2. I am Dead, Yet I Live – The Zombie's Gluttonous Craving for the Living

> The teeth! – the teeth – they were here, and there and every where, and visibly and palpably before me.
> *Edgar Allan Poe, "Berenice"*

> The only modern myth is the myth of zombies.
> *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

While myths, or rather the idea of mythmaking, is deeply woven into the fabric of American optimism, most of these myths (such as the myth of discovery or the myth of the American West) also seem to concern themselves with a past that haunts the present; these myths are deeply ingrained in American culture and they have, in some form or other, already taken place; to that end, they write the American fantasy as reminiscence, rather than current observance. In "Walking", American philosopher Henry David Thoreau comments upon the myth's inspirational quality, stating that: "Perchance, when, in the course of ages, American liberty has become a fiction of the past, – as it is to some extent a fiction of the present, – the poets of the world will be inspired by American mythology". Picking up on this notion in *The Myths that Made America*, Heike Paul further asserts that myths are: "popular and powerful narratives […] which have turned out to be anchors and key references in discourses of 'Americanness,' past and present" (11). If mythmaking, therefore, can be isolated as an inherently American trait that employs a fabrication of a present imaginary by means of a past imaginary, then Deleuze and Guattari are quite right in stating that what remains contemporary is indeed the myth of the zombie and the myth of the zombie can be read as central to the American project. It does so in particular with regard to the negative connotations that it brings to the fore and in its close entanglement with death which marks the ugly flipside of America's optimistic mythmaking tendencies. These are linked to the quest for a promising new future more gener-

ally. If the myth of the zombie is truly the myth of modernity, then it must also be instrumental in fabricating the current American cultural imaginary.

Considering these assertions by Paul and by Deleuze and Guattari, it could be stated that it is the zombie myth that still makes America today. Toby Venables picks up on this when he states that: "[o]ne of [the zombie's] defining characteristics […] is that it is a distinctly modern creation: urban, consumerist, cinematic, American – the ultimate materialist monster" (208). As such, the myth of the zombie appears to isolate the governing notion of gluttonous insatiability on the one hand and centers on the dead body, rather than the living, on the other hand. The previous chapter discussed the literary depiction of death within the genre of the gothic, outlining the way in which the contemporary American gothic in particular employs the paradoxical productivity that language obtains when faced with death. This was exemplified by means of the *death paradox*, building upon Foucault's mirror trope in which:

> […] headed towards death, language turns back upon itself; it encounters something like a mirror; and to stop this death which would stop it, it possesses but a single power – that of giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limits. (90)

The mode of the American gothic crafts a plethora of images of the deceased and has come to offer a fruitful depiction for an aestheticized death, in which text has the capability of becoming serially productive to the point of overwriting the deceased as a means to eliminate death completely, thereby reinstating the corpse as non-corpse, as living.[1] Moving away from this purely elusive, utopic depiction of the corpse, as opposed to its abject reality, this chapter is concerned with the more physical manifestation of death in the form of the image of the zombie. In the previous chapter, it has been outlined that the mode of the American gothic has the capability to textually devour the corpse by distancing itself from the corpse and by elevating it to the level of classical art, perhaps even to the point of outright mythologizing. This is to say that the corpse itself ceases to be and is, instead, reinstated as living by means of producing text about the corpse. While the American gothic employs texts that metaphorically devours the dead, to the point of resurrection even in the case of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, the zombie conversely becomes the literal manifestation of death that is hungry for life. The figure of the zombie, then, spins the previously outlined *death paradox* in a new direction, thereby giving rise to a more physical and graspable form of the deceased, adding an additional layer to this discussion about the American imaginary's seeming hunger for death.

The zombie, by definition, is "an antisubject, and the zombie horde is a swarm where no trace of individuality remains" (89) as Lauro and Embry's *A Zombie Mani-*

1 See chapter 1 for an in-depth discussion of the way in which the serialization of death progresses towards a reinstatement of the living that is navigated through gothic discourse.

festo states. As well as identifying the traditional zombie as antisubject, Lauro and Embry also make a claim for the figure being riddled with exclusively negative connotations. The zombie body, which is ambiguous at best, eludes categorization; it is located in a liminal position between life and death, it is *undead*, and therefore is neither human nor corpse and "has completely lost its mind, becoming a blank – animate but wholly devoid of consciousness" (Lauro & Embry, 89). The traditional zombie, then, is a subject-less half-being that is *un*dead and, yet, is still animate and in this liminal position rejects classification as either subject or object: "the zombie's irreconcilable body (both living and dead) raises the insufficiency of the dialectical model (subject/object) and suggests […] to become antisubject" (Lauro & Embry, 87). In "Gothic Wars – Media's Lust: On the Cultural Afterlife of the War Dead", Elisabeth Bronfen outlines the intricacies of the irreconcilable zombie body stating that:

> The monstrous body of the zombie, poised in an interzone between life and death, embodies […] an epistemological crisis regarding our intellectual ability to distinguish between the animate and the inanimate, the absent and the present body, human and non-human. (27)

Expanding on this aspect, Bronfen concludes that the zombie "bring[s] us face to face with the limits of our human understanding of a world in which binary oppositions no longer hold" (27). It is within this dynamism of irreconcilability, and the refusal for final categorization, that the zombie body echoes the *death paradox* and becomes both interpretable in manifold ways and textually productive.

Inspired by Barbara Johnson's "My Monster, My Self", which reflects on the potential irreconcilable monstrousness in and of selfhood, Olney expands this dynamic to the zombie in "Our Zombies, Ourselves" by referencing the plethora of recent texts, found throughout popular culture, all of which implement the subject-less undead:

> The living dead have been lurking in media and popular culture since the 1930s, but they have never been as ubiquitous or as widely embraced as they are today. […] Movie screens teem with zombies of all kinds: fast zombies and slow zombies, flesh-eating zombies and brain-eating zombies, plague zombies and rage zombies, voodoo zombies and demonic zombies, redneck zombies and Nazi zombies, sex zombies and pet zombies. (1)

While this illustrates the zombie figure's versatility on a formal level, and further outlines the zombie's overt capability to both transgress and bridge manifold genres in its ubiquitous contemporary presence, the zombie narrative itself is traditionally geared towards the non-zombie or subject. We commonly find the living at the centre of the versatile-in-form zombie narrative or myth, while the zombie is constructed as the dangerous (yet narratologically peripheral) other. Within its own narrative, the zombie lacks a voice, or in the words of James B. Twitchell in *Dreadful*

Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror: "The zombie myth seems flawed by its lack of complexity […] the zombie is really a mummy in street clothes with no love life and a big appetite. Both are automatons; neither is cunning nor heroic" (261). While this may draw a simplistic vision of one-dimensionality, it can hardly be denied that the zombie as character and voice oftentimes remains peripheral, even where it lends its name to a given narrative; its only palpable character trait is its insatiability. The zombie body's one-dimensionality, however, also renders it manifold interpretable, as: "[…] for the durability of zombie texts lies precisely in their 'blankness' which permits a variety of rather different narrative concerns to find them a workable vehicle […]" (Hubner, Leaning, & Manning, 7). In this sense, the zombie body is implemented in the narrative as pure canvas, "in which the 'blank' text can be inscribed with meanings that resonate" (Ibid, 9); its only purpose is to act as a sounding board for the living. The zombie's lack of depth, which is crafted as hollow, may be interpreted as a surface space for the anxieties of the living, thereby becoming a metaphor for a plethora of different fears: "the zombie has come to perform a vast range of allegorical functions, its meanings […] diverse […]" (Cussans, i). Ultimately, its body serves a merely narratological function that allows for the voice of the living to speak and act, rather than the voice of the undead. While there remains a rudimentary idea of what a zombie is, in spite of the manifold narratives which individually reinterpret its body, arguably contributing to its stance as a myth, Austin isolates "two key factors that define the zombie, whatever the cultural text – the uncontrolled body and the negation of borders" (175). The zombie itself becomes a mere nuisance for the non-zombie, whose voice may be interrupted by the zombie but remains steadfast in telling their story, thereby lending the aforementioned "uncontrolled", and seemingly empty, body as a vessel to the stories of the living, even within its own narrative. The zombie lacks a voice, and deliberate agency by extension, and is largely characterized by one single trait: its incessant and uncontrolled hunger for human flesh.

The zombie's paradoxical body, as a moving corpse, has often been quoted as lying within the realm of the previously employed Freudian concept of "The Uncanny", due to its proximity to death:

> Many people experience the [the uncanny] in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts. […] There is scarcely any other matter, however, upon which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as our relation to death. (241–242)

It is, however, the subjective corpse as an animate undead body with an agency that explicitly hinges on the familiar, which has become alienated, in the case of the zombie: "[…] this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is fa-

miliar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated" (241). Freud bases his elaborations on the uncanniness of the *un*dead in terms of the specific return of the dead. This can be brought into context by employing the notorious catchphrase, coined by George A. Romero, that: "When there is no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth" in *Dawn of the Dead*. This points to the liminal nature that the zombie body acquires. Not only are the dead present on earth, rather than six feet under as they traditionally have, these dead are also walking. Zombies pose a form of animate agency that has been reduced to a term infused with ambivalence, *un*dead in spite of their status as dead. The zombie body's ambivalence can be placed within a causal progression that teases out why it remains a site of uncertainty: Not only is there an uncanny uncertainty with regard to the state of life or death inscribed into the zombie body, but this notion of uncertainty also leads to a lack of subjectivity. The zombie body, essentially "[…] sits on the cusp of death […]" (Davis, 57–58) which results in its dichotomous, if not completely ambiguous, existence. As Austin states: "[b]y refusing a final categorisation (a dead body in a defined space for dead bodies) […]) (177) zombies cannot be clearly defined as either living or deceased and, hence, cannot be defined as subject. The lack of subjectivity can then further be tied to a lack of language, something which remains prominent in the traditional zombie narrative; lacking subjectivity, the zombie body does not require language, given that it does not seek to communicate (yet); riddled with ambiguity, the consolidation of the zombie body mainly results in the lack of a clear-cut definition, feeding into its mythmaking capabilities. In order to analyze the zombie narrative, then, it becomes crucial to define the zombie body beyond the notion of "the ultimate foreign Other" (Bishop in Olney, 8) which still remains ambiguous and defies precise categorization for this exact reason.

First of all, the zombie is a revenant of the dead that is clearly marked as corpse, hence its obvious ties to the Freudian uncanny. As a continuation of the Foucauldian mirror image, in which language reflects back on itself when faced with death, the French philosopher's essay "Of Other Spaces" lends a further lens to this analysis. While the text is mainly concerned with the liminality of spaces, its main *denkfigur* proves useful with regard to the zombie body. Elaborating on real and unreal spaces, as well as what is left in between, Foucault again brings the metaphor of the mirror into play in "Of Other Spaces"; this becomes illustrative of both unreal spaces (utopias) as well as real spaces, which are paradoxically utopic and juxtapose with the regular *topos*:

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent; such is the utopia of the mirror. (24)

As a utopia, the mirror imitates reflections within the reflective glass's unreal spatiality. Having outlined the mirror's position as a utopic space, Foucault goes on to state that the mirror also simultaneously works as a real, tangible place, given that "the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy" (24), a quality which also renders it a heterotopia; it becomes simultaneously real and unreal. This notion of ambiguity and doubledness can then be traced in the zombie's body, which "[…] cannot be understood as either 'alive' or 'dead': it is in transition and it is this which has the powerful and disturbing effect upon us" (Hubner, Leaning, & Manning, 6); its liminality becomes the source of its paradoxical body which seems to resist a precise definition. Returning to the previous chapter, the gothic corpse (like the zombie body) harbors a utopic quality. Like utopias, which "are fundamentally unreal places" (Foucault, 24) and are imaginary sites with no corresponding place in reality, "[t]hey are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society" (Foucault, 24). The corpse, within the diegesis of the gothic tale, becomes a utopic body; death is pushed into the supernatural realm and the corpse becomes an unreal, unconsciousness meandering which results in the superimposition of a fantasy of eternal life.

A reconceptualization and approximation of the gothic corpse can be traced within the zombie body. In this sense, an undead body comes to operate as a form of counter-site to both the living as well as the dead body. When read alongside Foucault's elaborations, the zombie body can be constructed as a heterotopic body, similarly to the previously outlined utopic mirror, which functions as a heterotopia in this instance that "makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal" (24). Being simultaneously animate as well as inanimate, real and unreal, the zombie body's undead state takes on heterotopic features. In his text, Foucault isolates *heterotopias* as:

> […] real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (24)

The zombie body comes to echo what Foucault attributes to the heterotopic site and hinges on its previously outlined irreconcilability. It is constructed as a graspable, living real within the diegesis while also being simultaneously deceased in the manner of these contesting "enacted" utopias (non-places). Olney picks up on this notion when he asserts that the zombie body "functions like a funhouse mirror" (11), which

comes to be "a kind of living death: insatiably rapacious and perversely enduring" (11). Contextualized with Foucault's mirror tropes, the zombie body poses a twofold paradox; on the level of form, it becomes a manifestation of language attempting to grasp the corpse that it cannot properly grasp. Upon this linguistic stagnation, it comes to produce an aestheticized image of death. Secondly, the zombie body is rendered a heterotopic body within the diegesis, a site of negotiation precisely because it is textually fabricated by this "mirror of death", thereby superimposing an imagination of death onto the abject corpse. Neither entirely real nor entirely unreal, it becomes a marker of both and hence a site of contestation that refuses categorization. However, throughout its manifold narratives, the zombie body has been marked with one specific character trait that seems to remain stable in every representation; its insatiability or, as defined by Olney, "a monster driven and destroyed by its appetite" (13). The zombie body, therefore, can be seen as developing from the uncanny, but becomes more than that; the zombie body takes on a dichotomous position between life and death and becomes a counter-site for both and can, therefore, be read as heterotopic in terms of its singular desire within its aimless antisubjectivity (typified by its incessant insatiability).

George A. Romero's zombies, as the traditional zombie body, are seminal in the exploration of the zombie narrative and will be the focus of this chapter. They will be read against a contemporary reconceptualization of the zombie as subject in *The CW*'s contemporary television series *iZombie*. This chapter is specifically concerned with the zombie body as trope, metaphor, and text, rather than lending its gaze to the survival and reestablishment of institutions by the living, a dynamic which is otherwise prevalent in the zombie narrative. If, according to Davis, "[t]he existence of zombies is but a confirmation of a fundamental conviction that the dead wield power in the world of the living…" (57–58), then the prominence which the zombie body obtains in contemporary culture becomes a signifier for the overt presence of death; its heterotopic body not only comes to "[…] mark the rebellion of death against its capitalist appropriation" (Shaviro, 8), but also signifies the insatiability not only of the zombie body, but also of its voyeur. As Bronfen contends in "Gothic Wars," "'[c]ompelled' is an apt description of the mutual implication of zombies, consuming living body tissue, and people consuming images of this consumption" (26). An ever-compelling figuration of the living corpse, the prominence of the zombie myth in American culture can be aligned with a diagnosis of death as the disease of its (cruel) optimism; the incessant hunger for the dead has become a trope for a seemingly inherent repetition compulsion that not only repeats an aestheticized death, but also actively transforms it. Tracing the zombie body, from its Romerean beginnings to contemporary television, then, will also shine a light on its evolution from antisubject to (almost) subject, tracing how its evolution has come to endow the heterotopic zombie body with a distinct voice.

2.1 Romero's Zombies: *Dawn of the Dead, Land of the Dead*

> "You are what you eat"
> *Proverb*
>
> They consume an extraordinary amount of bacon. Ham and beefsteaks appear morning, noon, and night.
> *Frances Milton Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans*

The idiom "you are what you eat" finds its epistemological roots in the German expression 'Mann ist was Mann isst' which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary of Proverbs*, translates to 'man is what man eats'. It involves either being or becoming that which one devours. The dictionary further states that "the saying is sometimes attributed to the French gastronome Anthelme Brillat-Savarin who wrote in his Physiologie du Goût (1825): "Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es" [meaning "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are"]. There is a physiological argument to be made in aligning the consumption of food with the formation of the self. However, proposing that one becomes what one eats proves difficult, if not outright paradoxical, with regard to the traditional figure of the zombie. If one becomes what one eats, then a notion of subjectivity is presupposed in the eating party. As has been outlined, however, the zombie body is marked, if not totally defined, by antisubjectivity; its only manifestable trait is its incessant hunger. Consolidating this notion with the idea of becoming what one eats, the zombie appears to be stuck in the formation of the self, which is to say it remains within the transgressive action of eating, rather than actually being able to actually become what it eats (i.e., to become a definite, living entity). While the quest for the zombie's subjectivity is inherently tied to its food consumption, it does not seem to ever be able to transgress into the realm of the living. Taking Foucault's elaborations on heterotopic spaces into consideration once again, this entrapment within a singular activity comes to be a presupposition of the zombie body, read as a heterotopia, which "are absolutely temporal […] indefinitely accumulating time" (26).

Simultaneously trapped within its sole agency, while also being defined thereby, the zombie cannot transgress its own heterotopic quality, endlessly contesting both the living and the dead. It is no surprise, then, that the zombie body is exclusively characterized by hunger; its hunger is clearly directed towards the living, that is what it instinctively wants to become. However, its lack of subjectivity renders its quest for selfhood an impossibility. At the peak of its evolution, as this chapter intends to show, the zombie body as subject remains a mere imitation of the living,

one unable to transgress into the *topos* of the living. It is this notion of transgressive entrapment which also renders its body so difficult to grasp; zombies are typified by an indefinability which caters to its narratological productivity and, by extension, mythmaking capabilities. Elusive by nature, the heterotopic body of the zombie exponentially generates narrative.

Oftentimes considered to be the father of the Western zombie myth, George R. Romero has made a number of films that have written the zombie body deeply into the fabric of the American cultural imaginary. According to McIntosh:

> [t]he seminal work that forever transformed how zombies are portrayed is, of course, Romero's *Night of The Living Dead*. […] Romero's original presentation of zombies […] breathed new life into zombies. (8)

It seems that the zombie narrative has largely been shaped by Romero's films; there is a plethora of voices that have identified Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* as the cornerstone of the contemporary zombie, given that "[h]is pivotal 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* is retrospectively considered to be the forerunner of all modern zombie films […]" (Austin, 179). It is Romero who extracted the zombie figure from its spiritual roots in Haitian voodoo and "essentially conflated the zombie with the ghoul, a cannibalistic monster type […]" (McIntosh, 8). It is also Romero who characterized the zombie as incessantly hungry: "Romero […] invested his zombies not with a function (…) but rather a drive (eating flesh)" (Dendle, 6). While the zombie's flesh-eating drive is deeply ingrained in the zombie narrative, the zombie image which Romero has crafted with these films is not entirely stable, but rather remains in constant development; the films not only mark a (serial) progression, during which the world is slowly overtaken by the zombie, but also a progression which peaks in the proverbial *Land of the Dead*; these films mark an evolution of the zombie body itself which seems to develop towards subjectivity. This notion is reflected in the corresponding titles of these films; the 1968 *Night (of the Living Dead)* developed into the more apocalyptic 1978 *Dawn (of the Dead)* in which the "living" was eliminated from the title. *Dawn of the Dead* has further been remade and reshaped in 2004 as a prequel to the 2005 film *Land of the Dead* in which the titular land hints at a loss of land for the living in which the living are othered, given that the land belongs to the dead; Romero ends his series and evolution of the zombie body with *Diary of the Dead* in 2007, which then proposes a form of textual capitulation of the living who are no longer telling their tales; these seem to exclusively have become those of the dead. Having been an instrumental figure in fabricating the American myth of the zombie:

> Romero is at once the pornographer, the anthropologist, the allegorist, and the radical critic of contemporary American culture. He gleefully uncovers the hidden structures of our society in the course of charting the progress of its disintegration. (Shaviro, 7)

He does so by not only mirroring the living body with the zombie body, but also by crafting the zombie body as a heterotopic site which comes to contest the norm as a counter-site, always in the process of transgression, which therefore exposes an intricate part of the American myth itself; namely, its seeming insatiability not just for life, but also for death.

The original 1978 *Dawn of the Dead* opens with protagonist Francine asleep, haunted by a nightmare, with the titular letters sprawled over this opening image:

Illustration 6: Francine wakes up, Dawn of the Dead

A spatially ambiguous mise-en-scene, Francine is jerked awake a by an unnamed coworker stating "you alright? Shit is really hitting the fan" in what is then revealed to be the floor of studio of a news station reporting on the crisis of the zombie body that has come to haunt the living. Francine awakens to a reality in which the dead are roaming the earth; the viewer is simultaneously positioned in medias res. While this opening sequence alludes to the conclusion of the previous and proverbial awakening from a *Night of the Living Dead*, it also becomes a fitting metaphor with regard to the previously discussed ending of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, which isolates the entire narrative of death as a dream within the mode of the American Gothic. In line with the zombie body's tangibility and physicality, the gothic mode is overtaken by a tangible manifestation of the corpse which actively comes to haunt the living. In this sense, we are waking from a gothic dream of overwriting the deceased to a more palpable and gruesome reality in which the undead are no longer condemnded to the unconscious. Within this progression of the zombie narrative, *Dawn of the Dead*

places its viewer within an imaginary in which the zombie body has ingrained itself deeply into the living; while its body may remain an anomaly, its presence no longer is. Being overtly present in this reality, it is scientific authority, in the form of the voice of a doctor at the news station, who addresses the American public with information about the zombie body and who solidifies hunger as its main and only motivation: "They kill for one reason. They kill for food [...] that's what keeps them going". This dynamic then teases out the prominent entanglement of food and death within the American cultural imaginary. It is not just that the zombie body is hungry, it is that it becomes a murderous agency in order to satisfy this insatiable desire. However, its greed for consumption is also rendered paradoxical; while food traditionally nourishes and reinstates life, the zombie, per definition, cannot be categorized as living, which links back to its entrapment within transgression.

As the narrative progresses, during which a few survivors find shelter in an abandoned shopping mall, it is once again the voice of authority, implemented in the film as a self-reflection in the form of a mise-en-abyme, who informs both the protagonists as well as the viewer that: "The creatures function on a subconscious instinctive level", concluding the voice-over of the news station which accompanies images of zombies greedily devouring intestines, their hands and faces crimson with blood. This portrayal reinstates the zombie's lack of intentionality while simultaneously isolating the zombie body as active with regards to its singular desire for consumption. A satirical comment on American consumer culture, this notion is later reflected in the (sudden and ironic) tape that plays at the shopping mall that states: "Attention all shoppers, if you have a sweet tooth we have a treat for you". Elaborating further on the specifics of the zombie body's hunger, the disembodied newscaster voice-over by Dr. Rausch, a voice of science and authority, adds an additional layer to the definition of the suddenly graspable zombie body:

> The normal question, the first question is always: are these cannibals? No, they are not cannibals. Cannibalism in the true sense of the word implies an interspecies activity. These creatures cannot be considered human. They prey on us. They do not prey on each other. That's the difference. They attack and feed only on warm human flesh. Intelligence? Seemingly little or no reasoning power. What basic skills remain are more remembered [sic] from human life.

Scientific authority, in this instance, informs the American public of two things: firstly, that the zombie body is clearly marked as non-human and, therefore, can be pushed towards antisubjectivity and, secondly, that the focus lies on the zombie body remaining aimless in its guiding quest for human flesh, in which any debris of humanity is only a remnant of a former life; put otherwise, its murderous hunt is not conducted consciously. Dr. Rausch reaches the same conclusion by reducing the zombie body to pure need: "[...] These creatures are nothing but pure, motorized instinct". The zombie body's animated state is also ridiculed by means of dehuman-

izing the zombie body. This is to say that the image that is presented to the masses is that of an aimless animate corpse, a non-person that has only one motivation which it pursues mindlessly, namely its hunger for human flesh. While its reasoning powers are ridiculed, it is also crafted as a serious source of danger for the living; this is a duality that results in trivializing the ultimate death of the zombie.

McIntosh reminds us that: "Romero also popularized the notion that zombies could only truly be killed by a blow or shot to the head or other such head injury that severed the brain core […]" (9). Part of the zombie's ambiguous state is also that it always has to find a violent final death. Its transgressive and heterotopic state requires a second death that needs to be actively cemented. This notion of murder is then further trivialized because, as McIntosh elaborates, "[since] zombies evolved in the popular cultural imagination the way they did, they symbolize a monster that can be killed guilt-free" (13). For the living, killing the already deceased and cementing their death turns into a sport, a form of spectacle and, hence, into a desire to overkill the zombie body. As an antisubjective entity stripped of all humanity, the zombie body asks for a stronger and more intense notion of death than the living body would, an act of overkilling which can be conducted free of mercy as: "[…] the modern conception of zombies has [endowed] him with simply a physical or biological drive or craving to kill or eat humans, [which is why] it becomes essentially a no-brainer – zombies are evil, and we are good" (McIntosh, 13). The resulting disrespect for a dignified zombie body becomes prevalent in a carnivalesque scene in *Dawn of the Dead*, during which a surviving motorcycle gang wreaks havoc on the shopping mall and, as an act of purging jouissance, begin to throw pies in the zombie's faces, disrespecting the dead body that comes back.

Illustration 7: Carnivalesque zombies, Dawn of the Dead

The implementation of the zombie body, as a source of the grotesque, illustrates that the corpse as revenant, then, is no longer elevated to a state of classical art[2]; it is reduced to a purely non-human entity which, at best, is turned into spectacle, because it is out of place and is, therefore, detested, ridiculed, and killed "guilt-free". As such, it explicitly becomes a counter-site for the living as "[t]he zombie body offers a space for a rejection or inversion of social values, echoing Bakhtinian notions of the grotesque and carnivalesque" (Austin, 181). This notion of spectacle is developed even further in the subsequent *Land of the Dead,* in which the zombie body has become institutionalized as the carnivalesque, the living making an economy out of their ridicule. In the beginning of the film, the disillusioned rogue hero Denbo visits what could be termed an underground funhouse. Within this circus-like space, in which the norm is contested, the zombie body is clearly marked as stable; it is implemented within this liminality as a non-person and is turned into a spectacle. For instance, there is the opportunity to: "Take your picture with a zombie" or the possibility of shooting paintballs at a target which is a zombie's chained body. The funhouse offers stripping women as well as zombie fights in which the living have the opportunity to bet on the winning zombie. Within this carnivalesque space, the trapped zombie body is commodified and stripped of all of the potential dignity of its (former) self. Instating the zombie body as a source of ridicule and objectification, *Land of the Dead* actively dehumanizes the zombie body only to invert this notion later by proposing a transgressive zombie body the alignment of which shifts closer to the living, rather than to the deceased.

While the zombie body remains aimless and anonymous within its horde throughout Romero's oeuvre, the pivotal *Land of the Dead* proposes a more developed zombie body, one that has peaked in terms of its limited evolutionary possibilities. A previous lack of intentionality and aimlessness is rewritten and sharpened in *Land of the Dead,* which also hints at the zombie narrative's exponential progression. This dynamic is present from the beginning of the film, as the opening lines that follow the credits have a character, Mike, stating that "they're trying to be us". To this, the narrative's disillusioned hero, Riley Denbo, answers: "They used to be us. They're learning how to be us again", aligning the zombie body with the human body. These lines consolidate the opening sequence, which is illustrative of a developing zombie body; most notably, the picture rests upon a trio of performing zombies, former members of a band fiddling with their instruments. While Denbo's observation hints at the zombie body imitating the living body, there is an additional layer of haunting that is ingrained in the zombies of the *Land of the Dead*. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the debris of their past, living lives, remained purely on the surface. In *Land of the Dead*, they are not only "trying to be us", the living, they also seem to

2 See chapter 1 for an in-depth discussion of the way in which the American gothic aestheticizes the corpse by endowing it with artistic grandeur.

perform actions which harken back to their previous lives. Most notably, this notion is rooted in the performativity of the zombie body of "Big Daddy", the nametag on his uniform informing us of his former name, who will come to be a differentiated individual within the anonymous horde throughout the course of the film. Judging by his attire, a former gas station attendant, Big Daddy's distinguishability serves as a synecdoche of the zombie's evolution over time and throughout the film. His affinity for fire, harking back to his living days, becomes a metaphor for the purging quality that he both performs and desires. No longer is the zombie's individuality exclusively reduced to the external appearance and the debris that is left written on that heterotopic body. In *Land of the Dead*, it is also previous "living" behavior that begins to be performed by the zombie body. Part of this fragmented reinstating of individuality involves not only the crafting of a distinct form of selfhood, but also the acquisition of a rudimentary language. As his gaze keeps following the zombie's developing behavior, Denbo worrisomely adds that: "They're communicating, they're thinking, there's something going on". This progression can be read alongside a recent development towards a more differentiated form of zombie, which is no longer exclusively riddled with negative connotations. As Bishop observes: "As the twenty-first century zombie narrative continues to develop and change, it increasingly challenges the customary definition of 'monster', often exploring the potential benefits of *being* a zombie" (26). *Land of the Dead*'s Big Daddy remains seminal in this contemporary development, arguably the first zombie body who started to exhibit human features.

Even as early as in the beginning of the narrative, Big Daddy is framed as a more differentiated zombie identity who is no longer exclusively ruled by their hunger. When a horde of zombies, among whom wanders Big Daddy, is attacked by the living, he quite markedly exhibits anger at the loss of his fellow kind; this is sharpened further when he kills a fellow zombie who has been badly injured in a humane act to end their suffering. After this mercy killing, Big Daddy turns to the sky and lets out an excruciating cry clearly marked as anger at the loss of his fellow zombie. This aspect is lent further significance in a subsequent sequence during which Big Daddy assumes leadership of a zombie horde and, with purpose, begins to guide them towards an illuminated skyscraper towards which he sees the living drive. The fact that he performs a form of anger which develops into determination to follow his attackers, however rudimentary, illustrates the evolution of the zombie body in *Land of the Dead*; this is a zombie body that is no longer trapped within the limitation of its hunger, but which begins to exhibit other desires and which also obtains differentiation in so doing. This dynamic is further mirrored in the living "us" that have been aligned with the zombie body since the beginning of the narrative; it seems that while the zombie's individuality becomes more pronounced, it is, in turn, the living's individuality that begins to lack relevance. "Everyone's got their story and I am sick of hearing them" Denbo tells Slack upon meeting her for the first time. Sickened by

the apocalyptic state in which he lives, he is no longer interested in the living's narratives; while the zombie becomes more distinguishable, the living body is pushed towards a heterogeneous anonymity.

The zombie body's metamorphosis towards subjectivity is specifically emphasized in a scene during which there is a form of baptizing ritual performed by the zombie body. Not only has he assembled a horde and become their leading figure, while still showing clear intent for vengeance (the wish to attack and overtake what is left of the human base in this land of the dead in specific), Big Daddy also marches his followers towards the remaining urban space which is populated by the living. Separated by water, which reflects the targeted skyscraper as a clear marker for capitalist determination, we find the notion of imitation written into the scene. While the skyscraper is real, its reflection is a mere imitation. In the same manner, the dead, at this point, however similar they come to look and even behave, remain a mere imitation of the living. During a moment filled with ambiguity, Big Daddy gazes back and forth between the real skyscraper and its reflection. While the scene is undefined with regard to Big Daddy's intentionality, there is a sense of thought process awarded to Big Daddy's subsequent jump into the water; the zombie body's intention is not marked as equally relevant as the ritual which is being performed, a baptism. As Big Daddy reemerges from the water, he simultaneously seals his partial subjectivity; still dead, he is framed as having been reborn, his body a site of progression. While the film does not go as far as to picture the reflection of the zombie body itself, which would immediately allude to Lacan's mirror stage and a transgression to a definite self, this baptism nonetheless marks the zombie body's evolution. The horde that follows his baptism exhibits a similar transgression. While still part of an anonymous horde, the horde has a direct goal at this point which is to get to the skyscraper. An argument for pure instinct could be made here; however, the fact that the zombie horde strictly follows its leader, without external distraction, implies a development towards intentionality and away from blatant mindlessness.

This notion is further reinforced in a later sequence, upon sealing their baptism and ensuing development, during which Big Daddy teaches a fellow zombie how to use a machine gun instead of a baseball bat, metaphorically marking their development in terms of their choice of advanced weaponry. Furthermore, while the distinct use of weaponry alone implies intentionality, and hence development, the fact that this zombie horde is killing out of rage rather than hunger, destroying the living body without consuming it, illustrates the evolution of the zombie body towards subjectivity; no longer can the horde be defined as mere "mindless walking corpses" which is how Kaufmann, the film's evil capitalist, describes them as he assumes that "they will never be able to cross the river". However, having crossed the river in a baptizing ritual, the zombies in *Land of the Dead* have been reborn as walking corpses with a purpose, exhibiting a fragmented form of subjectivity.

As the zombie body moves away from antisubjective ambiguity, it is the living that begin to desire to become a zombie body as a form of instrumentalizing the heterotopic zombie body as weapon:

> Cholo turns himself into a supernatural weapon as the zombie version of himself has a better chance of killing the armed Kaufman than his human iteration would have had. In a bizarrely cathartic moment, then, the audience finds itself rooting for the zombie and cheering the explosive death of the film's evil human antagonist. (Bishop, 28)

Punctual audience identification with the zombie body, then, consolidates the zombie's progression towards an imitation of selfhood which it has undergone within Romero's series. As the zombie narrative expands, the living and the dead slowly appear to conflate. The film concludes with a classic ending of the surviving few stragglers on the road, hoping for somewhere safe to go, albeit aimlessly. As the living are driving towards their uncertain fate, they come to observe a zombie horde that Denbo ascribes with intentionality: "They're just looking for a place to go, same as us". Expanding on a previous reference uttered by Cholo who, upon beginning his transgression towards the zombie body states: "You know, I always wanted to know how the other half lives", the final lines cement the conflation of the living and the zombie body as a less fortunate, albeit no less similar other, replacing a former animosity with empathy. As Olney observes:

> Over the past decade or so, there has been a pronounced shift in our public conception of the zombie: increasingly, it has come to serve not as a symbolic Other but as a symbolic Self. […T]he impulse to be 'versus' the zombie and splatter its stuffing is now joined with a longing to *be* the zombie, to walk *in*, rather than alongside, its shoes. (9)

This notion is then further reflected in the developing complexity of the zombie's appetite. If the zombie truly desires to become what it eats, then the 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead* reinforces the notion that it is not just life that the zombie craves, but conscious subjectivity. In the film, a living dog's flesh remains untouched and therefore undesired by the zombie's hunger; it is not just life that the zombie seems to crave but humanity. This notion becomes further prevalent in the development, or evolution of the zombie, in which the zombie body is endowed with subjectivity. While traditionally "a conversion to the ranks of the walking dead was a fate from which none could ever return" (Bishop, 27), as initially exemplified by Roger in *Dawn of the Dead* who asserts: "I don't wanna be walking around like that. I'm gonna try not to come back", Cholo's active instrumentalization of himself as a zombie body marks this exact evolution. Having devoured human life in a multiplicity of ways for more than half a decade, it appears that the zombie body is indeed moving closer and closer towards becoming not only animate, but subject and therefore "living",

even becoming endowed with humanity. Spinning the zombie narrative's dynamic further, the contemporary television format has come to develop the zombie into a singular, sympathetic protagonist of the tale, thereby implementing the developing zombie as subject and as having a voice of its own productive, and thus serial, narrative.

2.2 Brains à la Mode: *iZombie* and the Reinterpretation of the Traditional Zombie as Subject

> Television, like cinema has become an industry of the living dead.
> *Ian Olney, Zombie Cinema*

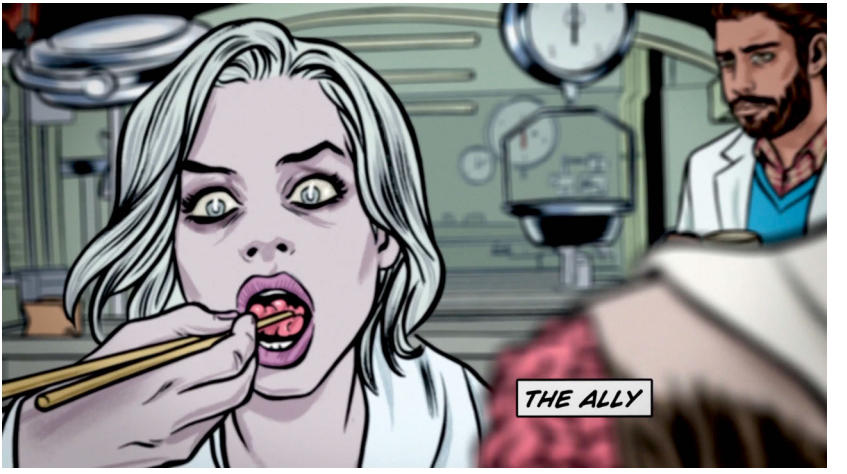
> I'm gonna eat your brain and gain your knowledge!
> *Dr. William Block, Planet Terror*

While Romero's films already mark a serial progression of the zombie myth as an integral part of the American cultural imaginary, *The CW*'s television series *iZombie* actively implements the serial format in its reconceptualization of the zombie as a conscious subject, thereby positioning the zombie at the centre of its narrative. The television series endows its undead protagonist with a complex voice that is rooted in an individualism that feeds on and absorbs an overabundance of deceased voices. While proposing the idea of a zombie with a self, this notion of self is both embellished (as well as shattered by means of crafting) the zombie as a gourmand of brains, which in itself proposes consciousness, individuality, and a resistance to becoming just another part of a hungry horde. Furthermore, infusing the brain-devouring zombie with the personal attributes of the former brain's host literalizes the notion of becoming or *being* what one eats. Thus, allowing the zombie to become not what it eats, but rather *who* it eats, elevates the antisubject into a realm of liminal subjectivity, thereby building up on the fragmented self which *Land of the Dead*'s Big Daddy eventually became. In *iZombie*, this subjectivity, in turn, allows for a narratological expansion governed by the zombie's voice(s), rather than focusing on the surviving living humans as the traditional zombie narrative does. By means of ingesting the dead's subjectivity, the reconceptualized zombie is eventually able to take charge of the narrative and to assume a position of metaphorical authorship by means of re-appropriating the tale of the undead into a domesticized space in which the zombie is able to gain subjectivity itself as a re-resurrected entity. Claiming their identity(ies) then allows the conscious zombie to not only assume selfhood,

but also, to assume an active voice which both actively tells and shapes the zombie's story.

Already inherent in its title, *iZombie* immediately shatters the notion of the conventional zombie's blank antisubjectivity. Adding a lower case 'I' to the proverbial zombie bestows its reconceptualized version with subjectivity. It is not just the genre and theme in this sense that has been adapted; there has also been a shift in focalization in which the undead are placed at the narrative's core, progressing the story narratologically, rather than simply providing obstacles for the non-zombie (i.e., the living). The television series' protagonist, zombie Olivia "Liv" Moore, is not just a gendered subject, she also evokes the audience's sympathies by means of her (post)humanity. In narratological terms, the zombie body is no longer exclusively focalized from without, lacking a voice and the corresponding agency. Instead, not only does the show center on the zombie body, but it is also actively told by and focalized through the zombie's subjective voice. The show, in terms of its leading character alone, essentially juxtaposes the antisubjective blind violence of the zombie with the performed femininity of a (post)human woman, thereby opening up potential for a more domesticized and complex version of the zombie. The fact that the opening credits feature a graphic image of Liv eating brains with chopsticks becomes a telling synecdoche for the complexity around which her character is built.

Illustration 8: Chopsticks and brains in opening credits, iZombie



Elaborating on the origins of chopsticks, Margaret Visser in *The Rituals of Dinner* states that:

> [t]he ultimately restricted – and therefore it may be thought the ultimate delicate – manner of eating with one's hands is to use the thumb and two fingers of the right hand, only the tips of these being allowed to touch the food. This gesture, refined even more by artificially elongating the fingers and further reducing their number, is of course the origin of chopsticks. (194)

Equipping the insatiable flesh-hungry zombie with the most delicate tools of food consumption illustrates the paradoxical nature that feeds into and informs Liv's character. While she may be driven by the zombie's traditional hunger, she is also showing restraint in her refined manner of brain consumption, thereby adding a layer not only of humanity but also of self-particularity and sophistication; this, in turn, becomes a marker of her individuality.

In the series' pilot episode, Liv is introduced as a formerly ambitious and successful medical student turned undead. While introducing her new existence as an undead being, she muses on her one guiding motivation, which has come to replace the manifold ambitions that she had previously. As we observe her 'insta noodles' heating up in the microwave, a dish that she sprinkles with fresh human brains, her voiceover reminisces on her former days as a human being, outlining her diverse desires, a thought she concludes with "now I am mostly just hungry – oh, and a zombie, so there's that"; she is shown visibly feasting on a bite of brains, closing her eyes in gluttonous gratification, and this is a sentiment which plays on the previously outlined "big appetite" of the zombie. While this highlights her trade-off of a complex personality, which is overtaken by a seemingly singular desire to eat, she also obtains a voice and immediately proposes subjectivity in her 'zombieness'. She is aware, not only of her hunger, but also of her former desires, the persona that she used to be while still alive as well as of her new status, a form of animate-yet-deceased subject. Presenting herself as a zombie illustrates the consciously active part that she is able to obtain; the construct of such a new individualized version of the zombie playing on the zombie body's uncanny dynamic. Liv, in this sense, is still Liv in some form; however, her death and partial return has alienated her from her previous self, thereby rendering her physical as well as mental subjectivity uncanny. It is no longer just her zombie body that can be constructed as uncanny, it is also her identity which feeds into her uncanny existence, harboring both the familiar as well as the unfamiliar. This notion of the familiar, a bygone humanity that returns in an alienated form, can be read alongside Kristeva's elaborations on the abject in "Approaching Abjection". In simple terms, the abject, something elusive by nature and as explored previously, forms that which the subject rejects as a means to preserve its own subjectivity; it is a non-object of disgust and repudiation: "The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I" (230). This threat to selfhood,

like the uncanny, is particularly present within the corpse, the non-abstraction of the abject:

> The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (Kristeva, 232)

The titular "I" in *iZombie* suggests a subjectivity that is inherent in the zombie that can become subject to the threat elaborated upon by Kristeva. Liv hence comes to obtain a complex position in her selfhood as an undead but clearly marked subject. While she is deceased, she is simultaneously (a) self by means of her conscious subjectivity. As a zombie who is not an antisubject, she returns from the dead as an uncanny version of her former, living self, while also continuously abjecting death in an attempt to maintain her subjectivity: "[t]here I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border" (Kristeva, 231). The liminal position that Liv inhabits renders her uncanny with regard to her former self and as simultaneously alive when read against the abject; as a consequence, Liv essentially becomes an agent of both positions, wanders along a spectrum between living and dead. She muses on this dichotomy in an episode called "The Exterminator" when she confides: "In my old life I was a lot of things – now I am only a stomach. Hunger incarnate. When I'm hungry I forget my lunch used to be a person. When the hunger's bad I forget I used to be one too". As V.W. Turner elaborates, the zombie comes to obtain a paradoxical position: "The essential feature […] is that the neophytes are neither living nor dead from one aspect, and both, living and dead from another. Their condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories" (Turner in Austin, 178).

The definition of Liv's selfhood is, therefore, also dependent upon whether it is the dead or the living that characterizes her – whilst either might mark her as *other*. Therefore, as a subject and zombie, Liv's body defies categorization to a certain extent, but she retains the potential to lean more towards living than dead as a zombie, unlike previous zombie archetypes, given that "[t]he sympathetic zombie protagonist is something of a recent development" (Bishop, 27). Liv actively chooses to align herself with the living rather than the dead even as a zombie, to a certain extent but not completely; this takes place predominantly through her food consumption which both provides her with subjectivity (becoming the deceased) as well as an identity (employing food preparation as a specific character trait). Herself a corpse, she begins to abject death by means of consuming human brains which not only lend her their memories, but also their subjectivity in the form of their personality traits. The consumption of food not only provides nourishment, but it is a necessity in order to maintain her subjectivity; as the brains wear off, we get more and

more of a sense of who Liv used to be, even as she is simultaneously losing her humanity. In order to align herself with the living, she needs to feed on another brain that then overwrites the previous brain's subjectivity with a new identity while simultaneously allowing her to temporarily maintain her humanity. Already dead, yet alive, her status as living is exclusively dependent upon the consumption of human brains. Similar to Big Daddy's development towards more technologically advanced weaponry, Liv limits the consumption of human flesh to the brain alone, rather than any carnality of the living, thereby marking her craving of human flesh as targeted at the living's most well-developed part. Not only is she consuming brains exclusively, but she is also transforming them into a plethora of dishes. Connecting this dynamic back to Freud and Kristeva, her uncanny self can be said to drift into the abject unless she is able to perform the life-affirming act of cooking before consuming the needed brains, which both characterizes her complex and inherently fragmented identity as well as her humanity, rendering it paradoxical or, more precisely, heterotopic. Her body becomes a counter-site that contests both the dead and the living; the act of meticulous and particular food preparation becomes an uncanny reconceptualization of her abject tendencies for Liv, thereby illustrating the paradoxes which infuse her character.

By means of not simply proposing a hollow self as zombie, the show also draws on the zombies' desire to blindly devour by spinning this dynamic in a more differentiated direction. Even though Liv's last name is Moore, which can be read as a reflection on her insatiability, she also tells her ally and trusted boss, Ravi, that she restrains her carnivorous desire as best she can: "just so you know regarding my unique dietary needs, I do it as infrequently as possible if I don't eat I become dumber, meaner and I'm afraid that if I let it go long enough I'll go all George Romero" ("Brother, Can You Spare a Brain?"). While this statement plays into her humanity, it also points to her self-reflexive awareness and hence her consciousness. In citing Romero, she expresses a knowledge of her kin. However, she also positions herself in the realm of the living, comparing herself to Romero himself who "dramatically redefined the zombie […]" (Silver & Ursini, 90), abstracting her citation of the zombie as a cultural artefact within the diegesis, rather than blatantly aligning herself with her monstrous reality as a zombie. This suggests that rather than an ultimate state, the reconceptualized zombie can be placed along a spectrum of 'zombieness', once again adding complexity to the figure. The show capitalizes on this by means of the "full-on zombie mode" which a starved zombie enters when not restraining him/herself. This aforementioned full-on zombie mode becomes characteristic of the zombie horde in which all individuality is exchanged for carnivorous desire for flesh as elaborated in "A Zombie Manifesto": "[…t]herefore, […] the zombie poses twofold terror: There is the primary fear of being devoured by a zombie […] and the secondary fear that one will, in losing one's consciousness, become part of the monstrous horde" (Lauro & Embry, 89). A signifier of a complete

loss of individualism and consciousness, the zombie horde is clearly marked as other with regard to Liv who repeatedly references the zombie horde as a threat throughout the show as she expresses her wish to preserve her individuality.

Playing on the conventional zombie's insatiable hunger, but individualizing it, *iZombie* devotes a substantial amount of time outlining the manifold meals in which Liv prepares her brains, alluding to an educational cooking program in which the viewer is taken through a recipe step-by-step. In the traditional zombie narrative, the consumption of brains can be read as a gender-neutral, universal form of violence committed by the antisubject who is purely governed by instinct. The consumption of flesh is paralleled with a form of savagery in which zombies devour human flesh raw using their hands which are left bloody and greedy for more. *iZombie*'s subject-governed female zombie, then, is able to reinterpret the act of consuming a human brain into a domesticized, if not educational, form of cooking; the visual repetition of the act of cooking in each episode further mirrors the serial format of the television serial itself. As an additional complicating layer, the zombie that features subjectivity then also evokes the notion of cannibalism, as opposed to the traditional zombie who could be seen as operating in a state of reverse cannibalism (being a dead antisubject hungry for the living's flesh). Liv, to a certain degree becomes an actual cannibal, "[a] person who eats the flesh of other human beings." (OED) the closer her body comes to being aligned with the living and, hence, categorized as human. The show bridges the nurturing act of preparing a meal and the cannibalistic deed of eating a (deceased) human brain by instrumentalizing the gendered space of the kitchen, thereby creating a new version of a zombie who adapts to human convention in an attempt to assimilate into a communal consciousness, rather than devouring all subjectivity. While the conventional zombie is crafted as being hollow, save for the singular desire for food, *iZombie* reconceptualizes this notion by means of drawing Liv as a foodie, "[a] person with a particular interest in food; a gourmet" (OED). By means of drawing Liv as a complex character, but an undead one, what becomes reflected in her interest in food also becomes part of her identity, thereby rendering her cannibalistic hunger diverse; this is illustrated by means of all of the different recipes that she provides. In preserving her identity as subject, rather than being blinded by hunger, she fetishizes her desire which is channelled into the meticulous preparations of her dishes. It is the hunger for brains that she experiences which also transcends the different personalities that she obtains through the consumption of these brains and becomes a defining characteristic of her as an individual subject.

While hunger may be her sole guiding desire, as she herself claims, it is through said hunger that she begins to craft her new personality, even as a zombie. As a foodie, she is able to instrumentalize her desire as a significant marker of her complex subjectivity. In her review of *The Official Foodie Handbook* by Ann Barr and Paul

Levy, Angela Carter elaborates on an elevation of food to the high arts which is conducted by the foodie who considers:

> […] 'food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama'. It is the 'art' bit that takes their oral fetishism out of the moral scenario in which there is an implicit reprimand to greed in the constantly televised spectacle of the gaunt peasants who have trudged miles across drought-devastated terrain to score their scant half-crust. (1)

Accompanying their titular lines with the subtitle "Be Modern – Worship food", Barr and Levy highlight the notion of spectacle that becomes an intrinsic part of food preparation for the gourmet. Orally fetishizing the human brains, which she essentially cannibalizes, Liv simultaneously humanizes her desires and renders her *big appetite* both colorful and complex; removed from a purely nourishing quality, the show extensively visualizes the manifold dishes that she prepares in an aesthetic and appealing manner. Discussing her appetite with Ravi in the opening of "Flight of the Living Dead", Liv asks him: "Of everyone here, who would you eat first?" While this statement is certainly intended to satirize her status as a zombie, the conversation, then takes a more complex turn when she begins to muse on an egg salad sandwich which she had observed on television: "I was watching TV on Saturday and I saw an egg salad sandwich and I was like I loved egg salad when I was alive, there's gotta be an equivalent I can make. If vegans can pull it off with tofu, why can't I do it with brains." This statement certainly acknowledges her as *not* alive, an aliveness which she attributes to a former Liv; however, she also utters the desire to find an equivalent taste to when she was alive, which elevates her to a level closer to alive than dead. Through food preparation she seeks to masquerade herself as human as closely as she can, as she further states: "So I went down to the artisanal spice shop on Pike, you know, *Seasons for all Seasons*, and I picked up some stuff. In the end the sandwich wasn't so bad, it didn't quite hit the mark, but kinda close." While the name of the artisanal shop "*Seasons for all Seasons*" picks up on the form of the television series, implicitly referencing the different seasonings (of Liv and her plethora of brain-based dishes) which will come to be served throughout the show, the elaboration on her quest for seasonings which transform brains as closely as possible into egg salad also offers a reflection on her own status as almost living. The food that Liv so meticulously prepares comes to represent her own status as not just undead, but as *almost* living. The brains that she prepares may not quite approximate egg salad, but her particular method of preparation comes "kinda close" nevertheless; while she is not quite a human being anymore, she still remains closer to living than dead, coming "kinda close" herself, remaining a dead yet animate subject rather than becoming the traditional undead conscienceless antisubject.

Inscribing said complex subjectivity into the figure of the zombie, and positioning the undead at the centre of the serial narrative, allows for a narratological ex-

pansion through the zombie's own voice; in *iZombie*, the proverbial zombie assumes a form of agency which is traditionally assigned to the living within the zombie narrative. This paradoxical notion of a narratological productivity that is caused by language's temporary incapability to grasp death, then, renders the intangible *un*dead as a focalizing subject of the narrative, one which inherently fruitful in the previously leaned upon Foucauldian "play of mirrors that has no limits" (91). While the traditional zombie lacks language, its contemporary evolution no longer does. On a formal level, placing a zombie-subject at the center of a television serial makes perfect sense in light of this notion; in a sense, the text itself, paradoxically and at the point of stagnation, becomes insatiable and greedy to tell a plethora of stories when faced with a form of death. In reciprocity with Liv's potential for a narratological expansion of the story, by means of the versatile voices which she gains through eating the brains of the deceased, death in *iZombie* results in formal productivity (i.e., serial narration). In other words, Liv's stories are greedily devoured and this serves to align the politics of food consumption with the politics of death. Further expanding on this idea, Lacanian psychoanalysis suggests that desire is formed as "a relation to a lack" in which "desire can never be satisfied, it is constant in its pressure, and eternal. The realisation of desire does not consist in being 'fulfilled', but in the reproduction of desire as such" (Evans, 38). The insatiability that informs these images is epitomized by an overt alignment alongside food metaphors. Liv's desire to craft manifold dishes reflects her desire to tell her story; the versatility of brain dishes resembles the versatility of this new zombie as subject – different selves as her temporary previous incarnations, which she characterizes as "flashes of memories or dreams" through the eyes of the deceased, become a narratological tool which is used to expand the story into the past (instead of employing the more traditional flashback structure, for example) in order to further the consolidation of a case and preserve and forward the police procedural's narrative structure. This means that on a formal level, Liv's hunger for subjectivity, which she gains through eating the dead, is necessary in order to develop the story further. It hinges on an insatiable desire to eat and, by extension, to live as a subject, to *Liv Moore* ("live more") even while the story is essentially being told by the dead.

The figure of the zombie, whether conventional or reconceptualized, paradoxically remains immortal in its approximation of death: "The irony is that while [the zombie] prompts us to ask what kind of life that would be, it reveals that our fascination with the zombie is, in part, a celebration of its immortality and a recognition of ourselves as enslaved to our bodies" (Lauro & Embry, 88). In the case of *iZombie*, then, Liv sacrifices part of herself for this notion of immortality as she partially assumes another's subjectivity with every brain that she consumes. While this is illustrated by means of her attire, as well as the behavioural traits she acquires, the cookbook character the later episodes in the series assume in particular, in which the preparation of each dish is meticulously illustrated and accompanied by the same score,

highlight the repetitive aspect of cooking brains not only as a marker of her post-humanity, but also as a leitmotif of the police procedural. The dishes that Liv prepares using the brains of the murder victims at the morgue offer a wide culinary array; as a chef and foodie, she experiments with cuisines from all around the world, cooking entrees, baking desserts, and steaming hot beverages. Her concoctions throughout the series include spaghetti and meatballs, chili dogs, shepherd's pie, the Hungarian fried bread Langos, peanut butter and jelly rolls with no crust, filled mussels, spicy noodles, a foot-long turkey and brain sub, a curry dish, peanut butter filled celery sticks, cinnamon rolls as well as a brain-infused cappuccino and a hot chocolate which is topped off with whipped cream and sprinkles. All of these dishes are tainted with death, containing the flesh of the deceased; however, all of these dishes also remain appealing even to the living. In "Even Cowgirls get the Black and Blues" for instance, Liv chews on homemade brain nuggets with hot sauce while Ravi desperately calls out to a divine entity to keep him from indulging in human flesh himself: "God help me, that smells sensational!", having to contain his own appetite for what he knows would be a cannibalistic act for him and which, however, simultaneously triggers his gluttonous desires. Rather than devouring human flesh raw, Liv maintains her humanity through the sophisticated manner with which she meticulously prepares these dishes that even become appealing even to the living who are aware of their main ingredient. The brains themselves remain ambiguous in affect and are not screened as markedly abject throughout the series; in "Dead Rat, Live Rat, Brown Rat, White Rat", for instance, Liv sprinkles half of a pizza with brains and Ravi eats the other half. The scene that follows hinges on dramatic irony, during which unbeknownst to him, Clive Babineaux claims a "brained" slice for himself, taking a bite and mistaking the brains that he accidentally consumed for mushrooms (he is "not a big fan" of mushrooms, it turns out). Hence, in *iZombie*, the brains of the deceased become an intricate part of gluttonous desires; they are not prepared as abject but similarly to Liv's status, instead come to obtain a paradoxical status that masks their actual abject nature as heterotopic – subversive and other, yet potentially desirable and graspably possible.

Framing the preparation of her culinary experimentations in this manner visually picks up on the formulaic aspect of the series' narratological expansion. Each dish references a murder victim, proposing a crime that has to be solved. Similar to the television serial *Twin Peaks*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, this visualization of narratology may be read alongside Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Circles" which muses on the world's circularity in which expansion appears almost infinite:

> The man finishes his story, – how good! how final! how it puts a new face on all things! He fills the sky. Lo! On the other side rises also a man and draws a circle

> around the circle we had just pronounced the outline of the sphere. Then already is our first speaker not a man, but only a first speaker. (227)

While the previous chapter isolated Agent Dale Cooper as an authorial figure of this circularity, *iZombie* positions Liv's zombie voice as such. In the manner of the allegorical second man, with each case coming to a close, there is another brain to be meticulously prepared and eaten, but the deceased's subjectivity can still be adapted and resolved. While the zombie, by definition "[..] is anticatharsis, antiresolution: it proposes no third term reconciling the subject/object split, the lacuna between life and death." (Lauro & Embry, 94) its antiresolution is challenged by the construction of the zombie as developing subject. As a zombie with a self, Liv projects a newly gained subjectivity that is illustrated by means of her unique recipes, as well as by the multiplicity of possible characters that she becomes through the consumption thereof. Each dish that she prepares becomes the voice of an Emersonian second man who tells a new story and who, structurally, maintains the essence and development of the police procedural. Each dish, in this sense, is also a new self for Liv to become which both approximates her status as living while simultaneously overwriting her previous subjectivity as living. She is able to maintain part of her humanity by cannibalizing the brains of the victims as a means to solve the individual cases of the police procedural; at the same time, she is sacrificing her own self which is superimposed not simply by another, but by a deceased other. In her quest to stay alive she paradoxically has to approximate the already deceased, to become and speak for the dead. If one indeed is what one eats, and that which Liv eats is the flesh of the deceased, then she does remain dead even if dead brain matter endows her with the subjectivity of the living. The framing of her concoctions as a recurring theme can then be connected to Christopher Bigsby's *Viewing America* in which he states that, with regard to the American television serial, "reinforcing a national ideology to do with production and consumption, its programmes [are] regularly interrupted not only to sell products but to sell the idea of consuming as value" (ix). While the television format caters to endless consumption, Liv's dishes come to obtain a similar function. Reminiscent of an advertisement, as a zombie, Liv reappropriates culinary consumer culture for the living which she is only able to do because her status is ambiguous, thereby rendering her cannibalism an understandable prerequisite for her fleeting humanity.

Liv as a subject, in spite of being a zombie, transgresses the zombie's surface individualism in which the debris of a former life is still noticeable; this also occurs in in *Dawn of the Dead*, for example, which employs a minimal form of individualizing the zombie body within the horde: "as an extension of *Night of the Living Dead*, it is with this film that zombies are markedly individualized, with the living dead in the shopping mall including a Hare Krishna follower, a nun and a nurse" (Conrich, 17). While Liv remains undead, it is not just the debris of a former life that marks

her (previous) identity, it is the dead that fracture her animate body which, in turn, carries her subjectivity. Therefore, the zombie body remains irreconcilable to a certain extent and is tied to a paradox in *iZombie*. Liv cannot sustain her subjectivity without consuming the brains of the deceased, and by extension assuming their individualities. Her agency is inherently tied to the deceased that she cannibalizes, not just by aligning herself as human while simultaneously eating human flesh, but furthermore on the level of her very subjectivity. It is said that subjectivity becomes a nexus for the advancement of the story; this is then further reflected on a narratological level in the form of narrative cannibalism. The television series, as a police procedural in which Clive Babineaux assumes the role of the detective figure, is the hermeneutic agent who becomes reliant on his partner Liv's cannibalism which progresses the story. However, the visions that she obtains, which are crucial for the consolidation of the individual cases, are not her own memories but are cannibalized stories which she ingested through the deceased and, in that sense, does not actively produce, but instead *re*-produces. Expanding this to the meta level of genre, the serial format itself becomes reliant on her cannibalism in order to maintain and move itself forward. As a television series, it is also the recipient who becomes insatiable. The viewer also devours the dead metaphorically, by means of consuming the serial. This notion is mirrored in the cooking analogy that is employed throughout the show; the recipe for Liv's dishes becomes formulaic for the television serial itself.

Isolating the zombie's insatiable hunger and reformatting this desire into a source of individuality, then, *iZombie* instrumentalizes the anti-subjective zombie body and, instead of leaving it "devoid of consciousness", renders it an epitome of the carnivalesque as, "[…i]n the world of carnival the awareness of the people's immortality is combined with the realization that established authority and truth are relative" (Bakhtin, 10). Invoking the Bakhtinian concept of grotesque realism, *iZombie* hyperbolizes the zombie body as a heterotopic counter-site, as "[b]odies, their consumption and decomposition form a crucial part of Bakhtin's ideas on carnival" (Austin, 181). While Liv's body is marked as dead by means of her pale skin and white hair, her zombie body is not excessively marked with corporeal decay. While uncanny, she is not abject; the symptoms of 'zombieness' are easily masked with tanning spray and hair dye. Traditionally a marker of death infecting the space of the living, the contemporary, individualized zombie body as depicted in the show defies its own decay and is capable of passing as human. It is then not its surface that marks it as zombie, but rather its *behavior;* most prevalently, its eating habits are what marks it. The zombie body as subject then further explores the notion of a multiplicity of zombies which, having become subjects, are no longer a homogeneous horde, but instead become a societal entity themselves and come to pose a potential threat to human society; they contest "established authority" not by means of their antisubjectivity, but by means of their sudden superiority as undead (and yet conscious), thereby assuming a form of posthuman, if not immortal, agency.

The contemporary zombie challenges its own status as ultimate abject and instead assumes a desirable potential for immortality, even though, according to Kyle William Bishop, "[…i]n the original zombie films of the 1930s and 1940s, becoming a zombie was a thing to fear as it meant loss of self-awareness and autonomy" and "the walking dead were monstrous manifestations of fates worse than even the most violent of deaths" (27). Even while obtaining a form of subjectivity, the undead zombie body remains an irreconcilable site. However, *iZombie* elevates it to a more complex, heterotopic level by means of endowing it with subjectivity, and by extension, posthumanity.

As such, the zombie as subject becomes instrumental in the narrative's progression; the narrative is focalized on the zombie as self. In this sense, the show employs the previously neglected wasteland of liminality, in which the zombie resides, as a narratological source for the maintaining as well as the progression of the police procedural. The preparation and consumption of food serves as a signifier of this serial expansion, on the level of form, as well as a signifier for the zombie as subject. On a formal level, the brains that are concocted play on the repetitiveness of the serial while the plethora of possibilities which are acted out hint at the productive potential limitlessness that the serial entails. On the level of content, the sophistication of a zombie's hunger is allegorized in the crafting of a more complex zombie body that harbors the potential to transcend its previous hollowness, thereby finally becoming an active voice within its own narrative. In *iZombie*, the zombie is that which she eats and that which she eats is subjectivity. Quite literally, then, she also becomes that which she eats through the manner in which she prepares and eats her sustenance; this is a posthuman self which carries an active narratological voice. The zombie's evolution is marked by an uncanny fragmentation of the subject, rather than by a blatant abjection which eliminates all subjectivity; no longer is the zombie body crafted as the infectious abject other, but instead comes to obtain a desirable position which opens up room for a renegotiation of the self. However, they remain a counter-site to both the living as well as the dead.

As has become evident, the zombie body remains a mere imitation of the living throughout its evolution even as it transgresses into subjectivity, rather than being able to transgress back as fully reinstated as living. When read as a heterotopic counter-site within the narrative, it could be stated that the American gothic proposes a utopic dream of immortality, whereas the zombie narrative contextualizes the corpse as a graspable manifestation which contests the living as well as the dead body. The contestation, as well as imitation of the living and the corpse by the zombie, can be seen as illustrative of its mythmaking tendencies. While the zombie imitates life, the text is imitates death; both, however, remain a myth within the American cultural imaginary, a figment of the imagination which remains elusive and, therefore, becomes a repetition compulsion in the fabrication of the myth that *is* America. It is not at all surprising that the iconicity of the contemporary television

drama becomes a place of negotiation of the zombie myth, its serial format simulating potential for an endless repetition and further progression of the zombie body. The zombie body is both life and death and simultaneously neither; the negotiation of its elusive body results in an overt textual productivity which mirrors its own insatiability in terms of the prominence with which its narratives are not only fabricated, but actively consumed.