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12. **Zombie Escape and Survival Plans**

Mapping the Transmedial World of the Dead

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**Abstract**

This essay reflects on the notion of space in the world building of zombie fiction. Running in particular through the *Resident Evil* (1996-present, initially a video game) and *The Walking Dead* (2003-present, initially a comic book) franchises, it will analyse the ways spaces and places are represented and designed, as well as the (player) characters’ behaviors these spaces and places motivate. More precisely, in order to underscore the questions of survival and of horror, it will focus on enclosed and contested spaces or, in other words, on the concept of the fortress and of the seminal notion of the labyrinth.

**Keywords:** Zombie, Video game, TV series, Comic book, Film, *The Walking Dead*, *Resident Evil*

It is commonly recognized that, in the mid-90s, “zombies were saved from triviality in popular culture and made frightening again, this time by video games” (McIntosh 2008, 11). What’s more, as Shawn McIntosh stated just after acknowledging the importance of the tenth art, “In many ways, in fact, they were and are ideally suited to the video game environment” (ibid.). If one considers the notion of “environment” not in the sense of a system on which a computer program runs, but instead as the combination of external physical conditions that affect and influence the growth, development, and survival of organisms; as the surroundings in which people carry on a particular activity; and as the state of being environed, McIntosh could not have been more correct.

While zombies are seen as the Everymonsters that might appear in many variations of the same narrative schema, and while the interactive nature...
of the video game indisputably engages the protagonists in direct confrontations with the undead, one should not forget that Capcom’s *Resident Evil* (1996) was a literal game changer by welcoming the player, through a now-famous line during loading screens, to “the world of survival horror” (my emphasis) and thereby drawing attention to the spatial dimension of the experience. Thus, this essay will reflect on the notion of space in the world building of zombie fiction. Running in particular through the *Resident Evil* (1996-present, initially a video game) and *The Walking Dead* (2003-present, initially a comic book) franchises, it will analyse the ways spaces and places are represented and designed, as well as the (player) characters’ behaviors these spaces and places motivate. More precisely, in order to underscore the questions of survival and of horror, it will focus on enclosed and contested spaces or, in other words, on the concept of the fortress and of the seminal notion of the labyrinth.

**Undead Worldness**

With video games, comics, films, TV series, novelizations, and novels—novels that this essay will not examine—, *Resident Evil* and *The Walking Dead* have come to be associated with the notion of transmedial world building. There is actually a zombie “world” or, better still, a “worldness” to these fictions (and many others following the same generic conventions). As Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca have explained:

> What characterises a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the “worldness” (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world’s worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time (Klastrup and Tosca 2004, 409).

Henry Jenkins has continued to explore this convergent cultural creation. So often quoted, he states: “More and more, storytelling has become the art of world building, as artists create compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium” (Jenkins 2006, 114), citing examples that point, among others, towards the walking dead:

> Different franchises follow their own logic: some such as the *X-Men* (2000) movies, develop the world in their first instalment and then allow the
sequels to unfold different stories set within that world; others, such as the *Alien* (1979) films or George Romero's *Living Dead* (1968) cycle, introduce new aspects of the world with each new instalment, so that more energy gets put into mapping the world than inhabiting it (ibid.).

Actually, the post-apocalyptic zombie universe is difficult to inhabit. And its current “worldness” originates from *Night of the Living Dead*. Romero’s 1968 film has been defined by Jean-Baptiste Thoret as a “matrix film”:

a film that inspires, that stirs the imagination, which produces a desire to connect. Different from the remake, and different as well from single quotes or references to previous works, the matrix film contains a number of motifs, situations or images that will be reused, transformed (*anamorphoses*) and reworked in other films (Thoret 2001, 144, freely translated).

As we know, by dissociating the zombie from the Haitian folklore, *Night of the Living Dead* established the “rules” or “basics” of the modern zombie. Rather than slaves under the spell of an evil master using some Vodou practices of the Caribbean, the dead now slowly, freely, and instinctively walk the earth with the purpose of eating and/or infecting the living; and they can only be killed by destroying the brain. Such evil deeds have well and truly established a narrative schema: “Many of the zombie movies of the 1970s have a plot similar to *Night’s*: a small group of people are trapped in a remote location and have to fight off numbers of slow-moving zombies who want to eat them” (McIntosh 2008, 9). Although the new ghoul behavior remains the decisive change to the early zombie tropes, another modification is possibly less highlighted but equally significant to the matrix of the zombie film.

**Holding Onto the Enclosed Space as Long as Possible**

In *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932), set in Haiti, Murder Legendre, the zombie master played by Béla Lugosi, inhabits a bastion on a cliff. As described by Kyle Bishop:

Deep in the bowels of his seaside fortress, an army of zombies operates the machines of production, cranking a massive grinder by hand and transporting a seemingly endless supply of sugar cane to the mouth of the mill. This scene in *White Zombie* emulates a similarly pejorative depiction
of the factory as in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), where seemingly mindless workers run the relentless machines with no apparent thought for their own lives and safety (Bishop 2010, 78).

In *Night of the Living Dead*, although they are in this first iteration afraid of fire, the mindless flesh eaters don’t think about their own safety when the strike their prey either. Above all, they have switched role and place: they don’t work on the inside and don’t guard the fortress; they are assailing it from the outside, as well as from the inside, when humans turn into voracious cannibals. The rural Pennsylvania home where the survivors end up requires adaptations. Bishop explains: “Ben immediately begins a radical home renovation to convert the farmhouse quickly into a makeshift fortress. Visual ties to *The Birds* and *Last Man on Earth* are obvious; Ben uses rough tools to attack and incapacitate the zombies, he systematically tosses the bodies outside, and he starts dismantling furniture to board up the doors and windows” (ibid., p.116). Whereas the shopping mall of *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) will likewise be secured with materials at hand, the underground bunker of *Day of the Dead* (1985), the ultra-modern city of *Land of the Dead* (1995) as well as the hidden panic room at the end of *Diary of the Dead* (2007) are fortifications specially designed to protect people.

The first *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996) deftly combines both versions of the fortress. Built in the Arklay Mountains, the Spencer Mansion where the Special Tactics and Rescue Service (S.T.A.R.S.) Alpha Team takes refuge at the beginning of the game in search of the Bravo Team is not what it first appears to be. It is “in fact the Arklay Research Facility, where Umbrella was conducting experiments for biological warfare, culminating with the T-Virus. The unpredictable biological accident was to envelop all of Racoon City in an inescapable nightmare” (Capcom 2006, 248). Consequently, Jill Valentine (or Chris Redfield) has to access the building and breach its defensive structures in order to find her or his way to escape it. Their investigation establishes the common journey of the (player) characters: first getting in, then getting out in order to survive; otherwise, the investigated spaces become death traps. The briefing of *A Resident Evil Story: Dangerous Secrets* in the first comic book (Kris Oprisko, Ted Adams and Carlos D’Anda, WildStorm, 1998) recounts these events. The team of paramilitary commandos descending to the Umbrella underground genetic research facility called “The Hive” during the first movie (*Resident Evil*, Paul W.S. Anderson, 2002) makes the same trip, and not everyone comes out alive. The zombies of *Resident Evil* and the others creatures infected by the virus are also the products of *White Zombie* and *Night of the Living Dead*. They
are in the fortress insofar as they were the employees (i.e. the slaves of the Umbrella Corporation); Jill emphasizes this truth to Albert Wesker towards the end of the game: “So, you are a slave of Umbrella now, along with these virus monsters.” But it does not matter whether they are inside or outside the space; they respect the Romerian living dead behavior matrix and impulsively walk toward the player character even though they'll be killed (see, for instance: Perron 2017). In the end, or in the beginning if we look at the origin of the havoc, it’s because one of the zombies got outside the walls of the research laboratories that the virus has spread and infected the population of Raccoon City.

The threat of a full-scale humanitarian disaster is difficult to control and to keep within limits. Regardless of the means, the growing horde of the living dead will invariably walk or crawl toward the human hideouts, will continuously push against the boundaries before eventually succeeding to invade the secured spaces (many times facilitated by the unwise behaviors of survivors or the hostile attempts of takeover by other parties). Bordered by rivers and an electric fence, even the well-guarded Fiddler’s Green of Land of the Dead will suffer such a fate and have its inhabitants horribly eaten. That is why, referring to Night of the Living Dead, Matthew Weise derives from these unavoidable breaches another key pattern:

As barricades are overwhelmed, survivors fall back to individual rooms, relying more on weapons. This concept of the “shrinking fortress” is a mainstay of the subgenre, finding expression in virtually every zombie film, whether on a small scale as in Shaun of the Dead (a pub) [Edgar Wright, 2004] or on an epic scale as in Land of the Dead (an entire city) (Weise 2009, 253).

Weise then explains how the first Resident Evil could not express this concept because the rooms of the Mansion were distinct spaces crossed only by the player character.

The player always knew they were safe when they reached a door, since doors were inaccessible to zombies. Furthermore, the nature of how the load screens worked made doors magical safe zones. Even with a small horde of zombies blocking a doorway the player could still escape at the touch of a button as long as they were able to touch the door (ibid., 255).

Quite rightly, however, Weise underlines in one endnote that Resident Evil 4 (Capcom, 2005) “manages to re-create the shrinking fortress mechanics
of *Night of the Living Dead* with fantastic fidelity" (Ibid., 265 n. 28). In a remote rural region of Europe, Leon S. Kennedy searches for Ashley Graham, captive daughter of the President of the United States, while being constantly assaulted by local villagers (more infected than living dead). In many locations, and especially during the first two chapters, he is able to enter the farmhouses and push furniture like bookcases and storage cabinets in front of doors and windows. This will only delay or slow down the invasion. For instance, the cabin where Leon, Luis, and Ashley barricade themselves in chapter 2-2 is attacked from everywhere, even from the second floor, accessed by ladder. Since there is no place to fall back, Leon and Luis must kill 40 enemies before the horde suddenly gives up and let them live, temporarily.

From a world-building perspective, the *Walking Dead* franchise is actually about mapping the world of the undead. That world is indeed dotted with fortresses, not shrinking as much as breached and overcome ones, rendering the fight useless and leading the characters to flight. From the beginning of the story in the comic books, the survival of Rick Grimes and the various survivors regrouped around him is a matter of space. The characters realize in the first issues that they can’t live out in the open or in outdoor environments because the zombies can approach and strike from any direction. As Frédérick Maheux notes after making a reference to Max Brooks’ *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead* (2003):

This pragmatic approach to space underscores two basic narrative forms for the zombie narrative: a sedentary form, where the survivors fortify a place and camp there, and a nomadic form, where the survivors have to travel from point A to point B (or simply keep moving). (Maheux 2015 189, freely translated)

In issue eight (Robert Kirman and Charlie Adlard, Image Comics, May 2004), the Wiltshire Estates are the first secure fenced domain that the characters encounter and in which they briefly settle down. They are soon swarmed by a horde of hungry dead residents because they had unwisely neglected to inspect the neighbourhood; a mistake they will never repeat. The group ends up at Hershel Greene’s farm. This is also the case for Lee Everett and Clementine in the initial episode of Telltale Games’ *The Walking Dead* (April 24, 2012). Both in the comic and in the game, the newcomers are rapidly kicked out by Hershel following deadly incidents involving his family members and zombies (they only remain for three issues in the comic
book; i.e. issues ten, eleven, and twelve of July, August, and September 2004). Things do not happen this way in the TV series. Compared to the rhythm of the comic book, in which the story is cut into short issues and quick narrative arcs, and to the video game in which the exploration of the farm is limited and therefore lasts only a brief time (the exploration of space being one of the distinctive features of the video game), Rick and his companions spend the entire second season there (AMC, 2011-2012). The series makes the most of its sedentary setting and particularly well-developed characters by infusing the narrative with additional pathos. As Bishop observes:

What makes the series such an important contribution to the zombie canon [...] is how *The Walking Dead* ups the ante on screen horror by making the characters so well developed, likable, and imperilled. Although the zombies obviously function as catalysts for the show’s physical action and apocalyptic story line, the core of *The Walking Dead* addresses the essential concerns of dramatic pathos: the struggles, losses, and emotional traumas experienced by the human protagonists. (Bishop 2011, 9-10)

The first task of the protagonists is, indeed, to try to make their surroundings safe. As well as this is achieved, they will nonetheless be overwhelmed by a horde of walkers during the final episode. Once again, the space becomes uninhabitable; they must move on.

Both the thirteenth issue of the comic book (October 2004) and the first episode of the third season of the TV series (AMC, 14 October 2012) bring the group to an actual stronghold: a prison, literally an enclosed space meant to keep some in while keeping others out. To seek such sites is a recommendation from Max Brooks’ survival manual dealing with the potentiality of a zombie attack:

In Class 3 outbreaks [a hue crisis], private homes and even public structures prove insufficient to support human life. Eventually, the people inside will have either suffered the eventual degradation of their defenses, or simply run out of supplies. What is needed in a severe outbreak is a nearly impregnable structure with all the facilities of a self-sustaining biosphere. What is needed is a fortress. (Brooks 2003, 87)

Owing to the exceptional sturdiness of its fence, the clan is indeed able to inhabit the prison for quite a long time, allowing them to begin planning a new life (36 comic issues from October 2004 to April 2008, and the whole third TV series season and half of the fourth one). As mentioned above, the
fences are eventually breached, though not initially by the walking dead, but, rather, by human enemies. The barricaded parking lot of the motor inn in the third episode of Telltale Games’ *The Walking Dead* (28 August 2012) is similarly breached because of a bandit offensive. The fact remains that, in order to survive, as is the case in more recent storylines, the protagonists must live behind walls, such as those of the Alexandria Safe-Zone (first appearance in issue 69, January 2010, and the eleventh episode of the fifth season of the TV series; 22 February 2015), the Hilltop Colony (first appearance in issue 94, February 2012) and “The Kingdom” community (first appearance in issue 108, March 2013). In Telltale’s *The Walking Dead: Season Two*, the hardware store William Carver’s group uses as a refuge and base of operations (mainly in episode three, AMC, 13 May 2014) is similarly isolated.

Given the importance of the concept of the fortress, *Plants vs. Zombies* (George Fan and PopCap Games, 2009) may well be the zombie video game *par excellence*. Indeed, it simplifies the dominant trajectory of zombies into a straight line of attack, while the sole goal of the human survivors is to defend their “tower”. By combining the mechanics of first person shooter, survival horror, tower defence, role-playing, and open-world games, *7 Days to Die* (The Fun Pimps, 2016) accentuates these survival and horror themes.

Navigating the Contested Space as Carefully as Possible

In order to contain the epidemic, the Umbrella Corporation erects a wall around Raccoon City at the beginning of *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (Alexander Witt, 2004). As opposed to the survivors of *The Walking Dead*, who enter the prison by choice, the townspeople are imprisoned without their consent due to the quarantine. They are trapped in an especially unsafe area. This seclusion goes against an important survival tip of Brooks:

**AVOID URBAN AREAS:** No matter what your chances for survival are during an infestation, they will undoubtedly drop by 50 if not 75 percent when traversing an urban area. The simple fact is that a place inhabited by more living will have more dead. The more buildings present, the more places to be ambushed. These buildings also decrease your field of vision. Hard cement surfaces, unlike soft ground, do nothing to muffle footsteps. Add to that the chances of simply knocking something over, tripping over debris, or crunching over broken glass, and you have a recipe for a very noisy trip. Also, [...], the possibility of being trapped, cornered,
or otherwise surrounded in an urban area is infinitely greater than it is
in any wilderness setting. (Brooks 2003, 100)

Insofar as the movie was inspired by *Resident Evil 2* (Capcom, 1998), *Resident
Evil 3: Nemesis* (Capcom, 1999), and *Resident Evil: Code: Veronica* (Capcom,
2000), it built on the ways these games were designed. In fact, to refer to
McIntosh’s comment quoted in the introduction, the video games truly
enhance the environment of zombie postapocalyptic fiction. Once more,
we must emphasize their spatial dimensions.

Rooting the video game in architecture, landscape painting, sculpture,
gardening, and amusement-park design, Henry Jenkins and Kurt Squire
see it as a spatial art:

Game worlds are totally constructed environments. Everything there
was put on the screen for some purpose—shaping the game play or
contributing to the mood and atmosphere or encouraging performance,
playfulness, competition, or collaboration. If games tell stories, they do so
by organizing spatial features. If games stage combat, then players learn
to scan their environments for competitive advantages. Game designers
create immersive worlds with embedded rules and relationships among
objects that enable dynamic experiences. (Jenkins and Squire 2002, 65)

Above all, they single out one fundamental motif: “Stripped to their simplest
elements, the earliest digital games consisted of little more than contested
spaces. Picture Pac-Man gobbling his way through a simple maze and trying
to avoid getting caught by ghosts. As game technology improves, the potential
for creating complex and compelling spaces seems unlimited” (ibid.). The
reference to *Pac-Man* (Namco, 1980) is especially relevant and the reading
proposed by Chaim Gingolde expands on the forces at work and at play:

Spatially speaking, Pac-Man’s maze helps to structure the game’s dynam-
ics and drama. Power pellets are tucked away in the corners, making them
hard-to-reach treats. As an arena, the maze forces the ghosts, Pac-Man
and the pellets into constant contact, releasing a focused and continuous
drama. The maze is also a recognizable puzzle form, which motivates
the player to move through it. Tactically, the Pac-Man maze has multiple
meanings: it is both an obstacle to acquiring food and escaping ghosts
and a means to trap and outwit those ghosts. Each maze also functions
as a level to complete, breaking the game up into discrete dramatic units.
(Gingolde 2007, 79)
Once enclosed by the wall, the city of *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* becomes a giant Pac-Man-like maze. It is thus not a big step to compare the zombies to the ghosts, the various guns and ammunitions found to the power pellets and the (player) characters to the Pac-Man. The gameplay and drama involve moving through the labyrinth to get the pellets, namely the documents and items scattered all around; in the video games, some of these items—such as keys, crests, masks, emblems, plates or handles—are necessary to end a “level” or a chapter, to get access to new locations, and to pursue the investigation.

The many events that make up the main plot of the *Resident Evil* franchise revolve around the top-secret activities of the Umbrella Corporation and its paramilitary organization. The storylines as developed across media involve the discovery of classified information, the uncovering of malicious activities responsible for the zombie outbreak, and attempts to eliminate the threat of bioterrorism. The war has gone global: *Resident Evil 5* (Capcom, 2009) is set in Africa; *Resident Evil 6* (Capcom, 2012) covers the United States, China, Edonia, and the deep see of the Northern Atlantic; *Resident Evil: Retribution* (Paul W. S. Anderson, 2012) goes to Japan and Russia; the last three issues of the comic book *Resident Evil: Fire and Ice* (Kris Oprisko, Ted Adams, Lee Bermejo and Shawn Crystal, WildStorm, February to May 2001) alternately take place in Mexico and Alaska; the outbreak in the five issues of the manga *Resident Evil: Markawa Desire* (Capcom and Noaki Serizawa, Éditions Kurosama, 2012-2014) is situated near Singapore; and the action of the first issue of *Resident Evil: Volume Two* (Ricardo Sanchez, and Kevin Sharpe, WildStorm, May 2009) even takes place in outer space. The various members of the S.T.A.R.S. Alpha and Bravo Teams, of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance, or of the U.S Secret service, as well as their relatives or allies, are all involved in and committed to this mission. The film series is centered on a character not present in the games: Alice (played by Milla Jovovich). While this former security operative of the Umbrella Corporation suffers from amnesia in the first installment, she slowly discovers that she is infected by the T-Virus, but, moreover, that she is bonding with it, a condition that gives her special abilities. Her journey into and through the storyworld is based on revenge and on saving humankind.

From Raccoon City in *Resident Evil 2* and *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* (Capcom, 1999), to the Spencer Mansion and its surroundings in *Resident Evil*, and to the foreign Umbrella facility and island in *Resident Evil: Code: Veronica*, the labyrinth is the common spatial motif. According to the study of Clara Fernández-Vara,
Physically, labyrinths and mazes are bounded spaces to be traversed; their main purpose is to delay the walker [in the general sense and not as a kind of walking dead] as he goes from point A to point B. This delay can be achieved by extending the distance between those two points, tracing meandering paths or branching those paths and forcing the walker to guess the correct one. Confusion and disorientation are also ways to obstruct the path to the exit. (Fernández-Vara 2007, 74)

The first Resident Evil games are known for their backtracking, for the player character’s need to bring specific objects back to a place already visited in order to proceed to new parts of the environment or, because the player character can only carry a limited number of items at a time, to the location of item boxes where useful objects can be stored. In order to orient oneself, the exploration and re-exploration is aided by a “Map” function that can be accessed from the status screen: “Select this option to view the rooms and areas you have already visited. This feature helps you keep track of where you need to go” (Resident Evil’s instruction guide). Nonetheless, as Alfred Korzybski famously stated, “A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness” (Korzybski 2000, 58). The map does not actually represent the genuine horrific playground, inasmuch as it doesn’t display the “biohazard” (the original release title in Japan). The “world of survival horror” is a tangible space contested by the (rarely solitary) zombie. In the games, the comic books and the movies, the characters must be ever-cautious. They generally explore the corridors and rooms with their gun raised and ready to shoot; their safety relies on purging literal death threats.

Reiterating an analysis I make elsewhere about video games (Perron 2017), I’ll recall that the zombie is a “definer of space”. “If the corridor is tight enough, then the zombie becomes an actual wall of the corridor. If the zombie traps the player in a dead end, then the narrow space becomes increasingly narrower. The zombie in this situation becomes a shambling, clawing, biting barrier” (Totten 2012). Stressing that the player character needs to “survive the space”, Maheux notes that “The videoludic zombies in Resident Evil occupy a spatial barrier role. They are more than enemies to be destroyed; they are traps that limit exploration by the player” (Maheux 2015, 195, freely translated). Jill or Chris might be safe when they reach a door in Resident Evil, but they do not know what’s on the other side. At the very beginning of Resident Evil 2, Claire or Leon is forced to face three zombies suddenly pushing open a wire-mesh fence because the back alley of the Gun Shop turns out to be a dead end. The spatial presence of the living dead is
central in the other media too. The Alpha and Bravo Teams are, for instance, ambushed by the living dead in the jungle in the second issue of *Resident Evil: Volume Two*. Because the maintenance tunnels of the Hive are flooded by a huge wave of zombies, Alice and the remaining group members of the first movie must walk on the overhead pipes to escape. Examples like these are as legion as the walking dead.

The prison of *The Walking Dead* is undoubtedly a huge labyrinth, not inhabited at its center by a solitary Minotaur (rather, in the original story, it’s four inmates who are initially found in the cafeteria), but by roamers locked in various rooms (the guards opened the cells as the situation deteriorated). The labyrinth must be claimed from the undead. In both the comic and the TV series, the group settles down near the exit. Yet, the maze is—literally and metaphorically—made darker in the television adaptation; the contrast between the bright outdoors and the gloomy interior is salient. It must be explored with flashlights. As there are multiple entrances to the prison, it is traversed repeatedly with great peril and not without casualties. It is in one of its corridors, littered with zombie corpses, that Glen finds a disturbed Rick after the death of Lori. The transmedial story of *The Walking Dead* certainly relates to the sedentary form of the zombie narrative, as the survivors attempt to find and settle in a secure haven. Nevertheless, insofar as such a sanctuary is hard to locate and, as we have seen, to keep and defend, *The Walking Dead* also relies much on the nomadic narrative form. The sudden departure from the prison after the offensive of the Governor’s troops splits and spreads the group across the area. They must keep moving to stay alive and to eventually reunite. In the video game, the young Clementine, Telltale’s new main character, playable in the second season (2013-2014), embarks on a long and seemingly endless journey after leaving her home at the beginning of this storyline. In his study of the zombie invasion in the video game space, Maheux uses the distinction made by Deleuze and Guattari between two types of space: “In striated space, one closes off a surface and ‘allocates’ it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one ‘distributes’ oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one’s crossings (*logos* and *nomos*)” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 481). Maheux then explains that the space of *Resident Evil* is striated, separated in rooms and doors (intervals and breaks) and that the open world of a game like *Dead Island* (Techland, 2011) is a smooth and open space. In that case, Maheux shows, “zombies are more obstacles based on time rather than space. The player knows that to get to any destination, he will face an infinite number of creatures” (Maheux 2015, 198). As a result, the wilds are
no less a contested space than the maze. The nomads must remain just as cautious as the settlers. An encounter with one or many zombies in the fields and forest is a constant possibility, a fact made painfully clear on numerous hikes nearby and between temporary homes. The characters must always secure a camp and install some kind of alarm around it. The predator might not be smart, but the humans are still the prey. And no matter how many flesh eaters are killed, there will always be others coming. The growing horde walking towards Hershel's farm in the opening scene of the last episode of the second season of the TV series *The Walking Dead* (18 March 2012) strikingly expresses this.

**Razing Everything in Their Path to the Ground**

The *Resident Evil* and *The Walking Dead* franchises have been and are still highly popular. They are, without a doubt, compelling environments that can be explored across media. Ultimately, they lean on the paradox of the living dead, of being at once alive and dead. Although the franchises create worlds, the created places and locations are, whatever the media, to be destroyed. In fact, to reverse Jenkins’s assertion quoted at the beginning of this essay and to underline once more the ins and outs of these apocalyptic fictions, it is precisely because the zombie worlds are so difficult to inhabit that energy is put into mapping them. No matter when the survivors stop moving and where they settle down, the flesh eaters will keep coming to overwhelm them mindless intent. The invasion remains definite and total. As SWAT team officer Peter Washington (played by Ken Foree) asserts in *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978): “When there’s no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth.” We could then say: “When there’s no more room in one medium the dead will walk another one.”

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