

The Zombie Myth as the Hegelian-Master Slave in William Seabrook's *The Magic Island: A Postcolonial and Cultural Perspective*

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Abstract

Objectives: the current paper aims to discuss the image of the Haitian zombie presented as a harmless, obedient slave, controlled being devoid of any personality and oppressed and fed by a mysterious priest or sorcerer called 'bokor' in William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929). So, the researcher investigates why and how this character was imported into the American novel and culture and traces its development.

Methods: the current paper analyzes William Seabrook's, *The Magic Island* (1929), from a cultural and postcolonial perspective to inspect circumstances leading to significant transformations and radical changes that could be attributed to the United States' occupation of Haiti in 1915 such conditions could have motivated Seabrook to go to Haiti and present this character to the American culture. The researcher is utilizing G.W.F. Hegel's master-slave dialectic in addition to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concepts of subaltern and 'Sub-subaltern'.

Results: Since its inception, the concept of the zombie denotes a soulless man who is devoid of will totally at the mercy of a plantation owner. Born of Haitian folklore and linked from its earliest periods to oppression, the zombie began as a parable of the exploited workers in modern industrial economies and of the exploited natives in colonial nations.

Conclusions: Zombies are the exploited Indigenous labor whom imperialism/colonialists used as cheap labor without proper working conditions. So the Seabrook zombies are a metaphor for indigenous laborers who are overworked, underpaid, undervalued, not respected, etc.

Keywords: Cultural materialism; postcolonialism; zombie slaves; voodooism; subalternity; exploitation; oppression

أسطورة الزومبي متمثلة في علاقة السيد والعبد الهيجلية في رواية الجزيرة السحرية لويليام سيبروك: من منظور ثقافي وما بعد استعماري

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ملخص

الأهداف: يهدف البحث إلى تجسيد صورة شخصية الأحياء الأموات في الثقافة الهايتية حيث قدمت هذه الشخصية بصورة غير مؤذية، فهم عبيد مطيعون وأشخاص متحكم بهم ومضطهدون من قبل سلطة عليا، وليست لديهم أية شخصية مستقلة، فقد تم تصويرهم في رواية ويليام سيبروك الجزيرة السحرية (1929) أنهم أشخاص يتغذون من قبل ساحر مشعوذ يسمى مستحضر الأرواح؛ لذا سوف يحقق الباحث في هذه الشخصية وكيفية دخولها إلى الأدب والثقافة الأمريكية، ويتبع تطورها.

المنهجية: تحلل الدراسة الحالية عمل ويليام سيبروك، الجزيرة السحرية (1929) من المنظورين الثقافي والاستعماري لعرض كل الظروف التي قادت إلى التحول في تقديم هذه الشخصية. هذا التغيير الجذري الذي حدث لهذه الشخصية بسبب الاحتلال الأمريكي لحضارة هاييتي في سنة 1915 وهذا الاحتلال دفع الكاتب وليام سيبروك إلى هاييتي وكشف هذه الشخصية إلى الأدب الأمريكي. الباحث سوف يستخدم أو يستعير بعض مفاهيم نظرية الاستعمار عند المنظر غياتري جاكتر وفوري سبفك "التابع وتحت التابع" لكي تحلل هذه الشخصية طبقاً لتلك المفاهيم.

النتائج: منذ ظهور شخصية الموتى الأحياء وتجسيد هذه الشخصية بوصفها عديمة الروح، ومن دون شخصية مستقلة، ومستغلة من قبل مالك مزرعة سكر، أو ساحر مشعوذ ظهرت هذه الشخصية في خرافات حضارة هاييتي وكانت ذات صلة وسيطة منذ بدايتها الأولى حتى الاضطهاد والاستعمار، إذ بدأ ظهور هذه الشخصية في حكايات معينة كحكاية العبد، أو العامل الذي يتم استغلاله في الاقتصاد الصناعي الحديث حيث يتم من خلالها استغلال سكان البلد الأصليين من قبل بلدان الاستعمار.

الخلاصة: شخصية الموتى الأحياء هم العمال الأصليون المستغلون الذين استخدمتهم الإمبريالية/المستعمرون كعمالة رخيصة دون ظروف عمل مناسبة. لذا فإن زومبي (شخصية الموتى الأحياء) عند سيبروك هم استعارة للعمالة الأصلية الذين يعملون فوق طاقتهم، ويتقاضون أجوراً زهيدة، ويتم تقديرهم بأقل من قيمتهم، ولا يحظون بالاحترام.

الكلمات الدالة: المادية الثقافية، الاستعمار، الأحياء الموتى كعبيد، الفدودوية، التابعة، الاستغلال، الاضطهاد



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Introduction

According to Roger Luckhurst, a zombie is a being without a soul, a deceased body that was once a living human with a soul. It is described as an undead entity that returns to a state of semi-life through the use of supernatural or pseudo-scientific means. Zombies are portrayed as silent, dull-witted beings, lacking memories of their previous lives or any emotional connections. They tend to merge into an unfeeling collective and multiply rapidly. This undead being cannot speak, possesses limited intelligence, and has no recollection of its past existence as a living being. Consequently, it cannot form emotional attachments or forge new relationships. Instead, it assimilates into an indifferent collective that grows rapidly. These creatures are driven by an insatiable urge to hunt down and consume the remaining living beings, relentlessly expanding their domain (McNally, 2011, p. 141).

The zombie can be seen as a multi-faceted cultural artifact that combines elements from the "civilized" New World and the mystical ancient Africa. It is strongly associated with the historical experiences of slavery, oppression, and capitalist dominance, serving as a manifestation of deeply rooted collective fears and societal taboos (Bishop, 2010, p. 37). In this light, the zombie monster can be understood as a distinctly American creation, rooted in the relatively recent folklore of the Caribbean and deeply intertwined with colonialism, slavery, and ancient mysticism. These unique qualities emphasize the importance of exploring the anthropological origins of the zombie as a crucial aspect of comprehending this specific subgenre of horror (Bishop, 2010, p. 38).

The concept of the zombie, as we understand it today, is the byproduct of a mixture of African folklore and European colonial interactions. According to Lauro and Karen Embry: "We cannot take up the figure of the zombie without recognizing its appropriation from Haitian folklore (2008, p.96). The zombie, in its historical and folkloric forms, represents a literal depiction of a slave, created by Voodoo priests to toil in the fields. However, the concept of the zombie holds a deeper metaphorical meaning that reflects our own bondage to our limited and vulnerable physical bodies.

In the 1968, American director George A. Romero, the godfather of modern zombies presented a turning point in the history of the American gothic genre, especially the zombie myth or genre. Romero changed the concept of the zombie forever from being sugar-eating to a flesh-eater. This change happened because Romero wanted to change the reader's brain, mind, set of thinking, ideas, and culture as well. It is worth mentioning that American society was afraid because of the Cold War that happened during the 1950s. The American's beliefs were shattered because of the manipulation. Rather than being led, the zombie figure became a leader. It was a period of great fear: the onset of World War II launched, threatening widespread genocide, atomic warfare, and the rise of communist dictatorships (Rhodes, 2024).

This study analyzes William Seabrook's novel, *The Magic Island* (1929) because it is the first American novel to introduce the zombie character. The current analysis is conducted from two perspectives; cultural materialism and postcolonialism which consider the cultural and historical influences that led to producing Seabrook's novel. The article investigates the influences of the novelist's cultural, social, religious, sociopolitical, and personal factors on producing this work, it also examines the transformation of zombie characters in terms of their subalternity, from being harmless, obedient beings, oppressed and controlled by high power to contiguous, threatening and flesh-eating characters who reveal the different circumstances to their readers. Additionally, the current paper analyzes two concepts: subaltern and sub-subaltern zombie slaves, showing the causes and techniques that made them oppressed, marginalized, and mute forever.

Literature Review

Zombie literature has been the interest of many scholars. As stated by Peter Dendle in his book, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* (2001, p.2-3) in 1968, George A. Romero reimagined the concept of the zombie in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). He shifts its representation away from the specific symbolism of the exploitation of black slaves and instead focuses on a general discourse on human interactions within the framework of capitalism in North America. George Romero "freed the zombie from his master's shackles and didn't give them a function (a job or a task like those voodoo priests would usually give the zombies), but a drive (to eat human flesh)".

In his book *Nightmares in Red, White, and Blue: The Evolution of the American Horror Film* (2004, p.51), Joseph Maddrey explains that the concept of brainwashing during a pandemic resurgence reflects current anxieties. Maddrey

suggests that the portrayal of the zombie in gothic literature represented American concerns about the communist threat, and during the 1950s, the fear of being manipulated and infiltrated by spies grew alongside the Cold War threat.

John Cussan in "Tracking the Zombie Diaspora: From Subhuman Haiti to Post-human Tuscon in *Monsters and the Monstrous*" (2004, p.203), argues that sociologists have discussed the significance of the Zombie archetype and its evolution as a predominantly American cultural phenomenon. The main theory regarding the development of fear surrounding the Zombie figure suggests it symbolizes the fear felt by a 'superior' race of being overthrown by an 'inferior' African race, like the events during the Haitian revolution, which led to the forced migration of Haitian slaves to America. The depiction of 'deep' and 'dark' Africa symbolizes real fear for Americans, highlighted by the portrayal of 'savagery' and 'cannibalism'.

In his article, "The Folklore of the Zombie Film" (2007), Mikel J. Koven presents a thought-provoking analysis of the possible folkloric roots of the modern zombie, but like McIntosh, he encounters a similar challenge by combining Romero's more European zombie concept with the Haitian zombie. Furthermore, Koven divides his article into two mostly unrelated parts, first of all, discussing the European-North American folkloric tradition of the reanimated corpse and secondly exploring the "ethnographic zombie" within the Haitian tradition. This presents a challenge for Koven in reaching a unified conclusion, as the two zombie types are not as closely linked as commonly believed.

Furthermore, Azhar Noori Fejer conducted a study "Witchcraft and Women's Spaces; A Cultural Materialism Study of John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick*" (2015), which stated that stories of witches or Gothic are part and parcel of the America famous culture, and this kind of culture is influenced by an unstoppable dependence on its past (p.133).

Wafaa Hassan Alwan conducted a study "Trapped Women in Net of Oppression in Martyna Majok's *Queens: A Postcolonial Feminist Study*" (2023), their study is tackling the postcolonial feminist theory. The study uses the concepts of "subaltern", which hints at the idea of the marginalized group of people who are oppressed by the ruling class authority, and the "intersectionality", which refers to the idea the interconnectedness of many forms of exploitation and oppression in order to examine the subjugation of female. According to Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Subaltern women experience oppression more frequently than subaltern men" (Silima, 2013, p. 456), due to their silence which blocks uttering their thoughts and sharing them. To Spivak, "women are doubly muted by the colonizer and the patriarchal society that work together to suppress subaltern women's voices" (p.11).

The current study is unique because it deals with an under-researched topic. This study will tackle a gap that has not been tackled before. It will show how the zombie literary representations have undergone a gradual transformation from originally a harmless, obedient, sugar-eating figure controlled by someone called bokor or sorcerer in Seabrook's novel, to the contemporary zombie image who is a contiguous, uncontrollable brain-eating that aims to make more horde to spread chaos. This evolution of the zombies is important to show the gradual changing of the zombies from obedient slaves and workers for the rest of their lives to zombies who cannot be contained and used by someone. The researcher uses the postcolonial theory to show these changes in the undead figures.

Theoretical Framework

1- Cultural Materialism

Prominent figures such as Raymond Williams and Louis Althusser viewed literature as a reflection of societal change, challenging the enduring dominance of Culture's hegemony. Their recognition that literary works conveyed significant meanings led to a critical approach focused on unraveling dissident or subversive perspectives within texts. Critics tried to unveil the implicit politics within the literature, seeking to comprehend the pervasive cultural hegemony and get a deeper understanding of the texts under critical observation (Bressler, 1999, p. 187).

According to Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2002), Cultural Materialism uses four methods to analyze texts. First, it emphasizes examining the historical context within which a work was produced. Second, it delves into the political commitment expressed within literary works, identifying the circumstances of their creation and capturing critical junctures. The combination of these methods can reveal insightful conditions. Third, Cultural Materialism scrutinizes the structure, techniques, and various genres of literary works to show

their meanings. Finally, textual analysis extracts examples from chosen texts to hone in on specific aspects of social, economic, cultural, and religious life (p.187).

Raymond Williams, in *Long Revolution* (1961), explains the cultural theory as "the study of a whole way of life," (p.67) and suggests that the value of art should be assessed within the entire context in which these works are created. Therefore, art should be regarded as an activity akin to other societal pursuits such as production, politics, and family life. Williams emphasizes that when studying art, we should not isolate it from society, but rather analyze all activities and their interconnections without prioritizing any particular one (p.66).

The use of cultural materialism approach is essential because the development in the zombie character from its introduction to the American literature and nowadays is due to the change in the culture or the elements of culture, including politics, economy, social life and the author's perspective. The culture of the time participated in producing such kind of literature. In Haiti culture, there is such kind of people who are under spell. And when it was introduced there, the American culture effected by the policy saw that this is dangerous because it hints to postcolonialism. So, the cultural materialism shows the cultural influences that particiaptatted in introducing the character of the zombie into the American culture and the deviation that went on the character of the zombie after being introduced to the American culture. So, Cultural Materialism is applied because whatever change happened on the original image of the zombie is due to the American culture. When it was first introduced throught the work of William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929) it was presented as it is in real life, but when it was introduced to the American literature, the influences of politics and the authors attitudes who wrote about the zombie literature are supposed to be shown in order to apply the approach.

2-Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism drew significant Western interest following the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the influential work *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. These publications helped raise the voices and issues of many marginalized cultures, gaining recognition in academic and social spheres. The terms "postcolonial" and "postcolonialism" made their first scholarly journal appearances in the mid-1980s, appearing as subtitles in works such as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's aforementioned influential text and in 1990 in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin's *Past The Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. By the early and mid-1990s, both terms had become firmly established in academic and popular discussions (Loomba, 2005, p.1).

Many argue that postcolonialism has two branches. The first perspective sees postcolonialism as a collection of diverse methodologies without a singular quality, as noted by Homi Bhabha and Arun Mukherjee. The second branch includes critics like Edward Said, Barbara Harlow, and Gayatri Spivak, who regard postcolonialism as a collection of cultural strategies "rooted in history". As postcolonial critics point out, to be colonized is "to be removed from history." When encountering the dominant culture, the colonized or native culture is forced to either go into hiding or face extinction (Bressler,1999,p.202).

The term was further developed by influential postcolonial theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), she argues that the subaltern is mainly disempowered and silenced within the frameworks of existing power dynamics. The subaltern's inability to truly speak and be heard in their terms is not just about the lack of access to cultural and social institutions but also about how their narratives are shaped and restricted by the overwhelmingly dominant historical and cultural discourse (p.66-98).

Gayatri Spivak in her above-mentioned essay, says those groups of people are not only obedient because of their lack of will and freedom; they cannot also speak. This group of people includes the native people and living slave workers. They are the 'other' because they have no humanity. Those groups of people are the lowest and even below the marginalized, and oppressed, they are the utmost salves or in industrial concepts, the downtrodden, unrepresented, but also unrepresentable; having no political power, work union, for they have no cognitive ability to even say that problem (Bishop, 2008,p. 141-146-148).

The zombie figure was a new entity found in the real religious rituals and daily myth life of postcolonial communities

of the Haitian and Caribbean cultures. The zombie was based on a set of ideas that represent the social and political superstructure in these new independent colonies utilizing fear to promote hard work, obedience, and working with their mouths shut. The zombie figure could be seen as a symbol of the Hegelian master/slave. The Hegelian master/slave dialectic is really at the heart of the zombie. The zombie is obviously the slave, but unlike the human model, the slave really has no choice, it's not a matter of the slave thinking s/he is enslaved but the true fact of enslavement. Nevertheless, the master is obsessed with control and fears enslavement above all. In *The Magic Island* we get this dynamic on multiple levels: the colonial Whites most fear enslavement by the "Black" Ti Joseph, and he, in turn, fears the loss of control of his enslaved zombies. The ending sees the return to "normal", the Whites are freed (and are once again in the superior position). There's really much much more to be said, as pretty much any zombie film, narrative, or story can be read through the lens of Hegel, but perhaps in different ways. The researcher is going to use Spivak's concepts of subaltern and sub-subaltern to analyze this character.

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The Magic Island as the Product of Zombies: Textual Analysis

The Magic Island exemplifies Seabrook's enthusiasm for two things: his love for exploration and the remarkable experiences he gathered during his travels. One particularly memorable instance combined these two aspects of his life controversially. Seabrook established a connection with the Guere, local people who practiced cannibalism (Redfern and Steiger, 2015, p. 265).

Seabrook's novel not only delves into the concept of Haiti's zombies but also increases the understanding of Haitian mysteries. Despite expressing some support for Haiti, Seabrook perpetuated existing narratives. According to Gary D. Rhodes' work "White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film," (2001), *The Magic Island* became more famous than any other collection of Haitian or voodoo literature and also paved the way for other successful works such as Kenneth Webb's play *Zombies* (1932) (Rhodes, 2001, p.71).

Seabrook tells of his extensive walks and explorations with Louise and occasionally other locals, through which he gained insight into the mystical practices of voodoo priests and their immense control over various aspects, including life and death. The narrative then delves into Seabrook's interactions with Louise's family and the local community, unveiling the deep religious devotion and strong family connections prevalent in Haitian society. Seabrook becomes acquainted with rituals in which Haitians offer sacrifices to the serpent-god 'Damballa' through Voodoo priests, leading him to urge Louise to facilitate his presence during these ceremonies.

Chapter II is entitled "Dead Men Working in the Cane Fields." Seabrook in this chapter precisely introduces the notion of the 'walking dead' as a worker and soulless slave. Seabrook learns from a tax collector, a Haitian farmer, and a jungle peasant named Constant Polynic that the fire-hags who left their skins at home and set the cane fields blazing; of the vampire, a woman sometimes living, sometimes dead, who sucks the blood of children and who could be distinguished because her hair always turns to an ugly red; of the werewolf- *chauché*, in creole- a man or a woman who took the form of some animal, usually a dog and went killing lambs, young goats, sometimes babies. Seabrook also learned from Polynic that werewolves, vampires, and demons were certainly no novelty, but there was one creature that Seabrook had heard about in Haiti that sounded exclusively local, the zombie (Seabrook, 1929, p.93).

The zombie, they say, is a soulless human corpse, still dead, but taken from the grave and endowed by sorcery with a mechanical semblance of life-it is a dead body which is made to walk and act and move as if it were alive. People who have the power to do this go to a fresh grave, dig up the body before it has had time to rot, (Seabrook, 1929, p.93)

Gary Rhodes (2024) thinks that probably it was a way of suggesting that they are devoid of free will and personality that has been stolen from them with whatever chemical means used to make them zombies and when Seabrook says the word 'soulless', Rhodes hints at the idea that Seabrook does not speak specifically about 'god', and 'spirituality', as much as they had their minds, memory, and personality all gone. Rhodes (2024) adds that Seabrook has chosen a dramatic term 'soulless' to describe that rather than necessarily suggesting that they are without spiritual soul literally, Seabrook uses that term more figuratively. They are a body working very much like the way that many Marxist theorists would define

exploited laborers. That is what Seabrook means by 'Soulless', rather than speaking to religion when he says 'soul' and 'soulless' (Rhodes, 2024).

In Spivak's analysis, slaves shape a social level under the lowest group making a fifth level that is twice subservient. This last group is not only normally neglected but also oppressed by the ruling foreign (i.e., white) class as well as their own indigenous (i.e., native) people. Spivak's analysis of the colonial class system has links to the social system of the zombie genre as well. When the same order applied to the zombie genre, then the zombie shapes a sixth level called the "sub-subaltern" class under that of native living slaves. So, the zombies are dominated for two reasons: (1) the master has no authority towards a class that seems mechanical or they act in an unemotional way that needs little food, no wages, and no time for resting, and (2) the zombies are mindless workers with no free will to act and most importantly they are unable to arrange. Spivak's subaltern slaves could find a speech when they had people (audience) who could discuss with them, record their speeches and notions, and show them to the Western world. Nonetheless, the zombies have no such people and no such capability, in fact they have no speeches and notions or even voice with which to talk. They are really "other" because of their lack of humanity (Spivak, 1988, p. 271-313).

Seabrook depicts the zombies as obedient and mindless workers, which reflects a sense that he was against them in all his works including *The Magic Island* and other books, stories, and magazines. Rhodes thinks that Seabrook was part of a tradition in the Western world particularly in England and America, of what we would call 'othering.' Seabrook would be against them in the sense that he would see them as the 'other', and this is one of the things that Seabrook wanted to do in his books – to show the otherness of people that he believed his audience at the time would see as strange and exotic. This would be non unlike the way that Edward Said talks in his book *Orientalism* (1978).

At this very moment, in the moonlight, there are zombies working on this island, less than two hours' ride from my own habitation. [...] If you will ride with me tomorrow night, yes, I will show you dead men working in the cane fields. Close even to the cities, there are sometimes zombies. Perhaps you have already heard of those that were at Hasco..." "What about Hasco?" (Seabrook, 1929, p.94-95)

In terms of Hasco, the researcher would imagine Seabrook says this name with surprise because I believe it is a name that, in terms of etymology, would be either German or Dutch. And the name was known in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So I imagine Seabrook is surprised to hear a Western name connected with, as he writes, "sorcery." Many Americans would have imagined the name to possibly be Italian, given the vowel ("o") at the end of the name. I would repeat my view that Seabrook is surprised because he would have expected to hear an indigenous/traditional Haitian name and he is shocked to hear what would have sounded like a "Western European" as well as, by extension an "American" name.

The word is American-commercial-synthetic, like Nabisco, Delco, Socony. It stands for the Haitian-American Sugar Company - an immense factory plant, dominated by a huge chimney, with clanging machinery, steam whistles, freight cars. It is like a chunk of 8 Hoboken. It lies in the eastern suburbs of Port-au-Prince, and beyond it stretch the cane fields of the Cul-de-Sac. ... (Seabrook, 1929)

Following Spivak's criticism of the 'other', she says,

Clearly, if you are poor, black, and female you get it in three ways. If, however, this formulation is moved from the first-world context into the postcolonial (which is not identical to the third-world) context, the description "black" or "of color" loses persuasive significance. The necessary stratification of the colonial subject constitution in the first phase of capitalist imperialism makes "color" useless as an emancipatory signifier. ... And the subaltern slave will be as mute as ever. (1988)

What Spivake means, in relation to Seabrook, is that poor, black (ethnic minorities) and women represent three demographic categories that allow for exploitation: they are undervalued by many powerful people, and by powerful countries. While the same is true in some countries that have been colonized in the past, such as Haiti, he means that color is not always a factor. The British control of Ireland until Ireland's freedom (at least 26 counties) in the 1920s would be an example of "whites" controlling/colonizing other "whites." To me, in terms of the early zombies, we can see this in the film

White Zombie: its title has a double meaning. The female victim is turned into a zombie on her wedding day (one meaning of "white"), but she is also white ethnically. In the same film, the villain ("Murder Legendre") turns another white into a zombie.

The researcher would say that it connects to postcolonialism due the fact it is common for countries like America to put factories in other countries to use their natural resources and pay small salaries. This has been true for a long time, such as the British involvement in other countries to exploit natural resources like rubber. Another way to say it would be that superpower countries generally want to take natural resources from other countries, like oil or diamonds or etc. And so the company in the passage exemplifies that fact: America wanted sugar and rum. Haiti had sugar. An American company exported the sugar to the US for Americans to buy, and the company did so as cheaply as possible, taking advantage not only of the natural resource (sugar), but also of cheap labor.

Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), clarifies that "the national bourgeoisie and their specialized elites, of which Fanon speaks so ominously, in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms" (1993, p.222). This is exemplified in the character of Ti Joseph. This imperialist master hired by Hasco has been brought back to life again and this time in the form of an indigenous one who utilizes black magic and voodoo practices to go beyond the levels of control done by the French or the Americans. Even though Ti Joseph has no political authority, the Haitians fear him. He practices his official power upon a friend or an opponent alike by turning those Haitians around him into obedient, mindless, and soulless zombies (Bishop, 2008, p.49).

Rhodes thinks that Seabrook was part of a tradition of wanting to be like someone who is in a museum and wants to exhibit a painting. Rhodes believes that Seabrook wanted to exhibit works of the 'other' in the same way a gallery might exhibit a painting. Seabrook wanted to show white Americans and British are not like those strange people in their culture and attitudes and are very foreign to us and that comes through different religions such as Voodoo and skin color. Rhodes thinks that Seabrook does not necessarily hate zombies or the Haitian people but he sees them as very different and Seabrook would have seen himself as superior to the Haitians. In a lot of white cultures, the colonialists saw themselves as 'civilized', so there were different ways to look at the 'other' from hatred to trying to civilize them. Some people hated Haitians, African Americans, Caribbeans, and native Americans. So, they wanted to kill them and enslave them, and others wanted to help them but it was always a type of help that meant the white culture was better and had to help the 'other'. So, Seabrook does not hate the people that he wrote about but he saw his own culture as 'better' and more 'civilized' than their culture (Rhodes, 2024).

Spivak argues that "the world's poorest people have no voice in society. She claims that the local elite officials, educators, religious leaders, and Western scholars can never faithfully speak for them" (Riach, 2017). Here, the character of Ti Joseph is the bokor or sorcerer who controls those unhappy, poor, and victimized creatures by his evil magic means to work for him. The zombies are exploited, used, and abused at the same time. They are given hard tasks assigned in far fields of Haiti, they are victimized by the colonists power represented by Joseph. Here, Joseph is the villain who has an imperialist mind to colonize the mindless, devoid of personality, uncivilized, and impoverished. They are a body working in a manner similar to what many Marxist theorists would describe as exploited laborers:

As the zombies toiled day after day dumbly in the sun, Joseph sometimes beat them to make them move faster, but Croyance began to pity the poor dead creatures who should be at rest and pitted them in the evenings when she dashed out their flat, tasteless bouillie. (Seabrook, 1929, p.96)

In Spivak's words: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as slaves is even more deeply in shadow (1988). For Spivak, slaves are silenced by colonialism (broadly, a system of societal organization in which men hold most or all positions of power). In the incident above, the reader can notice the inhumane ways used by the imperialist master, Joseph. Joseph not only exploited those pitiful creatures, but he even used to beat them so harshly to make those mindless and harmless creatures move quickly and work hard under the sun. Ti Joseph, can be viewed as a metaphor for imperialist power. Even his western name Joseph indicates that possibility. In

some ways, Seabrook's *The Magic Island* and its zombies remind one of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which the Western characters find themselves on an island and mistreat Caliban.

The United States regarded its occupation of Haiti as a noble mission saving the Haitian people from destroying themselves with their savage voodoo ceremonies. To the American people, Haiti needed help. They could not govern themselves because they were uncivilized so they needed to be civilized by the Americans. From such perspective, the character of Joseph can be seen as the civilized one who can lead those savages and primitive workers. The zombies worked indefatigably, day by day with the heat of the sun down on them. The zombies eat only unseasoned food as tasting salt or meat, which was thought to make them understand themselves as dead figures. Nonetheless, Croyance sympathized with those zombie workers and made up her mind one day to take them to a street festival, where she brought them pistachio candies that had been cooked with salt. At that very moment, they are awakened to their awful reality (Matchard, 2015):

Croyance, in her bright kerchief, leading the nine dead men and women behind her, past the railroad crossing, where she murmured a prayer to Legba, past the great white-painted wooden Christ, who hung life-sized in the glaring sun, where she stopped to kneel and cross herself but the poor zombies prayed neither to Papa Legba nor to Brother Jesus, for they were dead bodies walking, without souls or minds. (Seabrook, 1929, p.97)

Spivak argues that "In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual systematically 'unlearns' slave privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with" the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized" (1988, p.295). According to Aime 'Ce'saire's ruminations in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950, p.41-42), "the system of imperialism leads to the perception of other humans as animals, what Ce'saire calls the 'boomerang effect of colonization', the colonization means 'thingification'. This argument can clearly be applied to the zombie figures as they are depicted as monsters or beasts of burden, stupid animals unable of any genuine human contact. In this sense, the zombie can be regarded as the imperialist dream, a slave worker that is really an object, not thinking, unambitious and harmless. Unlike Joseph, the character of Croyance, Joseph's wife has sympathized with those poor and desperate zombie workers. There is an aspect of humanity in her character for she pities them and treats them well. For Joseph, they are just a thing to be exploited and maltreated. Croyance is good by nature. For that reason she takes those miserable zombies to compensate them for the long hours of working in the fields and burning sun of Haiti. There is a sense of guilt in her character.

On Croyance and Ti Joseph, Rhodes thinks the issue might be gender, the fact that in Western stories (and while this is a story about indigenous people of Haiti, there is the Western influence of the French, etc. Seabrook targeted his book for western audiences), dating to tales like Pocahontas women are often more compassionate than men, and sometimes intervene with men in charge to change their minds, to make them more compassionate. Moreover, it is interesting that Ti Joseph bears the mark of colonialism and Western civilization due to his name, Joseph, which plays such an important role in Judeo-Christian history, and remains a common name in America to the present day (Rhodes, 2024).

By contrast, his wife has an indigenous name. So the reader might see another difference between them, in addition to gender. She seems to be less impacted by colonialism than he is. And his role is of course to generate money, so core to imperialism. Regarding Seabrook's belief in zombies, Rhodes believes strongly that he wants his publisher, his critics, and his readers to believe his stories. He does not wish to be viewed as someone who was "tricked" by the "uncivilized Other." He does not wish to look uneducated and unenlightened. By contrast, he knows many people in the readership have long viewed Africans and people of African descent as being superstitious and even possibly capable of dark magic, witchcraft, etc. In other words, some readers in the 1920s would have believed that voodoo was possible, etc. That Black Magic was real. And so he wants to "have it both ways," in other words he does not want to look like an uneducated person who believes in silly stories, but he also does not want to dismiss voodooism and zombies completely, because he wants his stories to be exciting to his readers, particularly those that are willing to believe "it might be true" (Rhodes, 2024).

Seabrook said, "No one dared to stop them, for they were corpses walking in the sunlight, and they and all the people knew that they were corpses. And they disappeared toward the mountain" (1929, p.99). Following Spivak's statement, "The

subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with a slave as a pious item. Representation has not withered away” (1988, p.307). Because of the maltreatment, those poor, mindless, exploited, demonized, and wretched zombie workers became single-file walking without a sense of liveliness and devoid of any personality. Their relatives, maybe a father or a mother already knew that those are the dead raised from their graves to toil for such an aspiring imperialist master like Joseph.

When Seabrook encounters the zombie workers for the first time, he describes them as such: “My first impression of the three supposed zombies, who continued dumbly at work, was that there was something about them unnatural and strange. They were plodding like brutes, like automatons. Without stooping down, I could not fully see their faces, which were bent expressionless over their work” (1929, p.101). Spivak said “Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of “slave” seems most problematic in this context” (1988, p.295). Here, the reader can notice the chilling description of those zombie workers, they are presented as emotionless, unthinking creatures like troops in front of the author to ignite his curiosity. Nonetheless, the idea of Seabrook as the zombie worker is a fascinating one, it is shown to the reader as a picture of fear for the author rather than the subject. Therefore, the zombie laborer falls under the colonial stare of Seabrook, and of the Americans, as a non-native idea that can be explored and colonized (Stewart, 2013, p.2).

Seabrook further said, “the eyes were the worst. It was not my imagination. They were in truth like the eyes of a dead man, not blind, but staring, unfocused, unseeing. The whole face, for that matter, was bad enough. It was vacant as if there was nothing behind it. It seemed not only expressionless but incapable of expression” (Seabrook, 1929, p.101). Here the researcher would use the famous Bible quotation (in the book of Matthew) “Your eyes are windows into your body” (Blomberg, 1992, p. 22-23). Enslaved people live in a horrible situation and it is so very, very terrible. Seabrook is suggesting the zombies are worse, because they are physically and mentally enslaved. It is as if, by looking into their eyes, he sees that they have not only lost their physical freedom, but also their soul. Spivak’s statement reinforced what Seabrook presented above, She said, “In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern slave, the postcolonial intellectual systematically “unlearns” slave privilege..... Thus, to question the unquestioned muting of the subaltern slave even within the anti-imperialist project of subaltern slaves” (1988, p.295). There is a certain tradition in many cultures and certainly, the white culture in the United States, including literature and poetry viewing the ‘eyes’ as a window into one’s personality reminiscent of the old English phrase saying “The eyes are the window to your soul” (Shakespeare, 1981, p. 117). Seabrook in part is seeing the lifelessness of these laborers, even though they are animated, they are living but unable to work for their own good, they seem to be vacant and empty in terms of personality. Seabrook sees in their eyes what appears to be a lack of life even though they are still breathing and working (Rhodes, 2024).

Conclusion

The researcher comes up with the following concluding remarks: In William Seabrook’s novel, *The Magic Island* (1929), the zombies are merely victims of a voodoo priest. Those creatures are under the mercy of an imperialist white master who zombified and exploited them, who used them as a means to suit his gains and purpose. In the novel, we can see the kind of hierarchy of the 1930s in the way that the white people saw the Haitians as a ‘savage’ exotic superstitious nation inferior to the civilized white European culture. The prevailing attitude of that time was that Haiti was a kind of backward place filled with superstition and witchcraft in the form of voodoo; voodoo is inseparable from witchcraft in the American mind.

Haitians are mainly they are identified for being uncivilized by what people claim to be their pagan/primitive religion, which they dismiss and discount and degrade by calling it “pagan” and which also they dismiss as “superstition” and “hocus-pocus” etc. Of course they say we are invading to civilize the uncivilized people, and perhaps they do send missionaries and religious figures, etc who undertake that mission. But their main reason is financial gain, etc. And then, for whatever reason from uprisings of the indigenous peoples to their own decision they no longer are making financial gains they leave

the country. Which tends to leave it a terrible place, economically and otherwise. But , they remain to a degree because of the changes they made in the country. So for example, many people in India still speak English, etc. Or voodoo evolved to involve some aspects of Catholicism, in terms of Haiti. Also, some people there speak some French, etc.

Postcolonialism still has some of these problems extremely exploited labor who are paid so little to harvest crops or manufacture goods for export by a "local" company. To say, America grow sugar cane and sell it to people around the world, and make the most money by underpaying/barely paying labor. This is true today, for example, with extremely underpaid and overworked laborers in China and elsewhere who make items specifically for export to America. So the Seabrook zombies are a metaphor for indigenous laborers who are overworked, underpaid, undervalued and disrespected, etc.

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