

ENGLISH: WHOSE REALITY?

Visual Prompt: Zombies



Usher's latest song "DJ got us falling in love again" contains the line "Thank God the week is done. I feel like a zombie gone back to life." This quietly reminds us of our society, and how our jobs and position in it are often devoid of purpose. We are for all intents and purposes shuffling like zombies through the daily grind, going through the motions, believing what we are taught to believe, and then, rising and repeating each day. There is a certain numbness associated with this, and is a major factor in the rise of the new age disease of depression and for suicide rates and drug use to be rising (especially in the case of corporations). It is only when this routine is broken, as Usher suggests, that we feel alive again. Distancing us from our jobs, from the form filling, compartmentalised office life we can regain a sense of ourselves again.

In the visual medium, George A Romero attempts to capture this feeling through the very literal metaphor of zombies. His film Dawn of the Dead sees hordes of the undead wandering around a shopping mall. None of them seem to have a purpose, none seem to know what they want, but are merely shuffling around waiting to find something that catches their eye. Given its horror genre, this happens to be human flesh. Yet, the analogy is clear – we are zombies who simply consume, consume and consume. Be it from the latest iPad or that cute set of red shoes that you just *have* to buy; we don't question our impulses but merely feast upon the flesh of the world constructed by advertisers.

Naturally the other implication is aligned with Usher's message, in that, for all intents and purposes, we are zombies. Our lives are driven by the need to make money, as we can then spend it on things. The reason we want to do so is contrived – it adds direction and purpose to our lives. In a consumerist society it is the singular goal; only a few dare tread from this and follow their ambitions and dreams. These people are admired for their courage because throughout their journey they have been pressured into doing things that they didn't want to do; forced into doing a job in medicine or law because that would mean that a tsunami of wealth is on the horizon. Yet in face of this adversity, they withstood the pressure of society on their shoulders and subsequently formed part of the very few humans left on this earth.

For the rest of us, we are left to wonder the narrow (and windowless) corridors of our lives – eternally chasing the carrot dangling in front of us. Sadly, if we ever do get a fleeting chomp at the prized vegetable, we are energized to want more. It is one of the greatest paradoxes of humanity – the idea that the more money we have, the more we want. We can't be happy with what we have,

no, like the zombies we must feed; we live off the carrots. Our appetite for it cannot be merely sufficed with just one, but ten... twenty... millions! Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our life then is that the carrot is in fact plastic. It's a contrived entity, there because it needs to be, serving as a relative reference point to judge yourself by. Tolkien in his Epic LOTR trilogy satirised man's relationship with money, with his ghoulish-esque figure of Gollum repeating the lines "precious... PRECIOUS!" with reference to the One Ring. Clearly given the reverence placed on it in the stories from all parties concerned, Tolkien is having a playful jab at man's relationship with his demigod – money.

In the end though, there is no argument against money. Money is the reason I can make such arguments through education, it made this essay possible through a computer. The pseudo-communist ideals shown throughout this essay don't work in society because it's a dog-eat-dog world, again, reminding us of our zombie like society. The world would literally stop turning without it. A world without money is one that is hard to imagine. How would anything work? Why would we be working? A simple answer to this is in line with communism and would simply state that we would be working for society and not for individual gain. Ah, but then there is human nature. Our need to compete. This innate desire is why such well-founded ideas fall apart as shown in George Orwell's Animal Farm, that is, there are always people looking to exploit others for personal gain. It is thus impossible to challenge such a well-established entity as money, and one can project that this love story will continue for long into the foreseeable future.