

***iZombie*: Evil corporations, culpability and ir/responsibility**

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Abstract *iZombie* is set in Seattle where part of its population are infected with a zombie virus created by a corporation. *iZombie* sustains the productive use of the zombie to explore consumption and late-stage capitalism, but unlike most other zombie fiction, situates this in a recognizable, banal present where social and governmental institutions, laws and bureaucracies continue to operate. Central to these questions is the role and responsibility of corporations, situated within an eminently recognizable, but not particularly effective, law and order. *iZombie* accurately portrays the continued production of a dangerous product within a legal framework that protects corporations and investors, rather than customers. Given the dependence of zombies on access to brains, the series sheds light on the responsibility of consumers, legal authorities and broader society in perpetuating harms. In light of our increasing dependence upon corporations and the systemic harms that they cause – what kinds of justice are available? This article will consider how corporate wrongdoing, legal conceptions of corporate criminal responsibility and the im/possibility of justice are mis/represented in the first season of the series.).

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Large organisations and corporations are a common feature of horror and science fiction narratives (e.g. *28 Days Later* [Boyle, 2002], *Poltergeist* [Hooper, 1982], *Resident Evil* franchise [2002-present], *Mr Robot* [2015-19], *Stranger Things* [2016-present], and *iZombie* [2015-19]).¹ Corporations, particularly evil corporations, are so common and such an

¹ At law, corporations have a specific narrow meaning, which large organisations such as the Catholic Church have drawn upon to evade liability. This article avoids technical legal

accepted staple of horror and science fiction that they are almost background noise. Despite the centrality of the trope, there is a relative dearth of academic analysis of evil corporations in horror and science fiction.² This article explores the portrayal of corporations and organisations in the series *iZombie* in order to analyse individual and organisational culpability within a framework of existing law. This article will consider how corporate wrongdoing, legal conceptions of corporate criminal responsibility and the im/possibility of justice are mis/represented in the first season of the series. This is informed by the idea that the criminal legal system is not great at responding to corporate harms. We can thus turn to horror and science fiction to analyse how harms are caused by large corporations and whether or not they are sufficiently blameworthy to justify the imposition of criminal legal sanctions (Crofts 2022a). This type of analysis is part of a tradition of law and popular culture, whereby we can ask law questions through and by popular culture, disrupting common sense understandings of legal categories, asking what we assume and can expect from law, and what kinds of justice are delivered and/or possible (MacNeil 2007).

iZombie ran for five seasons from 2015 until 2019. The series received critical acclaim – Season One had a rating by critics of 92% and Season Two had a rating of 100%

definitions of the corporation and includes large organisations in the analysis to elucidate the capacity for systemic harms. This analysis includes governmental organisations, as the focus is on large organisations. Frequently in horror and science fiction it is not clear if the large organisation is a government organisation, an organisation funded by the government, or a private corporation.

² In her analysis of *iZombie* and the sociopolitical dimensions of food, Giannini extends her analysis from zombies as consumers to the corporations that produce and distribute food (2019: 67-68). See also Giannini (2017) and (Crofts forthcoming).

on the Rotten Tomatoes website. The critic Derakhshani (2017) is quoted on Rotten Tomatoes stating that the series is a ‘delightfully ironic take on the horror genre’. The genre-crossing series was variously categorised as horror, comedy, drama, and supernatural crime procedural. The series is set in contemporary Seattle, where part of the population has become infected with a zombie virus. The central character is Olivia Moore (Liv Moore [Rose McIver]), a driven and ambitious trainee emergency hospital doctor, who is infected with the zombie virus after being scratched by drug dealer Blaine (David Anders) at a boat party. As a consequence of the way that the virus spreads —through blood contact, sex or injury — Liv breaks up with her fiancé Major Lilywhite (Robert Buckley) and quits her job at the hospital. She gets a job as an assistant at the city morgue which gives her access to an unlimited supply of brains. *iZombie*’s take on zombie mythology offers sentient zombies (as long as they do not starve, they maintain normal brain function) that (temporarily) take on the memories and personality of the person whose brain they consume. This gives Liv a new purpose: eating the brains of murder victims allows her to help solve murders as the sometime partner of SPD Detective Clive Babineaux (Malcolm Goodwin). Each episode revolves around a murder mystery as well as exploring bigger themes about life and society post-zombie infection.

iZombie is part of a broader cultural meditation on the figure of the zombie, which has proven to be highly adaptable and malleable, shifting across time and place to lend ‘insight into our most abiding fears and preoccupations’ (Fojas 2017: 61). Zombies have been strongly, but not only, associated with various critiques of capitalism, leading Lauro (2017:107) to claim that ‘when we talk about zombies, we are never not talking about capitalism’. This genre of critique includes zombies as an allegory for the extremes of consumer culture and mindless consumption, epitomised in George Romero’s *Dawn of the*

Dead (1979) depicting the living and the living-dead flocking to the shopping mall. Steven Shaviro has argued that Romero's zombies are:

[n]ear-perfect allegory for capitalism, excessive in desire for more than enough, all of them [...] vacuous, mimetic replications of the human beings they once were. Despite [...] signs of difference, they all act in exactly the same way. The zombies are devoid of personality yet they continue to allude to personal identity. (Shaviro 1993: 85)

On this account, the figure of the zombie is a pure expression and logical outcome of capitalism: an insatiable, irrational, endless consumer that is ultimately destructive.

iZombie is part of a rich history of the continuous retelling of the zombie genre's story, ranging from the early roots of Haitian zombies, the slow, shambling threats of early zombies (*Night of the Living Dead* [Romero, 1968]), to the fast zombie (e.g. *28 Days Later*). Most zombies have limited agency — they are dehumanized and de-individualized — and since *Return of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1985) have only wanted to eat brains. Nicholas Kelly has argued that this dehumanization facilitates their representation as a narrative punching bag (2013: 83-105), justifying and requiring extreme responses. A feature of these types of zombie films is that killing is done guilt-free, in fact, resolving zombies (so that they are no longer in the liminal state of the living/dead) may well be a requirement, with series such as *The Walking Dead* (2010-22) exploring the infection of characters who fail to kill their infected loved ones (Crofts 2021). *Zombie* is part of a body of fiction that explores zombies with sentience (Abbott 2018). Other notable examples include films such as romantic comedy *Warm Bodies* (Levine, 2013), the horror *The Girl with all the Gifts* (McCarthy, 2016), and the comedy bromance *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004). Narratives with sentient zombies disrupt the trope of zombies as punching-bags, problematising the relationships between the infected and uninfected.

Most zombie fiction, including films with sentient zombies such as *Warm Bodies* and *The Girl with all the Gifts*, depict apocalyptic and/or post-apocalyptic societies. Most zombie fiction imagines a post-apocalyptic world of extreme horrors where despite radical changes to society and order, capitalism flourishes (e.g. the *Resident Evil* franchise). *iZombie* sets itself apart from other zombie fiction by portraying zombies without an apocalypse. The series can be regarded as a response to the monster theorist's Cohen's wish for zombies without an apocalypse:

[...] I wish we could have our zombies without desiring so ardently an apocalypse to go with them. Apocalypse is ultimately a failure of the imagination. Apocalypse signals giving up on the future instead of committing to the difficult work of composing a better present. Those who dream of the purgation of our problems rather than commit to the labor of repair choose an easier path. No wonder the zombies destroy them. To be undead might mean something more than to inhabit a terminal world, a vastness reduced to earthbound despair. Zombies without apocalypse might offer a future in which we recognize the suffering, the possibilities, the potency and the dignity of our fellow humans and our fellow nonhumans alike. (Cohen 2001: 410)

Cohen's conclusion poses a challenge to situate the figure of the zombie in a recognisable present in order to commit to a labour to improve the present and the future. *iZombie* arguably is an answer to this challenge. Zombies inhabit a recognisable Seattle, although in later seasons, the fabulously named zombie-owned corporation Fillmore Graves infects half the population of Seattle with the zombie virus to avert an apocalypse ('Looking for Mr Goodbrain Part 2'). *iZombie* sustains the productive use of the zombie to explore consumption and late-stage capitalism, but unlike most other zombie fiction, situates this in a recognizable, banal present where social and governmental institutions, laws and

bureaucracies continue to operate. In *iZombie*, zombies, including the hero Liv Moore, need to consume brains or risk permanently turning into a mindless zombie like those portrayed in much of the horror genre. Access to brains is portrayed as a problem of supply and demand, in the process raising powerful questions about our patterns of production, distribution and consumption. Central to these questions is the role and responsibility of corporations, situated within an eminently recognizable, but not particularly effective, law and order.

This article considers two corporate case studies in Season One of *iZombie* to analyse individual, social and organisational blameworthiness within a framework of law and order. Section one considers corporate responsibility for the sale of dangerous products through an analysis of Max Rager, the company that produces and markets the energy drink responsible for causing the zombie virus. Section two analyses Meat Cute — which ostensibly operates as a butcher whilst actually supplying zombies with brains — as an evil corporation, and the problem of criminal production and distribution and the responsibility of consumers, legal authorities and broader society in perpetuating harms. Section three interrogates the kinds of justice held out for evil corporations in the series.

Max Rager: Production and Sale of Dangerous Products

iZombie slowly reveals the responsibility of the company Max Rager for the zombie virus. In the first episode, Liv is infected at a boat party that was sponsored by Max Rager.

Throughout the first season it is gradually revealed that when the Max Rager energy drink, already implicated in violent episodes by heavy consumers, is combined with a particular version of the illegal drug Utopium, people become zombies. The role of Max Rager is consistent with a broader trope in horror and science fiction of corporations or large organisations as instigators; that is, they bring about or initiate the horrific action but have

limited control or involvement in the resulting mayhem. Examples include corporations in films such as *28 Days Later* and *Poltergeist*. In *iZombie*, Max Rager is an instigator. Through its creation, production and distribution of a dangerous product it starts the zombie virus in Seattle. This notion of a corporation as an instigator of widespread harms is not farfetched. With the advent of industrialization, and ever-increasing mass production and distribution of products, the potential risks and harms if products are unsafe has radically increased. The production and distribution of Max Rager is reminiscent of other (in)famous dangerous products, such as, the medication thalidomide, prescribed for morning sickness that led to birth deformities in thousands of children (Parle and Wimmelbücker 2019), Johnson and Johnson's sale of talc powder that contained asbestos (Dyer 2022), and prescription opioids that have led to an opioid epidemic in America (Jones 2021). *iZombie* explores questions of who knew what and when, reactions by the corporation to this suspicion and/or knowledge, and questions of culpability. Like other, similar narratives, it achieves this by personalizing what is essentially a faceless corporate entity.

Corporations can be portrayed by name alone in horror and science fiction (such as Cyberdyne Systems in the *Terminator* franchise), but they are frequently personified, that is, a character (or characters) is represented as the face of the corporation. This personification is consistent with legal conceptualisations of the corporation which focus on individuals within the corporation and ascribe knowledge and intention to corporations based on what those individuals knew and intended. In the United States, the primary means of attributing responsibility to corporations is through vicarious liability, whereby a company is held responsible for the actions and omissions of its employees committed within the scope of employment (Greenberg and Brotman 2014). The common law approach, which is still applied in the United Kingdom and Australia, limits its focus to senior management of a corporation. Under the doctrine of identification, the prosecution must identify the 'directing

mind' of a corporation and prove that that directing mind had the necessary criminal intention (*Tesco v Natrass* (1972)). In *iZombie*, Max Rager is personified and represented through its CEO, the character Vaughn Du Clark, which overcomes the real-life practical difficulties of identifying precisely who the directing mind is, and what they knew and when. In *iZombie*, these practical difficulties at common law of identifying knowledge and intent are erased — Du Clark is depicted as the embodiment of the corporation. He knows what the corporation knows, he makes the decisions and orders. Du Clark and many employees in the organization are aware that the sports drink causes intense short-term emotional and psychological side effects and incidents of violence, even without the toxic addition of Utopium that causes zombie-ism.

The series represents a variety of corporate responses to increasing awareness of the dangers of the energy drinks. As with many real-life products, it is arguable that Max Rager was not initially aware of the dangers of the energy drink. However, *iZombie* depicts the developing suspicion and then knowledge by individuals within the corporation that a product is dangerous, paralleling many real-life products such as thalidomide, talc, tobacco and opioids. *iZombie* interrogates the response of the corporation to that awareness and knowledge. As is the case with many of these products, rather than removing the product from the environment or informing the public of the dangers, Max Rager adopts a strategy of denial (Cohen 2001; Crofts 2020: 21-42). In 'Blaine's World', it becomes apparent that there is an internal memo identifying the dangerous side effects of the energy drink. When Liv confronts Du Clark about the internal memo, Du Clark labels it a fake.

The series depicts decisions about how Max Rager/Du Clark responds to the dangers of the product are governed by profit maximisation. Du Clark's primary concern is to maintain and increase profits any harms in the process are characterised as collateral damage

and analysed solely in terms of potential harm to the bottom line. In ‘Blaine’s World’, Du Clark employs a new scientist after the previous chief scientist was killed by a zombie. He shows the new scientist the film of his predecessor being killed. Rather than being concerned about the loss of life, the scientist states that he can see how such a side effect would be undesirable in terms of sales. The scientist reflects the values of the corporation by instinctively undertaking a cost-benefit analysis to keep the dangers of the product secret from the general public. Max Rager continues to produce and distribute the energy drink while scientists research a way to reduce the zombie ‘side effect’. Rather than withdraw the product, in season two, Du Clark employs Major (who is able to ‘detect’ zombies) to kill the zombies to cover up evidence of infection and allow time to fix the product. Not only that, Max Rager develops a new drink — Super Max — which one assumes will only be worse.

Max Rager’s decision-making and actions are in accordance with legal principles which operate to enshrine the central purpose of the corporation—profit—and to protect investors and executives from losses (Crofts and van Rijswijk 2020: 75-90). In the present day, incorporation almost always bestows limited liability for owners and shareholders, that is, the protection from risk. Investors can only lose the capital that they choose to invest. This means that corporations can externalize harms, privileging only some costs and benefits, and excluding others (Barak 2017). Accordingly, harms such as turning people into zombies, are externalised by the corporation and there is accordingly no requirement to protect against them. The law enshrines and requires only limited responsibility for a limited set of consequences, and this seems not to require much care for humans. The actions of Max Rager in continuing to manufacture and distribute the energy drink despite knowledge of its dangers parallel the infamous accounting practices of the Ford Motor Company in the 1970s. The company knew that the Ford Pinto would explode if struck from the rear, even in low-speed collisions. But rather than fix the existing design and delay production to make sure the

product was safe at a cost of approximately \$11 per vehicle, the company undertook a cost-benefit analysis that it was cheaper to pay out compensation for the relatively low number of people who would die. In response to litigation the company hid the Pinto auto tests, but after years of successful denial, internal documents surfaced and juries ruled against the company, granting million-dollar awards to plaintiffs (Dowie 1977: 18–32).

As with the Pinto case, characters outside of Max Rager in *iZombie* only become aware of the dangers of the energy drink after a whistle blower leaks the internal memo. In some ways the series simplifies issues of corporate knowledge by portraying Du Clark as the face and decision-maker of the Corporation. It is he who employs a ‘fixer’ named Sebastian (Matthew MacCaull), an ‘enforcer’ tasked to take care of any problem at any cost, allowing him to operate on his own and kill anyone with knowledge of the internal memo to create the necessary plausible deniability. Du Clark knows about the dangers of the energy drink but feels no guilt. However, the series also problematises proving this knowledge, even with a simplified directing mind. Each time Liv confronts Du Clark about criminal harms and actions, he denies corporate responsibility. He claims the memorandum is a fake and when Liv confronts Du Clark about Sebastian, Du Clark states that he is no longer employed by Max Rager. Although the corporation is culpable for producing a dangerous product and knowingly keeping it on the market despite these dangers, the series realistically shows the difficulties of proving corporate knowledge, even when the ‘face’ of the corporation is the CEO and would accordingly be recognised as the directing mind at law. *iZombie* accurately portrays the continued production of a dangerous product within a legal framework that protects corporations and investors, rather than customers.

Meat Cute: Problems of Supply and Wilful Blindness

A second case study from Season Two of *iZombie* is the small business Meat Cute. Once again, the business is personalized: Blaine is the owner/operator. He is introduced in the pilot as a low-level drug dealer of utopium who infects Liv. Blaine comes from a wealthy family with many previous unsuccessful business ventures funded by his father until he was cut off. He perceives becoming a zombie as a business opportunity which enables him to move up the organised crime hierarchy. He infects people with the zombie virus — whether by scratching them or having sexual intercourse — and then offers to supply the brains that they need to survive at an inflated price. It is an offer that they cannot refuse. Blaine's actions are consistent with a trope in horror fiction of organisations as exacerbators, that is, they may not have created the problem or bad situation, but they make it worse. The philosopher Claudia Card has explored questions of blameworthiness where groups or institutions may not have been responsible for the initial harm, but through their actions or omissions makes a bad situation worse (Card 2002), an example of this is the extremely poor governmental response to Hurricane Katrina (Eikenberry et al. 2007). Horror and science fiction offer countless examples, including Weyland Yutani of the *Aliens* franchise, which did not create the alien/s, but in the first film in the franchise *Alien* (Scott, 1979), the quest to capture and develop the alien as a biological weapon for profit, leads to the death of all the colonists on the planet and most of the employees on the 'rescue' ship. In the *Van Helsing* (2016-21) series, characters fight not only the hordes of vampires but also BlakTek which seeks to profit from the vampire infection by supplying blood.

Like Du Clark, Blaine's quest for profit is shown in his poor treatment of workers. A quick and simple trope in horror and science fiction to establish a corporation as evil and ruthless is through its bad treatment of workers (Crofts forthcoming). Evil corporations have poor worker rights. Employees are frequently portrayed as expendable (see for example, *The Fifth Element* [Besson, 1997] and *Stranger Things*). In *iZombie*, Blaine's employees are

enslaved by their need for brains, an extreme expression of Marxist concerns about selling our souls. Blaine turns a chef into a zombie to ensure that his product is tasty. Throughout the series Blaine tortures and kills employees who displease him.

By situating zombies in existing structures, *iZombie* broadens questions of responsibility and proffers a critique of capitalism and consumption. In 'Blaine's World', Blaine says to Liv, 'You gotta get what you can, while you can', expressing the central desires of capitalism: profit and an insatiable desire for more, more, more. Blaine is a quintessential capitalist: he creates a demand that only he can meet. The series *Dopesick* (2021), portrayed similar tactics used by the real-life Sackler family, owners of the pharmaceutical corporation, Purdue, which manufactured and distributed Oxycontin. Purdue knew that oxycontin is highly addictive, falsely claiming that it was not addictive, and in the process created a sustained demand and market for the product (Lelling 2018). Blaine is willing to sacrifice anyone and anything to make a profit. The series depicts little to no reaction by the legal system to stopping Blaine and preventing his creation of a dependent market. This mirrors the incredibly slow and ineffective response by the legal system to pharmaceutical companies peddling opioids that were marketed as non-addictive (Rios 2019).

After creating a market for brains, Blaine must then meet the challenge of supply. He does this by killing homeless people. Although he is portrayed as a villain, we should also look at the structures and people around him that enable his actions. Legal institutions remain in place but here too, the series depicts a failure of law. Blaine is able to kill homeless kids for so long in part because the police do not investigate. The Missing Persons unit in the police department is overloaded and understaffed. In part, the failure of police to investigate is a consequence of the dominance of neo-liberalist rhetoric of small government. Additionally, it is a product of an excess of missing persons and homicides due to ongoing

corporate slayings by Meat Cute to meet demand. This reflects an argument I have explored at length elsewhere, that criminal legal systems globally are geared to responding, investigating and prosecuting harms caused primarily by individuals rather than systemic harms caused by organisations across time and place (Crofts 2022b). For example, in relation to the deaths at Gosport Hospital in the United Kingdom, police investigations stalled over concerns about ‘finding necessary resources’ and the coroner stated that he could not investigate suspected homicides because the ‘ten deaths would put considerable strain’ financially and in terms of staff resourcing (Gosport Independent Panel 2018: 2–4). More than a decade later, the Independent Inquiry concluded that the ‘lives of over 450 patients were shortened while in hospital’, or in less euphemistic terms, killed (Gosport Independent Panel 2018: vii). *iZombie* thus reflects and reinforces a horror of the everyday where legal authorities appear powerless in response to corporate harms. The harms are too big, too bad, too much for the criminal legal system (Crofts 2022b).

The series also depicts a more nefarious reason for the failure of law. In Season One, Major Lilywhite works with homeless kids, and he puts pressure on homicide Detective Babineaux to investigate the missing kids. However, the Chief of Police instructs Babineaux not to investigate. This is because the Chief is himself a zombie and dependent on Blaine’s supply of brains. Blaine has intentionally infected the rich and/or powerful as part of his business strategy (‘Brother, Can You Spare a Brain?’, ‘Flight of the Living Dead’). This amply demonstrates the idea of monsters as contaminated and contaminating — even those who are not infected, like Babineaux and the police department — are (unknowingly) affected by the zombie virus. Accordingly, even good cops like Babineaux are doomed to fail, because the Chief is beholden to Blaine. Police are shown to be acting as an arm of Blaine’s corporation; Major is arrested after a newspaper article critical of the police is released and they intentionally put him with violent inmates as revenge. This reflects

criminological literature which critiques the increasing interdependence of government and corporations, resulting in arguments about state imbrication in, and profit from, corporate crime (Bernat and Whyte 2019). But there is also a more realistic and banal reason for Babineaux's failure to investigate; he tells Major that it is not his job. This is in part an expression of limited resources, but also of the idea that organisations enshrine responsibility and irresponsibility: our jobs tell us what we are responsible for and also what we are irresponsible for (Veitch 2007). It was not Babineaux's job to investigate, even though he knew that Missing Persons would not investigate.

Blaine's ability to kill homeless kids for so long in the absence of any ramifications also expresses a broader social issue. In his analysis of serial killers, Wilson has argued that it is necessary to place these crimes within their own particular context, and this includes the valuation of the victims: 'Those who want to kill repeatedly can only achieve this objective when the social structure in which they operate allows them to do so by placing value on one group to the detriment of others' (Wilson 2007: 23).³ Given that Blaine's production and supply of brains is unethical and criminal, it allows *iZombie* to also interrogate the responsibility of consumers (Giannini 2019). In 'Virtual Reality Bites', Liv starts dating a zombie named Lowell Tracy (Bradley James). He states initially that he is rich enough that he can afford to purchase the brains of elderly people who have died. However, in 'Patriot Brains', Liv realises that Blaine has been killing and sometimes torturing teenagers to get a stock of brains, and that Blaine is Lowell's supplier. Liv informs Lowell that he is eating the

³ Hodgkinson et al. (2017), argue that serial killers operate within the context of cultures of denigration and marginalization of particular social groupings lacking protection and becoming vulnerable predation. Homeless young people are assumed to have moved on and do not have anyone pressuring police to act on their behalf.

brains of murdered teenagers and does not believe him when he claims that he did not know. This is because when zombies eat they have powerful flashbacks and emotions from the victim's perspective. After she confronts him, Lowell admits that he has been wilfully blind – he did not want to know where the brains were coming from because he needed them to survive. This evokes our responsibility where what we are consuming has been produced in situations of slave labour, poor worker rights, environmental damage, and harms to animals. We prefer not to think too hard about where things like fast fashion and fast food are coming from. *iZombie* highlights the individual responsibility that we have within existing commercial structures. But the choice that the series offers is bleak. At the end of 'Patriot Brains', Lowell has a vision and sees Blaine killing the young boy whose brains Lowell just ate. Lowell tries to stab Blaine who kills Lowell. The series suggests that Lowell would prefer to die rather than continue to be dependent on the brains of murdered teenagers. The complicity of consumers is exacerbated towards the end of season one when wealthy clients begin to demand the brains of specific people or professions in order to improve their dietary experience. The customers complain that the brains of homeless young people are unsatisfying because their lives are unpleasant: 'These visions from runaways and junkies are worse than depressing, they're boring'. Several episodes explore the killing of a specific astronaut to satisfy customer demands. Blaine comments that each serving is worth \$250,000. These customers make explicit the link between consumption and death.

The series leaves the question of ethical consumption unanswered; Liv is able to access brains because she works in a morgue, but this option is not available to most. Later, the corporation Fillmore Graves, a private military contractor, produces food for zombies that is a mixture of brains so that visions do not compromise combat readiness. The food satisfies the hunger but is not as tasty; while 'donations' are preferred, the episode 'Spanking the

Zombie’ also indicates that they use defeated enemy combatants, raising a whole other ethical concern (Giannini 2019).

What Kind of Justice Is Held Out for Evil Corporations in *iZombie*?

Law, horror and science fiction hold out visions of justice, of what justice could or should look like, whether or not this is delivered. In most horror fiction, the narrative generally establishes a set of assumptions about what is just, and this usually involves unmasking and punishing or destroying the monster. But *iZombie* suggests that this concept of justice is too simplistic and our focus on the monster distracts from a greater evil: corporations. Not only are the zombies sentient and sympathetic, and thus destroying them is far from an act of justice, but *iZombie* portrays corporations as protagonists that cause mass harms. *iZombie* creates a demand in the audience for justice against the corporations, but delivers only a limited, unsatisfying form of justice, if at all. This is partly due to the imbrication of state interests with corporations. Later in the series, the corporation Fillmore Graves, run for and by zombies, infects much of Seattle’s population with the zombie virus to stop the American government from nuclear bombing the problem away. By making itself and the zombie problem big enough, the state is forced to encompass and include zombies, rather than destroy them. Like many multinational corporations it appears too big to fail and/or punish (Cubillas et al. 2017: 46-57). The state is portrayed as weak and reactive, in the form of the weakened police department, or corrupt and contaminated representatives. Fillmore Graves demonstrates the truism that once a corporation becomes big enough to impact the economy generally, it exercises power in the political sphere and can draw more fully on state subsidies and support. This has been exacerbated in the United States with the decision in *Citizens United* (2010), which held that as legal persons, corporations have a ‘right’ to free speech – and this could take the form of unlimited donations to political parties, further increasing the

disproportionate power that corporations have to influence the state (Gindis 2016; Watson 2019).

iZombie suggests that our models of justice, and our focus on the individuals who make up a corporation, is misplaced. *iZombie* portrays specific characters as representing and/or embodying the corporation. This ostensibly reflects a classic assumption of common law that if the directing mind is identified and punished, then the corporate malfeasance will be resolved. Often when a particular character is identified as the ‘face’ of the corporation, they suffer some form of justice. Justice is frequently meted out in ways which are poetic. In *iZombie*, Du Clark is killed by his infected daughter, whom he had earlier abandoned to her fate in order to save himself (‘Salvation Army’). Blaine seemingly thrives throughout most of the series, only to be trapped in a well on his own property to starve in the final episode (‘All’s Well That Ends Well’). Both Du Clark and Blaine’s fates fit the ‘rough justice’ model, with Du Clark’s sociopathic self-interest and Blaine’s greed leading directly to their downfalls. The series tends to portray senior management as the face of the corporation – and these characters have poor survival rates, most of the CEOs die in the series. However, a lot of fiction, including *iZombie*, problematises the assumption that justice has been achieved by showing the organisation as surviving, if not flourishing, after the death of the face of the corporation, even the CEOs (see *Stranger Things*). The corporation survives and continues its nefarious ways.

Justice is rarely if ever delivered by the legal system, rather it is imposed in extra-legal ways. At the end of season one, in ‘Blaine’s World’, in an extra-legal act of justice, Major Lilywhite kills the zombie employees (who have been involved in killing the teenage boys). The Chief of Police then blows up Meat Cute and kills himself, to escape Blaine’s clutches and implicate Blaine simultaneously. Although cathartic, this justice is limited.

Blaine survives the blast. When Liv confronts Blaine about his responsibility for the deaths of teenagers and readies herself to kill him, Blaine persuades her not to by asking who would supply Seattle's zombies with brains in his absence? This represents the dependence of us all on corporations that produce and supply goods and services. This leaves then, a question of what form justice is available if we take into account the potential for collateral damage. Liv delivers a complicated form of justice: she cures Blaine of the zombie virus. This suggests that Blaine could do less harm as a human than as a zombie, but his capacity to form the inhuman legal subject of the corporation remains. He returns, phoenix like, opening the Shady Plots Funeral Home to continue brain harvesting and selling. The season ends suggesting that the criminal justice system has no role to play in delivering justice, and that even when the face of a corporation suffers, the corporation survives and may even flourish.

Conclusion

The horror theorist Robin Wood has argued that horror fiction has the potential to be subversive and critical because the genre's perceived lack of seriousness encourages a loosening of censorship in viewers and makers (Wood 1978). Horror and science fiction can contribute to an anti-capitalist narrative with extreme representations of corporate wrongdoing, but this critique can be limited, as horror and science fiction are big business (Nowell 2014). By situating *iZombie* in a recognizable world, rather than a post-apocalyptic imaginary world, the series offers a multi-season, powerful critique of the extremes of capitalism, the role of corporations, and the failure of law to protect individuals and society. The series depicts the routinization of harms, whereby the harms of corporations are rendered banal and normal, externalised in the cost/benefit analysis, and not even categorised as crime but just part of doing business. Despite the series holding up untrammelled, rapacious inhuman exploitativeness for critique, only restricted solutions are proffered, and these are

aimed at individuals, not at the corporations themselves. The series depicts the infliction of great harms for the instrumental pursuit of profit, but there is no suggestion that the organization will be held accountable. The series grimly depicts the absence of any legal response against the corporations that cause widespread harms, a depiction that is sadly all too realistic.

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'Pilot' (Season 1, Episode 1; 17 March 2015)

'Brother, Can You Spare a Brain?' (Season 1, Episode 2; 24 March 2015)

'Flight of the Living Dead' (Season 1, Episode 5; 14 April 2015)

'Virtual Reality Bites' (Season 1, Episode 6; 21 April 2015)

'Patriot Games' (Season 1, Episode 9; 12 May 2015)

'Blaine's World' (Season 1, Episode 13; 9 June 2015)

'Salivation Army' (Season 2, Episode 19; 12 April 2016)

'Spanking the Zombie' (Season 3, Episode 5; 2 May 2017)

'Looking for Mr Goodbrain Part 2' (Season 3, Episode 13; 27 June 2017)

'All's Well That Ends Well' (Season 5, Episode 13; 1 August 2019)

Mr Robot (2015-19, US: USA Network)

Stranger Things (2016-present, US: Netflix)

The Walking Dead (2010-22, US: AMC)

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