

## Chapter Ten

# Monsters of Capital

### *Vampires, Zombies, and Consumerism*

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The Gothic world of the undead and the materially bound discourse of economics are intrinsically linked. Although, at first glance, the two could seem far apart, they connect through the use of imagery and metaphor. In *Capital*, his famous work of political economy, Karl Marx often uses Gothic terminology to discuss the workings of capitalism. Marx is particularly fond of employing metaphors of the undead to explain the nature of capitalist economies, and in this group, vampires and zombies are privileged creatures. Marx likens the capitalist to a vampire on several occasions, the idea of “draining workers” being unavoidable: “Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.”<sup>1</sup> And while the power and control of the capitalist are identified with the vampire, the factory workers—alienated and exploited—find symbolic representation as zombies: the unfair division of labor, Marx contends, converts “the worker into a living appendage of the machine.”<sup>2</sup> The politics of consumer capitalism seem to aptly mesh with undead folklore to generate a conceptual association between acquisition and satisfaction, production and desire. Although *Capital* was first published 1867, the conceptualization of labor, economic gain, and commodities in Marx’s text draws attention to the important connections between representation, identity, and consumerism that are still pertinent to the economic context of the modern day.

Implicit in Marx’s perspective is a critique of consumerism: that our consumption choices may not reflect our own needs, but the needs of the system. Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen have long claimed that consumerism “puts leisure, beauty, and pleasure in the reach of all,” so that the logic of

consumption is “embroiled in our intimacies,” it is “the insatiable urge for new things.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, not all forms of consumerism are alike. While the nature of open markets provides buyers with an array of desirable commodities, services, and purchasable “experiences,” price still remains an important definitive characteristic in the capitalist game.<sup>4</sup> So, just as not all products are alike, neither are all consumers. On the one hand, we have the small circle of the upper classes, the consumer elite, who can indulge in acquiring objects that can signal the owner’s high social status. These are the practitioners of what I like to call “high consumerism,” a way of buying and displaying that is beyond both the financial and the social capabilities of the masses. On the other hand, we also find various instances of “low consumerism,” a phenomenon that is not only more economically accessible, but also connected to mass production. This engagement with consumerism is mostly associated with the working and middle classes, where quantity and common “branding” become important cogs in the system of social identification.<sup>5</sup>

Taking the conceptual associations between monstrosity, commodities, and social status as a point of departure, this chapter discusses the role of zombies and vampires as two different critiques of contemporary consumerism. To say that vampires and zombies act as metaphors for consumerism is, of course, not new. Academic scholarship and populist views alike have been keen to link both undead creatures to critiques of consumer capitalism, probably a legacy of Marx’s own metaphorical use of them in his works. On the one hand, we have vampires, often portrayed as rich and surrounded by beautiful, expensive objects; on the other, we have zombies, undead creatures often depicted as dispossessed and detached, who are forever cursed to wear the literal and figurative rags of their former human lives. My perspective, however, places an emphasis on behavioral psychology and synthesizes a number of socioeconomic perspectives in order to uncover how the monsters of fiction are distorted, Gothicized images of the consumerist “monsters” who shape the real world. Focusing on the ways in which the two types of undead are portrayed in contemporary narratives—ranging from literary fiction to film and television—my analysis aims to show how these fantastical consumer “monsters” reflect cultural anxieties and desires.<sup>6</sup>

## IMMORTAL LUXURIES

The term “luxury” provides a common ground for the modern experience of the vampire. Even traditional literary vampires were known to enjoy the experience of lavish surroundings. Count Dracula himself lived in castle that, although left to ruin and decay for the most part, still communicated the former grandeur of the vampire’s aristocratic status. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872) preferred to hunt young ladies from the upper-class

layers of society and to dwell in sumptuous surroundings; similarly, Varney the vampire—in James Malcolm Rymer's novel of the same name (1847)—showed a distinct interest in luxury living, and his actions were often motivated by monetary concerns. While the association between vampires and aristocratic luxury was common in nineteenth-century narratives, it was the twentieth century that successfully showed the vampire as a creature attuned to the workings of consumerism, a “new monster” who enjoyed the finest things in life and whose bloody appetites were often likened, metaphorically speaking, to the vampiric nature of capitalism. Marx's famous definition of capitalism as a vampire-like parasite naturally provided an important jumping-off point for critics and fictional writers alike in constructing the vampire's connection to lavishness, wealth, and surplus value. And, in the past forty years, vampires truly have become creatures of affluence and taste, accustomed to the aesthetic properties of expensive commodities.<sup>7</sup>

In Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* (1976–2003), vampires are often described as sophisticated creatures with an aristocratic taste for extravagance and indulgence, perennially interested in acquiring wealth. The vampire Lestat—arguably the central character in the long-running series—is portrayed as loving expensive objects and opulent living; spanning over two centuries, Lestat's life is characterized mainly by his predatory, bloodthirsty endeavors, on the one hand, and his consumerist, luxury-obsessed habits, on the other. Acquiring a large fortune that will allow him an aristocratic lifestyle is seemingly the main reason that moves Lestat to approach, and later turn into a vampire, Louis de Pointe du Lac, the narrator of the now famous novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). In *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), Lestat's consumer propensities become even more obvious as the vampire is transformed into a rock star, a figure in itself intrinsically connected to the world of ostentatious display and consumption. We are told on a number of occasions that he loves “luxurious things” and that all his possessions speak of the remarkable individual he truly is. Lestat's luxury living indicates an emphasis on the symbolic nature of possession. The dynamics at work here are reminiscent of Jean Baudrillard's theory of *sign value*, a term denoting the value afforded to an object because of the social prestige that it imparts on its possessor rather than the utilitarian value that would be provided by its primary use.<sup>8</sup> Far from being an “aristocrat” in the ancient, European sense, Lestat enjoys the lavish lifestyle of the socioeconomic “1 percent” by being both the producer (in the form of his music) and consumer of expensive commodities—designer cars, clothes, and houses—in the sign value-obsessed context of the 1980s.

A similar instance of luxury-living, brand-obsessed vampires can be found in Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* (1981), where yuppie vampires—including the truly irresistible Miriam Blaylock—commonly enjoy the extravagance of consumerism, where designer labels become almost an exten-

sion of the vampire itself. Miriam's consumerist tendencies are further amplified in the film adaptation of the novel directed by Tony Scott in 1983. Here, the visual medium of film proves very efficient in communicating vividly the capitalism inherent in the vampire's existence and the high-consumer habits that define the creature at an economic level. Designer brands are everywhere, and the unmistakable logos of Dior and Chanel announce the vampire's presence in a way that is perhaps even more eloquent than fangs and blood. In these 1980s examples, vampires are trendy, consumer-obsessed personifications of the age and pointedly "indict the yuppie consumerism encouraged by American economic politics of the time."<sup>9</sup> The rampant consumerism of characters such as Lestat and Miriam sets them apart from the common human not only in social and evolutionary terms, but also in economic terms, highlighting the vampire as a figure of distinction—to use a term favored by Pierre Bourdieu—within the wider landscape of consumer and popular culture.

While both Lestat in the *Vampire Chronicles* and Miriam in *The Hunger* may pretend to "live" a normal life with their human acquaintances, their consumer habits and true way of life remove them from the everyday socioeconomic context and place them in the sphere of *conspicuous consumption*. This term, coined in 1899 by economist Thorstein Veblen, is useful in identifying the yuppie vampires as belonging to a higher order of consumer, an upper-class group for whom the acquisition of expensive goods is part of the display of their social status. Conspicuous consumption is the spending of money and the acquisition of luxury goods in order to display economic power. That economic power translates into higher social status for the conspicuous consumer, whose public display of wealth makes him the source of not only envy, but also desire.<sup>10</sup> Luxury, therefore, equals prestige. Although Veblen's understanding of conspicuous consumption was based on his analysis of nineteenth-century socioeconomics, the term still has relevance in the late twentieth century and, arguably, the twenty-first, where significant material improvements—including the increasing disposable income of the larger middle-class group of the Western world—have allowed extravagant items to become a sign of prestige. This is particularly pertinent in view of the development of brand-extended, "masstige" versions of everyday luxury that are now within the reach of many.<sup>11</sup>

In our contemporary twenty-first century, the vampire's lavish consumption has become the order of the day. Far from simply being an extravagant occurrence, consumerism in the vampire's life is not only unavoidable, but to be expected. The media-rich environment of the post-2000 era has truly made a virtue of portraying vampires as incredibly wealthy. Across the representational spectrum, vampires are creatures of means, surrounded by expensive commodities and living in luxury. Although, when it comes to the vampire's possessions, different and disparate examples can be found (and it

would be unwise to generalize), it is reasonable to suggest that vampires are “upper class” in their tendencies.<sup>12</sup> The list of rich, consumerist vampires in contemporary media is long and plentiful; examples range from the extravagant specimens in *True Blood*—a television series adapted from Charlaine Harris’s well-known *Sookie Stackhouse* novels (2001–2003)—to the sexy, trendy vamps in L. J. Smith’s *The Vampire Diaries*, both in their ongoing literary and televised incarnations. On the silver screen, vampires are portrayed as rich and powerful in the *Blade* trilogy (1998–2004), the *Underworld* film series (2003–2012), and Timur Bekmambetov’s *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012), based on the 2010 novel of the same name. The connection between high consumerism and vampires is so well established that Rob Latham has gone as far as labeling the creature as the “exalted representative” of economic “difference” and perpetual “accumulation.” The vampire, Latham suggests, is an “insatiable consumer.”<sup>13</sup>

Where mainstream examples are concerned, however, the high-consumerist existence of vampires is nowhere more obvious than in the popular and truly unavoidable *Twilight* saga. The vampires in this storyline—both in their original incarnations in Stephenie Meyer’s novels and in their cinematic adaptations—are portrayed as the ultimate creatures of affluence. From the aristocratic creatures of Europe to the nouveau riche families of the New World, vampires are depicted as having an immense wealth at their disposal, evidently granted to them by their long-existing, often centennial status. Winning in popularity and attention is the Cullen family—captained by the youthful-looking Edward—a group of blood-bonded vampires who fill the protagonist role in the series. The Cullens live in a large mansion with high ceilings and wooden floors; the mansion, however, is not their only foray into real estate, as we are told they own luxury properties all over the world. They drive expensive cars and wear the latest designer clothes. The visual advantages of the cinematic medium make the Cullens’ wealth even more explicit in the film adaptation, where the brands are granted more attention, and Edward Cullen is seen driving a Volvo XC60, a custom-made car sold only in Europe. The European nature of the car here loudly communicates its status as a luxury item for the American audience. The Cullens’ wealth has been depicted as so immense that *Forbes* magazine ranked Carlisle Cullen—the patriarch of the family—as the richest (fictional) man of the year in 2010, the second richest in 2011, and the third richest in 2012, his accumulated fortune amounting to \$36.3 billion.<sup>14</sup> An impressive figure for a three-hundred-year-old vampire who pretends to be a human doctor at the local hospital in the small American town of Forks, Washington.

The custom-designed nature of the Cullens’ houses, cars, and even clothing removes them from the reach of the middle classes who, even with substantial disposable income, cannot hope to match the uncountable wealth of the vampires, whose designer luxury is customized, personalized, overex-

pensive, and, therefore, unattainable. Mark Tungate contends that luxury itself is inseparable from notions of “authenticity” and “engaging experiences” that, in turn, are intrinsically connected to the “consumer sensibilities” of our contemporary moment.<sup>15</sup> One might be tempted here to see the contemporary vampires’ engagement with luxury commodities as a form of rat race, a status competition that forces them to continually search for better things, better objects, better representations of themselves in the world of commodities. This would place the vampires within the framework of Robert Frank’s theory of unsustainable accumulation. Frank describes an “expenditure cascade” in which the effects of status-seeking economic behavior ripple through all layers of the economic scale, causing the system to rely on untenable competitive consumption.<sup>16</sup> Status is seen in a negative light by Frank, who perceives it as the main cause of excessive and potentially self-destructive behavior in society.

In this light, the vampires’ overly active, status-driven consumer tendencies could be perceived as unsustainable, their unrestricted nature posing an untenable aim for the wider economic framework. And yet, contemporary twenty-first-century vampires—the Cullens in particular, but also examples from *True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries*—seem to take their wealth for granted; these vampires have moved on from the money-driven, trademark-obsessed behavior of their ancestors. The Cullens’ accumulation may be conspicuous in that it displays status, but that social visibility is only evident through the eyes of others. It is not portrayed as a “negative” trait: it is aspirational for those who look upon it and yet conspicuously unmentioned by the vampires themselves. In this sense, the Cullens’ affluence does not “cascade”—to use the term favored by Frank—through the economic structure, but relies on a seemingly self-regenerating, nucleus-based system whose source, like that of the vampire itself, is left unchallenged.

The Cullens’ lavish, taken-for-granted lifestyle—in its obvious divergence from the realistically achievable—is symptomatic of a socioeconomic framework that not only distinguishes individuals in terms of ownership, but showcases a new category of consumer: the consumer whose prestige is beyond simply being “upper class,” but is in fact “without class.” It is the economy of the inaccessible, the exclusive domain of an elite whose luxury does not simply lie in owning and flaunting expensive brands—as it would still have done in the late twentieth century—but in accessing a category of branding that goes, paradoxically, beyond the brand. While brands may now be within the reach of the masses, the personalization of the Cullens’ objects places their activities within the postmodern realm of experience, where the real luxury is not simply to be found in possessing, but also in familiarizing the excessive.

## UNDEAD COMMODITIES

While the high consumerism of vampires is indulged in numerous contemporary representations, the zombies' narrative of low consumerism is also clearly addressed by examples in popular culture. Evocative links between consumer capitalism and the "zombification" of everyday modern life are clearly made in George A. Romero's 'Dead' series. The series quickly gained popularity with audiences, and Romero is regarded as a very influential figure in establishing the view of the zombie we still hold today. Romero's work can be credited with distancing the zombie from its folkloristic origin as a magically commanded, soulless individual and transforming into a walking, rotting corpse obsessed with consuming human flesh. And even though variations on the theme have been produced over the years—from *28 Days Later* (2002) and *World War Z* (2013) to television's *The Walking Dead*—the impact of the Romeroesque, corpse-like creatures changed things forever in the zombie landscape.

Romero's innovation within "zombie lore" also allows the zombie to act as a contemporary critique of consumer capitalism.<sup>17</sup> The unavoidable connection between zombie behavior and shopping mania is particularly evident in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). Set in a suburban shopping mall, the film offers a not-so-veiled critique of the consumer-obsessed culture that has become a distinctive characteristic of Western life. *Dawn of the Dead* shows the zombies drawn to the mall, the former "wonderland of consumption,"<sup>18</sup> where the location recalls faint human memories of material pleasure that they cannot help but covet. In true Romero style, the zombies shuffle through the mall's darkened interior and roam its halls in search of something they cannot find, animated—or, perhaps, reanimated?—by the call of the popular shopping location. The value of the mall as not only a capitalist center but also a social venue is difficult to ignore. In the movie, the character Steve gives a clear explanation of why the zombies are drawn to the location: "It's a kind of instinct, a memory [of] what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives." The zombies in *Dawn of the Dead* are drawn back to the mall by what Matt Bailey calls "a deeply embedded sense of place."<sup>19</sup> Deprived of their lives, the zombies seek solace and a sense of connection in a location that, when they still breathed, represented the height of social interaction and the center of their desire-filled consumer existence.

The certainty offered by the mall—at least, to its zombie inhabitants—is counteracted by the consumption-deprived wider context of the film. The United States—and, it is suggested, most of the Western world—has descended into anarchy. Zombies have overtaken the country and destroyed everyday life as it was known. All that remains of the America that was—with all its political, cultural, and social power—are the historical signs of its world dominance: in *Dawn of the Dead*, the shopping mall functions as a

monument to the consumer culture that collapsed.<sup>20</sup> The suburban nature of the mall is placed in stark contrast to the decayed nature of the cities. When civilization was at its peak, the mall was a representation of convenience, cleanliness, and comfort, a core of shopping dreams that made life easy and carefree for the willing consumer. After the zombie apocalypse, the mall continues to exercise its appeal. Overtaken by dead creatures, the shopping center provides a destination for the roaming, stumbling zombies—evocative, heedless creatures that are all too apt to mirror the nature of the mindless consumer.

This object-based sense of zombie identification is not an exclusive characteristic of Romero's films, but it has set a representational mold that is visible in the behavior of zombies in recent films. A good example is *Warm Bodies* (2013), directed by Jonathan Levine. The movie—which acts, among other things, as a contemporary adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, focusing on the unlikely romance between a zombie boy and a human girl—continues to portray the zombie as an undead creature, detached from the world, whose only interest seemingly lies in eating flesh. A note of consciousness comes from the narrative voice of the main zombie character, R, who roams the halls of an abandoned airport, together with a horde of shuffling zombie companions. R comments on how his existence as a corpse disconnects him from the world, as he is “unable to say much of anything.”

In *Zombie Economics*, an important text centered on behavioral economics, John Quiggin pointedly argues that “every sustained period of growth in the history of capitalism has led to the proclamation of a new era.”<sup>21</sup> This new era is often the culmination of the most distinctive features of capitalism and mirrors the context in which it thrives. *Warm Bodies* suggests that the new era of contemporary consumer capitalism is, somewhat uncannily, the “zombie era.” At the height of its development, high-tech consumer capitalism could only collapse into an era of stillness and stagnation, where the common consumers—driven by their desire to own expensive gadgets and to be in charge of their own means of communication—could also lose sight of themselves and therefore cause the capitalist system to implode into an aimless scheme. An evocative symbolization of this process appears when R imagines what it was like “before,” when people could actually communicate and enjoy each other's company. As the zombies shuffle around, the surroundings are quickly replaced by an image of the time “before.” Ironically, people are portrayed as busily walking around, not making any kind of contact with their fellow man. Every individual is engrossed in some sort of technological device; smartphones rule the scene, and no one attempts to make any form of conversation with others. The critique of contemporary society offered by Levine is not subtle but still has visual power: people are “zombified” by technology, their relationship with objects of desire—not to mention, of course, the communication network, which is, in itself, a power-

ful consumer presence—detaches them from any form of interpersonal relationship. In the paradoxically disconnected world of the consumer network, the only certainty that remains is that of the commodity, the signified presence that speaks loudly of the value of the individual in contemporary economies. The clear suggestion in the movie is that, at some point, these certainties collapsed, as did the assurance of consumer capitalism. The “zombified consumer” led the way to the actual zombie, a creature of lost consciousness and economic passivity. In this sense, *Warm Bodies* provides a view of the zombie that is not only reminiscent of the Romeroesque tradition, but also offers an even clearer and more explicit critique of the impact of consumer capitalism in a time of globalized, networked existence.

Although the zombies in *Warm Bodies* maintain their basic characteristics and seemingly human form, they are unable to function as humans. The only hint of what they used to be is their clothing, a powerful representational commodity that allows R to engage in a guessing game, uncovering the presence of “a janitor,” “a personal trainer,” and “the rich son” of a powerful CEO. Although metaphorically stripped bare of their identities, the zombies are still catalogued by their clothes, powerful communicative mediums that maintain their function in the zombie world, just as they did before the wider civilization collapsed. The zombies’ old and ragged clothes expose how, as Michel de Certeau would put it, the everyday use of commodities makes explicit the existing “models of action” that continuously determine the choices of the consumer.<sup>22</sup> Even in the zombie world, clothing functions as an agent of social practice, and an economic identification that is proper to both the personal and collective everyday.

The signified importance of objects—particularly conceived as commodities—is made ever more explicit in the film when R is revealed to be a collector of mementos from the time “before.” R has commandeered an abandoned plane and filled it with masses of knickknacks—from snow globes to old vinyl records and Blu-ray discs of old zombie movies. Although R has not technically purchased the objects, he is still animated by a sense of acquisition and possession that highlights his behavior as low consumerist. He enjoys his time surrounded by these commodities, as they give him a sense of the self he has lost: to put it simply, these consumable objects give R a sense of identity. It is not by chance that his bonding with the human girl Julie begins through these desirable objects, as though to say that, while unable to establish a connection—in the interpersonal sense—the two find a way of relating through the social meaning imbedded in commodities. This way of dealing with commodities is reminiscent of what Grant McCracken calls *possession rituals*. According to McCracken, through the collecting, comparing, and flaunting of objects, individuals are able to express themselves within the bounds of social experience.<sup>23</sup> In this framework, R’s collection and flaunting of desirable objects allow him to extract the meaningful

properties that have been invested in the consumer goods.<sup>24</sup> Even in the postapocalyptic wasteland of zombification, commodities continue to exercise their appeal for those who do not have upward mobility on the socioeconomic scale.

The continuing impact of commodities in *Warm Bodies* suggests that the zombies are still subject to forms of what is commonly known as *social programming*. In behavioral psychology, this term refers to the set of rules and regulations that each individual learns and conforms to in order to fit in society. Learning these rules—so as to become a functioning part of society—is known as the “socialization process,” a careful shaping of individual sensibilities and behaviors that, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi argues, aims to produce “responsible citizens.”<sup>25</sup> People become passive entities and therefore tend to accept the social framing of particular situations, ones that dictate how they should act, what they should like, and what goals (if any) they should pursue.

Social programming has a particular bearing on the economic behavior of the individual within society. The socialization of the individual, within the everyday framework of late capitalism, prescribes that people will be driven to crave and possess endless amounts of commodities in order to feel satisfied and fulfilled. Csikszentmihalyi suggests that economic forces, such as manufacturers, merchants, and advertisers, “program” individuals into spending their earnings on commodities with an idealized consumer value. And although the messages of social adjustment can be very different, Csikszentmihalyi goes on to say, the outcome is always the same: they make people “dependent on a social system” that “exploits” their energies “for its own purposes.”<sup>26</sup> Gratification becomes inextricably interlinked with commodities, and this makes people vulnerable to a form of existence that pivots on the endless consumption of goods.

The promise of happiness, however, can never be fulfilled; commodities, it soon becomes obvious, can scarcely satisfy the emotional needs of the individual. Therefore, in both the psychological and economic sense, socially programmed people are left forever wanting, forever unfilled, forever unhappy. They are but passive shells, low consumers of capitalist desires: they are, to put it simply, socioeconomic zombies. The effects of social framing, in the economic and emotional sense, are metaphorically uncovered not only in *Warm Bodies*, but also in earlier examples such as *Dawn of the Dead*, where zombies continue to live their passive, socially programmed existence, one that demands their constant engagement with commodities in search of a sense of happiness and fulfillment that, sadly, can never be achieved.

In *Warm Bodies*, the zombies’ drone-like, passive role in the consumer cycle is exposed when, recalling the historically consumerist zombies of *Dawn of the Dead*, R continues to perform the low consumer role, collecting commodities even if little satisfaction can be obtained from it. R’s actions are

closely reminiscent of Csikszentmihalyi's view of the fully programmed individual, who desires "only the rewards" that society has agreed "he should long for."<sup>27</sup> It is clear that a certain element of nostalgia for life moves R's activities, and there is no denying that the film takes a more positive stance on his retro commodities than it does on the high-class amenities of the humans, who live a detached and unachievable existence in the zombie-free safe havens. Nonetheless, R's desirable objects and his obsession with collecting and comparing highlight his place on the consumer ladder: the zombie is at the bottom of the consumer scale, the wishful thinker of the economy, plagued by a social emptiness that no object—as fanciful as it might be—will ever be able to fill.

### BOTTOM-FEEDERS AND TOP-FEEDERS

As economic frameworks are uncovered through the powerful and evocative metaphor of the Gothic undead, the wealth of vampires emerges in stark contrast to the zombies' possession deficiencies, a commercial tragedy of richness versus scarcity. Operating on two different levels of both economy and sociality, zombies and vampires function as apt metaphors for consumer relations in our world. Their behavior resonates so vividly with the Western context—deeply animated by commercialization—that it is easy to imagine zombies and vampires as real creatures. This conclusion is tied to visualizing vampires and zombies as exaggerations of certain types of existence in the real world. Vampires represent the elite upper classes, their high consumerism visible in their luxury, custom-made items. By contrast, zombies exemplify the working and middle classes, obsessed with being surrounded by objects and zones of consumption, and blissfully unaware of the effects that such behavior entails. Subjected as they are to the capitalist culture industry, the consumer activities of the undead derive "from the collective unconscious" to expose and shape the inner workings "of mass-consumption."<sup>28</sup> Zombies and vampires, therefore, emerge as apt mediums for uncovering the reality of consumer economies in the our contemporary world.