The Narcissistic Zombie: 
*Dawn of the Dead’s Reproach to Materialism*  
by Glenn Snyder

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Is your life empty? Consumption promises to fill the aching void; hence the attempt to surround commodities with an aura of romance, with allusions to exotic places and vivid experiences, and with images of female breasts from which all blessings flow.” This is “the propaganda of commodities” presented in *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* by Christopher Lasch (138). President Jimmy Carter shared many of Lasch’s concerns, and in 1979—a time when, according to Carter, the dollar was not “‘sound as a dollar,’” the national dependency on foreign oil had led to a shortage crisis, the “shock of Watergate” still had America’s pulse racing, and the nation was recovering psychologically from Vietnam—Carter went on national television and reproached the American people for their consumption habits:

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we’ve discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We’ve learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose (565).

Carter is speaking primarily to those who, because of their spending habits, took the brunt of America’s economic troubles: the bourgeois. According to cultural historian William Graebner, “at bottom, [the bourgeois] perceived themselves as bored—not bored with the little things, or minimally bored, but bored big time,” and thus, they tried to “fill the aching void” with material goods (158-9). Eighty years before Carter’s speech, Thorstein Veblen gave us a satirical, anthropological look into the inner-workings of an American capitalistic product, a leisure class unlike any other.

Actors dressed as zombies during the filming of the movie *Meat Market 3*
other, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Veblen maintained that in the leisure class “the canon of reputability is at hand…. since the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence of wealth, it becomes honorific; and conversely, the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit” (74). Conspicuous consumption and the glorification of materialistic values derive from the conventions set in place by the leisure class to attract the envying eyes of others. President Carter identified the 70s phenomenon of conspicuous consumption within the bourgeois class with “a crisis of confidence…. a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will” (564). Carter’s “crisis of confidence” resonates with Lasch’s *Culture of Narcissism*, which describes a mass of egocentric tendencies laying waste to his contemporaries in the 70s. George Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) also actively examines the descent into the abyss of zombiestic narcissism as its protagonists take refuge in that bastion of consumption—the mall. Yet in addition to critiquing consumer culture and its effects, it also eventually offers an alternative to narcissism and the stupefying effects of consumer culture.

The mall zombie in *Dawn of the Dead* is the sardonic, ghoulish representation of the narcissism that plagued Americans in the 1970s. This creature, replicated endlessly, embodies the worst of Lasch’s 70s narcissist:

... character traits associated with pathological narcissism, which in less extreme form appear in such profusion in the everyday life of our age: dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings. (Lasch 74)

Romero’s mall zombies epitomize this “inner emptiness” simply by what they are: a conglomerate of soulless, emotionless, thoughtless, instinct-driven beings. So of course they exude an inner emptiness, but this emptiness, this sense of loss and deprivation, is not a feeling because the zombie cannot feel; it does not even sense physical pain. The typical zombie does not acknowledge any other zombies, and, like Lasch’s narcissist, “his devaluation of others, together with his lack of curiosity about them, impoverishes his personal life and [in Otto Kernberg’s words,] reinforces the ‘subjective experience of emptiness,’” (85). In the film, the cycloptic scientist (Richard France) simply and explicitly gives us these notions in a televised interview:

Intelligence? Seemingly [a slight pause for thought] little or no reasoning power, but basic skills remain a more remembered behavior—from uhh, normal life…. These creatures are nothing but pure motorized instinct.

Although the narcissist has “boundless repressed rage” while the zombie is “but pure motorized instinct,” both seem to be driven by repressed rage. But for the zombie, the rage is conveyed through its actions (eating the flesh of the living), because it is incapable of expressing rage, or any other emotion. The narcissist’s “unsatisfied oral cravings” are graphically paralleled by the ravenous tendencies of the zombie. If instinct is all they have, and their instincts endow them with an unconscious voracious urge to eat, then the zombie’s existing as pure humanoid instinct would make it the externalization of the narcissist’s id: “The power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism’s life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs” without restraint (Freud 91). The zombie’s innate need is the consumption of warm living flesh; the 70s narcissist’s need is the consumption of material goods. The consequences of satisfying these needs are similar: when the zombies feed, they create more zombies, and
when the narcissist puts its material wealth on exhibition, it incites envy and imitation, thus spawning more narcissists.

The mall zombie’s “dependence on vicarious warmth” is evident in his feeding habits. Zombies are always drawn to the living, conglomerating around them, which contrasts the zombies’ emotionless, floating existence with the relatively warm-blooded relationships that the living possess. So it seems that the zombies are feeding off of warmth between human interactions with no recognition of doing so. But feeding off warmth is shown more explicitly through their diet: “they feed, only on warm human flesh,” explains the cycloptic scientist; they do not eat the cold, the long-since-deceased, or even fresh carcasses.

Meanwhile, the narcissistic zombie’s “fear of dependence” is shown as an absence of dependence. The zombie has many symptoms associated with autism; it displays an inability to communicate through speech, body language, or any other means. Each and every zombie is isolated in its own world, all but unaware of everybody and everything around him. These creatures move and act like atoms, always bouncing off one another, but are still drawn to a magnetic source, whether it be the living or the mall itself. The zombie’s absence of dependence is coupled with Carter’s concern that “just as we are losing our confidence in the future, we are also beginning to close the door on our past” (Carter 565). This is in accordance with the narcissistic belief, common to the 70s, “that society has no future, while it rests on a certain realism about the dangers ahead, [thus] also incorporates a narcissistic inability to identify with posterity or to feel oneself part of a historical stream” (Lasch 102).

Once dead, the zombie loses all sense of the past, and other than the unconscious quest for warm human flesh, it is robbed of a future as well. The zombie’s narcissism is beyond this, though, rendering it altogether incapable of “identifying” with historical events or “feeling” part of a historical stream. The new narcissist is “liberated from the superstitions of the past” and “doubts even the reality of his own existence,” but the mall zombie is so far gone into the depths of narcissism that it isn’t even aware of its own existence (22). Lasch explains that “fiercely competitive in his demand for approval and acclaim,[the narcissist] distrusts competition because he associates it unconsciously with an unbridled urge to destroy” (22-3). So why do the narcissistic zombies in the mall seem to work together toward a common goal? Though the zombies seem to have a collective consciousness—or unconsciousness, depending on the way you look at it—they are simply unaware of each other, making them largely a single entity or force in motion, much like the atoms attracted to a common source. And that is why they do not fight and gore each other in “the war of all against all,” opting for what Lasch calls “the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self” (21, emphasis added).

Dawn of the Dead utilizes four protagonists to track the process by which a fellow human being falls victim to materialism and thus becomes one of the amassed narcissistic living-dead. When this party of four leaves the decaying world of law and order behind, they take the bare essentials for their survival: their guns, the clothes on their backs, water, cigarettes, and transportation. They start off relatively healthy and un-afflicted by materialistic values (except the hoarding and smoking of cigarettes), and it is not until they reach the mall that problems with their stability arise. We get some foreshadowing of their problems with the intercut shots of the gargantuan shopping plaza, posed with low angle shots of towering parking lot lights and a fence reading “Danger High Voltage,” which suggests a prison-playground of electrifying consumer-
They land on the mall’s roof, look down into the belly of the beast, and consider the zombie situation. Francine (Gaylen Ross) is curious and confused, wondering, “What are they doing—why do they come here?” Stephen (David Emge), her romantic counterpart, answers, “Some kind of instinct … memory …. It’s what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives.” Since the narcissistic zombie is driven by instinct, it would only be a natural reflex for them to congregate around the mall. Soon after, the quartet spots a stockpile of simple military provisions through a skylight above the rest of the mall and break in.

This begins their conquest for survival and, eventually, opulence. At first, they utilize the provisions and eat SPAM, the poor man’s meat, the veritable bottom of the food hierarchy. Later, Peter (Ken Foree) and Roger (Scott H. Reiniger) convince themselves that a “hit and run” is a good method for increasing their materials, thus increasing their chance of survival. Once they get past the narcissistic zombies and into the haven of Penney’s, Peter yells, “Let’s get the stuff we need!” When they get back from their first raid, they have increased the quality of their food rations to a bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey and caviar on water crackers. As Roger and Peter are unpacking their loot, among which is a radio and a small black and white TV, Stephen consoles Francine, whom a zombie attacked in his absence: “You should see all the great stuff we got, Frannie—all kinds of stuff. This place is terrific …. We’ve really got it made here, Frannie,” while the whole time she looks up at him with a blank stare in disbelief that they would put shopping before the welfare of their group.

The prospect of owning or making use of “all the great stuff” lures the quartet into staying in the mall. They decide to secure the place by blocking all the entrances with semitrailers. Roger hotwires the vehicles and thwarts the advances of a few clawing zombies as he frolics amongst them from truck to truck. He is playing on the edge of death and becomes intoxicated with false power over his own fate, soon assuming an air of invulnerability. Roger underestimates the zombies and, in turn, is almost mauled by a young female one. Peter kills it, saving Roger’s life, but soaking him with a spattered layer of red. Roger’s demeanor becomes glazed over with cold insanity—a look analogous to the blood lust of the zombies’ blank, focused gaze. Peter asks him if he is alright, and he replies, “Perfect baby, perfect.” Roger then has a fit because he forgot his bag of tools in one of the trucks, and levelheaded Peter warns him, “You better screw your head on …. You’re not just playing with your life, you’re playing with mine,” before they wade back into danger. Roger gets bitten on the arm after he drops down to get his fallen bag, and as he is climbing back into the truck, he is bitten again on the leg. The bites commence his transformation into physical zombiism, the externalization of his narcissism. His narcissistic colors became visible once they arrived at the mall; the realization they had a lot going for them and could actually own it all, combined with the delusions of invulnerability, spurred his transformation into a catatonic consumer.

Though Roger is physically crippled from being bitten twice and is carted around in a wheelbarrow-like vehicle, his ego is still undamaged. When Francine has the great idea to commandeer a show car to access and lock all the entrance doors, Peter asks Roger, “Are you okay to start it?” and Roger replies with a goofy, confident smile. His zealous overconfidence is his weakness, for as he is climbing into the car, his injured leg is punctured by the groping fingers of a zombie; he is hurt in the same place and for the same reason. The crew finishes locking down the mall, and the systematic cleansing of every zombie from the
mall commences. The zombie holocaust is not shown, but at the end of the day’s work, they stand on high, looking down at the macabre scene. Hauntingly sad music is played, and from this perspective the massacred zombies look like ordinary people. Roger’s health has declined noticeably, but he is still enthusiastic about their conquest and shows it by yelling, “We whipped ‘em and we got it all!” The short remainder of his life is lived to consume; all he does is eat and play with frivolous things—much like a child—while he is transported in a wheelbarrow-esque stroller around the mall. Roger’s childlike appearance and behavior indicate a regression in his mental state as he approaches narcissistic zombiism. When death is imminent, Roger asks a final favor of his comrade: “you’ll take care of me, won’t you Peter? ... I don’t want to be walkin’ around, like—that.” His grave resentment towards other soulless narcissists at the thought of being one of them shows that he strongly believes he is still above them. As soon as Roger comes back from the dead, Peter ends the zombie’s meaningless life of consumption and self-gratification with a bullet to the head.

The rest of the band of pilgrim consumers spend their time enjoying themselves in their vacant castle of leisure. Francine and Stephen, using the ice-skating arena as their shooting range, enjoy some target practice, bombarding fully clad mannequins in the latest fashions (a picturesque mockery of the mall zombie) with rifle round, after round. Later, Francine ice-skates with the entire arena at her pleasure like an ice-princess performing, wanting to impress judges and win the love of spectators, while passively competing against all the other ice-divas like narcissists competing for the three As: attention, affection, and admiration. But there are no judges, there are no spectators, and she is not a spectacle; she is just passing the time alone in a place made for drawing attention, so as an up-and-coming narcissist, she looks solemn in her aimless skating, because she is alone. The survivors go on shopping sprees and take the nicest of things—clothing, cheeses, candy, coffee, spices—while maintaining a playful, lighthearted attitude toward each other. Our protagonists are simply indulging themselves, and according to 70s’ narcissist ideology, “to live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity” (Lasch 30). At the day’s end, they all walk up to the railing where the “Penney’s” sign shines, overlooking the mall. Veblen discerns that, among the leisure class, “dress must not only be conspicuously expensive and inconvenient; it must at the same time be up to date” (172-3). Meanwhile our protagonists are still lugging their new, shiny guns while wearing their modish coats: Peter and Francine both have on large furs, while Stephen dons a hefty leather trench coat. They are looking at the narcissistic zombies pawing at the glass doors trying to get in, and Peter explains that “they’re after the place. They do not know why, they just remember… remember that they want to be in here. They do not know why, they just remember… remember that they want to be in here. Francine asks “What the hell are they?” and Peter gives a definitive answer: “They’re us, that’s all.” The narcissist in the zombie is mirrored by the narcissism apparent in the conspicuous consumption of the protagonists. The pilgrim consumers have conspicuously expensive apparel, and the mall zombie is merely a consumer driven by instinct. Conspicuous consumption routinely plays host to the walking dead, and what could possibly be more conspicuous than the consumption of human flesh?

Later, Stephen and Francine sit down to an extravagant candle-lit dinner hosted by Peter. At this point in the story, they are conspicuously consuming the most expensive foods at their disposal and washing it all down with a nice white wine. Veblen observes, “the ceremonial differentiation of the dietary is best
seen in the use of intoxicating beverages and narcotics [, and] if these articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble and honorific” (Veblen 70). When Peter leaves to go drink in bereavement over Roger, he pops open a bottle of champagne, but what is he celebrating? He isn’t celebrating anything; he is consuming the most costly of plundered boozes at his fallen comrade’s mock grave site, honoring him through consumption.

Time passes, and the pilgrim consumers level of comfort correspondingly increases with their acquisition of wealth. Their makeshift bunker seemingly turns into a chic apartment, stocked with the finest products in weaponry, entertainment, and food. They have plenty of time now for recreation; Peter demonstrates this with his tennis practice on the roof. He slams balls everywhere, not chasing a single one. Velben identifies this kind of leisure as “in the one case…a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods. Both are methods of demonstrating the possession of wealth and the two are conventionally accepted as equivalents” (85). When Peter is finished, he snatches his bag, neglecting the pile of tennis balls, and a bright-orange one falls off the edge—a moment of conspicuous waste. The camera tracks the bright color down to a drab scene of a sunken-in, decaying corpse and a conglomeration of zombies trying to get into the mall—drawing a visual connection between the waste and the wasted, while also reminding us that the three surviving, resident pilgrim members of the leisure class are in a comfy prison and cold zombiism is just a ball drop away.

Back inside the mall, we see Francine getting her first true face-to-face encounter with narcissism at her vanity mirror. I say “true” because all the other harbingers of zombiism lead up to this point and her epiphany. Throughout our protagonists’ stay in the mall, the zombies are relentlessly shown to be analogous with the mannequins. The mannequins are casts of what is deemed pretty or beautiful and are always dressed in the most fashionable attire, so the mannequins are also akin to the narcissist. Francine is shown caking on her collection of different kinds of makeup while gazing into the mirror; she even poses for herself with a pistol and makes a kissy face. This scene is parallels Narcissus’ own myth: he loved nothing more than to admire his reflection in the water of a lake; he loved himself so much that he dove in to embrace his reflection—essentially committing suicide. But Francine does not dive in; a recorded advertisement booms from the mall speakers, disrupting her narcissistic trance. She sees that with the makeup her face is analogous to that of the mannequin’s ghostly complexion, and this wakens her from the self-indulging fantasy that is narcissism. When she arrived in the
mall, she looked generic; and “the canon of beauty requires expression of the generic” (Veblen 153). Her new way of accenting her beauty is a novelty, and “the ‘novelty’ due to the demands of conspicuous waste traverses this canon of beauty; in that it results in making the physiognomy of our objects of taste a congeries of idiosyncrasies; and the idiosyncrasies are, moreover, under the selective surveillance of the canon of expensiveness” (153). Francine has temporarily changed not only in her personality but also in her appearance, and she sees it in her reflection. Her sharp resemblance to the mannequin combined with the outright waste of the costly products clears her sight. She sees what she is becoming—one of them, if she isn’t one already. As she realizes this, we see it written on her face as bold as blood on white silk; she takes off her fake eyelashes, and we know she doesn’t want to go any further.

In the next scene it is dinner time again, and Francine is in her maternity gown while the men are dressed in their finest attire: Stephen in his khaki slacks, and Peter in a pressed suit. The men play poker with fifty and hundred-dollar bills, drinking liquor out of decanters while Francine is doing the cooking and setting the table. Tensions are high between Francine and Stephen as the classic argument of whether to leave the TV on or off during the meal rages. This is “what might be called the secondary characteristics of narcissism: … connections between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture” (Lasch 75). The survivors all experience the secondary characteristic of “a decline of the play spirit,” and due to Stephen’s narcissism, he and Francine exemplify the characteristic of “deteriorating relations between men and women” (Lasch 75). Finally, she disapprovingly asks, “What have we done to ourselves?” Here Francine, having “discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning,” sees the despair in their situation of living from day to day with no purpose (565). She speaks as the voice of reason; her sensibility makes a guiding example for the band and designates her as an anti-narcissist of sorts.

If Francine is one step removed from the consumer-crazed frenzy raging inside the mall, so are certain zombies she seems to attract. After accidentally knocking over and smashing her light source when she is left alone for the first time, Francine is faced in the dark by a Hare Krishna zombie. Most of our fears are faced in the dark, for fear of darkness itself is “the most childlike fear” (King 181). The Hare Krishna is wearing big, thick, round spectacles that, according to Graebner, “imply not only a myopic inability to ‘see,’ to understand,” but also a distorted view of the world (165). And by pursuing a helpless young girl, it seems he is characteristically pressing his religious views on her, trying to make her what he is—a type of zombie. He is not vigorous by any means, though; the narcissistic zombies tend to claw at their prey, so he is slow and only gropes, making him look curious and needful more than anything else. Later, Francine encounters another sluggish religious figure, the obstinate nun zombie. The only thing separating her from the other zombies is her drab black and white clothing. While black and white usually signify the dichotomy of good and evil, she is neither; she is just another victim of a culture, stuck in the zombiistic trance of boredom. She follows the zombie crowd and gets physically trapped by her garb in a shutting department store door; signifying that the church is also ideologically trapped by the consumerist crisis in the time of a “God is dead” movement. Francine unlocks the door, freeing the nun from her predicament, showing that with intervention there is eventual
hope of freedom from the grasp of materialism.

The last truly significant mall zombie that is un-afflicted by narcissism is the Bach’s Arco Pitcairn baseball-player zombie. Reproachful stringed music begins to play when we first see Francine sitting down to load her gun behind a locked glass door, and the Arco Pitcairn zombie slouches down in front of her. He is ambiguous in that he looks like a lost soul that was caught in the nets of zombiism. He isn’t at all aggressive; he is only looking longingly at Francine, as if he has lost more than just his life. She sees him for what he is, and looks upon him with pity. A cairn is a mound of stones built as a memorial, and the Pitcairn baseball player is the symbolic memorial for everyone that fell to materialism under duress. These three zombies approach Francine because they share a common sense of longing for companionship and communion; she bears the fruit of the future, and thus provides hope. She embodies “the vision of a new society, a decent society,” and that is all they need “to give them new vigor” (Lasch 396-7).

Meanwhile, Francine provides herself with a sense of purpose and vestige of hope by having Stephen teach her how to fly the helicopter, in case anything ever happens to him. But in doing so, unnecessary attention is drawn to them, bringing them in contact with biker-raiders who lurk near the mall. The raiders are simply zombies in waiting: they are an army surviving on the road, scavenging for the closest fix of conspicuous consumption, and “[Jim] Hougan notes that survival has become the ‘catchword of the seventies’ and ‘collective narcissism’ the dominant disposition” (Lasch 31). But much like Roger during his decline, the raiders do not even take what is necessary for survival; they take meaningless things like lollipops and other candies, clothing, jewelry, and money, while trashing the place, leaving their fallen comrades behind and the mall chock-full of zombies once more. They are narcissistic to the point of foresight-blindness. This quality is personified through one raider in particular who is drawn to the blood pressure machine as if knowing his blood pressure is an absolute need. Narcissists often have such hypochondriacal tendencies; with the biker—and all narcissistic hypochondriacs—knowing is the necessity: “the bad images he has internalized also make him chronically uneasy about his health, and hypochondria in turn gives him a special affinity for therapy and for therapeutic groups and movements” (Lasch 86). Knowing his symptoms is his quick fix for therapy at that moment, and he can’t resist the machine that will tell him. The blood pressure lure is his downfall, for the ravenous kill him as the pumped-up cuff restrains his arm. The raiders are even verbally compared with the narcissistic zombies of the mall when Peter declares, “Just stay out of sight! They’re after the place—they don’t care about us.” But Stephen doesn’t listen because his fix is now the mall, and he is plagued and distraught knowing that his castle of “great stuff” has been penetrated and is under siege. This drives him over the edge as he aims his gun and mumbles, “It’s ours, we took it… it’s ours.” The consumer life made him oblivious to danger and caused him to lose sight of the more important things in life, like his child growing inside of Francine—the hope of the future.

Cornered in an elevator, Stephen is attacked by zombies who make short work of changing him into one of them.

The decimated raiders leave as quickly as they arrived, and after several hours of waiting for Stephen’s return, Francine is ready to leave, too. Led by Stephen-zombie, a horde of cadavers break into their castle tower, and Peter tells Francine, “I don’t want to go… I really don’t,” just before he kills the Stephen-zombie. Francine escapes up the ladder to the helicopter, and Peter goes into the bedroom to con-
template suicide. Just as it appears he is going to pull the trigger of his derringer, a very pale African-American zombie breaks into the room, and Peter—himself an African-American—sees what he will become. Like Francine and unlike Narcissus, Peter does not jump in to join the self-absorbed zombie crowd; he shoots the pale African-American zombie, renouncing his narcissism. Peter tears his way to the helicopter, and once on the roof, he spins around and his coveted gun is seized by a zombie. He lets go of the rifle without a struggle; he and Francine leave it all behind, only taking the necessary elements for survival in the manner of their arrival. Peter is even wearing the same SWAT uniform he arrived in, so they are back to where they were. They are not part of the leisure class anymore, and, as Veblen observes, “retrogradation of standard of living is considered a grave violation on human dignity”—so it is only by this violation that they recover some vestige of their human dignity (156).

Dawn of the Dead reminds us that it can all be taken away, and too much of it can carry you away. So, take what you need and leave the rest behind. Without a wall of possessions protecting you from the outside world, you can judge the value of your character through your ability, not by what you possess. Mired in the moral death of the consumer scene, Peter and Francine choose life. Our surviving pilgrims of materialism take off as the sun is rising, possession-less but maintaining an optimistic “we’ll see what happens” attitude, signifying that redemption and new beginnings are possible, no matter how far-gone you are.

In a capitalistic world, materialistic ideologies prevail. When we are not restricted by monetary limits, a leisure class develops where tendencies of conspicuous consumption take hold and run rampant. Conspicuous consumption and narcissism are coupled, feeding off of one another; in the seventies, President Carter’s position that “too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption” indicated that this plague had spread well beyond the class lines and festered all over the nation (565). Carter’s true “crisis of confidence” is the over-abundance of narcissists “living for the moment” and seeking self-gratification through consumption to “fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose” (565). The narcissistic zombies are not the bad guys here—they are the victims of the culture, the hang-ups or neuroses of materialism in effigy, manifestations of the time. Romero’s zombies are an infectious entity, unconscious that their actions are making it worse for those still alive, those that are not irredeemable victims of “the propaganda of commodities.” The mall zombies are externalizations of the narcissist’s inner qualities: the narcissist is not pretty on the inside, and the zombie is not pretty on the outside. For the American middle-class, the mall is the apotheosis of conspicuous consumption and a breeding ground for materialistic inclinations. And the mall is the Mecca for the narcissistic zombie of the 1970s. As consumers in a consumer world, we all have a zombie that dwells in our unconscious mind, and “[the] unconscious mind represents the modification of nature by culture, the imposition of civilization on instinct” (Lasch 77).
Works Cited