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Hardcore Horror: Finding Arousal in the Undead

Lauren Rosewarne

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Abstract

The mythical undead creature known as the zombie has been a presence in popular culture for close to a century. While zombie portrayals have enjoyed mainstream success in recent years with television shows like *The Walking Dead* (2010–2022), at other times they’ve mostly lingered on the fringes of pop culture in small-budget indie films but have never completely gone away. In this chapter, I focus on one place where zombies have loitered intermittently for more than

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40 years: pornography. This chapter takes a bird's eye view focusing on the why and what of zombie porn. I begin by introducing the idea of pornographic spins on zombies, explaining how they fit into modern erotic media consumption. I then explore two taboo appeals of the material: death and bestiality. The remainder of the chapter focuses on key elements of mainstream zombie presentations that have been appropriated in porn such as aesthetics along with character attributes like mindlessness, insatiability, and violence.

Keywords

Horror · Pornography · Death · Bestiality · Necrophilia · Aesthetics · Taboo · Perversion

Introduction

The mythical undead creature known as the zombie has been a presence in popular culture for close to a century. While zombie portrayals have enjoyed mainstream success in recent years with television shows like *The Walking Dead* (2010–2022), at other times they've mostly lingered on the fringes of pop culture in small-budget indie films but have never completely gone away. In this chapter, I focus on one place where zombies have loitered intermittently for more than 40 years: pornography. Explicit zombie presentations date back to the early 1980s with Italian sexploitation films. The film *Le notti erotiche dei morti viventi* (*Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*) (1980) for instance, is considered one of the earliest examples, but more recent high-profile zombie-porn films include *Zombie Strippers!* (2008), along with Bruce LaBruce's duo *Otto; or, Up with Dead People* (2008) and *L.A. Zombie* (2010).

The concept of "Rule 34" comes from a sentiment popularized on the internet in 2003 and substantiated by the deluge of online erotic content: "if it exists, there is porn of it" (Dewey 2020). And just as this rule can be proven through incalculable examples, *of course* zombie porn is a by-product. The fusion of a horror staple and porn in many ways seems like a highly predictable marriage: both genres are designed to stimulate extreme, visceral reactions, not to mention their shared displays of bodies, bodily fluids, bodily penetration, and, as described by Jenn Hyland and Eric Shorey, the "transgression of bodily boundaries" (Hyland and Shorey 2014, 176).

Rather than undertaking close analyses of any specific zombie porn production (something done well elsewhere, e.g., McGlotten 2014), instead, this chapter takes a bird's eye view, focusing more broadly on the why and what of zombie porn. I begin by introducing the idea of pornographic spins on zombies, explaining how they fit into modern erotic media consumption. I then explore two taboo appeals of the material: death and bestiality. The remainder of the chapter focuses on key elements of mainstream zombie presentations that have been appropriated in porn such as aesthetics along with attributes like mindlessness, insatiability, and violence.

Pornographic Complexities

In this section, three fundamental elements of porn are briefly discussed to help set the scene for the content discussed in this chapter including runtime, genre hybridity, and the wide spectrum of stimulating media.

Porn Features Vs Short Clips

It is important to understand “porn” as a term encompassing a diverse range of content as related to both appearance and purpose. As Emily F. Rothman observes in *Pornography and Public Health*:

There is such a wide variety of pornography categories and subcategories that virtually any statement that begins ‘pornography is...’ is bound to be wrong. Lumping all sexually explicit media together, even all of it that can be found on the mainstream Pornhub website, masks potentially important differences between categories (Rothman 2021, 51).

What a porn production looks like is determined by many different factors. Thus far I’ve namechecked four feature-length zombie porn films made by professional studios but it’s important to note that in an era of streamed content, audiences are much more likely to access free short-form media via sites like Pornhub rather than paid-for features. While sometimes short clips are extracts of longer films, often these are deliberately short productions—produced to both cater to advertisers and short attention spans, and often produced by independent sexual creatives on platforms like OnlyFans. In such clips, storyline is generally sidelined and the focus is exclusively on the sex. The clichéd porn plot of the female customer who offers to pay the pizza delivery man “in kind” therefore, is completely unnecessary in a short clips pornscape. If such material intends to dabble in genre—such as zombie content—it is thus necessary to draw on the hallmarks of mainstream material to quickly convey themes. Such material of course, can’t have the depth or storyline of features, and thus for genre fans and aficionados, zombie porn may be quickly dismissed as merely porn with Halloween-style dress-ups—a topic returned to later in this chapter—as opposed to anything genuinely connected to the genre.

Erotica Vs Horror Vs Comedy

It is worth briefly unpacking the “purpose” of porn in light of the kinds of unexpected erotic content discussed in this chapter. Pornography is, obviously, understood as sexually explicit content designed to arouse. This remit can be achieved through features or via short clips, and can also be accomplished through material that offers pleasures *beyond* simply titillation. While there are many different kinds of zombie films in the mainstream—think zombie comedies or zombie romances—commonly these are all hybrid genres: *horror-comedies* or *horror-romance*,

something attributable to the fact that zombies are generally associated with horror and thus their inclusion inevitably means that material will be categorized as horror even if spliced with something else. The idea therefore, that horror could make its way into porn is worth discussing. Here, I'm not interested in the idea of "torture porn"—a phrase too often used to describe horror content where the violence is sadistic, over-the-top and notably gratuitous but isn't actually *sexual* (even if some audiences might be aroused by it)—but rather porn that incorporates content normally only found in horror: think death, gore, violence, and indeed sometimes even zombies. The porn site RapeLust for instance, greets visitors with a warning that provides a good, if ominous, summary of the contents of the site as well as of the horror porn genre more broadly: "This website contains Highly Explicit and Excessive Sexual Activity, Intense Violence, Strong Language, Rape, Blood and Gore, which may be offensive or disturbing to some viewers". RapeLust is one of many websites offering content that is primarily understood as sexual—which features the fundamental components we associate with porn such as sex and nudity—but which also incorporates violence and bodily degradation, the assumption being that there is an audience who enjoys horror and porn *fused*. Zombie porn can sit in this space: existing as content that is violent, gory and which might be highly disturbing. That said, zombie porn doesn't always include the levels of brutality apparent in videos on sites like RapeLust, and oftentimes in fact, looks very much like mainstream nonviolent porn albeit with the addition of horror costumes and cosmetics. Such ideas also underscore the point that porn often does double-duty: that it can arouse *and* also horrify or shock.

Just as porn can be meshed with horror, it's worth noting that it can also be combined with comedy. In a scene from the US comedy-drama *Ideal Home* (2018) for example, the film's protagonist, Erasmus (Steve Coogan), is asked about the explicit DVDs in his collection with titles such as *Sex Wars: Phantom Ass* and *Bareback Mountain*. Instead of addressing his ownership of the films, Erasmus elects to explain the genre: "What they do is take a recognized title and just give it a bit of a cheeky twist." Akin to exploitation mockbusters—where cheaper lookalike productions are made to cash in on an existing blockbuster and piggyback off marketing (Rosewarne 2020)—porn remakes put a "cheeky spin" on a recognized title:

While such films are, mostly, a means to add novelty – and marketability – to standard pornographic fare, on some occasions, notably so with some of the remakes with higher production values, there is also an effort to do something creative with the content (Rosewarne 2019, 228).

Examples include *A Clockwork Orgy* (1995) as the porn remake of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), or other mainstream/porn pairs such as *Ghostbusters* (1991)/*Ghostbusters* (1984), *The Bare Wench Project* (2000)/*The Blair Witch Project* (1999), and *Twinklight* (2010)/*Twilight* (2008). Apparent in these titles is not only an erotic twist on mainstream source material but also elements of comedy and parody within: such titles can both cater to audience expectations related to explicit content whilst *also* offering elements of humor or irony. In the realm of zombie porn,

there are a range of examples whereby mainstream zombie titles are given a porn spin, for instance the aforementioned *Erotic Nights of the Living Dead* along with *Night of the Giving Head* (2008) are two zombie porn spins on the zombie classic *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). The popular television series *The Walking Dead* has similarly been treated to its own porn spin: *The Walking Dead: A Hardcore Parody* (2013). Other such examples include *Re-Penetrator* (2004) as the porn spin on *Re-Animator* (1985); *Porn of the Dead* (2006) and *Dawna of the Dead* (2008) as porn spins on *Dawn of the Dead* (2004); *Evil Head* (2012), the porn spin on *The Evil Dead* (1981), and the porn series *World War XXX* (2014–2015) as a porn spin on the zombie film *World War Z* (2013). While there are examples where a porn production will try to be realistic, zombies of course, *aren't* real and thus their screen presentation often lends itself to being humorous. Such humor can be exacerbated when such material is made on a shoestring budget; something very common in non-studio content. Humor can be found in any kind of zombie production, but in porn there is often something quite amusing about undead characters—normally presented as preoccupied with eating brains—suddenly possessing amorous intent and playing at “sexy.”

The Gamut of Arousing Content

Just as it is useful to identify that porn can often do things beyond merely arouse, equally it's important to note that content deemed titillating by audiences is not homogenous. Despite the clichés about porn often espoused by detractors, in reality the breadth of content is incalculable. Elsewhere I discuss this topic as related to the presence of material often assumed to be the antithesis of what conventionally arouses, specifically so fat and aged bodies:

While critics play up the waxed, the plucked, the surgically enhanced and the histrionic sexual theatrics so common in the medium, lost in these generalisations are all the very many *other* things we see. In the United States, one of the chunkiest sections of the porn market is fat porn. In Japan, the genre of elderly porn is [booming](#).

As relevant to both fat and elderly porn, there's a simple comment to be made: erotic material reflects our desires. Such porn would not get produced if people didn't want to watch it, and thus, its popularity serves as a good insight into the diversity of arousal (Rosewarne 2012).

Such ideas have relevance to a discussion on zombie porn content because such material regularly conflicts with ideas commonly held about erotic material, i.e., “young and beautiful people have sex. In good lighting, on clean sheets, and always to satisfying ends” (Rosewarne 2012). Zombie content often upends many porn tropes to deliver something different, that might be erotic or horrifying or funny or occasionally all three.

The next section of this chapter focuses on understanding some of the appeals of zombie porn. The internet and notably so smartphones have put porn little more than a few clicks away. With erotic media so effortlessly sourced and so widely

consumed, many of the long-standing taboos around sexuality have diminished (Rosewarne 2011). Part of the enduring appeal of the zombie—and specifically part of the appeal of zombie porn—is that the contents still manage to be transgressive. Key in the characterization of the zombie is their betwixt and betweenness: they are neither alive nor dead, human nor nonhuman. These neither/nor attributes can serve to unsettle, frighten, or shock audiences when situated in horror, but in the context of erotic material, they can harness taboos, thus giving zombie-themed content some renegade appeal. One obvious way this manifests is via allusions to death.

The Death Taboo

A discussion on zombies is incomplete without a discussion of death—after all, the idea of zombies as *undead*, as well as their primary activity being to make mortals unalive, means such a discussion is unavoidable. Death of course, plays an inextricable role in the zombie story: for a zombie to be such, they are dead but have been reanimated (as contrasted with *resurrection* which would have seen them bought back to life) and thus depictions of zombie sex are unavoidably transgressive: zombies are no longer alive and thus any sex scene involving a mortal is sex between somebody alive and an entity that inhabits a space separate from life and death.

Sex with the Dead

In my work on sexual perversion, I observe that for erotic interests that would be illegal to act on—think necrophilia or bestiality—porn can be a means to satisfy such desires:

For some perversions, participation might be illegal or dangerous or difficult; for others, titillation may be found in the idea of something; the messy reality might be superfluous, if not completely revolting. Vicarious participation may be just enough to satisfy (Rosewarne 2011, 47).

Having sexual contact with actual dead people is illegal, not to mention morally and ethically problematic. If, therefore, sex with the dead is something found arousing, porn can provide an outlet. In their work on necrophilia for instance, Rosman and Resnick (1989) present a spectrum of engagement spanning the rare “genuine necrophilia” through to the more common “necrophilic fantasy”—the latter which zombie porn can be an outlet for. Porn provides vicarious access to forbidden sexual fantasy without participants having to break laws or contravene personal ethics or morals.

While for the purposes of this chapter I am not interested in the whys of sexual desire on an individual level, it is worth noting that an interest in sex with the dead reflects a range of cultural preoccupations. Given that zombies have been present in

popular culture for decades, just as there is a tendency to eroticize *any* cultural figure—i.e., consider the eroticization of Disney characters (Rosewarne 2011), or superheroes (Jeffries 2016)—the same thing has happened to zombies. Putting a romantic or sexual spin on the character is a means to update the material and potentially carve out new audiences (Rosewarne 2019). The formation of the zombie-comedy hybrid for instance—sometimes termed the “zomcom”—illustrates this, and so too is zombie-themed porn. It is worth interjecting here and noting that the popularity of zombies is in fact, part of the reason that it can be challenging to actually find zombie-themed material on large porn sites such as Pornhub. The popularity of the character means that the word “zombie” is often used as a keyword in videos to attract clicks—something often termed “clickbait.” These videos however, often *don't* actually contain any zombie content at all, thus suggesting that demand might actually exceed supply in this area.

While necrophilia is the obvious direction where discussions of sex and death lead, there is also some work that links the two topics in a more romantic, less illegal or manner less overtly associated with criminality. In an episode of the crime-drama series *White Lies* (2024–) for instance, Werner (Warrick Grier) and his wife have sex at a crime scene where blood remains smeared over the floor. When later asked about this, Werner explains the appeal: “a couple in the shadow of the grave. Life and death, the erotic dance.” A complicated idea, of course, but Werner’s comment alludes to the idea that there can be something life-affirming (and, also, potentially life-giving) about sex, particularly so sex had in close proximity to death. A variation on this idea is sex as a distraction from death. Elsewhere for instance, I discuss infidelity—particularly so for older men—as a distraction from mortality (Rosewarne 2009). Jennifer Glaser presents a more literal example of this. In her essay “Sex and the Sickbead,” Glaser writes of sex with her boyfriend who was dying of leukemia: “during his lengthy and wholly unsexy illness, he had never ceased to be sexy to me,” and “my dying lover was great in bed” (Glaser 2006). While Glaser writes of things that often go unspoken as related to desire and illness, it’s also worth considering the article as part of the very long history of death in popular culture being framed as romantic. Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* for instance, popularized the template for the idea of a doomed love affair—of sex in the context of a dyad with an expiry date—as something imbued with sharper and higher emotions than an ordinary liaison. While of course, construing zombie porn as making allusions to the taboo of necrophilia makes sense, it is also worth considering the romantic appeal of a romp that just might kill you.

Life and Death Sex

A different appeal of zombie porn is the depiction of sex that’s inherently dangerous. While the danger can be related to violence—discussed later in this chapter—it can also come from simply having contact with a creature whose penchant for gnashing and gnawing at mortals has been depicted in hundreds of pop culture examples. An undercurrent in many zombie porn scenes—notably so those between a mortal and a

zombie—is that even if the sex is dangerous it’s framed as worth it for the pleasure. In a Pornhub scene “Zombie Girl Hungry for Cock!,” after a man discovers his girlfriend is a zombie, he lets her instigate fellatio. While the man is initially apprehensive—saying things like “that’s fucking strange, that’s fucking weird,” and expressing some lukewarm resistance—ultimately he says, “the hell with it. She’s technically my girlfriend, right?... A mouth is a mouth.” Despite the obvious danger of allowing his penis to go into the mouth of a zombie, the man acquiesces, seemingly because the pleasure smothered the risk. Film theorist Barbara Creed applies psychoanalytic concepts such as *vagina dentata*—the toothed vagina—to an analysis of horror (Creed 1993). While close-up images of women’s mouths are regularly used to convey this theme in mainstream horror, such a presentation is near ubiquitous in zombie porn. In many short clips, the action follows a very typical format (and, worth noting, a configuration common across mainstream porn too): a point-of-view shot of a zombie girl—outed as such largely through cosmetics and frequently iris distorting contact lenses—performing fellatio on a man (who is commonly presented as mortal, and often is the person holding the camera). As asked by the title of a HorrorPorn video—“Can I Survive The Attack Of Cum Sucking and Fuck Yearning Zombies?”—apparently even with the grunting and attempts to bite—oral sex with a zombie is worth it to the man, even in spite of the castration risk.

Biting—actual or attempted—plays a key role in zombie presentations as it is the common way that zombies convey their betwixt/between status but also how they are able to transform a living, breathing human into another zombie: “a mere bite from one of them, or a drop of their bodily fluid into my eye, and I too am become zombie” (Webb and Byrnan 2008, 84). In porn, this idea of transmission is often central to zombie presentations. In a Pornhub video whose title provides more storyline content than the clip itself—“Girls get infected and mutate into Zombies—wild lesbian sex”—the scene opens with a woman dressed as a schoolgirl being penetrated by some kind of insect-like creature. Her body contorts, her eyes roll back and a milky film crosses them—she has, seemingly, been infected. In “The Zombie Swallows” video from the BubbaPorn site where a group of friends are staying in a log cabin. One guest, Shelley, comes in from outside—naked—claiming to have just been gangbanged by trees. She pulls from her vagina a stake which she throws at one of her male companions, stabbing him in the leg and infecting him. Another “infection” example comes from the DarknessPorn site. In a video titled “Zombie Midget Fucks and Infects Cougar,” a man with pale make-up resembling, presumably, a zombie, has sex with a seemingly mortal woman. Outside of the man’s make-up however—and a couple of his half-hearted growls—little would indicate that this scene has any actual horror themes; the music playing seems almost upbeat and carnivalesque. It is only after the sex act finishes that they both walk out of the room with their arms outstretched in the cliched zombie walk: seemingly the woman is now a zombie too.

The idea of zombification being contagious can also be construed as referencing AIDS. While the broader idea of mainstream zombie films connected to social

anxieties around HIV has been well documented (Guynes-Vishniac 2018; Schweitzer 2018), the sexual fetish of actively seeking a HIV infection is worth connecting to this topic. “Bug-chasing” describes the process of actively seeking a HIV infection: in reality this might only be a very niche subcultural practice, but it can also be interpreted as a fantasy highly suitable for portrayal in porn. This is not the forum to speculate on the erotic appeals of bug-chasing, suffice to say ideas regarding taboo and deviancy, and notably so the brush with death already discussed in this chapter, has been flagged elsewhere as part of the appeal:

For many individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, the most captivating quality of the sex act is its irrationality. Safe sex, many bug chasers feel, negates that possibility... These individuals perceive heightened sexual satisfaction derived from high-risk sexual encounters wherein they “flirt with death” (Gauthier and Forsyth 1999, 93–94).

The same appeals of bug-chasing manifested in porn can be extended to zombie material whereby transmission and contraction of disease are frequently eroticized. Such ideas can be similarly witnessed through the subgenre of COVID-19-themed porn that emerged during the pandemic (Belinskaya and Rodriguez-Amat 2021).

The Animal–Sex Taboo

With the mainstreaming of porn having taken the forbidden factor out of many historic taboos, scholars often consider that little beyond bestiality, incest, and pedophilia are truly illicit any longer in erotic media (Rosewarne 2011). In this section, I briefly discuss zombie porn as providing an outlet for interests in bestiality. Discussed earlier was zombie porn providing a means to experience arousal through death-themed content. Zombie porn provides something similar as related to offering an outlet for a sexual interest in animals. First, it is necessary to understand the zombie character as not human. Kevin Alexander Boon for instance, writes “the zombie is the antithesis of our human identity (therefore, monstrous)” (Boon 2007, 33). Key in both mainstream and porn presentations of zombies is the character presented as a monster. While often this is a story of aesthetics—whereby, as discussed later in this chapter, the zombie is marked as Other by physically appearing as an reanimated corpse—in other presentations a transformation has been undertaken rendering the zombie as distinctly not-human. Whether we consider the zombie a monster of the supernatural variety or as some kind of animal, the zombie is regularly presented as very *nonhuman*: the grunting, the biting, the physical onslaught illustrates this well. In porn therefore, sex between a human and a zombie can be viewed as transgressive in that not only does it offer cross-species sex, but also sex that inherently bucks ethical and moral boundaries. While most zombie porn alludes to the bestiality idea through the nonverbal grunting and gnashing, in some examples the bestiality allusion is placed at the center of the story. In a PornHub video titled “The Fucking Dead: Capture and Fuck Zombie,” a man

finds a zombie woman in his backyard. He fashions a rope into a lasso and hooks it around the woman's neck. As he walks the woman back to his garage, the man repeatedly whistles and says "here girl" as though he's talking to a dog. In the garage, he ties the woman down before immediately instigating sex with her. When he finishes he slaps her on the rear as says "I might keep you around." This scene positions the zombie woman as pet, as sex slave, and as thoroughly dehumanized.

While most zombie porn takes the form of a mortal/zombie(s)—configuration, there are also examples of zombie-on-zombie sex. In a XNXX video titled "Zombies Fucking! A sweet little sample treat for Halloween" the scene is one of group sex: while there is mortal/zombie content, there is also zombie-on-zombie sex. Similarly, the "Animated 3D Zombies Fucking" video posted on the Heavy-R site shows a male/female zombie couple having sex. While it would be a stretch to consider the zombie-on-zombie content as bestiality, it nonetheless can certainly be construed as reminiscent of the appeals of watching animals have sex (Rosewarne 2011).

Zombie Porn as Ultimate Dehumanization

While this chapter does not adopt a radical feminist position to analyzing zombie porn, nonetheless, it would be amiss to sideline the obvious intersection between such criticisms of porn and the content of zombie-themed material, particularly as related to animal themes.

A key theme in anti-porn feminist literature is concerns about the ways that the material "dehumanizes" its subjects, commonly this is a concern centered on the portrayal of women:

As feminists have long observed, pornography labels women in degrading and dehumanizing ways: as animals, worthless whores, cum dumpsters, fucktubes, pathetic bitches and more. A typical consumer would encounter a number of such labels within a single session of using pornography, let alone over weeks, months and years of use (Whisnant 2010, 123).

While this chapter is not the place to challenge such assertions, nonetheless this idea of women in porn being dehumanized—of having their humanity and individual personhood taken away—is of course, highly relevant to zombie porn. The zombie woman in the aforementioned video, for instant, is trapped and shackled. Consent is not negotiated, she is fucked because she is considered as and treated like she is an animal. The betwixt/between status of zombies—they're not human and maybe not even animals, thus are not afforded the luxury of consent—more broadly provides scope for porn to dabble in ideas around abuse and exploitation, making explicit many of the concerns feminists have had with erotic media.

With much of the porn consumed today being short-form and with little storyline, ideas and aesthetics from mainstream zombie content are appropriated to alert audiences that the scene is not just "ordinary" sex but rather is zombie sex. Aesthetics are central in this story.

Zombie Porn Aesthetics

A zombie on screen is primarily understood as such through their physical appearance: think visible wounds, rotting flesh, and clothing in varying states of decomposition. Just as costuming plays a key role in mainstream film and television, it works the same way in porn. The starting point for this discussion is the zombie body framed as abject through their appearance.

The Abject Body

Clichés of porn often focus on the conventional sexual attractiveness of performers: that porn stars possess the revered qualities of masculinity and femininity and then exaggerate them—think huge breasts, enormous penises. In horror, while beautiful bodies are indeed often presented, a defiling regularly occurs: that something awful—oftentimes something *violent*—happens to a body to both harm it and create a horrifying visual display. In zombie porn—notably so in short-form content—a juxtaposition is provided: the performers commonly still have those attributes thought of as attractive—afterall, this is still porn!—but horror tropes are incorporated to position the body as abject.

Much has been written about women's abject bodies in horror (Kristeva 1982; Creed 1993; Jones 2011), but zombie porn can be construed as an equal opportunity offender in this regard: to convey a character's zombiness, a body must become disgusting to be defiled, and this happens to both male and female performers. (This doesn't necessarily mean that the meaning of the abjection is the same for male and female performers—nor has the same cultural significance—but such a discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter). The zombie, of course, in any context is abject—"The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection" (Kristeva 1982, 4)—but combining this abject body with porn creates new possibilities that can be construed as horrific as well as erotic (and potentially also comic too).

Abjection can be conveyed in a range of ways: bodily fluids provide a good illustration of this. Bodily fluids are a staple in both porn and horror, and, noteworthy, both are routinely considered as something disgusting, often because such fluids are viewed as contaminating (Menninghaus 2003). Contamination, of course, is of heightened concern in the context of zombies where transmission and contagion exist as dangerous possibilities. While women's bodies are often portrayed on screen as *more* disgusting—an idea centered on their vaginal secretions and menstrual fluids (Rosewarne 2012b)—in zombie porn fluids can frame anyone as abject. In the aforementioned Pornhub video "Girls get infected and mutate into Zombies—wild lesbian sex," in one scene a woman kisses a man and then spits into his mouth a thick, slimy substance containing a strange black entity. The man then violently jolts: seemingly he has been infected by this viscous fluid. While most of this video centers on group sex, there is much more fluid exchange than in mainstream porn: the thick contaminating slimy substance gets transferred from mouth-to-mouth, underscoring the centrality of transmission and contraction in zombie storylines and the role of bodily fluids in marking characters as abject.

Cosmetics and Costuming

While mainstream porn regularly calls for lingerie or bikinis, it is standard for costumes to do the heavy lifting as related to conveying a themed story, particularly so for short-form content where little scope for storytelling exists. Mentioned earlier was COVID-19-themed porn; of course, masks played a central role. The same thing works in zombie porn where costuming is often essential.

In a “Hot Zombie Pleases the Gash Between Her Legs” video posted on Puba for example, Nadia White, a conventionally attractive woman—albeit with face and body make-up done to look like open wounds—masturbates in a manner that appears very similar to displays commonly seen in mainstream porn. A similar video from DarknessPorn titled “Zombie Lelu Riding Her Sybian To A Huge Haunted Halloween Orgasm” again shows an attractive woman with some vaguely zombie-ish make-up using a sex toy. The female performer says, “there’s nothing like waking the grave on Halloween,” and she performs against a graveyard backdrop. In both examples, the horror aesthetics are used to distinguish the content from the deluge of look-alike porn that features women performing self-stimulation. In a Pornhub video titled “Feargasm—Cock Hungry Zombies”, the production opens with a woman in what appears to be a dungeon, chained to a bed. She has dark shadows around her eyes, scars across her face, is hissing and biting and then proceeds to perform increasingly aggressive fellatio (think simulated biting) on the man seemingly holding the camera. In this video—like most zombie porn content—the make-up mimics attributes familiar to audiences of mainstream zombie content.

On occasions costuming takes a more significant role, rendering a video as little more than merely inspired by zombie content; or, at least, with zombies existing only in the background. In a PIE4K video titled “Zombies Ate Their Neighbours,” two humans have barricaded themselves in their home; televised news reports advise of a zombie pandemic. Much of the 15-minute video involves a woman trying on different outfits while a man—dressed in military-style garb—watches on, criticizing each outfit as inappropriate to go into battle with zombies. The dress-ups, seemingly, serve as foreplay before the couple have intercourse.

Decomposition, as noted, is key in zombie presentations. While this is a quick way to signify the nature of content to audiences, it is also a physical reminder of death:

zombie porn makes this spectacle even more grotesque, refusing to shy away from the animal nature of the body and its clear statement that decay and death await everyone (West 2022, 66).

Frequently this takes the form of ragged clothing although, in some examples discussed already, can involve simulated wounds. Such trappings are uncommon in mainstream porn but will be immediately recognizable to audiences of both mainstream zombie content and also horror porn.

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, death is a key theme and part of the appeal of such material: make-up and costuming is key in conveying this idea.

Zombie Characteristics

In the final section of this chapter, I examine two attributes of mainstream zombie presentations that are often utilized in zombie porn to frame the characters as recognizable including mindlessness, insatiability, and violence.

The Mindlessness

Be it because they are no longer human and thus not capable of reasoning, or because the decomposition of their bodies has resulted in brain tissue loss, regardless, on screen zombies are invariably portrayed as mindless: *zombie* in popular parlance, after all, is used to describe acting without thought in an automated fashion. While acting on “instinct” can be construed as likening the character to animals as discussed earlier, in the context of erotic content such ideas can be illustrated through characters acting on sexual impulse without thought of seduction which, again, can be considered as evoking the behavior of animals, as well, potentially, as sexual predators.

A common theme in zombie media is the characters moving in packs: that rather than acting as individuals with free will, instead, zombies are externally controlled and often move as a mob. Such an idea, of course, lends itself to group sex or what is commonly termed as a gangbang or orgy in porn. “Zombie Gangbang,” a video posted to AdultEmpire, involves a group of zombies—albeit with just enough make-up to make them recognizable as the characters promised by the title—having sex with a seemingly mortal woman. In a DarknessPorn video titled “Zombie Force Teen To Have Group Sex,” a group of zombies attack a mortal woman in a graveyard and have sex with her. In these examples, humans are seized upon by zombies who seemingly, have hunted in a pack. In James J. Ward’s discussion of zombie porn, the author notes “the zombie exists in a world ruled by instinct and compulsion. It is never a question of whether to engage in a sexual liaison; it is always a matter of biting, chewing, and (presumably) digesting flesh in a futile effort to gratify an all-consuming hunger” (Ward 2015). Here, Ward gives insight into the unthinking nature of zombie sex but also provides a useful segue into another attribute common to zombie portrayals: insatiability. While these group sex scenes illustrate zombies acting unthinkingly and in packs, they’re also indicative of the insatiability of zombie appetites.

The Hunger

In Jen Webb and Sam Byrmand’s work on zombies, they discuss the characters’ insatiability: “we know, for instance, that zombies are unrelentingly, unquenchably and indiscriminately hungry. When they see their environment, they see a place whose only observable features are food” (Webb and Byrmand 2008, 84). When applied to presentations of sex, this insatiability is easily detected whereby the

impulse sees them with the single-minded intent of engaging in sex acts. In the aforementioned “Zombie Girl Hungry for Cock!” clip, a man discovers his partner asleep on the couch the morning after a party. When he gets closer to her he realizes something has happened overnight: she has a cut on her neck, red glazed eyes, and visible veins all over her face. She has become a zombie! When he wakes her she immediately—without pause for thought—grabs at his crotch before proceeding to perform fellatio. In the aforementioned “The Zombie Swallows,” after Shelley has sex with the man, while he puts his pants back on, she growls “fuck me.” He counters, “I already did,” to which she scratches his face then attacks him. The man screams but it’s too late and she’s gnawing through his flesh. He may have had *his* fill, but she certainly wasn’t finished—Shelley’s zombie appetite is insatiable! Such examples evoke well-established ideas of consumption—and specifically being *consumed*—with sexuality.

The linking of sexuality and consumption has been examined by scholars in a variety of different ways. As early as 1905 for instance, Sigmund Freud wrote about men’s sexuality as instinctive: “This impulse is made analogous to the impulse of taking nourishment, and to hunger” (Freud 1905/1916, 1). For my part I’ve written about women’s bodies in advertising as consumable: their sexualized bodies regularly positioned alongside food (Rosewarne 2007). More recently I’ve discussed the ways language more commonly associated with cannibalism has infiltrated our thinking and talking about sex:

For those who’ve been lucky enough to be in a dalliance where a fabulous faculties-takeover has transpired, there’s something erotically familiar about want manifesting in metaphors and fantasies centred on consuming and being consumed, devouring and being devoured... And even outside of infatuation, nods to cannibalism are easily detected in our dialogue of love and sex. Fat little babies could be *eaten right up*. The phrase *I want to eat you* is far more common—and arguably far sexier—than the proposition of an evening of cunnilingus. And oh-oh, here she comes, *she’s a maneater!* (Rosewarne 2021).

In Ward’s work on zombie porn, the link between porn as a medium and the specifics of zombie content is observed: “The two genres share a number of other characteristics—orality, insatiable appetites, the internality of the body, objectification and depersonalization... the use of prostheses and prosthetics, and a clinical depiction of anatomical features and physiological functions” (Ward 2015, 209).

The idea of the sex being literally consuming can be interpreted as referencing a range of cultural ideas such as gendered ideas around women being devoured by audiences (Rosewarne 2007), through to the eroticization of consumption in sex: something well illustrated by the sexual undercurrents of vampire content.

The Violence

Among radical feminists’ extensive criticisms of porn, a notable concern relates to violence: that the medium not only depicts physical brutality but notably *eroticizes* it, presenting such imagery as sexually arousing for audiences (Dworkin 1989;

Russell 1993; Purcell 2012). The extent to which mainstream porn is violent is open for debate, but certainly in much zombie material varying degrees of aggression plays a central role.

While in many zombie porn examples—but apparent in porn more broadly—audiences are left to make assumptions regarding things such as consent/consensual non-consent. Therefore, while some scenes can simply be construed as sexualized violence, others can be interpreted as BDSM presentations where pleasure can come, from other things such as power play and the giving and/or receiving of pain.

In “Asa Akira’s Zombie Butt Creampie” on DarknessPorn, a woman wakes up next to her partner—seemingly he’s become a zombie overnight. She resists him but he covers her mouth and forces her into sex while slapping her face and strangling her. As aggressive as the presentation seemingly is, the female participant ultimately seems to be enjoying herself. A similar example is evident in a Pornhub video titled “Zombie fucked Velma on Halloween night.” A woman dressed in a “sexy” version of Velma Dinkley from the Scooby-Doo series is woken by an intruder. The intruder is easily detectable as a zombie: he has dark shadows around his eyes and shredded, blood-stained clothing, and is hissing and chomping at her. The zombie man seemingly pursues her and while she is initially resistant, the pursuit ends in her bedroom where penetration immediately transpires. While the scene is set up to appear as though it is one of rape, almost instantly Velma seems to enjoy the sex, responding both aurally and physically to the zombie, even giggling and masturbating during the penetration. While she often pushes him back physically during the sex, this appears more so as a gesture to stop him biting her as opposed to actually resisting his advances. In other videos, the aggression is more overtly humorous in tone. In a video titled “Hot Sadistic Zombie Nurses Toys” on DarknessPorn, zombies dressed as nurses “torture” a mortal woman, applying different electro-stimulation devices to her until she orgasms. In another titled “Zombie R.,” a female zombie has a mortal restrained to a chair who she proceeds to torture through excessive tickling. Such scenes can be interpreted as consensual non-consent but can equally be read as sexual violence by critics but also by audiences aroused by material with violent themes.

Conclusion

Rule 34 says if someone has thought of it, there’s porn depicting it. Zombies exist in porn because, after all, *everything* exists in porn. Zombie porn however, is predictable: the character has been all over mainstream popular culture for decades already and anything that can be eroticized *has* been eroticized; particularly so characters that can be easily portrayed with simple costuming and without special effects.

Zombie porn is interesting because it reflects the complexity of audience appetites when it comes to erotic content: some people like watching beautifully groomed fuck, others prefer the involvement of folks who look like the literally just climbed out of a grave. While such material provides a sexual outlet for the ordinary porn consumer who might be seeking something a little different, it can also be viewed as

offering an outlet for audiences with more taboo tastes, and thus zombie porn provides a means to cater to them via its nudging to a range of traditional taboos.

Zombie porn reflects many ideas related to sexuality along with discourse around porn. While the content disrupts many ideas about erotic media, in many respects it is also merely a variation of what audiences are used to seeing in such material: explicit sex, little to no dialogue, and sometimes the occasional brush with degrees of aggression, albeit with the addition of ghoulish cosmetics and costuming.

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