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**Evoluce zombie v postkoloniálním světě: Od Day of
the Triffids a 28 Days Later po The Walking Dead**

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**Evolution of the Zombie in a Post-colonial World:
From Day of the Triffids and 28 Days Later to The
Walking Dead**

BACHELOR THESIS

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis focuses on the evolution and adaptation of the zombie myth throughout history, from magical voodoo to the science fiction phenomenon that has spread fear and anxiety for decades. Three post-apocalyptic narratives, *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham, *28 Days Later*, written by Alex Garland, and *The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman, provide great connections between post-colonialism and the wasteland world of the future. All three stories follow a central character who wakes up after a coma in a world that resembles the past rather than the future and is teeming with flesh-eating monsters. The process of othering is used to comment on the differences between the groups of survivors and the triffids/zombies. The thesis explores the problems caused by consumerism while subsequently connecting it to the post-apocalyptic world, as it is human nature to consume as much as possible. However, now it is threatened by the existence of a new monster that wants to consume us. Moreover, the thesis explores the power relations between a selfish military and a self-proclaimed governor resembling a plantation owner. The thesis comments on the representation of different races and stereotypes. Lastly, it explores Kirkman's expanded world, where he created new dictators, religions, and cults.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the zombie phenomenon is essential to understanding popular culture and can be viewed from many perspectives. The main two points used in this thesis are from the point of Post-colonialism and Globalization. These two distinct concepts differ in many areas, such as origins and goals but can be used to observe a particular phenomenon, the zombie plague.

In this day and age, we battle with many wars, viruses, and infections. Most notably, one of the impactful events is the COVID-19 pandemic that affected every household on the planet, leading to challenges with health, food, and living conditions (World Health Organization: WHO, 2020). Thankfully scientists invented vaccines that helped combat this virus, and our life could return more or less to normal. This thesis aims to analyze and compare stories where a global pandemic occurred. In popular culture, the outcomes are usually more severe and feature a post-apocalyptic scenario with a zombie outbreak with no cure to be found and people fighting for their survival. It is essential to mention the similarities and differences as we live in a world affected by viruses ourselves. One can argue that the zombie virus and COVID-19 are vastly different because one is a fictional infection, and the other is a real-life pandemic. However, there are several interesting connections. Both of these viruses caused worldwide panic and fear while spreading almost instantly from one person to another.

This is a recurring theme in post-apocalyptic fiction, where most of the world's population is infected in a matter of days, and only a handful of survivors are left. However, the struggle for survival and not getting infected is always lurking around the corner. This fear of contagion is sadly very much relevant in our current world. For the last few years, people have been avoiding as much human contact so they would not risk getting infected and possibly further spreading the COVID-19 disease.

Another connection is through the social and political collapse in our economy and politics, forcing people to live uncomfortably. The virus caused many disruptions in the political and social order leading to the governments being unable to contain the rapid spread of the disease and the people being helpless and starting to become desperate. This connects the theme of survival, where the survivors must adapt and rebuild primarily from nothing in the fiction. Fortunately, in the real-world pandemic, the circumstances were not so drastic as we did not have to fight off hordes of zombies and protect ourselves from other dangerous

survivors, but the themes of rationing food and scarce supplies, demanding living conditions, being quarantined for a certain period and many more were, unfortunately, part of our lives. Thankfully, the world is recovering and becoming normal again for most of the human population. However, the virus still affects some eastern countries, most notably China.

In 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a campaign to teach the importance of emergency preparedness. They released a graphic novel titled “Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse” for the purpose of attracting young audiences and teaching them the basics of survival in case of an emergency (Kruvand & Bryant, 2015). The novel presents a zombie outbreak scenario and uses a family and their dog to explain what is necessary and what to do if such a scenario becomes a reality. Kruvand and Bryant (2015) commented on the success of this project, which attracted thousands of people and eventually led to the crash of one of the CDC website servers: “A tongue-in-cheek blog post about what people should do to prepare for a zombie apocalypse and other emergencies attracted so many viewers that it crashed one of the agency's Web servers, went viral, and generated extensive media coverage” (para. 5). Although the project was created to teach emergency preparedness, it was popular because of its sci-fi connections to zombies and therefore reached as many people as possible. This whole project has been undoubtedly inspired by the book titled *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead* by Max Brooks. As the title suggests, it is a fully illustrated guide to help people survive hordes of zombies during a post-apocalyptic outbreak. Brooks belongs to several catastrophes think tanks and is an advisor to the US military, as well as the author of the famous zombie novel *World War Z*.

This thesis focuses on the importance of the post-colonial theory regarding a post-apocalyptic world with the significance of the virus and the infected and its connection to consumerism and socioeconomic in three different media while exploring the evolution of zombies and the impact they have on today's world of fiction. The main stories examined are the novel *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham, the movie *28 Days Later*, written by Alex Garland and directed by Danny Boyle, and a Comic book adapted as a television series, *The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman. Each narrative focuses on a male survivor that wakes up in a hospital sometime after the end of the world began. It follows the struggle and difficulties of rebuilding and starting all over from nothing as a society.

The main focus of this thesis is on analyzing the ruthless post-apocalyptic world through the post-colonialism theory and the eyes of a post-colonial critique focusing on

gender, race, culture, and more. The world has lost all of its governments, social safety nets, and healthcare, and it is up to the survivors how they will rebuild. Will they bow to dictators bent on enslaving the other survivors? What will be the function of women in this wasteland? Will they become sex slaves or reproductive property? Will the world be able to repopulate someday, or is the hope for humanity lost? On the same note, the thesis also focuses on consumerism and its representation by the plant monsters known as triffids and the zombies, also known as the living undead.

John Wyndham, or by his full name John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris, was born in 1903 and died in 1969. He was a British science-fiction author who wrote novels and stories that affected the Sci-fi genre to this date. His legacy remains to thrive through many authors of books, games, and television shows that found inspiration in his works, and they are retelling similar plots that still manage to capture the original feeling of Wyndham (Kirby, 2015). His British heritage is a pivotal plot point in his writing, as his stories are always in the United Kingdom. This cozy English setting is further accompanied by the classic stereotypes, the famous locations, and the hard English accent he uses for his characters. Some of his most famous books are *The Chrysalids*, *Trouble with Lichen*, *The Midwich Cuckoos*, and of course, *The Day of the Triffids*, which was a direct inspiration for the movie *28 Days Later* alongside with George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* film which is considered to be the start and rise of the zombie phenomenon for the film industry. The director of *28 Days Later*, Danny Boyle, was born in 1956 and lives to this day. He is a critically acclaimed film director known for his outstanding ability to convey the themes of youth into his movies.

The screenplay for *28 Days Later* was written by British screenwriter and filmmaker Alex Garland who is also well known for creating and working on several highly praised movies, including *Sunshine* and *Ex Machina*. However, the most famous film that he worked on to this day is still considered to be *28 Days Later*. In an interview, he stated that *The Day of the Triffids* has probably impacted his work as a science fiction writer the most (The Geeks Guide to the Galaxy, 2016). His answer is further supported by the many evident similarities between Wyndham's novel and *28 Days Later*.

In the early 2000s, American writer and comic book creator Robert Kirkman started to work on and release a comic book series named *The Walking Dead*, which quickly became a bestseller due to its depiction of the zombie and an intriguing narrative. He was born in Richmond, Kentucky 1978, and serves as a creator and executive producer on the

AMC television adaptation of his famous comic book series, *The Walking Dead*, and its spin-off series titled *Fear The Walking Dead*. Some of his other creations include the comic book series *Invincible* and *Outcast*.

For many decades the zombie has been depicted in many vastly different tones based on the target audience. In the movie *Zombieland*, the infected serve as comedic relief and do not present a significant threat to the survivors. On the other hand, in the film *World War Z*, their goal is to keep the audience on the edge of their seats due to the threat they pose with their aggressiveness and agility. In one of the movie's most famous scenes, zombies are shown scaling the massive walls of Jerusalem by climbing on top of each other. A reason that makes the zombies popular is their representation as a metaphor for political and social issues. Their existence forces people to confront their fears and insecurities head-on, which can be, for some people, a difficult task.

One of the most common usages of zombies is to comment on issues of disease outbreaks, political unrest, environmental disasters, and overall challenging events for the human race. Even though it is only a fictional scenario during the previously mentioned COVID-19 pandemic, some people could look up stories about zombies and viruses and try to understand how the survivors of them survived and moved on. This gave them hope to overcome real-life problems. For example, *The Day of the Triffids*, *28 Days Later*, and *The Walking Dead* explore themes of leadership, community, love, reunion, and survival. One can argue that the triffids are two completely different entities. However, they share many similarities, both being carnivores craving human flesh and moving in a relatively slow manner while keeping their advantages in numbers (Kirby, 2015). So, the triffids can be seen as the science-fiction predecessor of today's zombies.

Zombies can also be used as a social commentary on political issues, including the failure of society and consumerism, which will be analyzed further in the thesis in chapter two. The popularity of zombies is often linked to nostalgia for classic horror films, for example, *Night of the Living Dead* which, for some people, is the rise of the zombie genre that only got better throughout the years. As mentioned, zombies represent death, decay, and the loss of humanity. They are mindless reanimated corpses that wander the world with no purpose, only driven by their primal instincts to find food and eat. They do not care about political agendas, races, genders, or cultures. This can be argued as, from a certain point, they achieved something humans will possibly never be able to do. The war in Ukraine is an excellent example of the fact that people will always start wars and conflicts

with each other. Due to our cultural differences, people will always find reasons to create conflict regarding race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or territory. In this regard, it can be argued that zombies are functioning better than our society, but in the end, they are just walking corpses that have lost most of their brain and cognitive functions.

Another closely related phenomenon to zombies and their popularity is vampires. Vampires and zombies share many resemblances. Both are depicted as an undead revenant feasting on living humans, where one consumes the flesh and organs while the other drains the blood of their victims (Malone, 2018). Before the world became obsessed with the walking dead, vampires were the primary science fiction obsession for many people, mainly teenagers. They explored the themes of mortality, representing anxieties about aging as well as exploring sexuality which is in this age group a prominent theme.

The thesis aims to introduce and explore the origin of zombies throughout history and the connection of the post-apocalyptic world they occupy to colonialism and post-colonialism. The phenomenon of othering and consumerism are further used to comment on the differences that occur between humans and the triffids/zombies. Themes of race, culture, and power relations provide a more extensive description of the narratives in question.

2. COLONIAL CONSUMERISM AND POST-COLONIAL HUNGER

The concept of a zombie dates back to the ancient Greeks, as the dead were feared since corpses were believed to be able to reanimate themselves and exist in a state that is neither alive nor dead (Miller, 2015). Miller (2015) also explains that some inhabitants of the island of Sicily weighed down corpses with heavy stones and pieces of pots to prevent the corpse from returning to the land of the living. This is supported by the fact that some ancient Greeks practiced necromancy to contact the dead (Miller, 2015).

However, the term zombie originated in Haiti's voodoo culture, referring to a reanimated corpse that has been brought back to life using a ritual. In Haitian folklore, zombies are believed to be controlled by a voodoo doctor known as bokor and used as slave laborers or soldiers (History.com Editors, 2019). The process of creating a substance that induces a zombie-like state is described that: “Bokors have a tradition of using herbs, shells, fish, animal parts, bones, and other objects to create concoctions including “zombie powders,” which contain tetrodotoxin, a deadly neurotoxin found in pufferfish and some other marine species” (History.com Editors, 2019, Zombies and Voodoo section, para. 3). The notion of being forced to remain enslaved after death links post-colonialism and colonialism as it represents the legacy of slavery in Haitian culture. During this time, enslaved Africans were brought to Haiti to work in brutal conditions on plantations. Hence it can be seen as a reflection of this history and the continuation of forced slave labor. Furthermore, the idea that zombies are controlled by others and used for labor can be seen as a commentary on power dynamics in post-colonial societies.

Zombies controlled by voodoo differ significantly from today's depiction of the famous undead. Rather than being awakened and directed by someone, today's zombies are reanimated through a more scientific approach rather than relying on magic and controlling dark spirits. The idea of these “new” zombies has been explored throughout history, most notably in the 20th century, when the science revolution created zombies with science fiction elements. The novel *The Day of the Triffids* explores nonhuman carnivorous plants, named triffids, that resemble today's zombies in every aspect apart from their appearance. However, soon the events of World War II, most notably the bombing of Hiroshima and the Holocaust, mark the beginning of the Cold War and radiation fear (Pruitt, 2022). The images that these events provided replaced the plant monsters and created radiation zombies that were featured in the movie *Night of the Living Dead* by George Romero, who used the radiation from space

as the reason behind the dead walking again. History.com Editors (2019) commented that during large-scale events such as the bombing of Hiroshima, people will prioritize their survival over helping others, a recurring theme in many post-apocalyptic narratives.

The future iteration of the contemporary zombies is based on a virus. In most horror media, the zombie virus is created by a group of scientists and eventually escapes from the lab, either intentionally or unintentionally, ushering in the beginning of the end of the world. This is the case in the movie *28 Days Later*, in which the virus is spread by animals infecting trespassing civilians. Consequently, in most scientific novels or movies, scientists are responsible for disasters due to their curiosity, ambition, and desire for power, which leads to dangerous interventions in the natural world order. This provides a possible connection to the real COVID-19 pandemic, as recent sources and leaks support the idea that the virus escaped from the Wuhan laboratory. Nevertheless, some media and governments are on opposite sides regarding the virus's origin. To date, no concrete evidence supports a leak from the lab, but investigations into the issue are ongoing (Irfan, 2023). However, the virus caused panic and chaos for several years.

The Day of the Triffids, 28 Days Later, and The Walking Dead

All three narratives work with the idea of a central protagonist falling into a coma slightly before the start of the apocalypse outbreak. This event eradicated most of the human population while leaving the survivors to fend for themselves in this new cruel world. A new threat has emerged in the form of the triffids, described by Wyndham (2008) as mobile plants created to battle hunger problems and food shortages caused by the Cold War. The triffids subsequently prefigure the walking reanimated corpses, known as zombies, featured in *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead*, as they pose a similar threat to any survivor that encounters them. After waking up and managing to escape the hospital, they encounter many survivors who will become allies and eventually friends on their journey. Of course, not every survivor has good intentions, as some will become the enemy competing with the protagonist for status, power, or basic necessities of life. These three stories revolve around the struggles for survival and the challenges on the road ahead of starting over in a post-apocalyptic world.

The role of the military in these stories is shown more critically. They sacrifice innocent lives to ensure their own survival and fulfill their needs and desires. In *The Day of*

the Triffids, soldiers are depicted as ineffective while combating the carnivorous plants, resulting in heavy losses of human life. At the end of the narrative, they pose a threat and follow a strict protocol, forcing survivors to join them or end up dead. This is similarly portrayed in the plot of *28 Days Later*, as the military fails to protect innocent people. When the leading group of survivors reaches a safe zone, they learn that the military has left to occupy a better fortifiable location to ensure their survival. As the storyline progresses, they discover that the army has a more sinister agenda of luring survivors for their women and supplies. They posed a threat to the remaining survivors rather than being there to protect them. In *The Walking Dead*, the military is, from the start, shown shooting innocent people to contain the virus without knowing who is infected and who is not. Later in the narrative, they bomb the city of Atlanta, which has become overrun by zombies. Near *The Walking Dead's* conclusion, a group named The Commonwealth abuses their people's military power, showing signs resembling Nazism.

Although the narratives differ in many aspects, they are all heavily influenced by the subject of colonization. The so-called end of the world marks a breaking point for human evolution and sets back society several hundred years into the past. Supporting this fact is the previously mentioned military. They assume the role of the higher class, forcing regular survivors into submission and slave labor. This forced work that is only rewarded by rations so that the workers may be strong enough to continue their work cycle has happened on many occasions throughout human history, most notably during the colonization of foreign lands.

Further supporting this claim of colonization and subsequent post-colonialism are the locations and nations in which the stories occur. Both *The Day of the Triffids* and *28 Days Later* take place in Great Britain, known throughout history for its connections to colonization. In John Wyndham's book, the precise location of the narrative is known to the reader from the second chapter, as Bill explains:

When I, William Masen, was a child, we lived, my father, my mother, and myself, in a southern suburb of London. We had a small house which my father supported by conscientious daily "attendance at his desk in the Inland Revenue Department, and small garden at which he worked rather harder during the summer. There was not a lot to distinguish us from the ten or twelve million other people who used to live in and around London in those days." (Wyndham, 2008, p. 263)

One of the main features of this book is its narrative structure, which is told mainly through named locations that can be visited in real life. This was a clear inspiration for *28 Days Later* and its director Danny Boyle as after the hospital awakening, Jim wanders through the city of London, passing many well-known destinations, such as the famous Westminster Bridge, Big Ben, Trellick Tower, and Trafalgar Square, only they are eerily devoid of living people.

This British setting further contributes to the subject of post-colonialism with the characters and races that are present in the stories. *The Day of the Triffids* takes place during the Cold War, leading to only white people being present in this novel due to the time period in which it is set in. This is a significant difference from *28 Days Later* which occurs in the 21st century therefore, several people of color are present in the movie. One of them is a black woman present from almost the beginning of the movie and serving as a love interest to the protagonist Jim. Another important character is a middle-aged Irish man accompanying Jim on his journey to find safety. This person is exhibiting and connecting Ireland as another example of a colonial land that has been as well affected by the zombie virus outbreak.

Subsequently, there is *The Walking Dead*, with its setting inside of the United States of America, which takes place in mid to late 2010. The American setting directly contributes to the post-colonial background as it can be compared to the previously mentioned British setting due to its direct historical connection to colonialism. Out of the three stories, *The Walking Dead* takes place the furthest in the future. Therefore, the show contains a rich cast of diverse characters. Deggans (2014) remarks that “*The Walking Dead* has quietly assembled one of the most ethnically diverse casts on a top-rated TV show“ (para. 8). Among them are an unstable African American marital artist, a “white trash” tattooed motorcycle-riding archer, a middle-class Asian American, and a helpless middle-aged lady who saves the group on many occasions, all led by a sheriff whose moral authority is questioned daily. A great accomplishment that this television series managed to achieve is that “no zombies ever terrified more television viewers than those on *The Walking Dead*” (History.com Editors, *Zombies in Pop Culture* section, para. 5).

Main protagonists

When reading or watching the source materials, it is essential to know the main characters of the stories, as they help to analyze and understand the plot correctly. They are the center of the narrative, and their personality and traits help flesh out the character and understand their decisions, which can sometimes be considered controversial.

***The Day of the Triffids* – William “Bill” Masen.** From the start, Bill is depicted as a bright and intelligent character who adapts quickly to the new world order and remains optimistic until the end. After he leaves the hospital, he is one of the few people who can still see until he saves another female survivor and discovers that her eyesight is also intact. Together they struggle for survival until they are separated, only to be reunited further on in the narrative and start a family together. Throughout this, the threat of the mobile carnivorous plants, also known as triffids, is growing larger. Bill's previous work as a scientist gives him an advantage in safely avoiding or killing the monster plants.

***28 Days Later* – Jim.** Jim is a former bike courier who, at the start of the movie, wakes up from a deep coma located in an abandoned hospital and slowly discovers that zombies have overrun the world. He encounters several survivors on his journey to find a safe haven. This includes a woman with whom he later falls in love. Together with a few more survivors, they are trying to find a safe place to live. Jim's tale is full of betrayal and struggles for survival as he is forced to face many challenges ahead to protect his people from harm. When he is trying to break into a fortified compound, it is shown how resourceful he can be as he uses the infected to his advantage. Throughout the movie, he evolves from a scared person who freezes in a place to someone who demonstrates resilience and resourcefulness if needed.

***The Walking Dead* – Rick Grimes.** Rick is a former sheriff's deputy who ended up in a coma after a shootout on the job. After his awakening, he has difficulty comprehending the new world and what it has turned into. Throughout the series, Rick struggles with his morality while becoming more feral and ruthless in protecting his family and loved ones, but at a high cost to his mental health. He is a strong leader due to his background and police training which gives him many advantages in the apocalypse. At first, he tries to avoid killing any people as it is against his beliefs. However, throughout his journey, he shifts into a darker place where he kills anyone posing a threat, in one instance even biting a part of someone's

neck because his son was held at gunpoint. His journey is full of loss and grief but shows how someone can overcome these emotions and fight back.

The Hospital Awakening

Awakening from a coma in an abandoned hospital in a post-apocalyptic world has become a famous horror trope known among the fans of the genre that dates back to the year 1951 and the famous novel by John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids*. While it was used throughout many stories, including the movie in question, *28 Days Later*, this horror cliché became most popular with the release of *The Walking Dead* comic and, later on, the Tv show. Moving forward, it has been adapted in many media, ranging from comedies for the purpose of making fun of this truism to other horror stories creating a homage to the previous generations of horror.

A deeper meaning of the awakening in the middle of the apocalypse can be interpreted as an awakening into the past rather than into the future. This is also supported by the fact that human evolution has suddenly stopped and was transported hundreds of years into the past. The food sources supplying nourishment to humans have stopped working, as the people needed to operate them became absent due to the circumstances of fighting for survival and the shutdown of electricity. This creates the necessity for humans to grow and hunt their own food and creates consumer anxiety among groups of survivors because some of them have turned to theft, murder, and even cannibalism to survive.

All three stories share a pivotal scene: the abandoned hospital awakening. The main protagonist wakes up from a coma, not knowing what has happened to the world. Time is a pivotal factor in these sequences as it has a deeper meaning for the protagonist and the world they wake up in. At the beginning of *The Day of the Triffids*, a distant working clock prompts suspicion in Bill, alerting him that something is not correct:

I went on waiting, tingled with doubt. But presently I had my first bit of objective evidence – a distant clock struck what sounded to me just like eight. I listened hard and suspiciously. Soon another clock began, on a loud, decisive note. In a leisurely fashion it gave an indisputable eight. Then I knew things were awry. (Wyndham, 2008, p. 7)

The circumstances in *The Walking Dead* are the complete opposite. A clock displays a static time due to it being broken, prompting suspicion in Rick Grimes. This was a deliberate feature as it is the first significant indication that something has gone wrong. The stopped time displayed on the clock in this scene represents how the world Rick lives in has also stopped and ended. Broken clocks or watches are a valuable method of telling the specific time of certain disasters, as it is shown here. Another excellent example of this horror trope is in the critically acclaimed television series *The Last of Us*, where the main protagonist gets shot in the arm while holding his daughter. The bullet damages his watch and subsequently kills his daughter. The time that is displayed on the watch is a constant reminder of the tragic incident that has happened to him.

More indications occur as each protagonist progresses through the building, helping them understand the situation they woke up to. More signs indicate and support the idea of waking up in the past, as the electricity is not working. In *The Day of the Triffids*, Bill manages to escape the hospital without any harm as the only possible threat are the blind people over whom he has an advantage as he can still see. He manages to avoid the triffids until he travels further into the city. Unlike Jim and Rick, Bill is already familiar with the dangerous predator due to his previous work and encounter with a triffid, as he explains after he was stung as a child. He describes this incident as follows:

I woke up to find myself in bed, with my mother, my father, and the doctor watching me anxiously. My head felt as if it were split open, I was aching all over, and, as I later discovered, one side of my face was decorated with a blotchy-red raised weal. The insistent questions as to how I came to be lying unconscious in the garden were quite useless; I had not the faintest idea what it was that had hit me. And some little time passed before I learned that I must have been one of the first person in England to be strung by a triffid and get away with it. (Wyndham, 2008, p. 40 - 41)

This explains his advantage against the triffids and other survivors, as he is probably one of the only remaining people who know how to deal with them without getting stung while knowing the procedure when someone is unlucky enough to be caught by one of them. The narrative of *28 Days Later* follows a similar structure as Jim encounters a zombie further in his journey. The main difference from the triffid novel is his lack of knowledge about the threat that awaits him, requiring him to be saved by other survivors.

The other / Othering

Post-colonialism and othering are closely connected concepts. The term is explained by Sherry (2023) as a social process where individuals or groups are considered and labeled to be different in adverse ways from the dominant or normative group within a society. It focuses on establishing and reinforcing boundaries between two categories presented as “us,” the superior kind, and “them,” the lesser being often described as the “other.” The latter are seen as inferior and lesser, beings outside the boundaries of the traditional social norm.

Discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion are forms of othering frequently based on factors like ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic status (Cherry, 2023). This leads to mistreatment or dehumanization between individuals or groups of people, which can lead to justified violence in the perpetrator’s mind. Like many forms of harassment, it can be intentional or unintentional. On many occasions, it is perpetuated through stereotypes, prejudice, and power differences within a society. Cherry describes the impact of othering as follows:

Belonging to a social group often brings about a number of benefits, but it can also come with costs. On the positive side, being part of a group can provide friendships, support, care, connection, protection, and identity. On the negative side, it can contribute to things like othering, prejudice, and conflict with those who are outside of the group. Othering can have a dramatic impact on both individuals, social groups, and societies. (Cherry, 2023, Impact section, para. 1 - 2)

While analyzing the stories of *The Day of the Triffids*, *28 Days Later*, and *The Walking Dead*, the negative impact is most notably apparent when two groups of survivors encounter each other for the first time. One will want to assume the dominant and threatening position, leading to adverse outcomes.

In all three stories, the aforementioned other can be viewed in two different types. Firstly, the triffids and zombies, which represent the primary other in the narratives. Secondly, other surviving groups of people or specific individuals. The triffids in John Wyndham’s narrative are made up to be the antagonists to the survivors, being easily distinguished from humans by their plant-like appearance. An argument can be stated that due to their plant features, they cannot be identified as humans or animals, and therefore, they do not classify in the category of the other. Despite that, they share many human traits

that are not apparent based only on their appearance. Near the novel's conclusion, they show signs of intelligent thinking as they communicate with each other and surround the fence of Bill's compound. In one instance, the survivors shoot a gun while they try to convince each other of their cleverness. The conversation between them proceeds as follows:

“Well, it did look-Are you sure? Try again,” I suggested. She shook her head.

“It wouldn't be any good. All the triffids that heard it are coming this way now. In about ten minutes they'll stop and listen. If they're near enough then to hear the ones by the fence clattering, they'll come on. Or if they're too far away for that, and we make another noise, then they'll come. But if they can't hear anything at all, they'll wait a bit and then just go on wherever they were going before.”
(Wyndham, 2008, p. 235)

This level of thinking supports the fact that even though they are plants, they are eligible to fall into the category of the other.

In addition, Wyndham's novel explores a storyline where most of the human population loses their eyesight due to a strange meteor shower occurring in the sky. This generates an interesting kind of othering because disability is already considered as one of its attributes that only affects a small portion of people (Cherry, 2023). A fascinating situation arises that divides humanity into two separate groups (with and without the ability to see) and forces them to view each other as the others. Throughout the narrative, these two groups experience positive and negative forms of othering. Some of the people who can still see try to help the blind and show them the way, while on the other hand, some of them will take advantage of their disability.

Both *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead* portrays the zombies as the other, much like the triffids in John Wyndham's novel. They are the antagonists that hunt and kill humans, but unlike the triffids, they are sometimes hard to distinguish from ordinary survivors. They were once human before they became reanimated corpses. Therefore, their appearance can sometimes be deceiving and cause a survivor to mistake them. *28 Days Later* and the first season of *The Walking Dead* depict variations of zombies that are more agile and show signs of intelligent thinking as they use tools to their advantage. In the narratives, the process of othering occurs towards the zombies, as they represent death and chaos, in contrast to the human survivors, who stand for life and hope.

Additionally, *The Walking Dead* is known for its conflicts between groups of survivors, creating a more extensive form of othering between them as they view each other as enemies. The most memorable dispute occurs between Rick and the Governor. Each of these factions views the other as a potential threat that must be eliminated, which is one of the signs of othering, specifically “believing that people who are different from you or your social group pose a threat to you or your way of life” (Cherry, 2023, Signs section, para. 3).

3. CONSUMERISM AND HUNGER

It is crucial to understand the basic meaning of consumerism and the problems that are caused by it in order to properly understand its connections with the triffids and the zombie plague. The concept is explained by Hayes (2022) as follows: “Consumerism is the idea that increasing the consumption of goods and services purchased in the market is always a desirable goal and that a person's well-being and happiness depend fundamentally on obtaining consumer goods and material possessions” (para. 1).

While low levels of consumerism are considered acceptable because people need to be consumers to survive and meet their needs, excessive consumerism is generally considered bad for society (Hayes, 2022). Most cases of consumerism are due to manipulation by advertising. This problem is because many people fall victim to consumerism without knowing it.

The Triffids

The Day of the Triffids shows several examples and references to consumerism. The sole purpose of the triffids was to harvest them for their oils and juices as a better substitute for fish oils to combat the famine problems caused by the Cold War. In Wyndham's narrative, Bill is confronted by his father about his obsession with the Triffids, as they are a waste of time in his eyes, only to realize that they are the food source of the future. Wyndham explains this scene as follows:

One could not blame him for considering this a worthless pursuit, yet, later, the time turned out to have been better employed than either of us suspected, for it was just before I left school that the Arctic and European Fish-Oil Company reconstituted itself, dropping the word “Fish” in the process. The public learned that it and similar companies in other countries were about to farm triffids on a large scale in order to extract valuable oils and juices, and to press highly nutritious oil-cake for stock feeding. Consequently, triffids moved into the realm of big business overnight. (Wyndham, 2008, p. 45)

This led to a vast overpopulation of triffids as they were found all over the world while serving as a food source for humans. This suggests subtle signs of consumerism, as triffids can be seen as the product that everyone wants because it ensures the well-being and

growth of the economy in the country that possesses them. Hayes (2022) argues that consumerism helps shape the economy and the market when it creates a higher demand for the product in question. This happens to be the case with the triffids, as they are one of the most desirable commodities.

Regarding the subject of consumerism, the triffids stimulate a compelling and interesting train of thought. As described, they served as a food source for humans, who, however, had not reckoned with their rapid reproduction rate and ability to become cognizant while craving human flesh. After the event that blinded most of the population, they assumed the position of the primary consumer and began to overrun the whole world while eating every defenseless survivor they came across. This serves as a critique of consumerism regarding prioritizing short-term profits over a sustainable source. The triffids represent the short-term product that is, in this case, favored to a long-term sustainable plan.

Additionally, Wyndham's depiction of the blind survivors can be viewed as a metaphor for the psychological blindness surrounding this subject. Initially, in the novel, the blind survivors put their own needs first instead of trying to work together as a group to accomplish the goal of survival. They do not want to learn self-sufficiency and would instead force other humans that can see to do what they cannot do for them. Later in the novel, a few blind characters accomplish the goal of self-sufficiency as they can maneuver through the compound without any help.

George Romero and Malls

George Romero was an American Canadian film director who is to this day considered one of the most influential figures in the horror genre. He is commonly referred to as the "grandfather of zombies in horror films." He is responsible for the creation of the cult classic *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*. He is very well known for his comments on consumerism in his films, especially for forcing the survivors to set up camp in an abandoned mall.

The setting of a mall has become a well-known horror trope in zombie media, even appearing in the highly praised television series *The Last of Us*. It is a site of abandoned remnants, both practically and symbolically. It represents progress and prosperity, offering consumers access to a wide range of supplies and services located in one suitable place. It is

a familiar, safe place for survivors and a strategic place that offers survival supplies and a stockpile of food and water. However, this attracts a severe number of survivors unwilling to share the resources, ultimately leading to conflict. In *Dawn of the Dead*, the mall is a safe haven for the survivors, but it is filled with zombies, which implies that even after death, zombies are attracted to the place where they could have consumed goods before they died. Even though the majority of people are obsessed with mindless consumption, some are aware of its issues as “we may enjoy buying things, may even love our collected knick-knacks, but we remember not only the mall, but the thing we’ve always secretly known: that the always-already-terror lurks in the shadows of capitalism, consumerism, and commercialism” (Malone, 2018, para. 13).

Furthermore, the mall is also connected to colonialism and post-colonialism as it is the market the colonies always tried to accomplish. A mall is a place filled with goods and supplies, which was one of the main goals of colonizing other countries to establish a trade route and work labor that would provide and expedite the goods to other colonies. The mall culture is also closely tied to the economic prosperity following the events of World War II and the growth of the middle class.

The zombies represent consumerism similarly to the triffids in a way that their only goal is to consume flesh mindlessly. They are consumers before and after death, making them a mindless, enslaved person without the ability to stop. A typical example of consumerism occurs when a person must buy a new version of something even though they already own the previous version. A similar case occurs in *28 Days Later* and *The Walking Dead*, where a zombie feeds on a corpse, but he notices a survivor and proceeds to kill him instead of finishing eating the old body.

Both triffids and zombies can be viewed metaphorically as an avatar of capitalism due to their many similarities. The term capitalism is described as “an economic system in which individuals and private parties control the means of production and profits are the key driver of economic activity” (Hartill, 2023, para. 1). The desire for profit and power that the capitalist societies relentlessly persuade is a direct mirror image of the mindless craving consumption that is present in both triffids and zombies. Furthermore, the ideology of capitalism is spread verbally from one person to another in a similar manner to the zombie virus that is transferred through a bite or, depending on the narrative and media, through a scratch or blood infection. Another parallel between capitalism and zombies is seen in the wasteland post-apocalyptic world itself, which explores the themes of survival and the

collapse of society. The inequality between the higher class and the poor is primarily apparent as the wealthy and privileged have easy access to supplies, rations, and even bunkers or fallout shelters. On the other hand, the average person struggles for survival, sometimes going for days without any food, water, or shelter over their head.

4. RECOLONIZATION

The Day of the Triffids, *28 Days Later*, and *The Walking Dead* depict a world reminiscent of the colonial and post-colonial eras. New technology slowly fades away, and survivors are forced to adapt by relying on techniques that date back several hundred years. These narratives depict groups that rely on power and fear to ensure their superior position in the new world. This prompts an exciting idea that these people, despite their knowledge, revert to a more Darwinian way of thinking and claim lands and colonies of survivors, similar to the colonizers or dictators. The military in *The Day of the Triffids* and *28 Days Later*, along with the Governor from *The Walking Dead*, fall precisely into this category. This ties back to the claim that the military is primarily hostile toward the survivors.

Military and the Governor

Both the military in *28 Days Later* and Philip Blake in *The Walking Dead*, referred to simply as the governor, take on the role of antagonists in the narratives, even if they do not see themselves that way. The differences between these two "bad guys" are that the military acts as a fort/outpost that attracts inattentive survivors for its own benefits, using a broadcast that conveys a message: "Salvation is here. The answer to infection is here. If you can hear this, you're not alone. There are others like you. There are others like you. There are other survivors. We are soldiers, and we are armed. And we can protect you. Our location is the 42nd blockade in the M-602, twenty-seven miles northeast of Manchester. You must find us. Salvation is here" (Boyle, 2002, 0:41:09). Their group never accepts new members into the community, as they only welcome women whom they can eventually sexually abuse, as they are only concerned with fulfilling their own primal needs.

On the other side of the spectrum is the governor, who, in some ways, resembles a plantation owner or a colonial viceroy. The way he runs the community he established speaks to this. He controls the militia and decides what is good for his created society. When a potential threat from another group arises, as is the case with Rick and his group, his position as leader is challenged, causing him to create conflict. Further evidence of the similarity to a plantation owner is the fact that he divides his society into different work groups, with the lower class forced into physically demanding jobs. On the outside, it looks like he cares about the people under his control and treats them with respect, but in one episode in season

3 of *The Walking Dead*, his mental state breaks down when he shoots down all the civilians who followed him.

From the comparison of these two antagonists, it is clear that they are similar in that Rick is almost as ruthless as the governor, but his tribe is more or less democratic in nature, while the governor is a tyrant. However, the communities differ from each other, as the governor accepts new members to his settlement, while the army does not. Unlike the governor, who is the only leader of his community, the military divided its leadership among the soldiers.

Robert Kirkman's expanded world

Although Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* is considered one of the most-watched television series of all time, it has often been criticized for its representation and stereotypes, especially concerning people of color. One of these cases concerns the characters of African American origin. Deggans (2014) stated in his critique on this topic that “critics like me argued its two African American characters weren't enough to reflect the diversity of its setting around Atlanta, where the population is more than 50 percent black” (para. 11). For a time, Theodore "T-Dog" Douglas was the only African American character, often appearing only as a supporting character providing comedic relief or adding exposition to a scene. In one instance, his character got into an argument with a known racist, Merle Dixon, who ended up racially insulting and physically attacking him multiple times (Deggans, 2014). His unwillingness to cooperate with other ethnic groups is further proven in season one, episode two, during a scene where he tells T-Dog: “Hey! Bad enough I've got this taco-bender on my ass all day. Now I'm gonna take orders from you? I don't think so, bro. That'll be the day” (Kirkman et al., 2010-2022). This scene furthermore supports the idea of Rick Grimes waking up in the past, a racist Southern past in which a Jim Crow not only survived but thrived. Deggans (2014) also noted that this problem was resolved by adding more characters of color, including Michonne, Tyrese, and Gabriel, who became essential main characters. Unlike T-Dog, these characters had a backstory and were central to the main plot of the narrative.

One stereotype often criticized in *The Walking Dead's* early seasons is related to the lack of African-American representation in the narrative. This regards the fact that when a new non-white survivor is introduced, he or she usually replaces another character of the

same ethnicity. This results in the underwhelming representation of marginalized African-American characters, even when new ethnic survivors are introduced.

Compared to *The Day of the Triffids* and *28 Days Later*, *The Walking Dead* has a much more complex and extensive narrative, as the series ran for 12 years on cable channel AMC and later expanded to other international streaming services like Disney+. This allowed Kirkman and the showrunners to tell a story without the usual constraints of novels or movies, i.e., a fixed number of pages or a specific running time that cannot be exceeded. This allowed the 11 seasons of *The Walking Dead* to explore several years in the apocalypse and create numerous groups of survivors, ranging from marauders and cannibals to deranged dictators and fanatical cultists who worship the undead. *The Walking Dead* additionally expands into several other television series that feature new survivors in different areas of the United States of America, occasionally meeting familiar characters from the original series. These other television series include *Fear the Walking Dead*, *World Beyond*, *Tales of the Walking Dead*, and the three upcoming series *Dead City*, *Daryl Dixon*, and the as-yet-untitled spin-off series *Rick and Michonne*.

Kirkman has created a successful narrative in which he realizes his vision of a pluralistic world full of diverse communities ranging from democracies to dictatorships, forming new cultures, founding fanatical cults, and more. One of the most memorable groups in *The Walking Dead* universe is the Savivors, led by a man named Negan. Their faction is a prime example of power relations in a post-apocalyptic world. They abuse their brutal strength and force other survivors into submission and slavery. Negan is the central power dynamic in this group, as he uses his charisma, wits, and brutality to maintain control over his followers and the groups of people he has conquered. His leadership is most reminiscent of a dictatorship, similar to Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, or Joseph Stalin. Alternatively, perhaps his is just a more successful version of The Governor, Philip Blake. Negan is a governor with several colonies instead of just one, perhaps making him an emperor or a warlord. Among his extreme rules are that his followers must kneel in his presence, that his officers refer to themselves as "I am Negan," that he takes 50% of the supplies from the communities he conquers, and that he takes any woman as his wife and forbids her from seeing another man. These rules further support the idea that he leads a dictatorship and explains the power relations within the Savivors. Opposed to them are Rick Grimes and his group, which adheres to the principles of democracy. This is an apparent analogy to World War II and the conflict that a democracy helps defeat a dictatorship. In this case, the Savivors

and Negan represent the Nazis, while Rick represents the opposing Western nations that eventually help overthrow the dictator.

The Whisperers are a group that falls into the category of both a new culture and a fanatical cult. They are introduced towards the end of the series, which takes place several years to a decade after the first outbreak of the zombie virus. During these years, they have managed to build their own functioning society with strict rules and found a new religion in which they worship the undead. As mentioned earlier, some of the radical rules they follow are similar to those of the Savivors, as they forfeit their birth names and are forced to wear masks made of zombie faces. This allows them to mingle and walk among the dead without being detected. Their leader is a woman known as Alpha, with her second in command Beta, her enforcer whom everybody fears. The Whisperer's goal is to eventually eliminate all survivors that are not part of their cult, as they view them as inferior and not worthy of living in this world. These two groups indicate that although the world as we know it has been turned into a wasteland, it is human nature for groups to arise that seek power and whose objective is to colonize the new world and shape it according to their ideas and beliefs.

5. CONCLUSION

John Wyndham was a famous British science fiction author responsible for the famous novel *The Day of the Triffids*. His work inspired writers for many generations, including Alex Garland, the movie *28 Days Later*, and Robert Kirman and his comic book story, which he later adapted into a television series called *The Walking Dead*. These narratives focus on survivors awakening from a coma in a post-apocalyptic world and exploring the struggles of adapting to a world resembling the past rather than the future. At the same time, they are hunted by a monstrous flesh-eating plant and a reanimated corpse filled with endless hunger.

One of the central themes this thesis explores is the connection between triffids and zombies regarding colonialism and post-colonialism while also commenting on the phenomenon of othering. One of the main points is the post-colonial fear of being enslaved for eternity, even after death. Similar to the previously mainstream vampires that represented sexuality and struggles of growing up, zombies represent the fear of death and what is after, as it is unknown if some part remains conscious when someone is turned into a zombie, forcing them to live in an empty shell without the ability to break free.

The post-apocalyptic scenarios with triffids and zombies allow us to project to the future as one of the possible scenarios that could fall on humanity. A similar incident already occurred in the form of the COVID-19 virus that similarly affected the whole world and made people realize that the zombie infection is not as far-fetched a scenario as they thought it to be. The swift evolution of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) threatens the future, similar to zombies. Alex Garland explores the fears of enslavement and technology in the movies *Ex Machina* and *28 Days Later*. Both of these narratives touch upon the idea of unchecked technology leading to disastrous consequences.

Additionally, the problem of consumerism is an apparent factor in the apocalypse as the triffids and zombies represent a metaphor for a consumer that cannot stop his addiction to consuming more and more. The idea of consumerism also deals with a fear of being a leftover in a wasteland world filled with dangerous predators and having the primitive instinct of the need for consumption with limited supplies of food and water. This also reflects and connects with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, resulting in the food sources being threatened, as the shipments of grain have already negatively affected several countries in the world.

Further analysis of the narratives discovered vastly different power relations in individual groups of survivors. The most prominent power dynamic is a form of dictatorship that occurred in the self-proclaimed governor, resembling a colonial plantation owner with an unspoken 1984 leadership, and Negan, who has become a post-apocalyptic emperor and warlord who enslaved several other colonies into his empire. On the other hand, democracy is only shown in the main groups that oppose these “villains.”

In conclusion, the three narratives of *The Day of the Triffids*, *28 Days Later*, and *The Walking Dead* all have deep connections with colonialism and post-colonialism, with the fear of death and enslavement while also commenting and pointing out the problems of consumerism.

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SHRNUTÍ

Román Johna Wyndhama, *The Day of the Triffids* (Den trifidů) je jedním z nejdůležitějších sci-fi děl, který položil základ pro postapokalyptické příběhy. Působil jako přímá inspirace pro Alexe Garlanda, který napsal scénář pro film *28 Days Later* (28 dní poté) a také Roberta Kirkmana a jeho komiksovou sérii *The Walking Dead* (Živí Mrtví), která byla později adaptována formou televizního seriálu, který se stal důvodem popularity tématu zombie. Tato práce se zabývá evolucí zombie, od jejich vzniku v Haiti vůdů kultuře po spojitosti s nákazou COVID-19. Porovnání těchto příběhů poskytuje skvělý pohled do velice odlišných iterací apokalyptického světa, který se v mnoha ohledech podobá světu kolonialismu a postkolonialismu. V práci se využívá fenomén othering (jiný), který slouží k upřesnění pohledu na vztahy mezi živými a nepřátelskými monstry (trifidy a zombie) a také přeživšími. Kde se různé skupiny k sobě chovají nepřátelsky kvůli strachu o své bezpečí, anebo z důvodu zaujmout dominantní postavení. Dále se práce zabývá konsumerismem, kde zombie slouží jako metafora pro konzumerismus a lidskou chuť na nekonečné konzumování. Nakonec se tato práce soustředí na bližší analýzu a rozdíly postapokalyptického světa a nepřátelských skupin. Došlo ke zjištění, že v každém příběhu se vyskytne osoba, či kolektiv, který jeví známky diktatury, rasismu, fanatického chování a touze po vládnutí.