

A More Immediate Evil

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FAST EVIL. When we hear those words, we tend, I think, to immediately think of evil as quick. This is a bit of a false proposition. I would suggest that the problem is not so much in the temporal sphere but, rather, in the realm of the immediate—not in the popular meaning of that word, which we tend to use as a synonym for *instantaneous* but, rather, in its truest meaning: im-mediate, lacking mediation. Time is certainly a mediator, but probably no more so than space is. In a sense, evil is the lack of mediation, due to lack of time or shared actual space. Along these lines, evil is something completely amorphous and unidentifiable, as lacking in any physical aspects (such as speed) as it is desire or intent.

In the preface to *Being Singular Plural*, his study of subjectivity as both necessarily communal and necessarily singular at the same time (or, as he terms it, “being with”), Jean-Luc Nancy writes, “What I am talking about here is compassion, but not compassion as a pity that feels sorry for itself and feeds on itself. Com-compassion is the contagion, the contact of being with one another in this turmoil. Compassion is not altruism, nor is it identification; it is the disturbance of violent relatedness” (xiii). Nancy argues that there is nothing outside of the melee, no part of identity or meaning that exists outside of the moment of relation, that encounter

when we discover our lack of singularity at the same moment we confirm our individuality. We exist as beings, he argues, only in relation—in other words, only in our mediation with and by the world.

Which brings me to the single greatest figure of evil I can think of in existence today: fast zombies. Once upon a time, zombies lurched slowly through our worlds. In George Romero's *The Night of the Living Dead*, victims had moments to encounter their zombie attackers, to go through the experience of mediation, of *being with* them. Moreover, in *The Dawn of the Dead*, zombies roamed slowly through shopping malls, letting the viewer, as well as the potential victims, mediate their experiences with the undead, allowing the movie to offer a strong indictment of capitalism as the wasteland of the zombie. With the recent turn to the fast zombie, the viewer/victim does not have the same allowance for mediation with the zombie; instead, viewer-victims live in a world where mediation, which is different from time but necessarily reliant on time as a crucial mediating factor, has no moment in which to occur. (I understand that this statement is hyperbolic and technically incorrect—there is always *some* time—but the world increasingly downplays and lessens the amount of time and other mediators through which mediation can occur, thus constantly marching us closer to the ever-nearing, if never quite present, asymptotic horizon of pure immediacy.) Predatory capitalism—the metonymic equivalent of the fast zombie—desires just such a world of less and less time for mediation. The result is that we lose the *being with*, the very action of identity. We become zombies ourselves. More precisely, due to the accelerating nature of the contemporary world, we become *fast* zombies, and what we are befuddled by most of all are the brief moments of empty, slow, mediating time that reveal our lack of identity to us. We remain perfectly atomized elements of predatory capitalism, streaking zombies, although we are occasionally, secretly driven forward in search of something we encounter in increasingly rare moments: the time and actual space to enjoy not brains but minds—delicious, nutritious minds. But unlike Romero's zombies, we crave our own minds as much as we do others'; any mind will do so long as it forces us into a moment of mediation, a being with, an encounter that can reorient, and thus revitalize, our identity. The problem we must focus on, then, is not so much fast evil but, rather, the immediate evil.

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