masters to white interlopers. Whether the spectator encounters his eyes superimposed over a pewter goblet of wine or a moonlit sugarcane field, the repetition of ocular imagery suggests that Legendre is omniscient and omnipotent. This visual poetic takes its inspiration from the Gothic works of literature the film references, including \textit{Faust} and \textit{Trilby}, replacing narrative allusions to a sinister presence with visual cues that suggest the same lurking portents of evil. This is one example of what Lisa Hopkins has described as a "Gothicizing tactic," which heightens the horrific potential of a film by exaggerating and expanding on themes it contains which are already associated with Gothic literature. She notes that

\begin{quote}
Often set in ancient, partially ruined castles or mansions haunted by the real or apparent threat of a supernatural presence, [Gothic literature]'s cast of characters typically includes a mysterious and threatening older man, a vulnerable heroine, and a character who is poised ambiguously between good and evil. Although early Gothic novels were often set abroad, the sense of unease and the obsession with doubling that characterizes the form also typically include the fear that it also had something profound to say about the reader's own condition. \end{quote}

\textit{White Zombie} clearly adheres to the Gothic setting and character types, so its "Gothicizing tactics" are the cinematic conventions it uses to impart that sense of unease, of doubling, and of eerie parallels between the situation of the spectators and that of the characters. Moreover,

\textsuperscript{247} Rhodes, \textit{White Zombie}, 70.
Gothic elements of the mise-en-scene from costume choices to the candle-lit castle corridors not only reflect the film's Gothic literary influences, but dovetail with Seabrook's account in their invocation of authenticating narrative details (such as the sugar mill and the zombifying powder). Like *The Magic Island*, *White Zombie* collapses themes of Gothicism and Haitian authenticity in its use of visual imagery. For example, Seabrook peppered his narrative with examples of the syncretic relationship between Voodoo and Christianity, noting the use of Catholic imagery in many of Haiti's pagan arts and rituals. The film makes extensive use of cross symbolism, though almost never in an overtly Christian way: distorted crosses are formed in shadows on the walls, medieval crosses carved into the stone banisters, and Madeline's wedding gown adorned with a fashionable cross of decorative fabric. In fact, the only Christian crosses seen in the film are found in the gloomy cemetery on a hill where Madeline's body is interred. Situating these "authentic" crosses in the graveyard not only invokes the Gothic and furthers the plot, it suggests that the only place for true Christianity in Haiti is the grave. In this way, *White Zombie* seems to warn spectators that Christianity in Haiti has died and been replaced by something much more sinister, seductive, and potentially fatal for whites.
In the next scene, Legendre and his pack of zombies meet in Madeline's crypt to perform their dark ceremony, removing her body from the coffin and hastily carrying it back to the castle when they hear Neal approaching the tomb. Discovering his fiancée's body is missing, Neal screams in grief and terror, and eventually seeks counsel from the missionary. In his office, which is conspicuously lined with books in many languages, much like Dr. Villiers' office in *The Magic Island*, Dr. Bruner suggests that if Madeline's body is gone she may not be dead. Not only does this scene parallel Seabrook's experience with Dr. Villiers exactly, but Rhodes argues that it also takes inspiration from fairy tales and Browning's *Dracula*. As he explains, "*[White Zombie's]* use of travel to a foreign land, its treatment of the hero and heroine, [and] its inclusion of a wise elder" parallel the earlier works precisely.\footnote{Ibid., 72.} The Gothic and the authentic thus come into contact again, and collapse in the character of Dr. Bruner. Attempting to explain the possibility of Madeline's zombification, Dr. Bruner tells Neal that, "the natives brought superstitions with them from Africa…some of them can be traced all the way back to ancient Egypt." Notwithstanding the illogic of such a claim, Dr. Bruner's assertion connects the power of Voodoo to another time and another place, suggesting that this powerful force is reaching forward through the ages and living again through the Black bodies that invoke it. At the same time, this resurgence of Haitian zombilore in American consciousness during the occupation seems to reflect a reanimation of powerful folkloric dynamics that first emerged during the Haitian Revolution. One Gothicizing tactic of *White Zombie*, then, seems to be its disquieting conflation of past and present, here and there, us and them, life and death. Without overtly articulating specific racial concerns, the film plays on the latent postcolonial anxieties of its audience by hybridizing the authentic and the fantastic.
During their conversation Dr. Bruner also links belief to action, instructing Neal that, "wherever you find a superstition, you find a practice." Neal is as incredulous as Seabrook was when listening to Polynice talk about zombis, but horrified at the thought that his beloved fiancé might be among the living inhabitants of Haiti. "You don't think she's alive?! In the hands of natives?! Better dead than that!" Neal echoes the white racist notion, illustrated profoundly in *Birth of a Nation*, that for a virginal white woman in the early twentieth century death would be better than miscegenation. Simultaneously, then, *White Zombie* draws upon Gothic horror and a claim to ethnographic authenticity to reflect a prominent U.S. cultural concern regarding miscegenation in the age of separate-but-equal, as well as the potential danger of cross-cultural exchange between Haiti and the U.S. against the background of the occupation. Ignoring Neal's concerns, Dr. Bruner attempts to convince Neal that Voodoo itself is the greatest threat to Madeline, authenticating zombification as a possibility by citing the same Haitian law that Dr. Villiers cited for Seabrook, in exactly the same fashion.

Back at Legendre's castle, the resurrected Madeline plays piano for Beaumont. Numb to his attempts at interaction, Madeline stares blindly ahead, unable to speak to him or return his gaze. Beaumont pleads with Legendre to undo the spell, lamenting that her lifeless eyes have robbed her of her personhood and him of his romantic attraction to her. "Better to see hate in them, than this horrible emptiness," he says in supplication. Again the film emphasizes the power of visuality, contrasting the colonial gaze with the plight of the colonialist's victim. If the repeated return to images of Legendre's eyes were meant to convey his power and dominance, then the relative "emptiness" of Madeline's eyes symbolizes her loss of power and subordination to him. The "soulless" eyes Seabrook ascribed to Lamercie's zombis are now attributed to this

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young white woman, an allusion to ethnographic authenticity on the part of the filmmakers that also serves as a Gothicizing tactic.

Legendre refuses Beaumont's appeal, and instead offers him a drink of wine. After he drinks, Beaumont becomes alarmed at the thought that Legendre might have slipped zombie powder into his goblet. Legendre confirms his suspicions with homoerotic undertones when he replies that he's "taken a fancy to" Beaumont, his intonation implying that he would like to keep and control Beaumont just as he has Madeline. Beaumont staggers, shocked and horrified that what he did to Madeline is now being done to him. This is the most crucial moment of the film, the epitome of what it stands for and what it can represent for postcolonial theorists and critical race scholars. Even though Beaumont eventually recognized the atrocity of his past actions and sought to repair the damage he had done to the living being whom he made a slave, this repentance is not enough to save him -- just as sharecropping and Jim Crow laws were not enough to atone for the horrors of slavery. The real and terrifying possibility that vengeance might be not only sought, but justified, hangs in the air as Beaumont realizes his fate.

In his analysis of Gothicism in zombie films, Kyle Bishop argues that "by attacking Madeline (and, to a lesser extent, Beaumont), Legendre appears to cross a crucial moral line." It is the crossing of this line that serves as a catalyst for Dr. Bruner and Neal to come to Madeline's rescue, the climax of the film. Corresponding with Seabrook's horrific realization of zombi slave labor in *The Magic Island*, Legendre violates the boundaries established not only between woman and man, white and Black, but also between upper class and working class, imperialist and native. "Thus," as Bishop concludes,

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the white, Western, Christian characters shift from tolerating the grisly practice of zombification among the natives to being incensed to 'righteous' action. This sudden motivation parallels [Aimé] Césaire's discourse on Hitler and his critique of France's reaction to the rise of fascism. The West accepts barbarism committed against the so-called savages but reacts violently against barbarism committed against themselves.\textsuperscript{251}

Although they have been surrounded by zombies for the entire film, Neal, Dr. Bruner, and Beaumont are only stirred to action when white people face the threat of zombification.

As he begins to turn into a zombie, Beaumont loses the ability to speak, and Legendre remarks that he is the first of Legendre's victims to realize what is happening to him. This is a curious claim considering that several of Legendre's zombie slaves were Voodoo-masters in life, and it stands to reason that they would have understood their fate since they had perpetrated it against others. Beaumont may well be the first upper class white man to be transformed, however, so Legendre's assertion suggests that Beaumont's comprehension of his fate has more to do with race and class than with the logic of the storyline. Unlike the native Haitians, in this racist logic, the white American possesses a sophisticated enough intelligence to understand his own enslavement. While Béla Lugosi's Eastern European appearance superficially communicates a Caucasian identity, and while his main horde of zombies are predominantly white (though several appear to be in blackface), Bishop argues that Legendre and his zombies are "implicitly black" and "ethnically part of Haiti."\textsuperscript{252} What makes them Black, in other words, is not necessarily their skin tone but their membership in the imagined community of Haitian Voodoo. In essence, Legendre is "Blackened" by his adoption of Voodoo (and his embrace of Haiti, Haitian life and culture), just as Beaumont is "Blackened" by Voodoo's contaminating force, a form of living death which makes him a slave. Meanwhile, Neal and Dr. Bruner encounter a local Black man on the road (played by a white man in shoddy blackface) who performs an

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 78.
Uncle Tom character, praising the white colonialists in Haiti, denouncing Voodoo, and claiming to be the only man who's ever been zombified and "come back alive." If the metaphor of Blackness-as-death is extended and we accept this Tom's claim that he has cheated it, then the implication is that only by abandoning Voodoo -- in the film, a metonym for Blackness itself -- can one be redeemed from death. The surface level of skin tone must be the only Blackness that remains, and, as in the case of the actor, whiteness must be clearly visible underneath. Only by internalizing whiteness and white supremacy can one escape the fate of zombiehood.

In the final scene of the film, Dr. Bruner stops Madeline before she can carry out Legendre's command to kill Neal, and a struggle ensues. With his power called into question by Madeline's disobedience, Legendre commands his zombies to attack. Outside on the castle walls, looming above a turbulent sea, the zombies are unaffected by bullets from Neal's gun. Dr. Bruner attacks Legendre; as he weakens from the assault, his zombies hurl themselves off the cliff one after the other, presumably because they have no master to command them. Legendre desperately attacks Dr. Bruner and Neal with some kind of powder, and Beaumont, not yet completely zombified, summons enough autonomy to lunge at Legendre. Locked in a deathly embrace, the two tumble over the edge of the castle and fall together, crashing into the wave-beaten rocks below. As if their unholy collaboration bound them to each other, they suffer the same demise. If Beaumont was the Gothic character type poised precariously between good and evil, then he also embodied the psychological dimensions of white racial postcolonial anxiety. Having succumbed to the influence of the Other and enacted an unnatural symbolic reversal by killing and enslaving a white woman, his only hope for redemption is this fantastic murder-suicide. He kills both the evil colonialist as well as himself, triumphing over the hypnotic and seductive power of Voodoo. In this sense, *White Zombie* unwittingly conflates Voodoo (or its
own racist image of Voodoo) with colonialism and the evils of white racial dominance, its Gothicized poetics reflecting both the temptation of white supremacist ideology and the need to overcome it. When Beaumont kills himself and Legendre, then, it would seem that white guilt has won over the forces of neocolonialism in Haiti. And, yet, the racism that exoticizes and demonizes Haitian culture remains firmly intact throughout the film. Having read the final scene closely, we can see how it was only the suggestion of white slavery and the imperilment of the white woman that drove the heroes to action; while Legendre's zombie slaves were pitiable and served as evidence of his evil nature, it wasn't their enslavement that provoked the Gothic sense of unease or disquietude in spectators. When Beaumont sacrifices himself he redeems white American masculinity by vanquishing Voodoo and all it represents. With the zombies, Legendre, and Beaumont vanquished, Madeline regains consciousness and rejoices with Neal as the intertitle proclaims, "The End."

**Hybridity**

*White Zombie* was an unprecedented financial success for an independent film at the time, and one of the few horror films approved by Nazis. It owed its success in no small part to its sensationalist claims to authenticity and its direct engagement with popular nonfiction literature, capitalizing on ethnographic interest in Haiti (as well as Seabrook's renown) and employing Gothicizing tactics that heightened the film's horrific potential to attract a wide range of moviegoers. Although less well-received than *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*, *White Zombie* launched a craze for Voodoo and zombies in Classical cinema. Zombies quickly became Hollywood's most popular monster-type, with dozens of films following throughout the

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nineteen-thirties, forties, and fifties, similarly capitalizing on the notion of this authentic -- yet Gothic -- horror. As Bendix would remind us, however, there is something deeply problematic in ascribing "authenticity" to what must be considered fundamentally hybrid: an American fantasy of Haitian folklore, which itself derived from African beliefs.

The hybridity of zombielore, however, did not deter promotional advertisers from capitalizing on the notion that their films offered an authentic depiction of African or Afro-Caribbean cultures. Radio advertisements for *White Zombie* began, "Out of their West Indian Island comes a tale terror and romance, of witchcraft and Voodoo, and all the weird black magic that the white man seldom sees." Such advertisements were meant to draw spectators into theatres with promises that they could witness, with their own eyes, that which they may have read about in the popular short stories, plays, and travelogues describing Haitian folk life. The visualization of these people and practices was thus key to generating interest and excitement about a film. Similarly, posters for many zombie films promised viewers the chance to "Go where no white man has gone before!" in much the same way that earlier ethnographic films had projected the fantasy of imperial travel and conquest. Fatima Rony has described those documentary films as attempts to condense the distance between disparate peoples and places, allowing Western spectators to voyeuristically travel to exotic locales and to experience the rush of colonial adventure. In doing so, early ethnographic cinema shared an affinity with anthropology of the same era, both in terms of its exoticization of distant lands and in its notion of non-Western Others as symbols of the past or a quondam stage of humanity. As Rony puts it in her book *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*,

\[254\] Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse* inspired a spate of films in the 1940s and 50s.
\[255\] The same intro was used to advertise *I Walked With a Zombie* in 1942.
\[256\] Rony, *The Third Eye*. 

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Cinema appears to bring the past and that which is culturally distant closer; likewise, anthropology, which posits that indigenous peoples are remnants of earlier ages, has been largely concerned with the description and preservation or reconstruction of the spatially and historically distant. […] Early-twentieth-century cinema is thus a privileged locus for the investigation of the coming together of nineteenth-century obsession with the past, and twentieth-century desire to make visibly comprehensible the difference of cultural 'others.'

The project of visualizing the Other was thus closely imbricated with the project of visualizing the past.

Although Classical-era zombie films were not -- and did not claim to be -- ethnographic documentaries, their advertisements suggested that these movies offered authentic visions of life in Haiti, Africa, and the Caribbean. At the same time, as horror films their advertisements implicitly referenced other popular films in that genre, many of which were filmic translations of Gothic literary precedents (such as Nosferatu (1922), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1923), Frankenstein (1931), or Dracula (1931). Both the Gothic and primitivist anthropology of the sort described by Rony share an interest in the past and its persistence in the present, whether this takes the form of ghosts and revenants or people presumed to be "savage" or evolutionarily delayed. The filmic visualization of either supernatural beings or exotic peoples in this era would be titillating enough, but zombie films claimed to offer both. Moreover, by proposing that a film contained rare glimpses into a world 'seldom seen by whites,' zombie movie advertisements simultaneously distinguished zombie films from other popular and familiar films in the Gothic horror genre by proclaiming their authenticity, and Gothicized the discourse of authenticity surrounding ethnographic cinema by proclaiming the existence of authentic monsters. In other words, zombie film advertisements coalesced Gothic horror themes (reflecting what Rony describes as a "nineteenth-century obsession with the past") and the popular fascination with ethnographic authenticity (Rony's "twentieth-century desire" to

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257 Ibid., 9.
visualize cultural Others). In this way they capitalized on both the familiarity of the Gothic and the exoticism of the ethnographic. The zombie was thus poised to represent a new kind of monster as well as a new kind of horror film, and the key to advertising this was the promise that spectators could see exotic Others and their authentic monsters.

Rather than recognizing the hybridity of zombielore as a product of African, Afro-Carribean, and U.S. folklore, then, advertising tactics subtly suggested that zombie films were hybrids of Gothic cinema and ethnographic realism. *White Zombie*, for example, made use of at least two promotional posters, one which clearly emphasized the film's Gothic themes and another which went so far as to quote the Haitian *Code Penal* regarding zombies on the poster itself (pictured below). Other films proclaimed Voodoo as their subject matter but used shadowy imagery to relate the Gothic nature of the film, as with "Voodoo Man" (pictured below). The main strategy, however, was to entice potential spectators into theatres with promises of shocking or salacious images of Black Others engaging in bizarre behaviors. Many zombie movie posters provided sensational lists of the exotic practices that spectators could expect to witness in a given film: "the virgin sacrifice," "the blood dance," "the virgin dance of death," "the sacrificial altar of skulls," "the hypnotizing power of Voodoo drums," etc. However, not only do these supposedly-common behaviors and abilities not exist within the practice of Vodou, but such events rarely took place in the films for which they were advertised. The sole purpose of such promotional materials, then, was to market the films on the basis of their supposed authenticity. Moreover, the practice of marketing films by claiming or alluding to authenticity continued well into the 1960s, suggesting that fascination with the authentic monster of the Voodoo zombie may have been a driving force behind the production of many of the 100+ zombie films made between 1931 and 1968.
By marketing zombie films via sensational claims to authenticity in the 1930s, advertisers furthered the notion that the Haitian zombi was an authentic monster. However, the zombie was not necessarily the only authentic monster that Classical-era cinema equated with exotic places, primitivist anthropology, and people of color. Rony argues that the popularity of 1933’s *King Kong* not only advanced the notion of what she calls an *ethnographiable* monster, but did so by proposing that hybridity is monstrous. She notes,

*King Kong* is part of a long line of films representing the person of African, Asian, or Pacific Islander descent as an ape-monster. In its construction of the ethnographiable monster, *King Kong* draws on discourses -- mainly nativist -- on the fear of the hybrid as monster. *King Kong* summons a notion of time that feeds into ideologies of survival of the fittest, and of the indigenous body as the site of collision between past and present, Ethnographic and Historical, Primitive and Modern. […] *King Kong* is a pastiche film about the making of an ethnographic film and hence offers a meta-commentary on 'seeing anthropology,' one which, I will argue, foreshadows the fear of the postcolonial Other as monster.²⁵⁸

As we’ve seen, the fear of the postcolonial Other as a monster actually stems from Gothic literature of the nineteenth century. However, Rony's idea that "seeing anthropology" in a horror film allows for the understanding of indigenous peoples as somehow monstrous has strong resonance with the history of zombielore. Not only was zombielore catapulted to a more prominent place in American consciousness by the publication of travelogues and other ethnographic writing about Haiti, but even nineteenth century zombielore expressed an imaginative relationship between Blackness and monstrosity via figures like Jean Zombi, Zombi, and even the zombie phantoms of plantation lore. Additionally, the entire corpus of zombielore through the early 1930s "summons a notion of time" that is past and which "feeds into ideologies of…the indigenous body as a site of collision between past and present," resurrecting as it does extant examples of Black subjugation (and resistance) and suggesting that the history of Black

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.
oppression has consequences for the future of white power. Moreover, the idea that hybridity is in some way monstrous dovetails with the inherent dualism of the zombie figure, who is living but dead, past but present, freeman but slave, African but American, Black but -- possibly -- white. Rony's conception of hybridity as monstrosity is perhaps most apparent in the fantasies of miscegenation that permeate zombielore, which suggest in various ways that the comingling of Black and white cultures is what produces zombies. As discussed in the previous chapter, for most of the nineteenth century this comingling was explicitly linked to colonial slavery and its demise, with figures like Jean Zombi and Zombi emerging as rebel slaves who liberated their people from bondage. However, as lore about Black zombies stealing white babies from nurseries or narratives about a white woman transformed into a Voodoo zombie in Haiti illustrate, there was a pressing concern that the sanctity of whiteness could be contaminated by Blackness. Thus the hybridity of the zombie and its attendant monstrosity was in some ways linked to the hybridity of biracial offspring and their heralding of a new age in which whiteness -- and white dominance -- were unstable and insecure.

Classical-era zombie films articulate a specific version of what Avery Gordon would describe as "cultural haunting," which accounts for not only memories of social or cultural upheaval but also the way such memories continue to affect us in the here and now. These films contain colonial narratives wherein Black people operate as a ghostly presence, defined in part by a relationship to the supernatural that is at once powerful and terrifying. Following Rony, the ethnographiable or authentic monsters visualized by these films thereby contribute to racist fantasies in which Black people are seen as potent threats to white American society. While white people in these films can claim political, economic, and legal authority on the basis

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of racial superiority, Black people have an inherent connection to powers unknowable or inaccessible to whites through their practice of Voodoo. White Americans are haunted, then, not only by the ghosts of slavery but by the specters of religious difference perceived as threatening their way of life in the present (much like how Voodoo was depicted in early cinema as analogous with devil worship, and how narratives of Jean Zombi often equated him with a god, and how Zombi folklore often contained covert references to African religious protections, etc). Annalee Newitz suggests that even Birth of a Nation articulates the notion of a "haunted whiteness," seeing the knights of the KKK as ghostly figures themselves who are in turn haunted by the corporeal presence of living Black people, 'proto-zombies' who are at once symbols of the painful loss of the Civil War and emblems of a past that refuses to die. White Zombie, and many films that followed, offered narratives wherein Voodoo and zombification turn white Americans into slaves, thereby transgressing the comforting binaries of living and dead, white and Black, then and now. The zombie, then, became an explicit manifestation of Rony's "indigenous body as the site of a collision between past and present." Through this collision, the filmmakers inscribed the zombie film with meaning beyond its ostensive lexical content and made it into a chronotope of racial thinking during the Jim Crow era. As Shohat and Stam argue, the fiction film inherited the role of the nineteenth century realist novel in relation to national imaginaries, and like their postcolonial Gothic predecessors, zombie films spoke to and about the anxieties of white Americans in a period of increasing interracial and international contact. Looking at this early history we can see clearly how folklore and anthropology informed the development of literary and filmic narratives founded on the premise that Blackness somehow haunts postcolonial regimes of white power in the United States.

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260 Rony, The Third Eye, 15.
261 Shohat and Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism, 102.
In his analysis of the processes that generate folklore, Barre Toelken argues that the study of folklore must begin with the understanding of a "cultural metaphor," a mutual awareness that meaning runs deeper than its surface content in a particular cultural context. Following Seabrook's *The Magic Island*, the cultural metaphor of early zombie films -- and indeed, the horror -- resided in the fantasy that African Americans would somehow reclaim the "magic" of Voodoo religion and use it to exact a fitting revenge for slavery, ultimately reversing historical hierarchies by making white people into their zombie slaves. The anxiety evinced in these zombie narratives, then, also reflects a problematic version of white guilt. The punishment of being made a Voodoo-zombie forced to toil on the plantations of a foreign land would fit the crime of African slavery in America, which was often justified in terms of Biblical slavery. The zombie narrative thus illustrates an appropriate symbolic reversal of slavery in terms race and religion. The horror of these narratives, then, lies not only in the idea that slaves might successfully rebel and castigate their oppressors, but that such rebellion and revenge would be justified.

Zora Neale Hurston's ethnography of Haiti, written under the guidance of anthropologist Franz Boas, has been heavily critiqued for its demonization of Haitian spiritual practices. In 1938, however, many considered *Tell My Horse* to offer a more sympathetic view of Voodoo and zombies than Seabrook's account, and films such as *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943, discussed in the following chapters) took inspiration from it. Just a year before Hurston

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263. Michael Dash has called it "a dismaying apology for the occupation," (Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, 1997, 59.) and criticized Hurston's depiction of Haitians who are "gentle and loveable except for their enormous and unconscious cruelty." (Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 82.)
264. More could be said about the fact that Hurston's ethnography is not, in fact, very sympathetic, yet her relative status as an African American leads many of her readers to interpret it as such.
265. In fact, after reading Hurston's narrative, director Jacques Tourneur became so concerned with accurately representing an "authentic" colonial situation in *I Walked With a Zombie* that he employed folklorist LeRoy
published her monograph, Melville Herskovits had published his comprehensive and authoritative *Life in a Haitian Valley* (1937), yet his ethnography never achieved the same level of influence as did Hurston's in the horror film industry. Because she was African American, many assumed Hurston's to be the more authentic of the two ethnographies, despite (and perhaps because of) the fact that hers was more sensational and less contradictory to previous zombie narratives than was Herskovits's account. Literally hundreds of filmic iterations of zombie narratives emanated throughout the twentieth century, sometimes drawing on and sometimes eliding the ethnographic histories wrought by Seabrook, Hurston, Herskovits and their predecessors. Yet nearly all zombie films maintained the "cultural metaphor" of the zombie as the subjugated undead -- as the tangible symbol of historical oppression that returns to take its vengeance on contemporary society, "enslaving" innocent people by transforming them from 'one of us' into 'one of them.' In Toelken's terminology, the cultural metaphor that recurs is *conservative* in its meaning yet *dynamic* in its content.

As John Cussans describes, "Haiti and its zombie have now passed materially beyond their temporal and territorial limits to haunt the dreams of those 'living' in distant, safer and more 'reasonable' lands. Mass media constitutes a global and a-temporal sphere in which the spirit of the zombie now wanders endlessly." Understanding how zombies find footing first in the folklore genres of belief, legend, and rumor and subsequently in ethnographic discourse on Haiti allows us to understand the first fifty years of zombie cinema as part of a colonialist project that sought to produce, promote, and perpetuate a racial imaginary wherein the "dead" Black culture preys on "living" white society.

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Antoine, "who had studied the voodooism of his native Haiti," as an advisor on the film. (Kordas, “New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies: The Historical Development of the Zombie in American Popular Culture,” 27.) This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

266 Scott, *Monsters And The Monstrous*, 47.
At the end of the previous chapter I suggested that images developed for and through the sensational advertisement of zombie cinema contributed to the social imagination of Haiti, Vodou, and even Blackness itself. Using specific examples of promotional tactics, I demonstrated how the exoticism of films set in Haiti, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, and other tropical milieus reinforced the perception of fundamental oppositions between U.S. communities and those of Afro-Caribbean nations. Since these films also depended on Blackness as an exoticizing element, people of color were not imagined as part of the U.S. community in the same way as the white protagonists, and Blackness came to be affiliated with the uncivilized, erotic, and even monstrous characterization of island natives in Voodoo horror films. This chapter begins by further investigating some of the ways zombie films and the images they contained shaped the imagination of Blackness during the Great Depression, ultimately participating in the development of a racial imaginary. In Anthropology, the noun 'imaginary' refers to a set of values, beliefs, opinions, institutions, laws, and symbols prevalent amongst a group of people that shapes their conception of the social whole. The term

267 The idea of the imaginary has been important to theorists from across the social sciences, but is perhaps most closely associated with the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology. No single theorist can be credited with the concept as a whole because it has evolved through multiple critical discourses. However, Benedict Anderson and Arjun Appadurai (whose works are addressed at length in the following pages) are often credited with advancing the idea of the imaginary as a means by which local and global communities understand the world around them, and I primarily work with their understandings of the imaginary in this chapter. Other notable theorists of the
'imaginary' implies that these often intangible facets of society are primarily cultural constructs that exist foremost in the minds -- that is, the imaginations -- of people within a given community, but it also gestures towards the importance of images in shaping and maintaining those constructs. This chapter explores social theory surrounding the imaginary vis a vis Classical-era zombie films. From there it turns to the theorization of cultural memory to demonstrate how understandings of past racial conflict contributed to that imaginary, specifically in terms of how early zombie films subverted indigenous memories of the Haitian Revolution and the U.S. military intervention in Haiti and consecrated a particular history of those (post)colonial conflicts in the Western imagination.

In *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai has pointed to the ways images and imagination are key constituents of what he calls the social imaginary, a multivalent schema of cultural activity that directs our understanding of community identity and social hierarchy. For Appadurai, the imagination is a 'social process' of increasing importance for cultural identity in the contemporary world; as he puts it,

> The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the

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terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.268

Following Appadurai, the imagination is an active social process that entails a certain degree of agency. To imagine does not merely mean to dream-up or to fabricate; it also means to make sense of and to understand from a subjective viewpoint. Creating images necessarily implies processes of the imagination, both in the construction of images themselves and in the attribution of meaning to them. However, the production of images during Hollywood's Classical era was primarily the province of privileged white men. Their imaginative agency allowed them to create the images associated with zombie cinema and to distribute them widely, which in turn fostered the popular adoption of their particular imagination of Blackness. As with all Classical Hollywood films, the presumed spectator is a white male -- meaning that regardless of the actual gender and racial make-up of the audience, films were ideologically geared towards white men and therefore enforced an understanding of the world from their point of view.269 Much feminist film theory has been dedicated to the project of interpreting the many ways Classical films produced and patrolled white hegemony and male dominance in society.270 Yet even as Classical Hollywood's primary image-makers were white men, whose images conveyed their own imagination of racial and cultural difference, Appadurai would remind us that imagination is a process of which images are but one part. How a spectator receives and interprets an image has as much to do with the way that image is presented and contextualized as it does with the spectator's own subjectivity. Without delving into spectator theory or audience research, it's still possible to understand the social life of images as mutable and subject to individual

268 Appadurai, Modernity At Large, 31.
270 Mulvey, Visual and Other Pleasures, 2009; Lauretis, Alice Doesn’t.
interpretation. A Black Vodouisant from New Orleans, for instance, will necessarily interpret a racist depiction of a Voodoo ceremony differently than a white Christian from the Midwest who has no context for the act being represented. The same image, in other words, can lead to different imaginations of the people and behaviors being represented. As a social process, then, the acts of imaging and imagining Afro-Caribbean peoples are mutually dependent on dominant images (and their contextualization in media) and the imaginative agency of a given spectator. According to Appadurai, however, audiences can be easily confused by the blurring of boundaries between realistic and fictional landscapes. The farther away audiences are from direct experiences of daily life in other places, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds very different from actual reality.

To further articulate his vision of the social imaginary, Appadurai distinguishes between five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes. The five landscapes are building blocks of what Appadurai calls 'imagined worlds,' the multiple spheres that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread across the globe. The first three scapes -- ethnoscape, technoscape, and financescape -- are all closely intertwined and shift in relation to each other, never standing alone. Ethnoscape refers to the migration of people across cultures and borders, presenting the world and its many communities as fluid and mobile instead of static. Technoscapes bring about new types of cultural interactions and exchanges through the power of technology, which can

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271 Through ethnoscapes and mediascapes, "the lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world... fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement." Appadurai, Modernity Al Large, 590–591.

272 I want to reiterate the point made in the introduction and elsewhere that this dissertation is not concerned with audience research. However, to discuss the implications of these images of Blackness -- even when adhering to textual analysis -- the fact that such images were created to be consumed by spectators must be taken into account. Anything more specific on the relationship of specific audiences to specific images would have to be the topic of a future research project.
now happen at unprecedented speeds. Technology is very close tied with the economy, which is constantly in flux and, despite our best efforts to manipulate it, wildly unpredictable (finanscapes).273 The remaining –scapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes, deal with the national and international creation and dissemination of information and images, and along with ethnoscapes are the most important for our investigation of zombie imagery and the social imaginary. Mediascapes can be understood as the many media outlets (television, radio, newspaper, etc) that shape the “imagined world” we inhabit, where narratives and images are often the only way one forms an opinion about a place or culture. Ideoscapes center on the ideologies of a government and those that oppose it and are highly dependent on the context of the spectator. Mediascapes, ethnoscapes and ideoscapes circumscribe the role of zombie images in the formation of a racial imaginary in this era, including the imagination of Black history and its place in U.S. culture.

In his often-cited essay 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,' Appadurai offers a definition of mediascapes that helps us understand how images of zombies related to the imagination of Haiti and the imaginary of Blackness during the occupation. The first part of his definition describes the political economy of media in terms of ownership, control, distribution, modes of production, and representation. The second part emphasizes questions of identity, including how individuals' imaginative agency in relation to static images

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273 Rather than exploring these three scapes in detail, I choose to focus on mediascapes and (to a lesser degree) ideoscapes in order to cogently link Appadurai's social theory with memory theory regarding cultural remembrance and obliviscence. Briefly, it could be said that complex ethnoscapes were nearly unthinkable before and during Hollywood's Classical age, during which foreign peoples and places were presented as static and unchanging, and during which the fluidity and migration of peoples and their cultural forms were greeted with suspicion, skepticism, and even hostility. To the degree that the ethnoscapes was perceived at all, it was represented as a horrific landscape of distrust and anxiety concerning the mixing of races and cultures. The technoscape as Appadurai describes it applies primarily to later forms of technology such as the internet, but photography and cinema could also be seen as technologies that participated in a technoscape which "brought about new cultural interactions" through the power of the camera. However, for zombie cinema at least, there was little to no "exchange" engendered by this technology. "Exchange" implies the mutual contributions of two distinct parties, and filmic zombie narratives were almost exclusively one-sided, unidimensional representations of Black culture as imaged and imagined by white people.
helps them to form perceptions of their own identity as well as (and in relation to) the identity of others. Appadurai further elaborates this dimension of the mediascape in the following passage:

'Mediascapes... tend to be image-centered, narrative based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements... out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places.'

Although Appadurai is specifically concerned with mediascapes that developed in the latter half of the twentieth-century, his theorization of mediascapes resonates with the processes by which zombie films participated in the social construction of Blackness. Mediascapes position human subjects in imaginary spaces which may support a shared sense of national identity or address what Appadurai calls "the need of the deterritorialized population for contact with its homeland." While Appadurai speaks of a Diasporic homeland, in this case zombie cinema situates itself within a mediascape that constructs the 'homeland' of white American culture by representing its opposite, in the form of exoticizing and eroticizing images of "elsewhere" (in this case Haiti). That is, white American protagonists who travel to Haiti in these films are "deterritorialized," which is articulated via sensational and oppositional images of Afro-Caribbean culture; if a white spectator identifies with them it may be because they feel a latent and metaphorical sense of deterritorialization in a U.S. landscape where whiteness no longer entails the same privileges it once did. Thus the construction of U.S. national identity in these films necessarily excludes Black people, who come from the exotic and erotic "elsewhere," which is depicted in these horror films as a place as openly hostile to whites as whites were to Blacks in the U.S. At the same time, white presence in this "elsewhere" is typically imagined as a colonialist adventure in which the white man always triumphs over the "savagery" and vengeful nature of Black natives, who may or may not recognize or respect the "natural order"
of white supremacy. A major project of zombie cinema, then, appears to be the bounding of racial communities by the delimitation of characteristics perceived to be endemic to the people and places associated with a given culture. Between 1927 and 1963, also known as the Classical-era or Golden Age of Hollywood cinema, zombie films maintained and reinforced the perceived bounds of racial communities by their repetition of imagery associating Blackness with Voodoo, Haiti, and malevolence towards white Americans, who in contrast were depicted as the heroes or saviors of a familiar white way of life threatened by the Black "monsters". As Appadurai indicates, the 'homeland' provided by the cinema may also be a virtual space of adventure and fantasy, and in the West it is Hollywood that has most often provide this desired mix of the familiar and exotic. As such, the national imaginaries of Haiti and the U.S. reinforced through zombie cinema served to justify colonialism by inculcating the ideology of white racial superiority as a matter of course. The imagination of both white and Black communities were essentialized via the rhetoric of zombie films, with white heroes and Black monsters dramatizing the postcolonial baggage of slavery and its legacy in shaping national imaginaries of Haiti and the U.S.

According to Appadurai, mediascapes create sets of metaphors by which people live. They help constitute narratives of the Other, articulating both fear of disintegrating boundaries between communities and the counterintuitive desire to traverse those boundaries for the sake of adventure (entertainment) and acquisition (conquest). While horror film scholars such as Carol Clover, Barbara Creed, and Annalee Newitz have accounted for this obsession with boundary

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275 Ibid., 36; Andrew Jones, *Globalization: Key Thinkers* (Polity, 2010), 214.
maintenance and transgression through the lens of psychoanalytic feminist theory, a new historicist approach to film studies corresponds with the folkloric imperative to understand cultural expressions in terms of their temporality and meaning within a given community. The mediascape in which zombie films articulated their messages, then, had already been wrought into being through the lore and literature than preceded Classical horror cinema. The Haitian Revolution and its aftermath introduced the idea of Black zombies, while Gothic literature galvanized the figure of the monster as an embodiment of perceived threats to the sanctity and social comportment of a given community. The monster condenses a variety of challenges to upper-class white male regimes of power and authority by its very existence, and the community it opposes rallies together against the monster. The monster is both a unifying and a dividing force in that it simultaneously bounds communities while unsettling the notion that such boundaries are permanent or impermeable. The characterization of Voodoo zombies, for instance, suggests that there are permanent and irreconcilable differences between white American and Black Haitian culture, yet the idea that a white person could be transformed into a Voodoo zombie upsets the rigidity of that opposition.

Still, scholars of postcolonial Gothic literature note that not all monster-types operate the same way, nor do they circumscribe the same fears. Moreover, the particular reading of a monster narrative directs its interpretation as to what kind of threat it poses to the community in question. Frankenstein's monster, for example, may have been inspired in part by the Haitian Revolution and the notion that colonialism and "the civilizing process" created monsters capable of destroying the Europeans who gave them life, but is more often and more cogently interpreted

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as a fear of advancing technology, the potential incapacity of man to control that technology, and
the consequences of attempting to "play God" by interfering with the natural order of life and
death. As a literary work, Frankenstein invites the multiplicity of readings that nuance the
monster as an embodiment of diverse cultural fears, but the narrative has no direct analogue in
folklore. Vampires and zombies, by contrast, are monster-types that can be found in many types
folklore (as well as literary productions), and appear to embody reverse cultural fears related to
capitalism. Whereas Gothic vampires are upper-class monsters, singular individuals preying
on the poor and weak people whose life-blood they steal to increase their own power, zombies
are lower-class monsters, the disenfranchised masses who rise up and seek revenge against the
racialized capitalist power structures that enslave them. There's a division here, too, between
class-based modes of representing monsters. Oral folklore regarding vampires and zombies is
ubiquitous, yet the nineteenth century vampire -- the upper-class monster -- achieved literary
success far surpassing that of the zombie, which remained primarily part of the oral tradition
until cinema, ethnography, and the occupation of Haiti brought it to mainstream popular culture.
While both monster types enjoyed popularity during Hollywood's golden age, it's important to
ask how and why the U.S. mediascape engaged with zombies more than ever before -- how the
images and imaginations of Black Voodoo zombie slaves provided metaphors by which
spectators could invoke their imaginative agency in the production of a racial imaginary. In
Appadurai's terms, what imagined worlds were being created, and why?

277 The connection between Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and the Haitian Revolution was discussed in the previous
two chapters. The same authors cited there indicate that there is a far greater body of scholarship relating
Frankenstein to concerns about scientific and technological advancements. Khair, The Gothic, Postcolonialism and
Otherness, 2009; Halberstam, Skin Shows, 1995; Malchow, Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain;
Anolik and Howard, The Gothic Other, 2004; Botting, Limits of Horror.
278 Although this is my own reading of the relationship between vampires and zombies, it is informed by the class-
based theorization of vampires found in the disparate writings of folklorist Alan Dundes and media scholar Annalee
Newitz. Alan Dundes, The Vampire: A Casebook (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Newitz, Pretend
We're Dead, 2006.
Imagining Zombies

Monsters in the form of creatures, aliens, vampires and zombies dominated the Classical horror films of the 1930s and 40s. Supernatural or science fiction horror films, with their fantastical plots and familiar yet exotic worlds, have the luxury to create any kind of character, social system, or world within the confines of their narratives. We all know that a machine that can reanimate the dead does not exist, yet in the space of the cinema, we fear Frankenstein’s monster. The cinema-space becomes a territory of affiliation where we allow ourselves to indulge in fantasy and to embrace our fears collectively; as an audience we welcomingly suspend our disbelief for the purposes of entertainment, escapism, and the communitas of spectatorship. Similarly, common sense tells us that biological traits such as eye-color, skin pigmentation, and hair texture do not entitle one group of people to rule over another on the false pretense of racial superiority. Nevertheless, history has proven this fantastical proposition not only plausible but convincing enough to base entire social systems around it. Thus there is an unstated affinity between the genre of horror film and the horror of race relations in America. Both supernatural horror film and the social construction of race rely on the acceptance of elaborate fictions in order to work. In some ways the racial imaginaries created in early horror films bled out into the imaginative potential of their audiences, helping to shape dominant social understandings of race and racial dynamics.

Ed Guerrero’s *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* fleshes out the cultural meaning and broader racial implications of race in horror cinema. Guerrero incisively notes:
The social construction and representation of race, otherness, and non-whiteness is an ongoing process, working itself out in many symbolic, cinematic forms of expression, but particularly in the abundant racialized metaphors and allegories of the fantasy, sci-fi, and horror genres. This practice can be explained by several mutually reinforcing factors including these genres’ dependence on *difference* or *otherness* in the form of the monster in order to drive or energize their narratives; the now vast technological possibilities of imagining and rendering of all kinds of simulacra for aliens, monsters, mutant outcasts, and the like, and the infinite, fantastic narrative horizons and story worlds possible in these reproductions.²⁷⁹

Guerrero understands “fantastic” cinema as a product of the white imagination trying to work out its anxieties about Otherness. He claims that in the United States whites can be understood as a colonizing group, and the racialized narratives of much horror cinema are a means through which whites both confront and subvert their own racism.²⁸⁰ This becomes especially clear when analyzing Classical Voodoo films, which depict zombies as both sympathetic creatures and horrifying monsters.

Filmic zombies of the Classical era were represented according to racist stereotypes about dress and bodily comportment in low-class, rural Black communities: in tattered clothing, with bare feet, unkempt hair, and little control over his motor skills. With few exceptions, zombies were played by African American men (often wearing blackface to intensify their appearance) or white men in blackface, as in *White Zombie*.²⁸¹ For all intents and purposes, the figure of the zombie was modeled on the image of the slave. For at least the first twenty years, Voodoo zombie films were almost always set on some sort of plantation, either one that used to be

²⁸⁰ While there are of course impoverished or disempowered whites in American society, historically speaking whites have occupied the highest positions in government, economy, and social hierarchies. Sympathetic whites who recognize the unfairness and brutality of the racial situation in the US often experience some form of guilt over their ancestors’ actions. As pop-theorist Jim Goad puts it, “There’s a primitive, biblical, sins-o-the-father notion that *all* American whites, by virtue of their birth alone, bear a stain on their souls for black slavery.” (Newitz 2006).
²⁸¹ Lott, 1995, p.34.
worked by slaves in the past or one that has been established at the behest of some zombie overlord, a clear allegory for the slave master. Further, with the exception of a few films set in New Orleans, these plantations were almost always on islands in the Caribbean, frequently Haiti. Against the backdrop of the U.S. military occupation of Haiti, the image of the zombie was both a specter of slavery and of the perceived danger that Black Others posed against a white colonial force. It thus conjured memories of the Haitian Revolution even as it worked to reimagine that triumph as an authentic horror.

During the Great Depression, Voodoo and zombies were among the most popular topics for horror films, with dozens of films produced that illustrated conflicts between white male authority figures and Black zombies in Afro-Caribbean milieus (typically with a white woman caught between the two racial groups). Throughout this chapter I will touch on a few of these films to illustrate how they participated in the construction of a social imaginary and influenced perceptions of racial conflict in U.S. history via the imaginary worlds they created for spectators. Like *White Zombie*, films such as *Black Moon*, *Voodoo Island*, and *King of the Zombies* were set in Haiti and played on the idea that this was an island home to authentic monsters in the form of undead Black people. Not all of the Black people in the films were zombies, of course, but all of them were depicted as impoverished, uneducated, Voodoo-practicing, and either totally subservient or openly hostile to white people (usually the latter). We never see their homes, but it's clear that these Black characters live somewhere "out there," in the jungle or the wilderness that butts up against civilization in the form of a plantation, hotel, or manor house; metaphorizing the segregated neighborhoods of the U.S. at the time, Black islanders lived in spooky, unknown and potentially dangerous locales that sat just on the periphery of white-dominated spaces. In the films, Black people beat drums at night, nap throughout the day,
sacrifice animals, cast spells, drink too much, leer at white women, sing work songs, play tricks on white people, and complain about racial inequality. If they're zombies, however, they lose their autonomy and become mindless, dumb, and abject slaves performing the menial tasks assigned to them without complaint. Dozens of zombie films were produced as part of this B-movie subgenre within Classical Hollywood, many of them featuring hordes of zombie slaves that at some point overcome their inautonomous state long enough to revolt and take revenge against their masters. For at least the first twenty years of zombie cinema, the zombie uprising was quite literally a slave rebellion.

Several themes become apparent when studying the imaginary worlds created in these Classical zombie films: their parallels with colonial or slave-based societies; dialectics of U.S. history and the memories of racial conflict; and the continual use of the zombie as an allegory for Black cultural identity. Engaging with each of these themes, zombie films of the 1930s and 40s reveal how a mixed-race present felt haunted by the racial divisions of its past. As both an inautonomous slave and a rapacious sexual threat to white women, the zombie was at once a pitiable creature and a frightening monster, recalling nineteenth century discourse regarding abolition and miscegenation. Reflecting both white guilt over slavery and the persistence of racism against Black people, then, the early twentieth century zombie came to serve as an embodiment of the past that would not die, and a symbol of interracial relationships premised on slavery.

As stories about zombies circulated in the U.S. during the occupation of Haiti, they came to express a very specific fear. The days of slavery and colonialism were over, and many white Americans found themselves confronted with a future that was at once terrifying and of their own making: as descendants of white slavers, they would have to live with the descendants of
Black slaves. By extension, while many white people in the U.S. may have desired to move on from their unsavory past, the African American population served as a constant reminder of their race's crimes against humanity. As Annalee Newitz suggests, “the contemporary United States is still haunted by the colonial past. In all of these postcolonial era films ‘undeath’ is implicitly associated with colonial era social and economic relationships, where one racial group engages in state-sanctioned subordination of others. Stories about the undead, and zombies in particular, are best understood in the context of anxieties about the many kinds of race relationships that develop in the wake of colonialism.” As Appadurai illuminates, mediascapes provide metaphors by which people learn to interpret the world. The imagination of zombies as Black slaves who might rebel or seek revenge against the whites who enslaved them thus became a potent metaphor for the postcolonial anxieties of white Americans, concerned about the instability of their place in the social hierarchy after Emancipation and paranoid about the potential for Black people to take revenge in the form of white slavery.

Like the Gothic literary monsters that preceded them, filmic zombies troubled the boundaries of racial communities while simultaneously reinforcing notions of cultural identity and of race as an essentializing schema of group membership. Moreover, as a monster-type the zombie challenged the presumed natural order of life and death, past and present, white and Black. Its situation in films marketed on the basis of their supposed authenticity further complicated the understanding of this monster-type and the metaphors it provided within the mediascape of horror cinema. As explored in the previous chapter's discussion of sensational advertising tactics, cinema allowed white spectators to voyeuristically imagine Black Others engaging in exotic behaviors in exotic locales, and these ideologically loaded images were

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presumed to give insight into the daily lives of Afro-Caribbean peoples as faithful representations of their religious and spiritual practices. Because of the primitivist anthropology that allowed for the perception that African and Afro-Caribbean peoples in their indigenous habitats were vestiges of a bygone stage of humanity, the imaginative potential of these images also contributed to a false understanding of Black history.

Many contemporary scholars have criticized the way early anthropologists such as James Frazer attempted to distinguish whites from other races. Frazer and others who thought like him believed that whiteness had a particular affiliation with the progress of civilization and the future of the human race. All other races, then, were relegated to antiquity, the “savage” past and dead civilizations. In fact, after Darwin scientists and philosophers alike suggested that Black bodies might be studied for clues that would explain the “natural” superiority of whites as a product of evolution. Contemporary anthropologist Maria Torgovnick argues that this racist logic freezes people of color in time, imagining and depicting them as unchanged since the origins of human history.283 Voodoo zombie films of the Classical era reflected this misguided ideology, imagining Black islanders as relics of an ancient and savage humanity, symbols of a civilization long since defeated by the righteousness of colonialism and relegated to the peripheral spaces of the Western world. The return of zombies from the grave, then, metaphorized the return of a "dead civilization," and thus troubled the racist logic that saw colonialism as morally righteous and slavery as just. Moreover, this "dead civilization" could not only return from the grave, but upend established cultural hierarchies in the living world. As beings whose very existence overhauled the natural laws of life and death, zombies also challenged the "natural order" of white supremacy and threatened to reverse it. Imagining Haiti as a peripheral space of the U.S.

283 Torgovnick, p.3
empire, which was subordinate to the U.S. (as a producer of sugar cane) but not subject to its laws, the island became an image of the past. Not only was it occupied by the members of a "dead civilization," but those people occupied a tenuous place in the social imaginary as people who fulfilled the function once met by slaves but who were not slaves, and who, moreover, possessed the ancient knowledge of Voodoo -- inaccessible to whites -- that would allow them to make slaves of their enemies. Further, memories of the Haitian Revolution contributed to the imagination of these people as rebellious against white authority, and the U.S. occupation of Haiti thus became a source of anxiety as white marines attempted to control Haiti's sugar economy. All of these compounded anxieties stemmed from the imagination of Blackness as not only inferior to whiteness, but as the evolutionary "survival" of people from a dead civilization.

Woodrow Wilson's proclamation that the U.S. military occupation of Haiti was to be a "civilizing mission" contributed to the imagination of Haitian people as savage, primitive, and uncivilized. The occupation provoked curiosity about life in Haiti from its inception, but it wasn't until the 1930s, after *The Magic Island* took the U.S. by storm, that Hollywood gave full imaginative force to the representation of Voodoo rituals and zombie slaves. Imagining Haitian Others demanded reference points in the form of images, which came in the form of Alexander King's illustrations of zombies as well as from their situation within Seabrook's fictionalized "ethnography." By "image" here I mean more than just "an image," but also the meanings attached to that image by its contextualization within a particular narratological and epistemological frame. In other words, King's illustrations of Black zombies became images of HASCO and Ti Joseph by virtue of their juxtaposition vis a vis the narrative, and images of Haiti's "authentic monsters" by virtue of Seabrook's ethnographic claims. The success of *White Zombie* popularized this particular image, then, which distilled racist iconography, a
supernaturally-inflected master-slave dialectic, and authenticating discourse about life in Haiti. This image became central to the imagination of zombies and, therefore, the imagination of Black or Afro-Caribbean Others. By the same token, zombie films that capitalized on these images reified and perpetuated an ethnocentric understanding of Haitian history by dramatizing the plight of white colonialists and their memories of racial conflict. Those memories, whether leftover from the Haitian Revolution or the more recent U.S. occupation, profoundly demonized Black Haitians who defended themselves and their land, thus precluding the possibility of a Haitian-sympathetic understanding of these colonial conflicts.

The Matter of Memory

Memory studies has become a transdisciplinary field through which scholars from many different backgrounds investigate the notion of history, including its ontological foundations and epistemological implications. While individual arguments vary significantly, memory scholarship challenges the idea that memory functions as a static repository of past events or experience. In different ways, scholars of memory demonstrate how mnemonic processing occurs in multiple forms, has diverse functions, and varies significantly in its sociocultural conceptualizations. Within this growing body of scholarship, some common themes arise which provide a productive framework for understanding how zombie narratives draw on and contribute to postcolonial memories of cultural conflict and racial violence. First, disentangling the concept of memory from that of history creates a scaffolding for scholars to understand how these concepts both inform and challenge one another. Further, understanding memory's

284 The topic of memory has been taken up by scholars in the diverse fields of History, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Film Studies, Art History, Theatre, Museum Studies, Ethnic Studies, Ethnomusicology, Education, Literature, Religion, Biology, Neuroscience, Information Studies, and many specialized fields within the Humanities.
performative dynamics helps scholars to nuance this scaffolding so they can elucidate key oppositions and interrelationships between memory and history. Finally, considering how cultural forms map and layer memory as palimpsests of past experiences helps scholars to articulate the importance of non-textual sources (including visuality) within mnemonic processing and to complicate binary divisions between past and present. Ultimately, disciplinarily diverse scholars agree that memory functions as a dynamic performative process of knowledge production, transmission, and interpretation.

Susanne Küchler and Walter Melion combine anthropological and art historical perspectives to analyze how image production forms a locus of heightened interplay between mnemonic processes and cultural formation.285 In *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation* they investigate the artworks and artistic processes of Malangan funerary sculptures to demonstrate how image transmission precipitates and shapes memory and how memory, in turn, operates through representation. In line with other memory scholars, they argue that since memory cannot be seen as a simple repository of past experience, images do not simply derive from a repository of stored impressions.286 It follows that while memory often enables image production, it is neither prior to nor discrete from image production. Rather, as hands inscribe images onto material surfaces, they precipitate, shape, and consolidate memory.287 In other words, images shape memory as they literally shape artistic materials. Applying this framework to early zombie films, images of race and racial conflict shape social memories of slavery and the white presence in Haiti even as the same images shape the film's celluloid and make it into a piece of art. That piece of art then becomes not only a reflection but a

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286 Ibid., 6.
287 Ibid., 7.
constituency of social memory. Rather than thinking of a film as an objet d'art, however, it is useful to think of it as a site or a location of memory, what Pierre Nora calls a lieu de mémoire. Nora defines lieux de mémoire as "sites where memory crystallizes and secretes itself," artificial loci of the modern production of national and ethnic memory. Demonstrating how memory operates as a dynamic process that attaches itself to particular sites, Nora argues that lieux de mémoire inscribe borders around domains of memory and mark them as socially significant. While we could point to the quantity of zombie films made in the 1930s and 40s as an indication that they form lieux de mémoire of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, even a single film circumscribes the temporal and thematic subject of Voodoo zombies as a socially significant domain of memory. Although people and societies establish lieux with an original intention that may or may not appear on its surface to be divorced from social memory -- a horror film is, after all, made primarily for the purpose of entertainment, not as a record of historic events or attitudes -- lieux de mémoire adopt and recycle meanings as they take on different purposes through time. I Walked With a Zombie (1943) exemplifies one such site where social memories collapse and collide, illuminating one of the foundational projects of memory studies: the rupture between memory and history. That film will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter, but first it's important to understand how memory and history have been theorized and why that theorization is relevant for an understanding of Classical-era zombie cinema.

In "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux des Memoire," Nora theorizes the conflict between memory and history, arguing that history frames and reconstructs the past to concretize a version of events while memory transforms and adapts to suit the exigencies of the current

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289 Ibid., 20.
moment. *History* is what we encounter in textbooks, in educational documentaries, and in any official narratives used to describe the temporal period in question -- more or less a fixed text, commonly understood as the factual events of the past. *Memory*, by contrast, is permeable and malleable, a version of past events forever reconstructed in the present. Nora calls this reconstruction "refabulation," and he argues that memory "remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived" (Nora 1989: 8). As intimated in the previous chapters on authenticity, zombielore in the United States can be understood as a consistent return to and refabulation of the Jean Zombi legend. In turns throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, that Haitian legend was appropriated, manipulated, and successively deformed; Jean Zombi became Zombi, Zombi became zombies, and zombies became slaves. In between these transformations were periods of dormancy, and each revival saw not only a shift in the characterization of the figure but in the meaning of that figure to society: it's unlikely a mere coincidence that the first mention of Zombi was recorded following Nat Turner's rebellion, or that zombies (plural) made their first appearance at the end of the Civil War. These are moments of significant racial and economic upheaval, much like the Haitian Revolution, and in each instance the lore appropriately refabulates the zombie figure to serve the needs of the present within a given community.

Joseph Roach calls such successive iterations "genealogies of performance" to highlight the way they manipulate and shape social memories in order to concretize particular versions of history. Jean Zombi responded to the needs of Black Haitians during the revolution, regardless of whether one sees the figure as a symbol of hope for the weary revolutionaries or as a sinister wartime strategy designed to intimidate the enemy; following Nat Turner's rebellion (1831),
white slaveholders' rumors about Zombi justified their treatment of slaves and their tightening of religious restrictions on their plantations; after the Civil War, the idea of zombies served as a warning about the need to protect white children and as an imperative to be suspicious of former slaves; during the military occupation of Haiti (1914-35), literary and filmic zombie slaves reflected the concerns of a race-conscious society struggling to reconcile white guilt over the history of slavery with ongoing racism against Black people. Examining this genealogy of performance, we can understand how zombielore has been refabulated at specific historical moments to serve the purposes of those bearing the lore in the present; we can also see how the zombie retains traces of its former lives even as it goes through these successive transformations. The zombie, then, appears to operate as a type of memory in and of itself. When it recurs it gets appropriately refabulated according to this trajectory. The Great Depression and World War II represent a period of significant racial and economic upheaval, so it seems fitting that the zombies created in this era, in these films, reflect both the current state of race relations (as perceived by a given community) as well as the vestiges of its former manifestations, with all of those historical meanings attached.

The Performance of Memory

Performance Studies scholar Joseph Roach takes on the issue of postcolonial memory in his groundbreaking book about Afro-Caribbean cultural traditions in New Orleans, Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance. Roach goes so far as to define culture as "the social processes of memory and forgetting," arguing that these twin processes are manifest in all

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aspects of civilization from the sacred to the secular to the mundane. By positioning these processes at the epicenter of cultural formation, Roach suggests that remembering and forgetting are not just fundamental components of the human experience, but foundational processes of civilization. Like other memory scholars, Roach resists the temptation to see memories as static or complete entities that can be taken for granted, acknowledging their complexity and susceptibility to reinvention while affirming their importance to a culture's understanding of its own history. However, his intervention into the field of memory studies broadens our understanding of mnemonic dynamics by suggesting that memory is inherently performative. While Roach deals specifically with symbolic behaviors such as rites, rituals, and festivals, his theorization of culture as a performative extension of memory provides the groundwork to understand the role of films and film spectatorship in the formation of social memory. Specifically, Roach illuminates memory as inherently performative by arguing that the word "perform" means "to bring forth, to make manifest, and to transmit…[but] also…to reinvent." Memories, in other words, are capable of conjuring the past but also of reinventing it in new contexts and for new purposes.

Roach also situates Afro-Caribbean memories of slavery and colonization within a nexus of what he calls "Circum-Atlantic performance," recalling Paul Gilroy's theorization of the Black Atlantic as a cultural site that collapses real and imaginary borders created by and through the slave trade. Ritualized performances such as those on display during Mardi Gras season both recall the past and reinvent it, all while reinforcing present-day social dynamics among the diverse cultural groups who call New Orleans home. These performances serve as a way of remembering or engaging with the past, but also as a way of legitimating present inequalities.

291 Ibid.
the particular case of Mardi Gras, the festival schema heightens the performative aspects of memory but also obscures that very performance by enclosing it within a frame of play.

Play is a topic that has been tackled by many folklorists. Not limited to children's games or forms of expression, folklorists have found that people of all ages engage in play and that this behavior is an important part of human interaction and socialization that has far-reaching implications for the psychological internalization of social norms and stigmas. A foray into the field of studies on play would be tangential to this work, but it should be noted that forms of play are especially important because -- like fairy tales or popular horror films -- their very nature precludes most laypeople from taking them seriously as modes of education or cultural engagement. Unthinkingly engaging in play precipitates the internalization of ideologically charged messages hidden within that play, such as when a little girl's repertoire of jump-rope rhymes all focus on her marriage goals and their repetition thereby solidifies her understanding of gender roles. Roach painstakingly unpacks the dimensions of Mardi Gras in New Orleans to demonstrate how histories of racial conflict and inequality permeate even the most seemingly-trivial of social behaviors. For example, form of play manifests when adults and children run alongside the parade floats -- which are manned with mostly upper-class white New Orleanians who have paid to be there -- and shout the traditional phrase, "Throw me something, mister!"

While the play is ostensibly a game the purpose of which would appear to be the acquisition of beaded necklaces and other cheap prizes, it recalls and reinvents New Orleans' racist history: at the earliest Mardi Gras celebrations Black people were not allowed to march in the parades and would run alongside them, and the wealthy white participants would mock them by throwing rotten food at them. As the tradition evolved, the upper-class paraders chose to be seen as benevolent rather than condescending. Soon, poor people viewing the parades would shout for
the wealthy participants to thrown them scraps of food or coins, hence the ritualized plea to "throw me something, mister!", implicitly understood to be the traditional cry of a poor Black boy looking for a handout. Like the zombie films in question, this performance of memory represents history in order to recreate and then reify a particular version of it. Spectatorship might not traditionally be understood as 'play' per se, but Appadurai’s theorization of the imagination as an active process forces us to consider how zombie films might reinforce racist ideology while spectators engage with and negotiate their interpretation of the images on screen. Moreover, the films in question recall and reinvent histories of colonial contact, postcolonial conflict, and U.S.-Haiti relations, all from a point of view sympathetic to white hegemony. As in the case of Mardi Gras, the wealthy white arbiters of 'play' control the representation of history and, in doing so, shape (or re-shape) cultural memories. In other words, zombie films may be popularly understood as mere entertainment, but spectator engagement with them implies a passive engagement with history, and specifically the version of history preferred by the wealthy, white filmmakers.

Although spectatorship would not typically be considered a form of play by either folklorists or film scholars, there is considerable overlap between the two forms of engagement. This dissertation has not involved audience research or reception studies, but as a folklorist I would like to propose a parallel between play and film viewing. Both serve as forms of entertainment wherein individuals subconsciously work through latent anxieties while taking

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292 Today, the same racial and socioeconomic divisions between parade participants and parade-goers exist, but are disguised by the ritualized nature of over-the-top festival behaviors. Thus this form of play on display at Mardi Gras both recalls and reinvents the history of racial inequality and class hierarchies at the parades, while simultaneously reinforcing and disguising the ongoing social inequalities in New Orleans and the politics of festival season.
pleasure in the act itself. Even more significantly, play and spectatorship represent complex
social and psychological processes vital for both individual and community peace of mind, yet
because of their categorization as "entertainment" neither are taken seriously as modes of cultural
engagement. Like the Mardi Gras parade rituals, zombie films enclose performances of cultural
memory within a frame of play. For example, in the sensational horror film *Black Moon* (1931)
a white woman who was born in Haiti returns there as an adult with her own child, called back to
the island by some mystical power of Voodoo drums. Her white relatives on the island
repeatedly discuss the history of colonial violence in Haiti, explicitly expressing their fears that
there might someday be another slave uprising and preparing for that day by hoarding guns in the
plantation's watchtower. Although *Black Moon* is ostensibly a low-grade horror film that plays
with the idea of ethnographic authenticity to heighten its entertainment value, the film both
implicitly and explicitly recalls the history of the Haitian Revolution and the early days of the
U.S. occupation and conveys this history through the memories of white characters. Later in the
film their memories of the earlier slave rebellion are resurrected and represented for spectators
when contemporary Black islanders revolt and attack the plantation. The re-presentation of this
revolutionary memory thus frames and reconstructs the history of colonial conflict in Haiti, while
spectators take pleasure in watching the heroic white men shoot down at poor Black people and
zombies from their safe position atop the plantation's ramparts.

While it could be said that all memory is inherently representational, Roach's analysis
suggests that this representation is ideologically loaded and often politically motivated, whether
consciously or unconsciously. Such motivated-representation becomes especially dangerous
when it begins to take on the aura of history, replacing or eliding an objective understanding of

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the past with a skewed interpretation of the same events. With regard to the history of New Orleans, Roach seeks to demonstrate how "memories of some particular times and places have become embodied in and through performances," but also how "memories torture themselves into forgetting by disguising their collaborative interdependence across imaginary borders of race, nation, and origin." As a form of play, the festivals of Mardi Gras reify particular versions of history and, through their ritualized performances, reinforce a dominant narrative that thereby engenders the "forgetting" of alternative interpretations of the same history. Similarly, Black Moon frames memories of revolutionary conflict in terms of white fright and the imperilment of white women. When the Haitians attack the plantation at the end, the white mother not only joins their ranks as a combatant but volunteers to kill her white child for the sake of the cause. The film thus combines the memory of white-Black conflict in Haiti with the metaphoric danger of miscegenation, suggesting that prolonged contact with Black culture can turn whites against themselves. The protagonist's willingness to murder her own child conforms to the underlying principle of miscegenetic paranoia that the mixing of races will result in the death of whiteness. Even though this film references histories of colonial conflict in Haiti that might otherwise be forgotten, then, it also erases alternative memories of that history by replacing them with racist fantasies of miscegenation and white righteousness in defending their colonial way of life.

Applying Roach's understanding of performance as combination of recollection and reinvention, films that reference historical events or situations may be seen as artifacts of cultural memory. At the same time, if we consider film spectatorship to be a form of imaginative play wherein we ritualistically engage with images for the purpose of entertainment, then we can

294 Roach, Cities of the Dead, xi.
see films as ideologically-structured texts whose very nature disguises the serious work they perform towards the internalization of social norms.

Paul Connerton similarly argues for an understanding of memory as performance in his exploration of how social groups convey and sustain collective memories. In *How Societies Remember* he develops a framework for understanding social memory as a dynamic performative process of knowledge production and transmission. Differentiating between memory in general and social memory in particular, Connerton argues that understandings of the present are largely dependent upon knowledge of the past. While individuals will have experienced that past in different ways and therefore perceive it differently in the present, with social memory the participants in any collective social group will share some memories that construct that group's identity. These shared images of the past often serve as collective, historical justifications that legitimate how the group's social order operates. However, social groups often consist of people from multiple generations, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, genders, geographic regions, religions, and ideological standpoints. Because people from these different backgrounds will necessarily have different experiences of the past, the same social group may develop diverse and often contradictory sets of social memories. Rather than a singular "truth" passed down through each successive generation, then, social memory appears to be a dynamic process that produces multiple understandings of the present through acts of transfer.

The zombie narrative might be considered one such "act of transfer" that produces an understanding of the present via its performance of social memory. The legend of Jean Zombi

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296 Ibid., 3.
297 Ibid.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid.
which circulated in Haiti during the Revolution, for example, *brought forth* and *made manifest* (to borrow from Roach's definition of performance) a powerful African lwa, while simultaneously *reinventing* that spiritual ancestor for the purposes of the Haitian rebel army. The legend of Jean Zombi was a performance, then, just as subsequent iterations of zombi(e) narratives performed their own versions of social memory by successively conjuring and reinventing the figure at different temporal junctures and in support of different sociopolitical aims. This is precisely the type of lineage that Roach references when he discusses genealogies of performance, which manipulate and shape social memories to reify particular historical perspectives. In the performative genealogy of zombie narratives, films became an insidious mechanism by which certain social memories were reified and condoned as representations of history.

**Palimpsestic Zombielore**

The zombie is a figment of the Haitian Revolution, a monster of memory. While many scholars have addressed the zombie's origins in Haitian Vodou and its transformation in American cinema, deeper engagement with this folkloric tradition reveals how such narratives encode profound sociocultural processes of remembrance, obliviscence, and refabulation. Parts of the lore are remembered (a reanimated Black person, slavery and its discontents), others forgotten (an ancestor-spirit, a retributionary hero), and others refabulated (violence against white people, desire for vengeance). Through these processes, the zombie *in situ* becomes a palimpsest of all the zombielore that has come before. The palimpsest, discussed in this section, is an essential theoretical construct in memory studies that derives from Freudian psychoanalysis.
but has been elaborated and expanded by scholars of memory from across the humanities. Media theorist Thomas Elsaesser writes about the relationship between memory and representation in terms of inscription and retrieval, and specifically the tendency for representations to accumulate additional meanings via their successive iterations. Elsaesser notes that when Freud wrote about the psychological processes of memory, he compared them to the "mystic writing pad," a children's toy consisting of a thin piece of plastic which covers a thick waxen board, allowing the user to write with any implement and to erase their markings all at once by lifting the cover. The waxen board beneath retains the traces of its former inscriptions even as the plastic sheet allows for new inscriptions to be made over top of them. This, according to psychoanalytic theory, mirrors the psychological processes of "inscription/recording and memory/retrieval," two concerns which are also at the heart of audiovisual media, particularly cinema. Even as memories are manipulated, appropriated, buried, revived, and refabulated, they always retain the traces of their former inscriptions. With the mystic writing pad, what lies beneath (on the waxen board) becomes a palimpsest of everything written on the pad up to that point, while the surface (the plastic sheet) only reveals the most recent set of inscriptions. If we apply this metaphor to the zombie genre, we can understand how traces of Jean Zombi, Zombi, phantom zombies, and zombie-slaves -- essentially all pre-cinema American zombielore -- underlie every representation of the zombie in film. And, yet, prominent zombie theorists such as Deborah Christie, Sarah Juliet Lauro, and Kyle Bishop (to name a few) largely ignore the successive transformations of the zombie within this genealogy of performance. They grant only scant attention to the Voodoo-zombies of Classical Hollywood, dismissing them in toto as products of racism and xenophobia before moving on to the frenetic and cannibalistic zombies of later cinema. By acknowledging

only the idea of a Voodoo-zombie rather than exploring the historical vicissitudes and social contingencies of the actual lore, these scholars elide the multifaceted dimensions of the zombie as a postcolonial figure. In Elsaesser's figuration, they see only the surface of the writing pad -- or, worse, only part of the surface -- and never think to lift the cover. In this way, famous images from Classical Hollywood Voodoo-zombie films become "imagos" of racist fantasy.

In memory studies, an imago is an image or idea which comes to symbolize the memory of an important piece of history, yet which also obscures the historical complexities or multiplicity of meanings of that history. According to Norman Klein,

> If we concentrate, the imago seems to be waiting for us intact: a photo, a document, a table of statistics, an interview. It remains where we put it, but the details around it get lost, as if they were haunted, somewhat contaminated, but empty. Imagos are the sculpture that stands in the foreground next to negative space. Imagos are the false light that defines chiaroscuro. They are the rumor that seems haunted with memory, so satisfying that it keeps us from looking beyond it (1997: 4, my emphasis).

Looking beyond the imago demands a consideration of its formation, which for the Voodoo-zombie began long before Hollywood producers, writers, and directors intervened. The Haitian legend of Jean Zombi, first recorded in 1805,\(^\text{301}\) depicted the singular figure as a fearsome and retributionary agent avenging the sins of slavery and colonization. By the 1930s, however, the pathetic and inautonomous Black Voodoo-zombie-slave had become the most popular monster-type in Classical Hollywood. As previously discussed in the section on 'Authenticity,' while themes such as racial conflict, slave revolts, and vengeful Voodoo remained similar over time and through the various media of oral tradition, ethnography, literature, and film, the meaning of the zombie transformed subtly along with its corporeal counterpart.

In 1943, *I Walked With a Zombie* cleaved to stereotypical representations of Black zombies established by earlier films even as it strove to achieve a thoughtful and provocative meditation on the legacy of postcolonial memory. Despite the best efforts of its filmmakers, today that film is often lumped together with other Voodoo-zombie films of the 1930s and 40s, considered to be a subgenre founded in racism, rumor, and exoticism. The Voodoo-zombie went relatively dormant during the 1950s and 60s, when nuclear power and the threat of communism superseded concerns about race relations in the popular imagination of horror cinema, though it never disappeared. This nuanced genealogy is occluded by the imago, which allows and even invites us to simplify the historical meaning of the zombie and to neglect the complexities of memory that undergird its continued refabulation. In Nora's terms, memory stands in conflict with history.

As symbols of social memory, zombie narratives continually evince the power of a past that refuses to be put to rest, and, in the case of *I Walked With a Zombie*, these monsters of memory actively fight against the tyranny of history. While every manifestation of zombies operates as a palimpsest of the folklore, literature, and film that came before it, each also addresses the horror (and triumph) of a past that continues to function in the present. In this way, zombielore consistently negotiates the rupture between history and memory.

**Undeath and Trauma**

As an organizing principle, "undeath" offers a way to understand zombie narratives as multivalent expressions of the personal and cultural traumas fomented by colonialism. Most literally, the body of the zombie has been through the trauma of death and resurrection. As

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302 Much more could be said about this period of film history and the evolution of zombies, particularly regarding the 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*, which is widely credited with transforming the zombie genre once and for all. Unfortunately, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this project.
evidenced by their grotesque corporeality, the zombie's body has been ravaged by this trauma and indexes the way it continues to affect their being-in-the-world long after the trauma has officially ended. If we think of the zombie as a colonial metaphor, however, then "undeath" becomes both a state of being and a symbol of the material conditions of existence. This bodily trauma, it turns out, is the trauma of colonialism. Yet the zombie can articulate neither its own bodily trauma nor its experience of colonial trauma, and thus its memories of that trauma are absented and erased from the racial imaginary. The zombie's inability to speak mirrors what Ellen S. Fine has called "absent memory," a situation in which historic trauma against a cultural group provokes silence, an absenting of their subjectivity "caused by the deprivation of memory, or by memory that is concealed, refused, or forbidden." Zombies are not always mute in Haitian folklore, so the universal silencing of zombies in Classical Hollywood films suggests that their subjective memories of trauma are being denied, obscured by their characterization as monsters. Contained within that monstrous image, however, are the images of zombies generated by Haitians during the military occupation. Black and/or Haitian memories of colonialism absented by the film are thus present in the film anyway, by virtue of the zombie's folkloric lineage.

The legacy of colonialism lingers even beyond its death, but how this legacy is understood depends on the imagination of colonialism and its demise. Voodoo zombie films suggest that the death of colonialism entails the diminishment of white power, and to illustrate this the zombie slave is represented primarily in terms of its monstrosity. Capitalizing on the notion that the zombie is an authentic monster, however, nuances this representation by necessitating that Voodoo zombies be depicted as pitiful, inautonomous creatures as they were in

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the ethnographic discourse preceding the films. Classical Hollywood's Voodoo zombies thus condense complex and complicated understandings of (post)colonial memory, collapsing the physical, psychological, and cultural trauma experienced by enslaved subjects with the superficial but anxious trauma that attended the loss of white supremacy. The objective horrors of slavery endured by people of color are in no way equal to the perceived horrors of whites facing the loss of their hierarchical status and their political and material economy of slavery, yet the body of the zombie compresses these disparate memories of traumatic cultural experience.

The undeath of the zombie is the undeath of colonialism, and its manifestation as a corporeal being suggests that it haunts postcolonial regimes of racial power and authority. In her analysis of traumatic memory in documentary film, Aparna Sharma explores haunting as "the resurfacing of suppressed dimensions of history that, in turn, trouble and unsettl..."304 While haunting is more typically associated with ghosts (non-corporeal undead beings), all monster-types are capable of haunting by virtue of their ability to trouble the imagination of an objective reality. As scholars such as Ellen S. Fine and Cathy Caruth have illuminated, the experience of trauma is never and can never be experienced objectively, and therefore resists any semblance of faithful representation. Sharma argues that "trauma films" contextualize, excavate, and work upon collective trauma, often engendering haunting images that unsettle "rational and linear understandings of space and time."305 As a symbol of the past within the present, the Voodoo zombie slave "works upon" the collective memories of slavery and its abolition, including the resurrection of Haitian Revolutionary lore during the U.S. occupation of Haiti. As Sharma has indicated, "filmic representations dwelling on experiences of postcolonial societies

305 Ibid.
challenge…the universalism of the modern and postmodern, secular conceptions of history.\textsuperscript{306}

Voodoo zombie films of Classical Hollywood not only dwell on the experiences of postcolonial Haiti, but trouble the notion that this colonial history can be understood on any objective terms. The body of the zombie combines multiple subjective memories of slavery that work against each other, disfiguring its human corporeality and rending it into a monster -- a paradox that distills life and death, here and there, past and present, white and Black, memory and history.

**Possession**

In the previous chapter I analyzed *White Zombie* to show how it capitalized on the idea of an authentic monster by taking its inspiration wholly from Seabrook's account of Haitian zombies in *The Magic Island*. As the first major zombie film, it established the image of the zombie as an inautonomous slave that, somehow, had the potential to rebel against its master. Murder Legendre was a nightmare vision of capitalism gone awry -- his lust for wealth and power turned him "to the dark side," not just by his invocation of the evils of slavery and its attendant deaths, but by his adoption and mastery of Voodoo (a "Black" art) as his religion. Like Voodoo itself, supernatural powers of resurrection are seen as unnatural, reversals of the imaginary natural order. Moreover, Legendre's power over life and death is not employed benevolently, but selfishly, in order to increase his own wealth and power. He is like Lazarus Morell, the infamous literary figure whom Julia Kristeva describes as “the frightful redeemer, who raises his slaves from the dead only to have them die more fully, but not until they have

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.
been circulated—and brought in a return—like currency.”\textsuperscript{307} As he makes people into capital, Legendre evinces a literal return of the cruel slaver who stole, subjugated, and sold the humanity of other people for his own profit. It might be tempting to see such a figure cast as a villain as a progressive statement on the part of the filmmakers, yet Legendre’s assumptive murder and abject enslavement of Haitian men is not even the focus of this horror film, merely background. The Black "rival Voodoo priests" whom he has made his slaves do not challenge the imaginary natural order of white superiority or Black inferiority, but fit squarely in the imagination of slavery’s historic divisions and even subtly justify the racial hierarchy by suggesting that the slaves were evil to begin with. Rather, the primary horror explored in the film is how Legendre's mastery of Voodoo and his capitalist greed immediately threaten the innocent white woman he targets as the object of his desires. Her frail whiteness metaphorizes the fragility of race as status on which social hierarchy can be built, and for Legendre to possess her she must first die. When she succumbs to Legendre's Voodoo curse, it is as though whiteness itself has succumbed to Blackness. In his quest to acquire power, Legendre has "Blackened himself," and his possession of Madeline disrupts the imaginary order by suggesting that slavery's racial dynamics have indeed been reversed; just as whites once possessed Black people as their property, Voodoo has now enabled the transformation of whiteness and the possession of white bodies.

The dynamic paradigm of "possessor/possessed" serves as an organizing principle for the film and provides a schema for the circulation of characters within it. As Barry Keith Grant has noted, this is a paradigm marked by its instability and reversibility.\textsuperscript{308} At the beginning Neil

\textsuperscript{307} Kristeva, 24. Lazarus Morell appears in a number of literary works in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. For that reason the character is thought to be based on a real slave-owner who helped free slaves from their plantations, only to recapture them up-river and sell them again for a sizeable profit.

\textsuperscript{308} Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett, \textit{Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film} (Scarecrow Press, 2004), 351.
possesses Madeline, but loses her to Beaumont when she becomes possessed by Voodoo and transforms into the film's "white zombie." By virtue of Black magic Beaumont comes to possess Madeline, but quickly loses her as he himself becomes possessed by Legendre. Legendre literally and figuratively possesses all of his zombies, yet even so he is also possessed by the dark magic of Voodoo. The film thus dramatizes the possibility of human possession in both material and metaphysical senses, and in doing so inaugurates a central theme of zombie cinema: an affiliation between character alliances and property relations. At the same time, it's the specific possession of white femininity and Black masculinity by white male characters that drives the action of the plot. The paradigm of possessor/possessed is thus imbricated with paradigms of race and gender. The horror of the film then depends upon the tacit acknowledgment of a social hierarchy in which the intersectional categories of white, male, and possessor belong together and on top. The horror of the film thus rests in its repositioning of these categories, wherein the white male becomes possessed. Yet even in doing so the white female and the Black male characters remain the property of white men, so the horror is not even a total reversal of hierarchical power, but simply the loss of white male autonomy and control.

The enunciation of White Zombie presents itself in terms of these paradigms and positions the spectator in relation to them via its mode of address. The symbolization of possessor/possessed dynamics structure the film and provide its central motivations. In certain ways, Legendre possesses not only his zombies, but also, ostensibly, the enunciative devices of film language. As Grant has pointed out, shots in the film follow the trajectory of Legendre's desire, so in some sense he possesses the spectator's vision as well. He concludes that, "at the most dramatic points of the film, the spectator is placed in the uncomfortable position of the
zombie, the one possessed." Legendre's control over both characters' bodily autonomy and of spectators' vision suggests that the power of the wealthy white man transverses material and immaterial landscapes and modes of thought. The fact that Legendre's ability to take this command of people on both sides of the screen derives from his own possession by Blackness/Voodoo further suggests the terrifying superlative power of mixed-race masculinity. Just as the implicit fear of the "white zombie" reflects concerns about miscegenation and the enduring sanctity of whiteness, Legendre's meta power over both his zombies and the audience symbolizes concerns about the mixing of racial paradigms -- the combination of Black magic and white colonialism results in white slavery.

White Zombie's preoccupation with possessor/possessed dynamics resonates throughout a vast number of zombie horror films that followed it, in part because the zombie as a monster-type uniquely provides the opportunity to explore such paradigms. As Edward Lowry and Richard deCordova explain:

White Zombie offers a formative example of the narrative/filmic figuration of desire in terms of possession. Not only is the paradigm of possessor/possessed (which provides a consistent structural bases for the which White Zombie initiated) figured narratively amongst the characters of the film; it is also figured in the enunciative devices employed to situate the viewer on both sides of the paradigm at different points.

In other words, the theme of possession in White Zombie helps explain the meta issue of the spectator as possessor of the image even as s/he is possessed by the image s/he is watching. Iconic film theorists Christian Metz and Raymond Bellour have also noted the similarities between the dynamic of possessor/possessed and its function in relation to subject and object in

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309 Ibid.
voyeurism and fetishism.\textsuperscript{311} For Metz, the situation of the viewer in the cinema bears a strong resemblance to the dynamic of possessor/possessed which functions in the relation of subject and object inherent in psychoanalytic constructs of voyeurism and fetishism.\textsuperscript{312} Similarly, Bellous has demonstrated the possessor/possessed dynamic even more explicitly in his comparison of the cinematic apparatus hypnosis, in which he turns specifically to the production of horror in sequences that captivate audiences via film language such as tracking, lighting, and sound.\textsuperscript{313} However, it is important to note how the paradigms of Voodoo and miscegenation as well as the very nature of the Voodoo zombie invite this particular reading. The literal possession of the Black body by Voodoo magic in early zombie films becomes a metaphor for white possession of Black images or representations during the Great Depression. Even within a strictly textual analysis of the film, it appears that the metaphorical possession of such images would activate the imaginative agency of the white spectator, who would then psychologically situate these images within a nexus of other cultural forms that comprise the social imaginary.

Many of the Voodoo zombie films made in the 1930s and 1940s deal explicitly with the possession of females for sexual reasons while simultaneously exploring white/Black racial issues. Films like \textit{Ouanga}, \textit{Black Moon}, \textit{The Devil's Daughter}, \textit{Voodoo Man}, \textit{King of the Zombies}, \textit{Revolt of the Zombies}, \textit{Revenge of the Zombies}, \textit{Voodoo Woman}, \textit{Island of the Snake People}, and \textit{Zombies on Broadway} (to name a few) universally portray Black people as ignorant and/or evil "natives," who interfere with white objectives either by their laziness or their malice. Without painting all of these films with the same brush, it is safe to say that they emphasized the

same themes in similar ways, reifying the images and imagination of zombies sensationally constructed in *The Magic Island* and *White Zombie*. It was relatively normal to include themes of miscegenation, racial conflict (particularly in the form of Black disobedience to white authority, a curious vision of Black autonomy in films ostensibly about inautonomous Black slaves), and supernatural constructions of Black power in the earliest zombie movies, with their plantation settings and adherence to the Afro-Caribbean folk culture from which zombies came. But there was also undoubtedly a wellspring of issues upon which to touch regarding the socioeconomic milieu of rich, white plantation owners and downtrodden Black peasants and workers. The social imaginary of race was therefore intimately bound up with the social imaginary of class, both categories which were destabilized by the image of a zombie and the perceived vulnerability of the white woman who sympathized with the emotional and economic plight of Black slaves. In *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race 1903-1967*, film scholar Susan Courtney cogently argues that representations of Black-white relationships in film are strongly invested in the project of understanding American history.  

Even as she explicates the historical events and issues that engendered certain representations of interracial relationships on screen, she argues that the images produced by Hollywood participated in an ongoing social construction of race. As she puts it, "without forgetting the very real and often brutal social histories that have given rise to, and resulted from, dominant cultural fantasies of miscegenation, it is nonetheless also relevant that significant portions of that history have also taken place within the field of representation."  

Courtney painstakingly examines early Hollywood films to show how perceptions of racial difference were at the heart of cinema from its inception, and explores Classical era films to demonstrate how

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315 Ibid.
representations of miscegenation helped to delimit understandings of race within the social imaginary.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant have proposed that race relations involve constantly shifting categories, informed by a vast array of social forces, meanings, and events. Calling this shifting set of forces “racial formation,” they underscore the way race is most properly understood as the “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed.”

According to this theory, race is created through both social structures and cultural representations of racialized individuals or groups. Race, in other words, is an unstable category of identity that is dependent on cultural responses and interpretations of Otherness. For Courtney, those cultural responses and interpretations are both reflected and constituted by the dominant images of race in popular media. As she puts it, "particular interracial scenarios in particular historical periods reflect not only historically specific ideological concerns but also specific filmic mechanisms for (mutually) constituting race and gender." One of those filmic mechanisms was the hyper visibility and binaristic division of Black and white racial identity on screen, which she argues was meant to enforce an understanding of racial identities as mutually exclusive. According to Courtney, "in combination these images make especially clear that if the possibility of sexual "mingling" across racial lines always implies the potential dissolution of those "lines" and the categories and social structures they enforce…such destabilizations of race are partly grounded by the rigid conventions of gender identity and heterosexual romance also on display." The instability and reversibility of

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316 Omi and Winant, 1994.
318 Ibid.

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the possessor/possessed paradigm in *White Zombie* is intimately linked to the instability and potential reversibility of race, as illustrated in these paranoid fantasies of miscegenation.

**The Imago and the Imaginary**

As memory scholarship revels, memory is a process of the imagination as much as any other cogitative operation. Whether individually or collectively, recollection of the past requires it to be reinvented in the present. Just as the imago proceeds from the image, memory proceeds from representation. In *Difference and Repetition*, Giles Deleuze discusses how the repetition of certain representations shapes our understanding of difference. As he puts it, "difference is not and cannot be thought in itself, so long as it is subject to the requirements of representation."

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In the previous chapter I illustrated some of the ways that images from Classical-era zombie films both reflected and participated in the construction of a racial imaginary of Blackness, enforcing an understanding of racial and cultural difference that demonized Black people through the repetition of certain representations of the zombie figure. This representational strategy, I argued, collapsed fantasies of miscegenation with fantasies of conquest and travel, ultimately figuring Black masculinity as inherently monstrous and threatening to paradigms of white supremacy. The *imagination* of a Voodoo-zombie-slave led to the *image* of a Black male monster. Here, by the term “image” I refer to more than “an image,” as the phenomenon is clearly not reducible to a single image or even an original image (such as King's illustrations of Seabrook's zombies), but rather to a set of images that are circumscribed by their shared representational perspective. Likewise, by “imagination” I mean more than what Appadurai

describes as mere “fantasy,” “pastime,” or transcendental “contemplation,” but rather the cognitive work involved in conjuring, creating, and interpreting images of other people, places, and times. Image and imagination constitute, as Appaduri puts it, an “organized field of social practices,” a “form of work” and a “form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.” Imagination, in other words, is mutually dependent on individual psychological processes and extant representations within a given cultural milieu. As with Connerton, Küchler and Melion’s theorization of social memory, the cultural role of imagination in Appaduri’s sense does not refer simply to an individual faculty. Cultural imagination is rather “a property of collectives,” enabled primarily by electronic media, that constitutes “communities of sentiment” through acts of creating, engaging, sharing, critiquing and taking pleasure in media. These collectives emerge when groups begin “to imagine and feel things together," as in the communitas of spectatorship that manifests in a cinema or upon the shared viewing of a popular film. Benedict Anderson has shown how print capitalism created "imagined communities" of people who were never in face-to-face contact, which was the prerequisite for the formation of nation-states. In the 1930s and 40s, cinema helped to produce an imagined community of U.S. citizens that excluded and even precluded Black people. Part of the project of constructing the imagined "American" community in film was the imagination of others who were not American, leading to the racial imaginary of Blackness previously discussed. For Anderson, imagined communities carry the potential of moving from shared imagination to collective action -- in this case, the shared imagination of a

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320 Appadurai, Modernity At Large, 31.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid., 7.
323 Anderson, Imagined Communities.
Black male monster helped fuel the paranoid racist sentiments which in turn spurred collective actions such as the lynching of Black men.

Drawing on the work of Appadurai and Anderson, sociocultural anthropologist Noel Salazar has developed his own definition of the social schemas that organize and mobilize communities in the understanding of their own identity. In *Imaged or Imagined? Cultural Representations and the Tourismification of Peoples and Places*, Salazar defines *imaginaries* as "culturally shared and socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and that are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices (mediating how people act, cognize, and value the world)." The imaginary of Blackness in zombie films of the 1930s and 40s was intimately bound up with sensational representations of Voodoo, vengeance, and miscegenation. The repetition of such representational assemblages interacted with the spectator's individual imaginings of Black people and their culture in the U.S., mediating their understanding and valuation of that culture and shaping their perception of the shared history between Haiti and the U.S. As Appadurai and Salazar reveal, the transformation of everyday subjectivities through media and imagination is not only a cultural fact, but deeply entrenched in the politics of social hierarchy. Classical-era zombie films directly referenced the U.S. occupation of Haiti by recollecting and representing images from Seabrook, and created new representations of the imagination of Voodoo zombies as described by marines and writers who lived in Haiti at the time. In doing so, they conjured memories of the past, represented them, and reified a particular version of "history" that saw Blackness as inherently monstrous. In the zombie narrative's genealogy of performance, these classical Hollywood films participated in the construction of a racial imaginary, and in that way they can be seen as imagos.

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Salazar, “Imaged or Imagined?,” 22.
that both conceal and reveal the workings of cultural memory. Yet seeing them as imagos demands a deeper consideration of what memories, exactly, these films conceal and reveal. Assuming that their only purpose was a racist form of entertainment solidifies a singular understanding of how these films operated and obscures disregards the complex work certain films performed as both participants in and challenges to the racial imaginaries of zombie cinema.
A Postcolonial Monster:
Memory and History in *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943)

Over the course of the past decade, a number of dedicated scholars have taken up the cause of the zombie. Nearly every major academic text on zombies contains at least a cursory chapter or two on the "origins" of the figure(s) in Haitian Vodou and/or in Hollywood Voodoo-cinema of the 1930s-40s. In the previous chapter I have demonstrated how the "origins" of zombilore plumb greater depths -- both temporally and epistemologically -- than the folk-beliefs collected in Haiti during the U.S. military occupation would suggest. For those who focus on the sheer quantity of Voodoo-zombie films from Hollywood's classical age, it may be easy to assume that all such productions were inherently racist projects, symptoms of a culture struggling to keep white and Black populations separate and unequal. The recent flurry of interest in zombies has led to the general consensus that dozens of these Classical Voodoo-zombie films were simply the products of racist fantasy, the bizarre beginnings of a tradition whose subsequent iterations were far more diverse and meaningful than their source-materials. However, it is problematic to assume that every classic zombie film operated in the same way, that the filmmakers for each production had the same goals, or even that audiences experienced this entire genre of films as mere variations on a theme. Building on memory theory, we can see
how this Voodoo-zombie scholarship illustrates one area where a conflict between memory and history is beginning to take shape in the present. Summary investigations of Voodoo-zombie films often treat them as homogenous enterprises, and as the canon of zombie scholarship develops, we are beginning to concretize a "history" of Voodoo-zombie cinema that elides each production's individual contribution(s) to the field of zombielore. Despite overarching trends across the genre, every film remains a singular production and thus encodes the ideological proclivities of its filmmakers. Similar to Küchler and Melion's assertion that the inscription of images upon a surface precipitates, shapes, and consolidates memory, Walter Benjamin has noted that "it is not the object of the story to convey a happening per se, which is the purpose of information; rather it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the marks of the storyteller much as the earthen vessel bears the marks of the potters hands." One film that very clearly "bears the marks" of the filmmaker's "hands" is 1943's *I Walked With a Zombie*, one of the most often discussed Voodoo-zombie films of Classical Hollywood cinema.

*I Walked With a Zombie* revolves around a young white woman who comes to live on a Haitian plantation and eventually finds herself harassed by a Voodoo zombie slave that turns out to be controlled by one of the plantation owners. It's a plot that clearly draws from earlier films such as *White Zombie* and *Black Moon*, in which a white woman becomes imperiled by her affiliation with Haitian Voodoo, but which articulates its themes of postcolonial angst and anxiety consciously and forthrightly. Although just one of many Voodoo zombie films of the era, *I Walked With a Zombie* has been addressed by more film and cultural scholars than any of

325 See: Stuart Hall, Jean Louis Baudry, Commolli and Narboni, et al.
its contemporaries, in part because of its inherent contradictions between racist depictions of Haitian natives and a somewhat sympathetic treatment of their postcolonial suffering. It was panned by critics immediately upon its release, lumped together with other B and C grade Voodoo zombie films of the time, but soon became a cult favorite. Over the next seventy years, film critics and scholars heaped praise on the filmmakers for their conscientious and artistic rendering of this otherwise sensational storyline. In his study of Voodoo in the cinema, Brian Senn called it "without a doubt the most haunting and poetic of voodoo films (and perhaps of horror films in general as well)," and "the finest example of voodoo cinema ever set to celluloid,"327 while Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg declared, "there is little doubt that I Walked With a Zombie is one of the most beautiful, graceful, and resonant horror films ever produced."328 Similar statements lauding the film's poetic artistry can be found in many other film histories,329 substantiating the film's enduring presence in scholarship surrounding horror cinema. When the still-nascent field of zombie studies emerged in the twenty-first century, scholars like Annalee Newitz, Sean McIntosh and Marc Leverette shifted the dominant thrust of analyses of this film to focus on racial issues and the demonization of Black people via representations of Voodoo, even as they complicated that reading by pointing out its postcolonial undertones. Newitz, for example, noted that despite its covert anti-colonial messaging I Walked With a Zombie's "characterization of blacks as 'savages'…shares ideological terrain with Birth [of a Nation]," an overtly racist film that hinges on the threat of miscegenation and the sanctity of

327 Bryan Senn, Drums of Terror: Voodoo in the Cinema (Midnight Marquee Press, 1998), 55, 60.
Although contemporary criticism typically focuses on the tension between racist imagery and antiracist sentiments within the film itself, the primary reason *I Walked With a Zombie* has been taken so seriously compared to its counterparts over the years is the enduring cultural and cinematic cache of its filmmakers, Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur.

While the intentions of filmmakers are sometimes discernible (as in the case of films whose makers kept detailed production journals or spoke to questions about their intentionality in interviews or trade press), for the most part a film text must be read and interpreted only by virtue of what the celluloid contains. *I Walked With a Zombie* is the rare example of a film that can be studied, in some ways, in terms of the filmmakers' intentions. However, the film text itself reveals as much about cultural memory as do the filmmakers' own statements about their intentionality. As I will explore in depth throughout this chapter, the film portrays conflicts between white and Black islanders and ties those conflicts to the legacy of colonialism, repeatedly referencing the histories of slavery and U.S. intervention in Haiti from both white and Black perspectives. In this way it troubles the white colonialist understanding of Haitian history by replacing dominant narratives surrounding the occupation with mutable and conflicting memories of the same period. We could thus call the film a postcolonial *lieux de memoire*, following Nora, but the film itself invites viewers to adopt an Afro-Caribbean conception of history and memory. In this sense, it may be productive to turn first to non-Western constructions of memory such as those illuminated by Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, who explore memory as a culturally specific phenomenon.

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In *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, Roberts and Roberts explicate the mnemonic systems of Luba peoples, which in various ways employ beads and shells to symbolize cultural memories. Whether strung on a necklace or arranged on a board, these beads and shells produce meaning according to their placement in relation to one another. Each specific bead or shell signifies a particular "place," geographic or symbolic, and becomes the memory of that which it signifies. Memory devices such as the "chain" (necklace) and "peg" (board) can be read or interpreted differently depending on the person reading them. As mnemonics, they consist of multiple visual images linked together which produce meaning through their overlapping sequences, conveying and negotiating memory through their positions and contiguities. Yet the fact that different Luba people will read the same memory device differently suggests an inherent cultural understanding that memory is mercurial and subjective, even on the scale of cultural memory. To apply a Luba understanding of memory to the analysis of a zombie film entails the recognition that the same images, narratological developments, and filmmaking tactics may be interpreted quite differently by different film scholars. Although many theorists who have written about *I Walked With a Zombie* have noted its covertly sympathetic treatment of the Haitian natives it represents, most have focused their analyses on its contribution to the racist project of zombie cinema, situating it in relation to more explicitly racist films and interpreting its central images and imagination of Black zombies in line with that film history. While still acknowledging the role of these images and imaginations -- these beads and shells -- in the construction of a racial imaginary, I hope to complicate the perception of this film by offering an advanced reading of how these images stand in relation to one another within the film itself as well as in relation to images from other films of the same era. Through this

332 Ibid.
specific reading of the film's history, I will demonstrate how *I Walked With a Zombie* constitutes a complex intervention into the performative genealogy of zombielore, self-consciously engaging with the trauma of slavery and its aftermath by exploring the conflicting memories of colonialism embodied by the zombie. Despite its evident and pronounced racism, I argue that the filmmakers' commitment to both authenticity and memory allow for a more nuanced understanding of the "work" of the film.

This chapter represents one way a folklorist might undertake the study of a film in terms of text, texture, context and analysis. I begin with a summary of *I Walked With a Zombie* that serves as an initial reference point for the "text," which would actually be the film itself. From there I consider the context of the film, drawing on my archival studies and research on this film's history to consider how the filmmakers related to the work they were producing. I frame my analysis of the context in terms of Hollywood interest in both ethnographic authenticity and Gothic horror films during this time period, arguing that *I Walked With a Zombie*’s filmmakers sought to balance the demands of the studio and the public with their own individual aims and interests. The rest of the chapter offers a deep reading of the film's texture, combining formal film analysis with concepts derived from memory studies to demonstrate how *I Walked With a Zombie* articulates its vision of postcolonial memory. Throughout this close reading, I also draw on narrative analysis and postcolonial Gothic literary theory to illustrate my arguments and to suggest that *I Walked With a Zombie* continues a narrative tradition of representing colonial conflicts in terms of undeath that stretches back to the Haitian Revolution.
Summary

*I Walked With a Zombie* tells the story of a young nurse, Betsy, who relocates to work for the Holland family on the West Indian isle of Saint Sebastian. Paul Holland's wife, Jessica, exists in a zombified state, and throughout the film Betsy seeks various cures for her ailment. Later, we learn that before she became ill Jessica had an affair and planned to leave the island with Paul's half brother, the now-alcoholic Wesley Rand. Paul and Wesley's mother is implicated in Jessica's zombification when it is revealed that she not only practices Voodoo but masquerades as a *houngan* and claims to speak for the natives' patriarchal god, Damballa. Mrs. Rand is also revealed to have power over Carre-four, the omnipresent Black zombie that hovers around the plantation and stalks Betsy throughout the film. Betsy falls in love with Paul, but remains determined to restore his wife to health and to him. As revelations about Mrs. Rand and Jessica surface, however, we come to suspect that the matriarch purposefully zombified Jessica to keep her on the island and to punish both her and Wesley for their adultery. In the end, a mysterious force draws Jessica away from the plantation and into the jungle, where the film implies she will be sacrificed as part of a Voodoo ceremony. The drunken Wesley follows Jessica and kills her before she reaches her destination, and Carre-four brings her body back to the plantation.

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333 I italicize the word *houngan* here to reflect the spelling that appears in the script. Please note that in Haitian Kreyol the correct spelling is *ougan*.
I Walked With a Zombie, 1943

Gothicizing Authenticity

While the majority of zombie films following White Zombie (1932) were low-budget derivations trading in racist stereotypes, "exotic" images, and lurid hints at miscegenation, I Walked With a Zombie stands in contrast as a thoughtful, complex, and even poetic film that draws on those earlier zombie tropes even as it satirizes them. While not a critical success when first released, the film quickly attained cult status and enjoyed a sort of infamy throughout the 1960s and 70s, a time when zombie films were largely abandoning Voodoo and slavery in favor
of radiation and viruses.\textsuperscript{334} It has been so revered in the movie-making industry that a remake has been "in the works" since 1994, the most recent buzz regarding a 2013 "updated screenplay" with Liv Tyler and Gary Oldman attached to play the leads.\textsuperscript{335} For some reason, however, no 21st century studio has pulled the trigger on this remake, possibly because of the iconic filmmaking style and cult status of the original. Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur are each icons of Classical Hollywood cinema on their own terms, but their collaborative efforts yielded some of the most revered films in the history of horror cinema. In particular, they are regarded as masters of a "poetic" filmmaking style that draws on Gothic imagery and themes to create an atmosphere of dramatic suspense and psychological terror.\textsuperscript{336} The Gothic poetics undergirding \textit{I Walked With a Zombie} belong to a particular place and time -- namely a racially segregated U.S. struggling to make sense of its own history -- and would be difficult to replicate with any sense of the authenticity or verisimilitude that was crucial to the conception and reception of the first film. While cultivating a sense of "authenticity" was important to other Voodoo-zombie filmmakers of the 1930s-40s, it clearly meant something different to Lewton and Tourneur. Thanks to the detailed journals kept by Val Lewton himself and the devoted biographers who have studied his and Tourneur's careers, we have some insight into the thought processes and filmmaking choices that contributed to \textit{I Walked With a Zombie} and made it the icon of Voodoo-zombie cinema it is today.

French director Jaques Tourneur did more than take inspiration from classic works of Gothic literature, finding ways to translate literary techniques to celluloid. Fred Botting's

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{334} Senn, \textit{Drums of Terror}. \textsuperscript{335} The revised screenplay, "Plantation," was penned by Adam Marcus and Debra Sullivan, and Oren Koules (director of all seven \textit{Saw} films) was attached to produce. There have been no updates on the film since 2012. http://www.highlandfilmgroup.com/Plantation \textsuperscript{336} Telotte, \textit{Dreams of Darkness}; Hirshberg, \textit{Gratuitous Moonlight}; Fujiwara, \textit{Jacques Tourneur}; Bansak, \textit{Fearing the Dark}.}
analysis of the Gothic in cinema, *Limits of Horror: Technology, Bodies, Gothic*, argues that "Gothic [filmmaking tactics] preserve the illusion of darkness, death, and sexuality in a world given over to the omnipresence of virtual life and light on screens." Other scholars of Gothic cinema such as Lisa Hopkins and Judith Halberstam agree with Botting's assessment, and add that Gothic cinema also engages in doubling -- of characters, of images, of sequences -- much like the Gothic literature that preceded it. In retrospectives of his career, Tourneur is credited with being among the first to consciously employ the themes of Gothic literature (death, sexuality, doubling) in his film narratives, but also with transforming those themes into film language (lighting, sound, editing) to create a particular atmosphere of foreboding and disquietude. While Tourneur was developing this signature Gothic directing style in the late 1930s, Lewton was working as David O. Selznick's assistant on *Gone With the Wind* (1938). Lewton is even credited with images from that film such as the famous rising shot of the Atlanta Railyard covered with wounded southerners beneath a billowing confederate flag, and the inclusion of props such as the harp and parrot on a buggy during the exodus from Atlanta. This attention to detail is significant in that it reveals Lewton's close consideration of mise-en-scene and his dedication to the idea that background imagery adds dimensions to a story independent of narrative, dialogue, or action. Reflecting on *I Walked With a Zombie*'s production history, Tourneur remarked,

> The sets were beautifully dressed. Val was very fussy about furnishings and it paid off. You don't know why you like a thing in a film. Every time you see a film that you like, somebody stayed up at night, somebody worried, somebody

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was fussy, somebody made enemies. Good pictures don't just happen…Val and I were both craftsmen. We were very proud of our work.\textsuperscript{346}

The fact that Tourneur thought of himself and Lewton as "craftsmen" reflects their serious approach to the artistry of horror cinema, and their similar aesthetics and their attention to detail is one of the reasons they were paired together by studio executives. Lewton left Selznick in 1942 to undertake a series of horror films at RKO Pictures alongside Tourneur, and the pair were provided a budget $200,000 per film and a title determined by RKO. It was "a match made in heaven,"\textsuperscript{341} as Tourneur's taste for Gothic aesthetics and Lewton's devotion to creating a sense of authenticity via film language combined to produce the "Gothic poetics" that made them famous.

While Lewton may be best remembered for his contributions to low-budget horror cinema, James Agee (the premier American film critic of the 1940s) wrote that Lewton was one of "the three foremost creative figures in Hollywood" at the time, alongside Charlie Chaplin and Walt Disney.\textsuperscript{342}

Following the success of their first film, \textit{Cat People} (1942), Lewton and Tourneur were assigned the evocative title \textit{I Walked With a Zombie}. RKO had acquired the rights to Inez Wallace's quasi-ethnographic article about zombies published in \textit{American Weekly Magazine}, though the substance of the article was deemed less relevant than its title.\textsuperscript{343} According to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[342] James Agee, \textit{Film Writing and Selected Journalism} (Library of America, 2005), 124.
\item[343] Inez Wallace was a writer and entertainment columnist, working for the Cleveland Plain Dealer in the 1920s-1950s, and as a feature writer for many popular magazines. She was a gossip columnist in Hollywood and wrote the scripts for several radio and TV programs. While her short story "I Walked With a Zombie" was published in American Weekly Magazine on May 3rd, \textsuperscript{1942}, it is unclear why anyone trusted Wallace's ethnographic credentials. According to Dr. Herbert Shelton of \textit{The Hygienic Review} (1851-1996), Wallace was a "distinguished newspaper correspondent" who had met with a zombie and a native physician who told her how zombies were made -- an account oddly similar to one found in Hurston's \textit{Tell My Horse} (1938). (Herbert M. Shelton, \textit{Hygienic Review} (Health Research Books, 1996), p. 10.)
\end{footnotes}
reports, Lewton and Tourneur were notably depressed for a few days after being given the assignment and only rallied their spirits after an all-night session in Lewton's office at RKO.\textsuperscript{344} Having no script and embarrassed by the imposed title, Tourneur and Lewton resolved to make every effort to counter the sensationalism it implied. Lewton declared to his unit, "They may think I'm going to do the usual chiller stuff with which will make a quick profit, be laughed at, and be forgotten, but I'm going to make the kind of suspense movie I like."\textsuperscript{345} To that end, he conscripted writers Curt Siodmak and Ardel Wray to scribe a "West Indian variation on \textit{Jane Eyre}," which he believed would be excellent source material for a horror film.\textsuperscript{346} (As Senn notes, before leaving his job as Selznick's story editor for the RKO producer's post in early 1942, Lewton had helped prepare a film production of the Charlotte Brontë novel which was ultimately made by Orson Welles. "Undoubtedly, Lewton had spent the night figuring out a way to make his ridiculously titled zombie project respectable and seized upon the Brontë classic as a literary out."\textsuperscript{347}) Siodmak's previous credits included \textit{Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman}, \textit{Ghost of Frankenstein}, and \textit{The Invisible Woman}, while Ardel Wray was selected from RKO's Young Writer's Project and remains the only woman credited as a writer on a Lewton-produced film. Siodmak's first draft was dismissed by Lewton as too similar to the plot of \textit{White Zombie}, and he left the production before Wray and Lewton finished the screenplay themselves.\textsuperscript{348}

Tourneur and Lewton also devised a plan to imbue their next film with more ethnographic authenticity than its predecessors in the zombie genre. As Wray remembered, "We

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\textsuperscript{344} Siegel, \textit{Val Lewton}; Senn, \textit{Drums of Terror}, 42.
\textsuperscript{346} Siodmak and Wray were stock writers for RKO and had been assigned to different pictures when Lewton hand-selected them and insisted that they be transferred to his production. Val Lewton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{347} Senn, \textit{Drums of Terror}, 53.
\textsuperscript{348} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
all plunged into research on Haitian voodoo, every book on the subject Val could find. He was an addictive researcher, drawing out of it the overall feel, mood, and quality he wanted, as well as details for actual production."³⁴⁹ Tourneur began by reading Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*, and subsequently he and Lewton hired folklorist and native Haitian LeRoy Antoine to consult on the film and provide it with a sense of ethnographic verisimilitude. On October 29, 1942, *The Hollywood Reporter* announced that, "LeRoy Antoine, who is one of the country's leading authorities on Haiti and Haitian folk music and voodoo, will be the technical advisor on *I Walked With a Zombie*. Antoine will also teach the Negro actors Haitian rhythms for use in voodoo ceremony."³⁵⁰ Though little else is known about LeRoy Antoine, he evidently spent a lot of time with Lewton and Tourneur in the early days of production. Through those conversations, Tourneur felt that he caught a glimpse of how the American presence in Haiti was perceived by native Haitians and became determined to bring that dimension to bear on his film.³⁵¹ At the same time, Lewton was keenly aware of the studio's imperative for more Voodoo-zombie-slave miscegenation drama. Working together, they paid close attention to the balance of Gothic aesthetics and authenticating elements of Vodou religiosity and life in Haiti to create something remarkable, "the first feature [film] to take a truly adult approach to voodoo."³⁵²

By blending the ethnographic with the Gothic, Lewton and Tourneur attempted to strike a harmony between meeting the expectations of studio executives and satisfying their own desire to complicate the tired, stock-narratives typical of the Voodoo-zombie genre. From Antoine they learned about the importance of spiritual possession in Vodou, a theme which recurs throughout

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³⁴⁹ Siegel, *Val Lewton*, 57–58.
³⁵⁰ Senn, *Drums of Terror*, 58.
³⁵¹ Hirshberg, *Gratuitous Moonlight*.
³⁵² Senn, *Drums of Terror*, 58.
the film and which is used consciously as a metaphor for slavery. By drawing attention to the idea of possession rather than beating the old drum about the "living dead," they both corrected a pervasive misconception about the nature of Haitian zombis and suggested that the truth was far more complex than the fiction. Perhaps this is why, in the opening credits, they included this disclaimer: "The characters and events in this photoplay are fictional. Any similarity to actual persons, living, dead or possessed, is purely coincidental." Tongue-in-cheek jabs at their subject matter and source material aside, Lewton and Tourneur produced a meticulously crafted film that addressed race and racism without falling completely into an overly-simplistic Black-and-White dichotomy. Indeed, *I Walked With a Zombie* came to offer a more compelling and even sensitive view of postcolonial relationships than anyone could have anticipated, though it was and is often mistaken for just another in a long line of sensationalist Voodoo-zombie films. As Jacques Tourneur put it, "it was a horrible title for a very good film -- the best film I've ever done in my life." 

**The Imago and the Imaginary**

One reason *I Walked With a Zombie* has captured the attention of so many scholars is that it contains one of the most famous images from zombie cinema: a Black zombie (Darby Jones) carrying a white woman (Christine Gordon) through the jungle. On its surface, this image appears to speak for itself. It succinctly obviates the racist dimensions of zombie-cinema for anyone who has no direct experience with the films, and it appears in nearly every text that addresses racism in classical horror films or zombie cinema in general, including the cover of the

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353 Italics in original.
354 Need reference
academic anthology, *Race, Oppression and the Zombie: Cross-Cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition* (Moreman and Rushton, 2010). In many ways, the image has become an imago of Voodoo-zombie cinema, despite its complicated history. The image has been doctored numerous times -- for RKO to create different posters and publicity materials in the 1940s, for a special screening in the 1970s, and for contemporary film critics and historians to make efficient statements about classical zombie cinema and its preoccupation with miscegenation. The image enjoyed such popularity in the early 2000s that it was even recreated by superstar musicians Kanye West and Lady Gaga for a limited edition release of her album, *The Fame Monster*. 
Nearly ubiquitous in zombie discourse, this image appears and reappears in many manifestations of popular culture -- just not in the film itself. Created purely to be used in promotional materials, this infamous shot, which has become a visual synonym for this sub-genre of horror film, never actually appears in *I Walked With a Zombie*. While at the end of the film Carre-four does carry Jessica through the jungle, he does so after Jessica has been stabbed to death by her white husband. Rather than kidnapping or abducting her, as the image might imply, Carre-four is carrying her home.

This sexually suggestive image was staged by producer Val Lewton, who had once been known as a prolific writer of pulp fiction and pornographic novels. Tourneur, however, expressed distaste for the image in his private notebooks.\(^{355}\) Still, the film (and this image in particular) have taken on lives of their own in the recent criticism surrounding the history of zombielore, particularly within discourse on miscegenation in Voodoo-zombie cinema. Indeed, this image has become an imago of racist zombie cinema in precisely the way Norman Klein describes: when we discover it, it appears intact, whole, and easily interpretable; yet the details surrounding it have gotten lost. It has become the "rumor that seems haunted with memory, so satisfying that it keeps us from looking beyond it." Perhaps we do not feel the need to look beyond this image because, as with the many scholars of zombie history who include it in their texts without discussing it specifically, the image appears self-explanatory. Why else would we find it repeated so often in the discourse surrounding Voodoo-zombie cinema, with little to no acknowledgement of the fact that within the film it does not even represent the miscegenation it implies? The image only appears on posters and lobby cards, yet it has become synonymous with the film, and an accepted icon of Voodoo-zombie cinema's obsession with miscegenation.

\(^{355}\) Siegel, *Val Lewton*. 
Turning to the film itself, we discover that there is, in fact, a different image that can and should be interpreted as the most iconographic image from *I Walked With a Zombie*. While the first image expands a fleeting moment in the narrative and only appears outside the film itself, images of Ti Misery, the figurehead of a slave ship, return successively throughout the film. It seems likely that Lewton and Tourneur intended this to be the image that haunted their audience, rather than the image staged for a lobby card. As Fred Botting and Lisa Hopkins have suggested in their approaches to Gothic cinema, repetition of motifs triggers the sense of "haunting." A "Gothic poetics" emphasizes atmosphere and imagery over characters and events, a principle not dissimilar from Lewton's own stratagem of filmic poetry. As Lewton scholars have emphasized, Lewton had a literary sensibility and strove to imitate poetic forms through visual imagery. In his journal, Lewton wrote of discussions with Tourneur about how to create the sense of impending doom that seems to always be lurking over one's shoulder; a terror that sneaks up from behind. In other words, he sought to bring the past into the present in dark and unsettling ways. The methodology he and Tourneur devised for achieving this was the repetition of an image that they felt captured the soul of the film. In no way, however, does the image of Ti Misery encode the racist fantasies of miscegenation than can be limned from any of the film's promotional materials. Rather, it addresses issues of slavery, the Middle Passage, and the impossibility of overcoming postcolonial memory.

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356 Botting, *Limits of Horror*.
358 Nemerov, *Icons of Grief*. 
Statue of Ti Misery, *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943)

**Saint Sebastian and the Imago of Postcolonial Memory**

The camera closes in on the statue of Ti Misery, whose "sorrowful, weeping black face" once bashed waves as the figurehead of a massive ship that brought slaves from Africa to the island of Saint Sebastian, *I Walked With a Zombie*’s fictional analogue for Haiti.\(^{359}\) Ti Misery now rests in a fountain surrounded by lush Caribbean flora, the tempestuous ocean swells having been replaced by the calm, captive waters which now trickle around the arrows lodged in his chest. The fountain is built into the courtyard of Fort Holland, whose crumbling stone walls look more like the Gothic castles of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* (1931)-- whence the set pieces originated-- than the grand colonial architecture of a plantation. A symbol of slavery made into an object of haunting beauty, Ti Misery is the center -- the heart -- of the island, the fort, and the film.

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\(^{359}\) Ibid., 103.
Without knowing Lewton and Tourneur's dedication to the image of Ti Misery, even a cursory viewing of *I Walked With a Zombie* exposes the film's preoccupation with the image of this disemboughed figurehead. As Eric Weems explains,

The central recurring image is of the old wooden figurehead Ti Misery, which is Saint Sebastian, the island's Patron Saint, a tragic emblem of the pain and suffering for the descendents of the slaves that live upon the island, a figurehead that came from Africa on a slave ship. As in Lewton's other films, the past intrudes upon the present in baleful reminders of former deeds which mimic present circumstance. In *Zombie*, those who came to the island as slaves to European plantation owners are now servants of a different kind of bondage, a bondage that then infiltrates and controls the actions of most of the white masters who control the island. Lewton took pains to bounce these mirror images back and forth, underlining the sense that the modern is built upon the foundations of the old.\[360\]

More than just an emphasis on the role of the past in shaping the present, successive returns to the image of Ti Misery become the film's mnemonic for Saint Sebastian's history of slavery and racial conflict. As the Voodoo of the natives continually encroaches upon the white, upper class Holland family and their unwitting nurse, Betsy, repetition of the Ti Misery image reminds viewers that the Hollands' *history* of the island stands in conflict with the locals' *memories* of that same period. If we accept Nora's premise that memory continually shifts its valences and opens itself up to deformation in the dialectics of remembering and forgetting, then the image of Ti Misery can be seen as an embodiment of memory. Specifically, the image of Ti Misery can be understood as site of multiple and competing memories related to a colonial past; the figurehead could easily be interpreted as a marker of colonial conquest while at the same time its careful emplacement and repetition in the film situates it as a container of Black locals’ memories. As a mnemonic, then, the repetition of the image serves to remind spectators of the statue's symbolism as a metonym for the Middle Passage, recalling the island's history of slavery, rebellion, and racial conflict.

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As I will discuss going forward, the image of Ti Misery's juxtaposition with specific events in the film encourages viewers to think of present actions in the context of past events, i.e., to consider the legacy of slavery and its influence on ongoing race relations. This filmic stratagem mirrors the chain mnemonics described by Roberts and Roberts, in which the physical relationship between beads and shells symbolizes the relationship between that which they represent. For example, a shot of Ti Misery that follows a native complaining about racial inequality connotes a connection between the history of slavery and the contemporary experiences of Black islanders. The juxtaposition of these two elements thus reflects the native's memory of colonial history in light of his present circumstances.

Though images of Ti Misery recur throughout the film at specific moments, no two shot compositions are the same. In some instances the "weeping black face" is obscured, and all that can be seen is the black outline of a human figure, inflected with the glimmer of light surfacing the water of the fountain, a single arrow protruding from the statue. In other images, like the one pictured above, light is cast directly on the face of Ti Misery, exposing its visage and even emphasizing the quantity of arrows sticking out from its chest. In light of Luba mnemonics and/or Nora's description of the capricious nature of memory, it's possible to imagine that the differences between recurring images of Ti Misery symbolize different perspectives on the same colonial history. Although there's nothing to indicate that this was the intention of the filmmakers, Ti Misery clearly serves as an emblem of memory, and its appearance changes subtly in each manifestation. So whether or not these different shot compositions were meant to address the mutable nature of memory, the repetition of similar images evinces a consistent return to the memory of slavery within the film.
While the intentions of filmmakers can never be as important as their work itself, or its effects on a viewing audience, they are nonetheless significant to the question of memory in cinema studies. The image of Carre-four and Jessica may have become an imago of racism in classical zombie cinema, but the fact that Tourneur and Lewton attempted to create a different imago in the form of Ti Misery cannot be ignored. Their attention to detail in the construction of different shots of Ti Misery, as well as their consistent return to those images throughout the film, were meant to evince a type of "haunting" that would challenge spectators' preconceived expectations of this "B-movie" and trouble their understanding of a supposedly "dead" past, still very much alive.

While the histories and/or memories of slavery are addressed by several characters at different parts of *I Walked With a Zombie*, many film critics still interpret the film as a family drama that uses Voodoo and Haiti as mere backdrop. However, the forthcoming analyses of select scenes from the film reveal how Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur refabulated classical zombie narratives, consciously making *I Walked With a Zombie* into a covert and even subversive statement about the conflict between memories and histories of Caribbean colonization.

**Avoiding Authenticity: The Poetics and Politics of Postcolonial Haunting**

*I Walked With a Zombie* aims to unsettle rather than to horrify, and it achieves this in two distinct ways which both relate to the idea of memory and its potential for haunting. First, the filmmakers invoked classic works of postcolonial Gothic fiction from the nineteenth century,

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translating literary techniques into filmic forms and becoming what Botting has described as "pioneers of Gothic cinema."362 This Gothic cinema goes beyond a script inspired by Jane Eyre or recycled set pieces from Frankenstein and Dracula; the film can be considered Gothic by virtue of its aesthetic construction: its moments of silence, stillness, and slow tracking; its use of sound and score; the lighting that casts everything in soft shadows except for the zombie whose silhouette cuts a stark outline against plantation walls. As Botting suggests, these filmic techniques correlate with literary techniques born in postcolonial Gothic fiction.

All of these Gothic elements in the film's construction, however, work in the service of a greater philosophical aim. Ultimately, the reason I Walked With a Zombie unsettles rather than horrifies is that it forces white characters (and largely-white audiences) to confront a memory of slavery that is not their own. The memory of Saint Sebastian's colonial past dominates the film, not only in the repeated shots of Ti Misery, but in the dialogue and plot itself. As I will illustrate below, both white and Black characters find themselves haunted by the memories of slavery, subjugation, and rebellion on the Caribbean island. White characters repeatedly try to avoid confrontations with memories of slavery that are not their own -- ducking out of conversations, changing the subject, or even fleeing the scene to avoid talking about the natives' perception of the island's history -- but the Black characters carry their memories with them at all times and insist on making them known, whether through wailing, singing, or delivering pointed statements to the white characters. In many ways, I Walked With a Zombie materializes the disquietude of a colonial past that refuses to stay in its grave.

When Nurse Betsy arrives on Saint Sebastian to begin her new job on the Holland plantation, her driver (a tall black man who will later appear as a zombie) tells her a little about

362 Botting, Limits of Horror.
the island's history as they bump along in the horse and carriage. Their dialogue in this early scene sets the tone of the film, introducing the conflict between Black memories and white histories of Caribbean colonization:

**COACHMAN**

Times gone, Fort Holland was a fort...now, no longer. The Hollands are a most old family, miss. They brought the colored people to the island--the colored folks and Ti-Misery.

**BETSY**

[leaning forward from the back seat, attentively]

Ti-Misery? What's that?

**COACHMAN**

A man, miss--an old man who lives in the garden at Fort Holland--with arrows stuck in him and a sorrowful, weeping look on his black face.

**BETSY**

[incredulous]

Alive?

**COACHMAN**

No, miss. He's just as he was in the beginning--on the front part of an enormous boat.

**BETSY**

[laughing]

You mean a figurehead.

**COACHMAN**

If you say so, miss.

*warmed up to his orating*

And the enormous boat brought the long-ago Fathers and the long-ago Mothers of us all--chained to the bottom of the boat.

Betsy has been rapt in the repartee until now, but in response to this weighty comment she looks away from the driver and sits back in her seat with a huff. Pointedly gazing at the countryside, she replies tersely:
They brought you to a beautiful place, didn't they.\textsuperscript{363}  

This statement does not simply express Betsy's ignorance of the colonial history of oppression, nor does it merely redirect the audience's attention to the lush, exotic landscape, as other critics have suggested.\textsuperscript{364} It ends the conversation. Betsy does not want to think about the horrors of slavery, much less talk about them -- she wants to (as she states earlier in the film) "lie on a beach and look at palm trees." Her statement to the driver (disguised as a question) dismisses the atrocities of the Middle Passage on the basis that, from her point of view, the ends justified the means. By ending the conversation at this point and refusing to hear more about Ti Misery or Fort Holland, Betsy denies the Black man's memories of slavery and subjugation. The driver can only shake his head and reply, "If you say, miss. If you say."

The seed planted in this initial encounter will mature throughout the film, as islanders intrusively remind Betsy that the memory of slavery is alive (or undead) on the island of San Sebastian. However, no image or instance in the film serves as a reminder of the island's past more incisively or more often than that of Ti Misery. Lewton devoted nearly a page to describing the statue, and the original screenplay shows that shots of the figure, composed in a variety of extremely specific ways, were to be interspersed throughout the film such that the audience never went very long without revisiting it. While other aspects of the film may seem to follow somewhat generic tropes of Voodoo-zombie cinema, the consistent return to Ti Misery reminds viewers that this film addresses the horrors of slavery as much as (if not more than) it does the horror of zombies.

\textsuperscript{363} In the script this line is given as a question, but in the film the actress Frances Dee does not provide the intonation that usually signals inquisition. To my ear, this spoken line sounds like a definitive statement, though that may be open to debate.  
\textsuperscript{364} Bansak, \textit{Fearing the Dark}; Nemerov, \textit{Icons of Grief}.  

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After arriving at the plantation, Betsy quickly develops a crush on her employer, Paul Holland, whose wife fell into a catatonic state after having an affair (and threatening to leave the island) with Paul's half-brother, Wesley. On the night of her arrival Betsy wakens to the sound of sobbing in the distance, much as Jane Eyre was stirred from slumber by mysterious sobs which turned out to emanate from the West Indian madwoman in the attic. Betsy creeps through dim-lit corridors and crosses the courtyard (featuring the "glistening, moonlit" figure of Ti Misery), following the sound to a crumbling tower. Inside, a tall, blonde woman wearing a long flowing gown wanders along the stairway that savvy audience members will recognize from *Frankenstein* (1932). Realizing that this mute, expressionless woman is her patient, Jessica Holland, Betsy attempts to communicate with her. Instead, Jessica pursues Betsy slowly but menacingly up the stairs, backing her into a corner until Betsy screams in terror. Hearing the scream, Alma -- a Voodoo-practicing servant whose mournful wailing has now ceased -- rushes onto the scene just ahead of Paul. Alma apologizes to Betsy, taking Jessica by the arm and calmly leading her back to a bedroom while Paul comforts the frightened nurse. "Why was that maid crying?" she asks, though the audience has already discovered it was because Alma's sister gave birth to a healthy baby. Paul leads Betsy from the tower, shaking his head, "I'm not sure I can make you understand." Standing in the courtyard, Betsy comes face to face with Ti Misery. Paul looks from her to the figurehead and back again. After reminding her that Ti Misery once graced the bough of a slave ship, he explains: "That's where our people came from, from the misery and pain of slavery. For generations they found life a burden. That's why they still weep when a child is born and make merry at a burial. I've told you, Miss Connell, this is a sad place."

When Paul says "that's where our people came from," it is unclear whether he means "our" in the sense of kinship or ownership. His use of "they" in the subsequent sentences would
seem to indicate the latter, but the ambiguous "our" could also imply that his plantation-owning family -- his forbears, his wife, his half-brother and their mother -- was also wrought through the pain and misery of slavery and revolution on Saint Sebastian. Ti Misery, then, stands as a symbol not only for the loss and suffering of (former) slaves and their descendents, but also for the psychological torment and even mental illness that pervades the Holland family. As we soon discover, Paul has a violent temper, Wesley is an alcoholic, Mrs. Rand fancies herself a deity of "Voodoo religion," and Jessica has become a zombie. Rather than the Black-zombies being the symptoms of their own diseased culture, as films like Black Moon and White Zombie seem to imply, in I Walked With a Zombie the wealthy, white Holland family manifests the sores of colonialism's demise. The more they attempt to extricate themselves from the "history" of the island, the more they find themselves ensnared by the "memories" of the natives. This tension between history and memory produces a sense of haunting for both the characters in the film and for the audience. While the characters are literally haunted by the specters of a colonialist past they cannot avoid, spectators are haunted by the reality of a colonialist past they cannot undo. The film heightens this tension by materializing the matter of memory, making such memories into monsters. Everyone on the island of San Sebastian lives with the visceral memories of slavery and its aftermath, and the film literalizes this with both the figure of Ti Misery and the zombie named Carre-Four, played by the indomitable Darby Jones.
The inclusion of Carre-Four as a zombie can only have come from the consultation with Haitian folklorist and Vodouisant LeRoy Antoine. In the history of zombie cinema until this point, no Black zombie had ever been given a name. Moreover, Carre-Four is an obvious incarnation of Carrefour, a demigod of the Haitian Vodou pantheon. In Vodou, the lwa known as Carrefour or Mait' Carrefour is one of the Petwo aspects of Papa Legba, the "keeper of the crossroads" and guardian of access to a spirit realm. This helps to explain why we encounter Carre-Four at moments when the characters are literally or figuratively at a crossroads: after Betsy is confronted with an alternative history of the island; when she leads Jessica to a Voodoo ceremony (accepting the possibility that Western science and rationality cannot cure her patient); and after the horrific murder-suicide wherein association with Voodoo causes the white family to destroy itself. Carre-Four often appears motionless in sustained shots that emphasize his height, musculature, blank expression and bulging eyes. In Vodou, the lwa Carrefour often gets associated with evil, called a demon and even syncretized with Satan, but these are allegations he denies. This "denial" becomes significant when trying to unpack the meaning of Carre-Four as a
Stillness is the film’s metaphor for slavery, in ways that center on Carre-Four…Carre-Four, like the slave-ship’s figurehead, is a static and insentient figure of Misery. Solitary, clad in rags in the plantation field, he embodies the links between slavery and zombies. Carre-Four and Ti Misery also conjure the lynching of a black man. The image of Carre-Four alone and shadowed in the field borrows from anti-lynching imagery such as The Lynching (1932), by Julius Bloch, and The Fugitive (1935), by John Stuart Curry. Both pictures emphasize the static elongation of the black victim, turning him into an icon of suffering. Both connect the lynched figure to Christian martyrdom by showing him pinned to a crosslike tree… Carre-Four’s appearance strikes this antilynching note with surreptitious power. He is an attenuated dead black man alone in the fields. His very name (Crossroads) denotes the sacrifice of Jesus in the Christianized religion of voodoo. (This is why the nurse Alma refers to him as a “god” when she tells Betsy how to find him in the fields.) He is linked to Christian sacrifice also through the figure of Saint Sebastian, and in the saint’s arrow-filled ebony likeness, “a sorrowful weeping look on his black face,” we see an almost literal appearance of the lynched body of a black man (2005:103-6).

It is not just the use of a living/dead Black man as counterpoint to Ti Misery that brings this dimension to bear on the film, but the particular casting of actor Darby Jones. Jones was known for roles that exhibited his dancing skills, so to cast him in this part which required either very stiff movement or absolute stillness was a statement unto itself, and likely one that was meant to resonate with the recurrent images of Ti Misery. Moreover, the allusion to the lwa Carrefour suggests that the filmmakers surreptitiously subverted RKO’s directive by adhering to an even more "authentic" Vodou paradigm than that established in earlier films. Rather than building their narrative on the fictionalized travel-writing of a white, Western colonialist, they drew inspiration from the living belief traditions and memories of colonization in Haiti provided by LeRoy Antoine. The most resonant images in the film inflect the horrors of racist history through the lens of postcolonial memory: the peaceful fountain in the Hollands’ garden is

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365 Nemerov, Icons of Grief, 97–104.
actually a slave-ship's figurehead, and the terrifying yet "mindless" zombie is actually a powerful, yet pathetic, god. Both images operate as symbols of a past that continues to function in the present, haunting the living inhabitants of San Sebastian. In returning to these symbols over and over again, the film is haunted by references to memories of slavery and racial subjugation. Moreover, as the image of Ti Misery recurs throughout the film it becomes clear that its repetition fosters a sense of impending peril, even though it ostensibly references a historical past.

While other scholars have read I Walked With a Zombie as a racist fantasy, as a meditation on the fantastic or uncanny, or as a Gothic exploration of the psyche, I propose that it is, at its heart, a film about postcolonial memory. Indeed, the genre of Gothic fiction which flourished in nineteenth century England has been linked by many scholars to postcolonial discourse and folklore surrounding slavery and its abolition. Tabish Khair and Judith Halberstam have illustrated how iconic Gothic novels such as Zofloya, or, the Moor (1806), Frankenstein (1818, 1831), and Jane Eyre (1847), among others, can be read as responses to the Haitian Revolution (1790-1804) and U.S. slave revolts.\textsuperscript{366} In a sense, then, these novels appear to be haunted by the memories of slavery which cannot simply be forgotten or laid to rest, but must return in grotesque, often violent form. Frankenstein's monster, for example, appears to be an expression of white colonialist anxiety: a human creature rescued from death, re-made in his master's image, yet ultimately disobedient, strong-willed, and destructive. The Haitian Revolution had taught the Western world that Black slaves would not be forever subdued, they

could not be "civilized" completely, and they would, in fact, seek revenge for the crimes wrought against them. As explicated in the first two chapters, the primitivism that saw Africans and Native Americans as vestiges of a bygone age of humanity, members of a "dead" culture susceptible to reanimation, helped give birth to the postcolonial undead. In the case of *Frankenstein*, not only did the grand experiment of resurrection fail, but it created a monster that ultimately threatens the life of its master. The same could be said about Mr. Rochester's first wife in *Jane Eyre*: Rochester wrongly believed that he could remake a strong-willed West Indian woman in his image of a docile English wife, but his treatment of her drove her insane and caused her to attempt his murder on multiple occasions. Moreover, the very early Gothic text *Zofloya, or the Moor* was based on a novel written and set during the Haitian Revolution (*Zoflora, ou la bonne Negresse* by Jean-Jacques Piquenard, 1794). The persecuted Creole slave-girl Zoflora was transformed for British audiences into the savage and rebellious Black slave Zofloya, who murders his masters and rapes their mistresses in a narrative that strongly resonates with the legend of Jean Zombi. Images from all three of these works, as well as a couple from *Dracula* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, reverberate in *I Walked With a Zombie*. Lewton is sometimes credited with these literary allusions, but his journals reveal that it was Jacques Tourneur who had actually been studying these classic works of Gothic fiction as he developed his own unique directing style.\(^{367}\) Tourneur hoped to emulate the sense of suspense generated in these texts and bring to life what had previously existed only in the imagination. In other words, he sought to bring the aesthetics of these historical works of literature, which were written by those coming to terms with Haiti's successful rebellion, into the present world of a fictionalized Haiti. The zombie, as has already been discussed, serves as a perfect vehicle for metaphors about bringing the past into the present and troubling dominant historical narratives. Though a

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\(^{367}\) Telotte, *Dreams of Darkness*; Fujiwara, *Jacques Tourneur*. 

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full discussion of the postcolonial Gothic's affiliation with the Haitian Revolution is the subject of a wider project, it is important to recognize how figures such as Frankenstein's monster, the madwoman in the attic, Zofloya, and especially Voodoo-zombies operate as agents of memory, refusing to let dominant histories of slavery and oppression rest in peace.

When Pierre Nora discusses the conflict between what gets recorded and concretized (history) and what persists only in fluctuating mental scapes (memory), he argues that these two forces often rub against each other, creating friction and eventually forcing a schism between multiple modes of interpretation. At that point of rupture between memory and history one can often discover a lieu de mémoire, a "moment of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore where the living sea of memory has receded."368 In this sense, the fictional island of San Sebastian constitutes a lieu de mémoire, a place of memory that sits in conflict with the historical narrative, a narrative represented in the film by Betsy's colonialist logic and incredulity. As with other postcolonial Gothic fiction, in I Walked With a Zombie the specter of a monstrous past returns to trouble and harass those in the present, challenging dominant perceptions of histories and hierarchies. Despite Betsy's firm disbelief in "anything Voodoo" and her relative disinterest in the colonial history of San Sebastian, the islanders keep finding ways to pull her into their memories.

In one of the most famous scenes of the film, Betsy and Wesley overhear a calypso singer as they have drinks in the town square. The singer, played by Trinidadian musician Sir Lancelot, weaves a tale about the Holland family and the island of San Sebastian. According to Tourneur, Lancelot was meant to function as a "Greek chorus, wandering in and out seven or eight times and explaining the plot." In the final production, however, Lancelot sings the same

368 Nora, "Between Memory and History," 12.
song in each of his appearances, revealing new details through additional verses but always returning to the chorus. His song, "Shame and Scandal in the Family," condemns the Hollands as corrupt and immoral, indicting them for their immorality, secrecy, and callousness. He begins,

There was a family that lived on the isle,
Of St. Sebastian a long, long while.
The head of the family was a Holland man
And the younger brother, his name was Rand

Ah, woe! Ah, me!
Shame and sorrow for the family

The Holland man, he kept in a tower
A wife as pretty as a big white flower
She saw the brother and she stole his heart
And that's how the badness and the trouble start

Ah, woe! Ah, me!
Shame and sorrow for the family

When the singer realizes Wesley and Betsy are listening, he stops playing and approaches them to apologize, "with a little bow in the Haitian manner," as the script puts it.\textsuperscript{369} The drunken Wesley sends him away before passing out, but soon he returns and corners Betsy on her own. Approaching from the darkness of the beach, he stares at her intently as he plays the rest of the song, revealing sordid details about the affair between Jessica and Wesley as Betsy shrinks in fright.\textsuperscript{370}

The wife and the brother they want to go
But the Holland man, he tell them no
The wife fall down and the evil came
And it burned her mind in the fever flame

\textsuperscript{369} Script.
\textsuperscript{370} Incidentally, Sir Lancelot's appearance in this film is credited with bringing Calypso music to the United States. The song, titled "Fort Holland" but also known as "Shame & Scandal in the Family," was the most-covered Calypso song of the 1940s-50s, repeatedly appearing on Billboard charts and recorded by at least forty bands.
Ah, woe! Ah, me!
Shame and sorrow for the family

Her eyes are empty and she cannot talk
And the nurse has come to make her walk
The brothers are lonely and the nurse is young
And now you must see that my song is sung

Ah, woe! Ah, me!
Shame and sorrow for the family
Ah, woe! Ah, me!
Shame and sorrow for the family

Though in the previous scene Wesley prevented Betsy from hearing the song, and Betsy herself tried to avoid it, the native minstrel insists that this story must be told, that the "shame and scandal" must be revealed. His refusal to be silenced or to be avoided engenders terror in Betsy, suggesting that what is most horrific about his song is not necessarily the content but the performance -- a performance of memory that both disregards white feelings and forthrightly insists upon itself. Moreover, the scene Gothicizes Sir Lancelot's performance of this memory while continuing to capitalize on the notion of Afro-Caribbean authenticity. The song combines the elements of death and sexuality typically associated with the Gothic while the film language employs darkness, shadow, and light as Gothicizing techniques. At the same time, the casting of Sir Lancelot in this part, even more than the hiring of LeRoy Antoine, was and is often heralded as a symbol of Lewton's commitment to authenticity.371 Case in point, the film is often credited with bringing Calypso music to the United States; "Shame and Scandal" was released independently of the film and became the most-covered Calypso song of the 1940s-50s, repeatedly appearing on Billboard charts and recorded by at least forty bands.372 As a minor celebrity known for his Afro-Caribbean heritage, Sir Lancelot's articulation of this colonial memory in the film took on gravitas beyond even Lewton and Tourneur's Gothic poetics,

371 Siegel, Val Lewton; Senn, Drums of Terror.
blurring the lines between fiction and reality, horror and history, music and memory. As ethnomusicologist Tavia Nyong'o has pointed out, in this song "sexual shame becomes a metonym for the shame of the plantation/caste system in Haiti." Such an open critique of a white patriarch from a person of color would have been unusual or even shocking in a mainstream Hollywood film at this time. As Thomas Cripps has written, *I Walked With a Zombie* "emitted little organic wisps of racial understanding" through characters like the carriage-driver, Carre-Four, and the Calypso singer.  

![Sir Lancelot as the Calypso singer](image)

In fact, I would argue that one of the reasons this scene is even possible is because of the B-horror genre and the cheesy title; the Calypso singer, like most of the other Black characters, is effectually one of the monsters. Just before he appears to torment Betsy with his song, the zombie Carre-four recedes into the background where Sir Lancelot emerges, suggesting some sort of connection between the minstrel and the zombie despite their very different behaviors. As Bansak points out, "Lancelot's character is frightening because his behavior defies all social etiquette," even more so considering that he does not behave as a typical Black male in this genre.

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373 Ibid.
of film, that is, as a zombie. Moments before, the singer appeared warm and humble, but now he has the effrontery to approach Betsy with additional verses, singing and strumming, starring directly into her eyes and reminding viewers of Jessica, the "white zombie" in the tower above Ti Misery. The café suddenly appears empty; there's just an unconscious man, a frightened nurse, and a frightening man with his guitar. Bansak continues, "Lancelot does nothing particularly menacing, but his insistent approach is so terrifying that even his song scares us." Even the lyrics of Lancelot's song are terrifying because they present a version of past events that differs dramatically from the family-history that Betsy has learned from the Paul Holland. Though Lancelot never appears as a zombie, he serves the same purpose as the statue of Ti Misery and the sustained shots of Carre-Four: he reminds Betsy and the audience that memories of the past are omnipresent on San Sebastian -- unavoidable and inescapable.

The ascending terror of the café scene gets interrupted by Mrs. Rand, who is obviously accustomed to caring for Wesley in his drunken states. She sends the minstrel away, foreshadowing her affiliation with the natives and her ability to control them. In the next scene, the sound of drumbeats disturbs Betsy, Paul, and Wesley during dinner. As the drums grow louder, the brothers erupt into a heated argument, and Wesley begins to reveal more details about the family's past conflicts. Paul brings him to a sudden halt, just as Mrs. Rand did with Lancelot in the previous scene, suggesting that the past is not an appropriate subject for discussion. The avoidance of confrontation with the past -- or even a mild discussion of it -- haunts the film with a sense that the past is always hovering in the present. Later, Paul nearly opens up to Betsy about his own feelings relating to the past, but the sound of Voodoo drums in the distance forestalls him. He concludes, "I think it would be better for all of us if this subject were never...

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375 Bansak, Fearing the Dark.
376 Ibid.
mentioned again." If we're keeping track, to this point in the film Betsy, Wesley, Mrs. Rand, and Paul have all found ways to avoid confronting memories of the past -- particularly those that conflict with their understandings of the island's history. Yet, as Ti Misery, Carre-Four, and Sir Lancelot insistently remind us, the past cannot be so easily dismissed.

To Walk With a Zombie

While earlier zombie films emphasized the terror of being caught by or even becoming a zombie-slave, Lewton and Tourneur depicted their "white zombie" as a morally questionable white person who might not even deserve saving. Jessica is an adulterous wife who abandons her noble and good white husband in favor of his alcoholic half-brother. She is ostensibly the victim, yet the audience feels little sympathy for her. Meanwhile Black men in the film, whether depicted as minstrels or monsters, serve as the bearers of postcolonial memory and anticolonialist sentiments. They are both victims and violators, and to the degree that they terrorize the white protagonists, they do so by insisting that they be confronted rather than fled. In some ways this mirrors certain processes of the filmmakers, who attempted to not only confront but to embrace the reality of Haitian culture (albeit inadequately) through research and attention to authenticating details rather than hiding behind the dominant tropes and images of earlier Voodoo zombie cinema. While they still resorted to some of those earlier images to appease their studio heads, they did not take the easy way out or simply regurgitate popular tropes for a quick payday. No, rather than fleeing the confrontation with an uncomfortable legacy of colonialism, they faced it head-on and allowed it to permeate their film. Through their limited but concerted research into Haitian 'Voodoo' they discovered a central truth of Vodou: that it is a syncretic spiritual practice that would not and could not exist outside of Haiti's
colonial history. Thus their "authentic" representations of Voodoo reveal the deep social and psychological wounds of racial oppression. Like Ti Misery, Carre-four, and Sir Lancelot, Lewton and Tourneur insisted that this counter history of the Haitian occupation -- these postcolonial memories -- be revealed to their predominantly white spectators. As Michael Richardson argues, "I Walked With a Zombie is...the only American film that acknowledges how voodoo belief is founded in the pain and suffering of slavery and the rigours of colonialism." It's possible that Lewton and Tourneur realized how the cinematic zombie, up to this point, had been an embodiment of postcolonial anxiety and conflicting understandings of Haitian history, culture, and religiosity. It's also possible that they recognized how the meaning of that Haitian zombie could further serve as a metaphor for extant race relationships in U.S. culture. Although Lewton and Tourneur may have been displeased with the title of the film when they first received the assignment, they seem to have embraced it and used it to ask a sincere and important question about zombie cinema and race relations in the U.S.: What does it mean to walk with a zombie, rather than to run away?

A major turning point in the film comes when, in her last voice-over of the film, Betsy confesses that she has fallen in love with Paul. It is her unselfish love, she believes, that compels her to find a cure for his wife, Jessica, and to restore her to him. Her Western science and rationality having failed to produce a viable treatment, Betsy overcomes her fear of the Black islanders enough to consider the "Voodoo magic" that Alma says is practiced by the island's "better doctors." Alma's assertion that the island has "better doctors" than a white, Western man suggests to the audience that Voodoo is capable of a kind of healing that cannot be addressed by science or rationality. This valuation and validation of an Afro-Caribbean alternative to Western

377 Michael Richardson, Otherness in Hollywood Cinema (Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 128.
medicine demonstrates not only Lewton and Tourneur's understanding that Haitian Vodou is often considered a healing art as well as a spiritual one, but suggests that viability of that claim. At the same time, however, this authenticating detail is clouded by its somewhat Gothicized presentation, since Alma is depicted as a shadowy figure in the film, always lurking in the background, and delivers this line in an ominous (if not eerie) tone. Alma persuades Betsy to bring Jessica to the houmfort ("pronounced home-fort, a voodoo temple," according to the script) and offers Betsy a white scrap of cloth that she calls a "voodoo patch" to ward off danger. At twilight, Betsy leads Jessica out of the courtyard and past the statue of Ti Misery.

In slow, lateral tracking shots Betsy guides Jessica through a moonlit sugarcane field en route to the houmfort. This scene has been called "the central set piece" of the film and written about as one of Lewton and Tourneur's most fully realized sequences of "visual poetry." During this fluid and hypnotic walk through the cane fields, Tourneur chose to sustain, rather than interrupt, what he called "the mystical flavor of this spooky journey." Unlike the rest of the film, there are no cuts to the image of Ti Misery or the sounds of Calypso singing in the background, just the careful tracking of Betsy and Jessica as they traverse the cane field. Rather than implement a musical score to highlight or underscore a sense of foreboding, Lewton wanted the sounds of the night to creep in around the audience just as they do Betsy. As the mute pair proceed through the fields, we hear what Betsy hears: the hooting of an owl, the shifting of the wind, the rustling of sugar cane branches, and the mournful whistle of a hanging hollowed-out gourd. We also sees what Betsy sees, with as little understanding as she has for what she witnesses: the skull of a horse tied to the end of a spear, scaffolding that supports the eerie-

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378 "Houmfort" is the spelling given in the script. In Haitian Kreyol today, the same word would be written "ounfo."
379 Bansak, Fearing the Dark, 152.
380 Ibid., 153.
381 This filmic technique of silence and shadow is another of Tourneur's signature Gothic poetics.
sounding gourd, a human skull with a broken jaw encircled by pebbles in the dirt, and, most startlingly, a goat hanging by its neck from a tree. In this scene the silence of the score, the low-level lighting, the meticulous use of shadows, and the physical and symbolic evidence of death work to Gothicize the mise-en-scene even as its references to Haitian Voodoo convey a sense of ethnographic authenticity.

En route to the houmfort, Betsy's "voodoo patch" snags on a tree branch unbeknownst to her, in what would seem to be a foreshadowing of trouble ahead. It turns out, however, that the loss of this patch makes no difference whatsoever. J. P. Telotte contends in Dreams of Darkness that this "foundless manipulation" contributes to the film's "unifying theme, all appearances are deceptive… the low-key lighting and strategically placed shadows work upon our generic expectations to suggest some threat which never materializes…even the highly atmospheric walk through the cane fields seems almost an exercise in deception." While it may be superficial to proclaim the film's unifying theme to be one of deceptive appearances, the "foundless" loss of the patch does highlight one way in which Lewton and Tourneur attempted to complicate both notions of authenticity and generic conventions. They likely picked up on the idea of the "voodoo patch" from film's such as Devil's Island (1939) and Revolt of the Zombies (1936), but would have known from consultations with Antoine (as well as their other research) that such a thing was essentially meaningless in Vodou praxis. Similarly, the unexplained items in the mise-

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382 Telotte, Dreams of Darkness; Bansak, Fearing the Dark, 153.
en-scene of the walk may be seen as satirizing earlier zombie films, which threw in random and exoticizing signifiers of Voodoo with little or no attention to what Vodou symbols might actually exist. This satire becomes more apparent when considering references to Damballa, Legba, andougans in the next scene.

The walk sequence is finally punctuated by a chilling vision of Carre-Four at the crossroads. Like Ti Misery, his visage strikes the audience as ominous and portentous. In their earlier conversation Alma had indicated that Carre-four would mark the way, and when Betsy incredulously asked, "A zombie?!?" Alma replied with a calm sense of awe, "He is a guard." As Nemerov has pointed out, her accented pronunciation of the word "guard" makes it indistinguishable from the word "god," a likely nod to Carrefour's status in Haitian Vodou. Betsy, who aims her flashlight at the ground as she walks, comes to an abrupt stop when the narrow diameter of her beam reveals a pair of naked feet standing motionless before her. The beam follows a long, slow, upward path until we see the unforgettable face of Carre-Four.
Carre-Four does not react to the presence of the two women, but stands as still and stoic as the statue of Ti Misery back at the fort. Realizing that he will not harm them, Betsy and Jessica side-step Carre-Four to continue on their journey. If we accept Nemerov's premise that the sustained shot of Carre-Four's attenuated body in this scene is meant as a commentary on African American lynchings in the 1940s, then we can interpret Betsy's reaction as commentary on the ambivalence of many white Americans who avoided taking a stand on that issue -- who refused to engage in conversations about atrocities of the past -- despite being confronted with images of lynching that suggested such atrocities were not "past" at all. As we know, there were race-riots in New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit during the summer of 1943, when *I Walked With a Zombie* was in theatres. Nemerov argues,

> Carre-Four must have confronted audiences that summer as an especially charged figure, even if his exact significance requires after-the-fact interpretation. An iconography of racial violence haunts his scenes even amid the erasure of rope-and-gun specifics. Alone, dead, beautifully and self-consciously staged, facing the audience directly and meant for its inspection alone in a story explicitly about a people's long memories of slavery, he is disquietingly insisted upon.\(^{383}\)

While Lewton and Tourneur may "insist upon" the image of Carre-Four, Betsy has yet to reach that level of understanding and simply feels relieved to have gotten past this guard. In other words, she is relieved to have confronted but not engaged with an emblem of Haitian

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postcolonial memory. Although she could not avoid this encounter with the symbol of the past as she attempted to do in previous scenes, she is no longer terrorized by it. Despite the white outsider's fear, there is little real danger from the film's zombie.

Betsy and Jessica begin to hear drumming as they continue on, following its crescendo until they come to a "native camp," where they are largely ignored by the islanders dancing and chanting around a bonfire. The scene connotes a sense of verismilitude and even suggests possession in several of the participant's actions, but unfortunately this semblance of authenticity ends abruptly when a voice calls out from inside the hut, "Were are my people?" and the participants line up at the door to receive messages from Damballa's oracle. In Haitian Vodou it's implausible that a ougan or manbo would sequester and segregate themselves (or the lwa) from their constituents, especially during a ceremony or ritual invocation of the lwa. With this scene, Lewton and Tourneur succumbed to the conventional standard of inventing aspects of Vodou religiosity to suit their horror narrative, rather than prioritizing authenticity.

Betsy knocks on the door of the hut and asks to speak with Damballa. Shockingly, she finds Mrs. Rand inside the hut, speaking through the door as the voice of Damballa and later identifying herself as a houngan. The Holland/Rand matriarch begins to unfold the story of her life on San Sebastian, telling Betsy her involvement with Voodoo began when she discovered that the natives were more cooperative when she pretended to accept their beliefs. Instead of saying, "Boil the water and you will kill the germs," she learned to say, "Boil the water, and the gods will take away the evil spirits." Mrs. Rand's patronizing explanation seems dubious considering that she has assumed power in the island's Black community based on her appropriation of their spiritual beliefs, even presuming to speak on behalf of their god,
Yet it also affirms a condescending attitude towards Voodoo/Vodou for the spectators, which is both curious and unfortunate in a film that seemingly takes such pains to validate alternative understandings of Haitian history and culture. Mrs. Rand's colonialist rationale is readily accepted by Betsy, however, who exhibits a modicum of understanding that this was "the only way to reach them."

In constructing her character, Lewton and his writers subtly included details to help the audience understand Mrs. Rand as a typical "bad woman" or even villain: she has sons by different fathers and remains unmarried; she practices Voodoo and communes with Black natives more than her own white family; and she may have even been involved in her daughter-in-law's zombification. When the natives suddenly take an interest in Jessica outside the hut, discovering for the first time that she is a zombie, Mrs. Rand rushes the two women out of the camp and tells Betsy to take Jessica home before trouble starts. The "trouble," we soon learn, is that the natives want to kill Jessica for being a zombie. While the film lets us believe this is because the Voodoo-practicing natives are inherently malicious against white people, or even just protective of their own beliefs, Tourneur would have known from reading Hurston (and consulting with Antoine) that being zombified is considered by Haitians a fate worse than death. Performing an oppositional reading, then, we could interpret the natives' motive to kill Jessica as one of benevolence; death would release her soul and she would no longer suffer the torment of zombification. Alternatively, we could interpret all of the natives at this ceremony as zombies controlled by Mrs. Rand, the motive to kill Jessica then being the matriarch's personal vendetta.

384 In this way, Mrs. Rand seems to be a refraction of the evil-white-zombie-masters such as Murder Legendre (White Zombie), Von Altman (Revolt of the Zombies), or the Nazi spy (King of the Zombies).
385 While Betsy is speaking with Mrs. Rand, her congregants surround Jessica to perform a voodoo ritual, stabbing a thin sword into her unflinching arm. "She doesn't bleed!" shouts one man. "Zombie!" exclaims another. This concept of being impervious to pain and bloodshed is actually considered a trait of lwa possession -- the physical invulnerability a sign that the lwa has indeed 'mounted' its human 'horse'.

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against the woman who betrayed her son and drove a wedge between him and his half-brother. As Lewton and Tourneur intended, it is often difficult to distinguish a conscious Voodoo-practicing native from a zombie in this film.

Later that night, as Betsy sleeps on the sofa next to Jessica's bed, the shadow of Carre-Four slowly encroaches upon her. This is the only scene in which Carre-Four can be interpreted as a menacing or dangerous presence, since in every other appearance he either stands motionless or performs menial tasks. This scene also feels disconnected from the film, likely because it was another of Lewton's attempts to appease RKO executives who wanted specific types of imagery for their promotional materials. Thus, after Betsy's unsettling encounter at the houmfort, Carre-Four comes to hover over her as she sleeps. His shadow looms menacingly above her slumbering body (another favorite promotional image), but he walks past her and Jessica and out the door. Betsy wakes and, feeling an unsettling presence, puts on her robe and wanders into the courtyard. Thus rather than being stalked by a zombie, as the promotional materials seem to suggest, it is actually Betsy who pursues Carre-Four. A bullfrog croaks and jumps in the fountain where Ti Misery resides, startling Betsy as she steps cautiously in the moonlight. Finally glimpsing Carre-Four across the courtyard, Betsy does not scream (as convention might have it) but runs silently to Paul's bedroom door as the zombie shuffles toward her. Carre-Four increases his speed when he sees Paul, lunging at the pair with arms outstretched and mouth agape.
Just before Carre-Four closes in on Betsy and Paul, Mrs. Rand calls him by name and he stops in his tracks. Her voice drips with disappointment as she tells him to "go back," suggesting that perhaps it was she who had sent Carre-Four to accost the sleeping Jessica and his own ineptitude that caused him to pursue the wrong woman. Nothing suggests that Mrs. Rand has any reason for knowing Carre-Four's name or presuming the authority to send him home other than her participation in the Voodoo ceremony at the houmfort and her earlier dismissal of the Calypso singer. If not for the inclusion of Ti Misery preceding the zombie encounter, this might be a stock scene from any number of Voodoo-zombie films from the 1930s: the white woman is approached in her bed by a Black zombie who then tries to capture her, only to be called off by a white Voodoo-master who evidently wields some mysterious power over him. Placing the image of Ti Misery in the center of this scene, however briefly, redirects attention back to Betsy's encounters with the carriage-driver and the Calypso singer, linking Carre-Four with those characters as an embodiment of postcolonial memory.

The white police commissioner becomes concerned about the zombie's aggressive behavior and tells the Fort Holland residents that he has been forced to make a legal investigation, meaning that all the details of the island's (and the Hollands') dark past will be made public. To avoid such a spectacle of the past being dredged into the present, Mrs. Rand
comes forward and finally admits that she is responsible for Jessica's condition. She confesses that when she discovered Wesley and Jessica's plan to run away together, she went to the **houmfort** and pretended to be possessed by a Voodoo spirit, only to find herself legitimately under the spell of native magic. She claims that while in a trance she "unknowingly" ordered some zombies to put a spell on Jessica: "I kept seeing her face smiling because she was beautiful enough to take my family in her hands and tear it apart." No one accepts Mrs. Rand's confession, however, as it is far more believable for everyone involved that the natives brought on these malevolent designs themselves. Their understanding of the island's history, of slave rebellions fueled by Voodoo on San Sebastian, stand in conflict with Mrs. Rand's memories of her own part in the assault against Fort Holland.

No Voodoo-zombie film of this era would be complete without at least one vision of a Voodoo doll. We recognize "Jessica," with her flowing white robes and long blonde hair, in the doll held by Carre-Four back at the **houmfort**. The natives excitedly watch as a "witchdoctor" (**houngan**) pulls on a string, making the doll appear to stand and glide slowly toward him. We cut back to Fort Holland, where Jessica is seen walking past Ti Misery and towards the plantation gates, obviously in compelled by Voodoo magic. Paul and Betsy apprehend her as she is about the pass through the gate, followed by another close-up of Ti Misery, this time highlighting the water splashing over its arrow-ridden form. Wesley stands by the gate to keep guard over Jessica. In a cut to the ceremony, the **houngan** pulls the string forcefully; when the camera cuts back to the courtyard, we see Jessica returning to the gate. Dejected, and likely drunk, Wesley opens it and lets her pass. He then pulls one of the arrows out of Ti Misery and follows at a distance behind Jessica.
At the houmfort, we see the doll lying in a prone position as the houngan's hand hovers above with a thin sword, which he now plunges into the doll. The scene cuts to Wesley and we see him pulling his arrow out of Jessica's prostrate form. The juxtaposition of this imagery encodes an obvious interpretation: Jessica was actually murdered by the houngan and his horde of zombies, rather than by the white man who stabbed her in the heart. Carre-Four approaches Wesley and Jessica, his outstretched arms indicating his intention to claim the body. Without speaking, Wesley picks up Jessica and carries her down the path, making his way toward the raging waves of the rocky Caribbean shore. Undaunted, Carre-Four follows several yards behind. As Wesley tenderly carries Jessica into the water, deeper and deeper, the star-crossed lovers are finally engulfed by a huge wave. The screen is nearly pitch black, accompanied by the sound of crashing waves and soaring violins. As the white foam of a huge wave creeps into the black frame, it defines Carre-Four's silhouette, undetectable before the rush of foam. As Newitz puts it, "this spectacular murder-suicide takes place entirely under the watchful eyes of a black zombie… and the whole scene seems to suggest that blacks have the power to make whites destroy themselves." The images of Ti Misery and Carre-Four that frame this scene may in fact give the impression "that Blacks have the power to make Whites destroy themselves," but a more nuanced reading brings us back to the question of memory and history. Who is responsible for Jessica's death? It depends on which character(s) one finds more sympathetic, the Voodoo-practitioners or the adulterous alcoholic. While film language may seem to blame the former, it also leaves open the possibility for the latter. By highlighting similarly-composed images of Ti Misery and Carre-Four, the idea of postcolonial memory structures the scene itself. In this way, we might read the murder-suicide as a result of unattended memory, of the failure to reconcile competing versions of history.

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386 Newitz, Pretend We’re Dead, 2006, 106.
The screen dissolves into another night scene as a series of spear-fishers, knee-deep in water, comb the shallows for their catch. Their dirge-like chant echoes across the water as they come upon Jessica's body floating face-up in the current. In the final shots, the group of fishers carry Wesley's body on their shoulders through the Gothic gates of the plantation, followed by Carre-Four in that most-famous (and infamous) moment from the film. As the zombie carries Jessica's lifeless body past the statue of Ti Misery, an unknown male voice provides an aural epitaph: "O Lord God most holy. Deliver them from the bitter pain of eternal death. The woman was a wicked woman, and she was dead in her own life. Yea, Lord, dead in the selfishness of her spirit. And the man followed her. Her steps led him down to evil. Her feet took hold on death. Forgive him, O Lord, who knowest the secret of all hearts. Yea, Lord, pity them who are dead and give peace and happiness to the living."

The Christian overtones are meant to contrast with the Voodoo ceremony from the previous scene, calling attention to a dichotomy between religious understandings of death and humanity. The allusion to Eve and Adam suggests that Jessica's wickedness as an adulterer and Mrs. Rand's affiliation with Blackness and with Voodoo brought the once-powerful Holland family to its
knees. The real victim of the film is thus Paul Holland, the wealthy white male patriarch, whose life is undone by the white women who gave into "Black magic." Although Lewton and Tourneur's attention to ethnographic authenticity and employ of Gothic poetics allows for a reading of the film as sympathetic to anticolonialists and people of color, this ending reveals the inherent and inescapable bias of the filmmakers and studio executives, white men whose sense of 'horror' consistently returns them to the loss of their own privilege.

Originally, an additional scene was filmed depicting Paul and Betsy happily married and back in the United States, relieved that they will never to return to such a "godforsaken place." After seeing the first cut, however, Lewton and Tourneur decided to omit that scene and to end instead with the ominous voiceover and one final shot of Ti Misery. By ending on this image, which has been repeated throughout the film, Lewton and Tourneur emphasize the film's concern with postcolonial memory. In my analysis this is not an ambiguous ending, nor does it leave interpretation "open to the spectator," as Telotte and Siegel have suggested. As notebooks, journals, and even the script itself reveal, this image was meant to encode the defining theme of the film. Ending with it forces spectators back to the memories of slavery and the Middle Passage, despite the fact that they have just witnessed a towering Black zombie gripping a beautiful, helpless white woman in his outstretched arms. The final shot, then, encourages the audience to interrogate their own racist assumptions and engage with a memory of slavery disavowed in earlier zombie cinema. The text over the image almost seems ironic when considering the film's preoccupation with the past's continuing presence:
Or is it? In *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, Robin Wood calls *I Walked With a Zombie* "one of the finest of all American horror films." Wood goes on to state,

*I Walked With a Zombie* explicitly locates horror at the heart of the family, identifying it with sexual repressiveness in the cause of preserving family unity...It is built on an elaborate set of apparently clear-cut structural oppositions: U.S.-West Indies, white-black, light-darkness, life-death, science-black magic, Christianity-Voodoo, conscious-unconscious, etc. -- and it proceeds systematically to blur all of them. Jessica is both living and dead; Mrs. Rand mixes medicine, Christianity, and voodoo; the figurehead is both St. Sebastian and a black slave; the black-white opposition is poetically undercut in a complex patterning of dresses and voodoo patches; the motivation of all the characters is called into question.

One structural opposition that Wood fails to engage with is that of memory and history, which I have tried to illustrate as a central theme of the film. The final image of the film suggests that memories of the past will continue to trouble dominant perceptions of history, particularly those based on a tacit acceptance of white superiority and righteousness. The film is over, but the legacy of Ti Misery lives on.
Saint Sebastian, like Haiti, is haunted by the memories of slavery and revolution, and by following Nora we can perceive both places as *lieux de mémoire*. Likely thanks to Antoine's guidance, the parallels between San Sebastian and Haiti persist despite Lewton's and Tourneur's attempt to distance themselves from earlier films, further-fictionalizing this zombie narrative by giving the clichéd "isle of the dead" a new pseudonym. By choosing the postcolonial Gothic text of *Jane Eyre* as a narrative premise and filming on the sets and in the style of classic Gothic novels/films like *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, Lewton and Tourneur achieved a timely and skillfully disguised statement about the consequences of slavery and segregation in the present and future. Despite its reception, the film attempted to privilege the memories of slavery and oppression from the point of view of the colonized -- the Calypso singer (Sir Lancelot), LeRoy Antoine, even the zombies themselves -- rather than the histories of the island or its conflicts as represented by Paul Holland, William Seabrook, and zombie films of the 1930s.

As a *lieu de mémoire*, San Sebastian conjures these conflicts between memory and history just as Lewton and Tourneur conjure a conflict between approaches to authenticity. While earlier films capitalized on the notion of authenticity despite their sensationallly fabricated storylines, *I Walked With a Zombie* marketed itself as fantastical horror cinema despite its reliance on source material that was arguably more authentic than that of the earlier films. This reversal is underscored by the journals of Lewton and Tourneur, which stand now as memories of the production's attempts to circumvent traditional approaches to the Voodoo-zombie film. In many film histories, however, the film (and its most famous images) still operate as symbols of an embarrassingly racist thrust in the history of zombie cinema. *I Walked With a Zombie* itself, then, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* precisely because of the ways Lewton and Tourneur constructed the conflict between memory and history in the film. It has, unwittingly and
ironically, become the poster-child of racism in Voodoo-zombie cinema despite the subversive efforts of its filmmakers. From a twenty-first century perspective, the memories and histories of this film now stand in conflict with one another.
Conclusion

The Zombie as Palimpsest

Un souvenir heureux est peut-être sur terre plus vrai que le bonheur.
A happy memory is perhaps, on earth, more real than happiness itself.

- Alfred de Musset; Epigraph to Le Macandal by Marie Augustin

While there may be few visible traces of the past, the zombie as a monster-type cannot be understood without appreciating the fact that the figure as we know it has been kept alive -- or undead -- through a whole body of cultural production. As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this work, the Haitian zombi endures significant transformations as it proceeds temporally and across national and cultural borders, taking on new meanings with each successive manifestation. The zombie does not reinvent in every transformation, becoming something it never was before, but rather accumulates connotations that layer upon previous ones, sometimes obscuring but never eliding the older contexts. Darby Jones' dead-eyed zombie on Saint Sebastian is both an image of the Haitian zombi popularized by Seabrook and the Halperin brothers as well as a symbol of Haiti's colonial history going back to the Revolution. Carre-Four is simultaneously slave and provocateur, a god and a guide, and an insistent reminder of the inhuman horrors inflicted by colonialism. Yet he is also an encapsulation of racist images of Black people (and Haitians in particular) during this time period, imagined as a mute and intellectually stunted slave with little to no autonomy who somehow poses a great threat to the white interlopers he encounters, especially women. Although he bears almost no resemblance to the ferocious warrior Jean Zombi of Haitian lore, Carre-Four embodies his legacy as much as he
does Seabrook's; without all the previously accumulated meanings of the zombi(e), he could not exist as he does in the film. The audience may not be aware of it, but his character -- like all zombies -- comprises the successive transformations of the figure throughout history: Carre-Four is a symbol of the Haitian Revolution; of an African spiritual power misunderstood and feared by whites; of the U.S. Zombi who guided slaves towards escape and revolt in the 1830s; of the phantom zombis who stalked white women and children in their nurseries throughout the Civil War; of the mysterious and malevolent power of Voodoo-necromancy documented by early anthropologists; of Haitians' subversive tactics during the U.S. occupation; of rumor as military strategy; of Seabrook's HASCO slaves and the Hollywood zombies they inspired; of the entire history of zombielore in the Americas up to the point *I Walked With a Zombie* was released. To see him as only a symbol of racist fantasy or only a symbol of anti-colonialist sentiment is to ignore that fact that he symbolizes both simultaneously. His very existence maps the conflicting histories and memories of U.S.-Haiti cultural relations.

Memory scholar and Diaspora historian Rosalind Shaw explores how such processes of mapping and layering produce multiple modes of memory activation and interpretation.\(^{387}\) While Shaw primarily investigates the meaning of memory in a West African context, her insights regarding palimpsest memories become important for understanding how the zombie figure embodies multiple and often conflicting memories at the same time. This chapter begins with a discussion of palimpsest memory theory and its usefulness as a methodological tool for understanding sites of cultural production, particularly those relating to histories of racial

conflict. To illustrate how the zombie figure can distill competing memories of cultural history in a single form, a large portion of this chapter is devoted to the close scrutiny of a Blaxploitation zombie film called *Scream, Blacula, Scream!* (1973). This film reverses and revises many of the racial dynamics that I discussed in my analysis of *I Walked With a Zombie*, and in doing so illuminates the palimpsestic layering of discourses on authenticity, postcolonial Gothicism, and cultural memories of slavery within the zombie genre. In a close reading of the film, I unpack its complex performance of memory via a folkloric analysis of its text, texture and context. Through this exercise, I hope to reaffirm the value of reading films through the lens of folklore and to more thoroughly explicate the ways that even Hollywood films can operate as subversive and counter-hegemonic expressions of culture. I then conclude the chapter and the dissertation with a discussion of undeath and its ongoing significance as a postcolonial construct.

**Palimpsest Memoryscapes**

A palimpsest memory is one that contains numerous and even contradictory records of the same idea, person, or event, collocated and coalesced over time. For a simple example, in *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*, Shaw describes how a local forest became a palimpsest memoryscape as it combined and collapsed diverse cultural memories -- of dangerous animals known to ancient ancestors, then of slave traders encountered by previous generations, and then of mining companies and corporate interests threatening the people who lived nearby. The forest is presently regarded as dangerous and taboo not because of one of these memories, but because of how it has compounded the meaning
of multiple memories over time. As I will discuss, the figure of the zombie is a multivalent monster that not only embodies the meaning of multiple historical memories, but also dissonant ideologies of white supremacy and Black power.

Shaw uses the term 'memoryscape' following Andreas Huyssen, whose *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* draws on Appadurai's notion of -scapes to theorize the multidimensional nature of memory in an era of rapid globalization. Huyssen begins with a simple definition of palimpsest -- a text which has been partially erased to create room for a new text -- and attaches it to the notion of 'place' as he explores sites such as the Twin Towers memorial in New York and the memorial to state terror in Buenos Aries. These sites have been made into places of memory, the previous meanings attached to their loci both contained and erased by the memorials. If this sounds like a version of Pierre Nora's *lieu de memoire*, that's because it is. What Huyssen adds to memory discourse, and what Shaw picks up on, however, is the notion of the palimpsest as a methodological tool for evaluating such sites of cultural memory. Both scholars use the term *memoryscape* to expand on Appadurai's model of ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanescapes, ideoscapes, and mediascapes, suggesting that the memoryscape touches on all of these yet belongs to itself. In other words, memory can affect understandings of ethnicity, inform broad developments in technology and economics, shape ideologies of power, and be reinforced or elided within popular media; at the same time, memory can be theorized on its own terms as a palimpsestic mapping and layering of diverse historical perspectives. As with Appadurai, the -scape in *memoryscape* is imaginary, and the term need not imply landscapes or physical locations at all, despite Huyssen's and Shaw's special interest in

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388 Ibid., 10.
such places. Their primary concern is using the notion of the palimpsest to unpack the relationship between different forms and substances of memory that crystallize in a single location. For Huysen, the physical sites he investigates have become engulfed in memories of multiple times and places even as they have been officially marked as sites of memory for a particular historical moment. To relate this to the topic at hand, think of how the image of Darby Jones carrying Christine Gordon through the Hollywood-jungle (that has so captivated recent zombie scholarship) has "officially" marked the Voodoo-zombie as a memory of monstrous racism in U.S. cinema. Yet closer investigation of that film text -- and of the zombie as text -- reveals that it is a palimpsest of earlier zombielore. Both the film itself and Carre-Four the character reference earlier memories of zombielore born out of colonial conflict, even as they obscure that history within the frivolity of a B-grade horror flick. The notion of the palimpsest memoriescape allows us to peel back the layers of U.S. zombielore, revealing a map of memories that stretches back to the Haitian Revolution.

Although *I Walked With a Zombie* might be considered a memoriescape unto itself in light of the previous chapter's analysis of postcolonial memory in the film, at this point I want to consider how the entire corpus of zombielore discussed in this dissertation may operate as a palimpsest memoriescape. Shaw argues that palimpsest memories disrupt binary configurations of past and present, illustrating how memories of the slave trade are enmeshed with contemporary concerns.\(^{390}\) I've already asserted in many places that the zombie figure can be understood as a symbol of the past that continues to operate in the present. I've also outlined the many ways it articulates contemporary concerns about racial integration, which necessarily proceed from older concerns regarding the stability of the slave economy and white cultural

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hegemony. In light of Shaw’s work, I would argue that the zombie has become an embodiment of palimpsestic memory and that its meaning as a monster rests, in many ways, in its disruption of a binary conception of past and present.

The zombie has not always been a monster -- Jean Zombi, in the Haitian context, was a helpful ancestor spirit -- but through the lens of memory the zombie has become monstrous. A hero in Haitian lore, Jean Zombi became a monster as French-speaking exiles from Saint Domingue remembered and recounted his legendary role in the Haitian Revolution when they resettled in places like Louisiana. The specifics of that legend were obscured but the name Zombi remained -- palimpsestic -- as slave-owners on Southern plantations whispered rumors following Nat Turner's rebellion. Those rumors held onto the memory of the Haitian Revolution even as they reimagined the antagonist in terms that suited their present circumstances and anxieties; the Zombi that connoted the threat of a successful slave revolt in Haiti accumulated the connotation that such a thing could happen in the U.S. During the Civil War the palimpsest of zombielore erased the idea of an individual character and transformed those earlier legends and rumors into a monster-type, zombis, described as Black phantoms capable of kidnap and rape. As the memories of Jean Zombi and Zombi faded into the palimpsest, they provided just enough background for the establishment of a related paradigm, one that addressed contemporary race-based concerns of white Americans bearing the lore in their present; the phantom zombis bent on stealing white children not only recalled the danger posed by abolitionist freedom fighters such as Jean Zombi and Zombi, but suggested that the continuity of the white race was somehow

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391 This could even be taken back a step further. The meaning of the word ‘zombi’ (or any of its analogues) in pre-slavery African languages described entities such as fetishes, ancestors, or gods. That term, remembered in Saint Domingue as slaves fought for their freedom, became the name of a bloodthirsty and unforgiving warrior. Although I have suggested that an emic understanding of Jean Zombi would characterize him as a hero rather than a monster, the argument could be made that this is the first time the zombie was simultaneously personified, deified, and cast as vicious, a combination which some might describe as monstrous. In other words, there’s a way to understand Jean Zombi himself as a memory, and as a monster.
threatened by Black men. The Zombi that connoted the threat of a successful slave revolt in the U.S. thus accumulated the threat of miscegenation, and disparate cultural memories mingled in the form of a monster.

In each successive transformation, the zombie becomes more monstrous than it was before. It does so by conjuring memories of the past in narratives that speak directly to the most racially charged paranoias of the present. During slavery that paranoia addressed revolt and revolution, but after such revolution occurred the paranoia became one of absolute racial integration. In both nineteenth and early twentieth century zombielore, then, the monster appeared almost exclusively in narratives circumscribed by the fear of free Black people in the U.S. (and, it follows, by the potential loss of white power). Ethnographic writing about Haiti -- which made the monster less of a figment and more of a fact via its claims of authenticity -- perpetuated the notion that Black people had access to supernatural powers inaccessible to whites, and thus drew upon the palimpsest memories of Jean Zombi and the Haitian Revolution. Even lore generated during the military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) reflected and reinforced U.S. racism against African Americans because of how it capitalized on memories of slavery and racial conflict in the U.S., articulating the possibility of revenge in the form of white slavery. As the memories of previous zombielore pile on top of one another, the zombie figure becomes more grotesque, more immediate, more possible -- in short, more monstrous.

In her analysis of palimpsest memoryscapes, Shaw discusses how memories of late nineteenth century colonial conquest in Sierra Leone are shaped by memories of eighteenth century slavery, which are themselves shaped by twentieth century memories of colonization. Shaw argues that memories combine historical processes from multiple historical moments, thus

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creating a layering that moves memory both forward and backward in time; memories from one period become enmeshed with those from another such that the former is remembered through the latter.\textsuperscript{393} Similarly, it appears that memories of the U.S. occupation of Haiti are shaped by memories of the Haitian Revolution, which are in turn shaped by memories of slavery. During the occupation, Haitians recalled their success with rumor during the Revolution and re-deployed the idea of the zombi to their own advantage. At the same time, the stories of zombis recorded by U.S. marines recalled the bitter and gruesome defeat of white soldiers on this same island just over a century before, imbuing their tales not only with a sense of authenticity but of terror. Combatants of both nationalities, then, remembered the Haitian Revolution through the lens of zombielore. Moreover, those memories of the Haitian Revolution were intimately bound up in memories of slavery, both of Black people who feared becoming slaves again and of white people who feared becoming slaves for the first time. Whether one's ancestors had been slaves or slave-masters, the idea of the Voodoo-zombi enunciated the true horror slavery as a form of living death, a fate worse than death itself. The latent cultural memories underscoring ethnographic zombielore thus communicated a covert warning about history and its potential to repeat; slavery was dead, but it might return. Since the twentieth century creatures were both pitiable and monstrous, however, they simultaneously played into sentiments of white guilt and persistent racism against Black people, providing a mechanism by which whites could hold these seemingly contradictory feelings simultaneously. Zombielore stemming from the occupation thus shaped memories of U.S. slavery and of the Haitian Revolution, even as it was shaped by memories of those time periods. This is what Shaw illuminates in her discussion of how memory moves history. As a methodological tool, the palimpsest reveals how memoryscapes involve a layering of historical moments and processes that in some ways map the history of

\textsuperscript{393} Ibid., 15.
memory itself, moving memories of one period forward and backward in time as they become enmeshed with memories of other periods. Not only is the former period remembered through the latter, but the latter period is remembered through the former. If we approach the corpus of zombielore as a palimpsest memoryscape, then we can understand how memories of slavery and revolution shape not only the history of zombielore, but also ongoing understandings of race.

Appadurai notes two main characteristics of mediascapes. The first characteristic involves “the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information,” and the second involves “the images of the world created by these media.” The relationship between Appadurai's mediascape and Huyssen's memoryscape is nuanced and multivalent. First, the ability to produce and disseminate information correlates to the production of history as opposed to memory, which in Nora's terms implies a sanctioning of certain memories as an official version of history gets concretized. Second, memory has the capacity to "create images of the world" just as media does, especially when thinking of "images" in Appadurai's sense of imagination as a social process. As he puts it,

The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

394 Appadurai, *Modernity At Large.*  
395 Ibid., 31.
The mediascape is a playground of the imagination, but the production and dissemination of media rests in the hands of individuals who have a stake in making their imagination of the world the dominant one -- in making their memories into history. Memory, on the other hand, is a highly imaginative process that does indeed produce images of the world; however, the images produced via memory are malleable and subject to change over time, whereas the images produced by media are static and immutable. While zombielore enjoyed a significant presence in American consciousness prior to the images of zombies that populated silver screens throughout Hollywood's Golden Era, it was those images -- those particular imaginations -- of Black monsters that made zombies a household name. Films like *Black Moon, White Zombie,* and *I Walked With a Zombie* introduced a host of Americans to Haitian life and culture by providing them with supposedly authentic images that were in fact inspired more by the conventions of Gothic literature than the ethnographic lore they claimed to represent. Since the nature of zombielore is palimpsestic, these horror films also represent the first time many Americans learned about the history of colonial conflict in Haiti. The mediascape and the memoryscape thus overlap in zombielore, as images of colonial and postcolonial memory -- primarily from a white perspective -- become visions of history. While *I Walked With a Zombie* challenges this in some ways, it also produces one of the most famous and ostensibly racist images of a Voodoo-zombie ever created. This is more than just an inevitable symptom of the palimpsestic nature of zombielore; it proves how difficult it can be to overcome images of memory once they have been concretized in history.

The image of the Voodoo-zombie slave was a profound part of the U.S. mediascape as well as its memoryscape throughout the 1930s and 40s. The palimpsest continued to erase former inscriptions and to overwrite them with new imaginations of the zombie in turns
throughout the twentieth century. After the 1940s, the substance of zombielore changed in subtle ways as the U.S. grappled with its place in an increasingly globalized world. The 1950s witnessed the introduction of zombies created through nuclear power and/or radioactivity, yet the Voodoo-zombie remained a fixture in the genre of horror cinema. 1968 is often marked by zombie scholars as the year zombielore changed forever, as George Romero's now-infamous Night of the Living Dead turned a lens on the ignorant racism of the Voodoo-zombie genre by featuring an educated, middle class Black man fighting off hordes of brain-dead white zombies. Released five months after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, Night of the Living Dead had the effect of shaming white producers and fans of older zombie films by highlighting the racism inherent in those earlier texts. In the film, a multi-racial group of people take shelter from the zombies encroaching upon them in a farmhouse, and white characters make racist comments about Ben even as he protects them from the undead whites clamoring to get inside. At the end of the film, Ben is killed by a racist police officer who mistakes him for a zombie. Despite the word zombie never being uttered in the film or any of its promotional materials (Romero referred to them as 'ghouls,' despite admitting that he was "a huge fan of Voodoo zombies"), audiences were quick to label his creatures a reinvention of the classic monster-type. Even though the film did not mention Voodoo or include any Black zombies, then, it still recalled the memory of older Hollywood zombie films. With race riots literally raging in the streets, the memories of those earlier films suddenly became memories of the pervasive racism endured by African Americans throughout the Jim Crow era, newly recognizable and condemnable to white audiences. Voodoo and Haiti were erased from the palimpsest, yet the terror of racism remained.

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Confronted with the reality of this racist cinematic history, Hollywood took a step back from its Voodoo altars and started funding Romero-esque zombie films that featured white or multiracial zombies attacking people trapped in places such as office buildings and shopping malls, leading to what is now popularly known as the capitalist critique of zombie cinema. This trend became so prominent that today many people are only familiar with this type of zombie film, regarding *Night of the Living Dead* as either the birth of zombie cinema or the death of Voodoo-zombie cinema. Of course, neither of those suppositions is correct. At most, *Night of the Living Dead* marks a fork in the road of zombie cinema, a point from which two trajectories diverged and created subgenres, one (still) interested in the exoticism of Voodoo and the other in the banality of corporate consumerism. At many academic conferences, I’ve been surprised to meet people who profess their passion for zombie films and television but have little to no familiarity with the older films, aside from possibly having seen the famous image from *I Walked With a Zombie* at some point. The fact that so many self-proclaimed zombie fans are not even aware of the earlier history of zombies in Hollywood cinema suggests that the memory of those films has been erased and replaced in the palimpsest of zombielore. However, Voodoo zombies did not simply disappear after *Night of the Living Dead* or the boom of similar zombie films it inspired; as white directors began to drop the Voodoo zombie trope, Black directors rushed to pick up the pieces.

**Memory and Authenticity in Scream, Blacula, Scream**

Although the body of this dissertation has sought only to provide context for the lineage of zombielore from the late eighteenth century through 1942, I would like to conclude by
analyzing a film from the 1970s to further explore the palimpsest memoryscape of zombielore and to illustrate a particular relationship between images and social memory. Several Blaxploitation films took up the theme of the Voodoo zombie, but I want to focus on one in particular so that I may analyze it with the same level of scrutiny as I analyzed *I Walked With a Zombie* in the last chapter. *Blacula* and its under-theorized sequel, *Scream, Blacula, Scream!*, satirize Classical Hollywood Voodoo-zombie films, simultaneously remembering those previous images of zombies and reinscribing such images with memories that support the ideology of Black power. *Scream, Blacula, Scream!* clearly draws from *I Walked With a Zombie* -- a curious form of cinematic memory -- but provides its own authenticating discourse surrounding Vodou, Black American culture, and memories of slavery. As we will see, the character of Blacula becomes a sort of modern Jean Zombi, an undead ancestor who returns to liberate his people. The tragedy and the horror of the *Blacula* films, however, is that rather than liberating his people Blacula unwittingly enslaves them. By closely reading this film, I demonstrate not only how the palimpsest continues to provide a methodological tool for understanding sites of cultural memory, but also how the zombie figure can be claimed and reclaimed to dramatically different ends within a narrative framework that continues to reference postcolonial Gothic discourse even as it pushes towards a new era of racial understanding and coexistence.

Blaxploitation represents both a period and a genre of film history wherein African American filmmakers sanctioned by the Hollywood system were encouraged to produce films specifically for Black audiences. While economically speaking the impetus to fund Blaxploitation reflected the recognition by Hollywood executives that they could capitalize on racial conflict and social upheavals of the late 1960s and 70s, ideologically speaking Blaxploitation cinema affirmed the

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beliefs and values of the Black Power movement.\textsuperscript{398} Blaxploitation zombie films adopted many of the tropes associated with Classical Hollywood zombie cinema, but satirized them to present new meanings and to represent the fears and desires of urban African American communities following Civil Rights. \textit{Scream, Blacula, Scream}, for example, satirized Voodoo-zombie films of Classical Hollywood in order to comment on the nature of postcolonial memory and its capacity to shape both identity politics and social hierarchies in the present. Like \textit{I Walked With a Zombie}, \textit{Scream, Blacula, Scream} is a film whose anti-racist objectives have been overwritten by its memory as an icon of racist zombie cinema. By considering how the legacy of \textit{Blacula} sits in conflict with filmmakers' intentions, we can understand how the film self-consciously engages with issues such as palimpsest memory, ethnographic authenticity, and African American identity politics.

In the 1970s many Black filmmakers worked within the hegemonic Hollywood system in order to challenge it; funded by white-owned studios whose primary goals were capitalist and not political, these filmmakers seized the opportunity to make and market content that spoke to, about, and from the positionality of Black identity politics in a post-Civil Rights context. According to Robin Means Coleman, Blaxploitation films often drew their inspiration from Black power ideologies, emphasizing empowerment, self-sufficiency by-any-means-necessary, and consciousness raising.\textsuperscript{399} After decades where nearly "all horror films with a distinctive racial component kept the Black presence contained within narratives featuring exotic island locales, white interlopers, and uninhibited natives ('savages') practicing voodoo and experiencing zombification"\textsuperscript{400}, one major project of Blaxploitation cinema was the satire of Classical Hollywood horror films which had themselves been adapted from earlier postcolonial Gothic texts. Though \textit{Blacula} came first, it was

\textsuperscript{398} For more nuanced analyses of this history, see Coleman, \textit{Horror Noire}, 2011, 118–44; Jerry Rafiki Jenkins, "Blacula and the Question of Blackness," \textit{Special Issue: Blaxploitation Revisited} 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2005): 50–72; Koven, \textit{Blaxploitation Films}.

\textsuperscript{399} Coleman, \textit{Horror Noire}, 2011, 120.

\textsuperscript{400} Ibid., 131.
quickly followed by *Blackenstein* (1973), *Dr. Black and Mr. Hyde* (1974), and *Dr. Black and Mr. White* (1976), all of which were loosely based on nineteenth century works of postcolonial Gothic fiction. Other Blaxploitation horror films parodied popular mainstream horror films, often featuring Voodoo even when the original did not (for example, *Abby* (1974) parodied *The Exorcist* (1973) by depicting a young girl possessed by a Yoruba sex goddess/demon). In all of these cases, the Blaxploitation horror film became a palimpsest of the Hollywood films and Gothic novels from which they drew their inspiration. Injecting them with Voodoo-themed revenge fantasies changed the meaning of those texts, however, and in ways that spoke directly to the ideology of the Black power movement. There is an unspoken affiliation, it seems, between postcolonial Gothic fiction and revolutions in the politics of racial hierarchy. *Blacula* and *Scream, Blacula, Scream* were among the most popular films in the subgenre of Blaxploitation horror, in part because the filmmakers took pains to make something serious and meaningful out of a simplistic and potentially racist premise. This would seem to parallel the efforts of Lewton and Tourneur in *I Walked With a Zombie*, but the *Blacula* films were far more popular in their own time. In addition to their box office success, *Blacula* received the 'Best Horror Film' award from the Academy of Horror Films and Science Fiction Films in 1973 and William Marshall received numerous awards for his sensitive yet powerful portrayal of Blacula.\(^{401}\) While by today's standards Blaxploitation films are sometimes misunderstood, disparaged, or dismissed as an eccentric period of film history, Coleman suggests that by dubbing certain films 'Blaxploitation,' "this moniker is as much about exposing a category of film imbued with stereotypes of race relations, gender roles, sex, and violence as it is a critique of those who created the stereotypes, the political economy (financial investments, distribution, and marketing) behind such efforts, and reception and the great cultural impact the images had within and

\(^{401}\) Marshall was honored for his performance by the Academy of Horror Films and Science Fiction Films ('Best Actor' and 'Best Film'), The Count Dracula Society ('Cinema Award'), and The Saturn Awards ('Best Horror Film'). In categories where the film won, Marshall received the award personally (rather than director William Crain).
outside of Blackness." In the case of Blaxploitation zombie films, I would add that the postcolonial Gothic component is part of the palimpsest memoryscape of zombielore.

In many ways, the character of Blacula has become a campy cultural icon. More than forty years after his debut, television series and popular films continue to reference the African American vampire, almost always as a joke. Blacula is arguably one of the most famous characters of Blaxploitation cinema, and certainly the most infamous monster. Yet to their detriment, the Blacula films have become synonymous with a comically racist period in American film history. Despite the love shown them by Critical Race Theorists and film scholars, for modern audiences they are more likely to be laughed at than feared or revered. Like the iconic image of Darby Jones from *I Walked With a Zombie*, Blacula has become an imago of racism that keeps us from seeing the subversive efforts of filmmakers. From our current historical standpoint, the memory of Blaxploitation cinema -- particularly Blaxploitation horror -- has been occluded by the imago of Blacula, the "Black Dracula" whose very existence seems to imply a kind of lazy racism on the part of Hollywood producers. However, this imago depends on a misunderstanding or ignorance of the history of Blaxploitation cinema as a site of resistance to hegemonic conventions and constructions of dominant Hollywood cinema. While Nora would argue that historicity is only partially conceivable through the lens of memory, it is only through consideration of cultural context that the relationship between zombielore, cinema history and social memory can be properly theorized.

**Summary of the Film "Text"**

*Blacula* and *Scream, Blacula, Scream* both feature the same scene in which the African Prince Mamuwalde gets transformed into Blacula. An aristocrat from the Niger Delta, in 1780

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Prince Mamuwalde and his wife Luva visit Count Dracula at his European castle, seeking an end to the slave trade. Notably, this scene is set ten years before the start of the Haitian Revolution. Dracula laughs at their request; he subsequently attacks Mamuwalde and viciously bites him before locking him into a coffin in his basement dungeon. The coffin remains undisturbed for nearly two centuries, when Dracula's castle is sold to Americans and his effects are shipped to the U.S. In the first film, "Blacula" awakens on U.S. soil and destroys the interracial gay couple that had purchased his coffin. Taking up residency in their mansion, Blacula terrorizes both white and Black people as he explores the post-slavery world of the 1970s and comes to terms with his own monstrosity. Vanquished at the end of the first film, Blacula is resurrected in *Scream, Blacula, Scream* by a Voodoo-practicing eager to rise to the top of a gang hierarchy. Blacula continues to enslave others to him through a mixture of Voodoo and vampirism, but is ultimately destroyed by the knowledge that he has become the very thing he most despised in life: a slave master. Unlike the first movie, Blacula's inner torment is the driving force of *Scream, Blacula, Scream*.

**Remembering Blacula**

Like *I Walked With A Zombie*, the idea for *Blacula* came from studio executives rather than writers or filmmakers. The premise was simple: *Blacula* was meant to be a "Black" version of Dracula, set in the inner city ghetto of Chicago rather than in Eastern Europe. Celebrated Shakespearean actor William Marshall was offered the titular role, but upon reading the script he demanded that the character be rewritten. In fact, he is credited with the invention of "Prince

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403 John Edgar Browning and Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart, *Draculas, Vampires, and Other Undead Forms: Essays on Gender, Race and Culture* (Scarecrow Press, 2009), 25.
Mamuwalde” and even wrote the famous scene at Dracula's castle. As with *I Walked With a Zombie*, those involved in the making of the film took the initiative to imbue it with a sense of historical gravitas; they capitulated to the studio's demands for a conventional horror film while simultaneously subverting the studio's expectations by making the film perform a type of political commentary. As Hayden White has argued, "historical meaning inevitably makes recourse to generic codes,” and in the case of both *I Walked With a Zombie* and *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, the Voodoo-zombie film cannibalizes elements from nineteenth century postcolonial Gothic fiction, ultimately serving as a meditation on the memory of slavery and its capacity to haunt racial formation in the United States.

Like the Voodoo-zombie films that came before it, and the postcolonial Gothic novels that came before them, *Scream, Blacula, Scream* is about the monstrous return of slave memories disavowed by Eurocentric histories.

Blacula is clearly a monster, but part of what makes him a monster is his hybrid identity. Neither dead nor alive, neither African nor European nor American, neither Christian nor Vodou, Blacula is all of these things and none of them. His very existence is a paradox. In *Scream, Blacula, Scream* Voodoo is a primary focus and Blacula's monstrosity derives from the fact that his existence is a product of both European vampirism and African Vodou. But to begin exploring *Scream, Blacula, Scream* we must consider how Blacula became a vampire in the first place.

The same scene is revisited several times via Blacula's flashbacks. When they arrive at Dracula's castle, Prince Mamuwalde appears refined and elegant, and he speaks eloquently to his host; Luva calls him "the crystallization of our people's pride." Mamuwalde's regal presence contra

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the sniveling Count Dracula communicates the message that Blackness, before contaminated by whiteness, was sophisticated, dignified, and erudite. A memory within a memory, the image of Dracula is an image of Classical Hollywood cinema, but the image of Mamuwalde is one of proud African heritage. Moreover, Mamuwalde's civil yet impassioned request to Count Dracula to abolish the slave trade suggests to Black audiences that during the time of slavery powerful African figures actively worked against it, subverting the idea -- repeated in films such as Drums of the Congo (1954) -- that African chiefs and bounty hunters cooperated with whites in the enslavement of their own people. In the first scene of both films, then, Blacula seeks to replace memories of slavery recorded in earlier Hollywood zombielore with one more inspiring to the present African American community. Upon hearing Mamuwalde's request, Dracula responds, "slavery has its merits, I believe." Mamuwalde reminds Dracula of the "barbarity" of the slave trade. Dracula counters, "barbarous from the point of the view of the slave, perhaps," then, turning a lascivious gaze to Luva, "intriguing and delightful from mine." Dracula's implied sexual interest in Luva (really, his implied interest in raping her as his slave) references the threat of miscegenation that haunted older zombie films, but reverses it such that an undead white man makes unwanted advances on a vulnerable Black woman. Outraged, Mamuwalde attempts to leave and a fight ensues; Dracula's many guards eventually overcome Mamuwalde. After drinking his blood -- in what has been read as an extremely (homo)erotic moment, linked again with interracial rape -- Dracula lowers Mamuwalde into a coffin. Before slamming the lid shut, Dracula seethes, "you shall pay, black prince. I shall place a curse of suffering on you that will doom you to a living hell. […] I curse you with my name. You shall be Blacula!" Reversing key ideological signifiers from I Walked With a Zombie, Blacula gets transformed by a white member of the bourgeoisie rather than Black members of a Voodoo-practicing underclass. The reversal of racist anxieties surrounding miscegenation and enslavement in

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407 Jenkins, “Blacula and the Question of Blackness.”
earlier films is underwritten by a Black Power ideology that understands white patriarchy as fundamentally predatory, dangerous, and monstrous. At the same time, it overwrites those conventions in the palimpsest of zombielore.

Thematically, Mamuwalde's transformation and transition to America mirror the historical processes of slavery. Trapped against his will, Mamuwalde is renamed by his new "master," robbed of his agency or autonomy, and permanently transformed by unwanted contact with a wealthy European man. Dracula penetrates his skin and, by appropriating his lifeblood, literally empties him of any vestiges of his former self. Mamuwalde's enslavement takes the form of living death, and he languishes in the white man's basement for nearly two centuries until, in 1970, an interracial gay couple from the U.S. purchases Dracula's effects at an estate auction. Thus, Mamuwalde's undead body is literally sold on the auction block and, subsequently, "Blacula" makes the middle passage in a coffin. When Blacula emerges on U.S. soil, he discovers that he still retains the power of his ancestral African religion despite his newfound vampirism, which in this case we might read as a European affliction (since it was transmitted by Dracula, an Eastern European, via the unwanted exchange of bodily fluids). In other words, Mamuwalde dies an African in the eighteenth century, spends the nineteenth century in a burial chamber, and resurrects in the twentieth century with the power of Voodoo and the curse of vampirism. Complex ideological messages underpin Blacula's history, then, speaking to psychological identity-issues faced by African Americans: the "living" Prince Mamuwalde was African nobility; the "dead" Mamuwalde/Blacula an imprisoned slave; the "undead" Blacula is a hybrid monster. The memories of conflicting identities in multiple temporal and cultural contexts cause Blacula extreme mental anguish, which he project onto others. If we understand Blacula's transformation as a metaphor for the slave experience, then the film seems to comment on the perceived history of Africans in Africa, the inherited memories of slavery and
segregation, and the complex and sometimes contradictory identities that now must be embodied by African Americans in a post-Civil Rights context.

Like *I Walked With a Zombie*, *Scream, Blacula, Scream* pitches itself as an authentic representation of Vodou even as it lampoons the absurdity of 'Voodoo' in Classical Hollywood. The close-up of a small black doll forms the opening shot of *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, and the camera slowly zooms out to reveal that it sits on a Voodoo altar. This first image introduces the focus of the sequel as Voodoo more than vampirism, and as we pull further back we find we are at the funeral of a Mambo whose body lies on a sofa in her apartment surrounded by Voodoo paraphernalia, her family, and her followers. The film pronounces the authenticity of Vodou not by stating it in promotional materials, but by its mise-en-scene which normalizes 'Voodoo objects' (recognizable from memories of Classical zombie films) within a modern, 1970s apartment. Willis, the Mambo's son, and Lisa, her most promising protégé, debate who will become the next leader of their "Voodoo cult," with Lisa winning the most favor from the group. Willis leaves the funeral in a huff, acquires a mysterious package from an old man who warns him about the power it might unleash, and the camera quickly cuts to Willis's performance of a Voodoo ritual. Wearing a necklace made of teeth and other stereotypical signifiers of African tribal identity established by earlier Hollywood films, Willis casts his spell over carefully arranged skeletal remains, which dramatically catch on fire only to fizzle out in a few seconds. Like the Voodoo paraphernalia punctuating the infamous "walk" in *I Walked With a Zombie*, these elements of the mise-en-scene are meant to provide an air of authenticity vis-à-vis Vodou practice, yet mostly reference previous representations of Voodoo from Classical Hollywood. Unlike the 1942 film, with *Scream, Blacula, Scream* there are no records indicating that the filmmakers researched Vodou or attempted to represent the religion faithfully.408

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408 Supporting actress Pam Grier asserted that these films were transgressive in their own way; she specifically cited the *voudon* [sic] in *Scream, Blacula, Scream* as a case of progressive politics, even though she quite readily
Based on the film text alone, it appears that their main research was on the representation of Voodoo in zombie films of the 1930s-50s, suggesting that they were more interested in parodying those films than they were in making a statement about the true power of Vodou. In other words, even as they strove to provide African American audience members with authentic memories of Black power, they cleaved to their own memories of Classical Hollywood cinema. *Scream, Blacula, Scream*’s deployment of Voodoo signifiers imbues the film with an element of African religiosity and, later in the film, the true power of Vodou becomes evident when Blacula and Lisa use it toward specific ends. At this point, however, Willis’s ritual is an apparent failure -- his clichéd bones, teeth, and pentagrams have been revealed as impotent; dejected, Willis shakes his head as though chiding himself for believing such a ritual could work. In this way, the film capitalizes on the notion of Vodou as an "authentic" form of spiritual power while simultaneously mocking the earlier zombie films’ use of Voodoo as a code for danger.

Defeated and despondent, Willis retires to the dining room and hangs his head. Slowly, however, an imposing black shadow grows on the opposite wall, both looming over Willis and slowly encroaching upon him. The fact that in this film Blacula appears first as a shadow cannot be overlooked, because as seen with *I Walked With a Zombie*, the menacing shadow of the undead Black man/monster comes to symbolize the terror of an imperialist past that haunts the living. As Carre-Four hovered over Betsy, Blacula hovers over Willis, and in both cases it is the memory of slavery -- the undeath of the past -- that threatens to upset the present. While the latter is not necessarily a direct reference to the former, in both instances the monster’s shadow works as a Gothic trope that unsettles and produces an anxiety-affect in the spectator. Both films hearken to a Gothic sense of haunting via the ethereal presence of a shadow rather than emphasizing the grotesque

recognized that Blaxploitation vehicles were based on an inherent exploitation of Blackness.”Interviews William Marshall.”
physicality of the monster, as seen in many other zombie films from *Night of the Living Dead* onward. Reading these films in the lineage of postcolonial Gothic fiction, then, we can see how the menacing silhouette is the shadow of memory. As discussed in Chapter Four, Carre-Four's shadow above Betsy's bed can be understood as the shadow of colonial slavery that haunts the Holland plantation. For Willis, the young African American male who wishes to capitalize on his Vodou heritage but is more interested in attaining power for himself than for his community, Blacula's shadow represents the repressed memories of Willis's ancestral culture. The shadow is not only the memory of slavery, then, but the memory of proud African heritage, African male aristocrats, and "Black power" before slavery began; it is also the memory of transformation, of usurped power, and the legacy of slavery that cannot be forgotten or put into a grave upon the attainment of Civil Rights. For Willis, Blacula's shadow operates as a reminder of the struggles his ancestors endured in the course of history that brought Willis to this moment. In this way, it serves as a critique of Willis's sense of entitlement. While Carre-Four stalks Betsy for the twin purposes of studio-driven miscegenation drama and narrative-driven vengeance for her discovery of Mrs. Rand's Voodoo practice, Blacula converges upon Willis for the disrespect he showed towards his late mother (the Mambo priestess), her student Lisa, and his Vodou-practicing community; he attempted to usurp their power without fully understanding that Vodou is a religion based on ancestor worship -- a spiritual practice demanding recognition that the past holds sway in the present.

As in *I Walked With a Zombie*, Blacula's shadow lingers on the sidelines at first, translucent but still a stark silhouette against the wall. Like memory, the shadow is barely knowable but unmistakably present; it represents something that we cannot see fully but that is obviously a part of our world -- like history. Black intellectuals and artists such as Kara Walker have used the image of the shadow or silhouette to comment on the nature of stereotype in cinema history and the limited
possibilities of representation afforded to African Americans on the silver screen.\textsuperscript{409} In Walker's work, which is purposely grotesque and unsettling, two-dimensional images allow us to see both the startling reality of our own slave history in stark, black and white terms, and simultaneously compel us to consider how the three-dimensional lives of Black individuals in the U.S. have been eclipsed by stereotypical representations of slavery and racial inequality in popular media. Retroactively read as part of this critical race discourse, Blacula's silhouette can be understood as a symbol of African American postcolonial memory. The shadow on the wall is not physically tangible, yet spectators recognize the threat it implies. Whereas the shadow has only two dimensions, however, Blacula is a three-dimensional being, and his shadow disappears as he enters the scene. Unlike the ghostly hauntings or ethereal shadows of Gothic fiction, Blacula and Carre-Four are fully embodied agents of memory -- tangible, undead, and out for vengeance. They are agents because they act purposely, physically demanding that the living acknowledge their presence and their power, which is the presence and power of memory, no matter how deeply suppressed. Blacula attacks Willis and kills him -- ultimately transforming him into a member of the living dead -- before Willis even sees his face.

This scene can be read in a number of ways. Blacula has been cursed with a taste for blood by Dracula's infectious bite, and ultimately "brought back"\textsuperscript{410} through the mysterious power of Voodoo. Thus the idea of biological contamination through blood contact gets juxtaposed with the supernatural power of Voodoo to "possess" and colonize the body of its victim. By conflating Voodoo and vampirism, \textit{Scream, Blacula, Scream} calls attention to the hybrid nature of Blacula's monstrosity. His disease is European, his resurrection is Afro-American, but his undeath is both. Blacula himself seems to be a palimpsest of the Black experience in the U.S. As Harry Benshoff, 


\textsuperscript{410} Blacula dies at the end of the first film.
Jeremy Rafiki Jenkins, and Leerom Medovoi have argued, Blacula's existence, and therefore his torment, serves as a commentary on African American identity politics in the post-Civil Rights context of 1970s Chicago.⁴¹¹ These authors suggest that Blacula confronts the "double consciousness" of African Americans famously described by W.E.B. DuBois, and argue that Blacula's monstrosity metaphorizes the hybrid identity of African Americans who must see themselves as a part of both cultures -- African and American -- and yet, in many ways, fully belong to neither.⁴¹²

Seen first in Scream, Blacula, Scream as an ominous shadow looming over the African American Willis's head, Blacula initially appears as a figment of the reanimated past that haunts the present. In each of his films, Blacula represents both the memory of African freedom and power as well as the historical atrocity of slavery, yet he returns to prey on mostly African American victims in the filmic present of the 1970s.⁴¹³ His reign of terror, then, can best be understood as an attack of memory on the unfolding of history. In the early 1970s, Blacula was the ultimate symbol of Black power: African power in the form of Mamuwalde, lost or usurped power in the form of living cadaver, and reclaimed power in the form of Blacula. Willis is an unworthy recipient of this powerful heritage, a young adult Black man from the South Side who is more interested in commanding his own gang than in joining with his brothers to fight the [white] power. As Scream, Blacula, Scream's first victim, Willis gets killed by the power he sought to gain -- the power of his ancestors' religion and spirituality.⁴¹⁴ His death and transformation, then, simultaneously code the

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⁴¹² Medovoi, “Theorizing Historicity, or the Many Meanings of Blacula,” 17.
⁴¹⁴ His ancestors' power is signified directly by his mother, the dead Mambo priestess, and indirectly by the recognition of Vodou as African religious heritage.
risk of misusing ancestral power or heritage, the danger of bringing the past into the present, and a statement about ongoing racism and the role of slave-history in the lives of modern African Americans. The dead (African) preys on the living (American), even as the living tries to reclaim or usurp its power; past and present are thus locked in a mutually destructive embrace.

**Blacula Remembers**

As Medovoi suggests, from an ideological standpoint "the film is open to Afrocentric viewers who would enjoy the pleasure of identifying with an African hero, while also providing ample room for those who would distrust or reject Afrocentrism." In this way, the film satisfied the studio's demands for Blaxploitation horror while at the same time advancing the cause of Black power by emphasizing the importance of postcolonial memory within any construction of African American identity. Significantly, although Blacula casts a foreboding shadow on the wall neither he nor the transformed-Willis can be seen in a mirror, nor can they be photographed. Willis is particularly upset by this discovery, as he clearly placed a high value on his appearance and dress as markers of status within his community while alive. Blacula consoles the image-obsessed Willis, saying "I'm afraid that's one of the misfortunes of the cursed." Following an ideological trope of the Harlem Renaissance -- profoundly symbolized in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* -- the inherited history of slavery and the legacy of white supremacy cause Blacula, Willis, and African Americans to become "invisible." Moreover, in the case of this film's vampires/zombies, they suffer a fate worse than death by becoming invisible to themselves as well. In some ways, Blacula and Willis's failure to

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415 Medovoi, “Theorizing Historicity, or the Many Meanings of Blacula,” 14–5.
416 Slavoj Žižek argues, somewhat cheekily, that "vampires do not appear in mirrors because they have read their Lacan" and understand, therefore, that "they materialize [an object] which, by definition, cannot be mirrored." (Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture (MIT Press, 1992), 55, emphasis in original; Also quoted in Judith Halberstam, Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters (Duke University Press, 1995), 10.)
see themselves in the mirror suggests the difficulty of accessing "authentic" Black memories when surrounded by hegemonic and Eurocentric representations of history.

Although Blacula introduces himself as Mamuwalde, rejecting the name given to him by his white "master," he cannot shake the legacy of his enslavement. Not only does the memory of his transformation follow him like a shadow, seen by spectators in repeated flashbacks to the scene at Dracula's castle, but the transformation itself has made Blacula into a monster -- and a hypocritical one at that. Infected and enslaved by the racist Count Dracula, Blacula now enslaves others to him. White hegemony succeeds, then, in turning the empowered African into the very things he most pitied and most despised: slave and slaver. Blacula's history thus has a profound impact on how his "children," his progeny sired via Voodoo-inflected vampirism (or, more metaphorically, African Americans engaged in Black power struggles), see themselves. His dilemma is the refashioned dilemma of DuBois' double-consciousness, and a version of what Harry Benshoff has called "the double oppression of the slave trade." He must contend not only with his African heritage, but what that heritage means for a person educated and living within a Western society that systemically privileges whiteness. The juxtaposition of Blacula's imposing shadow before he "turns" Willis and the conversation about the mirror after Willis's resurrection, then, reinforce an ideological statement about the conflicted cultural psychology of urban-dwelling African Americans in the 1970s.

Like the image of Ti Misery in I Walked With a Zombie, throughout Scream, Blacula, Scream the film revisits the scene of Mamuwalde's transformation as a way of coding the omnipresence of postcolonial memory. As mentioned previously, that scene involves two allusions to interracial rape: Dracula's sexual advances toward Luva and his homoerotic bite on Mamuwalde's neck. Moreover, Blacula's first victims in the first film are an interracial gay couple. The conflation of miscegenation and monstrosity is triply coded in every flashback, then, suggesting that interracial

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417 Benshoff, “Blaxploitation Horror Films.”
sexual relationships are a crucial component of the memory of slavery and its horrors. Further, the fact that Blacula seems particularly concerned with eradicating interracial couples seems to imply that he, too, views miscegenation as monstrous and worthy of destruction.\footnote{Harry Benshoff considers the sexuality of these interracial victims more closely, arguing that Blacula targets the gay interracial couple in part as an attack against homosexuality as well as miscegenation. From Blacula's point of view, he argues, both homosexuality and miscegenation can be seen as betrayals of Black masculinity. In that formulation, Blacula operates primarily as an avenger of heterosexual Black masculinity in a world where such an identity is perceived to be under attack. (Ibid.)} The second attack of \textit{Scream, Blacula, Scream} occurs when an interracial couple -- this time heterosexual -- comes to the house looking for Willis. Blacula kills the Black man while Willis takes on the hysterical White woman, and the underlying message confirms miscegenation as fundamentally dangerous. Just as \textit{I Walked With a Zombie} juxtaposes representations of malevolent Voodoo-zombies with images of the innocent white women (the hysterical Betsy or the zombified Jessica), \textit{Blacula} juxtaposes representations of interracial intimacy with violent, murderous assaults that end in death; both films, then, articulate the potential dangers of miscegenation.

Significantly, however, throughout \textit{Scream, Blacula, Scream} most of Blacula's victims are African Americans. Since Blacula was originally "turned" by a white European man, following an ideological paradigm of Blaxploitation cinema, Dracula's contaminating whiteness has made Blacula "one of them." This message gets reinforced in apparent class-distinctions, coded by Blacula's aristocratic dress, mannerisms, and speech in contrast to those of African Americans, and in images of his mansion that reflect the European aesthetic preferences of someone like Count Dracula in contrast to the African arts and artifacts on display at Lisa's apartment in the next scene. These elements of the mise-en-scene communicate that Blacula has been "whitened" by the illness contracted when Dracula tasted his blood, just as Mrs. Rand was "Blackened" by her adoption of spiritual power in "the cult of Voodoo." Like Mrs. Rand, Blacula betrays his people and preys on them, representing a contaminating, bestial sexuality. While Mrs. Rand uses Voodoo to attack her
own white daughter-in-law, however, Blacula becomes a shadow-version of the white slaver and amasses an army of primarily Black slaves -- not unlike Murder Legendre in *White Zombie*. For Mamuwalde and Mrs. Rand, whose victims belong to the same identity group as they represent, it appears that contact with the Other has made them turn against their own people. Later in *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, Blacula gets harassed by two African American pimps. Before assaulting and killing them both, he exclaims, "You've made a slave out of your sister and you're still slaves imitating your slave masters!" Though Blacula can recognize the danger and horror of becoming like white slave-owners, his body has been colonized by the white man's affliction and he now possesses an irrepressible taste for blood. Like the transgressive Mrs. Rand whose investment in Voodoo leads her to attack her own family, the power of the Other turns Blacula against himself and the most precious facets of his identity.

Blacula first encounters Lisa at a party thrown by African art historians, and the mise-en-scène is littered with museum-worthy sculptures, masks, and objets d'art that stand in stark contrast to the fake-looking bones and teeth that Willis used in his Voodoo ceremony as well as to the Gothic European furnishings of Blacula's manse. Immediately, then, Lisa's home serves as a counterpoint to both the racist misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Afro-Caribbean Vodou seen in earlier zombie films and the relative values of assimilation with white culture that were often foisted upon African Americans in the United States during this time period. The film thus offers a hybrid space in which Blacula can interact with "authentic" African culture in an American context and which suggests to African Americans that there is, in fact, a third alternative between embracing a racist stereotype and assimilating with white culture. That is, the party represents a place where African Americans may engage with their cultural heritage in a context that acknowledges its complexity and challenges the assumptions of racial superiority.

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419 Later in the films the police photos of this double-homicide reveal no bodies, just white officers. In this way, *both* Black people and "Black on Black" violence are left unheeded by the white police force.
Americans can see themselves in different terms than those ascribed to them by mainstream Hollywood and in the dominant discourse surrounding race in the U.S. Double consciousness is temporarily complicated, then, and in this scene it seems almost that Mamuwalde has been resurrected; he gives that name to his hosts and he interacts with Lisa as he did with Luva in Dracula's castle. They exchange witty banter and demonstrate their knowledge of African history and art to one another; Mamuwalde's expertise is, of course, based on his memories of the 18th century Niger Delta, which makes him all the more impressed by the modern Lisa's interest and proficiency in discussing the culture from whence he came.

In an interview with *The Black Scholar*, William Marshall claimed that he insisted upon the inclusion African art historians and intellectuals at the party, a request to which director Bob Kelljan capitulated. The scene was rewritten to emphasize the academic nature of the event, granting Lisa and Blacula a moment of intellectual discourse on the subject of Voodoo and its religious context before returning to the typical horror-movie fare of monsters hiding in the shadows and vampires preying on the living. This scene, like the one at Dracula's castle, serves to reinforce values and ideals of Black artistic and intellectual sophistication, countering the stereotypical images of Voodoo seen in films such as *I Walked With a Zombie* and in Willis's resurrection ceremony. It also lays the groundwork for Blacula's next kill.

Mirrors and shadows continue to pervade the film with a sense of the haunting of memory and the past that cannot, or will not, die. Blacula's next victim is an African American friend of Lisa's who fails to see him in the mirror behind her as she readies herself for bed. Though Blacula cannot be seen in her mirror, he still casts a long shadow. Film language thus establishes his presence as ghostly and haunting, a Gothic trope that becomes more all the more real when Blacula

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emerges as a corporeal being and attacks the oblivious young woman. Gloria screams as the camera cuts away, and we understand that Blacula has "turned her into one of them." Here, the mirror returns as a trope signifying how African Americans, caught up in their own images of the present, may fail to recognize the past. At the party, Gloria told Lisa that Mamuwalde "creeps [her] out," and indicated that she was more interested in flirting with white men than with discussing African history and art. The punishment for her misplaced priorities (and interracial attraction?) is similar to Willis's: she does not see Blacula sneaking up behind her because she chooses to remain ignorant of her cultural heritage. Gloria's death (and eventual reanimation) is the result of her failure to acknowledge the power that the past still wields in the present.

Gloria's suspicious death prompts a police investigation, and as the host of the party Lisa becomes a prime suspect. While Blacula seems to be targeting African Americans who do not properly heed the memories of slavery and oppression he embodies, it is the innocent African American woman who does understand the importance of those memories that faces the brunt of Blacula's backlash. Accused of murder, Lisa must defend not only herself but her religion as well as her community against the attacks of the Chicago police department. The detective suspects Lisa of murder because of her association with Vodou, and the racist logic of his accusation provides another explanation for the conflation of Voodoo and vampirism:

Now, I've always considered myself a reasonable man. My thinking may be a little prejudiced due to race, creed, and color, but then again none of us is perfect...[Lisa is a suspect] because this girl's murder tonight is not a normal murder. If you ask me the Voodoo freaks had something to do with it. [...] I know you people never talk of your Voodoo so I won't bother asking you questions pertaining to it, but there are certain characteristics generic to your religion that even the lay person knows. Allow me to mention two of the most obvious. Now, one is snakes. Even the uninitiated knows that snakes are to Voodoosists as cows are to Hindus. Two: your guys drink blood. Now, this girl's body had two snake-like puncture marks on its throat, and said body was completely drained of blood. Completely drained of blood! Now if that doesn't add up to Voodoo, I don't know what does.
Not only does this speech convey that the white-dominated police force has an inherent bias against African Americans, but it also establishes the firm connection between African Voodoo and European vampirism as similar (and even hybrid) modes of monstrosity. The speech mocks the character delivering it for his (possibly intentional) misunderstanding of folklore: the detective blames Voodoo -- or Black people -- for a crime that more closely resembles one from a European -- or, white -- folkloric tradition. The prominence of vampire lore in Western culture makes it almost laughable that a bite mark on the neck such as this one would be interpreted as a Voodoo-powered snake bite, so the creative logic of the detective's conclusion reveals his racist bias. Yet, at the same time, the speech provides an explanation for the Vodou theme of the sequel, absent in the first *Blacula*. Not only does it explicitly equate the vampire's bite with the bite of a snake, a sacred animal in Vodou, but it draws on discourses of ethnographic authenticity and Gothic horror to suggest that the combination of white and Black folkloric traditions -- white and Black culture -- becomes something monstrous. The snake is a powerful spiritual symbol within Haitian Vodou and, as I have discussed elsewhere, the European Dracula represents an upper-class aristocrat at the pinnacle of wealth and power. Interacting with a snake during a Vodou ritual may be tantamount to interacting with a deity or lwa, while interacting with a vampire in the Gothic European tradition may lead one throw off the shackles of their mortal existence and gain eternal life. Both figures thus offer the promise of divine revelation even though being bitten by either can easily end in death. Moreover, in the history of monster lore Voodoo zombies and vampires share an affinity in that they articulate anxieties about capitalist oppression -- while the bourgeois monster preys on the underclass in vampire narratives, in zombie narratives the underclass rises up against the tyranny of the ruling class. Both types of monstrosity are culturally specific forms of undeath directly related to histories (and memories) of subjugation and oppression. The detective's simplistic confusion of a snake bite
and a vampire bite does more than play on the visual similarity of the wounds, then; it suggests that the conflation of zombification and vampirism is a conflation of African and European cultural identities. Simultaneously, then, this speech explains Blacula's monstrosity as authentic within a context of Afro-Caribbean folklore and insults the memory of older zombie films by parodying their ignorantly racist and laughably myopic understandings of Vodou. In doing so, it suggests that memories of Haitian folklore, American slavery, and Classical zombie films coalesce in the form of Blacula's undeath.

**Blacula's Children**

Interestingly, when Blacula's African American victims return from the dead, they appear in white face. While this ostensibly represents their corpse-like appearance and loss of blood, it also codes death as a loss of Blackness. Moreover, the trope correlates in some way with classic zombie films such as *White Zombie* and *I Walked With a Zombie*, in which Black actors playing zombies actually wore blackface to intensify their appearance. Whether meant as a satire on those earlier films or as an innocuous choice on behalf of the make-up artists, the effect is that Blacula's so-called children are not Black but white. In a reversal of the one-drop rule, their proximate contact with European vampirism redefines their race and make them, effectively, undead white people. This seems to reflect Blacula's concern that African Americans of the 1970s have been "whitened" by their assimilation into the hegemonic culture, ignoring or disavowing the memories of their Diasporic past. Ironically, however, it is Blacula himself who transforms their skin tone by infecting them with his brand of Voodoo-vampirism, killing the individual with Black skin and reanimating them as white. In a strange inverse of the Cthulhu Mythos ideology, which expressed a latent fear that whites

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421 This point is underscored by the fact that the majority of Blacula's victims are affiliated with interracial coupling.
were the only race who could truly die, *Scream, Blacula, Scream* suggests that, for the African, even a hybrid identity is a type of death.

Since Lisa has "natural abilities" and once studied under a Mambo, Blacula enlists her aid to "cure" him of his curse through the power of Voodoo. Like Mrs. Rand, he conspires with a Voodoo priestess to attain his goals, yet with very different intentions. While Mrs. Rand's education in Voodoo drew her away from her family and caused her to embrace the power of "Black magic," Blacula wants to extricate himself from the constraining and contaminating power of whiteness. As Lisa begins the exorcism, police officers storm the mansion. The juxtaposition of these two images suggests that, somehow, the white powers-that-be do not want Blacula to be free (of his curse). The ceremony gets cut short when the officers break in and a fight ensues between Blacula, his family of undead zombie-slaves, and the white police detective with his minions. While there are casualties on both sides, Blacula and the undead prevail. African Americans in the 1970s can cheer the message, here, that Black power defeats a racist and oppressive social system.\(^\text{422}\)

Blacula's violence frightens Lisa, however, and she tries to flee the scene along with the police officers. The power of the past proves distressing and disquieting, especially when resurrected in the present. A close up of her terrified face is juxtaposed with that of Blacula's, shown with full fangs, a widow's peak and black makeup lining his jowls. "You can't leave now," he pleads, throwing his head back, "I neeed you!" His desperate plea that she remain and re-attempt the ceremony suggests that the past -- the history of African nobility, the horror and atrocities of slavery, the memories of Black ancestors in the Diaspora -- somehow need the present -- the modern African American community -- to pay attention to them; otherwise, Blacula will never be able to overcome the curse of whiteness that has assumed power over his mind and body. In this combination of

\(^{422}\) Cf. Medovoi, "Theorizing Historicity, or the Many Meanings of Blacula."
images, both Lisa and Blacula are trying to move on. While Lisa wants to leave the past behind and move forward with her life, away from Blacula and into the arms of her police-officer-boyfriend, Blacula cannot "move on" without her help. He needs Lisa, a symbol of the memory-conscious African American community, to heed his existence as a warning and to help him throw off the shackles of his own hybrid identity. Though it sounds like a monstrous roar when Blacula cries out for Lisa to stay, his plea is poignant and heart-wrenching. Seeing the monster in such threateningly close proximity to Lisa, her boyfriend intervenes. "Mamuwalde--" he starts, but freezes as Blacula releases Lisa, slowly turns to him and pointedly declares, "The name is Blacula!" Here, for the first time in either film, Blacula claims his hybrid identity and accepts the name bestowed on him by a white master.

Lisa grabs an arrow and stabs it through the heart of her ceremonial Vodou statue (from the first shot of the film). The moment recalls I Walked With a Zombie's murder-by-Voodoo doll, when Wesley stabs Jessica with an arrow just as a native plunges a needle into the effigy's heart. Blacula clutches his chest and staggers in agony. The film ends in a frozen image of Blacula looking up at the camera with arms outstretched as he cries out in pain. His eye-contact with the camera stirs an affective emotional response in the spectator, who, for the first time since his transformation, is forced to look at Blacula as a pitiful victim rather than a predatory monster. The memory of the authentic monster -- the Haitian zombi slave -- thus reappears on the film's palimpsest of zombielore, overwriting Blacula's characterization as either a Jean Zombi-like retributionary agent or as an indiscriminately destructive monster. While other shots in the film have consistently shown him from below to emphasize his imposing character, this final image arrests his body and holds it as a helpless object of pity. A wash of red covers the shot. Ambiguously caught between life, death, and
undeath, Blacula is suspended in invisible shackles, fastened by the legacy of his violent encounter with whiteness.

**Scream, Blacula, Scream as Lieu de Memoire**

*I Walked With a Zombie* and *Scream, Blacula, Scream* share in common thematic tropes of postcolonial Gothic horrors wherein the memory of slavery insists upon its relevance to contemporary constructions of race and social hierarchy. Both films were commissioned by white studio executives who wanted to capitalize on generic Voodoo-zombie tropes, but were imbued with postcolonial meaning by filmmakers who sought to challenge typical conventions even as they worked within them, injecting their films with an air of authenticity and historical gravitas. Further, both films feature the repetition of images or scenes that serve as mnemonics for the experience of slavery, consistently reminding spectators that the origin of monstrosity is intimately bound up with colonial power dynamics. As Jenkins suggests, *Blacula* expresses the anxiety of "history coming back to haunt the present," but he also argues that the problem with Blacula's struggle "is that it presumes that blacks can only be African or African American, but never both."423 *I Walked With a Zombie* presents another version of "history coming back," yet exercises this theme to stress the potential peril of dissolving borders between white and Black communities. In both cases, then, the issue at hand is that of racial identity constructed via mediascapes and memoryscapes, and the tenuous stability of those racial identities in an increasingly integrated society.

*Scream, Blacula, Scream* is a lieu de memoire not only because it deals so directly with the notion of suppressed or repressed memories, but because it is a film whose history stands in conflict with its memory. That is, the caricature-like imago of Blacula as a symbol of racism in Hollywood

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overshadows the film's very serious efforts to engage with African American identity politics and the history of racism in Voodoo-zombie cinema. The film is thus "a moment of history, torn away from the movement of history," a lieu de memoire where the memories of African heritage, American slavery, and Blaxploitation cinema coalesce. According to Ed Guerrero, Blaxploitation cinema connected the oppression and injustice of the antebellum past with that of the inner-city ghetto, celebrating "revolt, reversal, and revenge" in the relations between slave and master.\(^{424}\) Blaxploitation zombie films such as *Scream, Blacula, Scream* evoke the memories of a history that will not stay in its grave. As Guerrero puts it, "Like *Blacula*, Blaxploitation horror films are important sources for examining the evolution of Blackness in America and the social and historical conditions that affected and haunted that evolution during the Black power movement."\(^{425}\)

As a subgenre, Gothic Blaxploitation operates as a palimpsest of the films, folklore, and literature that came before, yet it articulates its own radical positionality as a departure from those texts by inscribing the films with deep philosophical and political purposes. However, it is important to recognize that despite what these films meant within the Black community, they were consumed by broader audiences, which is how the image of Blacula became an imago of Blaxploitation horror. As with *I Walked With a Zombie*, the subversive efforts of *Blacula's* filmmakers went largely unnoticed because, in part due to the nature of satire, the film still conformed to the studio's demands for Voodoo-zombie-miscegenation horror. The film thus stands as a lieu de memoire in both its content and its historicity.

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\(^{425}\) Ibid., 73.
Performing Undeath

The zombie is not an element of Afro-Caribbean folklore that has been appropriated and manipulated beyond recognition by white colonial apologists. Rather, it is a figure that emerged at a specific moment in history, and continued to re-emerge at specific historical moments in multiple and varied responses to the increasing autonomy of Black people in the United States. Even as dominant white voices obscured and overwrote memories of slavery contained within the lore, the figure of the zombie resiliently held on to its subversive roots, becoming a palimpsest of all its previous selves. In spite of efforts to expunge them, white authors and filmmakers could not shake the memories of race, rebellion, and revolution so embodied by the earliest known American zombie, Jean Zombi. While it's true that white filmmakers of the 1930s and 40s likely knew little to nothing of the Haitian Revolution or the nineteenth century genealogy of zombielore it spawned, their appropriation of Haiti's 'authentic monster' endowed the figure with even greater meaning as a postcolonial construct. And, as the example of *Scream, Blacula, Scream* demonstrates, Black filmmakers also appropriated and manipulated that palimpsestic zombie to make their own statements about the fixity of racial identity in an integrating society. Between the Gothic horror of Classical-era zombies and the Gothic horror of Blaxploitation zombies, then, the anxiety that whiteness is an unstable category of identity becomes the anxiety that neither is Blackness. That is, if the misgenetic fantasies of occupation-era zombielore express a latent concern that whiteness might be transformed or even destroyed by contact with Blackness, then 1970s Blaxploitation zombielore unsubtly articulates how contact with whiteness threatens African Americans.

The Voodoo zombie represents mutual threats that whiteness and Blackness pose to one another. The undeath of zombielore is not just an undeath of history, but an undeath of rigid
racial categories that refuse to die out. Metaphors of miscegenation in Voodoo zombie films from both white and Black U.S. filmmakers see aspects of multiracial interaction as contaminating, thereby unsettling race as a stable category of identity. Whether thinking of Mrs. Rand in *I Walked With a Zombie* or Prince Mamuwalde in *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, the character who allies with members of the Other race takes on a dual identity that ultimately brings pain and suffering to themselves and those around them. The doubling of identity is a literary trope often associated with the Gothic, so it makes sense that these examples of filmic zombielore draw so heavily on postcolonial Gothic precedents. In Gothic studies, the 'Gothic double' refers to the duality of a character, usually figured in terms of an internal polarity of good and evil, such as in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In my earlier discussions of the Gothic, I resisted the urge to reproduce prominent psychoanalytic interpretations of the zombie as a paradigm of the Other in opposition to the Self, primarily because I sought to privilege folkloric perspectives centering on postcolonialism and critical race theory. However, the reading of *Blacula* informed by critical race theory -- which sees Blacula as an exploration of African American identity politics in the 1970s -- provides occasion to consider Gothic doubling vis a vis racially charged zombielore. If we accept the premises of Jenkins and Medovoi, who argue that Blacula's torment symbolizes the anguish of the African American whose very identity implies an oxymoron, then the film's Gothic double is any person who must simultaneously be African *and* American, both yet neither. The hybridity of Blacula's identity is what makes him a monster; by extension, the argument goes, the hybrid identity of African Americans causes them inner torment. In psychoanalytic terms, the Self cannot distinguish the Other because the Self *is* the Other. The same premise, it turns out, undergirds Classical-era films such as *Black Moon, White Zombie*, and *I Walked With a Zombie*, all of which feature white characters who lose their
sense of self as they occupy and embrace the Otherness of Haitian life. Throughout the history of zombielore, the zombie's identity is always doubled, which is perhaps why zombielore has had such a strong affinity with the Gothic for so long. Zombies are by their very nature dualistic creatures that reconcile polarities of identity: they are dead but alive, supernatural but real, inautonomous but aggressive, mindless but rebellious, weak but threatening, asexual but rapacious, Haitian but American, past but present -- Black and white. The palimpsest of zombielore has known myriad authors, but could not exist as it does if those authors had not come from different racial backgrounds and disparate time periods.

Yet even Night of the Living Dead, the film that supposedly changed everything by removing Voodoo from the zombie genre, hinges on a Gothic doubling of identity. Night of the Living Dead cages the Black hero, Ben, inside a house where he must protect ignorant living white racists by defending the stronghold against cannibalistic dead white monsters. Ben's double oppression, then, also forms a version of double-consciousness. He must see himself as both victim and hero, past and future, African and American.426 protecting himself against the attacks of vicious white zombies, (which in the Gothic tradition we may read as the horrific history of slavery and white supremacy), means also protecting the living white people, at least one of them racist, (whose fragile egos symbolize the legacy of white guilt that led to abolition and integration). Read differently, Night of the Living Dead's Gothic double is not Ben but the film text itself, which both is and is not a zombie film, is and is not about race. I already mentioned that Romero originally referred to his creatures as ghouls, which would be more accurate in folkloristic terms since Voodoo zombies have never been cannibalistic. However, Romero was as quick to accept their designation as 'zombies' as he was to accept praise for the

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426 Cf. Jenkins, "Blacula and the Question of Blackness," 72.: "The problem with this struggle is that it presumes blacks can only be either African or American, but never both."
film's anti-racist message, which was never intended to be part of the film. The part of Ben was originally written for a white man, but when the white actor cast to play him dropped out unexpectedly he was replaced with the best actor available on short notice, who happened to be Black.\footnote{Jen Malkowski, film historian at Miami University, personal communication (Berkeley Pacific Film Archive, June 2008). It should be noted that Romero now denies casting Rudy Ricci before 'discovering' Duane Jones, claiming that while the role was written for Ricci both actors competed for the part. Ricci's and Jones's accounts conflict with this version of events. [Ben A. Hervey, \textit{Night of the Living Dead} (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).]} Duane Jones is also credited with rewriting the ending of the film wherein his character is shot by the white police officer, reportedly having told Romero that it was the only ending that wouldn't "read wrong racially."\footnote{Ibid., 113.} In other words, the film contained no semblance of racial commentary before the Black actor playing the protagonist intervened, much like what happened with \textit{Blacula} several years later. However, the impact of \textit{Night of the Living Dead} on zombie cinema, particularly in terms of race, cannot be denied. Despite the original intentionality of its filmmaker, then, the film is a Gothic double of itself.

Though the double identity of Ben's character seems to be at the center of \textit{Night of the Living Dead}, scholarly critics of the film are more likely to see it as a commentary on what Guerrero calls a "culturally dead whiteness."\footnote{Ed Guerrero, \textit{Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film} (Temple University Press, 1993), 57.} Alternatively, Slavoj Žižek argues that the film's opening scene, wherein two white characters drive by the cemetery and opt not to leave flowers on their mother's grave, marks the zombies' return as revenge against a culture that does not pay them proper respect in funerary rites. "Why do the dead return?" he asks, "\textit{Because they were not properly buried.}\footnote{Slavoj Žižek, \textit{Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture} (MIT Press, 1992), 23, emphasis Žižek's.}" As a metaphor, Žižek's 'improperly buried dead' might represent the memories of historic race relations that cannot be simply forgotten or put to rest. Though Americans try to move on from memories of their history that may be experienced as painful, shameful, or even
grotesque, the zombies embody dead horrors of the past risen up to torture the living, not unlike the way uneven power relations and the "psychic residue of slavery" continue to haunt race-relations in the present.\footnote{Guerrero, Framing Blackness, 1993, 57.} White Americans attempt to bury the history and legacy of slavery before paying it proper respect; there has been no "truth and reconciliation," no reparations, no significant atonement. More to the point, the memories of slavery held by African Americans are for the large part rejected, dismissed, or overshadowed by white memories in the U.S. mediascape. From Gone With the Wind to The Help, Hollywood consistently prefers films featuring "good" white protagonists during times of racial conflict over ones emphasizing the perspectives of people of color during the same time periods. When Black memories are emphasized, such as in Blacula, they are considered niche films and marketed primarily to Black audiences. Similarly, after Romero white Hollywood attempted to bury the Voodoo zombie before paying it proper respect, which is both why shades of earlier zombielore remain thematically in the films and why so many contemporary zombie fans are unfamiliar with the myriad zombie movies predating Night of the Living Dead. Yet Romero has always admitted being profoundly influenced by that earlier film history. Thus Žižek's gloss on the zombies' return also provides support for the idea that zombielore, even when not directly referencing Voodoo, operates as a palimpsest memoryscape.

This dissertation is split into sections on Authenticity and Memory, but the two concepts are indelibly linked throughout the history of zombielore in the United States. Ironically, the drive for authenticity that is also sensational leads to the reconstruction of memory that may or may not be authentic to history. Further, the separation of memory from history in Memory Studies leads us to consider whether memory is more authentic than history. History is recorded and reified as objective 'truth,' but clearly reflects the memories and/or perspectives of the dominant social class.
Memory is personal and intimate, but also subject to manipulation over time as it becomes exposed to competing memories and/or histories from other sources. Blacula the character and Blacula the films each strive for authenticity but get trapped in memory. Blacula can't get over Prince Mamuwalde, and the memories of his past ultimately destroy him; Scream, Blacula, Scream can't get over the memory of what zombies used to be, its memory of Classical Hollywood Voodoo zombies overshadowing its efforts to present a more authentic version of Vodou in U.S. cinema. On the other hand, Night of the Living Dead forthrightly plays with the memory of older zombie films in order to challenge it, disrupting the nature of the zombie figure and calling attention to the racism of Classical zombie films. This all begs the question, can memory ever be authentic? Can history?

Perhaps the better question is one that challenges the nature of authenticity. "Authentic to whom?" one might ask. The American zombie is and always has been a palimpsest, so the idea that there's any one 'authentic monster' -- in Haiti, in Africa, or even the U.S. -- ignores how the figure has been constructed not in any one of these places, but between them. The zombie is a hybrid monster, a being which has become what it is through the imbrication of geographically and temporally disparate folkloric traditions. The genealogies of performance described by Joseph Roach parallel the palimpsest memroyscale described by Rosalind Shaw; in both models, the cultural performance of zombielore layers and builds upon itself, mapping its own history even as it charts historic upheavals in the understanding of race vis a vis Haiti-U.S. relations. As Roach suggests, "circum-Atlantic performance acts out the anxiety-inducing boundaries between whiteness and blackness on the cusp of life and death."432 The anxiety of losing one's identity to another, whether as a literal slave or as a Voodoo zombie, underscores American zombielore as a

long-form meditation on the durability of racial categories in a post-slavery context. Memory thus becomes intimately attached to anxiety through the performance of American zombielore. Both white and Black memories of slavery and racial conflict permeate the memoriescape of zombielore, however, so no one version of the zombie can be said to be truer than any other. The zombie is always authentic.

**Conclusion**

In the last sentence of his book, Roach concludes that "memory challenges history in the construction of circum-Atlantic cultures, and it revises the yet unwritten epic of their fabulous cocreation." The genealogies of zombielore in Haiti and the U.S. are mutually constitutive and mutually destructive; they could not or would not exist without one another, yet close investigation of either one will inevitably undermine the presumed authenticity of the other. However, closely comparing multiple forms of zombielore side by side, as I have attempted to do, reveals a palimpsest in which every manifestation of the zombie contributes to its meaning as a monster-type. As Shaw's research suggests, discovering the memories contained and overwritten in this palimpsest has the effect of moving the zombie forward and backward in time. Undeath is not just a metaphor for how zombielore gets reanimated at certain intervals, receding into the background only to resurrect at moments of violent social and economic upheaval -- it is a metaphor for convoluted and overlapping memories of slavery that persist, despite concerted efforts to suppress them, and which threaten the very notion of identity. In this way, the undeath of the zombie is much more than the undeath of racism, the undeath of colonialism, or the undeath of history. It is the undeath of race itself.

433 Ibid., 286.
Bibliography


———. *No Hiding Place*. J.B. Lippincott, 1942.


