more recent and popular zombie movies in America, *Zombieland*, coincidentally works incredibly well to demonstrate some of the nation's current problems. *Zombieland* represents the dysfunctional political landscape of America, with the main characters exemplifying different political trends and confirming that the term "zombieland" could be a metaphor for our political future.

Apocalyptic themes of different sorts have found their way to the political arena more and more in the lead-up to the Presidential Election of 2012. Republican Governor Rick Perry of Texas released a campaign ad early in 2012 (when he was attempting to capture the Republican nomination for president) which played heavily on American's infatuation with the apocalypse. During the ad, it was implied by dark music and images of abandoned buildings that America was in severe decline due to President Obama's actions in his first four years. All the ad needed was strategically placed guns or zombies and it could have been the first trailer for an action packed end-of-the-world movie. This type of ad is very effective since it draws the attention of the average citizen and can remain in their minds for long periods of time. On the other hand, it lacks any information relatable to the candidates and helps to fuel a significant problem with modern elections: people vote based on candidate image instead of making educated and informed decisions. This type of popularity-based advertising has become increasingly used to try and make politics appealing for the middle class. If politics are a film, and the politicians are the actors, then average Americans are just the spectators. And, as spectators, we want a show. Within hours of Governor Mitt Romney announcing Congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin as his running mate, the nation's top Google search was "Paul Ryan shirtless" instead of "Paul Ryan policies" (Huffington Post). Zombie films surprisingly differ very little from political ads (like the one Rick Perry put out) since both effectively play to the general public's cinematic imaginations.

The constantly looming "threat" of zombie invasion has been a much studied focal point for scholars, who have uncovered the political symbolism in this pop culture for the last seventy years. Starting in the early 1930s with the movie *White Zombie*, zombies burst onto the scene as creations of Haitian Vodou [voodoo] witch doctors who were able to revive the dead to do the bidding of their masters. Right from the get-go zombies dug their way deep into America's dark past when they were

seen as slaves created for the sole purpose of serving others; however, Haitian Vodou was only the beginning for the epidemic that zombies have become. Filmmakers have variously located the origins of zombies in genetic experiments gone wrong, biological weapons of terror, and raging disease; their causes increase as sophistication in technology advances. Many scholars, such as Sean Moreland and Kim Paffenroth, argue that zombies differ from other fictional supernatural beings in that they are an incredible blank canvas. They can take on the beliefs of the viewer as they are mindless beings whose actions are completely up to chance. One common belief held by many media analysts, such as Moreland, is that over time zombie films have evolved in complexity to match their audiences. On the other hand, the zombie genre remains very consistent throughout time because while the type of zombie in the films has evolved to be more brutish, the plots have remained nearly identical.

In the eyes of some academics the zombie film genre is still tied to its Haitian roots and draws incredible parallels to slavery. The first zombies seen in movies and novels were much different from the flesh-eating hordes we know and love today; in fact, they were creations of voodoo magic. The earliest zombies were located in Haiti or other Caribbean nations where a "…'master' used a local herb or voodoo magic to create 'slaves' for a particular purpose" (Vials, 43), an unpleasant reminder of the fact that Haiti's wealthiest citizens sought to "build an economy based around large-scale plantation agriculture" (Ahmad, 44). Even if the voodoo zombies are not a specific targeted race, they still fit the general definition of a slave labor force: a group of people doing forced labor against their will (being forced by magic).

Despite the "slave zombie from Haiti" era passing, the zombie has not been able to outrun its racial origins. In the immensely popular (selling 600,000 copies) pseudo-political zombie novel *World War Z* (2006) by Max Brooks, racial implications brought about a heated discussion. Brooks used the town of Cape Town, South Africa for the location of the first publicly reported zombie outbreak, which he coined "African Rabies." The global population of *World War Z* quickly adopted this term to describe the disease, causing some criticism of Brooks for using a racially fueled term. In the essay "Gray is the New Black" by Aalya Ahmed, the author interprets the term "African Rabies" as a direct reference to the "racism-tinged panics that accompanied the