

Zombies in Modern Culture

by John Gallagher

The zombie myth has been making an increasing appearance in film, drama and literature since the late 1960s. In 1968 George Romero's classic *Night of the Living Dead* was released and achieved international success and the zombie genre has since grown to become a cultural phenomenon. The significance of this cannot be ignored and it is the writer's opinion that the collective unconscious is attempting to compensate the one-sidedness of modern life through the medium of film, drama and literature and bring into cultural consciousness the adverse effects of materialism.

The rise of zombie movies and dramas correlates with the rise of secularism and consumerism. Zombies are the living dead and represent loss of soul in modern secular culture. Modern secular people have lost their connection with their soul and their higher Self. Zombies are spiritually dead people. Zombie hordes are mindless automatons roaming through shopping malls. They represent the mass mindedness of modern people in a consumerist and capitalist culture.

Zombies are like sleepwalkers and represent the unconsciousness of modern people. They are asleep dreaming they are awake. People think they are free but they are imprisoned by capitalist and materialist conditioning, brainwashing and advertising. If I buy this product I will be happy. Enslaved by capitalism. They are hedonist machines programmed to conform, produce and consume.

The zombie contagion is a metaphor for greed. Greed is contagious in a capitalist culture driven by consumerism. The zombies' hunger is insatiable. This represents consumerism in a culture where humans are spiritually malnourished and compensate with the acquisition of goods and short-lived pleasures which serve as distractions from their meaningless existence.

Modern people have lost their soul identity and have become attached to their transient physical persona. They are obsessed with creature comforts and worldly achievement: get a job, buy a house, reproduce, acquire material possessions, accumulate wealth and then retire. They have no conception of karma, reincarnation and the development of the soul to attain moksha.

In the movie *I Am Legend* Robert Neville's blood contains the antidote for the zombie contagion. Robert Neville (Will Smith) represents self-sacrifice and compassion which is the antidote to selfishness and greed represented by the zombie plague. This is a Christlike sacrifice where love overcomes evil. Selflessness, self-sacrifice and compassion for others is the way to salvation and liberation.

John Gallagher © 2020

johngallagher.online

strath.academia.edu/JohnGallagher