

**“This ain’t no love-in, this ain’t no happenin”:
Misfits, Detroit hardcore and the performance of zombie scenarios**

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Greg, Dennis, Dean and I all took the Woodward bus up to Bookies to see the Misfits. The trip was more like an odyssey....We were the only white kids on the bus. The bus ahead of us broke down so suddenly our bus was so packed that we couldn't see where our stop was

I was familiar with Bookies from all of the articles about the Dead Boys and other midwestern punk outfits that I had read in my older brother's *Creem* magazine. So I felt oddly sophisticated as we walked along in the dark.... It seemed like we had been walking for a very long time. 870 West McNicholls is pretty far from Woodward. We made our way into the club and caught the tail end of the Necros, the first of many times that I saw them play. They were raw and energetic. I found it absolutely exhilarating.

Then it was the Misfits' time to take the stage. The lights went dark and, when they came up again, the band emerged from these plywood doorways in the shape of old coffins.... They were wearing what looked like high heels and there was a lot of make-up. I immediately lost enthusiasm.... They were very sloppy....

I resolved never to bother seeing the Misfits live again. But later I discovered what a treat they were on vinyl.... I played *Walk Among Us* just the other day. Still sounds good.

(Christopher McNamara, personal communication, 3 March 2014)¹

Borderamas

This article explores how living death operated as iconographic metaphor and performance scenario for the Detroit hardcore scene of the early 1980s. Hardcore, a suburban North American response to punk rock, reached its peak between 1981 and 1983 before self-combusting. Its sound was fast, loud, brutal and very angry. Overwhelmingly male teenage audiences responded through a movement vocabulary of jostling and pushing and circling with elbows and knees akimbo (known as slam-dancing or skanking) and by hurling themselves (or stage-diving) into this maelstrom. As Stephen Blush writes in his history of the genre, “Fucked up but smart white kids populated Hardcore. Their bumper legacy included the Cold War industrial decline, post-Vietnam trauma, racial turmoil, police brutality and shitty music” (2010, 32). Focusing in particular on B-movie zombie references by the Misfits, I use Diana Taylor’s concept of the performance scenario (2003) to discuss the cultural environment in which I chose to grow up: to describe and understand the integrated

experiences of hardcore performers and their audiences; the slippage between “real” performer, persona and character; as well as the movements across different subcultural products. The latter includes the translations between either no-budget or relatively low budget movies and postpunk performance, as well as between different generations of zombie movies themselves, via the situated bodies of their consumers.

The bringing together of Detroit, zombies and performance has been anticipated by others. Borrowing his terminology from Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Jerry Herron describes Detroit as a “borderama”: “a spectacle contrived to perform culturally relevant work” that makes “conscious the otherwise unconscious functioning of the borders we construct” (Herron 2010, 66). The borders to which Herron is specifically referring – between “city and not-city, life and death” – are inextricably linked: “Detroit looks just like a city, except it’s not one any more.... [I]t persists in a death-in-life existence, and that is what lends the place an uncanny relevance” (Herron 2010, 64). At home and abroad, Detroit is known as both the Motor City and Murder City, the latter reputation consolidated when homicide rates soared during the 1980s. Like zombies, it has become the spectacularized site of (once American, now globalized) anxieties, a threshold space of abjection in which delineations between inclusion and exclusion are blurred.

Both Detroit and zombies now seem to offer us perpetually recyclable metaphors for a post-industrial apocalypse created when the American dream becomes the American nightmare, its survivors crawling out of homes and lives ruined by decades of local political corruption and ineptitude, drug epidemics, financial recession and corporate meltdown, racial tension and poverty. Sometimes the two iconographies come together in the popular imagination, as in the (unsuccessful) 2012 initiative to regenerate parts of the city by transforming them into a zombie theme park called Z-World.

For me, however, thinking back to the early 1980s, the living dead and Detroit were psychically connected most deeply through the ever-present threat of nuclear war. In the introduction to his memoir of the city’s decline, Mark Binelli recalls the strange thrill of reading a *Time* magazine article in 1982 about what would happen if a single nuclear bomb fell without warning on a North American city. The city they chose to drop it on was Detroit. Ground zero was downtown, now an enormous crater surrounded by twisted buildings and bodies melted inside their cars. He remembers – as I do, for good reason – how fragments of the (now seemingly ironically named) Renaissance Center would fatally rain down on those of us living just over the Canadian border in Windsor, “hurled across the river by 160 m.p.h. winds” (quoted in Binelli 2013, 2). And he, like me, tried to calculate how far you had to live

from ground zero to have a chance of surviving both the blast and subsequent nuclear winter.

By then, I had seen George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) many times. The film ends when its black protagonist – having survived an onslaught of swarming murderous undead bodies, which were probably created by radioactive contamination – is shot and burned by a posse of sheriff's deputies who are trying to restore order.

Walk Among Us

In 1982, the same year as *Time* was nuking Detroit, the Misfits released *Walk Among Us*. Now considered one of hardcore's classic LPs – a howling, catchy, hyperbolically funny, relentless tour de force – it was made by the band's founding member, singer and songwriter, Glenn Danzig with Arthur Googy playing drums, Jerry Only on bass and Only's brother, Doyle, on guitar. At the time, its relatively slick production values and horror pop lyrics were something of a guilty pleasure, especially when compared to the blunt "authenticity" of hardcore bands like Minor Threat, Black Flag and Bad Brains. The cover artwork features a photo of the Misfits, superimposed in front of the bat-rat-spider thing that attacks astronauts in the 1959 movie *The Angry Red Planet* (which was also the name of a Detroit hardcore band founded in 1982).

Most of the thirteen songs on the album last under two minutes and three are explicitly about zombies, although some of the rest *could* be about the living dead in a kind of generic nasty-ghoul way.² "Astro Zombies" takes its narrative from a 1968 B-movie of the same name starring John Carradine and Tura Satana (who is better known for her work in cult classic *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*):

With a touch of my burning hand
I send my astro zombies to rape the land.
Prime directive: exterminate the whole human race.

And your face drops in a pile of flesh
And then your heart, heart pounds 'til it pumps in death.
Prime directive: exterminate whatever stands left. (Misfits 2012)

Another track, "Ghouls Night Out," is about "humans held on eating flesh" but it isn't entirely clear whether these are dead humans or not. This song was inspired by Ed Wood's movie *Night of the Ghouls*, although most of us are more familiar with his masterpiece, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (first released in 1959), often cited as the worst film ever made. The plot of the latter concerns a scheme by extra-terrestrials to resurrect the Earth's dead in order to

prevent the living from inventing a doomsday weapon. (So yes, although they planned to unleash armies of the walking dead – which were called “ghouls,” but we would now recognise them as zombies – it really was for our own good.) This is the movie after which Glenn Danzig named the Misfits’ own record label.

According to Blush, although the Misfits were crucial to the popularisation of hardcore, they really were “in a league of their own”. Their songs, at least on record, were more melodic, “taking that Buddy Holly/Gene Vincent thing nuclear” (Blush 2010, 222). Their look, a cross between Eddie Munster and a WWF wrestler, was unusual for hardcore which tended to be stripped down and plain. The Misfits created iconic “devilock” hairdos for themselves that resembled 1950s pompadours pulled down to their chins (Blush 2010, 230); they wore spikes and leather, which was seen as rather old school passé UK punk, and they seemed very muscular and ripped to us at the time. The band embraced tawdry spectacle and cheap effects. When they first started out, they would project trailers for old horror flicks on sheets of paper while they were setting up, bursting through to start their sets with a song about that movie.

The Misfits were from New Jersey and had been around for a few years, with different line-ups, prior to the emergence of hardcore, but they did not make a particularly strong impression on the New York punk scene of the late 1970s: “the French poet referencing crowd at CBGB’s thought them to be bridge-and-tunnel guidos who wanted to be Kiss” (Rettman 2010, 71).³ The band’s fan base, especially on a national level, was fairly small until they were enthusiastically embraced by the Detroit hardcore scene in 1981. A member of the Necros, one of Detroit’s linchpin bands which struck up an alliance with the Misfits, has said that to them meeting Danzig was like meeting “the Fonzie of Punk” (Rettman 2010, 72). They were particularly impressed by his flair for self promotion via both styling and merchandising; adverts for the Misfits Fiend Club, featuring the band’s soon-to-be iconic wonky grinning skull logo, were regularly and prominently placed in local ’zines such as *Touch N Go*.

According to Tesco Vee, who edited *Touch N Go* and fronted the Meatmen, the Misfits were Detroit’s “house band from hell,” who provided “fabulously fun and out of tune smack downs” (unpaginated “Forward” to Rettman 2010). I think that there are a number of reasons why the band was adopted by the city, beyond the fact that they were simply liked as people.⁴ One is that, unlike in New York City, the kids who made the scene may have hated the suburbs but weren’t embarrassed by coming from them to play in the inner city. Because they were the only people choosing to do so, in a particularly bad-ass city at that, it was

considered a badge of honour. The second is that there has always been an ambivalent, barely suppressed theatrical flair in Detroit rock, especially that which was considered protopunk like the MC5, the Stooges and most obviously, Alice Cooper. Although a massive global star by then, who had even appeared on *The Muppet Show*, he still retained a lot of local street cred.

Finally, and not unrelated, the Misfits' lyrics resonated deeply and loudly in metro Detroit as comic book light relief that rang true to the lived experience of unemployment, the recent memory of fuel shortages, nuclear threat, curfew, and pollution that was turning our evening skies bright pink and orange. This was a city in which Halloween was notoriously commemorated by "burning hands" that seemed hell bent on "exterminating whatever stands left"; in the early 1980s, swathes of abandoned properties were set ablaze in an annual festival of arson known as Devil's Night. At its peak in 1984, 810 fires were reported during the three days before Halloween. It is no coincidence that the names of many of Detroit's hardcore bands – Necros, Negative Approach, Meatmen, Violent Apathy – so easily describe the attributes of the living dead, lurching through the flames. Homemade posters for gigs often featured stills from zombie movies like *Dawn of the Dead* (see, e.g., Rettman 2010, 198), to which I'll return later.

Detroit hardcore's adoption of the Misfits demonstrates how a shared transAmerican subcultural vocabulary and image bank, one that is used to respond to a national social, cultural and economic landscape, plays itself out in diverse ways on local and tribal levels. This shared vocabulary in the first instance comes straight from the B-grade movies of the 1950s and 1960s that are known generically as "weirdies". According to Thomas Doherty, this term refers inexactly to "an offbeat science fiction, fantasy, monster, zombie, or shock film, usually of marginal financing, fantastic content and ridiculous title" (2002, 119). These include protozombie movies such as *Creature with the Atom Brain* (1955), *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies* (1964), *Horror of Party Beach* (1965) and *Astro Zombies*. In the early 1980s, most teenagers would know these films through repeated showings on late night monster movie slots on local television, hosted by figures such as, in Detroit, Sir Graves Ghastly and The Ghoul. One of the first, and most celebrated, horror movie hosts in the 1950s was Vampira (created and performed by Maila Nurmi), a featured player in *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, and the fetishized subject of another Misfits' song.

These low-budget zombie movies were made "to mean and mean again," a phrase used by Dick Hebdige to describe a process of subcultural style (1979, 3). While Hebdige

focuses on the semiotics of reappropriated objects, I am more interested in what he identifies as their performative end product – that is, their culmination “in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer” that “signals a Refusal” (1979, 3). The Misfits were not the only postpunk band gleefully recycling trash Americana at the time; The Cramps, for instance, who recorded a track called “Zombie Dance” in 1980, were also doing it in their louche voodoo-billy. Both bands played with excess – and excess theatricality in particular. Each always teetered on the brink of becoming a kitsch novelty act, which was only avoided through their performances of unbridled savagery, knowing use of humour, and intense relationships with audiences that veered between discipleship and identification.

In his book on Glam Rock, Philip Auslander discusses how popular musicians create meaning through the doing of their performances. His methods of analysis consider the performer “as defined by three layers: the real person (the performer as human being), the performance persona (the performer’s self-presentation), and the character (a figure portrayed in a song text)” (Auslander 2006, 4). Glenn Danzig’s performance of character is notable for the way that the point of view shifts both from song to song and sometimes within the song itself. While he sometimes voices the monster, he is just as likely to tell the story from the perspective of a victim or a bystander. In “Astro Zombies”, he is a rather petulant puppet-master with a hang up about his sense of agency: “Who’d I do this for, hey, me or you?” he shouts, having just sent a legion of the undead to rape the earth. And suddenly we remember that this is a performance for and with an audience of largely teenage boys, boys who are desperately trying to negotiate their place in the world. Negative Approach’s hardcore anthem, “Why Be Something That You’re Not” (1982), succinctly expresses the same sentiment.

The performances of audiences and hardcore bands are bound tightly together, something that is neatly reflected in a description of Detroit hardcore as a “4/4, balls-out, screaming-and-shouting sound” that combines the speed of Southern California punk and the audience participation of British Oi!, “all wrapped up in a tasty coating of suburban anger” (Jackman 2010). This is all in evidence on a video of the Misfits playing their regular finale, “Braineaters”, live on a Detroit cable station in 1983. The band slip in and out of time and, as often as not, the microphone is pointing away from the stage, from which shaven-headed and sneakered bodies launch through the air. The lyrics, chanted by Danzig and his audience, lament the fact that they have to eat brains for every single meal. At the end of the song (which lasts under a minute), you can hear somebody shouting “Midwest Rules” in an expression of regional pride. Although many people used “Midwest” and “Detroit” fairly

interchangeably in hardcore circles, the scenes in Chicago and Minneapolis, for instance, were actually quite different. Each city had its own bands and its own vibe, despite the connections forged through DIY touring circuits, 'zines and record labels.

Scene/Scenario

According to Diana Taylor, scenarios are “meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes” (2003, 28). They are simultaneously a set up and action, always repeatable and necessarily repeated. Although they have localised meaning, because they are the products of economic, political and social structures which they tend to reproduce, they often pass as “universal”. Although scenarios establish and use formulaic structures of encounter, conflict and resolution, the fact that they always need to be embodied by social actors means that their significations are never stable. While on one level a scenario introduces critical distance between characters and the social actors who play these roles, on another it demands that all participants, spectators or witnesses are situated in relation to it. In other words, we need to “be there” as part of the act of transmission (Taylor 2003, 32). This passing on can take almost any form, from telling and re-enactment to *gestus* and singing. For Taylor, the scenario “makes visible, yet again, what is already there” (2003, 28). Perhaps most significantly, scenarios are never effectively duplicated; they can only be *reactivated* and this makes their coupling with zombie paradigms figuratively, if not literally, potent.

As Taylor notes, physical location, or scene, and scenario “stand in metonymic relationship” (2003, 29). This illuminates how the zombie scenario, which is both formulaic and flexible, is able to connect the social construction of bodies – those of performers and audiences together on the hardcore scene – to the specific practising of place in Detroit in the early 1980s. The atomic age zombie flicks reactivated by the Misfits and their fans at places like the Freezer, Clutch Cargos or the City Club in the Cass Corridor seemed like a cute foreshadowing of the “real” post-apocalyptic world.⁵ Surrounded by empty shopfronts, on an eerily quiet street that had been churned up by race riots fifteen years earlier but still hadn't been repaired, the police rarely bothered patrolling anywhere near these venues. While hardcore gigs took place all over the metro Detroit area, sometimes in Masonic lodges and Serbian halls, Cass Avenue was always ground zero. At the start of the 1980s, the neighbourhood was in the grip of heroin and within a few years, it was perched on the precipice of a crack epidemic.

It looked and felt like the bleak world of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, released in 1978, which we watched frequently in late night repertory along with its cine-kin, such as George Miller's *Road Warrior* (a.k.a. *Mad Max 2*, 1981), *Escape from New York* (John Carpenter, 1981), and, eventually, Alex Cox's *Repo Man* (1984), significant for its soundtrack of Los Angeles hardcore. These science fiction movies seemed nearly plausible to those of us suburban kids who hung out in downtown Detroit and were frequently reminded of the proximity of nuclear war by authoritative voices. The out-of-town shopping mall that temporarily tools up and shelters the protagonists of *Dawn of the Dead*, before redneck bikers ruin their idyll, accurately reflected the spatial, cultural and political precarity we were experiencing at that time.⁶

The Misfits' song that conjures this scenario most effectively is their homage to Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, a movie which in 1999 was included in the American Library of Congress's National Film Registry due to its cultural and aesthetic significance. While we tend now to think of it as quite distinct from a weirdie like *Astro Zombies* made in the same year, the lines were once much blurrier. The Misfits released their single "Night of the Living Dead" on Halloween 1979 and a version eventually made its way onto *Walk Among Us*. The lyrics address the listener directly, collapsing the distance between fact and fiction:

You think you're a zombie, you think it's a scene
From some monster magazine
Well, open your eyes now. Too late.
This ain't no fantasy, boy.

Effectively commanding his audience to snap out of it, Danzig also describes the "real" zombies:

Armies of the dead surviving
Armies of the hungry ones
Only ones, lonely ones
Ripped up like shredded wheat
Only ones, lonely ones
Be a sort of human picnic

This ain't no love-in
This ain't no happenin
This ain't no feeling in my arm.

And so we get to the crux of the matter: what's in your head is irrelevant; this is about the survival of your body. If you're not eating, you're going to be food. There is no point relying on arty, peace-and-love hippie shit or mutual co-operation in this violent world.

No particular rage is being expressed here at the zombies themselves: they are primal and hungry, and devouring warm bodies is what they do. This acceptance is significant when we consider the emphasis that Diana Taylor places on ubiquitous “discovery” scenarios in American contexts. While there is no doubt that the zombie scenario begins as one of colonial control, especially of black bodies, by Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* there is no attempt at taming the undead. The protagonists’ security is equally threatened, as he hinted at the end of *Night of the Living Dead*, by other living humans. Similarly, although the Detroit hardcore scene was notoriously violent, with gigs often ending in punch-ups and flying limbs, this was never directed at the locals, the people who might be most easily identified as the zombie underclass. In fact, the fights tended to be between audience members and, especially when skinheads began showing up with greater frequency, these altercations were increasingly predicated on tribal attitudes toward integration. This is one of hardcore’s many paradoxes in an angry cityscape largely defined by racial inequality and tensions. As Corey Rusk, a member of the Necros at that time, has said, “[The local residents] just looked at us like we were freaks too, and we weren’t the white people they had problems with. We had no race problems... [W]hatever violence problems there were, were usually between the white kids” (quoted in Miller 2013, 208).

One of the reasons that the Cass Corridor became synonymous with inner city blight and crime was because the city flushed out the nearby housing projects, not unlike the zombie hit squad working down the apartment building at the start of *Dawn of the Dead*, pushing its most vulnerable and poor, almost exclusively African-American, inhabitants on to the already seedy streets with few public resources. Cass Avenue, which at the turn of the 20th century was an intellectual and cultural hub, remained one of the few integrated parts of Detroit, its white inhabitants mainly strung-out junkies, or fucked-up Vietnam vets, or prostitutes, or people into marginalised sex scenes, or occasionally starving radical artists. As with the slippage of character in the Misfits’ repertoire of zombie song texts, there was always a sense that you were only a stumble away from occupying any number of positions from oppressor to undead. As Peter, a character in *Dawn of the Dead*, says: “They're us, that’s all, when there's no more room in hell.”

Although the most common reading of Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* is that it is a critique of capitalism, with zombies standing in for mindless consumers who return habitually to the shopping mall (see Harper 2002), there was another, related, living death that hardcore kids equally professed to trying to avoid – that is, the one induced by drugs. If you were abstinent, that was called being “Straight Edge” and it was signified by a cross on

your hand (the mark you'd get at a gig if you were too young to be served at the bar). The purpose of Straight Edge was to stand apart from the drunks and drug casualties at school and in mainstream rock culture. Its rallying call was a song by Minor Threat:

I'm a person just like you
But I've got better things to do
Than sit around and fuck my head
Hang out with the living dead... (Minor Threat 1981)

In fact, most people slipped in and out of Straight Edge, adhering when it was convenient and in certain company. As Minor Threat's singer, Ian Mackaye, put it, "We thought being straight was just another type of deviant in this community just like junkies" (quoted in Blush 2010, 28). Straight Edge was a way to express yourself as an intelligent misfit, somebody who was sharp and prepared – perhaps for the imminent zombie apocalypse.⁷ It was a rebellion of relative suburban affluence since, although the drugs on offer were slightly different ones, they were as available and as ubiquitous in the suburbs as in the inner city.

I May Survive

Generically, neither zombies nor hardcore were created by, or exclusively of, Detroit; rather, specific conditions in the early 1980s whipped them together in a perfect storm. What commentators like Jerry Herron consistently point out is that Detroit is, and always has been, causally related to the rest of America. The product of metropolitan individualism and racial segregation, it is a city that has progressively made "more visible things that exist – homicidally – across [American] culture" (Herron 2010, 66). Although it is commonly argued that zombies, like all monsters, are manifestations of "collective nightmares" (see Wood 2003, 70), for hardcore punks hanging out in Detroit at the time, the performance of zombie scenarios can be better understood as the theatricalisation of lived experience and an attempt to work through the fluid relationships between roles and participants.

The Misfits were perfectly placed to lend an ambivalent voice. As Danzig sang on the third track of *Walk Among Us*, "All Hell Breaks Loose":

I send my murdergram to all these monster kids.
It comes right back to me,
Signed in their parents' blood...
Yeah, my whole world's breaking loose.

Seemingly apolitical – but expressing the frustrated and barely articulate politics of very young adults who deeply mistrusted the values of those who created the apocalyptic

landscape in which they lived – the Misfits offered uplift through giddily impossible scenarios of both destruction and survival, one way or another (that is, the living way or the dead way). Their live performances did not need to be technically accomplished; indeed, perhaps what was valued more was that they *could* have been (as evidenced by their studio recordings), but were always chaotically flying apart, as if by centrifugal force. The messy “reality” counterbalanced lingering suspicions of histrionic fantasy and the Misfits bonded with Detroit audiences through their energy, presence, charisma and attitude.

All storms eventually dissipate. I was there the night Glenn Danzig disbanded the Misfits, just before Halloween 1983, at Graystone Hall in Detroit. I even wrote a review of it for a local newspaper under a headline that referred to the band as “thrash zombies.” The event pretty much corresponds with the end of my eighteen months on the Detroit hardcore scene. As new bands based their sound on the old ones and as gigs were increasingly populated by White Power neo-Nazi skinheads, it became time to move on. I was not the only one. A lot of the stalwarts, like the Necros, got into heavy metal. Ironically, many succumbed to heroin and some died.⁸ It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that the zombie scenario lay dormant for a few decades thereafter, subsequently resurrected to make meaning in very different ways.⁹ In a Detroit that became increasingly dangerous and desolate, perhaps it was just not possible to summon the righteous anger and defiance it requires to be reanimated. Other scenarios were called for.

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Notes

¹ The gig Christopher describes here took place on 12 September 1981. Many thanks to all those who shared their memories of our time together on the Windsor/Detroit hardcore scene for this article, and in particular Zonk Deck.

² During the same session, the Misfits recorded two other zombie-inflected tunes that were released on a different EP. One of them, "London Dungeon," was about their disastrous trip to England to play with the Damned a few years earlier ("They called us walking corpses, unholy living dead...").

³ CBGB was a New York music club, open between 1973 and 2006, famous for hosting punk and new wave bands. Guido was a (usually pejorative) term for working-class macho Italian Americans; bridge-and-tunnellers came in to the city from places like New Jersey to go clubbing. Kiss was a pop rock band from New York known for their face paint, flamboyant comic-book style costumes and pyrotechnics; in 1976, they released a track called "Detroit Rock City".

⁴ According to Dave Reidl, "They were perhaps the worst band I have ever seen live, but I loved them...Saw them putting on their make-up in the toilet at Graystone Hall (their last show) while I was having a pee.... Nice fellas. We had a bit of a chat" (personal communication, 3 March 2014). Dave can be seen crowd-surfing in this video of the Misfits covering the Black Flag song, "Rise Above," at that gig: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQUzve_JH1k.

⁵ When we presented early versions of our articles in this volume together as papers, it was striking how closely images of gigs at the Freezer resembled those shown by Phil Smith of penned zombies in movies such as *The Dead Next Door* (1989).

⁶ Northland Center Mall, in Southfield, less than a mile from downtown Detroit, was one of America's first (and at the time, largest) shopping centres when it was built in 1954. It was enclosed in 1974 and by the 1980s was

already falling into disrepair, probably due to its close proximity to the city. A commentator on the Dead Malls website wrote, on 9 July 2007, that during the 1980s, Detroit gangs began to colonize Northland, resulting in a commercial occupancy rate below 30% and regular police patrols.

⁷ Indeed, it is possible to anthropomorphically conflate the urban environment itself with a zombie/heroin addict. In a discussion of William Burroughs' location within the New York punk scene of the early 1980s on the Reality Studio website (2 November 2009), Jed Birmingham writes: "Blocks and blocks [...] were already dead, inhabited by drug addicted zombies preying on the living. The disease was spreading building by building. ... New York City with its streets clogged with garbage, its architecture and infrastructure crumbling, and its bank account depleted was the City as aging junkie."

⁸ An interviewee in *Detroit Rock City* notes that this was especially the case for many of the girls on the scene: "These chicks that were hanging around all seemed to pass away over the years" (quoted in Miller 2013, 206). Clearly, as my continued existence and that of my girlfriends (such as Sue St. Denis, who drummed in the Flesh Columns) will attest, this is somewhat of an overstatement. But there are some gender issues worth at least mentioning about this primarily male, testosterone-fuelled environment. The first is that I believe the girls on the scene generally felt as safe there as the boys and shared their world view; I remember no sexism and I never felt sexually vulnerable. Secondly, although I found myself surrounded by fighting boys on many occasions, I was never hit myself, nor did I ever hit anybody. Girls did tend to hug the walls, though, during gigs and were very rarely embroiled in the mosh pits. I remember no aggression between girls who regularly went to hardcore shows. There is clearly much more to be said about the performance of gender, by both boys and girls on the scene, which remains implicit in this article due to space restrictions.

⁹ In early 2013, the word "Zombieland" appeared in huge black block letters across the twelfth floor of a once grand hotel in the Cass Corridor. When Detroit filed for bankruptcy that year, this was seized upon as metaphor by the global media. The graffiti referenced Ruben Fleischer's 2009 comedy (or zom-com) of the same name, which revolves around the recitation of rules for survival in a zombie-infested world.