

The history of zombie in hollywood essay examples

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Thesis Statement

When one mentions the word, ‘ zombie,’ our minds rattle up the inconspicuous vision of rotten corpses snaking their way to transfixed, screaming and terrified victims. What one sees from the earlier Hollywood movies of the 30s and 40s to the early 21st century is a great transformation of the zombies from one being created to obey the orders of its creator to its creation from viruses and man-made environmental hazards. From the sluggish, disfigured and emancipated zombie to highly intelligent, quick and horrific zombies, the transformation of zombies Hollywood-style is conspicuous for all to see. Zombies would never have existed had it not been for W. B. Seabrook, who accidentally bumped into people who he believes practiced Voodoo. This paper looks at the history, the creation and representations of zombies through Hollywood movies.

Zombie in Hollywood

The concept or the ideology of introducing zombies to the west can be attributed to W. B. Seabrook, who in 1929, was so taken in by a certain cult

in Haiti that practiced voodoo, that he was instigated to write 'The Magic Island.' It is said that Bokors, Voodoo priests, practitioners of black magic, possessed the ability to resurrect the deceased through the administration of coup padre. (Keegan, www.filmn.ulf.edu). It is said that coup padre, a powder of deadly substance, is issued orally to "someone whom his or her family and community can no longer stand to live with and hires a Bokor to turn them into a zombie (e)" (Keegan, www.filmnh.ufl.edu). While many people believed in Black Magic and Necromancy, what Seabrook saw in Haiti was something extraordinary; it was the ceremonial effort to bring the dead back to life. Hollywood was quick to take advantage of this phenomenon and 'White Zombie' (1932) was released. The zombies depicted in this movie were controlled and programmed to disintegrate their victim(s). However, the portrayal of the zombies in this movie was far from what Hollywood had in store for its audience in the years to come.

The 'White Zombie' was a precedent for a series of zombie movies later on, most prominent among them being 'The Revolt of the Zombies' in 1936. The eerie zombies were back to haunt the living again, but this time, the zombies were far more vicious and intelligent. They couldn't be killed (if it could be called that!) and they roamed freely looking for living flesh to live on. The appearance of these mean-looking dilapidated figures was ghastly and they looked extremely realistic.

The zombie movies of the 30s and 40s generally portrayed the Haitian folklore of the 'victim' being created to act on the orders of someone. Other movies that followed this pattern was 'I walked with a Zombie' (1943) and 'The Voodoo Man,' (1944). Gradually, the zombies started going global like '

Zombies on Broadway' (1945). " While some of the earlier films reinforced the idea that zombies were, in fact, the reanimated dead, some films portrayed zombies as being the products of a sort of malevolent hypnosis" (njzombiewalk. com).

Over the years Hollywood has taken the zombie-effect to unimaginable heights. No report on zombies is complete without the mention of Romero. It was he who actually drafted the zombie theory to Hollywood and ended up being one of its most successful contributors. On closer dissection of his movies, one sees how he was able to influence the thought process of people on zombies. A strong point to distinguish zombies before Romero and after Romero was that those before him were zombies created out of witchcraft (Haiti) and supernatural forces, while those after Romero came from scientific fallouts (Chester, 2010).

In ' Day of the Dead,' (2008) for example, it is a virus outbreak that creates zombies. The zombies in this movie are fast, intelligent and extremely volatile. They not only brutally kill their victims, but their bite also turns those killed by them into zombies. This is clearly reflected in Mrs. Leitner's (Christa Campbell) own words when she says, " they're sick! don't want to turn into one of them." (Day of the Dead, 2008)

Conclusion

Right from the early 30s, Hollywood has been at the forefront of bringing to life the illusive and dreaded zombies on screen. Movies such as ' The White Zombie,' ' Zombie 2,' ' Dawn of the Dead,' ' Re-Animator,' ' Resident Evil,' ' Zombieland,' and ' ParaNorman,' to name a few, show the different faces

and sides of zombies. Right from 'White Zombie,' to the more recent movies like 'Resident Evil' and 'ParaNorman,' zombies have been portrayed as evil, sinister and barbaric. Yet, from those created to serve one's purpose to those born out of scientific fallouts, zombies have always remained a messiah of fear. From the deep jungles of Haiti to the realms of western boardrooms and bedrooms, zombies have been portrayed in different forms. Some, you could say take the form of seductresses with evil designs, and those more popular; ghastly and rotting, out to tear flesh and limb and enlarge their community.

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