

Introduction

Popular culture often suggests modes for understanding politics in new and productive ways. Media and cultural studies demonstrate that movies, television, music, poetry, fiction, and art can bare our fears and hopes in easily understood forms and offer wisdom in digestible sound bites. International Relations (IR) scholarship has incorporated these fields of study and approaches into its canon as well.¹ This article uses this literature as background to analyze another pop culture figure—the zombie—as a productive metaphor to understand race, gender, and power in IR. The use of zombies in the classroom for simulations, and as a tool for teaching theory, all reflect the fact that cultural memes are effective in reaching students and policy communities. As Charli Carpenter asserts, the role of science fiction and fantasy discourse can act to deflect disagreement in ‘divergent and highly contested policy communities’² and allows for more communication on important, emotionally charged issues.

Broadly, through historical and pop culture narratives, and as evidenced by its staying power in movies and fiction, the zombie holds a special place in contemporary theorizing about life and death in modern politics: it is an enduring icon who encompasses and embodies our political and social fears—‘they are a surface upon which humanity reflects anxieties.’³ The zombie speaks, through its search and hunger for living flesh, to humanity’s fears about contagion, disease, death, and loss of control. This undead figure reminds us of all that is repressed in our political and economic orders: the monstrous aspects of neoliberal capitalism, the emptiness of consumerism, the disposability of people and our reckless use of earth’s finite resources.⁴ Our destruction is assured by this violent consumption of natural resources and lives and the repressed will return with a vengeance and unending hunger for what we have taken. Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry in *A Zombie Manifesto* posit the zombie as that which crashes borders, and as a figure who threatens in its endless appetite to consume and transform humanity.⁵ As they note, the zombie is not dead, nor alive, such that contemplating this figure would push us to think about not just a biopolitics of life or a necropolitics of death, but rather of the grey areas in between.

¹ Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004); Kyle Grayson, Matt Davies, and Simon Philpott, ‘Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum’, *Politics* 26, no. 3 (2009): 155-163; Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton, eds., *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies* (Bristol: e-International Relations Publishing, 2015); Christine Sylvester, *Art/Museums: International Relations Where We Least Expect It* (London: Routledge, 2015); Laura J. Shepherd and Caitlin Hamilton eds., *Understanding Popular Culture and World Politics in the Digital Age* (London: Routledge, 2016).

² Charli Carpenter, ‘Rethinking the Political/-Science-/Fiction Nexus: Global Policy Making and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots’, *Perspectives on Politics* 14 no. 1 (2016): 53-69.

³ Eric Boyer ‘Zombies All! The Janus-Faced Zombie of the Twenty-First Century’, *Journal of Popular Culture* 47, no. 6 (2014): 1139–1152.

⁴ Through movies and television, the zombie narrative is also taken to reveal deep seated anxiety about capitalism and consumerism (*Dawn of the Living Dead*), a post 9-11 fear of contagion and immigration (*28 Days Later*, *Resident Evil*, *World War Z*), and a post-post 9-11 where society must reckon with the horrors that came previously and reincorporate this violence into society—or what is left of it (*In the Flesh*, *Wyrmmwood*), and a ‘redemptive’ genre where we learn to live with the Other (*Warm Bodies*). There are also comic takes on the zombie genre that critique and pay homage to many of these themes (*Fido*, *Sean of the Dead*, *A Scout’s Guide to the Zombie Apocalypse*, *Zombieland*, *Boy Eats Girl*, and *Pride, Prejudice and Zombies*).

⁵ Sarah Juliet Lauro, and Karen Embry, ‘A Zombie Manifesto: The Nonhuman Condition in the Era of Advanced Capitalism’, *boundary 2* 35, no. 1 (2008), 85-108.

In addition to these wider understandings, our critical approach to interpreting zombie narratives in popular culture in IR draws upon Roland Bleiker's articulation to an aesthetic approach that seeks to interrogate how representative practices themselves have come to constitute and shape political practices⁶ as well as Jutta Weldes's concern with the ways in which popular culture and its interpretation in IR can naturalize histories and power relationships.⁷ Erin Hannah and Rordan Wilkinson argue that rather than just using zombies as a means of teaching students about IR theories, they should be a way to develop critical thinking. Further, they forward a question: what is the purpose and consequences of using zombie narratives in IR?⁸

We answer that, in part and perhaps inadvertently, the consequences of the zombie narrative in IR have been to avoid hard questions of racism and violence against people of color. IR has long fought, and tried to theorize around, the white supremacist and colonial legacies that were part of its inception as a field of study, and as a way of understanding the world in the twentieth century. World politics in this century were largely concerned with removing natural resources to the metropole and keeping colonial populations controlled as legal subordinates under trusteeship, or through genocidal practices. This was done, in part, by creating and maintaining institutions and discourses that treated non-white people as inferior, both biologically and culturally. Errol A. Henderson argues that while the 'colour line' was well recognized in the twentieth century as the problem that organized most domestic and international policy, 'less appreciated today is the centrality of race and racism to the core theorists of the incipient field of international relations.'⁹ This article will focus on how the zombie, and its use in theory, can aid in continuing, in often unthinking ways, in the classroom and as a theoretical figure, the replication of racial hierarchies and racism in IR. Without implying intention, the zombie is often used without serious reflection about its racialized and gendered ontology and history. In simple terms, we posit the zombie as a way to continue to enact violence on black and brown bodies without having to rethink the categories of race born from IR's beginnings at the height of colonialism.

The first half of this article uses Alexander Weheliye's work on the racialized figure of bare life and analyzes how the category of the human and its exceptional 'others' are racialized in IR. In particular, Weheliye's concept of *habeas viscus* is an alternative genre of the human that is an 'afterlife' of 'bare life.' This is not the inflexible, immobile category of 'bare life', or racialized populations deemed 'exceptional' which are not 'exceptions' to the normal state of being, but a different genre of humanity. This new genre, or figure, where race is not lost, pushes us to think not in terms of the biopolitics of life, but of the necropolitics of life-in-death and death-in-life. In particular, it pushes us to think from the 'myth' of the zombie to its racialized 'real world' manifestations and then on to those in the 'uncanny valley' of the zombies, or the 'walking dead' who are not human, but also not not-human.

In the second half, we offer an example of the manifestations of the zombie and its politics from a popular comic and TV show that often finds its way into both preparedness training and the

⁶ Roland Bleiker, 'The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory', *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 30, no. 3, (2001), 510.

⁷ Jutta Weldes, 'Going Cultural: *Star Trek*, State Action and Popular Culture', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28 no. 1 (1999): 117-134.

⁸ Erin Hannah and Rordan Wilkinson, 'Zombies and IR: A Critical Reading', *Politics* 36, no. 1 (2016): 5–18.

⁹ Errol A. Henderson, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism in International Relations Theory in *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam, eds (London: Routledge), 2015.

classroom.¹⁰ *The Walking Dead* is used as an exemplary narrative replete with many beloved IR themes such as the state of nature, protection rackets, white male supremacy, the human/not-human ‘others’ and the threat of contagion. As a fictional example of apocalyptic politics, we argue that *The Walking Dead* offers more than a superficial ‘state of exception’ narrative of survival in a state of nature under white male leadership. *The Walking Dead* takes us from the exceptionalist politics of the post-9/11 era to the very ordinariness of the horror of ‘living on’ in these times. As Steven Shaviro noted about George Romero’s trilogy of zombie films, and what appears to be true twenty years on: there is no escape from the zombies, nor final defeats, there is only ‘living on’ in constant exceptionality that has become banal in its ongoing violence against human bodies. This is a mode of what Lauren Berlant has called ‘slow death.’ In ‘slow death’, dying and the reproduction of life are the same: there is no distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘exceptional’ life, rather the wearing out of life in a space of ordinariness.¹¹

In short, we make two interventions into the use of the zombie in IR: one to use it as way to re-theorize race, racism, and exceptionalism¹² and the other to recapture the power of the zombie narrative to think through the politics of racialization, contagion and enclosure in contemporary global politics with the claim that the theorization of bare life and exceptionalism has been about avoiding race and racializing assemblages in International Relations theory. We hope that both examples demonstrate that as a metaphorical conceit the zombie can have a second life in IR—one that can expose and theorize about race, racism, politics, and exceptionality rather than just be another way to avoid the subject as has been done historically.

A Short History of Zombies and IR

In the field of International Relations, zombies are assumed to have illustrative and affective value for translating theoretical concepts and understandings. In what Paul Kirby describes as a ‘descriptive analytical’ approach, fantastical and speculative works of fiction are mirrors for analogy and explanation for better understanding the world.¹³ Daniel Drezner’s book *Theories of International Relations and Zombies* stands as an excellent example.¹⁴ This book is generally understood as a creative introduction to the various theoretical approaches to IR. Mainly concerned with the theories that can (allegedly) predict behavior, the book discusses realism and liberalism along with institution analyses of bureaucracy and psychological approaches to politics. The ‘revived’ edition explores more IR theories, including how the zombie genre reproduces gender roles, but Drezner’s focus remains on how existential threats can influence behavior and how theories of IR can be understood through these predicaments. The zombie outbreak is then used as a set-up to think through existential crises and their place in decision-making. Zombies have also appeared in the IR

¹⁰ To further stress the power of the zombie as a cultural meme in institutional or training arenas, The Center for Disease Control released public service publication in the format of a comic book. It used a zombie scenario to educate US citizens on the importance of following their guidelines in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. See <https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/zombies.htm>

¹¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹² Post-9/11 politics have revived the Schmittian notion of the exception constituting the outside of the normal political, spatial and temporal relations; most famously taken up by Agamben in *Homo Sacer* (1998) and *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). As noted above, the idea of permanent ‘exception’ as haunting contemporary political life and possibly Western political life in its origins has been enormously influential in critical theory.

¹³ Paul Kirby, ‘Political Speech in Fantastical Worlds’, forthcoming at *International Studies Review*, 2017.

¹⁴ Daniel W. Drezner, *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2011). See also the ‘revived version’ of 2015.

classroom. Robert Blanton writes that zombie literature can be analogically applied to IR's organizing principles and actual world conflicts, while Rodger Payne suggests that ironic and humorous re-imaginings of the zombie genre such as Isaac Marion's *Warm Bodies* can contribute to teaching critical IR.¹⁵

This use of the undead has also been adopted as a metaphor and analogy for explaining processes and events in national and global politics. The zombie stands in for threats entailing emergency management and national security responses beyond the realm of normal politics. For example, the US Defense Department has military plans prepared for many possible contingencies including CONPLAN 8888-11 or 'Counter-Zombie Dominance.' This plan, created by the United States Center for Strategic Command, is 'not actually designed as a joke,' but rather is a self-aware training example that realizes the danger of the 'political fallout' that may occur if the public, or other countries, mistakenly think that the training scenario is more than just a practice exercise. Zombies stand in for actual enemies and therefore help avoid potential confusion or anger. The document informs the reader that 'rather than risk such an outcome by teaching our augmentees using the fictional "Tunisia" or "Nigeria" scenarios...we opted to use a completely fictional scenario that could never be mistaken as a real plan.'¹⁶

The zombie is a 'ridiculous' way for students, or the 'augmentees', to learn military planning in a more engaging context. It should be noted that even though the authors of the plan stress that it is meant to be 'entertaining' and 'enjoyable',¹⁷ it is based on how the military would respond in an attack on continental US soil, including nuclear weapons use—the zombies may be unreal, but the military responses certainly are not. Nor should it be lost that the two examples (Tunisia and Nigeria) are perhaps (unwittingly) racialized and from countries with large Muslim populations. This maps onto the larger war on terror and current US military concerns abroad. This Defense plan stands a clear example of how the deracialized zombie replaces the terrorist, the immigrant, or the diseased, and is used as a way to explain and justify the creation of exceptional or authoritarian politics without explicitly addressing race.

Zombies and Racialization

As noted above, zombies populate the end times. The post-apocalyptic narrative is frequently described as depicting white folks experiencing conditions of bare life, slavery or colonial conquest. In other words, it dramatizes white people living under the conditions they have forced upon others. We argue that the zombie narrative dramatizes white people living 'in the wake' (in Christina Sharpe's evocative phrase) of apocalyptic scenarios. Such narratives, especially as they involve zombies, are always about race even as they serve to erase race in the discipline of IR, as the zombie is a figure that exists both as a racialized figure in its origins in Haitian culture, as well as a figure

¹⁵ Robert G. Blanton, 'Zombies and International Relation: A Simple Guide for Bring the Undead into the Classroom', *International Studies Perspectives* (2013) 14: 1–13; Rodger A. Payne, 'Laughing off a Zombie Apocalypse: The Value of Comedic and Satirical Narratives', *International Studies Perspectives*, Online First: <http://isp.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/02/03/isp.ekv026>

¹⁶ Headquarters United States Strategic Command, 'CDRUSSSTRATCOM CONPLAN 8888-11 COUNTER-ZOMBIE DOMINANCE,' 2011. Accessed at <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2014/images/05/16/dod.zombie.apocalypse.plan.pdf>. See also Mark Neocleous, 'The Universal Adversary Will Attack: Pigs, Pirates, Zombies, Satan and the Class War', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2015), 15–32.

¹⁷ Ibid.

of extermination, as a life that does not matter and in fact must be killed for the safety of ‘humans’. Hence, the zombie narrative in IR is more than hiding race in IR: it is a racializing apparatus in that it allows IR to deploy grammars of race without explicitly talking about race. Sharpe’s words in describing her work on the aftermaths of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas resonate with the post-apocalyptic zombie narrative as a site at which the objects of terror are re-cast as terror’s purveyors: ‘living in the wake means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse *about* terror we, Black people, become the *carriers* of terror, terror’s embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror’s multiple enactments; the ground of terror’s possibility.’¹⁸ The contemporary Black Lives Matter movement, begun in the US and now connected to local movements around the world, is bringing increased attention to white audiences to the ways in which black people who are the victims of state-authorized violence are portrayed as the agents of that violence. Unarmed black men, women, girls and boys such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Rekia Boyd, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile, Sandra Bland and many more have had their deaths fit a pattern of attributing the violence of the state on the (perceived) threat that the victim poses. Far from just speaking to IR’s theories in an engaging manner, the zombie is doing a lot of productive work that deserves to be highlighted and used to advance conversations about race and white systems of power and oppression.¹⁹

Zombie narratives are constitutively concerned with issues of racialization and fears of being overwhelmed or overpowered by racialized others, and, as Elizabeth McAllister argues, its story and myth are part of ongoing political repression.²⁰ From the earliest zombie narrative in America, *The Magic Island*, by William Seabrooke, whose zombie tale is one of racialized sexual fears, and Bela Lugosi’s interest for a white woman’s love in *The White Zombie* (1932), to George Romero’s revivification of the zombie genre in the US in the Civil Rights era that highlighted the dehumanization of black people,²¹ to the ‘fast’ zombies populating apocalyptic movie landscapes where sickness has destroyed most of humanity, the figure of the zombie has been understood by cultural critics to stand in for white fear of black and brown bodies repressed by slavery, racism, and heterosexism.²²

A starting point for the zombie myth is found in Haiti in the 17th and 18th centuries. For the white colonizers, the zombie represents the anxiety and fear of living with those that you have enslaved while knowing full well they want freedom and, perhaps, revenge for what they have suffered. The zombie ‘represents, responds to and mystifies the fear of slavery...and in particular this monster

¹⁸ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 15. (emphasis in original.)

¹⁹ See Robert Vitalis, *White World Power, Black Power Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015) and Charles W. Mills *The Racial Contract*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Elizabeth McAlister, ‘Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies’, Division II Faculty Publications. Paper 115, 2012. Accessed at <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/div2facpubs/115> (2012). Last accessed 7 December 2016.

²¹ The ending to *Night of the Living Dead*, in which a black male survivor of the zombie is shot dead by an extrajudicial force of white men, dramatizes not only the racial undertones of the zombie narrative, but also the liminal status of the racialized figure as ‘zombie-like’ in terms of being positioned as not quite fully alive, yet not dead either. His life is a life which does not matter, which can be eradicated like the zombies who must be killed. Ben, the lone survivor, noticed by his movement in a window, and orders are given to kill anything that moves under suspicion of being a zombie. Ben’s body is carried away with meat hooks, emphasizing its unreality as a human subject whether because of his race or presumed zombie status is left ambiguous).

²² See Gaia Giuliani, ‘Fears of Disaster and (Post-)Human Raceologies in European Popular Culture (2001–2013)’, *Culture Unbound* 7 (2015): 363–385.

refers and responds to the nexus of capitalism, race, and religion.²³ In voodoo, the *zombi*, as it is written in the Haitian religion, is best understood as embodying in the oppressed a deep terror of never regaining ownership over one's own body and living in purgatory for eternity: 'The original brains-eating fiend was a slave not to the flesh of others but to his own. The zombie archetype...was a projection of the African slaves' relentless misery and subjugation.'²⁴ It is a figure that is 'simultaneously slave and slave rebellion' as it represents mindless obedience or instinct, without viable will of its own, but it also represents the oppressed refusing to be controlled.²⁵

In their mindlessness and rebellion, we would argue that zombies also represent the multitude, or the contagion, that Foucault described as the central role of governance to contain. Foucault's analysis of the emergence of forms of power revolves around the governance of certain non-human forms of life/death. Whereas sovereign power excludes bodies infected with leprosy, to the surveillance and discipline techniques of managing the plague to the regulation of different kinds of circulations of people and non-human objects in the 'milieu'.²⁶ As Eugene Thacker writes, 'in the 'problem of multiplicity' presented to the body politic concept by plague, pestilence, and epidemic, multiplicity is never separate from, and is always inculcated within, the problem of sovereignty....it is *multiplicity that plagues the body politic*.'²⁷ The racialization of the threat of contamination represented by the zombie can be traced back to the slave laws of the Caribbean and America that turned the metaphorical corruption of the bloodline of the slave as one who is civilly dead and unable to pass down property to their children to a racialized fiction of blood, making racial stigmatization inheritable by generations.²⁸

Critical race theorists such as David Goldberg, Christina Sharpe, and Sara Ahmed have noted that that designation of racial difference carries with it the suggestion of threat and this threat raises fears of insecurity, contagion, being overrun, and even extinction.²⁹ The racial other is a body produced in and through fear. Sara Ahmed, for example, reads Franz Fanon's famous description of the objectification and alienation of his black body in the gaze of the white boy: 'Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!...[he's] going to eat me up!'³⁰ Through her reading, Ahmed theorizes the production of racially differentiated bodies in and through fears of consumption of the self:

Fear works by establishing others as fearsome insofar as they *threaten to take the self in*. Such fantasies construct the other as a danger not only to one's self as self, but to one's very life, to one's very existence as a separate being with a life of its own. Such fantasies of the other hence work to justify violence against others, whose very existence comes to be felt as a

²³ Ibid., 461.

²⁴ Mike Mariani, 'The Tragic, Forgotten History of Zombies', *The Atlantic*, 28 October 2015. Accessed at <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/10/how-america-erased-the-tragic-history-of-the-zombie/412264/>. Last accessed 7 December 2016.

²⁵ Lauro and Embry, 'A Zombie Manifesto', 93.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. Trans. Graham Burchell. (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2000), 21-22.

²⁷ Eugene Thacker, 'Necrologies; or, the Death of the Body Politic', in Patricia Ticineto Clough and Craig Willse (eds): *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 154 (emphasis in original).

²⁸ Colin Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 45-48.

²⁹ David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Sharpe *In the Wake*, Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2. ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2014).

³⁰ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1982), 111-112.

threat to the life of the white body, but which as a threat to life, may *come to give rather than take life*.³¹

The racialized body as threatening, and specifically a body that threatens to consume the white body, speaks to the continued salience of the zombie narrative in which the only thing worse than being killed and eaten by a zombie is becoming a zombie oneself.

This racialized threat specifically plays out in the space between life and death. Smith and Vasudevan, citing McIntyre and Nast, write, 'Under neoliberalism, the territorial space of the West, racialized as white, appears under threat from growing populations of brown and black bodies moving across the dividing lines between zones of life and death.'³² Set against an epistemological backdrop in which race has been signified in terms of being 'advanced' or 'backwards' in a socio-temporal sense, the sacrifice of racially-marked 'backwards' populations excluded from full humanity in service to white futures can be said to play out time and time again in zombie narratives. Zombies can then materialize as racialized objects of extermination and management, subject to biopolitical and *necropolitical* violence. Achille Mbembe describes necropolitics to correlate with a form of governmentality that seeks to govern the movement of people; either to immobilize them or to force them to scatter over broad areas that are not contained by the state. 'Populations' as category of governance in Foucauldian biopolitical analysis, are 'disaggregated into rebels, child soldiers, victims or refugees, or civilians incapacitated by mutilation or simply massacred on the model of ancient sacrifices, while the 'survivors,' after a horrific exodus, are confined in camps and zones of exception.'³³ In Achille Mbembe's words, under necropolitical regimes, 'weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*.'³⁴

In short, there is no 'race-neutral' way of adopting the figure of the zombie as not only is this figure deeply rooted in histories and current regimes of racialization in colonialism and slavery, but also the governance and management of life and death in the production of 'living dead' resonates with the current colonial occupations and state violence against racialized bodies.

'Real Life' Zombies and the Law

Because the zombies become forms of not-life to managed and exterminated outside of the bounds of 'normal life' and law in apocalyptic settings, they provide a way into to thinking through the common adoption of 'bare life' produced in a state of exception.³⁵ Michel Foucault's definition of racism as a 'way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the

³¹ Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 63

³² Sara Smith and Pavithra Vasudevan, 'Race, Biopolitics, and the Future: Introduction to the Special Section,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35 no. 2 (2017), 210-221, citing Michael McIntyre and Heidi J. Nast, 'Bio(necro)polis: Marx Surplus Populations, and the Spatial Dialectics of Reproduction and 'Race', ' *Antipode* 43 no. 5 (2011), 1465-1488.

³³ Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2003), 70.

³⁴ Ibid., 40. (emphasis in original)

³⁵ The category of 'bare life,' as theorized by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) has come to represent a generalized category of 'other' or politically marginalized, abandoned in much of critical international theory.

break between what must live and what must die,³⁶ also gives key themes for analyzing forms of inclusion and exclusion, power and violence in IR.

Specifically, in writing about exceptionality, bare life and biopolitics IR has, with notable exceptions, not been concerned with questions of race or gender.³⁷ The biopolitical frameworks of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault have been particularly fruitful for critical scholars in the post-9/11 world on the creation of various forms of 'bare life' and 'states of exception' particularly related to the security practices, the global war on terror, and migration/refugee policies, even if critical scholars have adapted these analytics and grammars of violence and politics for their own purposes.³⁸ Certainly biopolitical analyses have revealed important dynamics about the power relations that underpin liberal security governance; however, such analyses have the tendency to universalize the concept of 'bare life' or Foucault's all-too-brief discussion of racism from his lectures translated into English as '*Society Must Be Defended*' without considering the historical roots of these concepts or the relationship they have with gendering or racializing practices. Within critical work in IR, a key way this takes place has been the use of Foucault's biopolitics and his definition of racism as the ways in which biopolitics works in conjunction with the sovereign power of the modern state to produce the break between lives that are allowed to live and lives that must be taken in the name of allowing others to live. The zombie provides a window into the ways IR's theories about bare life and states of exception have further hidden the already racialized (and gendered) body that is susceptible to state violence and terror.

To bridge the racialized apparatus we have named the zombie and its embodiment in the space between life and death, we must turn to the law and the context that the zombie is unearthed in theory and practice. In considering the 'real life' zombies--those designed by violent practices of law as 'living dead'--we do not argue that the zombie genre can help us explain or understand these situations more clearly. Rather, the interplay between the racialized figure of the fictionalized zombie and the 'real world' politics of extermination and management of not-quite-life provides us with a rationale to understand the work that zombies are doing in IR—as well what critical interpretations

³⁶ Michel Foucault, '*Society Must Be Defended*' (New York: Picador, 2003), 254.

³⁷ See *inter alia*, Veronique Pin-Fat and Maria Stern, 'The Scripting of Private Jessica Lynch: Biopolitics, Gender and The 'Feminization' of the U.S. Military', *Alternatives* 30 (2005): 25-53; Lauren Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Christina Masters, 'Femina Sacra: The 'War On/of Terror': Women and the Feminine', *Security Dialogue* 40, no. 1 (2009): 29-49; Shampa Biswas and Sheila Nair, eds. *International Relations and States of Exception: Margins, Peripheries, and Excluded Bodies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Vivienne Jabri, 'Michel Foucault's Analytics of War: The Social, the International, and the Racial: Michel Foucault's Analytics of War', *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 67-81.

³⁸ See, amongst many other works of critical IR theory that engage with Foucault's and/or Agamben's biopolitics, Jenny Edkins and Veronique Pin-Fat, 'Through the Wire: Relations of Power and Relations of Violence', *Millennium* 34, no. 1 (2005): 1-24; Vivienne Jabri, 'War, Security, and the Liberal State', *Security Dialogue* 37 no. 1 (2006): 47-64; Michael Dillon, 'Governing Terror: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence', *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 7-28; Jef Huysmans, 'The Jargon of Exception—On Schmitt, Agamben and the Absence of Political Society', *International Political Sociology* 2, no. 2 (2008): 165-83; N. Vaughn-Williams, 'The Generalised Bio-Political Border? Re-conceptualising the Limits of Sovereign Power', *Review of International Studies*, 35 no. 4 (2009), 729-749; Reece Jones, 'Agents of Exception: Border Security and the Marginalization of Muslims in India', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27, no. 5 (2009): 879-97; Mark Neocleous, 'The Problem with Normality: Taking Exception to 'Permanent Emergency'', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 31 (2006); Andrew Neal, *Exceptionalism and the Politics of Counter-Terrorism: Liberty, Security, and the War on Terrorism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Sonja Buckel and Jens Wissel, 'State Project Europe: The Transformation of the European Border Regime and the Production of Bare Life', *International Political Sociology* 4, no. 1 (2010): 33-49; Brad Evans, 'Foucault's Legacy: Security, War and Violence in the 21st Century', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 413-33.

of the zombie genre we might offer. In short, we read zombie narratives as ‘world-making’, that is, as productive sites of engagement around issues of race, racialization, and international relations rather than ‘world-revealing’ works that simply reflect underlying dynamics of international relations.³⁹

The zombie can be conjured in the interplay between a Haitian belief system, the appropriation in Western culture, and the legal and governmental practices that produce the ‘living dead’. The zombie, as dead yet alive, is a depersonalized figure in law; however, it is depersonalized not for reasons of inherent attributes but because its spirit has been stolen. Colin Dayan reads the production of the legal personhood of the slave vis-à-vis a ritual of zombification: ‘The zombie phenomenon only makes sense in terms of the features of a well-defined personality who reaps punishment for ambition, greed, disrespect, or slander ... [F]ar from supernatural, zombies are experienced as highly contextualized spectacles of alienation intended to inspire horror in the mind of the community.’⁴⁰

Dayan distinguishes between *civil body*, as an artificial person in law who possesses himself and his property and the *legal slave* as the artificial person who exists as both subject and object, who is both self and property.⁴¹ Dayan charts the ways in which, via the law, the slave becomes legal person only through a fiction of deficit of reason or intellect: ‘in this ritual, the slave has been not only murdered, but gutted, dispossessed of whatever autonomy existed before the law recognized him.’⁴² As such, the slave was treated as ‘more or less human, not yet born and already dead.’⁴³ From such a definition, it is not hard to see why the zombie, as constitutively defined by its bodily appetites through with no will nor intellect to control, has a privileged relationship to the racialized body of the slave and its aftermath in penal societies.⁴⁴

The zombie as a not-quite-human challenges the ways in which the human has been defined in relationship to its dispossessed others. The zombie is a narrative genre and, we might argue, a genre of humanity that is outside of the Western figure of Man. Recent work in thinking through race and the question of the ‘posthuman’ have aided in making connections between the specificity of the body as distinct from its assumed form as white, male, and European, particularly from the way in which many versions of the ‘posthuman’ in theory take the Western figure of Man as the epitome of ‘human’.⁴⁵ From this analysis of the figure of the zombie as rooted in histories of racialization and dehumanization, we turn to a political analysis of the biopolitical ‘state of exception’ as the constitutive outside of the modern political order to look at the ways in which questions of race have been obscured within this framework. In particular, we turn to the work of Alexander Weheliye, who draws on the work of black feminists Sylvia Wynter and Hortense Spillers. Weheliye links the ways in which ‘the human’ has been produced as an object of knowledge in the West and the exclusion of blackness from that category. The coding of non-white subjects as lack or

³⁹ See also Kirby, ‘Political Speech.’

⁴⁰ Dayan, *Law is a White Dog*, 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 41.

⁴² Ibid., 55.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ On the legacies of slavery to contemporary racialized and sexualized regimes of violence in penal societies, see also Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism: Lawfare, Torture and the Racial-Sexual Grammars of Legitimate Suffering’, *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 43–62.

⁴⁵ Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, ‘Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism’, *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 669–685; Stefanie Fishel, *The Microbial State: Global Thriving and the Body Politic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

aberration in terms of biological definitions of what it means to be human, i.e., the construction of 'natural' differences that make whiteness the default condition of 'Man'. Bare life, for Weheliye, is not an end point for modern politics, but rather a way to understand how the human can continue to resist under extreme circumstances. The zombie, as a figure outside of the regime of Man, points us toward not only the erasure of racialization in terms of a generic 'state of exception' or figure of 'bare life', but of the possibilities of re-interpreting the zombie and post-apocalyptic narratives as providing an alternative mode for imagining 'living on' in the apocalypse.

The Zombie and the Flesh

Alexander Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* provides a major rethinking of the terms of biopolitics and the category of the human in relation to race and racializing assemblages. Conceiving of race and racialization as political relations which require a multitude of practices, discourses, technologies and that bar nonwhite subjects from entering the category of the human,⁴⁶ Weheliye provides a trenchant indictment of certain forms of biopolitical analysis that (re)produce the in-humanity of black subjects. Moreover, from this perspective, the category of the posthuman can be similarly critiqued for the way in which certain formations assume that all humans have equal access to status of 'western humanity' and the 'human'.

Weheliye posits the category of *habeas viscus* or 'you shall have the flesh' as a racialized genre of humanity that is not Western man's opposite (as in 'bare life'), but an alternative instantiation of humanity. In positing this assemblage of humanity, Weheliye follows Sylvia Wynter in unearthing the scientific and humanistic discourses that produce the subject of western man as a racialized subject while ignoring race, racism, and racializing assemblages that create race as a biological given, or a 'real object'.⁴⁷ Discourses like the universalization of 'bare life' as a political category can have the unintended consequence of reproducing race as a biological category outside of political relations. Weheliye writes, 'If racialization is understood not as a biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of sociological relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not quite humans, and nonhumans, then blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot.'⁴⁸ Figures such as the zombie that are not-quite human can be understood as racialized, and not only in terms of the genealogy of this figure, but precisely because of its ambiguous claim to humanity. The zombie, as 'the living dead' also represents a challenge to Foucault's oft-cited discussion of racism and the exceptional politics of state killing.

Foucault's work is notable for its lack of discussion of gender and the rarity of questions of colonialism, race, and racism, with one exception: a brief discussion of racism in '*Society Must be Defended*'.⁴⁹ In this work, Foucault writes that previous to the nineteenth century, racism 'functioned elsewhere',⁵⁰ but the question of racism became conceptually relevant once it reached Europe and

⁴⁶ Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* (Duke University Press, 1995) and Gayatri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁵⁰ Foucault, '*Society*', 254.

was exemplified in the purification politics of Nazi Germany. Foucault's definition of racism is that which distinguishes the separate operations of sovereign power and biopower; racism functions in the modern state as 'way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die.'⁵¹ Raced bodies can be killed or disallowed life. It is when the biopolitics of racism are combined with state mechanisms of sovereign power that racism becomes theoretically relevant for Foucault. Furthermore, as Weheliye claims, such a move to divide 'ethnic racism,' or the hatred between different ethnic groups and biopolitical racism, shies away from the critique of black feminists, such as Wynter, who insist that all modern racism is biological. Modern racism insists on the natural and, usually, evolutionary basis for the inferiority of targeted subjects. Both of these forms of racism rely upon similar racializing assemblages, but Foucault does not interrogate the production of racial difference and thus reinscribes racial difference as natural.⁵² Race disappears as a matter whose production should be enquired into. For Weheliye, black feminist theory can see the category of the flesh, in contrast, as an assemblage of racialization that can emphasize how the category of bare life is based upon racialized, sexualized, and gendered distinctions. Bare life, rather than bringing to light to a political category of modernity, aids in reproducing, silence, and hiding these crucial distinctions between those who are considered bare life and those who are not.

Importantly, the category of *habeas viscus*, or the flesh, is not created to replace 'bare life' or the camp with the plantation or slave ship as the hidden matrix of modern political life. Rather the term is meant as an 'afterlife' of bare existence, and as a way to understand political agency outside of white supremacist understandings of 'Man'. What is rebellion when enslaved in the camp or the prison, or on the slave ship or the plantation? 'The flesh, rather than displacing bare life or civil death, excavates the social (after)life of these categories. It represents racializing assemblages of subjection that can never annihilate the lines of flight, freedom dreams, practices of liberation, and possibilities of other worlds.'⁵³ The concept of *habeas viscus* provides an entry point into the rethinking of the question of agency, as a different conception of humanity. Weheliye draws our attention to ways of being (or not being) not-human and also not-living in biopolitical turns that 'exceptional' populations have been practicing centuries.

In contrast to bare life, [*habeas viscus*] insists on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life (Guantánamo Bay, internment camps, maximum security prisons, Indian reservations, concentration camps, slave plantations, or colonial outposts, for instance).⁵⁴

In its interrogation of the discourses of 'bare life' as part of a racializing assemblage, Weheliye's work pushes us to think beyond the biopolitical categories and analysis descended from Foucault and Agamben. How might we think differently about racialized realities in International Politics, in particular about the ways in which forms of life escape the embrace of the law? How does one define humanity in relationship to a legal order?

A key point emphasized in the book is the focus on the 'everyday,' or more mundane forms of suffering, rather than the exceptional. This type of suffering is not always captured by the stark

⁵¹ Ibid., 254.

⁵² Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 59-62.

⁵³ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 12.

dividing lines between politically qualified life and the 'bare life' defined as the exception. Weheliye writes

Because black suffering figures in the domain of the mundane, it refuses the idiom of the exception. Mobilizing suffering that results from political violence as a conduit to new forms of life, however, requires some spatial and emotional distance from comparativity and the exception, since both often contain trace elements of calculability that deem some forms of humanity more exceptional than others.⁵⁵

The concept of the flesh, which Weheliye takes from Hortense Spillers, 'constitutes a liminal zone comprising legal and extralegal subjection, violence, and torture as well as lines of flight from the world of Man in the form of practices, existences, thoughts, desires, dreams, and sounds contemporaneously persist in the law's spectral shadows.'⁵⁶ Put another way, though we may be held captive or enslaved, our visions of freedom persist. Might we then see a connection between Weheliye's critique of the category of 'Man' and its 'exceptions' and the figure of the zombie? What kinds of critical discourses around race and 'the exception' might be opened up through reading the figure of 'the zombie' in this light?

Habeas viscus, or the concept of the flesh thus pushes us to think not in terms of the biopolitics of life but of the necropolitics of life-in-death and death-in-life and in particular, from the 'myth' of the zombie to its racialized 'real world' manifestations: to those in the 'uncanny valley' of the zombies, or the 'walking dead' who are not 'human' but also not not-human. In fact, as Reynaldo Anderson argues, transatlantic slavery was the apocalypse and that survival continued into post-apocalyptic times with slavery in north and south America; however, the point of using the apocalypse as metaphor 'isn't to get lost in traumas of the past of present-day alienation,' but rather to use it as a frame for understanding and healing.⁵⁷ The text that aids in bringing these connections to life (or un-life), is the graphic novel written by Robert Kirkman and illustrated by Tony Moore, and the television show, AMC's *The Walking Dead*. Following Samuel Chambers's work on pop culture, we will not sum up or interpret the show and novel, but rather 'mine it for ways in which it participates in the cultural production' of, in this case, race theory in IR.⁵⁸

The Walking Dead as Theoretical Text

On the surface, AMC's *The Walking Dead*,⁵⁹ which has been the most popular television show with the 18-49 demographic in the US for years, and is also very popular globally,⁶⁰ reproduces, or

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 132.

⁵⁷ Ytasha L. Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013).

⁵⁸ Sam Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris), 2009.

⁵⁹ *The Walking Dead* released its landmark 150th issue in January 2016 after debuting in 2003 to an ever-growing readership. In 2011, the first 12 issues of the comic bound together as *The Walking Dead: Book 1* held the number one spot on *The New York Times* bestseller list along with *Book 2* at eighth and *Book 3* at fourth. AMC developed the television show based on the graphic novel in 2010, debuting it on Halloween night to an audience of millions. It became the highest rated basic cable drama in the 18-49 demographic and the highest rated original show on AMC. Currently in its seventh season, the US debut had 17 million viewers tune in live. Internationally, the season seven debut had an increase in viewership across 28 markets in Europe, Asia, and Latin America—the highest rated launch in Fox Distributors' history. The UK debut saw 1.43 million viewers with increased viewing in Italy, the Netherlands, Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

⁶⁰ Collen Kane, '7 Signs America Has Gone Crazy for *The Walking Dead*', *Fortune*, October 11, 2015. Accessed at <http://fortune.com/2015/10/11/walking-dead-tv/>. Last accessed 7 December 2016.

appears to reproduce, white supremacist and patriarchal tropes of the western. In *The Walking Dead*, ‘walkers’ (zombies) have brought an end to government and society as we know it, and pose an acute threat to the few who remain as fully living humans. The walkers exist with a ceaseless drive to consume human flesh. Rick, a horse-riding sheriff who we first identify as the protagonist, certainly does nothing to dispel this sense that we are in a lawless land in which protection against the racialized others can only be found by following the white male leader who will bring law and order. Some have argued *The Walking Dead* has a regressive idea of gender and relies on culturally prescribed ideas of ‘strong leader.’⁶¹ A return to basic life in these exceptional circumstances would necessitate losing all gender and racial progress.⁶²

The aim of this section is to destabilize this critique of *The Walking Dead* and use it to contribute to critical interpretive projects in IR. We posit that the zombie narrative (and *The Walking Dead* in particular) can be analyzed in such a way that the exceptional and racialized politics are not necessarily reproduced, but can be critically engaged with and perhaps something genre-crossing may come out of this engagement. The author of the graphic novel, from which the TV show is based, is explicit in his opinion that zombies reflect and question society and its beliefs:

To me the best zombie movies aren’t the splatter fests of gore and violence with goofy characters and tongue-in-cheek antics. Good zombie movie shows how messed up we are, and make us question our station in society...and our society’s station in the world. They show us gore and violence and all that cool stuff too... but there’s always an undercurrent of social commentary and thoughtfulness.

Give me ‘Dawn of the Dead’ over ‘Return of the Living Dead’ any day. To me zombie movies are thought-provoking dramatic fiction, on par with Oscar worthy garbage that’s rolled out year after year. Movies that make you question the fabric of our very society are what I like. And in good zombie movies...you get that by the truckload.⁶³

Our intent to is to take Kirkman’s provocation seriously and offer *The Walking Dead* as a theoretical text that can connect Weheliye’s (adaptation of Spillers’s) concept of ‘the flesh’ with IR. *The Walking Dead* can be read to reinforce IR’s founding fictions of anarchy, the state of nature and need for white patriarchal leadership; however, we would argue this text can also be read as undermining these traditional IR stories as well. *The Walking Dead* does not just reflect the reality of international politics, but rather it helps us reimagine political space in ways that surpass the existing conventions

⁶¹ Katherine Sugg, ‘*The Walking Dead*: Late Liberalism and Masculine Subjection in Apocalypse Fictions’, *Journal of American Studies* 49, no 4 (2015): 795.

⁶² Katherine Sugg uses two internet memes to illustrate this point: ‘Whether the Civil War or a zombie apocalypse, Mammy gonna take care of Miss Scarlett,’ and ‘Black guy living in a world with no police or government ... Still dies in prison (795). It does appear that Kirkman and Moore, in the first graphic novel, *Days Gone Bye*, are self aware of the gender issues. Donna, in the first pages of the comic, complains that the women have to go out and do the laundry and the men get to go hunting. ‘I just don’t understand why we’re the ones doing the laundry while they go out and hunt. When things get back to normal I wonder if we’ll still be allowed to vote?’ To which Linda, Rick’s wife answers, ‘I don’t know about you but I can’t shoot a gun...I’ve never even tried. To be honest, I wouldn’t trust any of those guys to wash my clothes. Rick couldn’t do it with the washing machine...he’d be lost out here... it isn’t about women’s rights... it’s about being realistic and doing what needs to be done.’ Donna answers ‘Whatever.’ But Michonne and Andrea, two other characters in the story, disrupt this view of gender later in the plot arc with their martial skills, sharpshooting ability, and survival instincts.

⁶³ Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore, *The Walking Dead: Volume I: Days Gone Bye* (Image Comics, 2013).

of IR's focus exceptional politics that erase race and the zombie narrative's explicit and implicit racial politics in history. We will address this as the politics of 'living on' later in the section.

While it is certainly true that *The Walking Dead* explores the themes of protection behind walls,⁶⁴ the supremacy of the strong, white man, whether of the 'protagonist' Rick and his leadership or the Governor, or even the town of Alexandria is, time and time again, revealed to be a false hope. While noting *The Walking Dead's* elements of the frontier ethos in American history and culture, the question of anarchy also looms large here, as has been noted in other IR treatments of the figure of the zombie.⁶⁵ Life post-zombie apocalypse resembles the Hobbesian fantasy of a 'state of nature' in which external authorities cannot be called upon to save people from the threat the zombie poses. This apocalyptic vision of the world arguably structures IR theory as a whole, as from Wight's vision of recurrence and repetition outside of any possible achievement of the 'good life'.⁶⁶ This realist vision of the world presents safety and the possibility of moving, if not to a utopia, but away from the hellish life that is 'nasty, brutish and short' in the strength of the sovereign and in security in terms of a bounded territory.

The fortified town of Woodbury most closely resembles the sovereign state of realist IR theory, with its autocratic 'Governor' promising protection to those who obey him. Ultimately, Woodbury serves as a brutal illustration of the protection racket. The gated community, representing an economic, social and potential racial utopia that several characters noted they could not even dream of living in even before the zombie apocalypse, turns out to be built upon moral compromises the main characters find unacceptable, to say the least, as well as posing a threat to the survivors who live in the nearby prison.⁶⁷

The theme of the state of exception and the Holocaust is also dramatized as the band of survivors on the road see signs on train tracks leading them to a promised site of safety called Terminus. Once they arrive at Terminus, they discover that the people of Terminus are engaged in cannibalism, a discovery that leads them to be held captive in a train car. The train tracks and cars evoke the transport of Jews and others to concentration camps. The cannibalism evokes Foucault's definition of racism, that is, 'the break between who must live and who must die'⁶⁸ with the victims killed so that others might live, in this case, off their flesh. Here, the flesh-eaters are not instinctually compelled like the zombies, but have a relatively sophisticated operation, with conveyor belts and

⁶⁴ The theme of 'protection' is a staple of feminist security studies scholarship; often linked to racialized discourses of 'white men' protecting 'good [white] women' from 'bad [racialized] men'. See inter alia, Eric M Blanchard, 'Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 4 (June 2003): 1289–1312; Iris Marion Young, 'The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State', *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society* 29, no. 2 (2003): 15–35; Laura Shepherd, 'Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration Discourse on the Attacks on Afghanistan Post 9/11', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no. 1: 19–41; Laura Sjoborg, 'Gendered Realities of the Immunity Principle: Why Gender Analysis Needs Feminism', *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006): 899–910; Lauren Wilcox, 'Gendering the 'Cult of the Offensive'', *Security Studies* 18, no. 2 (2009): 214–240; Lila Abu Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁶⁵ Daniel Drezner, 'Theories'; Jason J. Morrisette, 'Zombies, International Relations, and the Production of Danger: Critical Security Studies versus the Living Dead', *Studies in Popular Culture* Vol. 36, no. 2 (2014): 1–27; Payne, 'Laughing'.

⁶⁶ Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?' *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 35–48.

⁶⁷ Notably, before he assumed the role of 'Governor', this otherwise-unnamed character resembled a zombie himself, roaming with virtually no affect or speech, mourning the loss of his family. Assuming the masculine role of protector brought him back to life, so to speak.

⁶⁸ Foucault, 'Society,' 254.

factory equipment reminiscent of Arendt's description of the Holocaust as the production of dead bodies on an industrial scale.⁶⁹ And yet, like the earlier 'safe haven' of Woodbury, this likewise turns out not to provide respite, nor to define the parameters of life after the apocalypse. In these two instances, we can read the limitations of both realist and biopolitical interpretations for imagining how life 'lives on' in apocalyptic, but not exceptional, circumstances.

The Walking Dead shows islands of enclosures in the spaces that are, in our contemporary global life, cordoned off for various exceptionalized subjects: from island camps for refugees and asylum seekers, suspected 'terrorists' who still remain in indefinite detention in Guantánamo Bay (a former camp for Haitian refugees itself) to the vast prison and detention complex in the United States. *The Walking Dead* reverses the politics of freedom and movement by making the inhuman or less-than-human others into those with the freedom of movement, and the 'human' into those who can only find a measure of safety, and a life beyond survival, in walled-in communities.

Furthermore, in *The Walking Dead*, it isn't the zombie bite that transforms you into a zombie, but rather death. The zombie waits regardless and learning to live with this reality is the real lesson gained for the characters. As Kirkman writes, 'In a world ruled by the dead, we are forced to finally start living'.⁷⁰ As the creator, he wants to explore how people deal with extreme events and how these events change them.⁷¹ It is a book about *how humans survive*. The series itself is an experiment in longevity currently at issue #165 in March 2017. Rather than the characters dying, like in classic horror flicks, Kirkman wanted his to characters to keep living.

The idea of *The Walking Dead* is to stay with the character, in this case Rick Grimes, for as long as humanly possible. I want *The Walking Dead* to be a chronicle of years of Rick's life. We will never wonder what happens to Rick next, we will see it. *The Walking Dead* will be the zombie movie that never ends.⁷²

Weheliye's concept of *habeas viscus*, as a different genre of life outside of the structures of Man, with dreams of freedom, seems illustrated by the struggle of these survivors to live on in their all-too-ordinary apocalypse. In the idiom of 'slow death,' dying and the reproduction of life are the same.⁷³ Not utopia or dystopia, not subjection or agency/resistance, just living on and wearing out. In *The Walking Dead*, 'living on' is associated with always moving, always being displaced, and always killing despite the survivor's search for the enclosure that could be a permanent home. Slowly, one begins to realize that each of their temporary homes, from the Farm, to the town of Woodbury, to the prison, and Alexandria, that safety is always already temporary. Contra Stratton,⁷⁴ the zombies are not a signifier for displaced people; rather, the survivors are displaced. Their displacement becomes a key part of the reason why, in perhaps the signature moment of the series, Rick, the white male 'protagonist,' proclaims in episode 5:10 'Them': 'This is how we survive: We tell ourselves that we are the walking dead.' This is the only time that the show's title is referred to. Survival is taken to mean a kind of death in life. At this moment, the show embraces a persistent theme of zombie myths: the question of who the 'real' zombies are. Always on the run, the survivors are the

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973).

⁷⁰ Kirkman, back cover

⁷¹ Kirkman and Moore, *Days Gone Bye*.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 96.

⁷⁴ Jon Stratton, 'Zombie Trouble: Zombie Texts, Bare Life and Displaced People', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (June 1, 2011): 265–81.

perpetually displaced. This line also echoes the famous line ‘They are us,’ from *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), the second instalment of Romero’s Zombie trilogy, in which zombies represent the insatiable and destructive consumption of capitalism.

Steven Shaviro’s argument that zombies are not mirrors of social forces but instead are animated by social forces is what makes the zombie genre an instructive one for IR to reflect upon. This is not because the zombie genre illustrates how to manage or exterminate ‘Others’, but for the ways such reflections can tell us something about our own world and its possibilities. ‘The zombies do not...stand for a threat to social order from without. Rather, they resonate with, and refigure, the very processes that produce and enforce social order.’⁷⁵ While the zombie threat is usually portrayed as a contagion in which zombies reproduce by biting living humans who then transform into zombies, *The Walking Dead* displaces this biopolitical narrative by having the characters realize that the zombies do not only reproduce by biting and therefore contagion: all the humans are ‘infected’ so that when they die, they will become zombies whether or not their death is due to zombie attack. Everyone is thus a zombie in waiting, and the dead must have their brains destroyed in order not to resurrect as a zombie. Within *The Walking Dead*, life and death, human and zombie, become increasingly intertwined.

The survivors of the apocalypse of *The Walking Dead* arguably can be said to subvert some of the conventions of the zombie genre by living on, and perhaps even living on outside the terms of humanity to which they had previously been accustomed. In the sixth season, the survivors living in Alexandria become uncomfortable with their mundane, everyday lives. Sasha, an African-American woman, carting dead zombies into a mass grave lies down with them in silence (‘Conquer’). Or for the white, teenaged Enid who sneaks outside the gates of the Alexandria Safe Zone to be among the ‘walkers,’ while remarking that the world belongs to the zombies now, not the survivors (‘Try’).

Such a reading of the survivors in this apocalyptic scenario would suggest an idea of subjectivity more akin to ‘the flesh’ than ‘bare life’. These post-apocalyptic stories of ‘living on’ outside of the terms of ‘normal politics’ have more than symbolic resonance. For example, Ytasha L. Womack, writes that post-apocalyptic tales can be used for strategic planning about the future of African American communities who live in abandoned urban centres in New York City, New Orleans after Katrina, Cincinnati, and Detroit. Activist Adrienne Maree Brown recognizes that ‘there are people living in places that we associate with the end of the world, but it’s not the end of the world, it’s the beginning of something else. An economy based on relationships and not the monetary value you can place on something else.’⁷⁶ Brown uses Octavia Butler’s series *The Parables*, as a ‘template for change agency in desperate communities.’ These books also have a mixed-race group of survivors in a dystopian world travelling together, in this case, from Southern California to the Pacific Northwest in a northern route that recalls escaped slaves travelling to freedom or the ‘great Migration’ north after the end of slavery to the industrial north. Like the survivors in *The Walking Dead*, the characters in the *Parable* books (led by a young black woman) only temporarily find safety and community behind communal walls; their destiny is to embrace movement and change. Brown’s workshop on emergent strategies asks, through this telling of the apocalypse: ‘How do we approach the strategic planning we’re all supposed to do if we accept, and come to love, the emergent power of changing conditions?’⁷⁷ When the exception and the apocalyptic prove all-too-normal, perhaps the figure of

⁷⁵ Shaviro, *Cinematic Body*, 87.

⁷⁶ Womack, *Afrofuturism*, 180

⁷⁷ Ibid., 179.

the zombie can provide insight into how to live on in ways that don't reproduce the racialization of the subject of Man.

Conclusion

Critical discourse in IR post-9/11 has made questions of biopolitics and exceptionality central to theorizing political violence and embodied subjectivity, while at the same moment, the zombie as a popular culture genre has undergone resurgence in recent decades. We have argued that the zombie as a figuration is itself a component of racializing assemblages within IR and built upon this argument to suggest that, as a posthuman figure of liminality between life and death, critical readings of zombie texts can point to alternative ways of theorizing subjects of International Relations that take us from the exceptionalist politics of the post-9/11 era to the very ordinariness of the horror of 'living on' after the apocalypse. *Habeas viscus* represents not the inflexible, immobile category of 'bare life', but racialized mobilities of populations deemed 'exceptional' which are not 'exceptions' to the normal state of being (Western man), but different genres of humanity.

Additionally, we have suggested that a reading of *The Walking Dead* can be used move past the use of the zombie genre as a mirror for IR, particularly for the ways in which they centre the politics of the exception. The zombie, as a common genre for engaging IR, represents a racialized figure that, in its 'fictional' nature, conceals its own racialization. Considering the roots of the zombie in the modern slave economy and in the politics of exception and extermination serves to provide the grounds for a re-thinking the ways in which IR as a discipline has reproduced racial divisions in the very ways it considers its subject of the human and its others. Without suggesting this is the only possible reading of *The Walking Dead*, we have argued that the exceptionalist politics that the zombie genre signals a more general problem with the category of bare life and used Weheliye's provocation of *habeas viscus* as a mode of thinking about the ways in which the question of race has structured the politics of the human and the exception. This includes the ways in which agency and resistance are reconfigured to enable us to contemplate ways of living on that do not depend on reinstating a human subject whose existence is predicated upon hierarchical distinctions of gender, sexuality, and race. The zombie may also have a wider lesson to teach: humans may have to relearn how to live ethically on a compromised, contaminated planet.⁷⁸ The future may well ask this of us. Our present certainly does.

⁷⁸ Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).