REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES IN POPULAR CULTURE:
A CASE STUDY OF CHILDREN OF MEN, AVATAR
AND WARM BODIES

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing the Representation of Refugees in Popular Culture and three movies (Children of Men, Avatar and Warm Bodies) have been chosen as case studies. This representation is compared with the representation of refugees in mainstream news media within the context of the current European migration crisis. The mainstream news media comprises mainly of a literature review of newspapers in Europe and what kind of discourse they have conducted on the topic. The two research questions are: How are refugees represented in popular culture? and How these popular culture representations compare with the representation of refugees in the mainstream news media in the context of the current European migration crisis? Using visual and critical discourse analysis as research methods the findings from the movies aim at revealing where and how the representation of refugees in the two fields differ and come together. The theoretical framework used is Critical Race Theory as well as some theoretical reflections on the concept of ‘the other’.

The aim of this thesis is to find out whether there are any common points between the representations of refugees in popular culture and those in mainstream news media and whether representations in popular culture have been in any way influenced by representations in mainstream media.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of refugees has been one of the most painful and sensitive social issues to face Europe recently. The continent is witnessing its worst migration crisis since the Second World War with thousands of people being displaced from their home countries due to military conflicts, prosecutions or extreme poverty. Large amounts of desperate refugees entered the borders of the European Union, overwhelming the minds and hearts of European authorities, social services and mostly media. According to a report prepared for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2014 more than 200,000 refugees and migrants fled for safety across the Mediterranean Sea. Crammed into overcrowded and severely unreliable boats, thousands drowned. In early 2015 alone, about 1,500 people drowned, which led to a public outcry to increase rescue operations (Berry, et al., 2015). Together with tragedies and compassion, however, concerns arose in terms of security and confusion between who a refugee is, an asylum seeker or a migrant. Other questions, more emotional ones, appeared such as whether, we, in Europe, should be compassionate, cautious or suspicious or perceive the newcomers first as human beings and then as ‘the other’. Interesting interpretations could be made on how Europeans fantasize about other cultures and nationalities, while listening to the news, reading a newspaper or watching a movie with political messages. People usually tend to turn to the media or mass culture when lacking information about an occurrence they have not experienced before. That is why it is so important to pay attention and examine how the media in Europe portrays refugees as it can easily shape public opinion or influence tendencies of fears and confusion.

However, while researchers and academics are highly engaged with examining traditional media outlets such as newspapers, another aspect of mass media seems to be left in the dark when talking about representation of refugees – popular culture. This genre provides an abundance of materials such as movies that could be analyzed to find out how the West sees
refugees and what popular culture has to offer on the subject. Throughout this thesis, I would like to focus on two questions on which the entire research will be based:

1) How are refugees represented in popular culture? and,
2) How these popular culture representations compare with the representation of refugees in the mainstream news media in the context of the current European migration crisis?

Conducting a research on representation of refugees in popular culture holds several important points that make this research worthwhile. First of all, after my research, there appears to be a gap in the academic world when it comes to representation of refugees in popular culture, although there is a lot done on race, identity, aliens, science fiction, religion or environmentalism. However, refugees in particular seem to be somewhat neglected. Second, it is vital, in the context of the current European migration crisis, to thoroughly examine all kinds of media and how they ‘speak’ about refugees because what the public sees as images, characters, actions and words inevitably shapes further the idea we have about others. Moreover, popular culture may be able to provide a different and a more unusual point of view but this notion will be analyzed in-depth further in the paper. And last but not least, the chosen movies lack deep academic debate on how refugees are represented, even though they provide a lot of material for a discussion as such.

Simultaneously with this account, the thesis will attempt to challenge notions such as representation, race, power and what and who a refugee is. *Avatar*, for example, questions well who a refugee is and who an aggressor and how roles can easily switch. This will be further explained in the analysis later on. *Warm Bodies* provides the very stereotypical idea of a refugee as a zombie but this time zombies used to be actual human beings same as us. *The Children of Men* is, perhaps, the most obvious account on refugees but what is interesting to observe is that there are no aliens, zombies or other planets but everything happens here and now with very real human beings. These particular movies should be studied because they are very different in storyline and visual images but in the end they speak about the same topic – refugees.
In Chapter 2 an overview of the literature review will be provided as well as a description of the theoretical framework. The literature review will describe what and how representation of refugees has been analyzed in the mainstream news media – European newspapers and what tendencies and narratives are most common. The theoretical frame will connect the most suitable theory to the problem and how this phenomenon can be explained in theoretical terms. Following this, Chapter 3 will give an account of the methods and materials chosen for this research. The analysis of the movies applies visual and discourse analysis methods in academic research and the three blockbusters – Avatar, Warm Bodies and The Children of Men will serve as empirical material and whose findings will be analyzed in-depth in Chapter 4. Chapter 5: Discussion puts all points together and finishes with Conclusion.

The following study, however, does not aim at arguing whether refugees should be welcomed or rejected in Europe and does not provide any kind of judgement on the topic in terms of politics or social and institutional issues. This paper does not separate the term refugee based on their country of origin and does not refer to refugees as in only Muslim communities, for example but as ‘the other’ as a whole and their representation. Moreover, I do not attempt to argue in depth who a refugee is, a migrant or an asylum seeker and I use the term refugee as a collective of every character classified as ‘the other’ in the empirical material.

In terms of the empirical material used, this research does not examine language as in grammar structures or word formations and does not aim at using theories, rules and references from the field of Linguistics. Critical Discourse Analysis is used to focus on words only and does not examine terms such as modality, nominalisations, presuppositions or overlexicalisations. Also, I do not aim at discussing film theory, film history and traditions or any kind of methods used specifically to analyze movies. My sole research interest is how refugees, in the face of the movie characters, are represented in the selected movies and how this representation compares with mainstream news media, while applying the selected research methods. This comparison is interesting, useful and necessary because depiction of refugees in popular culture could provide interesting insights how the world of entertainment relates to the immigration problem and find out whether entertainment and mainstream news media have more in common than we think when it comes to this topic.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAME

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 The Representation of Refugees in The European Mainstream News Media Context

This paper is hardly the first research conducted on representation of refugees in the media. The difference, however, is that it focuses on popular culture rather than only mainstream news media. Academia lacks thorough analytics on representation of refugees in popular culture but is abundant with examination of how refugees are depicted in mainstream news media, namely, newspapers (ICAR 2012). This is a very good starting point on the way to answering the two research questions and see what comparisons can be made between newspapers (as representatives of mainstream news media), popular culture and the image of a refugee within the current European migration crisis. It would be interesting to see how these three points overlap, complete and differ from each other.

To begin with, van Dijk claims that immigration crisis brought about first and close encounters with members of substantial groups of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The presence of this population of ‘aliens’ was met with increasing feelings of uneasiness, growing ethnic prejudices and widespread discrimination in many contexts: in the neighborhood, in shops, on busses, at work, in welfare agencies, and, of course, in media (van Dijk, Teun, 1987: 200). Majority of people in these different contexts are white people who set the agenda of public discourse, especially in the media. Majority group members speak or write about minorities in daily conversations, in the news media, in books, lessons, TV-programs, films, parliamentary debates or courtrooms. However, the inspiration for these debates comes from the media. It appears that people often refer to media resources when expressing or defending ethnic opinion and specific topics of discussion regarding immigration originate in the media and not in everyday interactions (van Dijk 1987: 201). In terms of language nearly a third of all headlines feature negative words of different classes: words that denote conflict and disagreement (hate, fight, crisis), control (stop, curb, ban, censor) or words that carry violence (murder, kill, riot, shoot, burn, massacre) and words that are associated with legal issues (illegal, prison, jail,
police, arrest). Most of these concepts are used with association of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers or in general, migrants (van Dijk 1987: 217).

The topic of asylum seekers, refugees and media covers two potential areas of research: the analysis of the coverage of asylum seekers and refugees and how refugees and asylum seekers use the media (ICAR 2012: 1). The relationship between refugees and the media has always been a complicated one, branded by market interests, sensationalism and exaggeration. The appearance and rapid development of commercial media has strongly affected the way in which the media report happenings to the point that it affects their initial purpose. Contrary to the fact that media originally has informative and educational purpose, today we are witnessing commitment of media to serve entertainment purposes leading to the so called ‘infotainment’, which aims at the inclusion of entertaining content in an effort to enhance popularity with audiences and consumers (ICAR 2012: 1). Moreover, journalistic ideology is supposed to feature opinions that should be fair, true, balanced and non-partisan, focusing on facts instead of on emotions or personalizations because the sole purpose of the media is to report the facts as they see them and nothing else (van Dijk 1987: 205, Weishar, Mike 2014). In other words, the credibility, seriousness and objectivity of the representation of information could be severely undermined as a result. This is particularly interesting when reporting on social issues and asylum seekers and refugees can be inserted within the same framework. Their representation in the mainstream media can strongly affect the way refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are perceived by society as a whole. Moreover, very often articles may not make any distinction between the three types of people, which adds additional confusion and preconceptions. To illustrate briefly: a refugee is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted of reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion and seeks safety outside their national country. An asylum seeker is someone seeking protection and is waiting for the government to consider their case and a migrant is a person who seeks to reside elsewhere from their national country due to severe poverty or lack of economic opportunities (ICAR 2012: 2; Buchanan et al. 2003; Innes, Alexandria 2010: 457). This short clarification is important because it will be used later on during the analysis of the representation of refugees in the movies.

Since this paper is focused on finding about refugee representation within the European context, it is good to mention here which the main countries are that comprise this context and the reasons why I have chosen them for this analysis. Overall, the entire continent has been affected by the crisis but it seems some have suffered more than others. Italy is currently one of
the main gates for these massive flows of people from the sea (Jacomella, Gabriella 2010: 4). Germany and the United Kingdom are worth including in the context as countries that have diverse and long-standing history of migration and they have as well accepted large numbers of migrants through the years. (Jacomella 2010: 6). Sweden is another country, which has shown high willingness to take in large numbers of refugees at once (Berry 2015). Therefore, I have decided to focus mainly on Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden when going through the European context and media and comparing and contrasting with popular culture.

According to statistics, press articles and broadcast programs contain expressions such as ‘hundreds’ and ‘thousands’ of refugees which do not demonstrate a fair and balanced way to report about immigration and humanitarian issues nor do they make any reference to statistical data. That is because media nowadays lacks the attitude to report merely on facts and nothing else due to competition or financial interests (both explained throughout the paper). As it was revealed by the Ipsos Mori Issues Index research in 2011: “48% of British respondents believed that immigration negatively affects British culture” (ICAR 2012: 4). In addition to this, it was discovered that newspapers in Britain often present images of asylum seekers and refugees that contain language, photographs and graphics likely to raise feelings of fear and hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees among their readers. Also, the frequent reporting of criminality done by newcomers, the predominance of images of young men and lack of women and children further strengthens these feelings (ICAR 2012: 6).

The major issue with newspaper articles (not only in Britain but elsewhere) is that journalists working in newspapers have their own agenda and ways of reporting that take into account finance, market appeal and the ever-lasting pressure of being competitive and political influence (ICAR 2012: 7). This influence can be seen as a form of social power, that is, the control exercised by one group or organization over the actions and/or the minds of another group, thus limiting the freedom of action of the others or influencing their attitudes, knowledge or ideologies (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008: 6). In other words, power can be manifested through the prerogative of the press, seen collectively to decide on the amount of coverage to be given to particular incidents. Going from this idea, popular culture can also be seen as a power manifestator but it does so with other means, namely, movies. However, it could be no any less harmful as it often spreads stereotypes and violent images about ‘the other’ but this idea will be further revealed later on in this paper.
Together with power and influence newspapers face a complicated relationship with their readers as well as financial motivations. The relation between the press and its readers is bidirectional and dynamic. Individual newspapers have a vested financial interest in reporting on issues within their readers’ concern as well as reflecting their views and attitudes, as newspaper readers tend to read those newspapers that are generally in accord with their own perceptions and approaches. Therefore, the reciprocity of influence between readers and newspapers and more importantly the power of newspapers over the selection, extent, frequency, and nature of their reporting, make newspapers an excellent source of data for the examination of the construction of refugees and asylum seekers (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008: 7).

Another problem could be the fact that, nowadays, journalists do not necessarily hold on to the ideal norms of journalism such as objectivity or accuracy in reporting. This is a very important issue because it questions the main purpose of media (to report of facts only) and it is why I would like to elaborate further on it here. Newspaper campaigns, as now prevalent features of the media landscape, offer coverage that deviates from dominant norms of journalistic output. Instead of reporting impartially on situations, they package constructed issues and representations of public opinion into a recognizable campaign format, producing these with the firm intention to attract and lobby the attention of the powerful. At the center of their concern is the outsider, who is “perceived to impose a threat to the order, resources or population of local communities” (Matthews and Brown 2012: 2). This is a very good remark, given the fact that refugees and asylum seekers are usually represented as hostile and aggressive invaders that would disrupt communities’ culture and way of life.

Newspaper coverage of refugees in the media is not new. Immigrants moving through Europe and into the UK have been the subject of media attention over a long period of time, including reports from the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout a lengthy research similarities were observed across the coverage. It is argues that news stories reproduce particular frames, myths, opposition and negative language (Matthews and Brown 2012: 3). and they [refugees] are usually connected to people with criminal intentions, which draws a wider embedded presentation of the three categories different from the general UK population, a contrast that is represented in terms of prominent opposition such as ‘us’ vs ‘them’ in the newspaper coverage (Erjavek 2003).
British newspaper, for example, can be classified into several categories, which could lead to additional complications when covering refugees – dailies vs Sundays editions, national vs regionals, conservative vs liberal and broadsheet vs tabloid. This inevitably leads to differences in coverage and the way in which refugees are represented (Gabrielatos 2008: 6). Tabloid newspapers, for example, use puns, slogans, stereotypes, caricatures and exaggerated personalization as well as manipulate images and concoct attention – grabbing scenarios and fake documentary photoshoots to heighten sensation and provide reader entertainment (Matthews and Brown 2012: 7).

Despite the fact that the topic of refugees in the UK media coverage is nothing new, it sharply increased in the early 2000s (Moore 2012). Dominant news media narratives, reflected and reproduced the idea that migration represented a problem and in the tabloid press it was defined as a crisis issues that is facing Britain and the word ‘migrant’ was the most common one to refer to refugees and asylum seekers as a collective term (Berry et al. 2015), which slightly differs from the ways reported in Sweden, Italy, and Germany.

Sweden has always enjoyed a positive reputation as the model of tolerant and multicultural welfare state but in recent years analysts have argued that this has changed together with attitudes towards migration (Schierup and Ålund 2011). Sweden’s liberal multicultural state has been dominated by the tendencies of the market and has become more conditional and less generous (Berry et al. 2015). One reason for this tendency could be the 2008 financial crash and the pursuit of austerity policies, which made Swedes feel more insecure and made refugees and immigrants look like the scapegoats. In his article “Media and Economic Crisis of the EU: the ‘Culturalization’ of a Systemic Crisis and Bild-Zeitung’s Framing of Greece, Yiannis Mylonas states that inadequate political explanation for the economic crisis has allowed for racist explanations by far right groups to gain popularity, providing an anti-immigrant discourse (Mylonas 2012). However, Sweden continues having liberal approach towards migration, both towards migrants from EU accession countries and third country nationals and among the countries to take in the highest number of refugees for a short period of time (Berry et al. 2015: 18) similar to Germany.

The Swedish news media has provided a more balanced and not as aggressive discourse on immigration as the country has adopted strict policies regarding inclusion and multiculturalism. Therefore, the media supports toleration and reporting revolves mainly around statistics or
events in other countries and not so much emphasizing on branding refugees as ‘illegal’ or ‘dangerous’ (Tawat, Mahama 2012).

Immigration to Germany has a very long history. Post-war ethnic German repatriation, East to West migration and guest worker schemes in the 1950s and the 1960s involving nationals Italy, Greece, Spain, Morocco, Portugal, Turkey, Tunisia and Yugoslavia. The numbers of asylum seekers seeking refuge in Germany increased in the 1990s with the fall of the Soviet Union and the war in Yugoslavia. It is interesting, however, to point out that nationality and migration was not a big issue in the country and the press until the 2000s (Berry et.al 2015: 18). This could be explained with the 9/11 attacks when security issues over immigration arose leading to the Immigration Law of 2005 (Kohlmeier & Schimany 2005). Unlike the UK and Sweden, however, it has been noted that immigrants themselves are more likely to participate and have a voice in the public debate on migration, in policies contexts that are more inclusive and open to their integration (Berry et al. 2015: 19).

On the other hand, Gualtiero Zambonini, from the German Commission for Integration argues that the German media has helped reinforce the image of immigrants as ‘foreigners’ and ‘aliens’. By focusing primarily on the problems associated with migration and leaving out the positive aspects, media has contributed to the polarization of German society towards migration. This conditioned the public to think about it only in terms of problems being caused by the newcomers (Zambonini, Gualtiero 2009). The image of the immigrant as an alien and a foreigner dominates political debates as well as the media. By portraying the immigrant first as a problem, opinion leaders such as Der Spiegel and Bild Zeitung exaggerated this image to various degrees (Zambonini 2009: 3). Contrary to this, Collins and Apostolou argue that newspapers such as the left wing Tageszeitung, moderate newspapers Suddeutsche Zeitung and Zeit and arch-conservative newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung add to a relatively healthy debate and media landscape by trying to represent refugees in a less stereotypical, less discriminatory ways that move away from the image of the alien or the aggressor (Collins, Apostolou). Coming out of this, it is observed that the German media landscape attempts to provide a versatile image of the new arrivals but one cannot quite escape the impression that refugees are represented mostly in negative terms connected to criminality, problems and illegality.

Similar to Germany, Italy also shares a relatively long immigration history. Over the last few decades the country experienced large-scale immigration and has one of the largest foreign-
born populations in Europe. Immigration became an increasingly politicized issue from the early 1990s (Berry et al. 2015: 22). Since then Italy has a history of media instigated public hostility towards migrants. The newcomers arriving in Italy have been described as a ‘tidal wave of desperate people fleeing poverty and warfare at home trying to enter the elusive European El Dorado’ (Berry et al. 2015: 23). Elites have legitimated anti-migrant hostility and ethnic prejudice in a number of ways such as the use of threatening language and images that contain war and diseases, labelling immigrants as illegals, irregulars and clandestinos. This also reinforces a clear divide between citizens who belong in Italy legitimately and who do not. Together with elites, public discourse has not been much more positive. It tends to talk about migrants in terms of border control, illegal immigration, security threats and urgent need to control immigrant flows. Material fears, such as competition for jobs, welfare benefits and cultural identity, are also on the media agenda on immigration in Italy (Berry et al. 2015: 23). The Italian political elites and the media have played a crucial role in the spreading and legitimating of both overt and covert forms of xenophobia and racist discourse over time (Colombo, Monika 2013: 164). Politicians and journalists have commonly employed terms like ‘massive invasion’, and ‘plague’ to describe the phenomenon. The prevailing images used when talking about immigration have been that of a ‘threat’ or ‘an invading and besieging army’ and immigrants were identified as ‘clandestine’, ‘irregular’ or ‘illegal’ and ‘undocumented’. The economic role of the new potential workers has been left out while issues in terms of border control and judicial treatment have been given a priority in the Italian media. Two main themes have been afforded the greatest prominence in the Italian public debate on immigration: the regulation of immigration flows and illegal immigration (Colombo 2013: 165).

To conclude, mainstream news media in Europe (newspapers) demonstrate a complicated relationship on several levels and with a number of players: first, coverage of refugees and how refugees use the media. This is a coverage that has been characterized by exaggeration and sensationalism blurring the line between entertainment and information purposes. Second, journalists working in these newspapers have to abide to issues such as finances, market appeal and competition, political influence and also take their readers’ interests into consideration all the time. Third, nowadays fundamentals values of journalism such as objectivity or accuracy have been shaken due to reasons explained above. This often leads to representing information in a wrong or twisted way. Fourth, in general, all four European countries chosen for this paper have shown negative and hostile representation of refugees using words such as ‘illegal’,
‘undocumented’, ‘clandestine’ or connecting them to words that carry conflict, aggression and disagreement (fight, crisis, prison, kill, police). The only exception is Sweden where more balanced representation has been observed.

The images below aim at showing how refugees are represented visually at a leading newspaper from the UK, Germany, Sweden and Italy (The Guardian, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Dagens Nyheter and La Republica, respectively). The selection criterion is described at Methodology.
2.1.2 Representation of Refugees in Popular Culture

- Why should we study Popular Culture and how/are refugees represented?

The next part of this literature review is going to focus on what has been done on the representation of refugees in popular culture and why it is worth studying. Since this thesis aims at researching exactly this and find out how it compares to representation of refugees in the mainstream news media in the context of the current European migration crisis, this overview is necessary to provide a clearer image of the issue.

According to Terence Wright and his research on refugees and visual images, media representations predominate how we see refugees. That is why it is very important to do an in-depth analysis of how refugees are represented in various forms of media such as newspapers or movies. There is a marked tendency to categorize them as human beings but the selective nature of the visual image objectifies them, missing to reflect on their historical, cultural and political circumstances. Thus, the media representation of refugees has received little direct attention. Within the area of refugee studies, media related issues have been discussed but no comprehensive study has yet been undertaken (Wright, Terence 2000: 24). Terence also emphasizes on the fact that the media representation may result in objectifying the refugee in the role of the illegal alien, while the feature film image of the refugee as a protagonist presents a role that is immediately recognizable to the public and that has a potential of gaining their sympathy (Wright 2000: 25).

Back to popular culture, some researchers argue that it [popular culture] constitutes an important object of analysis because media and communication technologies serve as a central catalyst for its success. In Western societies in particular, it increasingly affects people as modern mass media embed it into people’s lives and routines (Buhmann, Hellmueller & Bosshart 2015: 4). In other words, one reason why popular culture should be studied is that it is intensively present in our everyday lives and this could strongly affect how we see different issues, in this case, refugees. In addition, culture is a complex of spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (Buhmann, Hellmueller & Bosshart 2015: 5).

Popular Culture is also a commodity. A commodity that people buy and consume and get affected by. It is industrialized and produced by a profit - motivated industry that follows its
own economic interests. But on the other hand, it is the people’s interests and not those of the industry - as is evidence by the number of films and records that have been produced. In order for something to be made into popular culture it must serve people’s interests. Popular culture is the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system (Fiske, John 1989). This is a particularly good point as movies are commodities that are produced in an industrialized society and generate meanings and pleasures that are in the interest of the people. Thus it could be said that refugees are portrayed on negative terms only as this is what the industrialized Western society is interested to see and yet another reason to explore further the representation of refugees in popular culture.

Going back on the subject of cinema itself, researchers argue that film brings both strengths and limitations to the ways it shows complex issues (Lewis, Rodgers, Woolock 2013: 3). Moreover, it contains a visual element, which contributes a lot to the overall experience. The popularity of cinema as a form of entertainment is often assumed to derive from its specifically visual form (unlike newspapers, which rely mostly on text) or from the power of the moving image to touch and influence viewers’ minds in a manner unmatched by either the spoken or the written word (Lewis, Rodgers, Woolock 2013: 8). In addition, movies often derive from knowledge and information from the real world and the representational power also lies within the extent to which audiences have a prior knowledge of the context and events being depicted (Lewis, Rodgers, Woolock 2013: 8). This is another reason why popular culture and cinema in particular should be analyzed: because the hold the power of image (which is stronger than text) and have the ability to produce and re-produce knowledge which later goes on to the masses. And this is very influential as it can shape public opinions and attitudes easily and in a short time.

To sum up, media predominates how we see refugees and that is why it is very important to study how they are represented in various forms of media such as cinema. Media representation of refugees (in popular culture) has received little direct attention and no comprehensive study has yet been undertaken. Moreover, cinema might provide a different point of view of how we see ‘others’ and challenges deeply rooted negative stereotypes. Also, another reason why this topic should be studied in popular culture is that it is ever present in our everyday lives and more importantly serves as entertainment. It reflects cultural, spiritual and emotional issues more than the mainstream media and is also a commodity that people buy and consume.
2.2 Theoretical Frame

Critical Race Theory and ‘The Other’

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was derived during the mid - 1970s as a response to the failure of Critical Legal Studies to adequately address the effects of race and racism in the US (Decuir & Dixson 2004: 26). CRT developed originally from the work of legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado. CRT focuses directly on the effects of race and racism, while addressing the hegemonic character of white supremacy. It follows several criteria in doing so: counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence and the critique of liberalism (Decuir & Dixson 2004). However, this research is mainly interested in counter-storytelling (as the movies appear as stories that actually speak against racism) and the permanence of racism and its reproduction through repetition in language and images, which leads to firm establishment of racism and its acceptance as something given.

An essential tenet of this theory is counter-storytelling. It is defined as a method for telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially those held by the majority of people (Decuir & Dixson 2004: 27). In other words counter-storytelling tries to cast a shadow over already established myths such as racism and provide stories that speak the opposite and challenge concepts and prejudices connected to racism. It is a means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes (Decuir & Dixson 2004: 27). For example, the findings from the literature review confirm all racial stereotypes regarding refuges as mainstream news media applied the typical representation of ‘the other’ as threatening, unknown, dangerous and primitive, whereas the movies actually take the side of ‘the other’ and the protagonists are represented in a way that aims at earning the sympathies of the audience (counter-storytelling).

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic provide the following account of what CRT is: ‘the critical race theory movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power’ (Delgado & Stefancic 2006). Critical race theorists believe that racism is ordinary, not aberrational – the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color. Also, most scientists agree that our system of white-over-color serves important purposes, both physical and material (Delgado & Stefancic 2006: 3). In other words, racism is so normalized and seen as so natural that it is difficult to address it or to challenge it, or to imagine anything different that ‘white-over-color’. Race becomes common sense – a way of comprehending, explaining and acting
Another theme of critical race theory holds the assumption that race and races are products of social thought and relations. They are objective, inherent or fixed and do not reflect any biological reality. Races are categories that societies invent, manipulate or dismiss when convenient. The physical traits people share as skin color, physique and hair texture have little or nothing to do with one’s level of intelligence, personality or behavior (Delgado & Stefancic 2006: 3). For example, as revealed in the literature review, journalists speak mainly about criminal activities that have involved refugees, the stories are highly not personalized and we rarely or never see any positive accounts such as some of these refugees might be educated professionals.

Another important point of CRT is that no person in existence has a single, easily stated unitary identity. An African-American might be gay or lesbian. A white feminist might be a Jewish single mother. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities and loyalties (Delgado & Stefancic 2006: 4). In our case, a refugee coming to Europe might be a professor, a farmer, a single parent, gay or lesbian, a professional with a brilliant career, an illiterate and poor person from a minority group or a terrorist. Yet again, the mainstream news media do not make any distinctions and puts them all into the same pile – untrustworthy aliens.

The negative stereotypes about race and representation are socially constructed. They do not exist inherently but are a result of societies’ construction of skin color, facial features and intelligence capacities. Seeing the world through racism has become common sense, simply the way the social system functions. In the meantime, stereotypes and bad representations keep being repeated over and over again because ‘this is how it is’. The most common way in which these prejudices are repeated is through images and language. That is why I have chosen to conduct visual analysis and critical discourse analysis to find out how stereotypes are being recreated in the movies visually and how words used by the characters help further the spread of negativity towards the representation of ‘the other’.

The concept of ‘the other’ has long been a subject of interest in academia and in the field of science fiction in particular. It is associated with the different one, exotic and unfamiliar, usually depicted by an alien. Recently, Western Europeans have been having many close encounters with representatives of ‘the other’ because of the ongoing immigration crisis involving people coming from poorer countries (Zimmerman, Michael 2002: 4). On the one hand, people look for meeting people who carry obvious differences in clothing, skin color, cultural practices, and cuisine as in touristic experiences. On the other hand, when these
different people come to the Western doors uninvited they do not seem exotic any longer but aggressive and threatening to engulf the local culture. As a result, politicians often use the foreigners as scapegoats to gain power, justify violence or to blame them for a country’s economic problems (Zimmerman 2002: 4). Even people who are not directly affected by the newcomers may experience negative shift of opinion towards them due to exaggerated media messages or reproduction of racist perceptions through language.

The existing literature on ‘the other’, however, focuses mainly of science fiction (SF) rather than popular culture as a whole. Researchers claim that ‘SF by focusing its representations of the world not trough reproduction of that world but instead by figuratively symbolizing it, is able to foreground precisely the ideological construction of the ‘Otherness’ (Stephan, Matthias 2003). This occurs through consideration of identity, specifically how we define ourselves apart from, in relation to and against others. Science Fiction texts allow us to consider transcultural encounters within our own cultural contexts and biases (Matthias 2003: 1).

SF scholars argue that science fiction writers embody their countries and cultures in their texts and the sites where characters meet are the places where cultural exchange happens. Sites of meetings are the moments where characters come together in their otherness stands to blend in, especially if they are united by a common threat or a common interest. The site is important to explore because it could serve as a mediator between different ‘other’ actors and could either unite them or further separate them. In movies this is further emphasized on with the help of visual effects and visual meanings or composition (Matthias 2003).

The idea of otherness is central to sociological analysis of how majority and minority identities are constructed (Zevallos, Zuleyka 2011). This is because the representation of different groups within any given society is controlled by groups that have greater political power. The focus is not on individual personalities and characteristics but on the social identities members of a society have. Ideas of similarity and differences are central to the way in which we achieve a sense of identity and social belonging (Zevallos 2011). It could be through personal interests, looks, clothes, personal relations or language. These characteristics also define if someone is accepted as part of ‘us’ or part of ‘the other’ and therefore their inclusion into a society may prove difficult at first and they might be objects of aggression, hostility or ridicule.

I would like to conclude this chapter by describing the connection between CRT, the aim, the research questions and the empirical data.
The main argument of CRT is that it focuses on the recreation of racism and white supremacy over anything else of different color. CRT theorists believe that racism is normal, everyday experience. Therefore, this could be connected to the two research questions since they aim at comparing representation. This representation could be seen as a recreation of racism and white hegemony and the visual analysis of the movies demonstrates it. For example, it is very clear that ‘the other’ Na’vi bear different than white human color, which is typical when the West imagines members of other cultures. This is one example how, through colors and visuals racism gets recreated once again as CRT theorists claim. CDA (the second research method) is applied to find out whether this recreation is done also verbally. In addition, CRT has a vital point that no person in existence has a single, easily stated unitary identity. In Warm Bodies, for example, zombies start turning into humans eventually and their thoughts have nothing to do with monsters. In Avatar Jake Sully turns into an alien after he no longer associates himself with humans. In Children of Men Kee is not only an illegal fugitive – she is also pregnant, young and may be key to humanity’s salvation. So, here we see good examples of the argument that no one has only one identity and CRT theorists believe.
Chapter 3

METHODS AND MATERIALS

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Visual Analysis

Since this research focuses on movies it is logical that one of the research methods to use is visual analysis. Films are a highly visual form of popular culture that relies mainly on moving images to produce the desired effect. Images are powerful and have the ability to influence audiences even before the story has fully revealed itself. Therefore, it is important to analyze images from the three blockbusters in order to better understand what and how they speak on the subject of refugees’ representation in popular culture and how it relates to mainstream news media. I have decided to select particular screenshots from the movies to show how the key concepts in this paper (‘the other’, race, identity) are depicted visually.

The use of visual research method has become increasingly widespread throughout the social sciences. The rapid development of information technology, facilitating the creation and editing of digitalized data means that new methodological approaches are being developed. The rapid development of information technology is paralleled by a tremendous increase in the use of visual forms of communication. At the same time society’s use, production and transmission of visual tools of communication have also grown (Knoblauch, Hubert et al. 2008: 1). Visual data is usually connected to qualitative approach (as is the research approach of this paper) in analysis and addresses the culture meaning of visual data and relates to the ways in which actors (spectators) themselves interpret visual data (Knoblauch, et al. 2008: 2). This is another reason why this method of analysis is useful in this research: because audiences are completely free to interpret the moving images in whatever way they want. However, this may lead to further stereotypification of refugees and ‘the other’.

Gilian Rose provides a very good account of why research of images matters in her book Visual Methodologies. She explores the importance of visuals to the contemporary Western society and offers a broad analytical framework for understanding how images have social effects (Rose, Gilian 2007: 1). Many writers addressing this issue argue that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Europe. We are surrounded by different kinds of visual technologies: photography, television, film, video, newspaper pictures, and paintings. This entire variety of images offers different perspectives of the world and how they
transmit different ideas through images. However, these pictures are never transparent or meaningless windows to the world. On the contrary, they interpret the world and provide a unique point of view to social issues (Rose 2007: 2). Many claim that this way of viewing the world has become predominant and Westerners nowadays interact with it mainly through what they see. This phenomenon is also a result of the shift from pre-modernity to modernity. It is often suggested that in premodern times visual images were not that important to society, partly because there were so few in circulation. This began to change with the onset of modernity and it has been argued that in the Western society looking, seeing and knowing have become highly intertwined (Rose 2007: 3).

One of the most interesting moments in analyzing visuals is the fact that images are not merely pictures but something which reflects social differences. It is also been argued that images further contribute to the construction of social categories (Rose 2007: 7). This is particularly well noticeable in Avatar, where the sharp contrast between the indigenous people and the white Americans further constructs the idea ‘us’ vs. ‘them’. This, however, will be explained in more detail in the analysis of the movie. Looking carefully at images entails how they offer very particular visions of social categories such as class, gender, race, nationality and sexuality.

However, interpreting an image is not a chaotic and scattered process as it might seem at first. There are several steps that should be taken into consideration when analyzing a picture. Interpretations of visual images broadly concur that there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site of production, the site of the image itself and the site where the image is seen by the audiences (Rose 2007: 13). In addition, these different aspects are divided into three categories called modalities: technological, compositional and social. The technological is any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision. The compositional refers to the specific material qualities of an image. Finally, the social is the range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround the image and through which it is seen and used (Rose 2007: 13). The social part is what is in the interest of this paper and through analyzing the screenshots from the movies I am going to reflect on what kind of social phenomenon are being displayed and what they say about the representation of refugees in popular culture.
3.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

As already shown in the literature review, part of this paper deals with analysis of words and the language used when it comes to representation of refugees in the mainstream news media context and comparison with the language used in the movies. In this case, there is no better method to use than Critical Discourse Analysis. Put it shortly, this method is used when analyzing the connection between text and social constructions, in scientific research, such as race, gender or power.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis (including language) and other elements of social practices. Its particular concern is with the radical changes that are taking place in contemporary social life such as dynamics between the relations of different social groups. Semiosis figures three ways of social practices. First, it figures as a part of the social activity within a practice. More importantly to my research, semiosis figures in representations. Social actors within any practice produce representations of other practices as well as representation of their own practice, in the course of their activity within the practice. At the same time different social actors will represent the practices differently, according to how they are positioned within it (Fairclough, Norman 2001: 123). In other words, the practice is the reality in which actors operate and their actions or language varies depending on their personal role within this reality. As already observed in the literature review newspaper journalists refer to the refugees mainly as a threat, undocumented, illegal, clandestine. On the other hand, refugees would probably describe themselves as people looking for security or shelter (something which is not highly represented in the news media). In this case, we see different actors acting differently within their social realities and using different language or they provide different representations. Representation is a process of social construction of practice including self-construction – representations enter and shape social processes and practices. More precisely, people who differ in social class, in gender, in nationality, in ethic or cultural membership and in life experience produce different performances of a particular position (Fairclough 2001: 123). This final statement concludes very accurately how news journalists and refugees might differ greatly when representing migrants.

Scientists of CDA also point out that social practices networked in a particular way constitute a social order – for example, the currently emergent neo-liberal global order of the new capitalism. One aspect of this ordering is dominance: some ways of making meaning are
dominant or mainstream in a particular order of discourse (Fairclough 2001: 124). In this case, if the news media examined functions within the West then journalists would represent the refugees in a way which is in the interest of dominant discourse they operate in.

The problem with immigration is a social issue that faces European society today. Social problems are inextricably linked to texts. Our actions are frequently accompanied by language and much of what we say is accompanied by action. Critical Discourse Analysis is a program of social analysis that critically analyses discourse – that is to say language in use – as a means of addressing problems of social change. CDA is founded in the idea that the analysis of discourse opens a window of social problems because social problems are largely constituted in discourse (Fairclough 2001: 140). In other words, if refugees appear as social problem in Europe, their arrival here is unavoidably accompanied by discourse in newspaper, television, Internet and popular culture. Thus, as stated above the social problem and discourse become one and allow for analysis of both.

The whole point of CDA is to highlight how language, in its everyday as well as professional use, enables us to understand issues of social concern such as immigration. More specifically, to examine how the ways in which we communicate are constrained by the structures and forces of those social institutions within which we live and function. Society is not a mosaic of individual existences but a dynamic formation of relationships and practices constituted in large measure by struggle for power. There are institutions whose conventions are ideologically shaped by social relationships and realized through discourses (Fairclough 1989).

CDA is also about the examination of unequal relations of power through language use (Fairclough 1989). It also attempts to correct the widespread underestimation of the significance of language used in the production, maintenance and change of social relations of power. This will be very well demonstrated when analysis what kind of words in the dialogues of the movies later on and what part language plays in the establishment of the social relations of power. Simultaneously, language use shapes social identities, social relations and the system of knowledge and beliefs people have about a certain social problem (Fairclough 1993). This is particularly important when examining the representation of refugees in the media because the language used could be vital for the shaping of refugee identities.
3.1.3 Selection Criteria and Method Application

For the visual analysis I have chosen a number of screenshots taken from the movies themselves (using PrntScr + Ctrl V) and their selection was based on the following criteria:

1) Clear visualization of human beings vs aliens, zombies or other human beings;
2) Depiction of characters in their natural environments as opposed to each other (nature vs. machines in Avatar, a city inhabited by human beings vs. an abandoned airport inhabited by zombies in Warm Bodies, people in the street vs refugees in cages in Children of Men);
3) Close images of normal people vs. ‘the other’;
4) Clear depiction of differences in the appearance, clothing, skin color of human beings and aliens/zombies/refugees;
5) Visualization/satirizing of mainstream news media (if existing) as in Children of Men;
6) Symbols used as a metaphor of the separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (such as The Wall in Warm Bodies);
7) Not more than 10 screenshots per movie as the analysis would otherwise exceed the scope of this paper;
8) Clarity in colors and image perception (as much as the movies scenes and quality would allow) in order for the reader to see the images as clearly and easily as possible.

As for the images chosen from the newspapers:

1) Leading newspaper from each country with circulation not any less than 200,000 copies/month;
2) As diverse in political stances as possible;
3) I was looking for one image of each newspaper that would show refugees either in comparison to Europeans or in large numbers;
4) The image did not have to be from the home country of the newspaper.

This criteria was applied when selecting the screenshots to demonstrate how the characters representing refugees are depicted and what separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ in terms of appearances, places to live, symbols of separation. As a result 4 images in total were selected from Avatar, 7 from Warm Bodies and 5 from Children of Men (important to note that 3 of them coincide with CDA).
The material chosen for Critical Discourse Analysis was chosen after the following criteria and it was directly re-written from the movies themselves after listening only. The exact times when the dialogues/monologues start have been included:

1) Not more than two sets of dialogues/monologues per movie due to the length limitations of this paper;
2) Dialogues/monologues should not exceed 200 words (as that would be too long for this thesis) and not less than 30 words (as that would be too short and would not provide eligible results to analyze);
3) Dialogues/monologues ideally would represent words used to describe ‘the other’ and how ‘the other’ thinks and feels against ‘us’, the human beings;
4) Ideally demonstrate if mainstream news media is satirized and/or visualized;
5) Provide material how these dialogues/monologues compare to the language used in newspapers in the literature review.

As a result of this criteria two dialogues have been selected from Avatar (100 and 187 words); one monologue and one dialogue from Warm Bodies (97 and 37 words, respectively) and an opening line from a news bulletin in Children of Men (30 words) and three images that actually visualize mainstream media. However, Children of Men is abundant with words and expressions showing how refugees are treated verbally that go on throughout the entire movie so what I have chosen is a very small part from the whole verbal material.

3.2 Materials

Since this thesis analyses the representation of refugees in popular culture, I have decided to use three blockbuster movies Avatar, Warm Bodies and Children of Men as the empirical material for this paper and also as examples from popular culture. Movies are good representatives of popular culture because they provide different viewpoints on refugees and are open for interpretation. I was looking for movies that would cover the following criteria:

1) English speaking, filmed in the West (Avatar - US and UK, Warm Bodies – US and Canada, Children of Men – US and UK);
2) Have made no less than $30 million in gross income (Avatar - $760,505,847; Warm Bodies- $66,359,959; Children of Men - $35,286,428);
3) Contain people, aliens and zombies as in attempt to show as diverse representation of characters as possible,

4) Have received no less than 6 points of users’ ratings in IMDB;

5) Have differences in genres (Avatar – Action, Adventure, Fantasy; Warm Bodies - Comedy, Horror, Romance; Children of Men – Drama, Sci-Fi, Thriller(IMDB)) and

6) Are not older than the year 2000 and have a minimum of 2 years difference from when they were each filmed and not more than 6 years (Avatar – 2009; Warm Bodies – 2013; Children of Men – 2006).

3.2.1 Background

In order for this thesis to make full sense, a brief background of the movies’ plots will be provided. It will clarify further why these three films have been chosen in particular; describe briefly the plot and main characters.

*Children of Men*

The year is 2027 and the movie starts with a collage of London’s protests in 2003 against the war in Iraq. Among images of global conflict and unrest is our main character Theo (Clive Owen), his partner Julian (Julianne Moore) and their baby who did not survive, Dillon. After the death of their baby Julian and Theo broke up and did not see each other for twenty years. The film’s main story is that women have become infertile for unknown to science reasons and humanity has not been able to have babies in the last eighteen years. The government is totalitarian and immigrants are dumped into refugee camps. In this dystopic world, Theo gets involved in a scheme to protect and safely escort to the sea a young illegal African immigrant woman Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitely) who is somehow pregnant. By being escorted to the sea, she hopes to get on board a ship called *Tomorrow* that will take her to a safe organization called the *Human Project* and whose members try to create new and a more peaceful society. In the end, Theo escorts Kee to the ship successfully and Kee tells him she is going to name her baby Dillon.

Alfonso Cuaron’s *Children of Men* is not a movie solely about illegal immigration. It touches upon topics such as the vulnerability and destruction of the nuclear family, white – black
relations, global conflicts, wars and end of white masculinity and beginning of female salvation of the world (Kee’s baby is a girl and the father is unknown (Chaudhari, Zahid 2009: 74-75).

*Avatar*

Planet Earth is dying from pollution, destroyed nature and full exhaustion of natural resources. The human species are desperate and turn to outer space in search for survival. A special mission of army and scientific personnel works on the Planet of Pandora trying to establish connection with its native population - Na’vi - in an attempt to gain their trust and in the end obtain a precious and extremely expensive natural resource that holds the key to humans’ survival – *unobtainium*. In order to be more trustworthy, people have developed a special high technology that allows them to ‘enter’ into a Na’vi’s body, the so called Avatar. In this way, they hope to earn easier the trust of the blue population of Pandora. Jake Sully Sam Worthington), a paraplegic war veteran, takes the place of his dead brother and obtains his Avatar. In a mission to infiltrate with the Na’vi population, Jake Sully eventually gains their trust, learns skills and falls in love with the chief’s daughter Neitiri (Zoe Saldana). However, the greedy and ruthless human beings (in the face of powerful white Americans) are unstoppable in their desire for *unobtainium* and are ready to do anything to get it including kill. Towards the end Jake Sully turns against his fellow humans and helps the Na’vi, instead, becoming eventually one of them (IMDb, 2009).

*Avatar* is a cinematic product that touches upon a variety of socially painful issues – environmentalism, climate change, technology, colonialism, white supremacy, stereotypes and most importantly refugees. In fact, it provides an opportunity to analyze the representation of the refugee problem in an interesting way – when refugees are actually humans and they are aggressors, ready to take over.

*Warm Bodies*

In *Warm Bodies* our world is divided in two – human beings co-exist together with zombies – other former human beings who were unfortunate to get infected by a virus that turned them into uncommunicative, brain eating creatures. R (Nicholas Hoult), the main zombie character, captures a female human named Julie (Terese Palmer) during an attack but eventually starts to fall in love with her. As the story reveals, R slowly begins to heal, getting his heart beat back and gradually re-gaining his human features. In the end, he saves the life of his loved one and
zombies start re-gaining the trust of humans when they also see that good treatment, positive contact and care are the key to curing their misfortunate former human fellows (IMDb 2013).

*Warm Bodies* is a good example of the typical representation of a refugee in popular culture as a zombie. Moreover, unlike in *Avatar*, the ‘other’ is same as us or at least it used to be. In addition, they live within the same space and are not particularly interested in taking over or invading territories.
Chapter 4

ANALYSIS

4.1 Children of Men

*Children of Men* is the most obvious out of the three movies that it narrates about refugees. Therefore, I have decided to analyze it first. Unlike *Avatar* and *Warm Bodies*, it does not contain aliens, other planets, zombies or whatever unnatural occurrences that exist in science fiction. To the contrary, it is set in Britain and the plot tells about real people with real problems.

This movie provides the easiest and most abundant material for visual and discourse analysis simply because the images and messages are right there – obvious and clearly written and spoken, without any metaphors or hidden meanings. While in *Avatar* and *Warm Bodies* one is free to interpret and to use their imagination about how social messages are to be read, *Children of Men* discusses the issue of immigration very straightforwardly and there is not much left for the spectator to analyze. However, this is exactly the reason why I have chosen *Children of Men* as the first movie for this analysis. I want to explore and make a comparison between three movies that are completely different from each other in its effects and refugee representation but at the same time talk about the same topic. In addition, I analyze how representation in the movies (as popular culture) compares with the representation of refugees in mainstream news media.

In a sense *Children of Men* is the easiest to analyze but at the same time the most difficult because the entire movie abounds with images and words that can be used for analysis and therefore selection was rather challenging.

4.1.1 Visual Analysis

For the visual analysis of this movie I have chosen five images that provide the main vibe of the entire atmosphere in the film as well as how refugees are represented. Figure 5 and 6 very clearly show how refugees are treated in this film – held in cages. They are unwanted and guarded by an armed soldier. What is interesting to point out here is that the refugees are other Europeans trying to get into Britain. Ironically, there is an old lady in one of these cages who is shown speaking in German (as connotation to Nazism and Jews during WWII). So, in this case, the refugees are not only ordinary human beings and white but they are also Europeans who
supposedly share the same values and lifestyle as British people. And yet, they are perceived as a threat coming from the outside, endangering social order and peaceful life in London and Britain. The cage gives a connotation with animals that need to be restricted in order not to get aggressive or somewhat dangerous.

It is easily observable that the whole treatment they receive is extremely hostile, suspicious and their freedom of movement is literally restricted. The colors are mainly grey, black, dark green and brown – shades usually associated with pessimism and evil.

**4.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

*Children of Men* abounds with words, expressions and dialogues related to immigration and how refugees are represented. Due to the large number of words it was very difficult to select particular dialogues to analyze. However, Figures 7, 8 and 9 illustrate quite well the moods in the movie towards refugees in terms of language. We see words such as ‘collapsed’, ‘soldiers’, ‘massive migration’, ‘famine’, ‘illegal’. All of them carry strong negativism and hostility and are immediately associated with aggression. This comes very close to the literature review about how refugees are represented in the mainstream news media. In addition, Figures 7 and 8 actually appear as part of news reportage on TV.
The movie opens up with news bulletin on TV but without actual picture and the viewer can only hear what is being said by the reporter, which is the following:

“The Muslim community demands an end to the occupation of mosques. Homeland security bills are being ratified. After 8 years British borders remain closed. Deportation of illegal immigrants will continue.”

Even though the movie is fictionally set in 2027 and created in 2009, nowadays we could see striking similarities with our world – more specifically with the ongoing European migration crisis. Throughout the whole movie we hear language such as ‘report’, ‘illegal’, ‘immigrants’, ‘suspicious activities’, ‘protect’, ‘legal citizens’, ‘nobody will recognize the first baby born in eighteen years from a fugitive’, ‘to relieve or shelter illegal immigrants is a crime’, ‘the government hunts them down like cockroaches’ – all of which would sound very familiar to an average working person who follows the European mainstream media. From the reportage in the beginning we see language such as ‘demands’, ‘occupation’, ‘security’, ‘borders closed’, ‘deportations’ and ‘illegal immigrants’. This comes very close to the literature review where we see the same words. We see an appearance of ‘Muslim community’. Islam here is a sign of racial difference within the same culture that situates race as a matter of basic physical difference among bodies rather than differences among religions (Chaudhari 2009: 78).

Chaudhari speaks about the materialization of race based on its representation in the movie. He relies upon Marx and Engels and The German Ideology on the subject, which claims that racism is a result of the sharp division of labor (Chaudhari 2009: 76). This seems credible, especially if we go back to *Warm Bodies* and the account of historical representation of refugees as zombies I give there. The main argument is that zombies started out as black African slaves that would work forever for their white masters, even after death. In this case, the zombies, racism and division of labor seem to be mutually intertwined. The German Ideology persistently returns to the division of labor as the source of ideational misrecognitions, language – the very stuff of ideas and representations. Marx and Engels elaborate that language
is as old as consciousness; language is practical consciousness from the contact between people (Chaudhari 2009: 77). In other words, race is materialized also through people’s use of language and repetition of the same ideas. This also fits my analysis because now it can be observed that all three movies repeat the same topic (‘the other’) in fairly similar terms, only using a variety of representation. However, the main idea of the negative representation of the refugee or the indigenous person who differs in lifestyle and color (Na’vi in Avatar) is there and gets repeated in one way or another, both through language and images.

It is argue that language and meaning is the precondition for all social relations. Language is the ground of materiality and can be foundational of social relations from the realm of representations (Chaudhari 2009: 78). Expressed more simply, if throughout history white people have verbally referred all non-white people as slaves, illegal, inferior, different or undocumented then racism had been materialized and people understood it as the natural selection of the social order. This is well represented by Theo as opposed to Kee symbolizing the end of white male privileged dominance over the world and the start of the female beginning – of the black as in non-white beginning of social order. Kee and her baby (supposedly non-white as well) represent this idea that racism would start having new dimension and maybe new meaning since a black woman is the one to be able to have a baby among all of humanity in more than a decade.

To sum up, Children of Men is fruitful and clear material to use when analyzing representation of refugees in movies. It abounds with images and words that can successfully be used for analysis. In this movie the refugees are other white Europeans, held in cages and not looking different than the British people in any way. This is visible from the images as well as from the language, which in this case coincides with the visual analysis as media is visualized in the forms of TV reportages or show of newspaper pages. In this movie we once again see hostile and unfriendly language toward immigrants such as ‘illegal’, ‘suspicious’, or ‘crime’. The biggest topics of this movie are the materialization of race and the meaning of language as a precondition for social relations.
4.2.1 Avatar

In his article, for The Times, David Brookes gives a very short and straightforward summary of the movie from the point of view of racism: “The white guy notices that the peace-loving natives are much cooler that the greedy corporate tools and bloodthirsty US military types he came over with. He goes to live with the natives and, in short order, he is the most awesome member of the tribe” (Brooks, David 2010). This is a very brief and rather sarcastic overview of the idea that the native Na’vi population in the end is rescued by yet another white American and without his help they would have, most probably, gotten wiped out. This is a stereotypical representation of a white person and indigenous population of a place – the natives are primitives and savage-like creatures, fighting with bows and arrows, whereas the white people are educated and technologically advanced.

The movie begins with Jake Sully, his disability and futuristic planet Earth, invaded by high technology, destroyed nature and vice, and wide-spread corruption. Being unable to pay for treatment, the viewer cannot escape the impression that Jake is perceived as ‘the other’ among his people – American and white. However, he is poor and disabled and this automatically makes him look inferior into the eyes of other people. He also feels out of place and suffers from a sense of not fitting in. This is, perhaps, the first interpretation that could be made in terms of ‘the other’ and the interesting thing is that it is about a white, average male who lives where he has lived his entire life: and yet, he is turning into an outcast.

Avatar is a metaphor about the contact between different human cultures. It could be read also as the story of European engagement with the native peoples of the Americas and their eventual extinction. When the Spanish arrived in the Americas they described a world which could scarcely have been more different to their own. Europe was torn by war, oppression, slavery, poverty and disease, and the populations they encountered were healthy, athletic, well-nourished and peaceful (Monbiot, George 2010). This very well fits how the people and the natives are represented in the movie. The people – stressed and desperate, while the Na’vi are considerably bigger, stronger and athletic, warrior-style figures.

4.2.1 Visual Analysis

Making a visual analysis is the first step of examining Avatar. Out of the three movies, this is perhaps, the one that provides the starkest contrast between human beings and ‘the other’, between Earth and another, better world. I have chosen four images in total to analyze these
differences. As already mentioned, the use of visual research method has become increasingly widespread throughout the social sciences and visual data is connected to qualitative approach in analysis.

The first two images I have selected are both based on Pandora but demonstrate the sharp contrast between a site occupied by people and a site untouched by them. The sense of an industrialized and technologically advanced civilizations and peaceful, nature-loving but primitive natives is noticeable at the very beginning when the viewer gets only a glimpse of Pandora. We see heavy military machines, weapons and planes (in grey and black colors, Figure 10) in stark contrast with Pandora’s greenery and bright nature (Figure 11). The camps that the people settle are surrounded by smoke, pollution, heavy industrialization and give a sense of aggressiveness. The white and technologically advanced person is depicted outside nature at an environment that is heavy and somehow unwelcoming, while nature among indigenous people of a territory is the dominant, well preserved and the native population lives as part of it instead of trying to separate themselves from it. We see this very clearly in Figures 10 and 11. In Figure 10 there is barely any sign of greenery at the background, hardly noticeable. Only greyness and heavy machinery – people are highly equipped, militarized and aggressive, the complete opposite of living in harmony with nature. While in Figure 11 nature is everywhere – this is where the indigenous people live.

The site of this picture is clearly aimed at the Western public as the pictures show how the white, educated individual has seen themselves compared to an indigenous person (nature vs machines). In addition, the movie in general has been directed and created by a Western crew (IMBD), therefore all social issues have been supposedly represented through the lens of the Western understanding and later on interpreted mainly by the same Western audience.

Even though both images are on Pandora, they are very different from each other and have different meanings. The meaning is very similar to what is already described above – the Americans are educated, militarized and technologically advanced, having no sense of connection with nature. The natives, on the other hand, lead a nature loving life and do not know wars.
Most of the time the viewer receives the impression that it is the people who are the refugees – they travel to another planet in search of survival or more precisely – for unobtainium – a very expensive mineral resource, which may return prosperity back to the human race. Moreover, they are depicted not only as someone looking for refuge but as aggressors, ready to attack physically in order to get what they want.

Eventually, we come across Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver) – a talented and devoted scientist who believes in diplomacy and education to earn the natives. She appears as somewhat more balanced figure in the relation superiority –inferiority between the natives and the people. However, she does take an active part in winning their hearts and minds through building them a school and teaching them English, giving them medicine, building roads. This, however, is another way of showing white superiority, but through the means of soft power.

Some authors argue that Avatar repeats negative stereotypes about indigenous people (Gates, Charlie 2010). The blockbuster addresses the impact of colonization in an entertaining way but relies on stereotypes in doing so, particularly when it comes to the male members of the blue-skinned society. In addition, it took only three months for Jake Sully to learn their traditions. This is hardly enough and talks about certain simplicity and easiness in the beliefs of the indigenous and does not take long to master them.
The typical racist representation of white vs. natives is very clearly portrayed also through the stark contrasts between the Na’vi and the humans in their appearances. The humans are significantly smaller, white, heavily equipped with machinery, advanced weapons capable of causing mass destruction and have a modern and futuristic scientific laboratory. They are much smaller than the Na’vi, hardly as athletic and clearly unable to survive in nature without guns. They wear the usual Western clothes, no jewelry or decoration of any kind (Figure 13). On the other hand, the blue inhabitants of Pandora are almost naked, covered in colorful beads, barefoot, having no sense of what people understand as industrialization, medicine or education. They live in complete harmony with nature (and not against it), describe their social communities as clans, hunt and have only bows, arrows and knives as weapons (Figure 14).

Coming back from what constitutes visual analysis for scientific research, scientists argue that the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Europe. Images transmit different ideas and offer a variety in cultural representations. From these two images we see a recreation of the stereotype white people vs. indigenous – through their clothes, behavior, level of development, customs and most of all – skin color. It is no coincidence that the Na’vi are blue – a color that easily and instantly distinguishes them from white people. Images are never transparent or meaningless but interpret the world and provide a unique point of view to social issues such as immigration or racism. The pictures we see in movies are not a random selection of paintings but carefully and strategically created images that have a story on their own even though it is nowhere depicted in the plot. As stated in Visual Analysis it has been argued that since the outbreak of digital technologies in the Western society looking, seeing and knowing have become highly intertwined.

As the story develops and Jake learns the Na’vi ways he remains ‘the other’ almost the whole time. Even in a body of a native, he stands out with his behavior and lack of knowledge and yet again the dilemma who is a refugee, other or an outcast sharpens. Eventually, however, his skills improve and he gradually earns the respect of the rest of the tribe until the tribal
ceremony where he officially becomes one of ‘them’. To an extent, Jake is found interesting and fascinating by the members of the clan with difference and odd behavior and as a representative of another civilization. This is also another very stereotypical representation of natives as in the West people are used be perceived with curiosity by indigenous populations at exotic destinations.

### 4.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

*Avatar* abounds with powerful language related to the relation white vs. indigenous people. Throughout the whole movie the human beings verbally express their superiority against the blue population using direct and offensive language. Since the whole movie transcript is a huge material, outside the scope of this paper, I have selected a couple of dialogues (according to the criteria described in *Methods*) and lines that demonstrate how, through language, social realities are recreated from each side depending on what role different actors play within their practices.

The first set of words I have chosen are spoken by Colonel Miles Quaritch (played by Stephen Lang) of the army on Pandora, when giving an introductory speech to the newly arrived soldiers:

‘...you are on Pandora...respect that fact every second of every day. If there is a Hell you might wanna go there after a tour on Pandora. Out there beyond that fence every living thing that crawls, flies or squads in the mud wants to kill you and eat your eyes. We have an indigenous population of humanoids called the Na’vi. They are fond of arrows, gifted with toxin that can stop your heart in one minute. They are very hard to kill. If you wish to survive you need a strong mental attitude, you’ve got to obey the rules...Pandora rules’’ (Colonel Miles Quaritch, 00:10:27, *Avatar*)

From this quote the viewer remains with the impression of Pandora as a deadly place, full of weird creatures ready to kill. We see an insistent emphasis on the fact that the planet is hostile and aggressive. Strong words such as ‘*respect*’, ‘*Hell*’, ‘*wants to kill*’, ‘*toxin*’, ‘*hard*’, and ‘*survive*’ imply a sense of danger and lack of security. Pandora has its rules and norms and not respecting them could be fatal. The viewer receives the idea that the threatened are the human beings when in fact the threatened is Pandora and its untouched nature. The ‘*other*, the foreign, the different as opposed to what is known is bad without a doubt. When explored, Pandora offers a vast network of living things, all connected to each other and living in harmony, who,
in fact, do not kill anyone, unless provoked. All this is also a first distinction between ‘us’ and ‘the others’ and first glimpses of racism as advanced white people against backward, scarcely dressed natives.

The second quote I have selected is a dialogue between Grace Augustine and the head chief of the entire project on Pandora Parker Selfridge (played by Giovanni Ribisi) when the humans begin destroying a sacred for the Na’vi place:

*Grace:* There are families in there, children. Are you gonna kill children? Those trees were sacred to the Amotikaia in a way you can’t imagine.
*Selfridge:* O you know what, you throw a stick in the air around here, it’s gonna land on some on some sacred fern.
*Grace:* I am not talking about some kind of pagan, voodoo here, I am talking about something real, something measurable in the biology of the forest.
*Selfridge:* Which is what exactly?
*Grace:* What we think we know is that there is some kind of elector-chemical communication between the roots of the trees. It is a network, it is a global network and the Na’vi can access it, they can upload and download data, memories, at sites, like the one you just destroyed.
*Selfridge:* What the hell have you people been smoking out there?! They are just god damn trees
*Grace:* You need to wake up, Parker!
*Selfridge:* No, you need to wake up!
*Grace:* The wealth of this world isn’t in the ground, it is all around us. The Na’vi know that and they are fighting to defend it. (Grace Augustine and Parker Selfridge, 01:46:13, Avatar)

In a sense, this coincides with the European media representation of refugees being a threat as described in detailed in the literature review. What is interesting here, however, is that fact the threat is white human beings.

Later on the Na’vi are called ‘blue monkeys’ by Selfridge and talked down by her fellow humans and are not seen as anything less than savages who like being in the mud. In that sense she does appear hypocritical as she also participates in the process of ‘civilizing’ the natives.

Towards the end of the movie Jake Sully appears to have betrayed the Na’vi leading to their genocide committed by his own people. After being violently attacked by the ‘Sky People’ they are forced to flee their homes in search for a safer place. This is a typical refugee situation when the abused have to run and look for a safer location, not knowing what to do after. Out of
the sudden, it is the Na’vi who turn into refugees on their own planet, attacked by other species, who, on the other hand, also strive for survival and hope. In this situation the lines between ‘us’, ‘the other’, refugees and aggressors become very blurred as humans seem to ‘own’ Pandora simply because they own weapons that Na’vi have no chance against. Jake’s role changes all the time as he finally turns against the humans and helps the natives thus earning their respect once again and transferring himself into the Na’vi body forever. This situation can be put into further discussion. Jake, as a representative of the white people, acts as the grand savior in the end, without whom the blue creatures would be certainly killed. Here we see once again the representation of the superior, braver and smarter white hero that saves them all (Boehm, Mike 2010). Later on, the ruthless treatment of the Na’vi has been interpreted as a metaphor for the fate of American Indians as well as leading to association with Pocahontas in which “an Indian woman leads the white man into the wilderness and he learns the way of the people and becomes the savior” (Singh, Anita 2010).

To conclude, Avatar offers a very interesting and complicated mixture of ideas and challenges the notion of the refugee (meaning as anyone can turn into one). In more detail, we see the stereotypical representation of a white person against the representation of indigenous population as educated and technologically advanced vs the natives with different skin color, bows and arrows and very visible from the images. Also, the natives are nature loving while the Americans are all about machines and guns. From the dialogues the viewer witness expressions of white supremacy and offensive and degrading words towards the natives. All this represents the clash of cultures and how the white Western person views themselves when encountering ‘the other’. The meaning is that roles of aggressors and refugees can easily switch and we could get mix of identities.
4.3 Warm Bodies

4.3.1 Visual Analysis

The entertaining and rather comical interpretation of zombies in *Warm Bodies* provides a more unusual point of view when it comes to depicting zombies in movies. The distinction line between the real human beings and the neither living nor dead is noticeable from a few differences in looks and the food they consume. Otherwise, zombies are pretty much the same human creatures as the ‘normal’ ones but they are completely outcasted, living in seclusion and isolation and branded as nothing else but murderers who spread a deadly virus. However, they are fully aware human beings who merely have no physical ability to do anything else but slowly walk around and grunt at each other (Mendelson, Scott 2013). This is very well demonstrated by the visual depiction of zombies vs. real people.
I have selected seven screenshots from *Warm Bodies* that show the differences and mostly similarities between zombies and human beings in the way they look. What is interesting is that there are almost no differences. Figures 15 and 16 depict scenes where people and zombies are present in massive numbers, without showing any particular individuals. Looking closely, we see that there are no differences in their appearance. Looked from afar the zombies wear the same clothes and look the same way as normal people (Figure1 6). On Figure 15 people carry guns and is important to point out that zombies are never shown carrying any sort of weapon unlike people throughout the whole movie. One might argue that they do so in order to defend themselves against zombie attacks. This is a sign how the people defend themselves against the unknown and supposedly dangerous. Later on, however, it is revealed that weapons were unnecessary and people once again appeared as aggressors like in *Avatar*.

Figures 17 and 18 were selected together because they show zombies vs. people in a closer plan. Figure 17 depicts the main human characters and Figure 8 consists of a random selection of a group of zombies. Same as in Figures 15 and 16, there are barely any differences between zombies and human beings – they wear the same kinds of clothes (though the zombies are dirtier and worn out), the viewer can easily tell that the zombies were once ordinary people, and most of all they are white and one can tell they used to occupy the same society and same social realities. In the end, even when looked closely, there are barely any differences between normal people and zombies.

![Figure 19: Zombie Cleaning, Warm Bodies](image)

Figure 19 below shows yet another similarity between zombies and people. The picture portrays a zombie at an airport hall occupied in an activity he had before he got infected and was outcasted by society. The viewer finds out that he is now zombies only by the fact that he can barely move and talk. Otherwise, in his thoughts and actions, the zombie longs to be what he used to – a human being with a regular job, dreams and experiences. In Figure 20 we see the
same zombie as a human being and he actually has flashes of memory what he was before he turned into a zombie.

Warm Bodies is a very good example how human beings who live and function in the same place and same society (and have the same skin color) can suddenly be ignored and thrown into the hands of faith only. It also makes us question if anything unknown we see is as dangerous as it seems and whether we should first get to know them and make decisions how to treat them after.

The most fascinating part of the story is the fact that the dead ones cure themselves in the end not with medicine or some expensive treatment but just by being accepted. Simple acceptance back to society appears to be the key to the cure. This is probably the key concept in the whole movie implying that if one is treated with positivism, patience and openness, good outcome that benefits all is bound to come. Moreover, the whole time the viewer sees a wall (Figure21) separating the zombies from the city inhabited by normal humans making association with fences and walls Europe began building to stop the flow of refugees. The wall is a commonly seen metaphor in popular culture as a symbol of segregation, divide and hostility. The final scene of the film is how the wall collapses signifying the end of the division between humans and zombies and beginning mutual acceptance and healing.
The movie opens up with an image of R, looking creepy and eating brain but at the same time dreaming of being a normal human again. He goes through a monologue with himself asking what is wrong with him and how he longs to connect. He wishes he could remember his name and his old life. In addition, he looks around his corpse fellows and tries to picture them what they were before the apocalypse. The viewer sees the zombies mixed up with scenes from their past human lives, having families, friends and dreams:

R: “What I am doing with my life? I am so pale, I should get out more, I should eat better, my posture is terrible, I should stand up straight. People would respect me more if I stood up straight. What’s wrong with me? I just want to connect. Why can’t I connect with people?! O, right, it is because I am dead. I shouldn’t be so hard on myself, we are all dead. I wish I could introduce myself, but I don’t remember my name anymore. I can’t remember my name, or my parents or my job”. (R, 00:00:31, Warm Bodies)

This is the opening monologue of R in the beginning. From his words we can see that he thinks exactly like a normal human being. We see words such as ‘life’, ‘respect’, ‘people’, ‘connect’, ‘wish’, ‘remember’, ‘name’, ‘parents’, ‘job’, which is a typical human way of thinking. In fact, R is a perfect representative of the undocumented refuges described in the literature review on the representation of refugees in the mainstream news media– neither here, nor there, belonging in no man’s land, neither dead nor alive. This concept is also better described below further in this part of the analysis.

All this, however, displays the main argument why I have chosen Warm Bodies as the second movie of my research. It represents the very stereotypical image of a refugee as a zombie but at
the same time shows how refugees could be people who are completely like us but have turned into ‘the other’ due to misfortunate circumstances. Even the main human characters in the film admit that they look like people and might act like people but once approached they do not embody anything good or kind and must be eliminated. The so called ‘threat’ that refugees carry comes from the inside, from the same society, from white people who do not look any different. Unlike in Avatar where the threat comes from the sky

R, the main zombie character likes eating the brains of people not because they are tasty but because he can feel the memories and feelings of that person. This is the closest R is able to come back to a normal human and be a little better. This is yet another sign that he wants to be a human being and in a sense feels way more as a human being than anything else. Julie, his beloved one, calls him directly a ‘person’ as the story develops, instead of a zombie or corps and her father (Grigio, played by John Malkovich) warns that zombies look like people and act like people but they are not people:

Grigio: …corpses look human, they are not. They do not think, they do not bleed, whether they were your mother or your best friend, they are beyond your help. They are uncaring, unfeeling incapable of remorse. (Grigio, 00:07:45, Warm Bodies)

In this monologue we see words and expressions like ‘human’, ‘do not think’, ‘do not bleed’, ‘beyond help’, ‘uncaring’, ‘unfeeling’, ‘incapable’ which is in contrast with R’s monologue in the beginning and in line with words used by the mainstream news media when representing refugees as already described in detail in the literature review. R’s dialogue is from the point of view of the refugee, of the alienated, of ‘the other’ therefore his words are much more positive. Grigio talks as a representative of the humans whose society and way of life is constantly threatened from supposedly dangerous strangers who ironically were their best friends and mothers once. This point coincides with the representation of refugees in the news media as aliens coming to become part of us and eventually assimilating us leading to a full collapse of the traditions and social order we know and fight to preserve.

There are various intellectual interpretations and theories of the zombie phenomena in popular culture and what it represents. One of them is Social Anxiety – the general sense of fear that society might collapse any time. As zombie films are a genre of horror one expects there to be general sense of fear surrounding their depiction. The idea is to imprint into the public pervasive anxiety or rising social tension feeling that we might all succumb into the Zombie Apocalypse. This general point of view has a connection in regards to different cultures mixing
or, in this case, refugees coming into our society. Underlying this anxiety is a pervasive feeling of alienation (Ricciardi, Mickael 2013). In other words zombies are those who are the unknown, the different and risk being left out of society due to anxiety and fear towards the unknown. They are also seen as embodiment of the displaced persons and the undocumented, which falls very well with the concern of who a refugee is, a migrant or an asylum seeker, as explained earlier in this paper. Lack of documents makes this question significantly more challenging to answer (Ricciardi 2013). Researchers and film makers have noted that there has been an increase in zombie films observed during times of anti-immigrant sentiments. During festivals there are also low-budget zombie movies made by children of immigrants or foreign students from non-Western nations. The idea that there is a connection between zombies and distrust of immigrants and displaced people entering our Western society is worth exploring, especially now in the context of the current European migration crisis (Ricciardi 2013).

From the origins of the classical cinema, the figures of the zombies have been associated with that of the migrant or the slave (Fillol et al. 2015: 53). The origins of the first zombies are to be found in the imaginary of the African slaves. These re-emerge in the images of contemporary European filmmakers such as Pedro Costa and Nikolas Clotz. Their zombies presented in contemporary European cities demand that we review the zombie archetype with a history of colonialism and the capitalist system that produce marginalization and outlaws. The imaginary of the classical zombie in early Hollywood cinema also embodies those excluded by the capitalist system (illegal immigrants) with a clear political intention. Cinema has represented those illegal immigrants as zombies, that is, unproductive, undocumented men that remain outside the capitalist system (Fillol et al. 2015: 54). This sums up the situation with the refugees coming to the shores of Europe today – unfamiliar with the system, with no documents or a plan what their next step would be. Thus they remain isolated and without any prospects for the near future – like zombies, neither here, in Europe, nor there, in their home countries.

This fact marks an important phenomenon regarding the archetype’s origins. Zombies were the first supernatural creatures that did not emerge from the European Gothic tradition (like Dracula of Frankenstein). Instead, they came out straight out of African slaves’ practices, who arrived in Haiti and the Caribbean after much suffering and being uprooted (Fillol et al. 2015: 55, Slotwinska, Karolina 2015: 152). This is an interesting connotation given that fact that nowadays refugees arrive from exotic, far-fetched places after they go through dangerous journeys on water and land usually in appalling conditions. The zombies’ first appearance in
the history of film leaves a strong mark: they appear connected to over exploitation and their function is to keep working for their master even after death, for eternity (Fillol et al. 2015: 56). This is another interesting link to refugees in Europe nowadays – the media claims that politicians want them here for cheap labor and fill in holes in the labor market. Not to mention that most refugees still keep coming from former colonies such as Syria (France). From this point it seems that zombies are an interesting metaphor for slaves working for their masters even after death – something, which keeps happening and refugees still carry the ancestral heritage on their backs.

Another link between zombies and refugees could be found in the way they look: with no will in their gazes, empty eyes and clumsy walk: whether out of tiredness, desperation or hopelessness. The European media for the past one year abounds with images of frightened and exhausted refugees, barely with some clothes on their back standing in front of Europe’s gates. It is intriguing how a creature such as the zombie – mystical, fruit of popular culture and imagination and no existence in reality - can come so close to real life events, people and images.

As mentioned already, immigrants are zombie figures without an identity, outside of society, without a passport and sometimes without even fingerprints. They do not belong anywhere, have no official nationality – they are the living dead. On the other hand, they are defenseless, disadvantaged group who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. They are a byproduct of society, abandoned by Europe, where they hoped would start a new life (Fillol et al. 2015: 61). They are desperate to come back to life after death just like R in *Warm Bodies* when he dreams all the time of being a human again and feel and dream. These new zombies are no longer driven by a cannibalistic desire but by the wish to obtain asylum in a European country and start re-building their lives (Fillol et al. 2015: 63).

To conclude, *Warm Bodies* provides a very well developed idea of the refugee as a zombie. In this movie zombies are almost undistinguishable from humans, including in their thinking and eventually go back to their human selves. This is well shown both by the images and dialogues as they cover more the human side of the zombies rather than the monstrous one.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to make the connection between the different chapters of the paper and to explain the differences and similarities between the representation of refugees in popular culture and representation in mainstream news media in the context of the current European migration crisis. The chapter is divided into Discussion and this part is divided in Language and Visuals, because these two are a major part in this paper’s analysis and Other which would reflect on issues such as white supremacy and power. At the same time this comparison is done with parallel referral to Critical Race Theory. This chapter (and the paper) finishes with Conclusion, which will summarize all key points, aims and research questions of this thesis.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Language – Similarities and Differences

After researching what kind of language the European news media uses when referring to refugees and after analyzing the selected dialogues/monologues from the three movies it was observed that both mainstream news media and popular culture use negative language towards refugees most of the time. Nearly a third of all headlines feature negative words that carry conflict or disagreement: hate, fight, crisis, control, stop, murder, kill, illegal, prison. As already analyzed, the first dialogue in Avatar (By Colonel Quaritch) contains words very similar: Hell, kill, eat your eyes, toxin, stop, hard to kill, survive. The second dialogues between Dr Augustine and Selfridge contains words such as kill, throw, smoking, god damn trees, defend. In short, we do observe the same sense of violence and overall aggressiveness when it comes to language in this case. In German newspapers refugees are portrayed as problem, alien, aggressors and connected to criminality, problems and illegality. The Italian press calls them illegals, irregulars and clandestinos (clandestine) and talks about refugees in terms of border control, immigration, security threats and urge to control. In Avatar the blue humanoids are called blue monkeys, which dissociates them from anything human and brings them down to the level of an animal. In the Children of Men we see the same pattern: collapsed, soldiers,
massive migration, famine, illegal. It is interesting to point out here that there words are, in fact, visualized through images from TV reportages, which is a case where we see mainstream media visualized and putting out extremely aggressive words towards refugees. Throughout the whole movie we hear language such as report, illegal, immigrants, suspicious activities, protect, legal citizens, fugitive, crime, which are all a painful reminder of what we have seen in mainstream news media already. In addition, immigrants are hunted down by the government like cockroaches – this is satirizing of media in Britain referring to the tabloid newspapers that use puns, slogans and caricatures to attract readers’ attention. All this brings us back to Critical Race Theory (CRT) which claims that racism and its permanence are due to the constant reproduction of repetition of the same language, which makes prejudices towards refugees to be taken for granted. Avatar and Children of Men seem like a good illustration of this case they do share the same hostile language as the news media.

Warm Bodies, however, provides not such a straightforward and negative representation when it comes to language. R’s monologue in the beginning is not any different than the thoughts of any ordinary human being. We hear words such as life, respect, people, connect, wish, remember, name, parents, job even though he is a zombie and supposedly unable of any human actions. Important to point out here that such words are not common (or nonexistent) in mainstream news media therefore, Warm Bodies provides a more personalized and non-aggressive representation of the refugee and tries to break up the stereotypes. This reminds of the so called counter-storytelling from CRT when a story is used as a method to cast a doubt on the validity of accepted myths such as racism. It provides stories that speak the opposite and challenge concepts and prejudices connected to racism. Warm Bodies is a good example because it attempts to break the negative refugee stereotype in the face of the zombie by giving it more human – like thoughts and actions as seen in R’s monologue.

This movie as well provides an example of how popular culture can be used as satire when it comes to representation the same way as mainstream news media. This goes back to what was already mentioned for Children of Men – newspapers use puns, slogans, caricatures and exaggerated personalization to grab attention. Warm Bodies is comical because it shifts from the traditional depiction of the zombie and is shown more as a ridiculous creature that can barely move and put words together. This is a commonality between mainstream media and popular culture in using satire to represent refugees.
5.1.2 Visuals – Differences and Similarities

From the analysis of the visual materials from the movies and when looking at the pictures from the mainstream media we see that refugees are depicted only by themselves (as opposed to the films where they are in opposition to human beings) and the comparison between white vs ‘the other’ is not being observed. In the photographs from the newspapers we see only the refugees themselves, in mass numbers and it is difficult to distinguish any particular faces (apart from the picture of the children from The Guardian). In a sense, this coincides with Warm Bodies at the picture with zombies at the airport where it is challenging to make any differences between the zombies. On the other hand, we have two individual pictures of a zombie as a cleaner, which brings certain personalization to ‘the other’. The situation is the same in Children of Men where we see the refugees in mass numbers in cages. This coincides with the pictures from Italian and German newspapers, for example, where we see refugees in camps, crammed together, without distinguishable faces.

The mainstream media photographs also lack depiction of any symbols such as The Wall from Warm Bodies but the Refugees Queuing from Dagens Nyheter reminds us about the cages from Children of Men. In Avatar we see faces of ‘the other’ also quite well unlike in the newspapers.

5.1.3 Other

Representation of refugees in popular culture and mainstream news media share some other differences and similarities apart from visuals and language.

First, both industries are commodities. They have to maintain market appeal, financial gains, and influential power in their industries and to serve the interests of their consumers. Therefore, this could strongly affect how they represent refugees as subjectivity and exaggerations are highly likely. Both industries share complex relationship with their consumers and fight to remain leading roles in their fields.

Second, both movies and newspapers distribute power through images and language. This reminds once again of Critical Race Theory which talks about race as a product of social thought relations. This is repeated over and over again though the power of language and constant circulation of negative adjectives. In the movies spectators eventually find out that the indigenous population of Pandora are neither stupid, nor backward even though they are not white and obviously very different from the humans. At the same time, the zombies from Warm Bodies look almost like regular people but yet again they are outcasted.
The third point of this part is about the fact that movies represent the refugee as a protagonist. Unlike in mainstream news media, all stories are personalized, the audience knows the historical, personal and social circumstances which led the character to their current situation. For example, in *Children of Men* we closely follow the personal drama of Kee as a pregnant illegal immigrant. The viewer follows her throughout the entire movie and sympathizes with her. In *Avatar* spectators eventually get to know the Na’vi’s story and relation they have with the planet and out of the sudden the people are those who are bad in the whole story. In *Warm Bodies* audiences might feel sorry for the zombies as they long to be normal humans again and nobody wants to see R killed by a human. On the other hand, mainstream news media does not offer any personal stories – reporting is sharp, usually negative, relying on numbers and statistics (if those can be trusted for reasons described earlier) but the main tone is how bad, faceless and destructive refugees are while in cinema we see more positive stories that do not lead to an apocalypse for all.

Fourth and I intend to keep this as an open question – after the entire analysis provided in this thesis I would like to pose the issue of who a refugee is in the end and how im/possible it is for roles to switch. In the *Children of Men* other white Western Europeans are the refugees, aka the enemy and Kee (black and illegal) may save humanity; in *Avatar* Jake Sully switches from human to Na’vi identity all the time, moving from a refugee role (he is the ‘the other’ among humans due to his inability to move) to a blue character role, so in the end he decides to become what was considered unknown and dangerous. Critical Race Theory argues that nobody has only one identity but a colorful mixture of qualities and traits and overlap each other. Popular culture provides a complicated and versatile representation of refugees, identity and ‘the other’ as a whole, which is something we do not see in news media. We, as spectators and researchers have the opportunity to explore how refugees are perceived thanks to the creativity and freedom that popular culture provides and gives us the opportunity to see social issues from a completely different angle.
Nowadays Europe is witnessing its worst migration crisis in years. Wars and military conflicts in the Middle East have forced thousands of people to flee their home countries and come to Europe in an attempt to rebuild their lives. This crisis has made native Europeans closely encounter ‘the other’ – people who share different traditions and understanding about lifestyles. Because of this questions such as how Europe should approach the phenomenon have been raised and a long and seemingly never ending discourse in media, politicians and intuitions have started.

The aim of this paper is to find out how refugees are represented in popular culture and to compare it with representation of refugees in the mainstream news media in the context of the current European migration crisis (visually and verbally). The countries that comprise Europe in this thesis are the UK, Germany, Sweden and Italy. The literature review reveals how refugees are depicted mainly verbally in the newspaper industries of these countries. The discourse is mainly negative showing the refugees as dangerous, aggressive and invasive that come to ‘flood’ Europe. They are described as undocumented and illegal and texts about them refer to criminal activities. Images from several European newspaper show that refugees are depicted in massive numbers, faceless and without any individuality.

The empirical material from popular culture is three English speaking movies: *Children of Men, Avatar and Warm Bodies*. They are quite different in style and visual effects but tell the same story – about the exclusion of ‘the other’. *Children of Men* is the most obvious one, telling the story about white European people being excluded by people same as them. *Avatar* represents the old idea of white superiority vs. indigenous people and also shows how roles of refugees and aggressors can switch. *Warm Bodies* recreates the representation of the refugee as a zombie which originates from the time of slavery. It provides a comical and satirized image of ‘the other’ which finishes with the idea that everyone can become one of ‘us’ if treated with respect and kindness.

After the critical discourse analysis it was observed that both popular culture and mainstream news media represent the refugees in mainly negative terms using offensive adjectives. The visuals analysis of the movies confirmed some stereotypes but showed that ‘us’ and ‘the other’ could be not so different. In the end, it was revealed that popular culture has the capacity to
represent refugees as protagonists and with people who have personal stories while mainstream news media does not provide this and all this was conducted under the framework of Critical Race Theory.
Chapter 6

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