



Generation Dead

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Reviewer:

[Peter Hollindale](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This macabre novel is a tale of the undead. All over America (and only America) dead teenagers (and only teenagers) are returning to existence as the living dead. Some resume their school careers. Some are accepted by their loving families, others shunned. Not surprisingly, this new and disturbing minority, both the same and not the same as their living peers, give rise to prejudice and social unrest, with public attitudes in serious conflict. Oakvale High School, which has taken an enlightened attitude to the dead minority, is the scene for the novel's central relationship, between living Phoebe and dead Tommy, and its progress to a violent conclusion.

The first half of the book is partly an effective satire on prejudice against minorities. Hostility to the undead (?bioism?) shows striking similarities to other persecutions such as sexism, racism and ageism, and the link is made explicit: ?a bioist is like a racist but hates dead folk?. Like these other social conflicts, this one develops its own vocabulary. There is abuse (?zombie?) which the living dead adopt as their own, with pride, and there are official euphemisms (?living impaired?, ?differently biotic?) intended to dilute antagonism and offence. Phoebe herself follows Goth fashions, and there is plenty of dark humour rising from her taste in music, for bands like the Killdeaths, Grave Mistake, and artists like Killian Killgore of the Creeps. One of the undead girls, Karen, is seen reading Faulkner's **As I Lay Dying**. As a blend of social satire and ghoulish melodrama, the early chapters are clever and perceptive.

But the balance is hard to maintain, and about halfway through the book changes its nature. The vein of black satiric comedy disappears, leaving behind the macabre, and with it some highly sensitive areas of feeling which are not well handled. Deadpan humour becomes mere deadpan horror. Despite its promising start, **Generation Dead** settles for selling a distasteful although clearly marketable line in violent creepiness to its teenage readers.

Running Order:

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