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Dead places : American horror, placelessness, and globalization.

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DEAD PLACES:

AMERICAN HORROR, PLACELESSNESS, AND GLOBALIZATION

By

Katherine Ashley Wagner
B.A., La Sierra University, 2007
M.A., La Sierra University, 2009

A Dissertation
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A Dissertation Approved on

April 18, 2017

by the following Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. John Gibson

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Dr. Simona Bertacco

_____
Dr. Michael Williams

_____
Dr. Adam Lowenstein

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

those who reminded me that

I was never truly alone.

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ABSTRACT

DEAD PLACES:

AMERICAN HORROR, PLACELESSNESS, AND GLOBALIZATION

Katherine A. Wagner

April 18, 2017

This dissertation investigates particular American anxieties concerning cultural
identity and place, particularly fears about America's place (or lack thereof) within the
global world, that can be seen throughout much of post-WWII American horror literature
and film. More specifically, this project explores how an existent pattern of visual and
narrative depictions of destroyed bodies and places illustrates larger tensions and fears
about placelessness—the affect and effect of incomplete, partial, or inauthentic
relationships with the places that provide cultural and individual identity and meaning. I
argue that representations of placelessness within American horror texts become vehicles
for addressing and signifying American fears about globalization and America's
place(lessness) within the global landscape.

This dissertation begins with a discussion of how the methodologies of literary
and cinematic theory, humanist geography, and cultural studies work together to produce
an interdisciplinary examination of the intersections between American horror,
placelessness, and globalization. The introduction sets up the primary concepts and key
definitions central to this project's understanding of horror, place, and identity.

The overall structure of the dissertation then spirals out from the most localized of places to the most globalized of places that appear within American horror. The four main chapters of this dissertation each focus on a specific place or type of interaction with places: the home, everyday places, the American landscape/wilderness, and global tourism. Each chapter uses a particular theoretical framework that, in addition to the overarching ideas of placelessness and globalization, serves as a foundation for in-depth, close-readings of specific key horror texts.

The dissertation concludes with a brief examination of adaptation theory in horror and a return to the project's original premise: that post-WWII American horror presents specific and particular American anxieties tied to the fear that our cultural and individual identities are as fabricated and fraudulent as are our cultural and individual understandings of our places. I maintain that the ultimate source of horror in these texts is the insidious suggestion that such fears are warranted and the consequences of this horrific placelessness will be the terrible destruction and inevitable untethering of cultural and individual identities, bodies, and places.

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PLACING HORROR: AN INTRODUCTION[1]

> There is no place that is not haunted by many different
> spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can "invoke" or
> not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in. . .
>   Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (108)

> It was eerie, seeing the familiar building in these unfamiliar
> surroundings. He understood the corporate desire for
> uniformity, but there was something about the deliberately
> induced déjà vu he experienced while driving through a
> parking lot he knew toward a store that he knew in a town
> that he'd never been in or seen before that was not only
> disorienting but disturbing.
>   Bentley Little, *The Store* (293)

Described by Stephen King as "a master of the macabre,"[2] Bentley Little is a

Bram Stoker Award-winning author of over twenty horror novels. Although frequently

overlooked in academic circles, Little's body of work provides a powerful—albeit rarely

subtle—critique of postmodern American institutional structures. Little's 1998 novel *The*

Store charts the dissolution of a small town invaded, not by aliens or vampires, but by an

evil chain store corporation (named The Store) and its corrupt employees. Little's novel

pits the ideals of old-school charm and small-town quaintness against big-business, big-

media consumerism. As the novel progresses, the main character and his family realize

that the true horror of this invasion is rooted in the pervasive ways that The Store

undermines the authenticity and individuality of not just their own small town, but

countless small towns across America. The encroaching terror felt by these characters as

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[1] A portion of this chapter will appear in the journal *Interdisciplinary Humanities,* in a special issue on the
methodologies of horror edited by Edmund Cueva and William Nowak.
[2] Quote taken from the 1998 Signet paperback cover of Bentley Little's *The Store.*

they encounter The Store in towns that are now uncannily similar to their own hometown is as strong as their trepidation about the more supernatural aspects of this malevolent franchise. The novel does not directly state that (post)modern American culture is unequivocally evil. Even so, *The Store* depicts a world made horrific by many of the homogenizing trends—what the architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable called the "deadly sameness" (104)—present in real-world (post)modern America.

The Store may not end in the word *mart*, but it takes only a small stretch of the imagination to substitute Little's generic fictional brand of consuming horror with that of a big-name, real-world shopping conglomerate. After all, real-world corporate invasions invoke many of the same anxieties felt by Little's characters. In his study of six American small towns, Stephen Halebsky noted that the potential placement of a Wal-Mart in the area spurred strong conflict and controversy. Although not all were entirely opposed to such a proposition, many of the towns' residents protested what they saw as the inevitable and, in their opinions, negative changes of such a development. Halebsky argues that these views are not entirely unfounded; research from a variety of disciplines reveals the unfavorable and even negative effects of the average superstore design, which can include an overall diminishment of the unique character of pre-existing places (59). It is not my intention or desire to vilify big-businesses or mass consumerism, nor am I suggesting that Wal-Mart employees are as openly sadistic as those working for Little's The Store. Rather, I am interested in exploring how the discourses about such real-world issues—particularly those focused on placelessness and globalization—so regularly employ the same rhetorics of fear that drive much of post-WWII American horror.

This dissertation examines these connections between horror, placelessness, and globalization. It seeks to reveal how, within postmodern American horror (both literature and film), representations of placelessness—a condition marked by the loss of traditional roles of place and the identities constructed by these roles—address larger cultural fears about globalization. Such an investigation demands an interdisciplinary approach, one that juxtaposes a diverse corpora of theory and media—such as literary and cinematic analysis (textual examination of narrative and visual/structural elements), cultural theory (exploration of the operational systems that shape culture and its inhabitants) and humanist/human geography (inquiry into the geographical experiences of individuals and communities). I am certainly not alone in seeing the benefits of marrying these particular disciplines and methodologies. For quite some time, scholars have tied cultural theory to literary and cinematic analysis, thereby moving beyond mere formalist criticism into schools of thought such as New Historicism, feminism, and postcolonialism. And of course many leading thinkers, including Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, regularly turned their attentions to examining the relationships between the humanities and earth sciences such as geography (Luria 67). Influential cultural theories—such as Foucault's concept of heterotopia or Lefebvre's social space—as well as the rise of critical approaches, including ecocriticism, continue to acknowledge the important connections that exist between text, culture, and place. It is within this interdisciplinary discourse established by these and other scholars that I seek to place my own discussion.

And mine is ultimately a discussion of and about stories because—of the many connections between text, culture, and place—perhaps the most significant is narrative. Noted humanist geographer Yi-Fu Tuan affords to words, specifically our use of

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language, the ability to render meaning and "the specific power to call places into being" ("Language" 686). Admittedly, this is not a limitless power. In *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau cautions that although "'stories' provide the decorative container of a *narrativity* for everyday practices," they are nevertheless "only fragments of these practices" (70). Nonetheless, these fragments are enough to reveal how everyday practices include producing and constructing space as well as coordinating the people, objects, and messages within a place. This is equally true of fictional narratives because, as Timothy Mennel argues, fictional literature is capable of yoking together 'what transpires' with how we process 'what transpires' (85).[3] Similarly, in their discussion of film, Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn claim: "The way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film reflects prevailing cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures, and ideologies. Concomitantly, the impact of a film on an audience can mold social, cultural, and environmental experiences" (5). Narrative is itself a creative force, and multiple narratives (in their complexities, varieties, commonalities, and contradictions) together help form our memories, our assumptions, and our interpretations about culture and place.[4]

I argue that horror texts become an intriguing medium for exploring and managing larger American cultural fears concerning placelessness and globalization precisely because of certain recurring, shifting structural and narrative patterns that exist within post-WWII American horror literature and film. Ultimately, I propose that the

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[3] This is similar to Tuan's belief that literature can be a powerful tool for the geographer as it exposes "the environmental perceptions and values of a culture" ("Literature" 205).

[4] The value of exploring multiple, overlapping narratives is explored further by Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, who suggest that it is only through numerous narrative forms that the often conflicting nature of globalization can be fully understood (604).

textual moments in which horror, placelessness, and globalization intersect within the genre are frequently marked by the terrible destruction—or what I call the untethering—of cultural and individual identities, bodies, and places. Horror texts often reveal the invisible tethers (such as patriarchy, consumerism, and religion) that restrict and confine an individual or culture. The horror genre portrays these tethers as pervasive and rarely positive; however, it also exposes their inherent fragility as many texts explore the act or process of being/becoming untethered and the ways these untetherings are directly linked to the horrific destructions of place. In doing so, the genre proposes not only that most tethers are fundamentally grounded in place, but also that untetherings (however desirable) come at a very high price, one that unquestionably and perhaps irrevocably denies us our sense of place.

KNOWING HORROR

To loosely paraphrase Freud, sometimes a dead body is just a dead body. At other times, however, that dead body (or evil doll or possessed child) becomes a mechanism for engaging with social discourses, ideas, attitudes, and fears. In the words of Stephen King, horror can "often serve as an extraordinarily accurate barometer of those things which trouble the night-thoughts of a whole society" (*Danse* 139). Although there are many worthwhile definitions of the horror genre articulated by any number of scholars, I find myself often returning to one proposed by Linda Holland-Toll in her examination of American culture and horror. She suggests that the genre consists of "any text which has extreme or supernatural elements, induces (as its primary intention and/or effect) strong feelings of terror, horror, or revulsion in the reader, and generates a significant degree of unresolved dis/ease within society" (*As American* 6). This

definition neatly draws attention to not only the genre's intended affect (to produce horror as the audience's primary emotional response), but also to the genre's regular engagement with and elucidation of larger cultural issues. Robin Wood's conclusion "that to study the evolution of a genre is to study the evolution of a national (un)consciousness" (*Hollywood* 118) allows us to see how shared elements in horror texts of a given era are due to neither mere coincidence nor to direct connections between the films. Rather, we can read horror these commonalities as capturing and communicating particular zeitgeists.

Yet horror texts—both cinematic and literary—offer more than just a reflection or indication of social moods, fears, and thoughts; they also provide a more contained and manageable space in which to negotiate real-world, large-scale complex cultural experiences. This is not a feature unique to horror, but it is still a critical component of the genre. In *Images of Fear: How Horror Stories Helped Shape Modern Culture (1818-1918)*, Martin Tropp explains:

> Horror stories, when they work, construct a fictional edifice of fear and deconstruct it simultaneously, dissipating terror in the act of creating it. And real horrors are filtered through the expectations of readers trained in responding to popular fiction, familiar with a set of images, a language, and pattern of development. Horror fiction gives the reader the tools to "read" experiences that would otherwise, like nightmares, be incommunicable. In that way, the inexpressible and private becomes understandable and communal, shared and safe. (5)

Ultimately much more intriguing than just an assertion that no text is created in a vacuum, Tropp's argument shows how attempts to process real-world, albeit often unbelievable and extraordinary, horrors are often filtered through understandings gained from fictional horror. Such a claim lends a sense of agency to the horror genre that is not immediately present in King's analogy. Rather than the horror genre merely being an instrument by which individuals may observe cultural fears, the genre instead becomes a tool for active engagement with social concerns. Through dynamic and often forceful (perhaps even violent) confrontations, the genre is able to foist a sense of horror on its audience that is both undeniable and unavoidable.

Through its generic objective to disgust, horrify, or otherwise outrage its audience, horror possesses the ability to confront its audience with revelations about reality and the driving forces that govern it. Adam Lowenstein suggests that modern horror offers "a shocking collision of film, spectator, and history where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted, and intertwined" (*Shocking* 2). These collisions, which he terms as allegorical moments, not only reveal the polysemous nature of horror but also create an awareness of how horror can serve as a vehicle for addressing—as well as challenging—representations and understandings of historical trauma and national identity. Linnie Blake arrives at a similar conclusion when she argues that the critical exploration of a nation's horror films become a way to handle "the traumatic past" while also "exposing the layers of obfuscation, denial or revisionism with which those wounds are dressed in service of dominant ideologies of national identity" (*Wounds* 23). The horror genre, shocking its audience through depictions of the horrific, exposes the ways that dominant ideologies tether individual and cultural identities. And

these tethers are indubitably rooted in place for, as Louis Althusser suggests to his readers, ideologies provide people with "the *recognition* that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence" (178). Thus, through its destruction of the tethers crafted and maintained by certain ideologies, the horror genre continually whispers a sinister thought: perhaps one's place in the world is never truly secure, fixed, or safe.

EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

Hill House. The Bate's Motel. Camp Crystal Lake. 'Salem's Lot. The horror genre is peppered with iconic places that, often despite their fictionality, continue to skulk in our collective minds. Noted philosopher, cultural theorist, and humanist geographer, Edward S. Casey admits that "place has shown itself capable of inspiring complicated and variegated discussions" (*Fate xii*). It should not be unexpected then that so many scholars seek to investigate how places allow the horror genre in general (as well as specific, individual texts) to explore, represent, and comment on a wide range of issues, including gender, identity, and family. Examining modern horror's Gothic roots, Gina Wisker claims that "Gothic horror preys upon fears of displacement, incarceration, loss of identity, home, heritage, family, friends, and security" (147). The interspersion within Wisker's list of concepts of place alongside certain cultural constructs suggests, however subtly, that such ideas are not separate but interrelated within the genre of horror. Fred Botting, also speaking of the Gothic, argues that a staple of the genre is heterotopias (19). These heterotopias, he suggests, become unique spaces wherein certain cultural actions and social practices are often codified and occasionally

condoned.[5] Dale Bailey, suggesting that the haunted house is in many ways the modern

American horror's version of the Gothic castle, argues that haunted house narratives offer

the room to analyze the beliefs and assumptions that American culture holds to be self-

evident truths (6). Bernice M. Murphy, specifically exploring certain sub-genres like the

Suburban Gothic, also sees important relationships in horror between "living

environment and psychology" (*Suburban* 2). And, of course, Carol J. Clover famously

theorized that the modern slasher film addresses cultural anxieties about female sexuality

through elements such as the frequent womblike depictions of what she labels the

Terrible Place. As these and so many other horror scholars maintain: if the horror genre

serves as a cultural barometer, than place, like the mercury within the instrument, offers a

marking gauge.

This is especially true when such a barometer is measuring the pressures of

postmodern culture. Fredric Jameson, in his influential analysis of postmodernism,

claims that a transformation within this era occurred wherein space (rather than time)

now governs nearly all categories of life (*Postmodernism* 16). Perhaps then it is not

surprising that Foucault claimed that space is the primary source of this period's anxiety

(23). The results of such a paradigm shift are gargantuan and, as a result, the

postmodern—like horror itself—consists of violent confrontations between the familiar

and the unfamiliar, between old risks and new rewards (Soja 60). Edward W. Soja argues

that part of this postmodern condition is an "unsettled and unsettling geography" in

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[5] Foucault defines heterotopias as "something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24). These heterotopias may manifest in a number of ways— boarding schools, military experiences, psychiatric hospitals, and prisons—and are defined in part by their multi-layered natures.

which the "grip of older categories, boundaries, and separations is weakening. What was central is now being pushed to the margins, while the once tactful fringes boldly assert a new-found centrality" (60). And postmodern horror—which Isabel Cristina Pinedo argues by definition disrupts the borders and rejects boundaries—is particularly attuned to exploring the postmodern anxieties about the existences, permutations, and intrusions of spaces and places.

Spaces and places may dominate the postmodern conscious; however, the distinction and exact relationship between these terms is often obscured and occasionally ignored. Casey offers the humorous albeit astute remark that "[t]he difference between space and place is one of the best-kept secrets in philosophy" ("Smooth" 270). This opacity is due, in part, to a circuitous trajectory of philosophical thought on the importance (or lack thereof) of separating and prioritizing space and/or place (Casey "Smooth"). The distinctions between the two terms are further confused by the fact that the idea of social space (or socially produced space) proposed by theorists such as Lefebvre often functions similarly to place, insofar as both place and social space are considered sites of meaning, attachment, and investment (Cresswell, *Place* 10). Tuan proposes that it is actually this act of understanding and valuing a site that ultimately transforms space into place (*Space* 6). Starting with a slightly different premise, Casey nevertheless proposes a similar conclusion when he writes that whereas space "is the name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it," place is "the immediate ambiance of my lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interests that compose my life-history" ("Body" 404). These are definitions rooted firmly in a

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phenomenological approach, which is not a primary methodology of this dissertation. Nevertheless, these definitions affirm an important component of place: its role in humans' lives. Places, Edward Relph writes, "are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centres of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties. Indeed our relationships with places are just as necessary, varied, and sometimes perhaps just as unpleasant, as our relationships with other people" (141). And, as with all affairs, these relationships with place are experienced on multiple, often simultaneous (and occasionally conflicting) levels and through a variety of affordances. To fully grasp the role of place within humans' lives, it is necessary to explore how physical and mental interactions, social practices, and personal and cultural identities all work together to help shape place.

One dimension of place, perhaps the most commonly considered aspect, is the physical. Places are (or at least can be) concretely-defined locations, or sites in space, wherein certain activities are situated. Yet this does not mean that they should be viewed solely as individual or insular locations. Especially with the processes of globalization at work, places are often interrelated systems, operating on a number of levels and scopes (J. Agnew 327). This latter view is critical for understanding how modes of mobility—as demonstrated by commuters, travelers, and other itinerants—become integral components of how certain places are defined. It also provides a new appreciation for how places can and are experienced, processed, and rendered familiar through physical, bodily interactions.[6] The corporeal body acts as a vehicle for engaging with place; bodies

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[6] Casey—drawing upon the ideas of scholars such as Heidegger, Bourdieu, Lefebvre, and Tuan—offers in-depth discussions of the body and place in many of his works, including *The Fate of Place* and in "Body, Self, and Landscape."

provide locational cues such as up, down, far, and away. Just as importantly, the body

provides the link between place and the self, the latter of which Casey defines as "the

agency and identity of the geographical subject" ("Body" 405). Elizabeth Grosz

highlights a critical dimension of such a relationship through her exploration of the

pivotal roles certain places—like cities—play in the social construction of the sexed body

and the subjective self. She examines at length what she views as the critical reciprocal

relationship between bodies (which she defines as tangible, physiological objects

transformed into a critical part of the human psyche through physical and social

interactions) and cities (which she defines as a complicated system of political,

architectural, social, geographical relationships) (104-05). At the same time that the city

governs and transforms the body, Grosz argues, the city itself responds to the needs and

demands of the body's employment of this cultural space (109).

Thus places are more than physical locations; they are also the site of social life

and the location wherein in everyday happenings occur (J. Agnew 326). Place is an

amalgamation of the spatial and the social. And place mingles into all aspects of social

life. It is for this reason that Lefebvre maintains: "(Social) space is not a thing among

other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced,

and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their

(relative) order and/or (relative) disorder" (*Production* 73). For Lefebvre, approaching

the subject as a Marxist, social spaces are the settings for social exchanges. Social spaces

(what other humanist geographers simply call place) serve as critical sites for the

transactions—of money, of power, of knowledge—that produce social life. Social life is

transcribed in social space and within place. At the same time, however, that social space

becomes the place for social life, it is itself affected by the ebbs and flows of social life. "Space," Soja writes, "in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (79-80). His linguistic choices—translation, transformation, and experience—are evocative, revealing in three simple words a very complex system. These three words indicate performance, progression, and a process of change inherent to social life and fundamental to social space. Yet built into these words is also an acknowledgement of interpretation, of analysis, and of evaluation that although perhaps not easily quantified are still perceptible and present within a placed social life.

Places are critical sites for the reception, production, and distribution of knowledge and cultural understanding (J. Agnew 328). This remains true even in the current digital era where the Internet reigns supreme. After all, as John A. Agnew asserts, even those information and communications systems only loosely rooted in a physical space nonetheless almost always produce networks that "are grounded somewhere and in someone's sociospatial imagination" (328). Yet places are more than locations wherein knowledge is shared; places shape the expression of information. In his larger argument about the connection between what he calls "location and locution," David N. Livingstone argues that existing places directly influence how people articulate ideas, affect how people hear and process communicated thoughts, and even control how people view what can or cannot be expressed (75). Tim Cresswell suggests that this power of place extends to the assessment of whether or not certain behaviors are deemed normative or transgressive, or rather "that which is in place to that which is out of place" (*In Place* 10). He points to the term "outsider" as not only a descriptor of someone new

or unfamiliar with a place, but also a designation for an individual who "does not properly understand the behavior expected of people in a town, region, or nation. Outsiders are often despised and suspected of being troublemakers. They are people 'out of place'" (25-26). Places construct boundaries that provide both a sense of belonging and a sense of exclusion. These boundaries help differentiate and interpret the individuals, groups, actions, and information that exist within and outside of certain places. Through its ability to govern a sense of me/you, us/them, self/Other, place—or perhaps more accurately a sense of place—is a nonpareil feature of belonging.

It is through this act of belonging, at least in part, that a sense of identity is created through an engagement with place. Gillian Rose suggests that the feeling of belonging to a place is produced "because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (89). The belief that places are inseparably intertwined with a person's sense of identity is at the heart of Gaston Bachelard's topoanalysis. Bachelard believed that topoanalysis, which he defined as the "systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives," offers intimate and accurate insight into a person's memory, imagination, and very existence (8). "It is utterly part of our nature to want roots, to need roots, to struggle for roots, for a sense of belonging, for some place that is recognized as *mine,* as *yours,* as *ours*" (Coles 139). This is because humans not only exist in places, they need and want places to believe in, to connect with, to value, and simply to call their own.

THE HEART OF A PLACELESS WORLD

Yet what happens when place is lost? What happens when a person's sense of place erodes, when the places that shape social and individual identity lose their own

distinctiveness? What happens when being in place transform into placelessness? Places

are all around. They are physically-defined structures, socially and culturally-mediated

ideas, and psychological constructs. They are both concrete and abstract, capable of

being fixed and fluid, and connected to both thought and practice. Humans need place.

Directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, for good or for ill, places shape

human experiences. That does not mean, however, that people's relationships with

place—or even places themselves—are impervious or immutable. In his seminal 1976

Place and Placelessness, Relph suggests that "we are at present subjecting ourselves to

the forces of placelessness and are losing our sense of place" (79). He argues that the

phenomenon of placelessness can be seen throughout human history; however, the

current (postmodern) sense of placelessness deserves special attention (79-80). This does

not mean that current manifestations of placelessness should be seen as simply inevitable,

unavoidable, undesirable, all-encompassing, or something that can be removed through

smarter design decisions. Rather, Relph stresses that "[w]hat is important is to recognise

that placelessness is an attitude and an expression of that attitude which is becoming

increasingly dominant, and that it is less and less possible to have a deeply felt sense of

place or to create places authentically" (80).

Relph's study is deeply rooted in a phenomenological methodology; as a result,

he relies heavily on terms like *authentic* and *inauthentic* to define and distinguish

placelessness. Many scholars hesitate to use these terms, and in an investigation that is

not intended to be primarily rooted in phenomenology, I too acknowledge the potential

stickiness of these concepts. Yet Relph's explanation of what he considers an inauthentic

attitude to place, something that can be produced through placelessness, is insightful and

relevant to this dissertation. Building upon the ideas of Heidegger, Wild, Satre, and Ellul, Relph first constructs his own definition of inauthenticity and then translates this idea into understandings of place. He suggests that:

> An inauthentic attitude to place is essentially no sense of place, for it involves no awareness of the deep and symbolic significances of places and no appreciation of their identities. It is merely an attitude which is socially convenient and acceptable—an uncritically accepted stereotype, an intellectual or aesthetic fashion that can be adopted without real involvement. In inauthentic experience places are seen only in terms of more or less useful features, or through some abstract *a priori* model and rigid habits of thought and behaviour; above all such experiences are casual, superficial, and partial.
>
> Inauthentic attitudes to place may be unselfconscious, stemming from an uncritical acceptance of mass values; or they may be selfconscious and based on a formal espousal of objectivist techniques aimed at achieving efficiency. The former are discussed here in the context of 'kitsch', particularly as it is displayed in attitudes towards 'home' and the attitudes of tourists; the latter are considered with reference to *technique* in planning. (82)

Relph's description of an inauthentic attitude toward place, which is both a cause and effect of placelessness, strikes at the heart of the notion that place imbues meaning to human life, influences identity and information, and shapes social and cultural understandings. This inauthentic attitude transforms or reduces (depending on one's

perspective) place from a meaningful site into meaningless fluff. If places are centers of

meaning then impaired relationships with place, or inauthentic attitudes toward place,

may produce altered meanings and incomplete cultural or individual identities. When an

individual, group, or society experiences a disconnection towards or alienation from a

place or places the resultant emotion can be a sense of placelessness.

Writing less than a decade after the publication of Relph's *Place and

Placelessness,* Leonard Lutwack remarks that although placelessness may be only now

coming to the attention of humanist geographers, it has been on the minds of writers for

the past hundred years (183). He suggests that loss of place is an undeniable feature of

literature within the last century and this motif appears in a variety of ways: attempting to

either reject or reconnect to places; experiencing feelings of alienation; and/or escaping

from or altering reality through nostalgia, hallucination, or fantasy (184). Paul

Smethurst, narrowing his focus specifically to contemporary fiction, argues that the trope

of placelessness often symbolizes the flaws of the postmodern life. Geographical

placelessness, he suggests, converts into metaphorical placelessness as the postmodern

lives of the characters becomes hollow, purposeless, and inconsequential (20). Lutwack

and Smethurst are focused predominantly on literature, but placelessness is not limited to

literary expressions. Casey, for example, discusses how Anselm Kiefer's 1980 painting

Horror Vacui shows individuals hunched together in a vast, empty dome that Casey reads

as "the very shell of a placeless world" (*Getting xi*). This repetition of placelessness

within countless literary, cinematic, and other artistic works reinforces the increasingly

resilient cultural belief that placelessness is unavoidable and inescapable.

By definition, placelessness is neither a strictly negative nor positive state-of-being; however, it is the result of casual, superficial, or partial interactions and experiences with a place or places. Such experiences often create impersonal, inaccurate, or incomplete relationships with places that hamper both conscious and unconscious efforts to understand, perceive, and appreciate the significance of places, their roles in societal and individual developments, and their rich identities. Lucy R. Lippard eloquently suggests that within a "'geography of nowhere,'" placelessness "may simply be place ignored, unseen, or unknown" (9). Such a description illuminates why placelessness is so often ascribed negative connotations. Placelessness becomes both a cause and an effect of specific individual and cultural anxieties, and many discussions of placelessness play upon these fears and feelings of loss. Mahyar Arefi argues that through the loss of the meanings of and connections to place, placelessness frequently translates into cultural narratives of loss ("Non-Place" 179).[7] This sense of loss can lead to a crisis of identity as people find themselves searching for what has been eliminated or otherwise reduced by placelessness. Many people therefore associate placelessness with undesirable feelings and perceive it as a contributing factor in their reduced living experiences (Arefi, "Pedagogy" 104). Casey nicely sums up this idea when he writes: "The emotional symptoms of placelessness—homesickness, disorientation, depression, desolation—mimic the phenomenon itself. Each of these symptoms involves a sense of unbearable emptiness" (*Getting x*). For many individuals the terror produced by such

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[7] Samira Kawash, in her examination of the Palestine crisis, echoes a similar idea when she argues that the placeless (and often gendered) body—unlike the placed body—is frequently forced to contract, to go nowhere, and that eventually "the body with no place is pressured to disappear" altogether (40).

emptiness leads to "*horror vacui,* the unbridled terror occasioned by the mere contemplation of an entirely vacuous space" (*xi*).

These elements of placelessness produce a powerful concoction, one that has the potential to become a true source of horror. And what better place to examine such horror than within the horror genre? Although there is a lack of critical attention on the role of placelessness within the horror genre, scholars do regularly examine how people and places within horror texts are destroyed and broken, both literally and figuratively. I argue that the horror genre regularly reveals placelessness through the physical destruction of places as well as through the loss of a sense of place. Yet it also does so through the devastation of the bodies that inhabit these places. Elaine Scarry claims that "intense pain … destroys a person's self and world" and is furthermore "language-destroying; as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the context of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject" (35). A body in pain is a body that is unable to fully connect to place. And there are endless bodies in pain within the horror genre. The destruction of both bodies and places consequently becomes both a cause and effect of placelessness within the genre, producing a horrific untethering that unmasks larger cultural fears, especially those connected to globalization.

HORRIFYING GLOBALIZATION

Placelessness occurs through the intentional or unintentional eradication or erosion of the diversity, distinctiveness, and identities of a place or places. Individuals can be placeless without their knowing it; it is not necessary to be attuned to this state in order to be affected by the effects of placelessness. Placelessness is both an internal

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response to a personal or social detachment from place as well as an external condition

brought about through cultural and global developments. Melanie Smith suggests that

most people have experienced placelessness, what she considers to be that intangible

emotional response to one's environment that "encapsulates the 'could be anywhere'

feeling" experienced in places like shopping malls, theme parks, and even foreign resorts

(99). Such places often promote an inauthentic attitude toward place, one purposefully

encouraged through planning and design, in an effort to bring recognizable, homey, and

familiar elements to new, less intimate, and (sometimes literally) foreign places. Yet, as

she points out, renderings of the home in non-home places are nonetheless unsettling

because these home elements are in actuality "displaced or misplaced, local heritage has

often been eroded to make way for them, and the result is a kind of nowhere land, home

to no one" (99). Smith's description of this result of placelessness—in which a sense of

home and the local is disrupted and perhaps even destroyed—mirrors many people's

discussions and concerns about globalization. Nick Stevenson states that many people

see the "global village" as replacing "a hierarchical national culture with one that is

depthless, kitsch, and placeless" (41). Stevenson proposes that such descriptions are

hyperbolic, and ultimately fail to fully capture the realities of globalization.

Nevertheless, a "placeless narrative" still governs many discussions of globalization

(Sheppard 312).

Most scholars agree that, although Theodore Levitt may not have coined the term

globalization, his 1983 article and its proclamation that the "globalization of markets is at

hand" helped push the term into popularity (92). Globalization is certainly not new to

human history; yet, as many theorists—including prominent sociologists Ulrich Beck and

Anthony Gibbens—acknowledge, the processes of globalization have been more prominently felt since the mid-twentieth century and, as a result, affect (to varying degrees) most features of contemporary life (Jones 2). In his *Dictionary of Globalization,* Andrew Jones suggests that globalization, at its most basic level, is "the growing interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all aspects of society" (2). On the whole, this definition elicits fairly affirmative connotations, highlighting the admittedly positive aspects of globalization. Yet "the process of globalization, the emergence of the sense that the world is a single place" (Featherstone *Undoing* 88) involves an integration, and potential conflation, of societies and places that is not without consequences. For example, Jan Aart Scholte discusses how globalization demands new ontological modes of thinking. "Globalization", he writes, "has made the identification of boundaries – and associated notions of 'here' and 'there', 'far' and 'near', 'outside' and 'inside', 'home' and 'away', 'them' and 'us' – more problematic than ever" (49).

Globalization impacts place as well as understandings of place in part because it destabilizes many cultures' traditional understandings of time and space. Featherstone argues that one consequence of globalization is the power that other cultures gain in voicing and sharing their experiences, their histories, their narratives. Globalization thus reveals that there has never been one dominant history by promoting the "sense that there are plural histories to the world, that there are diverse cultures and particularities which were excluded from Western modernity's universalistic project, but now surface to the extent that they cast doubts on the viability of the project" (*Undoing* 89). America has traditionally been viewed "on top" and even "in first place," and certainly there are political and economic precedents that encourage these beliefs. Yet the pluralities of

histories promoted by globalization (not to mention postmodernity) undermines the conclusively right to instinctively and unequivocally claim a definite hierarchical and imperial view of the world and one's place in it. The belief that America's place is in the center of everything is brought into question by the reality that globalization provides "several organizational options at the same time" and these options allow for "[m]ultiple identities and the decentring of the social subject" (Pieterse 52). Although such an expansion allows for a plethora of new options and promotes a certain sense of hybridization, it also deprives the sense of global centrality so fundamental to many cultural and individual perceptions of America's place in the world.

The tendency to see one's homeland as being at the center of the world seems to be a nearly universal human response. Underlying this tendency is the claim, often implicit, that there is something inherently valuable (and perhaps even preferable) about the place that their home(land) occupies (Tuan *Space* 149). Such a belief, however, can be difficult to sustain in a globalized world. When placelessness follows the processes of globalization, it strips societies and individuals of their feelings of belonging— historically as well as geographically—that they once found in traditional understandings of place (Smethurst 222). This sense of loss helps account for why a dominant and pervasive rhetoric of globalization, especially within American discourses, constructs and portrays globalization as a modern invasive and invading force against which nations, cultures, and individuals—on both local and global levels—must fight. According to Frederick Buell, the term global produced a concern in America due to "the alarmed perception that the United States was slipping from a position of global centrality" (552). The result was that, until the national discourse strove to be more globally-aware, the

term global was "the nightmare that haunted Americans" (553). Globalization was the ultimate boogey-man, Buell explains, because it was seen as remaining, "just under the surface, a threat to reconstituting 'normalcy.' It threatens to dissolve borders and even the most reterritorialized of normalcies into grotesqueness and heterogeneity" (578). American cultural anxieties about globalization are clearly complicated; however, it is apparent that these tensions are rooted in fears of being untethered from the dominant cultural interpretations of America's "normal" place in the world.

It is perhaps then unsurprising that these fears of globalization are so frequently articulated in a genre dedicated to expressions of fear. Pinedo suggests that postmodern horror is uniquely situated to depict the postmodern world as "an unstable one in which traditional (dichotomous) categories break down, boundaries blur, institutions fall into question. . . . Consensus in the possibility of mastery is lost, universalizing grand theory is discredited, and the stable, unified, coherent self acquires the status of a fiction" (86). Her description, upon which she builds her definition of postmodern horror, speaks to a certain generic affinity to (postmodern) globalization and its inherent destabilizations. Edited collections—including *Horror after 9/11: World of Fear, Cinema of Terror* and *American Horror Film: The Genre at the Turn of the Millennium*—illustrate that there are a number of scholars who have turned to explorations of globalization in horror. Yet although there is scholarship on globalization and the horror genre, there needs to be more focus on how constructions of place within horror address postmodern America's larger anxieties about globalization. Because too often globalization is perceived as synonymous with Americanization, too much of the existing horror scholarship focuses on how globalization has spread American culture or on how other cultures are impacted

by globalization rather than investigating how globalization might be itself a source of terror within American texts.

THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

America (by which most, myself included, mean the USA) does shape the forces of globalization. As George Ritzer and Todd Stillman blatantly admit: "No subscriber to a globalization standpoint would ever deny that the USA is a dominant force in the world" (42). Thus, when discussing globalization, it is necessary to contextualize and perhaps even distinguish American cultural interactions and understandings from non-American ones. After all, many continue to equate globalization with American imperialism and Americanization, the promulgation and production of various elements of the "American way of life." Even though Americanization is not the only global force, nor is it nearly as menacing to local and national cultures as many believe (Ritzer and Stillman 42), Americanization does indisputably exist and manifest itself in countless ways, from the pervasive reach of Hollywood to the U.S. military presence felt around the world. Ritzer and Stillman may be correct that Americanization is neither a guaranteed nor an indefinite force and that the interest in and desire for the American way of life may decline over time (46). But, for now at least, it continues to play an undeniable and important role in identity formation and therefore must be properly contextualized. Too often Americanization is demonized or viewed as merely the process of trying to convert the world into American clones. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues that scholars of national cinema must realize that "our task is not to analyze how the entire globe is engulfed into the massive process of Americanization but how 'America' as a set of conflicting images is articulated to other sets of images, as the effect

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of which the identities of many other nations partially emerge" (108). Although

Yoshimoto is focused primarily on global image culture, his proposal bears further

consideration for understanding American perceptions of America. Other nations may

expose their identities through their cinematic juxtapositions of contradictory images of

America; however, such exposure is not limited to foreign cultural identities. Conflicting

images of America and America's place, tied into and moving beyond Americanization,

also permeate American culture.

Americanization affects American perceptions of the rest of the world and

America's place within that world. Richard Pells discusses that Americans must also

deal with the repercussions of an Americanized world. "Americans live with it too. And

not always happily. When they travel abroad, hoping to experience the idiosyncratic

charms of other countries, they are often horrified by the extent to which foreign lands

seem—superficially—Americanized" (*xv*). His example may sound frivolous, what is

often called in pop culture a "first-world problem;" however, the ramifications of

encountering Americanized places outside of the United States are potentially much

graver than disappointing vacation experiences. They can, for example, affect the

formation of identity when confronted with real-world horrific events. Brian J. Williams

explores, for example, how contemporary war texts from the Gulf Wars to the current

Iraq War increasingly contain what he calls anatopisms, "the presence of items that seem

spatially out of place, as foreign to their location as anachronisms are foreign to their

times" (360). He argues that these war texts often show foreign combat zones that seem

to be increasingly filled with familiar elements of home. More than just causing a sense

of déjà vu, "[t]he narrative of home/away that grounds the soldier's identity comes under

violent attack, both literally and epistemologically, as these emblems of the global market confuse ideas of what should belong to an American and what should belong to an Iraqi" (375). The land itself replaces the human enemy as the antagonist of US combatants' physical and psychological battles. Williams proposes that this shift has potentially dire implications for real-world soldiers' physical and emotional well-beings, but it can also be seen a producing a shift in which it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone—not just soldiers—to understand America's place within the global world when the boundaries of home/away, us/them, American/non-American seem to no longer exist.

For many Americans—especially those who are never fully confronted by such realities as the Americanized world—there is something perhaps "even more unsettling" about viewing the inescapable effects of Americanization (and America's place within the world) within the boundaries of America itself (Pells *xv*). "The fear of losing one's unique cultural heritage as one becomes an affluent consumer of America's goods and services, movies, and mass circulation magazines," Pells proposes, "is as strong in the United States as it is in Europe" (*xvi*). Wilbur Zelinsky claims that it is unsurprising that a belief in the increasing placelessness of America continues to dominant cultural perceptions. He draws attention to the numerous scholarly investigations supporting this idea as well as the considerable degree to which Americans in their everyday lives are inundated by mass-culture; flooded by technology; surrounded by homogenizing operations like fast-food chains; and living in featureless, always-familiar establishments such as hotels and government facilities (1).

Zelinsky begins his book *Not yet a Placeless Land: Tracking an Evolving American Geography* with the question: "Is the United States becoming a placeless

land?" (1). Ultimately, as the title of his book suggests, he arrives at the conclusion that

America is not entirely placeless; that America is a paradox in which the land is

concurrently becoming more standardized and also more distinct and unique (269).

Lurking within Zelinsky's book, however, is an intriguing question: does the reality of

the situation (the not-yet-placelessness of America) take precedence over the belief of the

situation (the encroaching sense of placelessness within America)? Perhaps in certain

cases, the real-world does take precedence—such as in actual applications of housing and

architectural planning or the real-life developments of cultural establishments. Yet I

would argue that within the realm of horror, the reality is less significant than the

perception when it comes to the belief that America is becoming increasingly placeless.

Although discussing German films' engagement with American ideals, Steffen Hantke is

nevertheless correct in saying that horror texts can reveal how "American exceptionalism

becomes absurd when American culture has successfully gone global; every place will in

fact be like every other place" ("Dialogue" 76). The fear that a place's individuality can

evaporate without a trace persists and pervades in American beliefs about their/America's

place. The belief that place within the US is weakened to the point of extinction that

impairs American understandings of spatial relationships (Jameson *Postmodern* 127).

Karen Halttunen poetically begins her presidential address to the American Studies

Association by saying: "A rising chorus of modern-day Jeremiahs proclaims the death of

place in American life" (1). "Despair about placelessness," Dolores Hayden boldly

asserts, "is as much a part of American experience as pleasure in the sense of place"

(184). No matter if such worries are unfounded and America is not yet placeless, the

fears of a placeless America are themselves very real.

Such fears are only exacerbated by real-world systems of operation such as "runaway productions," film (and TV) shoots filmed not only outside of Hollywood but often outside of the US entirely. For example, hundreds (if not thousands) of US films and TV shows have been and continue to be filmed—for purposes of convenience and cost—in Canadian locales like Vancouver, Toronto, and Ontario. Intriguingly, many of these out-sourced projects, like the horror TV shows *The X-Files* and *Supernatural,* regularly emphasize within the narratives their supposedly U.S. settings. Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher discuss how within the United States the "runaway production" produces "considerable angst" not only for those who find themselves with out-sourced jobs but also for those who view these productions "as some kind of cultural affront" (3).[8] The idea that "foreign" locations could so easily replace "real" US places (and that conversely other places could so easily be mistaken for the US) creates cultural anxieties about iconic, authentic, and symbolic landscapes and the identities rooted in these places. Sarah Matheson suggests that the "language of placelessness" speaks to many of these anxieties through its depiction of urban environments as becoming standardized landscapes rather than distinct and unique places (131). Although Matheson is speaking particularly of the Canadian attitudes towards having iconic Canadian cities appropriated, this sensation is not limited by geographical or cultural borders. The US can be rendered equally placeless with the revelation that depictions of the supposedly quintessential places of the US are not even filmed within its national borders.

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[8] Elmer and Gasher cite, for example, the outcry raised by many due to the fact that the 2003 TV movie *Rudy: The Rudy Giuliani Story* was filmed not in New York but in Toronto. Protestors saw such a decision as unpatriotic and neither ethically nor morally right for a film "about the American Spirit" (3).

The recent push to 'bring back' runaway productions to the US is no doubt

financially motivated; however, there is more to the issue than just a return of money. In

a July 2015 speech to the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, Senator Kevin de León

claimed: "The entertainment industry is very much a part of California's golden history."

De León is referencing a specific historical period; however, he is also constructing a past

in which America's place (or in this case Hollywood's place) is firmly at the center of the

entertainment industry. Pierre Bourdieu calls this "embodied history, internalized as a

second nature and so forgotten as history" the habitus (56). Bourdieu quotes Durkheim's

argument that the past is a critical, though unconscious, part of one's identity that is so

integral to identity formation "that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves

precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us" (qtd. in Bourdieu 56). Yet it is

important to remember that, as Pierre Nora argues, history is but a representation of the

past, the always incomplete attempt to rebuild something that no longer exists (8).

Margaret E. Farrar claims that attempts to claim memories of place, particularly when in

service of the trappings of this definition of history, are really part of an often gut-instinct

of American culture to cling to a nostalgia for a past that has little to do with memory and

much more to do with symbols. Any contradictions to these constructions of history,

especially those rooted in beliefs about American place(s), are consequently viewed and

treated as threats to the larger sense of community.

Tuan suggests that it is human nature to need and create symbolic meaning, and

that it is through imbuing a place with symbolic meaning that an individual can become

vehemently devoted to places (such as a nation-state) too large to fully experience (*Space*

18). These symbolic places help build collective identities and communities. As D. W.

Meinig writes: "Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together" (164). Yet, as Benedict Anderson points out, the nation must be understood as an imagined community that is built not on actual one-on-one interactions with every member but rather through the image of shared relationships and connections that lives in each individual's mind (6). As relationships with people and places change, these images evolve. New ways of understanding are required, for example, as the meanings of American space and American place become less clear. This can be challenging and such change is not always well-received, however, as it "tests the national identity, which has long rested on belief in archetypal American places" (Agnew and Smith *x*).

At the end of his literal and philosophical meanderings of America, Jean Baudrillard proposed that the "image of America becomes imaginary for Americans themselves, at a point when it is without doubt profoundly compromised" (*America* 125). Although Baudrillard seems unwilling to confirm if such a compromise has indeed occurred, it does seem likely that the image of America is at least partially colored by the rose-tinted glasses of nostalgia. The ideas of nostalgia—an intense, often physical as well as emotional longing for a place, for a home, for a remembered past—will be a dominant and repeating motif in this dissertation. Many works of fiction reveal "a global culture haunted by nostalgia for secure national identities, which is to say for identities that large numbers of people had talked themselves into believing were the ones guaranteed by their birth in a particular nation" (Peyser 19). American culture and

American perceptions of place seem particularly haunted by this type of nostalgia. And let's face it: there is no better genre than that of horror for exploring such hauntings.

<center>**THE ROAD AHEAD**</center>

The main chapters of this dissertation will spiral outward from the most localized of places (the home) to the most globalized of places (the tourism destination). Paul Wells suggests a comparable schema for analyzing horror when he states that, at their most fundamental level, "horror texts engage with the collapse of social/socialised formations. These range from the personal to the familial, the communal, the national, and the global" (9-10). Many scholars, when converting theories of globalization from the abstract to real-world applications, also employ a similar "multi-scalar (local, national, regional, global) framework" (Jones 14-15). This division from the local to the global additionally mimics Relph's own discussion of placelessness, in which he distinguishes the attitudes toward *home* and *tourism* as two critical ways that placelessness can be experienced (82-85). Thus, it only made sense to employ a similar structure to help highlight what I see as a discernable pattern of placelessness in American horror.[9] Each chapter traces a different facet of this pattern through both brief surveys of a number of familiar and less well-known horror works as well as through close readings/screenings of four different texts specifically chosen to further expose the primary themes of that chapter. There were many textual options for these chapters and,

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[9] Although the main chapters of this dissertation create a rhetoric of home/everyday places and away/exotic places, I do not intend for readers to see these components and locations as unrelated. Within the placelessness narrative of globalization, the boundaries separating *home* and *away* are, to a certain degree, both artificial and mutable. Likewise, the feelings of placelessness associated with home and those connected to away/tourism frequently overlap and intersect with one another. Thus, although the main chapters of this dissertation focus on different places, it is the amalgamation and repetition of all of these different places (and accompanying tropes) within American horror that ultimately suggests that the genre is both producing and addressing particularly American cultural fears connected to placelessness and globalization.

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as a result, the selected works may feel arbitrary; however, I tried to choose works for my close-readings that allowed me to address anxieties that, while perhaps not unique to American culture, are nevertheless particularly attuned to the specific places examined in this dissertation. Often I had to discard texts that I had hoped to write about as well as texts that would have offered lovely examples in favor of being able to offer in each chapter specific analyses that could, by being more in-depth, dig to the heart of the matter. As a result, my selections are intended to prompt the beginning rather than the end of discussions about particular American fears.

In Chapter 1, "There's No Place like Home: Constructions of the Home within American Horror," I look at two versions of the *home* within American horror: (1) home as the physical, architecturally defined house and (2) home as the expanded spaces of the town in which one lives. I do not intend to imply that home-as-house and home-as-town are the same concept; however, both tend to manifest horror through similar narratives of invasion (psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual). I maintain that through these invasions, the home ceases to be a familiar, nostalgically welcoming place and instead transforms into a placeless source of uncanny terror on local, domestic, and familial levels.

Moving away from the literal home, Chapter 2, "All around Me are Familiar Places: Everyday Places in American Horror," explores places familiar to both everyday life and the horror genre: malls/stores, hotels, schools, and hospitals/mental asylums. I investigate how these the horror genre regularly suggests that there is a difference between places experienced every day and places that shed light on concepts of the everyday. In doing so, the horror genre is able to reveal the inherent and often

unrecognized placelessness that defines our cultural understandings of the everyday lives

and places of America.

Starting with Chapter 3, "Dying to Get Away: Travels across the Local

Landscapes of American Horror," I shift focus away from stationary manifestations of

placelessness to examine the ever-shifting boundaries of identity and sensations of

placelessness associated with mobility, travel, and tourism. In particular, I examine the

historical and continuing tensions in American culture between constructions of the

American landscape and ideas of the wilderness. I argue that the horror genre purposely

blurs the boundaries between these categories to create a placelessness wherein we must

question America's place in the world.

Chapter 4, "Send Me a Post(morem) Card: Cultural Tourism in Post-9/11

American Horror Films," intentionally deviates from the attempts of the previous

chapters to offer both literary and cinematic examples spanning the many decades since

WWII. Instead, I focus on a specific trend: post-9/11 horror films featuring the horrific

placelessness encountered by American tourists abroad. I argue that these texts

ultimately reveal the important ways that September 11, 2001 problematized ontological

thoughts about our place in ways that continue to disturb and disrupt.

In my final section, I posit the idea that the cultural untetherings connected to

placelessness exhibited in American horror speaks to a larger cultural Imposter

Syndrome. I tie this idea, which I see as the natural conclusion to my ideas about the

particularly American cultural anxieties about placelessness and globalization, to

questions of adaptation. Adaptation studies frequently centers on issues of fidelity and

fears that American horror has "run out of ideas" and these concerns, I argue, reveal

future areas for investigation of this dissertation's themes and ideas.

CHAPTER ONE

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME:

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE HOME IN AMERICAN HORROR

> Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and
> everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers
> new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference.
>   bell hooks, *Yearning* (148)

> Welcome to the new home of the Finn Family. Don't be
> afraid. Wipe your feet on the mat. Ah,
>   HOME SWEET HORROR
>   Come. Step Inside. But be warned. This old house only
> seems empty. Because thanks to a harmless children's
> game, Bloody Mary just might make an appearance in a
> mirror near you.
>   Careful now. She scratches, see. There's blood under
> her fingernails.
>   Any questions, just ask. Because this old house is dying
> to talk.
>   James Preller, *Home Sweet Horror* (1)

James Preller's 2013 early-reader chapter book *Home Sweet Horror* opens with a

warning: do not mistake this house for the comforting and safe space of your own home.

It may be home to the Finn family, but it is also home to unspeakable terror and a

dangerous supernatural threat. As a horror fan (not to mention well beyond the

recommended reading age of 7-10), I find Preller's book to be full of both familiar and, at

times, trite tropes of the genre such as a family moving into a new house for a fresh start,

a children's game gone horribly wrong, ghostly ministration from a still-watchful mother,

and alphabet refrigerator magnets that convey otherworldly messages. Preller's

illustration-filled series Scary Tales, of which *Home Sweet Horror* is the first, aims to

transform recognizable elements of the horror genre (e.g., creepy amusement park rides, schools with disturbing janitors, supernatural video games, scary dolls) into stories intended to terrify young audiences. Nevertheless in re-envisioning these generic elements for children, Preller is also distilling the fears and anxieties at the heart of horror. And, if the focus of his first book is any indication, one core element of the genre is undoubtedly the home.

Home invasions, communities under siege, haunted houses, and towns with dark secrets are all staples of the horror genre. Arguably as early as Charles Brockden Brown's 1798 novel *Wieland,* the home established its place specifically within American horror and even now continues to dominate the generic landscape (Wells 41). Serving as more than mere setting, the home—represented by both the solitary house and the larger community (i.e., town)—becomes a site wherein cultural anxieties about the family unit, gender, and public and private identity/space can be further explored. As a frequent horror trope, the literal and figurative invasions, corruptions, and destructions of the home ultimately reveal this place to be both a source and a consequence of placelessness. The home is no longer a recognizable, identifiable, or understandable place; instead, it has been transformed into a placeless site where horror can and does take root and manifest.

The home is such a vital and virulent component of American horror that one of the biggest challenges in writing this chapter was narrowing down my selection of primary texts. The four works explored in-depth within this chapter—the 2008 film *The Strangers,* Peter Straub's 1979 novel *Ghost Story,* Ira Levin's 1967 novel *Rosemary's*

Baby, and the 1984 film *A Nightmare on Elm Street*[10]—are well-known and beloved staples of the genre that span a wide spectrum of historical and cultural periods and cover a range of horror sub-genres. Individually, these texts represent dominant themes and tropes within horror texts about the home: home invasions, hauntings, possessions, and serial killers. Collectively, though, these texts speak to a larger pattern at work within the genre in which an actual dangerous, unfamiliar, and placeless reality is concealed beneath the nostalgia-induced illusion of the home as a safe and familiar space. This horrific, Unheimlich, and placeless home—uncannily far removed from its nostalgic counterpart—becomes a perfect metaphor for representing the larger cultural fears of America's place and identity within a globalized world.

<center>

PLACING THE HOME

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It may seem odd to begin a chapter on American horror by discussing a children's book, even one called *Home Sweet Horror*; however, the rich and already-existent scholarly precedent linking together children's literature and the horror genre illustrates many intriguing points of convergence: shared Gothic traces, certain texts' potential didacticism, and questions of audience-appropriateness and censorship (Jackson et al. and Dickson). The introduction to the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* claims that children "expect the stories they hear to cast light on what they are unsure about: the dark, the unexpected, the repetitious and the ways adults behave" (Meek 2). Is this not what audiences of horror also seek? Noël Carroll maintains that our primary interests in horror stem from its ability to satiate our curiosity by allowing us to engage "in the processes of discovery, proof, and confirmation" (184). For both

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[10] These texts are listed in the order in which they will be discussed later in the chapter.

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children's literature and horror, the home becomes one of the primary sites wherein the characters (and by extension the audience) seek these answers.

The scholarship on children's literature provides an explicit theoretical framework—one that is hinted at, but not always overtly discussed, in horror scholarship—for viewing constructions of the home as a specific place of identity formation. An appropriation of this scholarship on children's literature, particularly the paradigm of home-and-away discussed at length by children's scholar Perry Nodelman, magnifies how the representational spaces of the home can infuse an entire genre with symbols of specific ideologies. Nodelman argues that within children's literature, *home* and *away* are more than destination points in the protagonist's journey; instead, they become the sites of social and ideological discourses. The frequency of the narrative pattern of home-and-away within children's literature helps reveal how these social spaces construct and reinforce key oppositional binaries by encouraging "child readers to think of everything in terms of this or that—home or away, safety or danger, freedom or constraint, ignorance or knowledge" (62). Yet Nodelman proposes that the persistent tug-of-war between the conservative ideologies often crafted by the adult writers and the desires to reject these beliefs by the child readers produces a body of literature in which the perpetual struggle between these polar opposites only serves to equally reinforce and support both sides of the binary (62). The horror genre does not face the same generational tensions between author and audience as children's literature; nevertheless, many of the larger ideological implications of the home-and-away pattern hold true to the horror genre.

In many horror texts, the home is emblematic of "traditional family values,"
values that seem to be threatened when monsters, ghosts, or even more mundane human
killers intrude upon and invade the home. Michael Myers' return to Haddonfield, in John
Carpenter's 1978 film *Halloween,* is a threat to the perceived safety that is suburban
America. Myers is subdued, however temporarily, by the end of the narrative and the
status quo and its traditional values are upheld by the triumph of the pure and proper
Laurie. Nevertheless, the film's opening sequence with a young Myers attacking his
sister makes one thing clear: the horror that invaded Haddonfield once also called that
small town home. Steffen Hantke writes that although "horror fiction almost always
pretends to take sides with its most conservative readers," it nevertheless "does not
necessarily preclude the reader's profound sense of unease at being reminded that social
realities remain fundamentally ambiguous" ("Deconstructing" 42). In *Halloween,* the
home (and the cultural ideologies imbued therein) may appear to be a site of safety, but it
quickly and literally becomes a place of danger and constraint as Laurie first hides from
and is then trapped by Myers in the upstairs closet.

Laurie may not physically travel very far in the film, but her psychological
transformation is extensive. Nodelman argues that this is the true significance of the
ideas of *home* and *away* in children's literature; as characters journey from their home to
places away from their home, they are embarking on not just physical but emotional and
psychological journeys, ones that involve moving from one set of values and ideological
beliefs to another (64). Roger B. Salomon does not use the binary of home/away, but he
does maintain that the horror genre is marked by movement that, while not always
physical, is always metaphysical. He claims: "Horror narrative involves thresholds—a

narrative in which two worlds, settings, environments impinge, where crossing (and the resulting experience of horror) is the basic action" (9). This indeed is the narrative pattern of countless horror texts. Shirley Jackson's 1959 *The Haunting of Hill House*, for example, is the story of the horrific events that occur as a result of Eleanor Vance's decision to cross the threshold of the evil Hill House. Yet the novel is about other thresholds as well: day into night, past into present, hauntings into madness. It is often with this liminal and placeless space that the true sources of horror are revealed.

Many texts feature journeys from *home* to *away* and then back again as the characters return home hoping to find the succor and rest that remained elusive while they were away; yet often, in the horror genre, it is this return to *home* that proves the catalyst for the ensuing horror. Although to an outsider this place may appear unchanged, "the home one returns to after being away is not and cannot be the same home one left" (Nodelman 65). As a socially produced space, the home undergoes continual, often irrevocable, reinterpretation by individuals who—having been exposed to new stimuli beyond the threshold of the home—are renegotiating social contracts and reevaluating cultural and personal beliefs. In Stephen King's 1987 novel *It*, for example, the characters are confronted by the realization that the home of their childhood is not the same home that they are now experiencing. Indeed, King's entire novel focuses on the ways that the memories of childhood both obscure and sometimes illuminate the fight against evil being engaged by the now-grown protagonists.

Examining the role of the home in horror through the framework of *home* and *away* reveals exactly how this place exists as more than an architectural building or even a physical dwelling. Juhani Pallasmaa writes that the home is "a diffuse and complex

condition, which integrates memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the

present. A home is also a set of rituals, personal rhythms and routines of everyday life"

(133). Pallasmaa's statement illuminates the far-reaching, diverse, and occasionally

contradictory influence that conceptions of the home can and do have. Not only does the

home hold important meaning(s) for individuals, groups, communities, and cultures, but

meaning is actually acquired through conscious and unconscious knowledge of the home

as both a receptacle for and a producer of specific personal and communal

understandings, beliefs, and actions. For this reason, must humanist geographers seem to

be in accord on three general points about the home: (1) Because of the important

historical, cultural, geographical, personal, linguistic, and other variances that must be

taken into careful consideration, the concept of the *home* is inherently nebulous and will

likely continue to be ambiguously defined and understood. (2) In light of these

variances, the home is (for most historic and contemporary cultures) a critical force that

shapes and is shaped by cultural, social, and individual identities. (3) As a result of its

extensive impact, the home—while usually contained within some sort of architectural

unit—must be viewed as more than a mere physically-constructed house (Benjamin,

Brink, Easthope, Sebba and Churchman, Dupuis and Thorns). The home—regardless of

its appearance or form—is truly where the heart (of all matters) is.

 This view of the home emerges as a dominant and pervasive attitude visible in the

many interviews conducted by humanist geographers in an effort to translate real-world

interactions with the home into more nuanced theoretical, social, psychological, and

emotive understandings of the home (Sebba and Churchman, Dupuis and Thorns).

According to the majority of those interviewed, the home is considered a source and

symbol of security and identity. This sense of security is often directly tied to people's

desire for control and the ability, within this perceived personal territory, to exert that

control through various forms of self-expression. Many of those interviewed further

described the home as "a physical framework for the institution of the family" (Sebba and

Churchman 9). The home was seen as a means of familial continuation, often through

the transfer of both material and less tangible assets and accomplishments (Dupuis and

Thorns). Drawing upon the theories of many notable humanist geographers, Peter

Somerville posits that the multiple dimensions of the home can best be understood

through seven "key signifiers": shelter (the physical structure), hearth (the physical sense

of well-being), heart (the emotional comfort), privacy (a sense of maintaining

boundaries), roots (a sense of identity and purpose), abode (the actual place of

habitation), and paradise (the idealization of the positive aspects of home) (532-533).

While the interviews suggested that there are many communal views and understandings

of the home, they also revealed that not all of these elements may not be experienced or

understood by every individual as factors—including gender, social and economic status,

and age—tailor experiences with the home.[11] Consequently, the home cannot be seen as

offering a universal, master narrative; rather, it must be acknowledged as an inherently

contradictory, complicated, and bespoke construct. This latter viewpoint proves crucial

in situating the home as a critical factor in nearly all aspects of personal and cultural life,

including those shaped by globalization.

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[11] Feminist scholarship, for example, questions the relationships that exist between the home and women, particularly in relationship to viewing the home as the site of patriarchal control and/or female resistance. Tracing feminist views of the home from some of the earliest readings of the home as a site of oppression to the ideas of black feminism that the home can become a place of freedom from oppression, Linda McDowell suggests that recent feminist scholarship must now acknowledge that the home—like any gendered construct—is inherently complex (88-9).

The concept of home and of a 'home away from home' are central within the postmodern and global conditions of living for the billions of people alive today. Citing people's real-world tangible and financial investments into their home, Hazel Easthope argues that "as a result of the perceived threat to place posed by the volatile processes of globalisation, there has been an increasing trend for people to invest more money in place construction" (136). Homi K. Bhaba suggests that these perceived threats manifest not only in real-world perceptions of the home but also in fictional representations. In his essay "The World and the Home," Bhabha argues that the domestic spaces of the home become, within certain works of fiction, mechanisms for discussing larger historical and global invasions. In this way, "the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (141). He claims that the blending of the borders between home and the world produces a disruptive shock, one that can elicit feelings of the "unhomely." Bhabha begs forgiveness over the unruly nature of the term; nevertheless, he articulates the need for a term that can be separated from homelessness and removed from easy solutions or accommodations of place. Undoubtedly, the unhomely is a concept rooted in, and perhaps most concerned by, the post-colonial experience. Bhabha does not, however, exclude the possibility that the unhomely "has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions" (142). His exemption of the unhomely from a strictly post-colonial setting is significant, as it suggests that feelings of the unhomely can be experienced—at least to a degree—by anyone whose sense of home has been disturbed, disrupted, and perhaps destroyed by the

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processes of globalization. It is a haunting scene that he paints when he writes: "The

unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you

find yourself with Henry James's Isabel Archer 'taking the measure of your dwelling' in

a state of 'incredulous terror'" (141). The horror genre ultimately offers no relief from

this incredulous terror of the unhomely moment as, again and again, the home ceases to

be (and perhaps never was) the everyday sanctuary from the everyday world.

A STRANGE LONGING: *THE STRANGERS* AND A SENSE OF NOSTALGIA

Watching Bryan Bertino's 2008 film *The Strangers* for the first time, I sat in the darkened

theater alongside a couple dozen strangers as we, like the film's titular strangers,

watched—with perverse delight—the horrific plights of Kristin and her ex-boyfriend

James. We watched the intimate dissolution of Kristen and James' relationship and the

awkwardness of life post-relationship. We also watched Kristen—approximately twenty-

five minutes into the film—oblivious to the gaze of the male stranger now in the house,

trying to calm her nerves after having heard sounds outside of James' secluded family

vacation house. In a continuous shot lasting almost a minute of screen duration, the film

positions the stranger so that it appears that he is watching not just Kristen but us; the

resulting affect is an awareness of how invasive and disturbing it feels to be watched

within the supposed sanctity of one's own, familiar home (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 For nearly a minute the camera reveals who and what Kristen cannot see behind her. After cutting to a shot of her from the other side of the house, the camera returns to this perspective. Kristen only sees a clearly empty doorway; the male stranger is gone.

And that is exactly how the vacation home is depicted—as a place that feels vaguely like your own, familiar home. In the DVD special feature *The Elements of Terror*, Bertino explains that this was an intentional affect as he wanted to "find a house that your brother could have lived in, and your father could have lived in, you could have grown up in. And the way we lit it, the colors we picked, were all trying to find something comforting, trying to find something inviting, so that we could destroy that" (*The Elements*). The destruction of the home is, to an extent, literal; windows get broken, floors are bloodied, and furniture is destroyed. At the same time, however, the film uses the systematic destruction of this ubiquitously 1970s American ranch-style house to produce an uncomfortable and strange nostalgia as our "childhood" home is annihilated. Through an acutely-crafted affect of nostalgia that creates a longing for a time and place when 'things made sense', *The Strangers* exposes the particularly post-9/11 American anxieties about the random, placeless destruction of our home(land).

At its etymological core, nostalgia combines the idea of pain (*algos*) with the idea of a return to home (*nostos*). Nostalgia is essentially homesickness, but this simple statement fails to capture the rich complexity of nostalgia that has been shaped, defined, and refined by some of the greatest thinkers, writers, and artists throughout history. It is indeed a concept that can only be understood through an interdisciplinary voyage that spans continents, centuries, and critical perspectives.[12] Nostalgia is rooted in place, but it is also temporally constructed. The things and places longed for cannot be re-placed or reproduced, perhaps because they are relics of a past and place that never fully existed to begin with. Nostalgia is in many ways inherently contradictory. Helmut Illbruck claims nostalgia can be dangerous "because it contains and promotes both hope and fear" (160). Nostalgia is both intrapersonal and interpersonal, serving both individual and collective purposes (Wilson 19). It is about both the past and the present because, as Allison Hui explains, "the space and time from which people evoke nostalgia are as important as the space and time nostalgia evokes" (65). To return to the paradigm of home/away, nostalgia constructs a longing for the home shaped by its absence in the *away*. Horror narratives involve crossing the nostalgic thresholds between hope and fear, home and away, past and present, remembered and reimagined.

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[12] In his comprehensive treatment of the subject, Helmut Illbruck charts the trajectory of the concept of nostalgia, starting at its beginnings in 1688 when Johannes Hofer coined the term to describe a strange phenomenon that he called the "Wasting Disease" (qtd. in Illbruck 5). Hofer saw it as a sickness primarily afflicting citizens of Switzerland who were often struck by passionate feelings of homesickness when exposed to reminders of their homeland and home-culture (Illbruck 29-30). Believing it to be the consequence of a too powerful imagination or a too weak mind, Hofer viewed nostalgia as a literal sickness for the home that was capable of producing physiological deterioration and debilitation (63). Yet, as Illbruck discusses, this word eventually shifted from a pathological meaning to a more poetic one, losing its scientific footing as it gained a place in the popular imagination (147). Illbruck shows how the minds of individuals including Goethe, Kant, and Nietzsche (to name a few) helped mold the current more nuanced form of this concept.

As any savvy film-goer knows, there is a significant difference between the claim that a film is "inspired by true events" and a film actually being "based on true events." Bertino admits that there were real-world inspirations behind the development of *The Strangers* including the Manson Family murders and his own childhood memory of would-be robbers knocking and then leaving when they realized that someone was home at his parents' house (Production Notes). Despite these rather loose connections to real-life experiences, the film opens with the claim that "What you are about to see is inspired by true events." Furthermore, audiences hear the transcripts of a 9-1-1 call, which only serves to further lend verisimilitude to the film's supposedly "true events." The intentional fabrication of the cinematic events' authenticity potentially heightens the fear factor that such horrors can be enacted in "real life." Yet such deceit also raises the idea that perhaps the past—and the places of the past—cannot ever be re-placed or reproduced. Bertino wanted the setting to feel like anybody and everybody's childhood home, but the film's refusal to distinguish fact from fiction problematizes the reality of such a familiar, nostalgic place long before it is destroyed by the strangers.

The film's portrayal of nostalgically, familiar places and events is further complicated by its explicit engagement with a different kind of past—the horror genre's past. *The Strangers* is a post-9/11 slasher film made in the image of classic 1970s slasher films. The "inspired by true events" statement and subsequent questions of realness is a familiar trope of horror and one that resonates with films such as Wes Craven's 1972 *Last House on the Left* and Tobe Hooper's 1974 *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. On the surface, *The Strangers* seems to be offering its audiences a familiar trip down this horror film lane. Bertino admits to feeling that something is missing in

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modern horror and that he openly sought to return to the tone and experience of 1970s

horror films (Production Notes). But although *The Strangers* may be able to mimic the

past, it is impossible to return there. Philip L. Simpson argues that the film intentionally

invokes the 1970s setting in order to repurpose key contemporary cultural anxieties. He

suggests that the nostalgic treatment of the slasher film and of the serial killer allows the

film "to work through fear of home(land) invasion in the post-9/11 culture" (188). By

situating specific post-9/11 issues (e.g. unexpected attacks, faceless Others) within a

familiar home, the film provides a safe place for examining these issues. "Nostalgic

communication," writes Roger C. Aden, "provides individuals with a means of

symbolically escaping cultural conditions that they find depressing and/or disorienting"

(35). Yet the nostalgic narrative also becomes a means of depicting "how previous

systems of social relations failed to address genuine human needs" (Su 175). The

familiar home within *The Strangers* is not a place of safety and the film's blatant lack of

veracity in its opening statements suggests that the belief in such a place, like the events

of the film, might never have been founded in reality. The film may be attempting to

escape the horrors of post-9/11 culture with its nostalgic reimaginings; however, it is

unable to fully escape the post-9/11 anxieties about the sanctity of one's home and the

security of one's place within that home.

Even before the arrival of the strangers, *The Strangers* begins with a series of

images of various homes that, from the outside, look safe and secure, and it continues this

motif by repeatedly showing external shots of the vacation house. From the start, the

film reveals that these serene appearances stand in sharp contrast to the tumultuous

events transpiring within. Citing a lack of readiness, Kristen has rejected James'

proposal, transforming the house—filled with traditionally romantic items such as ice cream, champagne, candles, and rose petals—into a physical place that is at odds with their emotional place. The resulting conclusion is that the destruction of the home (as well as the damage done to Kristen and James' bodies) began long before the arrival of the strangers. If the home is a place of familial continuation, then Kristen's rejection of James effectively disrupts a primary function of the home. The home in the film is full of reminders of the past created by James' family over the course of many vacations: books, pictures, vinyl records, markings in the doorway of children's heights. The comforting atmosphere creates a nostalgic longing for this better, idyllic time that is at odds with the tear-stained Kristen and angry James that currently occupy this space. Stephanie Coontz suggests that despite our portrayals to the contrary in popular culture, American families "have always been in flux and often in crisis" (2); (individual and cultural) memories of picturesque families and homes are mere cultural myths. The seemingly perfect past visible in every nook and cranny of the vacation home in *The Strangers* proves itself to simply be what Illbruck calls the "yearning retrospectively for a time that we imagine to have been a life without cares and of pure enjoyment" at the core of most nostalgic reflections (131).

This yearning can turn into terror with the realization that it is impossible to reclaim the past; homesickness cannot be alleviated if the home no longer exists. In *The Strangers,* the home becomes increasingly placeless for the couple as everything they believed about the place (i.e. the home as a sanctuary and place of love) is systematically destroyed. At the same time that the strangers help destroy Kristen and James' perceptions about the vacation home, the film itself disrupts the viewers' understandings

of this place. For example, the perceived distance that must exist between the house and the barn, based on earlier establishing shots, does not match the length of running and the amount of time it takes both Kristen and James to navigate that space. The strangers seem to have access to the home that extends beyond the entrances and exits shown earlier in the film; furthermore, their appearances and disappearances defy the realities of their spaces. Even the film's first sequence of the destroyed home is vastly different from the way that the home appears throughout the majority of the film.

About twenty minutes before the end of the film, Kristen and James are both tied up, bloodied, and once again wearing their formal wear from earlier that evening. One of the strangers opens the curtains and reveals that it is a bright, beautiful day. The film cuts to an external shot of the isolated, seemingly unbroken home before returning to the terror occurring inside. The final showdown highlights the many differences between the strangers and the couple (figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. An American (medium-long) shot shows the three strangers facing Kristen and James, drawing particular attention to the masks and costuming of the strangers that feels both dated and timeless.

The juxtaposition of Kristen and James' formal wear with strangers' oddly anachronistic look (their masks and clothing feel vintage albeit indefinably dated) draws attention to the fact the true nature of the strangers' clothing, like Kristen's dress and James' tuxedo, are costumes for the parts that they've played that night. The strangers' killer personas are clearly constructed, but the purpose for this design remains unclear. When Kristen asks "Why are you doing this to us?", the stranger in the baby-doll mask answers "Because you were home." In this answer, *The Strangers* proves once and for all that there is no return to the (pre-9/11) past of American nostalgic yearnings.

Unlike the almost entirely motive-filled villains of slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s, the killers of the *The Strangers* are the product of a different era. Kevin Wetmore, in his discussion of post-9/11 horror, writes that despite the interest in the motive for the 9/11 attacks, ultimately "the motive was irrelevant" and *The Strangers* clearly reflects the post-9/11 particularly American anxiety toward violence that feels and is random (*Post* 86). America's post-9/11 place is revealed to be placeless as the question of "why?" cannot be satisfactorily answered: we are not special, we were just home. Renato Rosaldo argues that nostalgia is particularly dangerous in its imperialist form when "someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to his or her intervention" (108). This form of nostalgia certainly seems tied into the events of 9/11 (and the larger issues of globalization) and the yearning for a secure home(land) that is impossible considering America's own participation in the global landscape. In *The Strangers*, the first and last shots of the film are of a broken home filled with broken bodies, images that suggest that our desire for any other outcome

is just the consequence of a nostalgic longing for a place that—if it ever was there at all—clearly no longer exists.

HAUNTINGLY FAMILIAR: *GHOST STORY* AND THE UNHEIMLICH

Much of the horror genre can be described as narratives in which the messy, violent, and usually bloody collision between the past and present leaves few if any survivors. Peter Straub's 1979 novel *Ghost Story* offers so many potential crash sites: stories and remembrances intersperse the ongoing narrative; the old men are joined by a young man as the mistakes of the past and the dangers of the present converge; and an evil force, acting on a repeating loop of time, tries to corrupt (and blur) past memories, present dreams, and future hopes. Even the narrative structure of the novel creates this tension; not until the end of *Ghost Story* does it become clear that the actions of the prologue occur later then the majority of the novel's events, thereby complicating the urgency and immediacy of much of the plot's drive. This is a novel that, through its own chapter headings, admits to being about a community besieged and a town observed through nostalgia. For the characters of *Ghost Story*, the town of Milburn is no less their home than the physical houses that they occupy. Straub weaves together past and present, Milburn and not-Milburn, old men's deaths and young men's lives into a cohesive narrative where these elements are uniquely different and yet importantly the same. Revealing the uncanny truth of memory—an uncanniness tied in part to nostalgic remembrances of the home—*Ghost Story* shows a double exposure of the community-experienced home (town) as Heimlich/Unheimlich, familiar/unfamiliar, placed/placeless.

In horror studies, the Unheimlich is more commonly referred to by its English translation: the uncanny. Yet there is something lost in this translation: namely, the

home. Sigmund Freud explained "that the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124). In his explanation of how the familiar can be frightening, Freud turns to an etymological exploration of the concept, spending most of his discussion in unpacking the German meanings. More than just a linguistic bias, this decision reveals how—at its core—the Unheimlich is the opposite of the Heimlich, the opposite not just of the familiar but of the *home*ly. The term *Unheimlich*, arguably unlike its English counterpart *uncanny*, positions place at the center of this idea. Viewing it in this light, it becomes clearer why Freud suggests "that the uncanny would always be an area in which a person was unsure of his way around: the better oriented he was in the world around him, the less likely he would be to find the objects and occurrences in its uncanny" (125). Dylan Trigg, in his discussion of the phenomenology of the uncanny, argues that "it is the sense of being *lost* in place that is invoked through the experience of the uncanny" (125). *Ghost Story* is truly than a story about the horrors of the uncanny and the ways that individuals can be become lost in a place that is frightening because it—their home—is being haunted by that which is dangerously familiar.

In the town of Milburn, the scrappy old men who comprise the Chowder Society (at the start of the novel, permanently short one member) meet regularly to tell each other ghost stories. One of these men, Ricky Hawthorne, reflects on the fact that their stories—since the death of member Edward Wanderley—"were getting worse. They frightened themselves each time they met, but they continued to meet because to not meet would have been more frightening yet" (80). They know that the death of their friend was not due to mundane causes, even if the death of an old man is unto itself a familiar enough

occurrence. Subsequently, they decide to invite Edward's nephew Don (a horror writer) to join them and help solve the mystery of Ed's death. With each piece of the puzzle that they gather, the image becomes clearer: an uncanny, supernatural entity—who has repeatedly manifested in their individual and collective pasts and who is now intruding in the recent present—is determined to destroy them all. What starts out as an attack on a few members of the town quickly escalates into an assault on the entire town of Milburn. Straub intertwines frequent portraits of Milburn and its citizens into the stories of the lives of the Chowder Society members; as the group of old men suffer and the evil force gains power, the town itself deteriorates. Yet rather than this change feeling like the sad metamorphosis from an idyllic, beloved home into a confining, despicable prison, novel depicts the slow transition of Milburn in such a way that it feels more like a snake shedding its skin to reveal the dark layer that always lurked just underneath. The evil residing in Milburn proves to be not a newcomer but an old resident, and the town is marked not only by this malevolent presence but also by a peppering of more mundane and petty disagreements, secrets, and lies.

A significant portion of *Ghost Story* is delivered through characters telling each other stories, of characters sharing their memories of the past. "Memories," Vijay Agnew writes, "ignite our imaginations and enable us to vividly recreate our recollections of home as a haven filled with nostalgia, longing, and desire; or they compel us, as witnesses and co-witnesses, to construct home as a site and space of vulnerability, danger, and violent trauma" (10). In *Ghost Story*, the characters' memories create their home as both a site of desire and of danger, longing and trauma. Milburn is where they've lived relatively prosperous lives full of families, careers, and friendships. It is

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also, however, where they failed and suffered. It is the site of their greatest secret and

shame: their belief that they accidentally killed (what they thought was) a woman.

Repeatedly their memories of the past are blurred, polluted, and counterfeited by the

supernatural force as it toys with their impressions of their home and of their former

actions. In the process, the Chowder Society's often nostalgic experiences in Milburn

expose a home that is uncanny in its placelessness. Their home is not the place that they

remembered as key in their nostalgic musings about their past nor is it the place that they

thought they knew only a few days and weeks ago. Instead, Milburn is a placeless

nowhere that uncannily mirrors a *somewhere* that they once knew.

Throughout the duration of the narrative, the increasingly-dwindling surviving

members of the Chowder Society visit a number of locations in Milburn, including a part

of town called the Hollows. At first, Ricky believes the supernatural threat has hidden

there because it's the one part of town the men don't know as well; however, he

eventually realizes that although he may not know the current dilapidated Hollows, he is

intimately familiar with another, past version of the Hollows (520-522). It is the place of

his nighttime dreams, a place where his life changed forever, and it is a place that is

incredibly dangerous. Although eventually the remaining Chowder Society members

(and the young men who have joined them) defeat in the Hollows the newest wave of the

supernatural evil residing there, this victory comes only after each of them manages to

escape from the trap placed by the supernatural force. Importantly this trap is, while not

entirely physical, nevertheless very much centered on and in place. The supernatural

force imprisons each of them within waking-dream fantasies, wherein the places of their

minds are not just hauntingly but frighteningly familiar. Thierry Paquot discusses how,

for Bachelard, a person's "capacity to imagine consists in the remembrance of places, dreamed or real, that nourish them with images throughout his or her existence" (77). There is a repeating narrative theme in *Ghost Story* about how humans construct stories and the ways that the supernatural creatures behind all ghost stories first take residence "in the places of our dreams. In the places of our imaginations" (*Ghost Story* 491). As the characters of *Ghost Story* soon learn, they must be careful not to dwell too long in their stories, or they run the risk of becoming forever lost within the ultimately placeless, and therefore unnavigable, spaces of their dreams and imaginations.

Even in the actual places of Milburn, the characters must avoid experiencing feelings of being lost. Throughout the novel, there are a number of instances in which life-long natives of Milburn get lost within a town they know intimately, struggle to find their way from one familiar destination to another, and discover that their journeys within the town have been inevitably (and occasionally irrevocably) interrupted. The increasing sense of disconnect towards and alienation from their home produces intense feelings of placelessness for these characters. In her discussion of the uncanny and nostalgia, Svetlana Boym writes: "At first glance, it appears that the uncanny is a fear of the familiar, whereas nostalgia is a longing for it; yet for a nostalgic, the lost home and the home abroad often appear haunted" (251). In *Ghost Story*, the characters realize that their home has indeed been lost, and this truth haunts them. One of the Chowder Society members, Lewis Benedikt, arrives home to find that despite the tangible proof that someone has been in his home (breakfast for two in a house of one), the lingering presence of another being is disturbing but unprovable. Later he finds the door to his home (isolated from the rest of the house) in the middle of the forest and, stepping

through, is transported to a different place and time altogether. Another member, John Jaffrey, abandons his house and rushes out to meet his death partially because he could not stay for another minute in a room that was "at once familiar and unreal" (118). Peter Barnes, a young man who eventually helps the Chowder Society, is particularly attuned to these feelings of placelessness. Breaking into the house of the supernatural evil (who he believes to be just an enigmatic woman), Peter thinks: "*I can't go in there.* Empty, but filled with bare rooms and the atmosphere of whatever kind of person chose to live in them, the house seemed to be feigning stillness" (309). Unlike his friend who breaks into the house with him, Peter realizes that his intuitions about the house must be trusted, even if they do not readily match the supposed reality of the place. He seems to instinctively know that this house is not a benign part of his home town, but that instead this once familiar place has been reshaped into the dangerous lair of the supernatural.

The uncanny creeps into the novel, but it becomes most chilling in those moments when the characters realize that what they most fear is that which is most familiar: themselves. Lewis, while on a walk, is struck by the terrifying idea that "… *suppose you went out for a walk and saw yourself running toward you, your hair flying out, your face distorted with fear …*" (176). King, in his discussion of *Ghost Story* and another Straub novel, suggests that an important theme in these works "is the idea that ghosts, in the end, adopt their motivations and perhaps the very souls of those who behold them" (*Danse* 271). The supernatural threat—who goes by many names—tells Don (and others) that "I am you" (26). Don eventually realizes the truth of this statement; although he is not dead, he is nevertheless still the true ghost in this ghost story. The novel states that this is ultimately the "unhappy perception at the center of every ghost story": we are always the

ghosts within our own ghost stories (429). Boym suggests that through one form of

nostalgia, an individual will "see everywhere the imperfect mirror images of home, and

try to cohabit with doubles and ghosts" (251). And throughout the novel, all of these

imperfect and uncanny mirror images—so often tangled into understandings of their

home—continue to haunt the characters.

About halfway through the novel, Lewis shares one of the memories that most

haunts him: the circumstances of his wife's death. He explains that after she died, those

he believed were responsible had skipped town; their identities not matching the credit

card on file. Telling the story to his friend several decades after his wife's death, Lewis

is surprised by the German's response that "I think it is a very American sort of story"

(375). He asks for clarification and Otto says it's an American sort of story "[b]ecause,

my good friend, everyone in your story is haunted. Even the credit card was haunted.

Most of all the teller. And that, my friend, is *echt Amerikanish*" (375). Agnew suggests

that "[m]emories establish a connection between our individual past and our collective

past (our origins, heritage, and history). The past is always with us, and it defines our

present; it resonates in our voices, hovers over our silences, and explains how we came to

be ourselves and to inhabit what we call 'our homes'" (3).   In the introduction to

Spectral America, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock argues that American culture possesses a

particular attachment to ghosts, not only because they can serve as metaphors for our

anxieties about an inescapable past but also because "[t]hey speak to our desire to be

remembered and to our longing for a coherent and 'correct' narrative of history" (6). In

Ghost Story, Lewis is literally being haunted by a supernatural force; however, Otto's

claim that the story is particularly American is speaking to a different type of haunted.

Lewis' story reveals the particularly American anxiety that without our ghosts, ghost that can be as much our past places as our past peoples, we may have to acknowledge that we too are might be fleeting and ephemeral. Yet *Ghost Story* suggests that there is also a price for keeping our ghosts, for allowing our past to define our future as we remain haunted by the uncanny memories that transform our once familiar places into unfamiliar placeless spaces.

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INVASIONS OF PRIVACY:

***ROSEMARY'S BABY* AND THE BOUNDARIES OF HOME AND BODY**

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Although the past is a critical and frequent component of understandings of the home, the future can also be an important part of the home/away equation. Maria Vittoria Giuliani argues that orientation for the future—for future plans and aspirations that help shape constructions and representations of the self (of individual identity)—is often a key factor in the development of what she refers to as a bond attachment to a new home (137). A frequent narrative motif in horror is the family or individual moving into a new home in an effort to get "a fresh start" or with the hope of beginning a new phase of life. Shoping the opportunity for a blended family to bond, the possibility to set aside past behavioral issues, the chance to move beyond past horrors, the start of a new chapter in their lives. Such narratives often substantiate the characters' anxieties about the future and about their places within the ever-changing world by showing how fragile the future is. The future is not impermeable. The past intrudes upon the future, preventing characters from truly starting anew. Furthermore, reality invades upon the fantasy, disrupting people's assumptions and dreams of the perfect future. The future lacks clear limitations and edges and is thus, in many ways, inherently placeless. Ira Levin's 1967 novel

Rosemary's Baby explores all of these anxieties about the future through its renowned story of a woman who discovers that her home, much like her body, has been invaded by supernatural horror. Through the simultaneous invasion and intrusion of both Rosemary's body and her home, *Rosemary's Baby* transforms the home into a placeless site marked by blurred boundaries and borders.

       Rosemary's Baby opens with Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse receiving news that there is an opening at the Bramford: an old, Gothic, elegant, charmingly unique, and highly desirable apartment building. The young married couple loves the available apartment they visit and, by the end of the first chapter of the novel, they have secured it, despite having to lie to break their previous lease. Rosemary's friend Hutch shares the dark reputation of the Bramford—a history of death, cannibalism, and witchcraft—but neither Rosemary nor Guy are deterred from their desire (14-20). They believe that the stories must be exaggerated or coincidental; yet even with its tumultuous past, the Bramford is still more desirable to Rosemary than the cookie-cutter, spiritless, box-like new homes that are the alternative on the Woodhouses' limited budget (19-20).[13] They move into their Bramford apartment and, while Guy is out-and-about working on his craft and career as an actor, Rosemary contentedly transforms the apartment into their home. The Bramford seems like the ideal place to make their home, to create a sanctuary where they can start a family and be happy.

       It is only when Rosemary is in the basement of the Bramford that she experiences any misgivings. There she cannot help but notice the "unsettling" nature of the service

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[13] Ironically, these new homes embody the sense of placelessness that Relph saw as a rampant feature of postmodern places. Yet, as the novel reveals, it is not placelessness itself that is inherently horrific but rather the consequences of placelessness—an incorrect or incomplete understanding of place that prohibits an accurate sense of self and cultural categories of identity—that is truly terrible.

elevator and the fact that the basement is "an eerie place of once-whitewashed brick passageways where footfalls whispered distantly and unseen doors thudded closed …" (25-26). Here she recalls Hutch's story about the dead baby found in the bowels of the Bramford; here she can admit that not every aspect of the Bramford is entirely perfect. Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* argued that lived experiences should and do inform architectural understandings and imaginings. As such, an examination of "the home" reveals that certain locations evoke—not only through their physical form but also through their psychological associations—certain feelings and reactions. In this house of our minds and memories, Bachelard states that, inside "the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls" (19). Bachelard saw the cellar as the dwelling-place of irrationality, and Rosemary's thoughts within the basement certainly seem irrational—for both Rosemary, whose fears seem misplaced when she is back inside her homey apartment as well as for the unsuspecting readers, who have yet to discover that not all neighborly concern is desirable.

It is while Rosemary is in the basement's laundry room—described as a spot that "would have done nicely in a prison"—that the novel's only use of the word "intrusion" occurs (26). Levin writes: "Rosemary came down on weekends or after five; earlier on weekdays a bevy of Negro laundresses ironed and gossiped and had abruptly fallen silent at her one unknowing intrusion. She had smiled all around and tried to be invisible, but they hadn't spoken another word and she had felt self-conscious, clumsy, and Negro-

oppressing" (26).[14] In the presence of this community of women, Rosemary feels like the

outsider while inside her own home. In many ways, of course, she is an outsider to this

group: a solitary, white, stay-at-home wife moving about the private spaces of her home

while in the midst of a group of black, employed women for whom the Bramford is a

public, work space despite their domestic duties.

In her article "Breached Bodies and Home Invasions: Horrific Representations of

the Feminized Body and Home," Marcia England explores the significant links between

the horror genre's frequent transgressions of both the female body and the home. In her

analysis of *Evil Dead II*, England—herself quoting from Vivian Sobchack—writes:

> This horrific blur of the public and private draws on dominant
>
> assumptions of those spaces in order to evoke feelings of terror. When the
>
> home becomes fluid and spatial boundaries break down, the implications
>
> are the exposure of the myth that there is a 'distinction between family
>
> members and alien Others, between private home and public space,
>
> between personal microcosm and sociopolitical macrocosm' (360)

Both for the novel's narrative and in Rosemary's life, Rosemary's intrusion into the

occupied laundry room is a singular and overall singularly unimportant occurrence. It is

an act that is both unintentional and without any real aftermath. Yet this intrusion

foreshadows the increasingly horrific invasions of both Rosemary's body and her home.

In the basement, the dissolution of the boundaries between public and private is

immediate and obvious. Inside her apartment—within her own home—the exposure of

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[14] The potential issues of ethnicity and racial tensions inherent in this quote beg further examination, especially in light of the 2014 mini-series in which Zoe Saldana plays Rosemary and Patrick J. Adams plays Guy.

this truth happens too late. By the time that Rosemary realizes that her family (i.e., Guy) is also an alien Other (in league with the neighboring witches), that her private home is publically accessible to the coven at all times, and that her personal pregnancy is the consequence of the coven's desire to usher in the Antichrist, Rosemary is already pregnant and seemingly helpless to stop what is happening.

At first, Rosemary is thrilled, albeit nervous, about her pregnancy. Section two of the novel, which starts after the revelation that she is with child, begins with the statement: "Now she was alive; was doing, was being, was at last herself and complete" (115). It is not just Rosemary's life that is changing due to her pregnancy; her sense of her life and its purpose are also being affected. Some of this is certainly psychological in nature; however, arguably, all pregnancies alter the body's experiences with place because the body is itself drastically altered.[15] Rosemary's pregnancy is, of course, atypical—the result of the machinations of the coven (who want to breed the Antichrist) and of the capitulation of her husband (who sees this as a worthy sacrifice for the sake of his career). As the novel progresses, a sinister shadow of evil replaces the usual glow associated with pregnancy. Yet although Rosemary's problems are clearly supernatural in nature, the novel suggests that, at least partially, the source of horror is Rosemary's physical body. *Rosemary's Baby* mutates the pregnant body into an abject form made horrific through its liminal, boundary-destroying nature.

Julia Kristeva, although she uses the example of the corpse and dung to explain the abject, clarifies that the abject is not caused by "a lack of cleanliness or health" but

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[15] A number of scholars, including Ann Dally, Julia Kristeva, Adrienne Rich, and Shelia Kitzinger, explore in-depth how the historical and cultural perceptions about the pregnant body are not only placed but help place ideologies and perspectives on a variety of ideas.

rather the abject is that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" is in essence the abject (4). The abject undermines the borders of self/other, insider/outsider, and subject/object. As many scholars suggest, pregnancy—with its biological and social processes that often conflate the identities, agencies, and bodies of mother and child—can be one manifestation of the abject. Abjection does not create a source of desire; rather it produces fear and terror. This side of the abject appears in many cultural perceptions of pregnancy. Exploring a variety of discourses on pregnancy, Robyn Longhurst discusses the belief "that pregnant bodies are not to be trusted, rather, they are to be dreaded, when occupying public space. Pregnant bodies threaten to break their boundaries, to spill, to leak, to seep" (82). Pregnant bodies cannot maintain boundaries of cultural spaces (mediated in physical places) because they are themselves intrusive and perpetually invading the borders of carefully constructed spheres of identity.

If "normal" pregnancies conjure the abject, then Rosemary's pregnancy is abjection incarnate. She is, after all, giving birth to the supposed son of Satan and such a pregnancy cannot be simple or painless. As physiological complications arise, Rosemary's pregnancy becomes both world-destroying and world-defining: "The pain grew worse, grew so grinding that something shut down in Rosemary—some center of resistance and remembered well-being—and she stopped reacting, stopped mentioning pain to Dr. Sapirstein [her obstetrician], stopped referring to pain even in her thoughts. Until now it had been inside her; now *she* was inside *it*; pain was the weather around her, was time, was the entire world" (141). Her pregnancy, the culmination of the ultimate

invasions of her home and body, rends asunder the understandings of self that are fostered by a sense of place.

The pregnant body, as it breaches boundaries, becomes unwelcome in any place and is therefore relegated to the liminal spaces between traditional understandings of place. Samira Kawash suggests that the body situated in place operates different from the body denied place; the placeless body is forced to diminish until eventually "the body with no place is pressured to disappear" (40). Rosemary's pregnant body exaggerates this placelessness. Although by the time her contractions start Rosemary's body is "too gross" to allow easy movement (215), for much of her pregnancy she is not developing or expanding like a normal pregnant body—leading one friend to comment that she looks like a contestant for "Miss Concentration Camp of 1966" (154). After the childbirth, Rosemary's body, place, and identity are nearly shattered as she is kept confined to her bed, drugged, and used only as a wet nurse for her baby. Rosemary finds herself trapped within a home—within an existence—that is placeless and without clear definition as her former pregnant body is pressured to disappear.

Eventually, however, she discovers the secret passageway connecting to the coven leader's neighboring apartment. Although her discussion is of the 1968 film version, Lucy Fischer's reading of the text's geographical negotiations translates to the novel as well. Through her comprehension of the actual nature of the place that is her apartment (specifically the connection between the two apartments), Rosemary has, once and for all, "has un-'shelved' the Maternal Macabre—has reclaimed its 'back rooms'—has forced it out of the cultural and cinematic 'closet'" (14). At the end of the novel, Rosemary is both a victim of and a perpetuator of placelessness as she destroys permanently the

boundaries and borders already weakened by the earlier invasions and intrusions on her body and home. Arguably it is once she is through the passage that the novel's most horrific scene occurs. Originally planning to kill the spawn of Satan (even if he is also her son), Rosemary starts instead mothering him, telling him about the place that she has prepared for him, as the coven—whose international members have been arriving for days—watches and worships around them. While she coos intimately at the child that is both her son and the Antichrist, the novel ends with the line: "The Japanese [coven member] slipped forward with his camera, crouched, and took two three four pictures in quick succession" (245).

Rosemary's private world—her apartment, her role as mother, her sense of identity as Rosemary Woodhouse—reveals itself to be permanently and horrifically public. The international presence alluded to but only seen at this final moment in the novel suggests a larger correlation, one no doubt shaped by the world events of the 1960s and the anxieties leading into the 1970s. Natasha Zaretsky argues that an examination of American cultural history reveals an "intertwinement of debates about national and family decline" that starts in 1968 and continues into the next decade (3). She explores how in the late 1960s and 1970s both political concerns (about national and international relationships) and familial concerns (about gender and identity relationships) were singing the same duet of fear about America's potential decline both outside and inside the home. Her argument suggests a heightened awareness or at least anxiety in this period that the weakening of American ideologies about the home could be compromised by external, global failures. At the end of *Rosemary's Baby*, the localized chapter of the cult has mutated into a globalized, insidious encroachment upon the insular (body) of

Rosemary. The conclusion of the novel, in this way, transforms Rosemary from person to icon, allowing her to stand in for a host of interpretations including that of an America confronted by a placeless reality as its private world dissipates into a horrifying public existence.

DISTURBING SUBURBIA: *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* **AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY**

Four little girls all in white. A soft diffused light gently paints them against a green, grassy yard. Three of them jump rope while the littlest blond girl watches; as they jump, they chant—as countless girls have done before and will do after them—a song for keeping the beat. It sounds nearly perfect, like the dream of suburbia encapsulated in one ideal image. Until, that is, one hears what the girls are actually chanting: "One, two, Freddy's coming for you. / Three, four, better lock your door. / Five, six, grab your crucifix. / Seven, eight, gonna stay up late. / Nine, ten, never sleep again." Less then five minutes into Wes Craven's 1984 *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the film—of which the first several minutes shows a different, older girl in white being chased by a sadistic killer with knives for fingers through the fiery bowels of a furnace room—exposes the dark underbelly of the suburban dream. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* repeatedly reveals that a past that refuses to remain dead threatens constructions of identity and the home by corrupting valued places into placeless nightmares.

A Nightmare on Elm Street, the first film of a franchise that has spawned nine movies over 25 years, opens with a series of close-up shots of Freddy Krueger creating his knifed glove. The close-up shots, which continue for almost a minute, deny the viewers any ability to place the action. There are clearly tools visible in the reddish lighting, but beyond these details the scene is effectively placeless: it could be anywhere

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or nowhere. The film's iconic theme song plays as the red/white-on-black titles appear directly before the camera shows a canvas cloth penetrated from the other side by Freddy's knives. Effectively serving as a change in setting, this latter image (accompanied by a non-diegetic scream) transitions into a shot of Tina Gray, Freddy Krueger's first victim, cast against an unnaturally and uniformly white background that is, yet again, rather placeless. Eventually the shot moves from a close-up of Tina's face to a long shot, in the process revealing Tina to be in a dark and dank hallway that would be a perfect fit in some industrial warehouse. Chased through a labyrinthine boiler room, Tina is caught by Freddy but, before he can kill her, she awakens. The camera shows her safe and sound in her own bed. Yet the momentarily relief of awakening from a nightmare offered by this opening sequence is misleading; home is not a sanctuary from the bogeyman. Systematically, the film strips away these illusory beliefs about the home as a haven and instead reveals that the home is actually where the nightmares live. Tina shares her nightmare with the film's Final Girl, Nancy Thompson, who (disturbed by the startling similarities to her own dream) agrees to sleep over while Tina's parents are out of town. The sound of someone outside throwing something against the bedroom window awakens Tina. Staring out the window, she can hear the voice of someone calling her name. Immediately after this scene, the film shifts to a sleeping Nancy. The implications behind this juxtaposition seem clear: one girl is in danger as she is being lured outside while the other is safe within the confines of the home. Yet such an assumption proves presumptuous. As the camera remains on the image of a sleeping, innocent Nancy, an outline of a face and hands emerge out of the wall above her bed (figure 1.3). The nightmare might lead Tina outside, but the danger is also in the house, a

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fact confirmed by Tina's eventual murder while sleeping in her parents' bed. This is a theme that is carried throughout the rest of the film; home is not where dreams come true, but instead where nightmares thrive. This is true for both individual homes contained within separate houses as well as for the larger collective home contained within this suburban neighborhood.

Figure 1.3. At first, Nancy, haloed by soft light, is alone. The dark wall behind her begins to lighten as, over the course of several seconds, a corporeal form materializes in the wall. The scene reveals that the evil is literally within the walls of the home.

Suburbia has often been considered synonymous with the American dream. It is usually an indicator of freedom (from the anonymity and rat-race of the big city), of power (of home ownership), and of community (that cannot be had in the city). At the same time, as Kendall R. Phillips discusses, the creation and continuation of suburbia (and the suburban way of life) became a site of American anxieties about isolation, confinement, and conformity, a place that—because of its differences from both the city and the country—disrupted "the vision of domestic bliss" (67). Unsurprisingly, these

often opposing attitudes and nightmarish fears found root in the horror genre, specifically

through what Bernice M. Murphy calls the Suburban Gothic—a sub-genre about the

horrors of suburbia—that she argues inundates much of American popular culture. In

these texts, suburbia is not a dream place, but a place filled with often opposing attitudes

and nightmarish anxieties and fears. Murphy outlines some of the primary features of

this suburban nightmare, a list that includes the descriptors: "[h]aunted," "[a] place of

entrapment and unhappiness," "[a]n obvious hunting ground for paedophiles and child

murderers," "[a] claustrophobic breeding ground for dysfunctionality and abuse," and

"[a] place in which the most dangerous threats come from *within*, not from without"

(*Suburban* 3). This list reads like a checklist for *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and it is

unsurprising that this film is one of many that she analyzes. Craven's film explores

particularly American fears about the darkness lurking in this particularly (although not

uniquely) American place where large numbers of Americans have made a home. The

film explicitly peels back the bright exterior of this small town community and divulges

the dark interior that is haunted by the past, by dysfunctional families, and by threats that

are much too close to home.

As the film progresses, Nancy's behavior becomes increasingly erratic as, after

the death of another friend, she refuses to sleep. Forced to go to a sleep clinic by her

mother, she wakes from another dream with Freddy and tries tell her mother and the

doctor about her killer dreams. Her mother, however, refuses to listen and insists that she

is simply sick, but when Nancy returns home she finds bars on the windows of her home

that belie this diagnosis. She confronts her mother and demands to know the truth.

Nancy's mother first leads her down to the cellar and then describes a sordid past: Fred

Krueger was a serial killer, who killed at least 20 kids in the neighborhood. When he didn't get jail time, the parents decided to act. Mrs. Thompson tells Nancy that the parents set the "old abandoned boiler room where he used to take his kids" on fire and then "watched it burn." She ends her speech by telling her daughter: "But he can't get you now. He's dead, honey, because Mommy killed him. I even took his knives." She shows Nancy the glove that she's been keeping (presumably this entire time) in the cellar furnace. Mrs. Thompson's story of vigilante justice is intended to comfort; however, the story clearly disturbs Nancy and the film suggests that it is not just Nancy who should be disconcerted. The remainder of the film becomes increasingly surreal and dream-like, suggesting that the audience should also question their assumptions about reality and about what really is happening within this community and within this home.

Communal identity relies on a sense of belonging. Conversely, communal identity produces strong and often negative reactions about outsiders, about those who do not belong. Changes to a community or culture, which are usually deemed inherently negative by virtue of being different, are often ascribed to the actions of those outside of the community. The outsider becomes the scapegoat for the undesirable and new changes experienced by the community (Crothers 186). Yet although Mrs. Thompson and the other parents were quick to destroy the outsider in their group, they seem less willing or capable to admit their own contributions to the changing face of their community. The film makes it clear that Freddy might be evil, but the community is contaminated even without his presence. Tina's parents abandon her for the weekend. The mother of Nancy's boyfriend is easily fooled by her son's lies. Nancy's parents are divorced; her mother is an alcoholic murderer and her father is a distant, ineffective

authority figure. David Kingsley, in his reading of *A Nightmare on Elm Street,* goes further in his argument that the film suggests, if not directly implies, an incestuous element in the relationship between Nancy and her father. Regardless, it is clear that, as Jonathan Markovitz states, the "adults in the community are so unwilling to face their collective nightmare, that they are willing to claim that their children are insane to prevent the truth from coming to light" (218). The community remains so fixated on the dangers of outsiders that it is unaware of the toxic nature of the already existing communal identity.

The film's temporal and spatial structure deteriorates shortly after the telling of Mrs. Thompson's story. The remaining half hour of the film occurs in a single night as Nancy fights Freddy in her dreams and in her home after she pulls him back into the real world. Freddy's dream world was already markedly placeless. Many of the dream sequences show Freddy's ability to be "both everywhere and nowhere" (J. Kendrick 24). He is both in front of Tina and chasing her from behind. He is inside the home and outside of it. He is in one location, but simultaneously not in any real place at all. James Kendrick suggests that Freddy's fluidity stresses the uncanniness of dreams/reality evident throughout the film and, as a result, affirms the film's ability to blur ideological boundaries. This uncanniness peaks with the image of Nancy falling asleep for her final confrontation with Freddy. The placelessness of Freddy's nightmare world bleeds into the final minutes of the film as it becomes increasingly unclear if anything—including when she pulls Freddy back into "reality"—is real or if everything that occurs in the final fifteen minutes of the film is part of the same nightmare. This dissolution of the borders between reality and nightmare starts with the first moments of Nancy's dream. After

heading downstairs to her house's cellar, Nancy pulls open a hidden door to reveal the

stairs leading down to Freddy's boiler room. In doing so, the home becomes permanently

placeless as it is literally inseparable from other places. This disruption of place is further

emphasized by the Dutch angles and unusual and disorienting perspectives of the next

several shots as Nancy descends into the boiler room.

When Nancy drags Freddy back to the real-world and her actual home, she still

believes that her "real" home is a safe place. Yet once her booby-traps prove ineffective,

she soon realizes that her home may be a trap for Freddy but it is also a prison for her.

Despite her father's arrival with his fellow police officers, Nancy is unable to save her

mother from Freddy's deathly embrace. In their final confrontation, Nancy announces

that she is taking away the power she gave Freddy; she wants her mother and friends

back and, because he is just a dream, he cannot control her reality. When he goes to stab

her in the back, he turns transparent and disappears. Nancy opens her mother's upstairs

bedroom door after the night of terror and exits out the front door of the house into a

bright and cheery day. It seems that her plan worked. Her mother is alive (and not

drunk) and her friends are happily together and waiting for her. The audience, however,

has already seen what happens when a person turns their back on the dark truths within

their own home. They know that ignoring placelessness does not make that placelessness

disappear altogether.

In his discussion of the most recent remake of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*,

Lowenstein discusses how the 2010 film fails to offer the rich sense of community found

in the original 1984 film. He argues that whereas the remake firmly places Freddy as an

outsider so far apart from the community, Craven's original film "shares in making and

breaking Freddy's monstrosity" ("Alone" 22). He looks to the conclusions of the films as

his final example of how this difference plays out in these two movies. In both films

Freddy comes back, interrupting Nancy's peaceful interlude and raising questions about

what has or has not been real. Yet, he suggests, an importance difference occurs in

Freddy's final moves. Whereas in the remake, he drags the mother from the house into

his nightmare world, in the 1984 film, Freddy pulls the mother inside the house itself

(figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4. The medium close-up highlights the contrast between Nancy's vision of home

and safety and the violent, nightmarish presence of Freddy. Yet it also undeniably places

Freddy not *away* but within the *home*, as he pulls Nancy's mother both simultaneously in

the *home* and *away* into her nightmarish reality.

In doing so, the 1984 film makes its point unequivocally: the horror always was as and

always will be found within the home. The threat was never external; it was always

within the community, within the home. Freddy has always been in the home, rendering

that familiar place into a placeless nightmare. The horror may lurk outside; however, it is

has always been the home(land) and everything this place represents. Yet it turns out that

the nightmare is not just found in the home. Tony Williams, in his discussion of the

family in American horror films, argues that 1980s slasher films manage to both capture

particularly American anxieties associated with the Reagan era that patriarchy (and by

extension the places of patriarchy) are being threatened while also suggesting that

perhaps it is this very system against which these teenaged survivors must fight (18-19).

In *A Nightmare on Elm Street* the film shows that that the nightmare is both inside and

outside of the home, found both at *home* and *away*.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART (OF DARKNESS) IS

The home is not (as I will discuss in future chapters) the exclusive place of

American horror, but it is remarkable the sheer amount of American horror literature and

film that not only features but intently focuses on representations, destructions, and often

reestablishments of the home. From home invasion narratives to possession stories, from

haunted houses to disturbed suburbias, the home is at the heart of American horror. The

place known as the home is not uniquely American; however, there is a particularly

American projection of the home—as often seen in various forms of popular culture from

American family sitcoms to horror films—that is both the receptacle and creator of

American ideologies about ideas including the family, community, nostalgia, and

identity. "The word home, to many people in the United States, is a symbol of freedom,

choice, and power" (Kozoll et al. 568). In American popular culture, the home assumes

synecdochic significance for the ideas and understandings shaped, fostered, and changed

within the physical and psychological spaces of this place. Threats to the home, even

those found within fictional texts, become for American cultural understandings about more than dangers to a physical location. Threats to the home often translate for many Americans as threats against individual and cultural freedom, choice, and power. Threats to the home raise particular anxieties that if American domestic places are contaminated, manipulated, fragmented, destroyed, or fabricated than so too might be the ideologies formed in the home.

The horror genre exploits this correlation, regularly translating the attack against and loss of the home—or at least the traditional understanding of the home—into an attack against individual and cultural conceptions of identity. The absence of home found within these texts is about more than a lack of shelter or the lack of an abode. Casey argues that the feeling of not being "at home" or otherwise separate from home does not require literally being away or distanced from our home; we can feel home-less (without home) even when we technically have a home (*Getting x*). If home is a complex set of values, ideals, and beliefs that shape community, belonging, and identity, then homelessness must also be considered as more than mere absence of home (Somerville). Homelessness is the state of being tether-less, without the tethers of meaning offered by the home. Being without these tethers creates what Zelinsky considers to be "the angst that afflicts so much of contemporary humanity, the sense of being adrift, homeless in a universe of doubtful meaning" (*xiv*). It is important that he considers literal placelessness to be one of the symptoms of this homelessness; however, homelessness also speaks to a larger sense of placelessness.

In discussing Graham Swift's 1988 novel *Out of this World*, Smethurst discusses how the character Sophie experiences the "feeling that secure and stable places, *authentic*

places, like home, have been lost, is accompanied by the feeling that there is no escape within the world, because the world is somehow unified in its lack of place" (278-279). The culprit of, or at least accomplice to, such feelings is a postmodern placelessness as much about identity as it is place. Smethurst's description of the placelessness experienced by Sophie resonates with Bhabha's explanation of the larger, global ramification of the transformation of the home into the unhomely. He writes: "The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (*Location* 13).

This global framework disrupts America's home in the world; or, perhaps more accurately, it destabilizes America's sense of its homeland. Nationalism and cultural identity are often contextualized in terms of family, belonging, and home (Rose 185). Thus, threats to nationalism and cultural identity, such as those many feel are issued by globalization, are interpreted as threats to America's sense of home(land). Yet, as Rose argues, "the effort—against the complex and tortured background of modern history—to actually *make* 'culture' and 'place' correspond with one another turns out to be a hopeless, expensive, and sometimes violent and dangerous illusion" (186). American horror creates terror through its depictions of threats against and to the home; yet perversely, the genre also threatens (in often violent and dangerous ways) to expose the illusions behind the very concepts of the home and all that it represents.

Five words were catapulted into the hearts of America forever when a young Dorothy Gale, thankful to be back on the farm in Kansas, exclaims toward the end of the

1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* that "there's no place like home!" Both relief and joy color

her realization; she knows now that no other place (not even the Technicolor wonder of

Oz) can compare to home. Because she is no longer *away* and once again home again,

she can finally appreciate and revel in this knowledge. If this were a horror film, Dorothy

might still utter those five immortal words; however, the connotation would be rendered

into a horrible and profound exclamation: there is *no place* like home. In a placeless

world, home—Dorothy would discover—is nothing but an elusive and damning dream,

one that exists only in the haunted past and fevered imaginations of the perpetually

homeless and irreparably homesick.

CHAPTER TWO

ALL AROUND ME ARE FAMILIAR PLACES:

EVERYDAY PLACES IN AMERICAN HORROR

> America is full of places. Empty places. And all these
> empty places are crowded. Just jammed with empty souls.
> All at loose ends, all seeking diversion. As though the
> chief object of existence were to forget. Everyone seeking
> a nice, cosy little joint in which to be with his fellow-man
> and not with the problems which haunt him. Not ever
> finding such a place, but pretending that it does exist, if not
> here then [sic] elsewhere.
> <div align="right">Henry Miller, Remember to Remember (13)</div>

> FRANCINE: What are they doing? Why do they come
> here?
> STEPHEN: Some kind of instinct. Memory of what they
> used to do. This was an important place in their lives.
> <div align="right">Dawn of the Dead (1978)</div>

Masses of people—insatiable in their need to consume—are instinctively driven

to shuffle mindlessly around the mall. This description could easily apply to any recent

coverage of Black Friday in America, but it also perfectly describes George Romero's

1978 zombie film *Dawn of the Dead.* The iconic film's message about American cultural

consumerism and consumption may not be subtle, but it is, nevertheless, intricately

executed. Early visual juxtapositions between the mall mannequins and the zombies are

replaced later in the film by cinematic comparisons of the mannequins and the human

survivors, whose time in the mall has rendered them figuratively (and sometimes

literally) zombies—uncanny and passive reflections of their former human selves.

Starting the narrative before the survivors even reach the mall, the film reveals that the

mall itself is, if not the root of the problem, then certainly a leading catalyst of this horrific transformation. The initial, exuberant shopping scene upon the survivors' arrival to the mall is replaced with subsequent robotic, uninspired expenditures and transactions. "In other words," Kyle William Bishop writes, "the apparent comforts of the shopping mall in *Dawn of the Dead* are ultimately revealed to be little more than illusions, the ghostly remnants of a lost, albeit not yet forgotten, way of life" (148). Francine, the lone female survivor of the film, discovers this truth and tries to warn the group: "You're hypnotized by this place. All of you! You don't see that it's not a sanctuary, it's a prison!" Yet it is not until the mall is overrun by a biker gang that any real attempt to leave the mall is made. Despite the remaining survivors being low on fuel and resources, the final images of their departure into the bright dawn is accompanied by cheerful music suggesting that, while the situation might be bad and the future unknown, they have at least managed to escape from a truly dangerous, albeit familiar, place.

Whereas the previous chapter of this dissertation focused on exploring how a single place (the home) yields multiple avenues for investigation, this chapter seeks to illustrate how a core concept (the placeless potential of the everyday) can be approached from a variety of familiar places. The four works examined in-depth within this chapter—Stephen King's 1977 novel *The Shining,* the 1998 film *The Faculty,* the 2001 film *Session 9,* and Grady Hendrix's 2014 novel *Horrorstör*[16]—present four locations frequently depicted within the post-WWII American horror genre: the hotel, the school, the hospital, and the store, respectively. These are not the foreign, exotic places so often found in the traditional Gothic narrative; rather these are the sites wherein the everyday

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[16] These texts are listed in the order in which they will be discussed later in the chapter.

can and does occur. The everyday is familiar, relatable, and all-encompassing. It

provides the necessary tethers for constructing social meaning by establishing the cultural

context that is needed to communicate, to make ourselves understood. The absence of

the everyday results in a lack of relatability that borders on the nonsensical; ideas and

identities stripped of their context become ambiguous or meaningless.

So many post-WWII horror narratives begin with depictions of the everyday:

ordinary lives transpiring in familiar places. When the horrific manifests, as it always

does, its arrival usually coincides with the suspension of the everyday. The four primary

works analyzed in this chapter also begin in the everyday: a family looking for a fresh

start; the new kid wondering where she fits in; co-workers dealing with conflict and

tension, and individuals feeling as though they've lost their direction in life. In each of

these narratives, these moments of the everyday happen in seemingly ordinary places;

however, as the horror unfolds, these texts—through both their narratives and their

decisions of form—reveal that the assumed familiarity of these places offers a

dangerously false sense of security. Although we may interact with certain places every

day, that does not mean that these places actually offer the context needed to engage with

the everyday. These places prove to be not places of actual meaning or, perhaps more

accurately, our assumptions about the meanings offered by these places ultimately do not

match the reality. Either way, there is a loss of value and identity that leads to a sense of

placelessness. The horror genre exposes this placelessness that lurks behind and may

even obscure the everyday; in doing so, the genre is able to probe larger cultural fears

about America's (non)place in the everyday, globalized world.

The everyday feels intimately familiar because we experience it every single day. Because of its pervasive and constant presence, the everyday literally cannot be extra-ordinary. As a result, the everyday often translates for people not only as commonplace and ordinary but as dull, boring, and mundane. One consequence of this outlook is the assumption that the everyday is mere background. Yet, as Henri Lefebvre suggests, the everyday is not background but "common ground" (*Critique* 97). He writes: "Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human—and every human being—a whole takes its shape and form" (*Critique* 97). Michael E. Gardiner offers an even more pivotal role for the everyday when he argues that it "is where we develop our manifold capacities, both in an individual and collective sense, and become fully integrated and truly *human* persons" (2). In other words, the everyday is not only where the human takes form, as Lefebvre suggests, but it is also where a person learns what it means to be a human, what it means to claim a sense of identity on both an individual and collective level.

The everyday governs the small and large details of our lives, but it also serves as a foundation for interpreting these details. In other words, the everyday provides the contextual cues needed for understanding and translating the primary events, language, and ideas that shape culture and identity. Stanley Cavell, in developing his philosophy of ordinary language, argues that language must be appreciated in context because that is how we both absorb and transmit words. There is nothing, he claims, which forces or

requires us to perpetuate this process and to expect others to continue spreading this language through new contexts. Nevertheless we continue to do so, working to preserve, develop, and communicate a familiar, common language. Cavell suggests that this push occurs through the most basic and ordinary of actions, through:

> our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. (*Must We Mean* 52)

Cavell may be talking explicitly about language here, but he's really offering a much larger paradigm of understanding. The communication of shared experiences (of language, of action, of place) shapes meaning and reveals the context needed for understanding language, actions, and places. Conversely, when the ordinary is stripped of its perspective and circumstance—when language, actions, and places are taken out of context—the everyday ceases to be fully knowable.

The everyday's ubiquitous presence ensures that it feels familiar, but its seemingly omnipresence does not guarantee that the everyday is well-known. Lefebvre quotes Hegel's statement that "Was ist bekannt ist nicht erkannt" (qtd. in *Critique* 15). Although Lefebvre translates this as "But the familiar is not necessarily known" (*Critique* 15), there is a beautiful symmetry in the original German phrase that is lost in translation. Both *bekannt* and *erkannt* translate as *to know*; thus, Hegel is suggesting that it is possible

that what we know (on a deeply personal and intimate level) is not always the same as that which is known (as a method of intellectual or rational classification or identification). This is a contradiction that lies at the heart of the everyday. The everyday is inherently ambiguous. Ben Highmore reveal that, within the historical and theoretical interpretations of the everyday, there exists an ideological narrative of contradictory views and arguments: the everyday is "both illusory and profoundly real" (7), individual and collective, transparent and invisible, both supportive of the status quo and revealing subversive strains. The everyday both hides and exposes the tethers that connect us to the people and places around us. Thusly, we may *know* the everyday, but the everyday is not something that is or perhaps can be *known.*

The horror genre exploits the uneasy attitudes toward the everyday that are the consequences of its ambiguous nature. Horror demonstrates that the everyday surrounds us, but it also consumes us. Philip J. Nickel proposes that the genre is frequently situated at the point where the everyday has gone "berserk" or otherwise transformed into something no longer familiar (18). This, he suggests, creates the disturbing conclusion that the everyday is inherently fragile and can—at any moment—be disrupted and destroyed. As a result, the horror genre "casts our reliance on the everyday world around us into shadow" (18). We are forced to acknowledge that our view of the everyday as impenetrable to change or harm is as much an illusion as the everyday itself might be. The horror genre confronts these false assumptions in part by demonstrating the life-threatening consequences of assuming that the everyday is familiar and therefore secure. Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho,* one of the films that Nickel examines in conjunction with the everyday, is a prime example of a film that exposes the dangers of

trusting these false illusions. Although the film contains many extra-ordinary events

(theft, murder, mother-impersonating), the film continually offers markers of the

everyday from ordinary dissatisfaction at work to images of familiar, everyday items

such as a toilet. Through this juxtaposition, the film suggests that Marion Crane's biggest

mistake was arguably not stealing the money but assuming that she *knew* what was

happening simply because she was in a familiar, everyday place.

Places are the locations of the everyday. Yet places are not simply the *where* of

everyday life; they offer the context needed to appreciate, value, and understand the

everyday (Eyles 109). The everyday imbues all places and in turn places permeate the

everyday. In the most literal sense of the word, the everyday is omnipresent.

Unsurprisingly, it can be easy to get lost in the everyday; however, it can also be easy to

get lost *because* of the everyday. Fredric Jameson suggests that "estrangement, which

always takes off from the numbness and familiarity of everyday life, must always

estrange us from the everyday" (*Brecht* 84). Significantly, the full definition of *estrange*

is rooted firmly in conceptions of place: to "remove (permanently or for a length of time)

from an accustomed abode, haunt, association or occupation" ("Estrange"). Although the

everyday may be comforting in its familiarity, such familiarity can breed estrangement

caused by a lack of direct attention or mindfulness of the places, routines, and things that

comprise everyday life.

Familiarity can produce a deep intimacy, but it can also lead to a sense of

alienation caused by the uncanny sensation, to return to Hegel, that something is familiar

without being known. Isaac Marion's 2010 zombie horror-comedy novel *Warm Bodies*

directly plays with this concept of estrangement from the everyday. His first-person

narrator R and many other zombies occupy the airport, not because they need the shelter

or aerial transportation, but because to have no place to surround them and encompass

them at all "would be horrifying" (4). The zombies may haunt a familiar place; however,

their estrangement from the everyday is nonetheless keenly felt. R discusses how his

fellow zombies can "recognize civilization […] but we have no personal role in it. No

history. We are just here" (4). The airport becomes one place where this passive

existence, this alienation from everyday living, becomes manifest.

The zombies may not remember the original role of the airport; however, the

readers have not forgotten this place's purpose. Airports may not be experienced every

single day, but they are everyday fixtures that reflect both the ability to and desire for a

mode of transportation and travel that effectively diminishes the distances between the

local and the global. In his foreword to Larry Ray's *Globalization and Everyday Life,*

Anthony Elliott argues that "nowhere today do we see the impact of big social changes

restructuring the terrain of everyday lived experience … than in processes of

contemporary globalization" (*x*). Globalization becomes not just an experience of the

everyday; instead, it is itself a part of the everyday discourse. In many ways, Ray asserts,

this is because globalization shapes everyday practices and methods of communication.

If, as Cavell suggests, the everyday develops through interactions and relationships then

globalization offers the potential for greater connectivity of and within the everyday. Yet

the opposite is also true. Ray opens up the possibility for an alternative, darker

relationship when he proposes that within Ulrich Beck's theories about the global world

is the existence—however inadvertently produced by globalizing forces—of "an

alienated state of everyday life" (63). The everyday is at the center of the people, places,

and ideas that form individual and cultural identities. Globalizing forces, however, continually probe and problematize how we define the local and global, how we define identities, how we define our centers. The result can be a sense of alienation from our centers, from our sense of the everyday. Much like a microscope can both illustrate minute details and distort the larger picture, globalization can both expose one to and estrange one from the elements of the everyday. And much like those findings under the microscope, stripped of its context, the results of the globalized everyday often appear horrific and inevitably placeless.

"UNMASK, UNMASK!": THE MASQUERADE OF UTOPIA WITHIN *THE SHINING*[17]

Jack Torrance holds his drink in the currently dry Colorado Lounge of the Overlook Hotel, listening to the cries of party-goers "(*Unmask, unmask!*)" despite being the only living person in the room (522). This moment arguably marks the point of no-return for the patriarchal figure of Stephen King's 1977 novel *The Shining*. Perhaps there were earlier moments when Jack could have escaped the clutches of the hotel relatively unscathed; however, the hotel is playing for keeps and this gathering—trapped somewhere between real and spectral, between past and present—is as much funeral as it is party. From the beginning, Jack hoped that the Overlook would be life-changing: an opportunity to fulfill his patriarchal duties as provider, to satisfy his calling as a writer, and to mend the cracks in his family. Indeed, at first—minus a few disturbing moments here and there—the Overlook Hotel seems to be a desired utopia full of promise and possibility for Jack, his wife Wendy, and their son Danny. The first glimpse of the hotel leaves Wendy temporarily speechless and Jack admits that the hotel might be "the single

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[17] Quote is from *The Shining* (522).

most beautiful location in America" (92). Yet the readers, already privy to the misgivings of young Danny with his titular shining, know what Jack and Wendy will not and perhaps cannot discover until it's too late: this is "the dark and booming place" where Danny will be hunted by "some hideously familiar figure" (93). "Whatever Redrum was, it was here" (93). As the Overlook Hotel reveals its true nature, *The Shining* exposes the horrific, placeless consequences for those unable to see beyond the false utopic mask to the authentic face of the perpetually-haunted-by-the-past everyday.

It might seem misleading to place *The Shining* in a chapter about the everyday. The events of the novel seem so far from being commonplace; after all the narrative is— at least on one level—about a nearly sentient and certainly sinister hotel laying claim to a young boy with a powerful supernatural gift. However, the novel is also about the lingering damage inflicted by parents, a family struggling to overcome their own broken past, a mother and father trying to understand their gifted son, and a son who is learning that his love for his parents exists even (and perhaps because) of their flaws and imperfections. In a 2001 introduction to the novel, King argues that horror "stories exist because we sometimes need to create unreal monsters and bogies to stand in for all the things we fear in our real lives" (xvii). In June 2016, King spoke in Kentucky as part of his book tour for *End of Watch.* He talked very little about this most recent book, however; instead, he took his audience—myself included—on a journey that meandered, as much as some of his best books do, across a variety of ideas and themes. At one point in his talk, he explained that a story's success and its ability to hook readers requires two primary elements: a sense of verisimilitude, which he defined as "trying to give readers a sense that they're in the actual world, to give the story some texture" and a portrayal of

characters that readers "care about, characters that they feel for one way or the other." This is, in my opinion, what *The Shining* offers to its readers and how the novel manages to ground its narrative in the everyday. We care about the characters because they feel real, not in the context of their over-the-top circumstances, but through their navigation of everyday life. The larger-than-life nature of the Overlook may be beyond the purview of the everyday; however, hotels are places of the everyday and, for the Torrance family, the Overlook is—for one fateful winter—a place where the everyday occurs: having family meals, expressing love through physical intimacy, learning to read, dealing with the past, growing up. Nevertheless, *The Shining* contains elements of the fantastical, of the extreme, that cannot—and should not—be ignored because they actually help construct and maintain the characters' feelings (as well as the readers' impressions) about the Overlook. The revelation that the Overlook is not a sanctuary arrives in an extreme fashion; however, in the process, the novel exposes a more mundane truth: it is dangerous to cling to the illusion that our everyday places can be perfect and ideal utopias.

Although utopias are often associated with communities or cultures, the concept of utopia is—at its core—about place. Or, rather more accurately, about the often intangible nature of place. In an essay whose title calls utopia an "elusive idea," Ruth Levitas writes: "Thomas More's original pun—*eutopos/outopos* combined as utopia, hence the good place which is in place—is transformed into the good place which can be no place, and which, in seeking a place, becomes its opposite, dystopia" (3). Inherent in More's original construction of this term is the root word *topos*, which perhaps explains why historically, territorial constructions and associations have been key elements in the description and desire for utopias (Bauman 12).

It is perhaps unsurprising then that the concept of utopia finds such deep roots within the landscape, both geographical and cultural, of America. Tracing the literary and historical traditions of utopianism, Krishan Kumar suggests that is there is perhaps nowhere better than the "wide open spaces" of America for imagining and constructing utopic dreams and communities, in part, because of the ways the American geographical and cultural landscapes intersect and complement each other's characteristics (*Utopianism* 82). Jean Baudrillard goes so far as to entitle an entire chapter of his *America* as "Utopia Achieved." After boldly asserting that "The US is utopia achieved" though, Baudrillard then admits that this achievement is—especially within the latter half of the twentieth century—also a burden as American culture must seek to address "the problem of its duration and permanence" within the larger global world (83). In an interview published a little over a decade after *America*, Baudrillard elaborates further that "America is the original version of modernity, the weightless paradise of liberation from the past" (97). In *The Shining,* the Overlook—that perhaps most beautiful place in America—seems to be the ideal place for Jack to liberate himself from his past; however, the novel also reveals particular American anxieties that perhaps there is no such place, no such utopia in America (let alone within the Overlook) that is not haunted by the past.

The move to the Overlook Hotel and Jack's taking the position of winter caretaker are about the opportunity to secure a brighter future—for the family as much as for Jack's stagnating career as a writer. The hotel, especially for Jack and Wendy, seems to be utopia achieved. They see it as a good place where they can be and can become better versions of themselves precisely because it is not a place from their usual lives. Early in their stay, while he is repairing the roof of the Overlook, Jack reflects that if there ever

was a place that allowed the chance to seize control of one's life then "this was surely it" (172). Wendy, listening to Jack steadily write later that same day, is happy not just because of her husband's current vigor for writing but because this renewed interest suggests that he seems "to be slowly closing a huge door on a roomful of monsters" (179). Part of the novel's later horror arises specifically because Wendy and Jack fail to see that it is impossible to exist within an everyday that is removed from the past. Kumar writes that "[u]topia, while it liberates the imagination, also sets limits" ("Aspects" 18). And this is the ultimate truth that Wendy and Jack are unable to see until it is much too late—no place offers total freedom and certainly not from the past.

It is not just their envisioning of the Overlook as a utopia that is a problem; it is Wendy and Jack's inability to see (or rather accept) the impossible fantasy within their utopic vision that causes their ultimate sense of placelessness. Down in the cellar, Jack finds a scrapbook of the Overlook's infamous and sordid past. Looking at a dinner invitation from 1945, Jack imagines the scene full of colorful decorations and colorful people celebrating the near end of the war. He thinks: "The future lay ahead, clean and shining. America was the colossus of the world and at last she knew it and accepted it" (232). Yet his fantasy of the host exclaiming at midnight to unmask is interrupted by his thought of a line from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" and the party that is not a celebration of the future but a funeral filled with party-goers who cannot escape the sway of either the past or death itself. This subconscious intrusion of this thought is met with a frown as Jack refuses to accept that "this shining, glowing Overlook" is anything but "the farthest cry from E.A. Poe imaginable" (233). Jack admits, as he peruses the materials further, that if every hotel has a ghost or two than the

"Overlook had a whole coven of them" (245). Yet even as he becomes increasingly entangled in the past of the Overlook, he refuses to believe that the past can or will have any control over his future; he is confident that such control to affect his future belongs to him alone. His decision to write about the past of the Overlook becomes then as much about his visions of his own future as it is about his belief that he can neatly contain the past.

The novel's turning point, that moment when the impending horror becomes inevitable, marks Jack's realization about the true nature of the Overlook not as any other hotel or even as a hotel with a specific and exceptionally colorful past, but as a place where the past bleeds every day into the everyday. "It was as if another Overlook now lay scant inches beyond this one, separated from the real world (if there is such a thing as a "real world," Jack thought) but gradually coming into balance with it" (518). Jack discover that *all* times are beginning to merge into *this* time and he is not just imagining the past but actually hearing it resonate throughout the hotel. Listening to the ghosts of the Overlook forces him to confront the idea that the past and its inhabitants have been present all along. "He was becoming aware of them as they must have been aware of him from the very start./All the rooms of the Overlook were occupied this morning" (520). If, as Lauren Berlant argues, "the spatial and temporal ambiguity of 'utopia' has the effect of masking the implications of political activity and power relations in American civil life" (26), then removing that mask exposes the potentially gruesome machinations and monstrous face of America that was hiding underneath the shiny utopian mask of perfect. Jameson, in writing about Stanley Kubrick's 1980 cinematic adaption of *The Shining*, praises the film for transforming what he sees as the novel's depiction of the past "as a

babel of voices" into a crystallized single period (the 1920s) that produces the affect that "it is by the twenties that the hero is haunted and possessed" ("Historicism"). This, Jameson argues, allows the film to speak to a nostalgia for a time that is often seen as "the last moment in which a genuine American leisure class led an aggressive and ostentatious public existence." While I agree with Jameson's reading of the film, I feel that his dismissal of the novel's depiction of the past as a cacophony of voices ignores the critical way that King's work speaks to the ambivalence inherent in the everyday.

The multitude of voices of the past—as they weave together, contradict each other, and fight for supremacy—reflect the reality of the everyday. Highmore suggests that understanding the everyday require an examination of all of its facets, including the seemingly contradictory (individual/communal, micro/macro) aspects. Furthermore, those "moments when everyday life breaks down, when everyday life becomes interrupted and dysfunctional" are ultimately as revealing as those moments that exemplify and lionize the everyday (Highmore 30-31). Holland-Toll suggests that it is the wide range of voices, and the differences exemplified within this plethora of perspectives, that illustrates a sense of the carnivalesque and the degree to which society shapes, controls, and influences those within it (Holland-Toll "Bahktin's" 134). It is through the jarring rabble of multiple, often conflicting, voices that the novel exposes the illusory forces at play in Jack's sense of identity and his belief that he is the one the Overlook wants (135). To situate Holland-Toll's idea about the plethora of voices within context of my project, the lack of a clear, singular voice of the past prevents Jack from knowing his place and the resulting sense of placelessness leads to his ultimate demise. There is an unease, Holland-Toll suggests, in the novel produced through the idea that

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"the multivoiced, many-faceted speech of the Overlook Hotel … serves as a metaphor for the conflicting speech of American society" ("Bahktin's" 139). The novel's narrative explicitly draws this comparison as Jack tells his friend that he thinks "this place forms an index of the whole post-World War II American character" (*The Shining* 281).

Despite (or perhaps due) to Jack's obsession with the hotel, Danny is the first member of the Torrance family to realize the full consequences of the lingering past on the Overlook and the way that this past ensures that "*This inhuman place makes human monsters*" (213). Mike Featherstone claims that utopias "are traditionally obsessed with borders, others, and infiltration. In the case of utopia, the infiltrator is the viral other who transforms the perfectly homogenous society into a nightmarish place of anxiety, fear, and paranoia" ("Virus" 191). Peter Kraftl argues that the true nature of utopia can be expressed through the perpetual tension that exists "between the comforting and the unsettling" (121). He argues that this tension often plays out through representations of the unhomely or the uncanny. By the end of *The Shining*, the Overlook has assumed the ultimate uncanny form: the face and body of Jack Torrance. Danny has been taunted by this image for months and, although at the end, he is running for his life, he is also comforted by the realization that the monster chasing him "was not his father," "[i]t was not his daddy" but rather the Overlook wearing the "mask of face and body" that had once belonged to his father (649). The childlike simplicity and naivety of Danny's thoughts, however, sit uneasily with the adult reader as she finds herself asking where the line exists between what was always Jack—his anger and violence, his alcoholism and criticism—and what is this Jack-mask worn by the Overlook. The Overlook may be a utopia achieved; however, *The Shining* shows that such a utopia is not a dream-come-true

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but a nightmare-come-to-pass wherein the everyday, by definition of utopia, literally is no place. And even worse, the novel seems to say, there is arguably no escape from this placelessness because, as Danny learns, "[t]here was no place he could run where the Overlook was not" (653).

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"SOMETHING WEIRD'S GOING ON HERE":

PERCEPTION AND ALIENATION IN *THE FACULTY*[18]

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The 1998 film *The Faculty* opens with a low angle of a football whizzing through the air. The shot changes, showing a high school football practice that, while perhaps not *the* quintessential real-life high school moment, is nevertheless iconic as a quintessential high school movie moment. There are immediate hints that this film might deviate into the realm of horror, such as the non-diegetic score playing in the background (The Offspring's song "The Kids Aren't Alright) and the coach yelling at them to consider themselves "dead" if they do not pick up their game. These elements foreshadow the film's horror genre, but they also are staples of the high school movie: misappropriated power, physical aggression, faculty who do not understand, and feelings of isolation. This juxtaposition of elements and genres becomes one way that the film, written by Kevin Williamson and directed by Robert Rodriguez (both of whom are intimately familiar with the horror genre), makes frequent use of the tool of metacommentary, that certain hyperawareness of its own place within larger literary and cinematic traditions and conventions. Through the capacity of metafiction to offer distancing and humorous ironies, *The Faculty* positions audiences at a one-step removal from 'the horror of the horror' encouraged by more traditional horror texts. It is ultimately by offering what

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[18] Quote is from *The Faculty*.

Relph calls "existential outsideness" (51) that this film manages to alter the familiar

school setting into a crafted and placeless site and, in the process, the film highlights the

inherently constructed nature of everyday roles and identities formed in this place.

From the start of the film to its finish, *The Faculty* openly draws attention to its

fabricated nature as a metafiction and this allows the film to place its audiences, to a

degree, outside of the narrative as they are reminded of how this text is intentionally

crafted to engage with other familiar texts, tropes, and conventions.[19] After all, this isn't

just a film about invading aliens and alienated teens; it is also a film that is about (or at

least cognizant of) the existing narratives about invading aliens and alienated teens.

Delilah (the popular girl) tells Casey (the geeky kid) early in the film that his fate is to be

that "geeky Stephen King kid" because "[t]here's one of you in every school." Yet

perhaps a more accurate remark is that there is one of these character archetypes in every

teen narrative and in every high school movie. In addition to its overt references to the

horror and science fiction genres, the film consciously exploits many of the conventions

of the high school movie from character types and scenarios (the angry football coach,

the disenfranchised faculty except for that one caring teacher, the disengaged students,

the popular cheerleader) to locations (the football field, the faculty lounge, the

classrooms, the gym and locker rooms). Relph writes that our understandings of places

are affected by the degree to which we feel inside or outside of a place; existential

outsideness, he suggests, involves "an alienation from people and places … of not

belonging" (51). Denying its audiences the opportunity to step fully and exclusively

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[19] Although one could argue that this affect might be lost by audiences unfamiliar with the texts and genres *The Faculty* is commenting upon, I suggest that the film's explicit and direct reference to texts and tropes ensures that such an affect is—at most—diminished, but never lost for uninformed audiences who, at the least, have referential knowledge of the film's construction of the familiar high school setting.

inside just one text (as it continually prompts a dialogue between works), *The Faculty* creates the affect of existential outsideness that distances audiences not only from the horrors of the film but also from the film's depiction of a familiar place: the school.

The film further plays on the ideas of insideness and outsideness by portraying the school as an uncanny amalgamation of two contradictory affects: *déjà vu* and *jamais vu*. By reproducing images and ideas that we've seen before in other works, *The Faculty* exploits a sense of déjà vu, the "subjectively inappropriate impression of familiarity of a present experience with an undefined past" (Sno 341). This sense of déjà vu is further heightened through the association that arises from comparisons to our own experiences in high school, however disparate those may have been. Yet the film does not offer this sense of déjà vu until after it creates a sense of jamais vu, the "subjectively inappropriate impression of non-familiarity of a present experience with an undefined past" (Sno 341). The first exterior shots of the school building as imposing and commanding (figure 2.1a) are followed by interior shots that reveal the school to be an isolated, empty place shut down for the night (figure 2.2a). The appearance of the school first in this unfamiliar form (which is only further enhanced by the decidedly non-educational activity of the murder of the principal) problematizes the later feelings of déjà vu that emerge through the later, more familiar external shot of the school in the bright daylight (figure 2.1b) and the subsequent internal shots of a school filled with life and students (figure 2.2b) from having the usual comforting effects. The contrast between these two versions of the school produces an unsettling sense of disconnect and placelessness as it suggests that "something weird's going on here" underneath these false and contradictory sensations of jamais vu and déjà vu.

Figure 2.1a (left). The early external shot—with its low-key lighting and framing of the building looming in the shadows—produces a sense of jamais vu as the school feels imposing and unfamiliar. Figure 2.1b (right). The later external shot—with its "natural" high-key lighting and framing that highlights recognizable images (e.g., causally-posed students, the school sign, the American flag)—produces a sense of déjà vu as the school now feels comforting and familiar.

Figure 2.2a (left). The full shot highlights the unfamiliarity of the circumstances by focusing on the principal's terrified face, while the low-key lighting further emphasizes the potential for jamais vu. Figure 2.2b (right). This later full shot reveals an expected and familiar scene of students filling the hall, while the high-key lighting transforms the earlier darkened hallway into a familiar image of déjà vu.

In my introductory chapter, I defined placelessness as being, in part, a reaction to the sense of disconnection towards or alienation from a place or places. Feelings of placelessness can be caused by a sense of alienation from the places of our lives, but—because these places offer meaning for everyday life—placelessness can also produce a sense of estrangement from everyday life and the individual and cultural connections and significance contained within the everyday. On January 8, 2017, I interviewed Robert Kurtzman, specifically for this dissertation, at his special effects studio Creature Corps. in Ohio.[20] Kurtzman worked on *The Faculty* as a special makeup and creature effects artist. During our interview, I asked Kurtzman about his thoughts—as connoisseur and creator of horror—about the relationship between horror and place. His response was: "The thing about horror is that you can find any setting and something horrific could happen there. I mean anywhere." In *The Faculty*, this "anywhere" takes on a seemingly familiar face: the typical, American high school. This place, which is perhaps the ultimate repository of teenage angst and alienation, becomes in the film the perfect setting for exploring feelings of estrangement with the everyday.

Drawing upon the ideas of Michel Foucault, Sherry R. Truffin argues that, if power makes people, if it "constitutes, legitimates, animates, and reproduces the institutes that, in turn, constitute and help replicate modern culture" then "[s]chools—like prisons, asylums, hospitals, factories, and other social institutions—play an important role in constructing these modern subjects and in ensuring that most will be docile and 'normal" while others will be unruly and 'deviant'" (198). At one point in *The Faculty,* the

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[20] Kurtzman has over thirty years of experience in the special effects industry and has worked on over fifty projects ranging in length and genre; however, he is perhaps best known for creating many of the nightmares of the horror genre—from his conceptualizing the idea for the 1996 film *From Dusk til Dawn* to his most recent work on the 2017 horror film *The Bye Bye Man.*

drunken history teacher, pre-alien, reads aloud to his students. The jock (Stan) tells him that he's reading the wrong lesson for the class, but it seems like the right lesson for the audience as he reads: "Only through conformity through the masses can the United States offer … the benefits of power, order, and security." Christine Jarvis argues that in real life, the school is often seen as a place of meticulous order, rules, and protocols and that within teen horror, the lack of these elements expresses larger teenage fears that their "inner turmoil will take control" and they will lose control of their potential power (258). *The Faculty* suggests that the horror stems not only from a fear of losing control but from discovering that the meticulous order is an extraordinarily thin veneer over the chaos that even a small shift in the balance of powers will unleash.

Contestations of power happen throughout *The Faculty*, particularly as the film reveals the school to be the battleground between the faculty and students, the aliens and humans, the insiders and outcasts, and even the private and public spheres of the everyday. Jarvis suggests that schools are always mixes of private and public, individual pains and collective rituals (260). Ted Kilian argues that *all* places offer the potential for this mixture because "[w]e do not move from public to private, rather we are constantly within both, simultaneously protecting ourselves from absorption into the public through the power of privacy (exclusion) and asserting ourselves into the public sphere (the realm of political power)" (127). The film explores the private/public dichotomy as characters move back and forth from private spaces (e.g. the locker room shower) to public spaces (e.g. the classroom) and as they alternate between making demands for individual rights within the school (e.g. the characters' refusal to join the collective) and desiring to have certain public personas (e.g. the characters' wanting to be popular or respected by their

peers). At first glance, many of the film's examples of the school's mixture of the private and public seem mundane and commonplace. Yet underneath these examples lies a horrific placelessness. The student's privacy of the locker room shower is interrupted by an infected and dying teacher, unable to handle her transition into the alien hive. The students rebel not only against the homogenizing influence of school cliques but also against the colonizing forces of the alien queen. Henri Lefebvre writes that part of what is familiar to us in the everyday is other people, but this familiarity is dependent upon our ability to recognize others as they "play the roles I have cast them in and which they have cast for themselves" (*Critique* 15). In *The Faculty,* the characters are regularly asking each other whether or not they've been infected by the aliens. Each time that one of them behaves differently or tries to break out of his or her established roles in the high school, the other characters are immediately suspicious. Unsurprisingly, no one fully suspects— until much too late—that the alien queen is the new kid as she is the only member of the group to consistently play her role. As the characters each reveal the inauthenticness of their assumed roles, they become increasingly estranged from their conceptions of the familiar, of the everyday.

Lefebvre argues that "there is no social relation—relation with the other— without a certain alienation" (*Critique* 15). Long before everyone is aware in the film that actual aliens are turning the faculty (and later the students) into "mindless slaves that they can control," the film creates a cast of characters who feel alienated by the roles that they've been assigned: the jock who wants to be a scholar, the geek who wants to be cool, the popular girl who is actually quite smart, the outcast who actually belongs, the new girl who wants a community, and the Goth who pretends to not care. After the alien

reveals herself, she explains her motives: "You were lost and lonely, just like me. And I thought that maybe I could give you a taste of my world: a world without anger, without fear, without attitude. Where the underachiever goes home at night to parents who care. The jock can be smart, the ugly duckling beautiful, and the class wuss doesn't have to live in terror. And the new girl—well, she can just fit right in with people who are just like her."

The geek responds that he would rather just be afraid than to exist in her world; however, the film raises the idea of whether or not the absence of such alienation would be so terrible. The school, mid-alien invasion, is less violent; students are more involved in their classes and everyone serves a purpose. After the queen alien is destroyed, the humans revert back to their original messy, emotional human states. The film transitions from the final confrontation with the alien to a scene one month later as a voice-over of a reporter announces that "Life has returned to normal …" Yet this is not entirely true as the film shows each of the characters, now living their desired identities rather than merely fulfilling the faked roles to which they were originally conscripted. The film's final words are from Casey, who has won the popular girl and has been labelled the hero, remarking: "Things sure have changed, haven't they?" Yet the film undercuts the effectiveness of this final comment as it transitions from a close-up of Casey and Delilah to a crane shot of the campus that, as it continues to pull back, reveals a school that seems to have largely reverted to its old ways, complete with bullies shoving a new geek against the flagpole.

The Faculty, and arguably all American horror narratives set in a high school, takes on a new level of significance in light of the recent chapter in American history

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marked by an unprecedented amount of school violence and shootings. Although the first major school shootings occurred prior to the release of *The Faculty*, it was arguably the 1999 Columbine shooting that placed this type of event into the cultural forefront and, while these events are not an every day occurrence, school shootings have since become a familiar part of the everyday American landscape. Bryan R. Warnick et al bein their article on school shootings with the question: "Why are *schools* interpreted as appropriate places for violence?" (373). They arrive at three factors: schools are already "places of symbolic microagression and coercion where force rules the day," these are sites "where we invest hope" into expectations that are not always met, and "[s]urburban schools are seen as places of 'expressive individualism,' where students react against social cliques and find out who they really are" (385). *The Faculty,* with its direct reference to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers,* speaks directly to American fears that conformity is ubiquitous with a loss of control; however, the film also reveals a cultural anxiety about the consequences of difference and the ways that American culture engineers specific places in the everyday (such as schools) that strive to enforce consistent experiences and complacent obedience. Although it presents an imaginary school with a supernatural threat, the film nevertheless also captures a zeitgeist in which the everyday place of the school is rendered hopelessly and horrifically placeless by the violent perceptions of alienation and isolation found there.

"I WANT TO GO HOME": FEELINGS OF LOSS AND BEING LOST IN *SESSION 9*[21]

Brad Anderson's 2001 film *Session 9* follows Gordon Fleming, a new father and devoted husband who desperately needs to secure work for his hazmat company. The company

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[21] Quote is from *Session 9*.

takes a job at a local mental asylum and there things quickly begin to deteriorate quickly. While one crew member starts listening to the abandoned records of sessions with a patient experiencing dissociate identity disorder, strange things begin to happen: another co-worker disappears (willingly or not), someone or something seems to still be living in the hospital, and Gordon's increasingly erratic behavior suggests that he may not be the kind and gentle man everyone believes him to be. Although the film offers chronological markers through non-diegetic titles for each day of the week, it quickly becomes difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction, between the past and the present, and between what is paranoia and what might be the supernatural. *Session 9* manages to muddy conceptions of placeness and placelessness through its use of the actual Danvers State Hospital as a setting for its fictional narrative. In the process, the film distorts many of the spheres—real/imagined, past/present, mental stability/illness—that create the boundaries used to navigate the everyday.

Danvers State Hospital may not make it into the cast list of twelve; however, based on some of the film's official synopses, it certainly deserves top billing. IMDb describes the movie as one in which the "tensions rise" amongst a group of co-workers "as they work in an abandoned mental hospital with a horrific past that seems to be coming back." Amazon Video is even bolder in foregrounding the significance of the hospital as its synopsis reads:

> It looms up out of the woods like a dormant beast. Grand, imposing …
> abandoned and deteriorating, the Danvers State Mental, Hospital closed
> down for 15 years is about to receive 5 new visitors. Donning protective
> gear, the men of the Hazmat Elimination Co. venture into the eerily vast

and vacant asylum that is filled with an evil and mysterious past. Rampant patient abuse, medieval medical procedure and rumors of demonic possession are some of the many dark secrets the hospital holds—but then so do each of the men.

Both of these synopses situate the Danvers State Hospital as an imposing and menacing force within the film. They also reveal that the hospital is not simply a setting; it is a presence in its own right—one that cannot and should not be ignored. These synopses reveal the degree to which *Session 9* uses this specific place to communicate real-world American anxieties about the horrific consequences of the actual manifestations of placelessness in America.

Danvers dominated the conversation of a 2001 online interview with Brad Anderson (the writer/director) and David Caruso (one of the actors). Anderson admitted that Danvers was a part of the film from the beginning, as it was in part his prior interactions with the place that had nurtured his desire to make this film. They shot the film only months before the space was officially deemed unsafe and the reality of their environment deeply affected the production and filming. Earlier in the interview, Caruso described the effect of shooting in this place: "Danvers is not a movie location. It really is [a mental hospital]. It was a place we never got comfortable in. […] It was always scary, and you could feel the pain of the people that were at Danvers. It's a rough environment. But, I mean, it's on the film. You can see. They didn't have to dress any sets or anything […] and it was a terrifying location." The film captures this essence of the hospital, but it does so by rendering Danvers into a film location; the audience is only allowed to experience the place through the fictitious narrative and through the mediated

experience of carefully crafted moments of cinematography and editing (figures 2.3a and

2.3b). The end result is an inherently uncanny representation of a real place at the center

of a fictional text. The conflation of existent placeness with constructed placelessness

muddies the viewers' abilities to decipher the "authentic" Danvers State Hospital.

Figure 2.3a (left). The first unencumbered POV shot of Danvers creates the affect of

real-world engagement as though "we" the audience are walking toward Danvers State

Hospital. Yet this effect is mitigated by the placeless voice-over audio intrusion of the

fictitious narrative. Figure 2.3b (right). Although the final shots of the film are external,

aerial establishing shots that help situate Danvers within its environment, the temporary

superimposition of the inside and outside of Danvers in a few frames diminishes the

potential affect of an authentic presentation of place.

Excluding the scenes that transpire outside of the buildings and property lines of

Danvers State Hospital, the entire movie is filmed on location. Additionally, the

narrative repeatedly makes it clear: this is not some random mental institute. This is *the*

Danvers State Hospital in all of its real-world decay and glory. On the surface, the real

place that was known as Danvers State Hospital stands in total opposition of the concepts

of placelessness put forth by Relph when he argues that often placelessness manifests

itself through places that "not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same possibilities for experience" (90). The original construction of Danvers, which began in 1874, involved an elaborate and meticulous design. Richard B. Trask writes that the hospital "came into being during the period when throughout the country insane hospitals were constructed on a massive scale with imposing appearances." Danvers was so ornate, a style appropriately dubbed "domestic Gothic," that a senator wrote in 1877 that the hospital was akin to a palace, although arguably even a royal palace probably was "neither so large nor so pretentious architecturally as the hospital at Danvers" (qtd. in Trask). The hospital plans even received the only award offered in the US for the design of a mental hospital. It was not just the buildings of Danvers that stood out; before its closure in the 1970s, the hospital rose to some notoriety in the medical community for its practices and therapies.[22] The 1983 nomination to place Danvers on the National Register of Historic Places (a request that was granted) included references to both the hospital's programs and the ways that the hospital utilized the large and diverse property and its offerings to help establish "a pattern of community involvement for which the hospital would later be noted."

Despite its status in the National Register as a "nationally significant property, both for its architecture and history," all that remains today of Danvers is what Trask calls "a mere ghost-image of itself". The bulk of Danvers State Hospital's structures were demolished in 2006 by the residential apartment developer who purchased the land, leaving literally only a shell (some of the outer walls were kept in place) of the original main structure. Trask writes that in its place emerged "a forest of monotonous, multi-

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[22] Additionally, Danvers is often considered the birthplace of the modern lobotomy, although this tidbit is not present on the location's official websites.

story, contemporary structures crowding out what was a formerly grand landscape. And the dirty little secret of the hospital's history and use, the triumph and the tragedies of this locale" have been effectively buried in the rubble. If the authentic Danvers State Hospital embodied placeness then what exists in its place truly exemplifies placelessness. Although real-world pleas and attempts to preserve Danvers were both vocal and passionate, it is interesting to note that in *Session 9* the characters do not seem to share this same concern about the hospital's inevitable transformation from placeness to placelessness. For the hazmat crew, this is just another workplace to clean up. The town engineer in charge of choosing the asbestos-removal crew proclaims that, if it were up to him and if the place weren't on the National Historic Register, he'd tear the whole thing down and "[p]ut up a Walmart maybe." The film's characters may not sermonize on the subject, but the film's beautiful and almost lovingly depiction of the place and the horror found within its decrepitude encourage the audience to consider the potential awfulness of Danvers' fate. In this way, the film allows audiences—even those unfamiliar with the actual history of the hospital—to be able to consider cultural anxieties about real-world placeless in American as they ask themselves: Which is the true horror—the seemingly sinister past Danvers once claimed or the placeless future of this historic hospital?

The film's treatment of Danvers, both in its narrative and through its cinematic lens, is unsettling in its most basic sense of the word. At the beginning of the film, the town engineer explains that the hospital's layout is fairly linear—much like the outline of a bat, he says, with the main building serving as the body and the male and female wards on either side spanning out like wings. A tracking shot accompanies this description, the characters facing the camera as it keeps pace with their explorations. For approximately

a minute, the editing continues to create a sense of graphic continuity through match-on-action and other cuts that help create at least the illusion of clear, identifiable spatial relationships between the various places inside Danvers. This spatial awareness is, however, quickly undermined by the abrupt cut from the hydrotherapy room to the characters in the kitchen, with only a sound bridge offering continuity between the two scenes/locations. The film almost entirely refuses to offer any sort of visual or referential blueprint; shots of empty hallways and labyrinthine stairways create not the impression of connections but instead a sense of dead-ends and isolation. Furthermore, unencumbered glimpses of Danvers are tantalizingly rare as the framing of many of the shots inside Danvers—even in the relatively wide-open spaces and rooms of the hospital—only further obscure clear spatial composition (figures 2.4a and 2.4b).

Figure 2.4a (left). The close-up nature of this shot, combined with the racking focus that blurs the background, limits the amount of visual space available to the viewers even in the hosptial's wide-open spaces. Figure 2.4b (right). Many shots of the hospital employ extreme angles (such as this canted and low angle) that not only fail to offer natural, everyday ways of viewing place but instead manage to create a near claustrophobic sensation of entrapment.

The perpetually placeless treatment of the hospital bleeds into all aspects of the film's narrative. Boundaries are used in order to craft distinctions, to build categorizations, and to assist in the identifications of the people and places in our lives (Nippert-Eng, Petronio). In other words, they help us navigate the everyday. Boundaries can be used to establish physical or geographical demarcations, but they can also be used to establish the different spheres in which people operate or associate themselves (work/home, private/public, healthy/unhealthy) within everyday contexts. Yet although boundaries help to create and maintain connections and value (of information, places, individuals, or beliefs), they are often permeable, allowing people to cross between them on a regular basis (Petronio). They are fragile constructions and can collapse under strain, scrutiny, or even modes of thinking (like global methods of communication) that render them obsolete (Morley and Robins 75). In *Session 9,* the boundaries that define the everyday quickly disappear as the characters spend more time within the placelessness of Danvers. The characters' private lives begin to directly affect their public work lives as the hospital becomes not just a work site but a place intruded upon by personal issues. The border between the past and the present is problematized as audiences hear the voices of the different identities of the former Danvers patient even when none of the workers are listening to the tapes. The physical dangers of the asbestos seem to blend into the psychological threats of the place. Within Danvers, nothing— sometimes not even the walls themselves—are permanent or impermeable; everything bleeds together.

Mike Wayne argues that horror films use boundaries—both geographical and temporal in nature—to create what he calls "frames" that disrupt the ways that characters

perceive the everyday world around them. Even as these characters escape these frames and return back to their regular lives, the films leave behind the suggestion that, perhaps, "this everyday life is the *real* horror" (206). According to Anderson, Scottish actor Peter Mullan, who played Gordon, was drawn to the film because it presented the idea that perhaps it was the American everyday life that was the horror. Mullan saw it as blurring boundaries by depiciting "an American tragedy. Here's this guy from overseas who's come here to try and make it, make it good in this country, marry, raise a family, start a successful business … and it's starting to unravel around him." The horrific untethering that is the consequence of a shattered American Dream can be seen throughout the film. The first words audiences hear in the film are on the radio as someone says "You got these foreigners." Another person chuckles before the first voice continues "They're taking American jobs from hardworking Americans." Gordon, who retains a ghost of Mullan's accent, is—on the surface—one of these problematic foreigners and, by the end of the film, a killer several times over. Yet the film, rather than making him into a monster instead depicts a sympathetic character who tried to do anything he could for his family and who pushed himself so hard and tried so emphatically to claim the American Dream that he cracked irreparably. Ziauddin Sardan and Merryl Wyn Davies argue that, especially within a global framework, the American Dream turns into a nightmare that not only further separates groups of people offers only "a squandering of the human future" (vi). Whether or not their judgment of the American Dream is entirely accurate, their statement nevertheless reveals particular American anxieties about the prices that must be paid for the American Dream and whether or not the pursuit for this dream (or even the dream itself) is healthy.

Much of *Session 9* seems to explore the idea of where the lines are to be drawn between healthy and unhealthy and how the places of our lives help craft these lines. According to Sander Gilman, it is "the fear of collapse, the sense of dissolution" that exists at the core of Western images of disease, including mental illnesses (1). In the film, Gordon's collapse is inextricably linked to Danvers. Yet the film does not seem to suggest that Danvers is the problem or even that Gordon was simply too weak; rather it seems to propose that perhaps it is the American concept of the everyday that is flawed and broken. At several points in the film, a cracked American flag can be seen stuck to a window in the kitchen of Danvers. This flag was already present on location; however, Anderson's repeated and intentional showing of this image helps reinforce the film's theme of the potentially flawed and broken nature of the American ideal. Peg Aloi claims that the film's "narrative suggests that nothing becomes 'real' until the characters are removed from the comforts and routines of the everyday" (198). At the end of the film, Gordon is isolated in one of the rooms of Danvers, without family, friends, or crew. Although nothing is literally restraining him from leaving, he is clearly trapped as he pitifully says: "I'm so lonely here." The film moves to an external establishing shot of Danvers accompanied by a voice-over monologue by the violent personality from the old session tapes—a voice that Gordon has possibly been hearing for quite some time— saying "I live in the weak and wounded, doc." Audiences are left to wonder who or what it is that is truly wounded and weak in this placeless location of the American everyday.

"ALL ABOUT SCRIPTED DISORIENTATION": NON-PLACE IN HORRORSTÖR[23]

When George Romero placed his zombie narrative in a mall, he struck a chord that would reverberate throughout American horror for the next several decades: the terror of realizing that *we* are those monstrous, mindless, shuffling, consuming masses. Unsurprisingly, American horror also continues to depict the locations of everyday consumption: malls, shopping centers, big-box conglomerate chains, and even local grocery stores. The horror of these places runs deeper than just facilitating our purchasing tendencies as these places prove, time and again, to be not just the places where we consume but rather the places that consume us over and over again. In this way, the horror genre often demonstrates the dangerously simplistic and inaccurate belief behind the assumed relationships that we have with everyday places; although we may associate certain places with gain (of values, identities, and goods), that does not mean that these places are not simultaneously sites of loss (of meaning, power, and capital). Grady Hendrix's 2014 novel *Horrorstör,* by setting up explicit and implicit connections between stores and prisons, exposes the ways that big-chain are in reality not places defined by acquisition but rather non-places marked by forfeiture; in doing so, the novel reveals how incorrect cultural assumptions about the nature of our everyday places is not only inconvenient but actually capable of producing a horrific sense of placelessness.

　　Horrorstör is an intriguing addition to the existing body of horror about stores that are just as hungry as the people who frequent them. The narrative follows a few employees of an Ohio branch of the Orsk corporation who are begrudgingly monitoring their specific store after-hours in hopes of catching the vandals who seem to be visiting

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[23] Quote is from *Horrorstör* (71).

nightly. What the employees discover, however, is nothing so mundane; they discover instead that just beneath the consumer-friendly surface of Orsk lies the psychic remains of the Cuyahoga Panotpicon, a prison that once existed on that location and still exists there each night. There is nothing subtle about the novel's blatant adoption of IKEA's Scandanvian-esque flavored consuming experience and 'build-it-yourself' furniture for its fictional-brand of Orsk, just as there is nothing restrained about this satirical work's unusual form, which conjures up associations of a store catalogue. The book's atypical proportions, glossy cover, and cover images of what could easily be the stark, bold (albeit more horrific) images of an IKEA showroom offer a clever illusion to a store catalogue that is continued inside with a store map of the ubiquitous Orsk layout, various order forms and advertisements, and even chapter headings that attempt to "sell" a particular product. This mimicry of an IKEA catalogue is of course not perfect but rather intentionally uncanny, a point made with the front cover's image that (while at first glance appears to be an ideal showroom photo) actually presents an unsettling, disquieting image that alludes to dark things lurking just below the surface. As the book progresses, the images of the sharp-angled, modern Orsk furniture are replaced with images of doppelgänger torture pieces from the Cuyahoga Panotpicon. The novel's form, coupled with its narrative, proves disorienting as it blurs the lines between real places and fictional ones, real acts of consumption and faux shopping experiences. The end result is a sense of placelessness that is not that unfamiliar for those who frequent IKEA and its carefully-constructed, artificially 'authentic' experience.

The opening sentence of *Horrorstör* begins with a familiar image: "It was dawn, and the zombies were stumbling through the parking lot, streaming toward the massive

beige box at the far end" (9). The next paragraph, however, shifts away from the expected narrative; these are not hungry consumers but exhausted employees who "every morning, five days a week (seven during the holidays), … dragged themselves here, to the one thing in their lives that never changed, the one thing they could count on" (9). This focus on the workers, rather than the more obvious consumers of Orsk, becomes a way for *Horrorstör* to further illustrate the challenges faced in distinguishing between the places and the non-places of the everyday. Peter N. Stearns discusses that the events of September 11, 2001 created particular American anxieties about where the ordinary citizen fit into the fight on terror. He argues that the push for the average American to 'do their part' in sustaining the capitalistic system proved to be only a temporary fix for the existing cultural fears as it was revealed that the increased mindless "dependence on consumerism" ultimately "did nothing to help people feel that they were participating in any special effort in ways that could help refocus emotional concern" (44). Hendrix's novel underscores this perception as it ultimately suggests that it is not the buying of products that is unto itself a source of placelessness; the danger lies in treating the acts of consumption and exchange—of acquisition and forfeiture—as unavoidable and perpetual components of the capitalist framework.

Most of the Orsk employees seem to appreciate and thrive on the continuity and stability offered by their work. The novel describes one character as treating "Orsk like her family and home, and every day she tried to make it a better place" (26). Posters around the store offer slogans such as "Our home is forever" (115) and "A place for the everyone for always" (116) encourage this mentality. Yet one Orsk employee, Amy, cannot entirely escape the crushing sensation of the daily grind and the feeling that she

could get "stuck on the hamster wheel forever, stuck in retail forever, stuck at Orsk forever" (34). Lefebvre argues that a frequent characteristic of the everyday is the presence of repetition, particularly through "gestures of work and consumption" so that the "everyday imposes monotony" in such a way that "days follow one after another and resemble one another" ("Everyday" 10). Yet, Lefebvre also admits that in this endless stream of repetition "lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness—everything changes" (10). Part of the horror for the characters in the novel emerges as they, like the less-than-enthusiastic Amy, remain "unaware of the subtle changes taking place around her" (37). The characters have become so comfortable by their conceptions of this everyday place that they are largely unprepared for the terrible ways that the store will change and reshape itself as the Cuyahoga Panotpicon and its occupants rise to the surface. "During the day, Orsk was a building like any other […] But after eleven o'clock […] it became something else" (37). Even when Amy hears strange sounds while patrolling the empty store at night, her source of comfort arrives with the reminder that "[s]he was at her job. She couldn't possibly be in any danger. […] If there was a safer location than a big box retail outlet owned by a global corporation, she couldn't imagine it" (46). Of course this assumption proves to be as far from the truth as possible.

Lefebvre ends his discussion of repetition and change within the everyday by revealing that it is not as simple as an either/or construct; the everyday is simultaneously repetition and change, an endless loop between "acceleration" and "stagnation" ("Everyday" 10). And it is within this cycle that the true horror of the novel reveals itself. It may seem nonsensical and ludicrous to compare a successful company like Orsk to the prison that previous occupied its space; however, the novel suggests that it is also

irrational and absurd to not see the similarities. The similar presentations of the Orsk

furniture and the doppelgänger-like Cuyahoga Panotpicon torture devices as well as the

near-identical maps of the prison and store on the front and back inside flaps of the cover,

respectively, emphasize this similarity. Yet it is really the descriptions of Orsk that

cement this impression. The store at night is described as feeling "endless, sprawled

around them all silent and secret" (57), but even in the day "Orsk is all about scripted

disorientation" to create a "programmed shopping experience" that is not unlike the

experience crafted in the prison for rehabilitating the criminal mind. One of Amy's co-

workers tells her the store "wants you to surrender to a programmed shopping

experience" is not all that different from the prison warden's belief that that the criminal

mind could be cured through "forced labor, mindless repetition, and total surveillance"

(71). What the co-worker fails to see, however, is that the prison was not the only place

built "back when people believed that architecture could be designed to generate a

psychological effect" (71-72); Orsk has also been crafted to produce a specific effect.

When deputy store manager Basil tries to free Amy from the trap laid by the warden of

the Cuyahoga Panotpicon, he tells her that she isn't thinking clearly because they are not

in the prison but in Orsk. Amy, however, is no longer fooled: "We've always been in the

Beehive. There is nowhere else" (152).[24] The everyday, it seems, can be simultaneously

Orsk and Beehive, reward and punishment, repetition and change.

   The everyday "place" of the store is not only unsuitable for permanent

inhabitation, but it is incapable of producing a sustainable sense of identity or

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[24] Both the warden and the prisoners referred to the prison as the Beehive "because it hummed with the sound of industry" (121). This nickname and the imagery it inspires (of mindless drones working not for themselves but the 'greater good' becomes yet another subtle but valuable connection between the experiences of the store workers and the prisoners, between the non-places of the store and the prison.

community. That is because Orsk is not a place but rather a non-place. Marc Augé

created the term *non-place* as a way to explore the spaces of modernity that, unlike

places, "cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" despite

the frequency of visitation or even occupation (77-78). Arefi proposes that place,

placelessness, and non-place exist on a continuum, with the latter two representing,

respectively, "the geographies of nowhereness and otherness" ("Non-Place" 186).

Whereas placelessness prompts a sense of nowhere (and everywhere) through a lack of

identity or distinctiveness, non-places exhibit something that is not quite placeness and

not quite placelessness but rather something other, somewhere that is, often literally, in-

between. Although it is arguably easy to distinguish between places and non-places in the

real world, the horror genre questions the wisdom of trusting our abilities to know our

everyday places. Sometimes horror characters mistake non-places for places. Other

times, however, characters make the assumption that they can gain the same types of

meaning and identity from the non-places in their lives as they do from their places. One

constant remains: within the horror genre, the inability to successfully differentiate and/or

comprehend the reality of non-places leads to a horrific placelessness that reshapes—in

often disquieting and frequently uncanny ways—the geography of the everyday.

　　Horrorstör repeatedly shows the horrific placelessness that arises from mistaking

the locations of the everyday for places when they are in actuality non-places. Non-

places are often repositories of very specific practices and usually crafted with precise

functions and purposes in mind; as a result, interactions with non-places often take on

contractual relations that—as with most contracts—involve exchanges of some kind

(Augé 101). Stores are clearly designed around the concept of exchange, and everyone

who interacts with such non-places, from shopper to employee, seems to acknowledge this facet. Alan Penn argues that crossing the threshold into a store is the first step in the fulfillment of contract between shopper and trader, one that creates a barrier (however temporary) between the outside world and the store (39-40). *Horrorstör* suggests that this experience is felt as much by the employee as he is also a user of this non-place. Amy's first obstacle in the novel proves to be not overcoming the horror of a killer workplace, but simply accepting the horror of having to give up, however temporarily, the outside world during her shift inside Orsk. The employee-characters each view Orsk through what they will obtain (family, stability, money) in exchange for their services and time. Orsk promises a total experience, not just for its customers, but for its employees too as its slogans emphasize the sense of accomplishment, hard work, and community available to its "family" (39). Yet, as the novel suggests through its conflation of the store and the prison, the family being offered in this non-place is much less the Waltons and much more the Masons. Augé argues that the contracts made between user and non-place are stringent as "the user of the non-place is always required to prove his innocence," to establish—often through checks on his identity, that the user is who she claims to be—that they understand the contract in place and how they fit within the functions of this non-place (102). In *Horrorstör* the characters are unable to accept, until it is too late, that their contract with the store is a life sentence and involves not just acquisitions (of goods, of money, of identity) but also forfeitures (of freedom, of time, of security).

The characters are unable to see the true nature of Orsk and the contract it offers in part because the store has crafted, primarily through its promotional packaging of an

Orsk family of hard workers, the illusion of relational and historical connections that simply cannot exist within a non-place. Amy is not sure whether the "completely fake, slightly stilted Europ-phrasing [that] was part of Orsk's fake Ikea act" is "slightly annoying or totally offensive" (39); however, she does not realize that the truth of this packaging might be more nefarious. In her specific discussion of IKEA and the constructed identity it promotes through merchandise, design, and marketing (of both products and brand), Ursula Lindqvist argues that IKEA is an archival space, one created to produce a specific national identity that can be transmitted and consumed around the world (44). In order to make such an identity palatable, archival spaces will, as necessary, expunge any elements (or ideas or peoples) that do not fit inside the fabricated, cohesive identity (45). In *Horrorstör*, Orsk—as both a horrific IKEA-knock-off and the mirror-image of a prison—also seems to also exist not as a place where actual identity is produced but as a non-place where the illusion of an authentic, singular identity is maintained. Elements and people who don't fit this cohesive image are terminated, literally.

What is perhaps most disconcerting about *Horrorstör* is that this placeless nightmare does not end with the Orsk store. The novel concludes with two of the employees having escaped their night in hell inside Cuyahoga Panotpicon /Orsk, but— without anything to substantiate their claims of what they endured—life returns to normal. Normal means a new big box store, Planet Baby, setting up shop in the Orsk building. Amy takes a job there and, although it is eventually revealed that her plan is to have nighttime access to the store so she can try to recover her missing co-workers, it is nevertheless unsettling to read of Amy's return to a place that is ultimately "different but

the same" (239). The narrative may end on this relatively hopeful note of possible

rescue; however, the novel itself actually ends with first an advertisement for the new

Planet Baby and then a final advertisement for Orsk that promises "We never stop./We

never sleep,/And now we're in your home./Orskusa.com" (248). Augé states: "Certain

places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-

places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés" (95). This claim comes, in my

opinion, not coincidentally after his reference of a list of words that includes "America,"

"West," and "consumption." The title *Horrorstör* may imply a pseudo-European

connection; however, the novel is clearly and resoundingly addressing American cultural

anxieties about the fears that our places of consumption may be in turn consuming us; we

are imprisoned and not liberated in these places. Ultimately, the novel is an American

horror story about the placeless reality of realizing that perhaps our place is truly a non-

place, perhaps our assumptions about how consumption tethers us to the everyday are

actually hiding a reality of perpetual untetheredness. "The space of non-place creates

neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude" (Augé 103). And

perhaps that is exactly what the American non-place offers: solitude and similitude.

"IT'S A VERY VERY MAD WORLD"

The title for this chapter is an intentional misappropriation of a line from "Mad World," a

song that gained new life in a cover by Michael Andrews featured in the 2001 *Donnie*

Darko film soundtrack. The lyrics to the first verse begin: "All around me are familiar

faces/Worn out places, worn out faces/Bright and early for their daily races/Going

nowhere, going nowhere." The chorus, before moving into the second verse, ends with

the idea: "I find it hard to tell you, I find it hard to take/When people run in circles it's a

very very/mad world mad world." The piano-driven melody, which reinforces the melancholic mood of the lyrics, is appropriately haunting. But "Mad World" is not just haunting, it is a song about being haunted … by the ghosts of people and places that have been damaged and broken, not by extraordinary events but rather by the repetition of the everyday.

This is a theme that plays out frequently within American horror texts. People so often focus on the extreme and excessive nature of the genre: its complex kill scenes, exaggerated scenarios, and intense and violent gore and violence. Yet arguably what often resonates the most with audiences, what seems to maintain cultural longevity, and what continues to influence the genre are stories about the everyday: fears of pain and mortality, concerns over the influence of media, struggles with addiction, and feelings of being out of place or even without a place altogether. In post-WWII American horror, these everyday horrors happens in everyday places: hotels, schools, hospitals, and stores, certainly, but also grocery shops, churches, bowling alleys, malls, airports, train stations, motels, gas stations, and all those places in-between. What should potentially be a source of comfort, the sense of place-intimacy bred from familiarity and frequent exposure every day is instead the ultimate source of horror. These are not just any places; these are *our* places that are being threatened and destroyed.

The loss of these everyday places is literally a placeless situation, but placelessness also manifests itself in a larger way. We consider these places to be markers on the map of the everyday, offering clues and cues on how to read the everyday and how to find our places within the everyday. In the introduction to a 2009 journal issue about the global impact and ramifications of the 2008 American financial and

economic crash, Nathan Gardels argues that "America is in shock because our economic and financial landscape is suddenly unrecognizable" (2). He ends his introduction by returning back to this idea of shock: "If Americans are in shock today over how rapidly their fortunes can turn on the domestic front, they will be no less stunned tomorrow when they realize the high cost on the global stage of putting the house of the American Dream back in order" (5). Through the destruction of everyday places, the horror genre does not simply strip the map of its markers; it offers a totally alien landscape, one that is completely unfamiliar, unrecognizable, and placeless. We expect the places that we visit every day to provide us with tethers that can ground us to the cultural communities and identities fostered by the everyday. Yet, repeatedly the horror genre shows the dangerous consequences of holding such assumptions. These familiar locations are not places of meaning but non-places, not sites of acquisition but rather forfeiture, and not utopic dream-come-true sanctuaries but deadly nightmarish prisons. These "everyday places" do not fulfill the social contracts that they promised or, rather, that we assumed they promised. And this is where the real horror lies as we are forced to consider: Have our tethers to the everyday been taken from us or did they just never exist to begin with? Either way, we find ourselves left with nothing more than a horrible and overwhelming sense of placelessness.

CHAPTER THREE

DYING TO GET AWAY: TRAVELS ACROSS

THE LOCAL LANDSCAPES OF AMERICAN HORROR

> What are the landscapes of fear? They are the
> manifestations of the forces for chaos, natural and human.
> Forces for chaos being omnipresent, human attempts to
> control them are also omnipresent. In a sense, every human
> construction—whether mental or material—is a component
> in a landscape of fear because it exists to contain chaos.
> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (6)

> ASH: There's something out there. That … that witch in
> the cellar is only part of it. It lives … out in those woods,
> in the dark … something … something that's come back
> from the dead.
> *Evil Dead II* (1987)

A group of hapless teenagers spend a fateful and, for most of them, final few days

in the woods. This description could easily apply to countless American horror films and

franchises including *Friday the 13th, Cabin Fever, Wrong Turn, The Last House on the

Left,* and *The Evil Dead.*[25] The 1987 film *Evil Dead II*, picking up immediately after the

narrative of the first film, is a gorific satire and celebration of not just Sam Raimi's

original film but the horror genre and its recognizable evil-lurking-in-the-woods trope. In

Evil Dead II, the main character Ash warns the others that something bad is out there in

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[25] In fact, the horror-in-the-woods theme is iconic enough to have spawned its own parodic sub-genre of
horror-comedy with popular films like the 2010 *Tucker & Dale vs. Evil* and the 2012 *The Cabin in the
Woods*.

the woods and, indeed through the film's trademark shaky-cam "Force" POV shots, the audience witnesses this evil's sentience first-hand. Danger is definitely outside but, as the film reveals, danger is also literally the outside—as even the woods themselves prove to be a threat.[26]

The number of American horror texts set in or around the woods is staggering.[27] But it isn't just the woods wherein our nightmares lurk. Danger proves to be everywhere outside: woods, deserts, mountains, oceans, lakes, and rivers. The masters of American horror—from writers such as H.P. Lovecraft and Richard Matheson to filmmakers such as Wes Craven and George Romero—remind us time and again that horror can be found in any and all versions of the wilderness that exist at the heart of the American landscape. Often the fears about the wilderness are played out in narratives about travel, as family units and/or groups of friends embark on vacations and road trips across the expanses of the American landscape. Their retreats and journeys are, however, inevitably interrupted by outside forces—human (cannibal families, murderous rednecks) and non-human (supernatural forces, crazed animals) alike—that systematically destroy not only individual lives and identities but those of the group being terrorized.

The four works examined in-depth in this chapter—the 1999 film *The Blair Witch Project,* Jack Ketchum's 1980 novel *Off Season*, Bentley Little's 2004 novel *The Resort*, and the 1974 film *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*[28]—each present the terrible fates that

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[26] In *Evil Dead II,* Ash is thrown by the evil force into multiple trees before nearly drowning in a puddle as the force holds him down. In the 1987 and 2013 versions of the *Evil Dead*, nature is a more openly dangerous threat as, in both films, the trees/woods actively penetrate and impale characters.

[27] The frequency of horror texts set literally and specifically in the woods begs the question of what is the particularly American fascination with this form of the wilderness. Roderick W. Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* discusses the historical fascination, depiction, and imagining of the woods as being a particularly American expression of wilderness.

[28] These texts are listed in the order in which they will be discussed later in the chapter.

befall those groups and individuals who find themselves unprepared for the horror that awaits them in the wilderness (specifically, in the woods, off the coastal shores, in the desert, and across the plains, respectively). On the surface, these works create the impression that there are few places left in (a globalized) America that can be protected from outside forces. Yet long before the outside forces invade, the characters in these texts are already being horrifically untethered by their misplaced belief that the wilderness has been safely contained, that they can trust the familiarity and the place-ness of the American landscape. Their travels begin to problematize the boundaries of place just as their mobility exposes the ever-shifting boundaries of identity—of outsider/insider, savage/civilized, wilderness/non-wilderness. As these boundaries of place and identity begin to deteriorate, a horrifying question arises: What if the outsiders are *us* or at least a version of us? American horror travel narratives may not unequivocally answer this question one way or another; nevertheless, as this chapter reveals, in a culture obsessed with borders, the shifting and blurring of these boundaries becomes—literally and figuratively—devastating as it disrupts perceptions of the American landscape. For, even as the texts examined in this chapter seem to articulate larger cultural concerns about outside (globalizing) forces invading the perceived solace of America's place, they also speak to just as real—but perhaps more latent—fears about the placeless wilderness that is always lurking just below the surface of the American landscape.[29]

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[29] My focus in this chapter is on post-WWII American horror; however, the "horror in the woods" has been a familiar trope within American culture since its inception. For a thorough examination of how narratives of the horrors of the wilderness can be seen in early colonial and Puritanical historical and cultural artifacts, see Bernice Murphy's *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture*.

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA … AND ALL THE PLACES BETWEEN

From the intertwined relationship between the concepts of American Exceptionalism and

Manifest Destiny to the lyrics of the patriotic song "America the Beautiful," beliefs about

and feelings towards the places of America are complicated by, changed by, and—in

turn—convert constructions of cultural and national identity. America, as a nation, has

arguably always been—to one degree or another—about the land. America, as a culture,

has arguably always been—to one degree or another—about the appropriation, claiming,

manipulation, and shaping of not just the land but the landscape. These two terms, *land*

and *landscape*, are often used interchangeably and indistinguishably outside of the field

of geography, which is unsurprising given that the etymology of *landscape* involves the

idea of "commonplaces," translates in early Dutch incarnations of the term as 'land

shaping,' and shapes specific forms of artwork traditionally focused on certain sceneries

and depictions of the land (Olwig). Nonetheless, it is important for the purposes of this

chapter to acknowledge that, within humanist geography, *land* and *landscape* are

entangled, albeit separate, terms. Only with such a perspective is it possible to see

exactly how American horror travel narratives can so eloquently allow manifestations of

placelessness to become metaphors for larger fears about the loss or dissolution of

identity.

There is no single definition of landscape, perhaps both because it is a term

continually being refined and re-defined as well as because its meaning shifts and is

shifted by theorists approaching the subject from different fields, global perspectives, and

methodologies.[30] Most scholars agree, however, with the general definition that landscape is the product of a relationship between human and place, between culture and land. Carl Ortwin Sauer breaks it down into the following formula when he suggests: "Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result" (343). J.B. Jackson, the American geographer often considered instrumental in drawing critical attention to everyday landscapes, argues that landscapes are not just created by humans, but needed by humans because it is within these places that larger constructions of meaning and understanding are created (*Discovering* 156). Even transitory landscapes, such as the American highway, can "provide us with some symbols of permanent values. It is possible for it to provide us with landmarks to reassure us that we are not rootless individuals without identity or place, but are part of a larger scheme" (Jackson *Landscapes* 152).

Landscape is, in many ways, inherently open and ambiguous. It is able to serve simultaneous purposes and exist in several forms concurrently. It becomes a tool for addressing and promoting colonial agendas and perspectives. Landscapes derive meaning from the past and the present and help to shape the future.[31] A landscape can be both a place that inspires dreams as well as a place that reinforces a sense of reality through its tangible existence (Tuan "Thought and Landscape" 101). It also serves as a potential gateway between ideas, places, and peoples. Referencing Walter Straus' claim that landscapes offer the space to move from one place to another place, Casey claims:

[30] The 2007 edited collection *Foundation Papers in Landscape Ecology* provides a well-rounded, global perspective on landscape and the leading scholars that have helped promote its larger and cultural relevance.

[31] Historic sites such as the American West ghost town, for example, illustrate how these places can be not literal landscapes of the past but landscapes that continue to produce modern cultural meanings that continue to impact future assumptions and attitudes about the West (DeLyser).

"Landscape is the transitional domain that links cosmos and hearth, place and space, self and other" ("Body" 418). Articulated another way, landscapes are "a composition or web of boundaries" (Jackson *Discovering* 13). Jackson suggests that within "our early American landscape," boundaries "were designed to isolate and protect the objects or people within it" (*Discovering* 15). Writing in the 1980s, he argues that we "have outgrown" this view of boundaries; however, I disagree. As Tuan articulates in the first epigraph for this chapter, landscapes can also encourage and house fear and fearful things (*Landscapes of Fear*). These fears often are linked directly to anxieties about what lurks just outside of the familiar American landscape. Culturally speaking, Americans may believe they've escaped the early perspectives about landscapes as ways to isolate and protect from outside forces; however, post-WWII American horror reveals that we are still haunted by what (and where) we believe waits just beyond our comfortable boundaries—the wilderness.

Roderick W. Nash begins his essay on the historical perspective of the American wilderness, by saying that "Americans have found it difficult to be indifferent to a factor so basic in their collective experiences as the wilderness" ("The American" 3). They have viewed it as "an enemy to be conquered" and "something of value to be cherished and preserved" but they have never viewed it with either quiet unconcern or apathy (3). This complex relationship stems not necessarily from the actual nature of the wilderness, but rather through the constructed imagining of the wilderness that "gave Americans a unique national identity" that, as it evolves, reveals existing beliefs about the American tradition (Nelson and Callicott 6). In J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's 1772 *Letters from an American Farmer*, he answered the question: "What is an American?" first with

a description of the landscape of America. He remarked that the "enlightened Englishman" could experience nothing but "heart-felt pleasure" as he "beholds fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges where an hundred years ago all was wild, woody, and uncultivated!" (928). His statement reveals an appreciation for a *colonialized* landscape that has successfully pushed out the inferior, somehow less-American wilderness that does not fit the image of the English-constructed perceptions of landscape. This attitude can be seen in other historical texts, many of which—through their distinct notes of imperial expansion—expose the ways that the wilderness myth promoted a particularly American desire to conquer and colonize these spaces. For example, the second stanza of "America the Beautiful" reads: "O beautiful for pilgrim feet,/Whose stern, impassioned stress/A thoroughfare for freedom beat/Across the wilderness!/America! America!" This description, found even in the original 1893 poem, reinforces this idea that the wilderness is what stands between Americans and their America, a cultural opinion that began to dissipate in the mid-twentieth century.

As the Wilderness Act of 1964 (and more recent cultural movements such as the move to go more "green") reveals, American attitudes toward the wilderness over the centuries have evolved and continue to change.[32] Theodore Roosevelt—often remembered for his advocacy for conservation and promotion of the national parks— spoke about both often and eloquently about "the beauty and charm of the wilderness" ("Theodore"). The US Wilderness Act of 1964 offered the following definition for

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[32] The historical as well as, just as important, critical changes are reflected and explored in terms of how they inform cultural and global constructions, processes, and identities in the edited collections *American Wilderness: A New History* and *The Wilderness Debate Rages On: Continuing the Great New Wilderness Debate.*

wilderness: "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." That last clause is more than merely poetic; it establishes a relationship between human and wilderness that must be— by definition—transitory.[33] A person dwells in a landscape, but an individual can only *travel* to or from a wilderness. This remains an important attribute of the myth of the wilderness, and it is one that, importantly and problematically, suggests a singular American tradition, one that equates "man" with "civilization" in its implication that the wildernessis marked by an absence of humans. This perspective omits the perspectives of the indigenous Native American groups living and traversing this "wilderness" as part of their everyday lives. For better and worse, as a positive or negative, precious or dangerous space, the wilderness is often cast at the opposite end of the spectrum from the point of juncture between culture/society and place/land that defines the landscape (Scheese 7).

America's mixed (albeit never indifferent) feelings toward the wilderness can be seen throughout American horror and its depictions of those parts of America beyond the familiar landscape.[34] Wilderness is often painted—through word and image—as beautiful even in its starkness, both glorious and overwhelming in its expanses, and offering both succor and danger through its distance from "civilization." The first-person narrator of James Dickey's 1970 novel *Deliverance* remarks that the river was "mindless with beauty. It was the most glorious thing I have ever seen" (171). But he also

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[33] In *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps,* Casey explores how landscape paintings and maps articulate the complicated ideologies at work in acts of preservation in locations like Yosemite.
[34] As I and Megan McDonough discuss in our article "Rebellious Natures: The Role of Nature in Young Adult Dystopian Female Protagonists' Awakenings and Agency," these conflicting attitudes toward the wilderness can be seen in many American genres and texts, not just horror.

describes it as an "icy pit" notable for its indifference to human lives and its inherently "sinuous" nature (171). Often, as is the case for the main characters in *Deliverance* and countless other texts, the full dangers of the wilderness are not discovered until it is too late. The characters assume that the wilderness is contained by the cultural, civilized landscapes from whence they came. They are unaware how their assumptions about the American landscape are rooted in—to return to the words of Relph—an "inauthentic attitude" toward place founded in "an uncritically accepted stereotype" (82) that hides how the borders surrounding this landscape are actually inherently nebulous and permeable.

The boundaries surrounding the American landscape have been, from nearly the beginning, in a state of flux. American culture was, in many ways, founded on the imperialist struggle to convert the placeless into the placed, to reach beyond the edges of the frontier in an effort to transform the wilderness into a more familiar landscape. In his 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Frederick Jackson Turner—defining the frontier as "the outer edge" and "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (32)—insisted that the frontier was always more than just the next piece of land to be claimed. The "traits of the frontier" as well as those traits developed elsewhere in response to the frontier molded colonizing American culture, American attitudes, and American traits. "The result," Turner says, "is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics" (59). Writing in the late nineteenth century, Turner saw a new emerging era for the American people, one in which the frontier (for perhaps the first time since early European arrival to what would become the United States) was no longer in existence (60). The boundaries of

inside/outside and landscape/wilderness depended, in part, on the existence of the frontier; without it, American cultural identities lost their own shapes. It is perhaps unsurprising then that, as America headed into what is often called the "American century," the concept of the frontier was revived.

In February 1941, Henry Luce, the publisher of *Life* and *Time* magazines, wrote an editorial about how the twentieth century was to be the "American century" or rather "America's first century as a dominant power in the world" (qtd. in White 8). Whether he was simply trying to be a bit cheeky with bold claims, attempting to create an audacious call-to-action to match the extreme world circumstances, or just hoping for the best, Luce penned a phrase that became the 20th century equivalent of the shots heard around the world. Donald W. White claims that the American century took on mythic proportions and qualities, much in the same way that Manifest Destiny had in the previous century. Such myths, White proposes, thrive on a certain ambiguity that allow for multiple interpretations and symbolic purposes, thereby providing frameworks for politicians and cultural leaders, coloring social experiences and beliefs, and ultimately justifying both worldviews and world actions (7)—including a "fear of foreign threats" (9). Walter LaFeber discusses how, in a 1982 speech, the then president Ronald Reagan quoted Luce's writing when he claimed: "We're the country of the endless frontier …" (177). The idea of an endless frontier encourages a rather problematic and precarious interpretation of the world as anything/everything beyond the boundaries of the American landscape being the wilderness just on the other side of that endless frontier, passively and perhaps eagerly awaiting its fate to be conquered as a threat or cherished as a prize.

The idea that in the twentieth century—in a post-WWII world—America deserved to claim its supposedly rightful place at the top continues to play a role in affecting (American) conceptions of globalization and American identity within the (globalized) world. David Morley and Kevin Robins write: "Globalisation is profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world: it is provoking a new experience of orientation and disorientation, new senses of placed and placeless identity" (40-41). Although the "we" in their statement most likely refers to their own British identities, their claim resonates equally true from an American perspective, especially if American horror and other products of American popular culture are any indication. According to journalist and US government official Carl Rowan: "The United States is a nation without meaningful borders" (qtd. in Heale 52). As M.J. Heale discussion reveals, Rowan's statement was uttered specifically in reference to the immigration situation in the United States, but it also exposes a larger fear connected to the role of open borders in the constructions of American identity (52).   If the boundaries surrounding the American landscape are permeable than so too are the carefully constructed borders separating the ideas of inside(r) and outside(r).

The idea of the landscape is inherently ambivalent. It is about the past and present, culture and nature, human and place. The American landscape is historically and culturally ambiguous (and loaded) in terms of scope and definition, boundaries and borders. Within American horror, rather than this being an admirable quality of the American landscape, it is instead disturbing.   In these texts, it is not just the wilderness that becomes a threat; rather horror also stems from the characters' inabilities to accept that the American landscape (and the identities it fosters) is always changing and re-

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forming. Audiences are denied the ability to sustain carefully constructed spheres of us/them and insider/outsider as the ambivalent boundaries between familiar landscape and wilderness dictate equally flexible boundaries between spheres of meaning and identity construction. Through the characters' chosen acts of mobility and movement, the American landscape ceases to be stagnant or un-permeable.

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN TRUTH AND FICTION: *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*

Today, the words "found footage" may be accompanied by groans at the over-saturation of this device and its often nauseating, out-of-focus, jarring "shaky cam" effect. Yet in 1999 when *The Blair Witch Project* was released, the film's opening statement (that a group of students went missing and one "year later their footage was found") was met an unprecedented reaction of shock, horror, and genuine belief in the veracity of the film's events. Many audience members found the film to be incredibly unsettling, but it is also dis-settling. To an incredibly profound degree, the film produces an intentional misdirection that disrupts any familiar sense of place. *The Blair Witch Project* crafts a horrific sense of placelessness—through its narrative, cinematic form, and promotional materials external to the film—as it reveals that what exists between the blurred boundaries of the American landscape and wilderness and between truth and fiction will haunt you forever.

The Blair Witch Project (*BWP*) opens with college student Heather Donahue preparing for a trip into the woods outside of the town of Burkittsville, Maryland as part of her documentary about the Blair Witch. She shows the camera her *How to Stay Alive in the Woods* manual with the joking retort "because you never know what is going to happen," but she and her companions (Josh Leonard and Mike Williams) are excited for

what they assume will be a quick weekend trip. Instead, as the "found footage" chronicles, the group becomes horribly lost, losing first their map, then their sanity, and eventually their lives. Weinstock proposes that at its core the film is about being lost—in the woods, in time, and even in history. He argues that the film speaks to the zeitgeist of an uncertain American millennial culture caught between reality and fantasy, between the past and the present ("Lostness" 229). Weinstock ends his essay by suggesting that the film, "itself a millennial phenomenon defined by a thematics of lostness, asks a culture on the edge of transition if it knows where it is going and if it can be sure what it will find when it gets there" (242). I think, however, that the film is not nearly so generous or gentle as it questions, not what culture will find when it gets there, but whether or not a *there* exists at all. The film's blurring of boundaries between landscape/wilderness and reality/fantasy does not simply produce a sense of lostness; it exposes the placeless anxiety that perhaps there never was a place of solace, a place of refuge from whence one could initially become lost.

The characters eventually become aware of their untetheredness as they accept being lost; however, the film begins by proposing that perhaps the characters, even at the beginning, were never truly placed. Even though this film is about a group of individuals exploring the rich history of a New England town, there is nothing authentic about Heather, Josh, and Mike's experiences with the places they visit. During their initial stop in Burkittsville, Heather describes the town as "much like a small quiet town anywhere." Her description, while certainly condescending, matches the footage of a town that does indeed look like it could be Anywhere, USA. From the beginning, the film conflates fact and fiction, authentic places and fabricated locations. The town of Burkittsville is a real-

life town and some of the film was indeed shot there; however, since the tragic history of the town and the legend of the Blair Witch are entirely fabricated, most of the film's shooting locations are not actually the places that the narrative claims them to be. The result is a rather non-descript, placelessness that emerges long before the characters ever become lost in the woods.

In his exploration of the landscapes of fear, Tuan writes that with the fall of night, "[p]eople lose their ability to manipulate the environment, and feel vulnerable. As daylight withdraws, so does their world" (*Landscapes* 107). Weinstock argues that in *BWP*, "following the disappearance of the map, the 'wildness' of the wilderness forcefully emerges for the characters, and their superstitious fears are activated" ("Lostness" 232). After the characters' first night in the woods, Heather reassures her companions: "The sun's up … we're okay now." Like children, they irrationally believe in the power of daylight, but their superstitions do not match the reality of their situation. Whereas the familiar American landscape has been modified to allow humans to conquer a fear of the night and obtain solace from the dark, the wilderness of the woods offers no such comfort. Yet it isn't just their superstitious fears of the night that obscure their ability to fully know their place; the film exposes the corrupted and imperfect "communication between civilization and wilderness" that caused them to become untethered long before they lost the map (Weinstock 232). At one point, Heather says: "It's very hard to get lost in America these days and it's even harder to stay lost." Later, she tells Mike that the woods cannot go on forever "[b]ecause this is America and it is not possible. We've destroyed most of our national resources." Mike and Josh begin to scream-sing "America the Beautiful" and, for a moment at least, seem temporarily

bolstered by this claim. The characters are referencing a version of America that is defined through its ability to control and colonize the wilderness. What the characters fail to recognize until it is too late, however, is that this version of America is, like all cultural constructs, a crafted one and they are not in this crafted American landscape safe from the 'uncontrolled', uncontrollable wilderness.

The characters have crafted a version of the woods that proves horribly different from its reality. They don't take the woods seriously because they do not fully understand that they've crossed the border between the safe, familiar landscape and the true, dangerous wilderness. This is perhaps best illustrated by Heather's decision to purposefully take them off the map, confident in her knowledge of where they are going. As the truth of this place claws its ways out of the fantasy that they have created, the characters find themselves in a world where the boundaries between reality and fantasy and between rationality and irrationality are as flimsy as the boundaries between the American landscape and the wilderness. This devolution is documented through an intriguing mix of narrative and form. The degeneration of the characters from sane, reasonable individuals into superstitious, emotional creatures can be seen not only through their increasingly inappropriate reactions but also through the film's presentation of a rather linear story (college students head to woods, college students get lost in woods, college students are never found) through a plot that feels cyclical, composed of fragmented bits. As the film progresses, the screen duration of each subsequent day and night fails to remain consistent, mirroring not the realities of time but those of the characters' psychological and emotional deterioration. Furthermore, whereas the early shots of the film are clear and offer physical and relational context between the characters

and their environment, later footage is full of canted angles, blurred and indistinct

images, and increasingly shaky camera work. In a 1999 article, Emily Wax discusses the

"[d]iizzy spells, queasiness, cold sweats and occasional vomiting" that were part of the

experience for initial theater-goers. Yet even without the big screen experience, the film

is still disorienting and the footage is discombobulating; the camera's spasmodic bobbing

up and down, whipping about, and bouncing from spot to spot matches the characters'

own erratic movements. Even when the camera is still, the film presents images that—

often upon first viewing—seem to have lost referential meaning until, by the end of the

film, the bewildering visuals match the characters' realization that they are lost and the

wilderness is "on all sides of us" (figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. The canted angle and "un-cinematic" nature of this shot are, in the narrative,

due to Heather putting the camera on the ground before comforting Mike, but the

disorienting nature of this image is due as much to form as narrative. The shot denies

familiar directional cues and obscures the ability to easily distinguish between the

characters and their environment.

The film uses a combination of content and form to reveal the characters',

especially Heather's, Disneyfication of the woods. While there seems to be little

connecting "the happiest place on Earth" with the nightmarish woods outside of

Burkittsville, both rely on a fabricated version of the American landscape. Relph writes

that placelessness occurs because "[t]he products of 'disneyfication' are absurd, synthetic

places made up of a surrealistic combination of history, myth, reality, and fantasy that

have little relationship with particular geographical setting" (95). At Disney parks, such

experiences are usually considered endearing and enjoyable. *BWP* reveals, however, the

more horrific consequences that can occur when individuals are unable to see the

placelessness developed through constructed, inauthentic, and incomplete relationships

with a place. Relph suggests that museumisation (one form of Disneyfication) focuses

specifically on "the preservation, reconstruction and idealisation of history" (101). *BWP*

does not just offer a narrative about a group of student filmmakers hoping to make a

historical documentary; the film presents footage that will supposedly later be

transformed into a documentary. The distinctly different visual presentations of the two

cameras in *BWP* (the color camera used by Heather and the black-and-white camera that

serves as the 'official lens') draw attention to the fact that the audiences are seeing

mediated representations of the events in the woods.[35]

From the start of the film, Heather's desire to control the presentation of the

documentary—and by extension the portrayal of the woods—is clear. She tells Josh that

"[t]he woods around Halloween time is a creepy enough phenomenon […] I don't want

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[35] This impression is further enhanced through the film's aspect ratio that produces a deliberate windowboxing effect that reminds viewers (however temporarily) that they are indeed watching someone else's digital rendering of the events

to go cheesy." Relph argues that Disneyfication becomes a way to craft an often non-existent sense of power through its "belief in the objective mastery of nature and of change: monsters and history and wild animals are brought safely under control" (99). For the characters, especially Heather, the cameras become a mechanism for the characters to assume this sense of power and control. Many shots in *BWP* include Heather holding and using a camera, even after both Mike and Josh tell her to put it down and even in situations where it would be more logical to put it down (figure 3.2). At one point, Josh explains her behavior: "I see why you like this video camera so much. […] It's not quite reality. […] it's totally a filtered reality, man. […] It's like you can pretend everything's not quite the way it is." The camera becomes a way for Heather to believe that she is keeping the wilderness at bay; however, her belief that she can remain safely behind the camera—a spectator but not a player in the horror—proves ill-founded. The camera ultimately does not offer solace, but rather placelessness.

Figure 3.2. The shot shows not only Heather's impractical use of the camera given the circumstances, but it also reveals how the camera becomes both a literal and figurative barrier between Heather and the wilderness around her.

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Audiences of *BWP* repeatedly see Heather's desire to script her experience in the woods, to control the version of events that she offers. At one of their planned destinations, Heather uses a clapperboard before posing with a book and narrating the place's history. She tells the others that she is dissatisfied by the results and will edit the scene accordingly. Seeing this footage creates the illusion that it is truly unedited found footage. In this way, the film crafts a sense of placelessness through its presentation as found footage that is supposedly unmediated. Yet in reality, over nineteen hours of shot footage was edited down to the movie's hour-and-a-half length (Sánchez "Blair"). Neil McRobert argues that found footage texts—much like their Gothic predecessors— navigate an "ontological boundary" by blurring the distinctions between reality and fiction (140). "In the case of found footage," he claims, "the audience is not *there,* instead the filmic horror is potentially *here* (140).[36] To date, *BWP* remains one of the most successful films in manufacturing and sustaining a fabricated "truth" that delivers a convoluted and ultimately placeless mix of here and there, truth and fiction. In a 2016 online interview *BWP* co-writer and director Eduardo Sánchez said that, even after 15 years, over 50% of people surveyed still believe that the Blair Witch is a real legend. In the same interview, actress Heather Donahue said that people still claim that the real-life Heather, Josh, and Mike are decoys hired to obscure the truth that the real kids in the film died. Although the continued and persistent inability or unwillingness to distinguish fact from fabrication might be, at least partially, a testament to people's poor evidence-gathering and critical thinking skills, the fault cannot be entirely cast on the masses.

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[36] This description is very similar to the claim made by Jan Aart (quoted in this dissertation's introduction) that globalization "has made the identification of boundaries … of 'here' and there' … more problematic than ever" (49).

The filmmakers and production company did everything in their power, including using a real town, to first create and then sustain the myth of *BWP*. The production of the film utilized what the directors called "extreme realism," a method in which the actors improvised solely based on the cues and clues left for them in the woods and the directors' constant additions and acts of terror (Sánchez "Blair"). In a 2016 essay in *The Guardian*, Donahue wrote about the actual obituary that surfaced in her hometown newspaper, the condolence cards her mother received, and her longtime IMDb status as deceased. Undoubtedly the lines between fact and fiction were permanently blurred and perhaps even obliterated through the creation and release of the Blair Witch website, the TV mockumentary *Curse of the Blair Witch,* and the published "dossier." These promotional materials—intended to allow viewers to separate historical truth from urban legend—offered detailed timelines; police reports and crime scene photos; interviews with the student filmmaker's teachers, childhood friends, close relatives, and search party members; pages from Heather's journal; and even primary, historical documents supporting the Blair Witch mythology.

Sally J. Morgan argues that part of the power of the film lies in the way that "*The Blair Witch Project* presents itself as an historical enquiry that attempts to disaggregate myth from fact" (140). The result is a series of texts that actively engage with relationships between and perceptions of "real-life" American identity, history, and landscape in a direct manipulation of public history and colonial anxieties, producing what Morgan calls "a dark sense of history, a *heritage noire*, which in turn unsettles in confidence the present" (148). The result is a film that is not just crafting a history *about* American culture, but one that is writing a history *of* American culture—a history in

which the fears *of* the culture and its landscape are directly linked to fears *about* the

culture and its landscape. In particular, *BWP* addresses American cultural anxieties that,

despite the rhetoric of the wilderness myth, there is no singular American tradition. The

film's lack of a clear, linear arc becomes a source of anxiety as it suggests that perhaps

there is no such thing as a real-life narrator who carefully edits everything together into a

neat, cohesive story. Discussing ways to rethink American history, Charles Bright and

Michael Geyer argue that globalization forces an acknowledgement that there is not a

single heritage or history but rather a multiplicity of coexisting and even contradictory

perspectives. "The consequence" of this experience is "not unlike vertigo" (Bright and

Geyer 70), an affect that *BWP* emphatically maintains through its horrific placelessness.

CAUGHT BETWEEN CONTROL AND CONTROLLED: *THE RESORT*

I started my dissertation with a quote from Bentley Little's *The Store* as a quintessential

example of placelessness. Yet this placelessness and its terrible consequences can also be

seen repeatedly in Little's body of works, including his 2004 novel *The Resort*.[37] *The*

Resort follows a number of individuals who, for various reasons and under a variety of

circumstances, find themselves staying at the highly exclusive and incredibly luxurious

resort and spa: The Reata. For the novel's primary characters—the Thurman family

(Lowell, his wife Rachel, and their three sons)—The Reata seems to be ideally isolated, a

perfect getaway from the demands and strictures of daily life in the "real world." It

seems to be a place where they can be—at least for the stay of their vacation—in control

of their lives and able to play out their fantasies and dreams. Yet as the novel progresses,

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[37] In addition to *The Store* and *The Resort,* many of Little's works are named after places and organizations associated with places including *The Night School* (also known as *University*), *The House, The Association,* and *The Academy.*

all of the characters discover that their sense of control is as much an illusion as is the constructed nature of The Reata. As The Reata's evil sentience grows and develops, the resort itself begins to shift and expand, creating new physical and geographical frontiers that distort many of the boundaries of identity (control/controlled, civilized/savage, fantasy/reality, human/nature, past/present) connected to place. The characters who encounter The Reata never fully recover (if they even survive) from the realization that these borders do not exist and perhaps never existed. It is through this horrific suggestion that *The Resort* packages a profoundly disturbing vision of placelessness, one that is wrapped up in the explicit and implicit tensions and conflicts between the American landscape and the wilderness.

The opening lines of the novel are Lowell's wondering aloud: "Where *is* this place?" (3). None of his family responds and the desert also offers no answers. "There'd been no signs for the resort at all, nothing in over thirty miles, and he was starting to worry. These single lane roads that crisscrossed the desert all looked the same and were all poorly marked and it was more than possible that they had taken a wrong turn somewhere" but, Lowell reflects, "at least they were away from California" (3). The Thurmans eventually arrive at the resort, which is even more impressive than the brochures suggested and stands out—with its landscaped grounds—like "an oasis in this rough and rugged country" (7). This first impression proves to be the most duplicitous and dangerous as it is ultimately obscuring the resort's innate placelessness. The resort— like most similar locations—is a clear example of a non-place that maintains no real connection to the actual nature of its surroundings. Yet this non-place is not simply disconnected from its environment; it is actively working to remove meaningful historical

and relational correlations. The Reata manages to lull every character into a sense of complacency and security against the dangers of the wilderness around them. Even after the resort assumes full power and completely transforms from a slightly creepy, albeit fancy resort into a playground where evil and corruption have a free-for-all, The Reata is still capable of appearing, however briefly, "once more like a bastion of civilization in the wilderness" (335). The Reata constructs the illusion that there are fine boundaries between the cultivated landscape of its grounds (and its people) and the roughness and dangers of the wilderness; however, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the real wildness has always been *inside* the resort.

The Reata presents a manufactured version of the wilderness, including a "fake Disneyish cliff" (6) that produces a waterfall into the pool and a well-manicured garden that offers "an idealized version of the desert southwest" (8). The result is an inauthentic version of the wilderness that is lacking the substance of the actual wilderness and the reality of the cultural landscapes outside of the resort's clutches. Relph argues that the style and attitude of kitsch is one factor in producing placelessness. On the surface, a luxury resort may seem the antithesis of kitsch and indeed The Reata is not itself kitschy; however, the resort's appropriation and presentation of the wilderness is indeed an example of Relph's assessment of the placelessness-inducing kitsch attitude that allows for places to be "treated as things from which man is largely alienated, and in which the trivial is made significant and the significant is made trivial, the fantastic is made real, the authentic debased and value is measured almost entirely in terms of this superficial qualities of cost, colour, and shape" (83). In his discussion of kitsch geographies, David Atkinson argues that more than being "vulgar" or "ironic," kitsch aesthetics "conjure

unchallenging, nostalgic visions of modern worlds," ones that are easily accessible and even enjoyable (525). In Little's novel, one of the nostalgic visions the resort crafts is directly tied to imperialism. William Cronon writes that the problem with wilderness, particularly in American constructions of this idea, is how the wilderness is packaged in a way that "can become an unthinking and self-defeating form of cultural imperialism" (82). *The Resort* reveals that this cultural imperialism, much like the wilderness itself, becomes a packaged commodity available through The Reata's conscription and repurposing of Native American culture (like the gift-shop tomahawks) and its creation of authentic, traditional gardens.

Jack Turner writes: "To take wildness seriously is to take the issue of control seriously" (111). In *The Resort*, readers see that the inverse is also true: if the wildness is not taken seriously than neither will be the issue of control. The Reata, through its kitsch-ification of the wilderness, manages to assume (and consume) the initial sense of control that the characters feel while staying at the resort. The Thurmans discover that they are literally unable to leave the resort, even temporarily. This loss of control is compounded by Lowell's conscription into the resort's increasingly violent and extreme intramural games. Other characters find that their ability to make decisions—about where to eat and what to do for leisure activities—are limited by the resort. In fact, it is only after Lowell's children refuse to obey the resort's insistent signs to stay on the hiking paths that they discover important clues about the resort. At the end of the novel, it is the youngest son's refusal to give up control—as he takes his own life rather than allowing the resort to sacrifice him—that ultimately allows him to save his family. The youngest son's sacrifice emphasizes the novel's statement that the imperialist forces

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(represented by the hotel and its owner) are—no matter how similarly aligned to our own cultural past—the clear "bad guys" of the story. Thus, the novel suggests, the true horror stems not from the characters' inability to perceive their placelessness, but rather the inability to (like the wilderness and its native inhabitants) claim a sense of control independent of existing externally-enforced mandates.

Exploring the horror genre from an ecocritical perspective, Stacy Alaimo argues that "creature features" and other horror texts that depict monstrous natures are intrinsically focused on borders between man and beast, between human and nature. She argues that these texts often problematize the boundaries that exist between these dichotomies and this blending becomes itself a source of horror. James S. Duncan claims that landscapes are programmed with "various conventional signs of such things as group membership and social status, individuals are able to tell morally charged 'stories' about themselves and the social structure of the society in which they live" (39). At first glance, The Reata seems to reinforce these memberships. Sports teams are divided by social class as well as athletic skill; there are elite restaurants for certain "winning" members of the resort, and The Reata is known for catering specifically to the wealthy. Yet *The Resort* proves that these boundaries are fabricated, just as the landscapes at The Reata (and, readers must wonder, perhaps those landscapes found across America) are sculpted. As the wilderness of The Reata breaks through the illusions established by the landscaped grounds, a wildness sets in as various taboos about sex, violence, and depravity are violated and as the characters begin to indulge in their baser desires. Bert Olivier suggests that part of the horror of or fear toward nature, a sensation that others

have called ecophobia[38], stems from a belief in nature's abjectness and the ways that its

"inaccessible, uncontrollable, amorphous, teeming proliferation of menacing 'things'"

causes "nature's ceaseless tendency to undermine coherent 'meaning', its refusal of the

'rules of the game' of civilisation" (455). By the end of the novel, all pretenses of

civilization have been dropped. What was originally vicious, but semi-organized

intramural sports—what one character thinks of as the perfect "metaphor for American

society's overplaced emphasis on sports" (249)—becomes reduced to chaotic killing

sprees. The Reata's activities coordinator no longer bears any resemblance to a civilized

man but instead exhibits a certain "savage glory" (307). Toward the end of the novel,

Lowell reflects on the blood-hungry individuals infected by the spirit of The Reata who

had "turned savage in the night, and whatever their original classes or occupations—rich

or poor, janitor or stock broker—they were now children of the desert, spawn of The

Reata …" (354).

Those who are not (yet) the "spawn of The Reata" cling to the familiarity of

social class separations, especially those between The Reata employees and its guests.

They are clutching at social memories of how and where things should be; however, the

novel suggests that these memories of the past cannot fully be trusted. In *The Resort*, the

past—both Lowell's own past as well as the past of The Reata—continually intrudes

upon the present. Lowell is reminded of his own high school coach when he meets The

Reata's activities coordinator; later he discovers that his son has been impossibly dating

an incarnation his own high school girlfriend. The Reata's first (and only) owner

resurfaces every so often as part of his rituals for maintaining ever-lasting life. The

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[38] See Simon C. Estok article "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and
Ecophobia" for further discussions and definitions of ecophobia.

children stumble upon the old, original remains of the first Reata hidden in the desert off of one of the walking trails and discover that the current horror is explicitly linked to this place's past darkness.

On several occasions, this kitsch-ification strikes characters as false and problematic. As the novel reveals, through its use of multiple characters' alternating point-of-views, everyone is quite aware of the strange happenings at the resort and how their responses do not match the nature of their circumstances. Most of the characters realize that The Reata is not quite as it appears, that it—and the safely contained wilderness it offers—are somehow producing a false front (64, 147, 159, 223). According to W.J.T. Mitchell, landscape is able to disclose "both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance" (10). *The Resort* reveals particularly American cultural anxieties about the horrible consequences awaiting those who blindly accept our historical imperial expansion of the wilderness or even condone past actions as being the price for current rewards. The novel does this by making the history of the evil The Reata as, in many ways, the history of the American conquest of the West. Little's imaginary resort claims its start in the appropriation of the wilderness propagated by the 1862 Homestead Act; it also claims a past similar to real-world dude ranches that became popular ways for the rich to play at a controlled version of the wilderness (359-367). The novel alludes to actual myths and legends of the past that continue to shape modern interpretations of the West, including the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine and the fountain of youth (176, 359-367).

Toward the end of *The Resort*, a former employee of The Reata claims that the

crimes committed in the past "created a place that was *unclean*" and that within this

unclean place "[h]istory just keeps repeating itself here" (365).   The history being

described in the novel is, while based on real events, just as constructed and composed as

the rest of Little's narrative; it is not so much history that is being recounted as memories.

Farrar argues that place memory, like social memory, "means endorsing a particular kind

of history" one that suggests a unified, consistent interpretation of things. As no such

history exists, place memory "becomes spectacular and televisual, rather than a vehicle

for active engagement with and contestation of the meaning of a place" (729). In a

specific discussion of ghost towns in the American West, Dydia DeLyser proposes that

social memory, especially when connected to certain American landscapes, becomes as

much a reflection of the present as the past, resulting in a unique hybrid of fantasy,

reinterpretation, and reinvention (36). The permanently emotionally-scarred Lowell has

experienced the ultimate sense of helplessness as he is unable to control the situation in

time to save his son. The loss of his son becomes the ultimate form of placelessness as

"his hope for the future, the light of his life" has been forever extinguished (390). The

boundaries between past and present are, Lowell discovers, as horrifically fluid as those

between the American landscape and the wilderness. Patricia Nelson Limerick argues

that the American West needs to be considered not as a fixed boundary but rather an idea

that reflects how the processes of conquest constantly shifted the borders of the frontier.

In Little's novel, the characters are unable, until it is too late, to see that the always

permeable and ever-evolving nature of the West constricts understanding of The Reata

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and the porous borders between the American landscape and the wilderness that are often obscured by imperialist narratives.

DWELLING BETWEEN US AND THEM: *OFF SEASON*

Jack Ketchum's 1980 novel *Off Season*—a story about a group of out-of-towners who are systematically killed, tortured, and eaten by a pack/family of savage, sadistic cannibals—is not for the faint-hearted. The author's uncut, uncensored version is even more unsettling. In the afterword to the 2006 edition, Ketchum writes about how Ballantine's editorial demands and negotiations after picking up the novel "finally came down to was a case of, *I'll give you this bludgeoning if you leave me that beheading* (273). For Ketchum, the loss of certain details—such as the recipe for human meat jerky—were unfortunate but worth the price of publication; however, the demand to not kill off a primary character at the end was the one change he made that, in retrospect, was entirely unacceptable. Consequently, in his reprint he made his own demands: no negotiations or compromises would be made. The book would appear as original intended, bleak conclusion and all. It is difficult to imagine reading that other version of *Off Season* because the novel's placelessness relies, in part, on the elaborate descriptions of human consumption that turn readers into vicarious cannibals; on the moments when the primary characters themselves rend and tear flesh; and—yes—even on the novel's final scene, which strips away all hope and solace. Through its narrative about cannibalism and extreme violence, *Off Season* offers an all-consuming placelessness that ultimately destroys the boundaries between inside(r) and outside(r) that are so often used to build and support the demarcations between the American landscape and the wilderness.

Relph argues that often landscape "is of little or no interest to us—it is merely there as background and context" until, that is, "we are travelling on unfamiliar routes, visiting new towns, buying a new house, or perhaps just looking around, the appearance and character of landscapes become matters of interest" (123). This "casual attention may provide memories or generate reflections but it makes no great impact on us and has no great depth" most of the time (Relph 123). *Off Season* shows the horrific consequences of the superficial attention fostered by novelty. Carla, the first of the characters to arrive at the rental house in the small coastal town of Dead River, Maine (as well as the first of the group to die), spends her first night alone before the rest of the group's arrival. At one point she "gazed into the moonless dark outside. What an amazing, profound darkness once you left the city, she thought" (46). On the drive to the house, he sister Marjie observes how "[t]he countryside had changed considerably over the past hour or so. Everything seemed smaller somehow—the houses, the barns, the gas stations—as she supposed was appropriate for a depressed area. […] And not only were the houses smaller, but so were the trees, as if the trade winds off the coast had smothered them, and the earth could give them little in the way of sustenance" (74). Both Carla and Marjie notice the new scenery in part because it is so different from their lives in New York City. Yet both women's gazes are casual, offering temporary insight without authentic understanding. As Carla looks into that amazing darkness, she does not see the man prowling directly outside her kitchen door, waiting eagerly to consume her. When the group stops before arriving at the rental, Marjie sees a couple of locals and thinks how "[l]ike the houses, like the trees, the people out here looked stunted, almost still-born, as if centuries of social immobility had thinned their seed, bled them dry. […]To

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her eyes, used to diversity, there was a troubling uniformity about them all, something that spoke of isolation, and a dull and thoughtless cruelty" (77). She assumes that this "troubling uniformity" will result in nothing worse than minor hassling from the locals; she does not consider the larger implications behind her observation. Even derisive comments about the consequences of being out in the country are made in a joking, casual manner.

It is not until Carla, Marjie, and the other members of the group are confronted by the family/pack of cannibals that they begin to understand that their superficial interactions have obscured the realities of their environment. In this way, the novel uses cannibalism as a mechanism for spectacle. "Spectacle," according to Jonathan Crary, "is not primarily concerned with a *looking at* images but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects" (74). As a spectacle, cannibalism forces familiar things (e.g. killing, butchering, cooking, consumption) to be rendered uncanny as they are stripped of their familiar, socially-sanctioned contexts and relationships. As a spectacle, cannibalism becomes a perfect vehicle for exploring larger themes within a horror text on local travel by serving as a reminder that it often takes something extreme and perhaps horrific to notice the world around us. Simon C. Estok argues that the idea of the cannibal is a vital component of the travel narrative because it, like the travel experience, exoticizes the familiar while also serving as a symbol of "terrifying difference and dislocation" that produces a "simultaneous blurring and affirmation of boundaries" ("Cannibalism" 2).

The American landscape and issues of wilderness are often constructed and viewed through boundaries of inside and outside. The American landscape is considered

inside, within the safe and controlled spaces of American culture. The wilderness, on the other hand, is outside, the uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) space beyond the frontier and beyond the comfort and sense of identity offered by the American landscape. Cannibalism becomes a primary way for *Off Season* explores the anxieties of these boundaries being blurred. Kristen Guest argues that cannibalism, "long a figure associated with absolute alterity and used to enforce boundaries between a civilized 'us' and savage 'them,' may in fact be more productively read as a symbol of the permeability, or instability, of such boundaries" (2). Discussing specifically the American rural Gothic, Bernice M. Murphy argues that the trope of cannibalism—both literal and figurative forms—can be found in historical depictions and cultural understandings of journeys across the wilderness, interactions with the American landscape and its peoples, and the negotiations and compromises made within the spaces between civilization and savagery. Cannibalism, while not unique to America, nevertheless is a historically used symbol to construct certain versions of America by exposing particular anxieties about the fine lines between us/them, landscape/wilderness, civilized/savage. *Off Season* similarly uses the metaphor of cannibalism to explore the ways these boundaries conflate, overlap, and are problematized in ways that affect perceptions of the relationship between certain American landscapes and the wilderness. The group of victims expect a brief break from the city, but the intrusion of the cannibals makes them realize that "the country" is not necessarily genteel or gentle. The local sheriff realizes—upon discovering the gruesome remains at the rental house—that he does not know the land (and what it might hide) as well as he imagined. Although he had previously noted the unusually high number of missing person cases in the area, he is

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unable to imagine his sleepy town as the hunting grounds and home of a family that

epitomizes the horror of the wilderness (91-94).

Cannibalism forces the characters of *Off Season* to reexamine their conceptions

of place because it forces them to question their ontological interpretations of themselves,

of those around them, and even of humanity itself. On the one hand, the cannibalism

helps reinforce the divisions amongst the characters. Marjie, watching the cannibals,

thinks how "[i]t was like watching another species entirely, a pack of wild animals"

(209); the cannibals seem very far removed, at first, from their victims as well as the law

enforcement officers hunting them. Yet many of these boundaries begin to fuse and

intersect, thereby complicating the identities shaped by these categories. The group of

victims stops on their way to Dead River for a seafood meal, leaving a table "cluttered

with cracked claws, legs broken and sucked dry, broken backs and tails, empty

clamshells, and a tablecloth spackled with butter" (75). This description is juxtaposed

against a later image of the cannibals' disgusting cave, littered with the remains of feasts

of a different kind of flesh (110-111). Immediately before the cannibals invade the

house, Carla and her boyfriend are engaged in enthusiastic, animalistic sex (129-131) that

is later mirrored by the equally enthusiastic, animalistic (albeit less culturally-acceptable)

sex amongst the cannibal family (207-208).[39] On their way to the caves to rescue the

survivors, the law enforcement group encounters a splinter cell of cannibals that attacks

them with tooth and claw. Sheriff Peters is at first shocked because "he'd never known

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[39] Kelly L. Watson argues that a link between issues of gender and sexuality and the early European perceptions of cannibalism and its savagery can be see through the interwoven discourses of conquest, conquered lands, and conquered gendered bodies. *Off Season*, as a text preoccupied with (or at least aware of) issues of gender and sexuality, warrants a more thorough investigation of the ways that it weaves these issues together with cannibalism.

the human animal to react this way" (262) but, as the fight continues, the officers become equally savage as "something wild and treacherous passed between them and suddenly it was a different ball game altogether, suddenly there were no sane heads left among them" (263). The novel also goes into the minds of the cannibals, showing the familiar human urges for family, security, and food behind their unfamiliar behavior. In this way, as the novel progresses, the separation between the monstrous, animalistic cannibals and the cultured, civilized people disintegrates until the behaviors of each group are often indistinguishable.

Maggie Kilgour discusses how cannibalism as a metaphor of absorption reveals the complicated relationship between inside and outside:

> The relation between an inside and an outside involves a delicate balance of simultaneous identification and separation that is typified by the act of incorporation, in which an external object is taken inside another. The idea of incorporation … depends upon and enforces an absolute division between inside and outside; but in the act itself that opposition disappears, dissolving the structure it appears to produce. (4)

Kilgour's description of incorporation is certainly applicable to the literal act of cannibalism (of human eating human), but it also depicts other, more figurative acts of consumption. Mario Klarer argues that there is an existing tradition of linking "cannibalistic incorporation with utopian spaces" and that this tradition reflects "the subliminal human drive for a restitution of primordial oneness through an incorporation of the Other" (407). He sees the interplay between cannibalism and utopia playing out in early European images of America and the New World. The relationship between the

American land(scape), cannibalism, and the Other who is "us" gains even more historical depth and cultural significance when additional myths, legends, and narratives are added into the equation: the Wendigo, the Donner Party, Jeffrey Dahmer.   Although the novel depicts the cannibals as violent, animalistic, and inherently evil—it also reveals that these killers are an indigenous people of sorts. Marjie reads in a history of the region about two separate disappearances in the mid-1800s of a girl and a boy. Although she thinks of the story as nothing more than a fine "ghost story" to end the night with (56), the novel later reveals that the cannibals, who were forced to find new ways to survive and find sustenance, are indeed the descendants of these early inhabitants of the area who fled to the mainland after intruders (men with guns) arrived (108-111). Much like the early colonial narratives of cannibalism problematized the beliefs that the dangers to American culture were out in the wilderness (and not coming from within the supposed civilized landscape), Ketchum's novel shows that the cannibal clan are a danger produced *by* American culture.

Murphy suggests that within the rural Gothic tradition, particularly within narratives of cannibalism, there is a theme of adaptation, of doing whatever it takes— even at great cost—to survive within the wilderness. In *Off Season,* Marjie acknowledges "a vast new sense of her own evil—of the awful place she had been brought to by these people" that leads her to bite the penis off her captor in an effort to escape (247). The idea of adapting to any circumstances, even if the cost is cannibalism, can also be seen in discourses of globalization, such as Ryan Schleeter's examination of the anthropofagia (cultural cannibalism) of the Brazilian movement of Tropicália. Schleeter argues that this form of cultural cannibalism is both a reaction to and a

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consequence of a globalized world in which cultures are able to appropriate, incorporate, and consume other cultures only accessible through globalized forces. Roy Bendor suggests that the theory of globalization as hybridization gains new significance and power through the analogies of cannibalism as it reinforces a dissolution of boundaries between us/them, insider/outsider. *Off Season* suggests that, if these boundaries dissolve, all that will be left behind is devastation and a horrific placelessness. At the end of the novel, Marjie has been saved by Nick, the only other surviving member of the group. The sheriff, mistaking the blood-covered, wild-eyed man for one of the cannibals, shoots and kills Nick. As the ambulance drives Marjie—half-eaten and entirely broken—to the hospital, she looks out the window at the telephone wires on their wooden poles that seemed "like dark stab wounds in the flesh of morning" (270). Ketchum said that it was important for Nick to die at the hands of the sheriff because, much like the nihilism produced at end of Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, he wanted "this bleak, nobody-wins-in-this-world notion" to linger for audiences (Afterword 278). It is this conclusion that offers a true sense of placelessness as the lines between us/them are so horribly disfigured that it is unclear where (if anywhere) we belong.

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TRAVELLING BETWEEN CIVILIZATION AND SAVAGERY:

THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE

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James Ferman, who served as the Director of the British Board of Film Classification, censored Tobe Hooper's 1974 film *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* after coining the term "the pornography of terror" to describe what he saw as unacceptable content and images (qtd. in Jaworzyn). Yet, despite often been labelled as "the original splatter movie," the film actually depicts very little gore or violence by instead alluding and implying to many

things off-screen. So then where did my original teenaged impressions of the film as being uncomfortably confrontational stem from? What causes the film to be so disturbing and what prompts the violence to be so horrifying despite the lack of a visual presence? Baudrillard, in his journeys across America, asserts: "Driving is a spectacular form of amnesia. Everything is to be discovered, everything to be obliterated" (*America* 10). Perhaps this amnestic effect of driving applies to viewing so Hooper's film; after all, this is a film itself about the consequences of driving. I argue that the film's ability to create a mirage of violence lies in its capacity to constantly blur boundaries in a profoundly unsettling placelessness. *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* explores a placelessness shaped by mobility, modernity, and monstrosity—one that exposes the short distances it takes to travel between civilized and savage, the American landscape and the wilderness, and order and chaos.

Mobility is a key focus in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (*TCSM*) from the film's opening lines. A voice-over narrator informs the audience that the tragedy they will see transpired as "an idyllic summer afternoon drive became a nightmare." Gregor Schnuer writes that mobility is not "just a departure from a point, but it is also, implicitly, leaving a place" (553). *TCSM* is truly a travel narrative about not only the desire to arrive at a destination, but also the desire to leave that destination. The horror emerges from encountering the cannibal family, but also from the characters' inability to escape and to engage in the act of mobility that they assumed was, if not their right, then certainly their privilege. Although the entire narrative of the film occurs in Texas, the film also produces a vicarious mobility for the audience as they, listening to news reports, are able to "go" at the speed of a radio wave between "local" crime to news happening around the

larger state of Texas and even to events transpiring places around the US. Schnuer

suggests that mobility implies both movement "'away from' and 'towards' at the same

time" and in *TCSM,* audiences see that as they move away from the local horrors of

grave-robbing they are only moving toward the oil fires in another part of Texas and

toward a possible cholera outbreak in San Francisco. The end effect is not a sense of

isolated, unrelated incidents separated by distance but rather the haunting impression of a

nation consumed by horrors that know no boundaries.[40] Some of the early dialogue

enhances this impression, such as when one of the girls reads another's horoscope as

being: "Travel in the country, long-range plans, and upsetting persons around you, could

make this a disturbing and unpredictable day. The events in the world are not doing

much either to cheer one up." The characters' mobility (and arguably, as the horoscope

hints, the world's mobility) brings not respite or positive interactions, but uncertainty and

problems. Mobility may offer new experiences or greater connectivity; however, it also

"shows us the threshold between the here and there, or the interior and the exterior. In

other words, mobility confronts us with the border of a place" (Schnuer 553).

Relph writes about how the methods of mobility and travel that afford mass

communication between people and places can directly lead to placelessness. Quoting

J.T. Snow's essay that the new road "starts everywhere and ends nowhere," Relph

explores how these roads—by allowing the mass movements of peoples and ideas—

cannot fully promote intimate or full relationships with the places they connect (90).

Relph's scholarship, written in the 1970s, shows its age in his use of the term *new road* to

describe the modern (and now ubiquitous) American interstate and highway system (90).

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[40] Arguably this opening sequence also helps enforce the idea that the horrors of this film—like the murders
of Ed Gein that inspired the film—can be felt across the real-life landscape of America.

His thoughts, however, emerge only a few years after the premiere of *TCSM,* and

therefore exude an anxiety that matches the zeitgeist of the film and its era in a way that

cannot be replicated today. Before audiences even see the teenage characters, they are

shown the highway and the corpse of an armadillo—the road's most recent victim. Shots

of the highway throughout the film, despite the titlular reference to a specific state, are

disturbingly placeless; they could easily be of any number of places within the US (figure

3.3). The teenagers have no real connections with any of the places that the highway

allows them to visit, and arguably it is this unfamiliarity that prevents them from

discerning the wilderness all around them.

Figure 3.3. The long (bordering on extreme long) shot should serve as an establishing

shot that provides insight into the places of the narrative. Instead, the shot—and many

others like it—reinforce the placeless feel of the film. This road could be anywhere, and

therefore it feels like it might be nowhere.

Highways, to return to a term from the previous chapter, are non-places. Non-

places are products of modernity, so it is unsurprising that Augè includes in his

discussion motorways, gas stations, and other elements of modern mobility. As non-

places, highways lack the clear historical or relational frameworks for establishing or maintaining the unique identities places offer. These non-places instead become delineators between the places that they cut through and across. In their discussion of road movies, Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson suggest:

> Roads act as spaces in-between—they traverse apparently empty zones— and the boundaries both geographical and cultural that define social existence in the city or town no longer exist. There are no certainties on the road, only potentialities. … The highway exists as a line that traces the borders and boundaries of established order, threatening to collapse into anarchy at any moment yet never fully disavowing the presence of civilization. (12)

Sargeant and Watson position the highway, especially in the road movie, as a visible marker of the boundaries that exist—geographically and culturally—in the American landscape. The road also, however, increases the opportunity for the dissolution of these boundaries, particularly those between civilization and savagery, between the American landscape and the wilderness. Baudrillard states that the deserts of America "denote the emptiness, the radical nudity that is the background to every human institution" (*America* 66). The highway then becomes a way to navigate between these places of emptiness and it is perhaps unsurprising then that, in road movies, the road often becomes a visible symbol for and producer of cultural isolation; even as lingering elements of that culture (such as the vehicle) can be seen, the inevitable detours and stops (to motels, gas stations, and other locations) indicate that the wilderness is never far away (Laderman 15). Murphy claims that highways "furnish Americans with the illusion of freedom rather than

actual freedom" (*Highway* 102). Characters in horror texts frequently and falsely believe that as long as they remain near the road, they will be safely ensconced within the familiar, civilized American landscape. In *TCSM*, the teenagers pick up a hitchhiker off the side of the road. Later Sally runs back to the gas station assuming she will find shelter. In both instances, the characters cannot see how the highway's placeless mobility has dissolved the boundaries between places of safety and those of danger. The characters believe they have the freedom to travel wherever/whenever they want without impunity or risk. At the end of the film, a blood-drenched Sally—the only survivor of Leatherface and his family—sits in the back of a truck as it drives away from the horrors she has experienced. Yet it is difficult to feel a total sense of relief as audiences are not able to see where she is now headed or whether she is truly safe. After all, she is back on the highway. Hooper said that the film seems to fold "continuously back in on itself, and no matter where you're going it's the wrong place" (qtd. in Jaworzyn 28). And it seems that, in *TCSM,* this wrong place is the only destination that the highway offers.

The wrong place of the American horror travel narrative is often the backwoods—a nebulous, and itself rather placeless term, that (despite its name) is less about geographical cues than cultural ones. The backwoods is that place within American horror—be it the swamps of the deep South, the forests of New England, or even the plains of Texas—where the deviant and horrible Other dwells, where cultural mores are broken and discarded, and where the victims discover that there are places out there beyond their worst nightmares. The term *backwoods* contributes to the culturally negative connotations of the idea of the rural as it transforms the rural poor into the terrible Other, the rural landscape into the dangerous wilderness, and the idyllic

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encounters with the rural into nightmarish conflicts. Consequently, the rural Gothic speaks often to the "relationship between the representations of 'civilization' and 'savagery' in American culture" (Murphy *Rural* 147). *TCSM* regularly juxtaposes images and ideas of civilization and savagery in scenes where the two elements are depicted not merely as contrasting forces but ones that not only co-exist but overlap. The teenagers may not realize—until it is too late—that they've entered the wilderness, where civilization and savagery might wear the same face; however, the camera hints at this transition. "In a kind of anti-frontier myth, [the characters] find themselves inept at civilising nature; it becomes uncontrollable, alien, terrifying and ultimately murderous" (Bell 98). Shots of the characters in the film heading to the cannibal house show the natural environment encroaching upon them on all sides; many shots are framed with trees, bushes, and other elements of the "wilderness" between the characters and the camera's gaze. Later, during Sally's first attempt to flee Leatherface, the wilderness reveals itself completely as she finds herself trapped in (and by) a thicket.

The rural Gothic "reminds us that 'wilderness' is both an interior and exterior space" (Murphy *Highway* 102). In *TCSM,* the wilderness is not something beyond the outskirts of the familiar American landscape; rather, it can be found just off the highway. The wilderness is not where the savage Other dwells, but rather where *another* version of ourselves exist. The wilderness is not outside or independent of civilization, but rather, as Cronon suggests, "a product of civilization" (69). The wilderness is not presenting a threat beyond American culture, but the threat contained within American culture. The teenagers stop at a gas station and buy BBQ; later it is revealed that the gas station attendant is the patriarch of the cannibal family and the BBQ might be the *other* white

meat. Suddenly the "civilized" practice of eating meat off the bone becomes more

savage and gruesome. Later, when Sally wakes up to find herself the unwilling guest of

honor (and next item on the menu) at the cannibals' dinner table, the scene is rendered

additionally horrific as the film visually produces a disgruntling and disgustingly

uncanny version of the quintessential American family dinner captured in Norman

Rockwell's iconic 1943 painting "Freedom from Want" (figure 3.4).[41]

Figure 3.4. The first-person POV shot reveals a scene that is eerily similar to Rockwell's

painting "Freedom from Want." The scene's heavy use of extreme close-ups of Sally's

eye emphasize the shock of what she/the audience are seeing as well as the horror of what

the images imply but never show.

Wood argues that audiences of *TCSM* cannot fully distance themselves from the

cannibal family because "there is the sense that they are victims, too—of the

slaughterhouse environment, of capitalism—our victims, in fact" ("Introduction" 190).

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[41] Only in this version of the American family dinner, instead of the distinguished patriarch, there is a barely alive corpse. Instead of a doting matriarch, there is a man wearing make-up over his mask of flesh. Instead of a beautifully laid table, there is a centerpiece made of human bones. And instead of roast turkey, there is a banquet of Sally's friends.

The cannibals' solution is unconventional; however, their fate—torn down by the very culture that they depend upon—is not uncommon. Christopher Sharrett argues that the film shows how American culture's "civilizing spirit has run its course; its energies are depleted, its myths not only dead but inverted and forced to show the consequences of their motivating force" (271). American culture is not fighting against the wilderness; rather, its very roots (not to mention its successes) lie in "the seed of barbarism" (272). Yet in many ways *TCSM* suggests that America is not just rooted in barbarism but, as Baudrillard discovered through acts of mobility, America—despite its technological and other advantages—"is the *only remaining primitive society*" (7). The cannibalistic family are not just the victims of our culture; they *are* our culture, stripped of its presumptions about our civility.

In his focus on the significance of oil in the film, Chuck Jackson situates these truths about American culture within a larger global discussion. He claims that through the metonymy of oil, the film "makes visible how local bodies, economies, and terrors participate in and, indeed, are made possible by global capital's early 1970s political economy, an economy which has been pushed into the twenty-first century and further globalized" in ways that continue to make it relevant for present-day audiences (48). Arjun Appadurai proposes thinking about "global cultural interactions" through something akin to chaos theory; instead of wondering "how these complex, overlapping fractal shapes constitute a simple, stable (even if large-scale) system," people situate globalization within a framework of flow and uncertainty (46). Appadurai's claim takes on an interesting dimension when compared to Sharrett's claim that *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is an apocalyptic text in part because it presents "a world dissolving into

primordial chaos … where the sustaining forces of civilization are not operative" (262). The film suggests that the chaos of globalization is not refreshing, but horrific and inescapable. Early in the film, Sally hears her horoscope: "There are moments when we cannot believe that what is happening is really true." And the truth of *TCSM* is that we cannot believe the encroaching placelessness that blurs the boundaries between order and chaos, civilization and savagery, the American landscape and the wilderness, and the local and the global.

<div align="center">RETURNING ONCE AGAIN TO THE CABIN IN THE WOODS</div>

When interviewed about their 2012 film *The Cabin in the Woods*, Joss Whedon and Drew Goddard shared that the film was both an opportunity to pay homage to horror films such as *The Evil Dead* as well as a chance to "ask the question, not only why do we like to see this, but why do we like to see this *exactly*? Why do we keep coming back to this formula?" (Whedon and Goddard 10). As I argue in an earlier article, in answering these questions the film reveals horror's preoccupation with place and its frequent presentations of placelessness.[42] Of particular relevance to this chapter's discussion, however, is the way that *The Cabin in the Woods* also participates in the existing generic conversation about the boundaries between the American landscape and the wilderness. On their way to the cabin, one of the characters remarks: "It doesn't even show up on the GPS. It is unworthy of global positioning." The characters believe that they can travel safely from the charted American landscape to the unknown wilderness; however, they are unaware of the ways that these two bleed together. The myth of the wilderness proves to be just as shaped by human interactions as the American landscape; the

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[42] "Haven't We Been Here Before: *The Cabin in the Woods,* the Horror Genre, and Placelessness" published in the Fall 2013/Winter 2014 special issue of *Slayage*.

American landscape proves to be just as dangerous as the supposed wilderness. The film furthermore situates these relationships (between American landscape and wilderness) through a larger global discourse. When the American branch becomes humanity's last hope for survival, one character quips: "I'm telling you, you want good product, you gotta buy American." This branch ends up failing like its global counterparts, perhaps because, as the film's Final Girl suggests, "…It's time to give someone else a chance."

Discussing America's shifting position of power and influence, Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong caution that "the end is inevitable: you must become, recognize that you have become, and act like a normal country. For America, this will be a shock: America has not been a normal country for a long, long time" (3). If their claim is true than it is undoubtedly the result of a culture that not only still widely believes in the idea of American Exceptionalism but that possesses the hubris to have claimed an entire century. The myth promoted by the American Century was of clearly defined roles and places: dominant/non-dominant, inside(r)/outside(r), American/non-American, American landscape/beyond the frontier. Akira Iriye suggests that the consequences of the American Century have wrought permanent changes upon the global landscape. He writes:

> The American Century, then, was a time of intensive transnationalization, both of the world and of the United States, a period in which national boundaries ceased to inhibit the movements of people, goods, money, and ideas, in which different races and cultures amalgamated, and in which claims of national uniqueness began to dissipate. In the American Century, the United States became less "American." (140)

His description is intended to be a positive one and part of a proposal for the next wave of global relationships. Nevertheless, his statement describes not only the collapse of carefully constructed boundaries but also the consequent dissolution of the previous, place-based American cultural identity. The anxieties about such a fate are directly seen in American horror.

Andrew J. Bacevich proposes that the original vision behind the American Century is no longer a viable method for approaching the world, but that it nevertheless "survives as an artifact, encapsulating an era about which some (although by no means all) Americans might wax nostalgic, a time, real or imagined, of common purpose, common values, and shared sacrifice" (239). Nostalgia is a theme that continues to surface in this dissertation, precisely because it is a concept that perfectly demonstrates the degree to which places, and the loss or absence of those places, directly and incredibly affects individuals as well as social and cultural groups. Glenn Albrecht asserts that nostalgia is a unique word in the English language as there are few others that manage to so fully encapsulate the depth of the relationship between the emotional/psychological and places/environments (35). Albrecht proposes a new term "solastalgia"—connected to the ideas of desolation and solace—as a way "to describe the pain or sickness caused by the loss of, or inability to derive solace from, the present state of one's home environment. Solastalgia exists when there is recognition that the beloved place in which one resides is under assault (physical desolation)" (35). Although originally crafted as a term to aid humanist geographers' discussions of the emotional and cultural repercussions of environmental damage, this term resonates with any situation where "there is the direct experience of negative transformation or desolation of the

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physical environment (home) by forces that undermine a personal and community sense

of identity, belonging and control" (35). Perhaps the most eloquent statement about this

concept remains Albrecht's summation: "In brief, solastalgia is a form of homesickness

one experiences when one is still at home" (35).

The American horror texts examined in this chapter are rift with solastalgia.

These texts repeatedly build up the concept of solace, the sense that there is a place where

the beleaguered characters might seek comfort and relief. Repeatedly, the characters—

and by extension the audiences—grasp for the solace they believe can be found in the

American landscape, that beloved place of sanctuary and safety. And repeatedly within

American horror narratives about travel within the US, comfort cannot be found because

the places of solace prove to be (at best) insubstantial and (more often) merely an

illusion. The homesickness that the characters are experiencing is partially due to what

they perceive as external threats, such as those represented by the Other. Yet, within

these horror texts, this homesickness—this solastalgia—becomes problematized by the

fact that the characters *are* already home—they are not abroad but *within* the boundaries

of America. There is no proffered relief from this solastalgia because, as these texts

suggest, it is not just the globalized world but the American landscape itself that offers

not solace but desolation, not tethering but untethering, not places of meaning but horrific

placelessness.

CHAPTER FOUR

SEND ME A POST(MORTEM) CARD:

CULTURAL TOURISM IN POST-9/11 AMERICAN HORROR FILMS

> But then, he was a tourist, and a tourist can't help but have
> a distorted opinion of a place: he meets unrepresentative
> people, has unrepresentative experiences, and runs around
> imposing upon the place the fantastic mental pictures he
> had in his head when he got there.
> Michael Lewis, *Boomerang: Travels in the New Third*
> *World* (14)
>
> CHARLES: Peru is dangerous; you can't just go invade a
> country because you see them as doing something immoral.
> JUSTINE: I know. I just think I should be doing something
> about the rainforest.
> <div align="right">*The Green Inferno* (2013)</div>

Eli Roth's 2013 film *The Green Inferno* follows a group of American college

student activists determined to "save the rainforest" and help out the indigenous people,

regardless of whether or not those people want their aid. Inevitably, the trip does not go

as planned; the students are eventually captured by an indigenous, cannibalistic tribe only

interested in eating the activists. Film critic A.A. Dowd states that *The Green Inferno*

follows a fairly standard and familiar formula for Roth: "The scenery in Roth's movies

may change from the Deep South to Eastern Europe to Chile, but the warning remains the

same: Stay where you belong, ugly Americans, or the world will eat you alive." This is

undeniably not a refrain unique to Roth; an entire subgenre of horror focuses on the

horrific consequences awaiting countless—often American, usually white, and almost

inevitably privileged—tourists who assumed that the safety of their traveler's checks

carried over into a general security for their well-being. Horror films remind their

audiences that—in a world where the forces of globalization bridge the distances between

places—the gaps between "us" and the dangers and wonders of the rest of the world are

also diminished.

      The Green Inferno further complicates this message through not only its narrative

but also its production. Filming on location in Peru, Roth and crew actively sought

"tribes who have been largely untethered from western civilization" (Newman). The

film's early advertisements capitalized on the fact that the film featured natives who had

never seen a film before, let alone ever been captured on camera (Roth).[43] More than a

novelty act, however, "[t]his desire for hyper-real horror has its cost, though, as many

reviews have accused Roth of cultural appropriation and cinematic imperialism"

(Newman). According to the Amazon Watch, a non-profit organization invested in

protecting the rights and existence of the rainforest and the indigenous peoples of the

Amazon basin, Roth's claim that the film is a critical response to what he calls

"slacktivists" does not justify the film's racial stereotypes or its appropriation and use of

the indigenous peoples ("Amazon").[44] Roth's response to these accusations are rather

mixed. On the one hand, Roth admits that, although they provided the village with metal

roofing, they also "completely polluted the social system and f*cked them up" by

exposing them to the trappings and technologies of Western culture (Roth 10). On the

other hand, however, Roth defends his actions by saying that being part of the film

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[43] According to an interview with Chris Tilly, Roth and company showed the native tribe its first film: *Cannibal Holocaust,* a film that the indigenous people reportedly believed to be a comedy.
[44] The prevalence and lingering power of these negative stereotypes can be seen in Roth's anecdote that while they were filming, an American mission group stumbled upon the set (i.e. tied up Americans, severed heads) and assumed that they had indeed found the ultimate heathen horror (Corrigan).

allowed them to make considerably more money than their typical jobs as farmers and

allowed them to engage in behavior that they found to be highly amusing (Newman).[45]

Through narrative and production, the film then reveals that these dangers will befall

even those who have the best of intentions and who wish to use the advantages of

globalizing forces—not for harm or personal interest but rather to build something better,

to contribute something new.

 The Green Inferno becomes then a text that enters into the ongoing conversations

about the ways consumption and commodification are, according to Barbara

Marciszewska, always at the heart of tourism (71). Greg Richards posits that because of

these intersections, cultural tourism should itself be seen as "a global common currency"

(2). The horror genre, with its frequent portrayals of monstrous consumptions and

immoral commodifications, becomes a natural vehicle for representing and exploring the

underlying tensions and fears about the interactions and exchanges of tourism.[46] The four

works explored in-depth within this chapter— the 2005 film *Hostel*, the 2006 film

Turistas, the 2008 film *The Ruins,* and the 2004 film *The Grudge* —join this dialogue, as

each also depicts the horrific price that must be paid for demanding certain experiences as

a cultural tourist.[47] Although I have tried throughout the dissertation to offer an equal

representation of both literary and cinematic texts that collectively span the decades of

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[45] Although *The Green Inferno* deserves further critical consideration, particularly within this dissertation's theoretical framework, I have chosen not to "close-read" this film as one of the chapter's primary texts. This decision stems primarily from the fact that I have already discussed, at length, the issue of cannibalism in a previous chapter. Consequently, I feel that too much of my analysis of Roth's film would mirror the theories and ideas of that earlier close-reading rather than fully prompting an additional layer to this project's larger discussion as might be obtained through an analysis of a different film.

[46] The horrific costs of travelling and tourism within horror can be directly traced to the genre's Gothic roots in texts such as Ann Radcliffe's 1794 novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Often these texts—ranging from *Dracula* to *White Zombie* to *An American Werewolf in London*—reveal that what waits at the end of the trip are monsters notable for their insatiable hunger for the lives of those who visit.

[47] These texts are listed in the order in which they will be discussed later in the chapter.

post-WWII American horror, in this chapter I am focusing exclusively on post-9/11

cinema. While there are important and notable pre-9/11 and literary texts that explore the

inescapable terror experienced by Americans engaging in cultural tourism,[48] the

explosion of American horror films post-9/11 that feature cultural tourism deserves

particular attention. 9/11 was an undeniable marker, signifier, and symbol—one that

shaped cultural perceptions and anxieties so profoundly that its impact in popular culture

can be explicitly felt even in texts that avoid direct reference to the event. And as many

scholars—including Linnie Blake, Adam Lowenstein, and Kevin J. Wetmore—

acknowledge, these perceptions and fears produce unique patterns within post-9/11

American horror in a variety of significant and interrelated ways. Through their

narratives on authenticity, security, and invincibility, the texts examined in this chapter

reveal not only an insidious fear about the inevitability of placelessness within a

globalized world; these films more specifically address the particularly post-9/11 cultural

fear that (cultural) assumptions about the inviolability of America's place are

dangerously incorrect.

PLACES IN THE PASSPORT

Tourism is, in its most simplified definition, "[t]he theory and practice of touring" and/or

the act of "travelling for pleasure" ("Tourism"). In reality, tourism involves abundant

and diverse relationships between places, cultures, and individual and collective

identities. Shaped by factors of motivation, experience, and interpretation, tourism

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[48] Films like the 1988 zombie narrative *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, with its horrification of the real-life experiences of ethnobotanist Wade Davis, and Scott Smith's 2006 novel *The Ruins,* which was adapted into the film explored in this chapter, are two examples of American cultural tourism horror that deserves further consideration even though (and perhaps, more accurately, because) they are either pre-9/11 or literary.

appears in different types and forms (such as cultural tourism and its concern with the

lifestyles, histories, and geographies of a people and region). Carolyn Cartier argues, for

example, that touristed landscapes, which reveal "the dialectic of moving in and out of

'being a tourist,'" further show "the messiness of tourism as a category of activity,

experience, and economy. In the touristed landscape people occupy simultaneous or

sequential if sometimes conflicted positions of orientation toward landscape experience

and place consumption" (3). Tourism is further complicated by the ideological and

symbolic tensions at "the conceptual heart of globalisation" (Robinson and Smith 2).

Rhetorics about the nation state underlie many of the driving forces behind national and

governmental offerings of tourist experiences and cultural brands (2). For this reason,

concerns about how to present and maintain the social and physical places of tourism are

often seen as ways to counter or combat the forces of globalization (Franquesa and

Morell 175).

The multiplicity and multiculturalism at the heart of globalization is critical in

understanding the intricacies of tourism in general, and cultural tourism in specific.

Culture "plays a double role: on the one hand, it supports collective memory and social

identification; and on the other hand, it is a source of income and economic activity"

(Herrero 324). Because of this, *cultural* tourism must be seen as equally capable of

playing multiple roles in constructing and maintaining identities as well as in framing

exchanges and interactions between cultures, people, and places. Kevin Meethan

proposes that cultural tourists, unlike other types of tourists, attempt "to go beyond idle

leisure and to return enriched with knowledge of other places and other people even if

this involves 'gazing' at, or collecting in some way, the commodified essence of

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otherness" (*Tourism* 128). As Richards suggests, there are some problematic

dichotomies at work in Meethan's construction, particularly between active/idle and

authentic/inauthentic, that prove to be highly problematic social constructs. This does not

mean that there are not certain shared experiences, drives, or desires of cultural tourists,

particularly concerning a quest for authenticity. Rather, Meethan's statement fails to

fully acknowledge how concepts like authenticity can and are defined "in the eye of the

beholder" (Richards 5). Edward W. Said suggests that frameworks of thinking that

promote or maintain "[a] single overmastering identity," regardless of which identity that

is, are "a confinement, a deprivation. The world we live in is made up of numerous

identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically" ("Identity" 17).

Said's claim highlights the realities of a globalized word; however, he is also offering an

explanation for why ideas such as authenticity and exchange cannot and should not be

seen as objective or fixed.

Because there are multiple interlocking and interworking identities at play,

questions of authenticity must move past issues of "genuine" and "real" to consider

issues of perspective, construction, and recognition (MacLeod). Authenticity is best

considered not as an either/or binary, but as a continual process and exertion to find,

present, and claim interpretations of identity, history, place, and culture (Hoelscher 371-

2). Just as importantly, authenticity must be considered in terms of agency. Tourists can

and often are active makers of their 'authentic' experiences, just as host cultures often

produce and craft particular authenticities; in this respect, authenticity becomes itself a

commodity negotiated as a social construct and contract (E. Cohen). The idea that the

relationships of tourism—that cultural tourism itself—are fundamentally centered on

ideas of commodification (of peoples, cultures, places, and identities) is admittedly incredibly challenging, especially as it often implies, if not encourages, a commodification of Otherness and the Other that speaks to themes of imperialistic nostalgia and colonialism.[49] With that said, however, to reduce cultural tourism to the belief that it consists exclusively of the distortion (at the very least) or the raping (at the very most) of the indigenous/host culture denies the ways that both guest *and* host can shape cultural identities and the ways that cultural tourism can concurrently offer commodification and protection of cultural identities and places (Briedenhann and Wickens). Cultural tourism, in other words, produces "*interactive spaces*" where "new forms of *power* are created," and these spaces are able to help produce empowerment that transcends one group or culture and that, increasingly, translates into power for both tourist and native cultures (Duim et al. 114).

David Crouch argues that because tourism is an embodied act, the landscapes of tourism are often intentionally constructed as places of seduction, places that create and sustain tourists' desires to consume. Viewing the touristed landscape as one that is crafted to provide desires or offer seduction, shows that "authentic" and complete interactions with places—what Relph considers critical for avoiding a sense of placelessness—are subjective, ephemeral, and perhaps not entirely feasible. "It seems," Relph writes, "that for many people the purpose of travel is less to experience unique and different places than to collect those places" (85). Unsurprisingly, placelessness can emerge as "individual and authentic judgment about places is nearly always subsumed to

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[49] Caren Kaplan argues that the idea of the tourist must be considered as an identity that is formed by individual and collective availability and accessibility of social powers tied to constructions of gender, class, and race.

expert or socially accepted opinion, or the act and means of tourism become more important than the places visited" (83). Placlessness can also be purposefully engineered through the act of appropriating 'authentic' places for the tourist experience by the designers and architects of touristed landscapes seeking to create synthetic tourism sites that are familiar even in their unfamiliarity (Relph, M. Smith "Space").

I argue, and I believe Relph would agree, that tourism alone does not produce placelessness nor is placelessness an inevitable consequence of any and all acts of tourism. Nevertheless, Relph's discussion of tourism and placelessness is valuable in exposing existent tensions and fears about tourism, anxieties that are subsequently communicated through rhetorics of horror, both within and outside of the horror genre. An Internet search of "horror stories about tourism" reveals a plethora of supposedly real-life narratives describing nightmares and terrifying experiences. People are often more than willing to share the horrifying moments of their trips—from less-than-desirable accommodations to actual life-threatening encounters. Often these horror stories highlight what Bill Bryson describes in *Neither Here nor There* as "the odd thing tourism is," as it involves travelling to a "strange land" to spend time, money, and effort to (re)claim the comforts of home (242-43). At other times, however, these horror stories reveal anxieties about the consequences of not fully understanding the nature of tourism as an inherently risky enterprise as well as a failure for those travelling to understand the ontological and geographical places they encounter.

Within American horror, cultural tourism becomes a metaphor for a variety of (sanctioned and unsanctioned) global interactions, which construct, problematize, and disturb our sense of place, particularly within a post-9/11 framework. The events of 9/11

produced a literal placelessness with the obliteration of buildings, places, and the bodies that were interacting with them. Yet the staying power of 9/11 highlights the larger impact that the events had on cultural and individual imaginations, understandings, and thoughts. Marc Redfield eloquently describes the impacts of 9/11 when he writes:

> The event called September 11 or 9/11 was as real as death, but its traumatic force seems nonetheless inseparable from a certain ghostliness, not just because the attacks did more than merely literal damage (that would be true of any event causing cultural trauma) but because the symbolic damage done seems spectral—not unreal by any means, but not simply "real" either. (56)

9/11, Redfield suggests, haunts the American psyche not simply because it was a traumatic event or even because, in very real ways, it was about death on a catastrophic scale. Rather, 9/11 haunts America because, like a ghost, it is capable of lingering behind long after death; its presence can be felt even when not directly seen, and its post-life existence gains the power to serve as a metaphor for a multiplicity of anxieties that extend far beyond its original form.

In his examination of post-9/11 horror in American cinema, Kevin J. Wetmore admits that, while horror is "both emotional and intellectual" (*Post* 18), he is wary of assigning a single, collective voice for audience experiences and American understandings; likewise, he acknowledges, rather humorously that few audience members emerge from "a horror film saying, 'I was terrified by that reaffirmation of patriarchy and the reinscription of codes of sexual behaviour'" (18). Yet, he nevertheless maintains, correctly so I think, that it matters that horror does create fear and that it does

serve as a window to the anxieties that terrify us. With that in mind, Wetmore proposes

that 9/11 produced a paradigm "shift in emphasis, tropes and elements, many if not all of

which existed before 9/11, but which became foregrounded [in American horror cinema]

in the period afterwards" (*Post* 19). Wetmore is not alone in asserting that post-9/11

horror has a distinctly unique flavor, one that clearly illustrates anxieties faced—not

necessarily for the first time, but in original ways and concentrated forms—in a post-9/11

America. And, as most of these scholars agree, it is possible for a horror text to explicitly

address the tensions and fears emphasized and constructed by 9/11 without ever directly

portraying or speaking to that event. The ghostliness of 9/11 appears in subtle and direct

ways with American horror—from an increase in themes of nihilism, attention to the

sheer randomness of the horror, questions about authenticity, a particular focus on fears

of vulnerability and insecurity, and extreme manifestations of sociophobia[50]. If 9/11

revealed the fragility of the cultural tethers that bind us, then post-9/11 horror exposes the

particularly American cultural anxieties of discovering ourselves untethered by the

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[50] Post-9/11 horror is also frequently characterized as exhibiting not only an abundance but, as some claim, a celebration of violence and torture. David Edelstein famously coined the term "torture porn" to describe post-9/11 texts—not just those in the horror genre—that he felt failed to offer a real justification (especially in terms of moral responsibility) for heightened degrees of violence. This term has since been adopted by horror scholarship, although some scholars do seem to use this term solely because it has—for better or worse—become a part of the lexicon. Many of the discussions of "torture porn" contribute greatly to the conversations that this dissertation hopes to spark. Catherine Zimmer, for example, writes: "Torture porn *must* be read as trans- and international, trans- and inter-generic, trans- and inter-technological, simply because the narrative formations of surveillance and torture insist on the production of boundaries only to blur them, and the introduction of indistinctions only to produce (un)stable resolutions" (104). Yet, although the label *torture porn* is pervasive enough to serve as a recognizable classification and shorthand, I agree with Adam Lowenstein that this category is fundamentally problematic as it fails to acknowledge the full intricacies and risks that (some) of these texts are attempting and accomplishing. Lowenstein proposes the use of the term *spectacle horror* as a viable alternative that addresses the concerns of Edelstein's classification without offering the same judgments ("Spectacle"). While the debate of *torture porn* as a category is an important one in horror scholarship because words—contrary to Shakespeare's claim that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet—have meaning and labels have power, I do not believe that a lengthier (or non-footnoted) discussion of this issue is necessary for furthering the purview of this dissertation.

placelessness of finding that the sacredness of the American (tourist) is as inauthentic as their perceptions of touristed landscapes.

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***HOSTEL*: THE COST OF THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE**

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According to IMDb, Eli Roth's 2005 film *Hostel* currently maintains a Metascore of 55/100.[51] About average for horror films (which traditionally rate lower than other generic and mainstream movies), this score neither reflects the degree to which this film is discussed nor the frequency for which it is cited as both an example and scapegoat of post-9/11 anxieties. Called out by name in David Edelstein's crafting of the term *torture porn, Hostel* remains highly discussed and critically analyzed as a text that echoes post-9/11 cultural tensions in ways that demand, and continue to demand, conversation and debate. It is *because* of this existing discussion, that I believed it was critical to situate this film in terms of my own examination of placelessness, cultural tourism, and American fears. Ultimately, in revealing how—like any souvenir—tourists' desires and the seduction of the touristed landscape are a crafted, commodified products, *Hostel* exposes the placeless horrors between authenticity and inauthenticity, 'our' place and 'their' place, and hospitality and hostility.

   Hostel begins with the three primary male characters—Paxton and Josh, two Americans on a European vacation after college, and Óli, an Icelandic man whom the Americans befriend on their journeys—in Amsterdam, a city traditionally conveyed as renowned for its open sex trade. Desire and seduction are an established component of tourism; the tourists' desire to encounter new and authentic places, experiences, and peoples are matched by often intentionally—especially within the tourist industry—

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[51] Based on a composite number of 21 different critic reviews.

seductive places, experiences, and peoples. In the film, when the men arrive at the hostel in Slovakia the sexualized form of seduction is made explicit. The men discover upon arrival that their "roommates" are half-naked, beautiful women who are headed to the sauna; later, when Paxton returns alone to the hostel after having supposedly "checked out," he finds new, equally beautiful and half-naked women headed to the sauna. It is then, through this flash of déjà vu, that Paxton (and the viewers) begin to see how well-perfected the system of seduction is. Importantly, the film plays out this sexualized seduction through another seduction: the seduction of a *place*. Paxton, Josh, and Óli's desires drive them to leave Amsterdam and, at the encouragement of a stranger they meet in a hostel, to "go East my friend" to Slovakia, where they are told: "You can pay to do anything, anything." Crouch argues that tourist practice is an act of seduction, what he calls "flirting with space" (23). His argument rests heavily on the ideas of embodiment, the ways that tourists engage with experiences and the ways that individuals encounter places. Ultimately, Crouch sees these forms of seduction as integral to understanding the gaze of the tourist as well as the ways that power and identity become commodities and tools of the tourist experience. Cartier argues that seductions of place reveal how factors like residency, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity mediate encounters with place. As a result, she sees seduction as being a possible system for knowledge or, perhaps more accurately, awareness of potential (desired) experiences with the places we encounter through acts of tourism. "Seduction's psychological orientation," she writes, "also asks us to consider contradictions of tourist imagining, anticipation and memory, which suggest its tensions and illegibility," the latter of which she links to the idea of "*mundus vult decipi* (the world wants to be deceived)" (5).

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Although seduction and desire are two driving forces that shape cultural and individual decisions, behaviors, and ideologies, American cultural perceptions and understandings of these concepts are complicated. On the one hand, America is a nation built upon the desire for certain unalienable rights and the seductive allure of the American Dream. On the other hand, American popular culture regularly depicts desires and seductions, particularly in sexualized forms, as being forbidden—if not explicitly illicit—urges and actions. As Jim Butcher asserts, after the Cold War, the US cultural anxieties about communism no longer provided a relevant framework for conceptualizing what it meant to be an American. In the subsequent decades, as an increased awareness and concern for globalization arose, "conservatives turned to multiculturalism and political correctness as scapegoats for America's relative decline" (27). Blake discusses how the rhetorics of fear perpetuated post-9/11, particularly by the Bush administration, amplified existing anxieties about outside forces infiltrating the nation's borders and threatening the governing ideologies, myths, and beliefs. She states that the political rhetorics post-9/11 were, no matter how problematic or flawed, nonetheless incredibly effective as they made the "highly attraction assertion of national cohesion and political supremacy at a time of great confusion" ("I Am" 187).

Hostel is a film aware of these conflicting American cultural perspectives. Yet its ambivalent treatment of desire and seduction becomes, rather than a source of emancipation, the root of the film's horror. Desire and seduction are, the film suggests, neither inherently good nor bad; there are not in fact. in the film's world, any such black-and-white moral guideposts. As the film illustrates from the first image (a puddled reflection of the hostel sign in Amsterdam), there is another side to everything. Gregory

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A. Burris argues that *Hostel* repeatedly presents a mirroring or doubling effect that

exposes a "Jekyll and Hyde-like dual nature of reality" (7). Most elements of the film

contain some sort of doubling—from the two Americans' different approaches to their

travels to the various touristed landscapes they visit, from the legal sex trade of

Amsterdam to the illegal death trade of Slovakia. Burris suggests that these doublings

allow the film to criticize American imperialism by showing that everything, including

our capitalist desires and the seductions of consumption, has a darker doppelgänger. The

film uses a mirroring of places to particularly illustrate the duality of desire and

seduction. From the men's first arrival in Slovakia, there is a distinct difference in terms

of place, compared to Amsterdam. Whereas Amsterdam was depicted as bright, full of

people, and lively, Slovakia—from the moment they step off the train—is stark, dull,

empty, and industrial.[52] The hostel in Slovakia, despite the stark surroundings of Eastern

Europe, is lush and presents numerous opportunities to gaze at and consume the beautiful

locals. Initial shots of the village are quaint, full of cobbled streets and picturesque

images. There is, of course, another side—a darker, flesh market, not of sex but of death,

which occupies the less attractive, more industrial areas of the country.

These conflicting seductions are not portrayed as beautiful examples of the

multiplicity afforded by globalization, but rather as products and producers of horrific

placelessness. The film never actively seeks or portrays the touristed landscapes as

unique locations where the characters can develop meaningful relationships with place.

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[52] In 2004, I lived for a year in what was formerly East Germany and, even 15 years after the wall fell, much of the landscape (especially the smaller towns) looked distinctly different from its Western counterparts. Watching *Hostel*, I was reminded of my experiences in "East" Germany as the film's shots of Slovakia do possess a distinctly Eastern European feel in terms of the architectural aesthetics and the people's interactions with the landscape. Of course, the film intentionally crafts—through image and music—the sensation that this Eastern Europe is, especially compared to the more American-friendly West, exceptionally eerie and creepy.

The men visit placeless locations like brothels, discos/clubs, and hostels—places that are often intentionally crafted to feel like they could be anywhere or nowhere. Once Paxton, Josh, and Óli arrive in Slovakia, the film begins to visually deny even the audience with place-based referential cues. The film offers very few initial establishing shots to help locate the town in relationship to the train station or the Elite Hunting Club (whose members pay for the ultimate experience of being able to torture and kill another human). Furthermore, the town itself becomes a labyrinth full of alleys and non-linear paths, and the shots in the town are full of canted angles, images obscured by walls and objects, and quick cuts that are edited together in ways that make distances and relationships between places incomprehensible.

The town in Slovakia is, at least from a distance, quaint and picturesque; however, the film does not hesitate to show that when the dominating seductions of the area differ from the desires of our American tourists, the overall effect is overwhelmingly placeless. The Elite Hunting Club is an indiscernible distance from the town in the rubble of an industrial building of some kind. In this building, for the first time since the characters' arrival in Slovakia, the film offers establishing shots; however, these shots only further emphasis a horrific sense of placelessness (figure 4.1). It is only after Paxton is escaping from the Club, possessing for the first time a full awareness of how seductions and desires are always—as with any aspect of tourism—a commodification, that the film begins to create spatial relationships between the Club, the town, and the train station. This awareness comes much too late, however; Paxton and the Japanese woman that he saves are permanently disfigured and the horrific placelessness, as the beginning of the 2007 film *Hostel: Part II* illustrates, will always haunt Paxton.

Figure 4.1. The extreme long shot reveals not only the degree of the decay of the Elite Hunting Club's building, but also how the placelessness of Eastern Europe and its darker side of commodification literally overwhelms Paxton (who can barely be seen in the shot) and figuratively consumes—actively and indiscriminately—American bodies.

Hostel reveals that seduction and desire are not only distinctly place(less) ideas but also commodities. Frans Schouten argues that tourism is about "selling dreams" and offering "the commodification of escapism, the commercial answer to the longing of mankind for another reality beyond the dull and grey of the everyday life" (191). Paxton, Josh, and Óli are clearly aware that some of their desires come at a cost; after all, they are willingly paying for prostitutes at the start of the film. Later, Paxton and Josh visit a torture museum, where they—once again—willingly exchange money for a touristed experience. Yet the men do not fully understand that theirs are not the only dreams being sold. Jerod Ra'del Hollyfield argues that film's critique of American "capitalism's hubris" can be seen as the characters are clearly "ignorant of international affairs and cultures, a deficiency that ultimately shatters their comfort and myths of isolation" (27). In this way, the film resonates with particular post-9/11 American anxieties about—to reference Lowenstein's description of Paxton's fate in the film—"the price (rather than

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just the perks) of American privilege" ("Spectacle" 57).   Aviva Briefel discusses how, post-9/11, the Bush administration suggested that consumerism was articulated as "a patriotic form of resistance" (142); yet, as *Hostel* demonstrates—there is a price, perhaps one that is not readily affordable, for this form of "patriotism."

It would be easy to read the fates of Paxton, Josh, and Óli as the price for their own desires and wanton consumptions. Yet such a reading requires a moral cosmos that, Wetmore argues, is not characteristic of post-9/11 horror (*Post* 197), and one that is refuted in the film by Paxton (who is more sexualized and 'amoral' than Josh) being the lone survivor of his friends. The most problematic issue, however, with such a reading stems from the film's equation of existing, real-world sex markets with the Club's death market. The film's early sequence in an Amsterdam brothel where unseen but silhouetted activities happen behind closed doors mirrors the later imagery of the Club's killing grounds, where Paxton—dragged down the hall to his own private room—is able to peek into open doors filled with unspeakable activities. Toward the end of the film, after Paxton has escaped, he finds himself conversing with a Club member who directly likens the killing experiences to sexual acquisitions and purchases. To read *Hostel* as punishing Paxton, Josh, and Óli's for their quest to satisfy their desires, even if those desires are morally ambiguous, is to problematically read the film as suggesting that all products of capitalist markets (such as sex workers) are responsible for their fates.

Hostel may not morally condemn the three tourists for their behaviors and desires, but neither does it fully suggest that the products of commodification, those individuals whose bodies become symbolic souvenirs, are helpless victims. In this way, the film captures particularly post-9/11 tensions about the ambiguity of American interactions

with the rest of the world. Lowenstein discusses how the film's switch of what he calls the "I-camera," or first-person POV cinematography, switches perspectives in meaningful ways that mirror real-world post-9/11 imagery so that the scene where Josh awakens in his torture room visually confronts American audiences by having Josh stand "in not just for an American victim of torture, but also for an American torturer" ("Spectacle" 52). Paxton, at the end of the film, stalks and then kills Josh's torturer, creating a relationship between predator and prey that destroys easy binary definitions. Maximiliano E. Korstanje and Olsen's discussion of how post-9/11 horror films, such as *Hostel*, reveal cultural fears about the potential risks of travel (especially for Americans) is framed within anxieties about the fragile boundaries between hospitality and hostility. Many people have noted the homonym of *hostel* and *hostile*, a play-on-words that is particularly poignant considering the pledge to hospitality that most real-world hostels undertake. *Hostel* reveals that the "transitory suspension of hospitality, or at least, the passage from hospitality to hostility" (Korstanje and Olsen 311) may be nothing more than a difference of interpretation, a disparity of desires.

At the end of the film, Paxton is the lone survivor of his group. He escapes Slovakia, but on the train he hears the voice of Josh's torturer—a man they met earlier on the train from Amsterdam—and decides to follow him off the train in Germany to kill him. Ironically, as he is stalking the man, Paxton passes by an advertisement for Coca-Cola (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 The medium shot may center Paxton in the image; however, the Coca-Cola advertisement dominates the frame. Furthermore the perspective depicts the advertisement (located on a number of stairs) as fragmented and broken (which would not be as apparent if it were a head-on shot of the stairs)—a fitting image to match the equally broken (literally and figuratively) Paxton.

Although clearly an actual advertisement in the real-world shooting location, the image highlights a product (Coca-Cola) that was marketed and continues to be presented, as Tom Standage discusses, as not just an American product, but a commodification of American culture and ideologies—including the American Dream—made available through globalizing forces. Jeremy Rifkin argues that the American Dream, the desire for individuality and (financial) success, is no longer relevant or viable "in a world of increasing risk, diversity, and interdependence" (3). He proposes that a new dream, what he calls the European Dream, is supplanting the American Dream as it is "far better suited" … to bring humanity to a global consciousness befitting an increasingly interconnected and globalizing society" (3). Regardless of whether or not Rifkin is correct in his reading of the shifting global landscape, it is clear that the fear of such a shift is a post-9/11 American cultural anxiety and—if *Hostel* is correct—the cost of the

American Dream is not only too high, but its loss will not herald in a meaningful utopia but a placeless horror.

John Stockwell's 2006 film *Turistas* opens with a shot of a surgical lamp before cutting to a close-up of a woman's eyes. The film then proceeds to show several extreme close-ups of her eyes that are so zoomed in that audiences are able to see the reflection of a man looming over her. The combination of the later additional shots of bodily trauma and the woman's cries that "I'm so sorry … I want to go home" illuminate the film's theme about the horrors that await those who are not at home. Temporarily, as the credits begin playing, the visual and aural horrors of these initial shots disappear, but—even as "tropical" sounding music plays and then images of first foreign currency and then a series of pictures that flip across the screen (as though the audience is flipping through a travel guidebook of Brazil)—they are not forgotten. As the credits continue playing, the images move from bright and cheerful shots of Carnival of Brazil and attractive (and scantily clad) female bodies to images of poverty, governmental security documents (such as passports), and finally news clippings of "missing tourists." Many of these latter images pass across the screen like negatives from a camera, further drawing attention to the fact that these images are not only contradictory but mediated ones. The stitching together of these differing versions of Brazil through its opening montage allows the film to quickly and effectively reveal that these 'realities' of Brazil are all arbitrated by perspective and experience, meaning that—for tourists and natives alike—there are many equally viable 'authentic' versions of Brazil. Through its horrific presentation of the tourists' impossible desire to experience something 'genuine,' *Turistas* reveals the

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inherent placelessness at the core of authenticity. The film, as it presents the subjectivity of authenticity, is able to address particular post-9/11 American anxieties about the subjectivity of other American ideologies and actions, thereby destabilizing the idea that there is one, authentic place for America in the globalized world.

From the start of the narrative, *Turistas* situates the idea of authenticity as a cultural construct rather an absolute universality. The first scene after the opening credits pans across the bus to show both the native Brazilians and the various tourist main characters (not all of whom are American but all of whom are white and from English-speaking nations) who are riding a local bus along a narrow mountain road. The film uses this opening sequence to reveal that there are multiple interlocking and often conflicting realities at play. In the process, the film is able to posit the question, which will be explored throughout the film, of whose experience should be considered the authentic experience of Brazil. The natives' faces are indifferent and bored, suggesting that the bus driver's erratic driving and the dangers of the journey are an everyday, familiar occurrence to them. Even after the bus rolls down the hill and they are forced to evacuate it, the local passengers do not seem particularly perturbed by either the accident or the inevitable ten-hour wait for another bus to arrive.

Yet the early shots, which pan across the bus to introduce the characters, also show that even amongst the tourists there is not one single, genuine touristed experience. Alex—one of the American tourists visiting Brazil with his sister and her friend—asks if he's the only one having a problem with the bus driver's erratic (and increasingly unsafe) driving. Although they are eventually validated, his concerns are not portrayed as being the voice of reason. Rather, as his sister Bea says, his comment is proof that he's being

"such a tourist," which she makes clear is a very different from how she wishes to be perceived. The rest of the film establishes that this is true for all of the main tourists—Americans Alex, Bea, and Amy; English Finn and Liam, and Australian Pru—each of whom expects different "authentic" interactions with the places and peoples of Brazil. While everyone is waiting for the new bus, Bea takes a photo of one of the local boys (figure 4.3). Much like her earlier snapping of some graffiti on the bus, Bea's photo of the boy reveals her desire to capture the 'reality' of her trip, to record an authentic moment as a souvenir of her trip. The boy's father, however, begins yelling at her in Portuguese and Pru, the only tourist fluent in Portuguese, translates that taking photos of children without permission is not acceptable. The locals fear the many stories about foreigners stealing Brazilian children. Bea asks how she was supposed to know about this cultural anxiety or the appropriate cultural mores. It is clear that she is genuinely contrite; yet, her actions reveal her inability to see that her tourist experience does not trump the locals' experience. The authenticity she perceives as her right to consume and claim as a tourist is not (for the local) a commodity for sale.

Figure 4.3. The framing of the shot highlights that Bea's photo as a virtual souvenir of the "real" Brazil is not necessarily the "authentic" everyday life happening immediately outside of *her* camera lens but nevertheless within the film's lens.

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The pursuit for authenticity—like Bea's desire to take the local boy's picture—is often seen as a very pure, unadulterated, and wholesome urge, one exhibiting a longing to have meaningful and accurate interactions with cultural people and places. Often this authentic experience—which is supposedly the genuine (often coded as native) experience—is furthermore depicted as something that a tourist can encounter on their holiday, as part of their escape from their own everyday lives. In *Turistas*, the tourists decide that, because waiting by the side of the road for the next bus is neither enjoyable nor comfortable, they are going to instead head to a local hidden beach for drinks and relaxation. They emerge from the hot, humid jungle to a startling paradise[53]—a pristine, beautiful, and nearly empty beach—where they can experience a highly desirable and seemingly "authentic" experience of Brazil. Ning Wang argues that authenticity needs to be seen as a "*projection* of tourists' own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images and consciousness onto toured objects, particularly toured Others" (355). The tourists' behavior in the film reveals the dangers of not seeing the importance between projection and reality. They have a certain projected image of Brazil—as a paradise where nature is inviting and playful, where the people are beautiful and sexualized, and where the lifestyle is carefree and fun—that the beach offers in abundance. Rather than being suspicious or at least wary of this perfect paradise, they simply assume that *this* must be the authentic Brazilian experience.

The beach is naturally beautiful, but it is also an artificially crafted landscape. The beach is naturally beautiful, but it is also an artificially crafted landscape. Nicola MacLeod discusses that, within the real-world tourism industry, authenticity is a product

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[53] The film's alternative title is *Paradise Lost*, a title that is especially apt considering the film's depiction of the Brazilian landscape as a paradise.

constructed for tourists as a reality that can be claimed for a price (185). Although the

tourists in *Turistas* do not discover that the location is a "honey trap" until after their

night of fun on the beach, the audiences are quickly shown—when the beautiful bartender

calls her boss to tell him that more "gringos" have arrived for him—that this is a crafted

version of Brazil, one that stands in sharp contrast to another concurrent version of the

country. The film juxtaposes images of the tourists playing and partying with scenes

introducing the natives who are planning to harvest the tourists' organs for profit. These

Brazilians are shown in crowded inner city locales, unlike any shown in the movie since

the opening credits, where bodies and places are dirty, contaminated, and barely

surviving. Eventually, the tourists realize, after having been drugged and robbed on the

beach, that this beach paradise might have been fabricated. They make their way to a

small town where, after angering the locals, they are led by a local acquaintance on a

journey through the jungle to a supposedly safe place. By this point the tourists have

begun to realize that they were mistake about their assumptions that the experiences on

the beach were *the* authentic encounters with Brazil; however, as they are led through the

jungle, they are denied closure of having a substitute authenticity. As the tourists are

headed to the 'surgical' site (and the eventual merging of the tourists and native surgical

team grows imminent), the jungles and other landscapes of Brazil are increasingly

depicted as places where the tourists can (and will) be easily lost. As the film continues,

it increasingly depicts a version of Brazil that feels very placeless, as though—despite its

unique underwater caves and stunning scenery—it could be anywhere or perhaps

nowhere at all.

As the film forces its audience to consider the subjectivity and relativity of authenticity, it becomes difficult to not consider whether or not other ideologies—such as moral principles—are not also subject to cultural constructions and projections. Only a few hours after the tourists are led to the surgical site in the jungle, a group of locals—including the ringleader of the organ-harvesting operation—arrive. Earlier in the film, the ringleader tells a local street urchin that the "the best thing you can do is the right thing. The next best thing is the wrong thing. But the worst thing you can do is nothing." Later, the ringleader (while removing Amy's organs) says: "The whole history of our country is you taking from us and our land—rubber, sugar, gold. And from our bodies—for slaves, for sex. And now, for … our insides. […] And so I am thinking—maybe there is something I can do to even the scales, just a little. To help you find a way to give back." The film has already shown—in addition to the pristine beaches of Brazil—the effects of the country's poverty, drug addiction, and lawlessness on the local peoples (including through many examples of children). Yet any sympathy for the ring leader's actions is minimalized by the film's unwavering cinematic gaze on the surgery (while Amy is wake) and Finn's horrified face as he realizes he is next.

Turistas speaks directly to post-9/11 American anxieties through this portrayal of the ways global interactions craft multiple narratives and subsequently multiple subjectivities, particularly concerning issues of morality and decency. Zimmer, speaking directly about the films *Turistas* and *Hostel*, suggests that the films' intense portrayals of trauma and physical violence become very familiar (both in terms of cinematic depiction and cultural imagination) to the real-life trauma and violence that American enacted (and was enacted upon them) in the "war on terror." Matt Hills argues that many post-9/11

horror films offer narratives and images that craft conflicting and occasionally incoherent statements about what should or should not be considered righteous or justified horror. The real-life horror of the events and subsequent actions of 9/11 prompted many cultural debates—not only about what it meant on a fundamental and collective level to be an American—but also about what the 'right' response was to the situation and "how our response to 9/11 morally configures us" (Weber 4). *Turistas* never pardons the behaviors of the organ-harvesting group; however, it does acknowledge that, like perceptions of authenticity, moral and ethical motivations are mediated by circumstance and perspective. And the price for this understanding, this untethering from the notion of unquestionable ideologies, proves to be, for the characters, a truly horrific and costly placelessness.

After receiving aid from a sympathetic local, Alex, Bea, and Pru are trapped in a cave by the lighter-skinned, more affluent ringleader and his darker-skinned, poorer lackey. The ringleader, treating the henchman poorly as he has throughout the film, yells at his minion for being not only a coward unwilling to kill the tourists but also for being a "worthless Indian." The tourists beg the henchmen to not harm them because, as they plead, "we've done nothing to harm you;" likewise, they encourage him to kill the ringleader by telling him to "[t]hink about how he treats you!" The tourists' begging reveals not only their desperation but their full understanding for perhaps the first time that, even for the local Brazilians, there is not one experience, one 'authentic' existence but rather a series of experiences and existences negotiated by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic class. In his 1976 seminal text on tourism, *The Tourist,* Dean MacCannell writes: "And once tourists have entered touristic space, there is no way

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out for them as long as they press their search for authenticity" (45). In *Turistas,* it is only after they begin to fully understand the total subjectivity of the 'authentic' experience with Brazil that the remaining survivors are able to find their way out—figuratively and literally covered in the blood and dirt of Brazil—of the placeless jungle (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. The surviving tourists emerge from the placeless jungle after experiencing the horrific consequences of the conflicting versions of authenticity. The image—with the halo effect produced by the natural backlighting, the 'untamed' jungle, and the scantily-clad Alex in the foreground—also alludes to visual depictions of the fall of man and Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, itself a narrative about the price of conflicting authenticities of knowledge and experience.

The tourists receive aid from some other locals (again revealing that there is no single authentic native experience) before boarding a plane to leave Brazil. Alex encourages some other tourists to take a plane around Brazil, having learned first-hand that the consequences of attempting to experience the "real" touristed landscaped. At the end of *Turistas,* the characters may be able to leave Brazil; however, as Alex stares hauntingly out the plane window, the film leaves the final horrific conclusion that the

survivors—much like the America that survived 9/11—may be permanently untethered by their experiences and their fool-hearty beliefs in the sanctity and moral certainty of their 'authentic' experiences with the rest of the world.

<p align="center">*THE RUINS*: INVASIVE ENCOUNTERS</p>

The premise of Carter Smith's 2008 film *The Ruins*, based on Scott Smith's 2006 novel by the same name, does not sound too scary: a group of American college-aged students and their German companion, spend a couple of days being terrorized by some plants on the top of an ancient Mayan ruin; however, the carnivorous plants of this post-9/11 horror movie are a far cry from Audrey II of *Little Shop of Horrors*. While they *do* skirt that uncanny line between flora and fauna, the plants of *The Ruins* are, unlike Audrey II, distinctly terrifying—with their blooming red flowers that (through their styles and stigmas) can mimic voices and cell phones ringing, their vines that cannot only move but envelope their prey, and their abilities to colonize as they first worm inside their host's body and then not only grow but thrive. Yet, although the plants may be the obvious danger, the film is clear: tourists who seek to intrude upon the cultures of others must be prepared for the invasions of the indigenous life in their own lives. Through its narrative about the active and contagious death at the heart of dark tourism, *The Ruins* presents a horrific sense of placelessness wherein the body and mind are contaminated in unsettling and terrible ways that not only distort categories of identity but also twist understandings of the past. In the process, the film manages to communicate post-9/11 American anxieties about the illusory nature of the borders that separate us from the invasive dangers that are all too close in a globalized world.

The Ruins begins like so many other post-9/11 horror films centered on cultural tourism: a group of attractive, young, white, and primarily American tourists are indulging their desires in a touristed landscape—a resort on the beach—that has been coded as relatively safe and contained. The film opens with the tourists—American couples Jeff and Amy, Eric and Stacy and the German (Mathias) that they met there in Mexico—lounging by the hotel's pool. The blue skies and frolicking guests could be anywhere and, like many real-life resorts, the scene is the epitome of crafted placelessness. Although the tourists eventually go to the local beach, the characters seem content to remain in this anesthetized place that is clean from exposure to the outside, indigenous world. Even trace amounts of the 'outside' world are deemed undesirable by some of the Americans; Stacy warns Mathias that the drinks have ice in them, which are—she says—of course contaminated by the feces in the water system. Yet when Mathias proposes that the group accompany him and some friends to a local ruin, the opportunity is portrayed as extraordinary because, as the German says, the location is "not in the guidebooks. VIP only." The others are persuaded by this detail and decide to go because, in an example of what is known as reverse-marking (Richards 5), the place becomes extra-special, more unusual, and more 'authentic' as a touristed landscape because it is *not* clearly marked or otherwise advertised. The allure of experiencing something unique overpowers the Americans' critical reasoning powers and they cease to acknowledge that all actions have consequences. They see leaving the hotel as an opportunity to move outside of the crafted placelessness; however, they do not see (until it is too late) that leaving the hotel will involve interactions with the indigenous life, interactions that may not go as desired.

The idea that visiting an ancient Mayan ruin—a place defined as a decaying remnant of a past time and people—will allow them to experience "a little culture before we leave" may seem an odd supposition. Yet every day in the real-world, tourists seek cultural engagements through dark tourism, a term used to describe a global phenomenon of actively seeking out, traveling to, and experiencing places and sites associated with death, destruction, war, and trauma. Anna Farmaki suggests that the practice of associating the death/pain of others with entertainment or enlightenment can be traced back to as early as the 11th century; however, she also proposes that dark tourism, as a critical component of the cultural tourism industry, has qualitatively risen in the last century—with places like Auschwitz and Ground Zero attracting millions of visitors every year (281-82). Farmaki discusses how the existing literature on dark tourism presents a consensus on certain motivations that drive the desire to engage in dark tourism, including the fascination with death/the longing to contemplate death and the desire to engage in a cathartic release by witnessing and/or sympathizing with the misfortunes of others (282-84). Yet dark tourism arguably also contains a component of nostalgia, where the tourist "does not seek to reconstruct a now mythical home, but rather seeks to recapture a moment in time" (Tarlow 51). Peter Tarlow questions whether or not, by producing artificial realities in its efforts to conserve and promote tragedies, dark tourism deadens or otherwise whitewashes tragic events and places. Although he does not fully arrive at an answer to this question, he does suggest that while "almost no one would willing … run for one's life from the collapsing Twin Towers," there is nevertheless the desire to experience a simulated version of tragedies such as 9/11 so that engaging in commodified forms of nostalgia, "tourists seek the difference in the

protection of the familiar, they seek the danger of history in the protection of the known"

(52).

Dark tourism encourages, if it does not actively foster, place-less rather than

place-ful experiences. Not only are most destinations marked by often extreme

destructions of bodies and places, but—even when the destinations present 'authentic'

versions of the past—the tourists are usually engaging with crafted and constructed

places that do not allow for complete, full understandings and relationships but rather for

a sense of placelessness. In *The Ruins*, it is clear that the tourists believe that their status

as Americans/Westerners will protect them from their experiences in this touristed

landscape, even one that is literally a site of death. They casually speculate whether they

are walking on the remains of countless people, but they never pause to think about how

this facet of the ruins might govern their own relationship with this pace. Whereas the

hotel showed the positive (or at least non-horrific) products of placelessness, the ruins

reveal the horrific placelessness awaiting those tourists who do not seek complete

relationships with their destinations. Wetmore writes that even if the film's narcissistic

tourists are "hardly an occupying force," they are nevertheless "Americans in a third-

world country where they do not speak the language, do not know the customs and are in

constant danger from the threats around them, which they remain blissfully unaware of

until it is too late" (*Post* 111). The tourists initially treat the ruins not as a site that should

be preserved as a piece of heritage for the local peoples, but as a playground—a place

that exists for their entertainment (figure 4.5). The tourists do not behave with any real

understanding of the world around them or the places they experience as tourists. The

film reveals that such a lack of local understanding spreads to more global conclusions;

ontological perceptions of "one's place" are also contaminated by this placelessness. Jeff

tells Amy that someone will find them because "[t]his doesn't happen. Four Americans

on a vacation don't just disappear. Somebody […] is going to find us." Ultimately, it is

this inability to correctly perceive how they (and how American tourists) fit within the

world that prevents them from fully accepting or even noticing the horrific consequences

of invasive encounters with the (literally) hostile lands they visit.

Figure 4.5. Similar to shots found in many post-9/11 horror films featuring cultural

tourism, this shot emphasizes the ways that tourist experiences (here captured through

Amy's photography and Stacy's posing) nurture placelessness as, even in their

interactions with places, the tourists fail to perceive the fully horrific nature of the

touristed landscape that will consume them.

The vines in *The Ruins* are invasive and hostile; they are cunning and possess an

animal-like consciousness that aids them in consuming anything living that they can

touch. Brian Merchant suggests that ecohorror in the 21st century has transformed the

biological threat from large forces like Godzilla and Jaws into "more pervasive and

inescapable" threats that highlight cultural attitudes that "we now have everything to

fear." Merchant does not discuss specifically 9/11; however, his ideas mirror Homay

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King's claims that post-9/11 horror often reflects real-life American anxieties (encapsulated in the increased fears of viral outbreaks and anthrax threats) about the horrifically contagious natures of not just viruses but the emotions of grief and terror—all of which can spread with ease and speed. *The Ruins* plays on these post-9/11 anxieties through its depiction of an incredible amount of bodily violence as the characters discover that the vines are not just lurking on the outside, but unfurling inside them as well. Stacy, who hurts her leg in an effort to rescue the paralyzed Mathias (who fell down a shaft after being tricked by the vines into thinking a cell phone was ringing below), tells the others that she can feel the vines inside of her: "It's everywhere. It's in my head." The other characters do not believe her at first, because, even having witnessed the plants' incredible means of survival, they are unwilling to acknowledge that this final barrier between inside and outside has been breached. Wetmore asserts: "After 9/11, the United States, which saw itself as 'untouchable' in terms of moral conduct, realized it was 'touchable' in terms of violence done against it" (*Post* 11). In *The Ruins*, the characters discover that they are not only touchable but entirely vulnerable to the external and internal threats around them. They have everything to fear, including each other, and their hysteria is as transmittable as the vines. Stacy begins cutting herself and, when Eric tries to stop her, she accidentally stabs and kills him. When she begs Amy to kill her, the vines mimic her request—stripping her of any opportunity to die with composure or dignity.

Although Jeff acknowledges earlier in the film that the natives are clearly

quarantining them by not letting them leave so that they can keep the vines contained,

this knowledge does not stop either him or Amy from crafting a plan for her escape. Jeff

carries the supposedly dead body of Amy down the steps of the ruins before creating a

distraction so that Amy can make her escape. Amy successful makes it to the jeep, but

the final images of her reveal that she has is contaminated by the vines and is now

effectively a carrier of this colonizing threat (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. The close-up of Amy, covered in the blood of her friends, shows that she is

indeed contaminated by the vines and that her desire to live, although—from her facial

expression—not an intentionally malicious act, will nevertheless have horrific and (as the

plants contaminate other places) placeless consequences.

While it would be easy to judge Amy for her selfish desire to live even at the cost of

potentially spreading the plants, Jeff's sacrifice for her life and his final words complicate

this judgment. Before he dies, Jeff tells the natives (even though they do not appear to

speak English): "You don't even know her name. You don't know any of our names.

I'm Jeff […] I was going to be a doctor." His statement is more than just a moment of

hubris or a desire to not suffer a random death (another anxiety seen in post-9/11 horror),

it also creates the potential for audience sympathy as audiences are reminded that the fates of the tourists are due not to their own crimes or misdeeds but rather to being in the wrong place at the wrong time and failing to properly read the signs of danger around them.   In this way, the film further raises questions related to post-9/11 anxieties about whether or not the ends justify the means and whether or not it is acceptable to ensure one's own survival at the cost of another. Amy's willingness to keep escaping while nevertheless being dismayed that she is a carrier of the vine also speaks to the horrific and placeless consequences of what Rosaldo calls imperialist nostalgia, in which "someone deliberately alters a form of life, and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention" (70), that became shockingly apparent post-9/11.

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THE GRUDGE: HAUNTED HOUSES ABROAD

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Amidst the high number of American horror films that have been adapted from Asian horror, Takashi Shimizu's 2004 film *The Grudge* stands out as a particularly intriguing experiment in adaptation that created a unique dialogue between original and remake. Unlike many remakes where there is very little connection between original film and remake other than an (often loose) interpretation of the script, *The Grudge* featured not just the director but the entire crew of the original 2002 film *Ju-on: The Grudge*. Also unlike many of these Asian horror remakes, *The Grudge*, while nevertheless adding several American characters to the story, did not re-place the film in the US but rather kept the original location of Tokyo, Japan. In the adaptive decision to place American tourists at the center of a narrative about a home haunted by Japanese ghosts, *The Grudge* communicates the horrific placelessness created through culture shock and what Daniel Herbert calls "the problems of transnational spaces and identities" (144-45). More

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specifically, the film addresses particularly post-9/11 American anxieties about the ways that national and international interactions within a globalized world allow domestic spaces to be consumed and haunted by outside forces.

Wetmore states that American remakes of Japanese horror did not really exist prior to 9/11 ("Technoghosts" 73). The explosion of American remakes of Asian horror films post-9/11 begs the question: What is it then about Asian horror, specifically J-horror, which resonates so fully with a post-9/11 American culture? Lowenstein asserts that "[t]he events of 9/11 could been seen as inaugurating a heightened awareness of a particular form of disjunctive globalization," in which the periphery becomes as important as the center and ideologies and histories can no longer be seen as strictly linear or cohesive ("Transforming" 64), a viewpoint that can perhaps be more easily articulated through Asian horror's use of narrative patterns that break from the classical Western unities of time, place, and action. Additionally, Wetmore argues that post-9/11 American horror communicates, in often unprecedented ways, "heightened senses of insecurity, vulnerability, meaninglessness, hopelessness, bleak despair and uncertainty" (*Post* 3-4). These emotional responses can certainly be seen in a number of Asian horror films and I argue that it is through its ultimate nihilistic conclusion that *The Grudge* (through its story about an American tourist abroad) directly addresses post-9/11 anxieties about the placeless inevitability awaiting us all. In the featurette "Myth of *Ju-on,*" found on *The Grudge* DVD, the writer of the American screenplay, Stephen Susco, discusses how the American narrative of the haunted house focuses on uncovering the situation, finding answers, learning how to solve the situation, and then actually solving (or at least attempting to solve) the problem. The East, Susco says, employs a different

formula for the haunted house narrative in which the characters (and audience) discover that the haunting "is much bigger than you are; there is no defeating this" horror. Whereas *Ju-on: The Grudge* remains incredibly disjointed and fragmented with its interlocking vignettes that bounce back and forth in time and place, *The Grudge* seems, at first, to offer a more traditional American narrative. Although *The Grudge* also shows a variety of people who interact with the house, including American college professor Peter Kirk (the film's first on-screen death) and the Williams' family who moves into the house sometime after the original tragedy in which Takeo Saeki kills his wife (Kayako), son (Toshio), and family cat, the film also focuses its narrative much more concretely on one character: Karen, an American working as a caregiver (assigned to the Williams' mother) while living in Japan for the year with her student-boyfriend Doug. The majority of the film focuses on Karen, working to discover the truth about the past that is currently haunting her. Yet although Karen does discover (with the prerequisite Internet search scene) the who, what, when, where, and why of the Saeki family tragedy, she is nevertheless denied the ability to find a solution to stopping the horror. By the end of the film, the house and Karen remain haunted and an ultimate sense of hopelessness emerges with the final images of the film: Karen staring at the corpse of her boyfriend, with the ghost of Kayako right behind her.

  The Grudge's emphasis on the character of Karen was one way that the producers of the remake sought to create a nihilistic conclusion that would particularly resonate with American audiences. The affect of horror produced in the remake also stems from its ability to align the perspectives of the film's audience with those of Karen through the director's purposely crafting the remake for an American audience who are transformed

into the film's virtual tourists.[54] Undoubtedly the remake's higher production budget

allowed Shimizu to create shots and other cinematic moments in *The Grudge* that would

simply not have been possible on the smaller budge of *Ju-on.* Although *Ju-on* offers,

towards the end of the film, a few establishing shots of an empty train yard, the majority

of its external shots are localized in small neighborhoods. In *The Grudge*, numerous

establishing and aerial shots of Tokyo are offered throughout the film in an effort to, at

least partially, establish and familiarize a place foreign to the desired film's audience.

Yet, especially in comparison to depictions of the city in the original film, the camera's

gaze in *The Grudge*—much like the tourists' gaze—exoticizes the city by making

someone else's everyday into a visual spectacle. Extreme shots and unusual angles not

only emphasize the smallness of Karen and Doug in the big city, but also show the city in

ways that would not be ordinary views even to locals. The opening, exotic shots of the

big city are complemented by a scene in which Karen pulls Doug over to the wall of city

cemetery. With the passion and knowledge of an ethnographer, Karen describes the

scene before them with a sense of wonder that further Otherizes the details of an

otherwise recognizable and familiar act (of paying tribute to a loved one).

Through the constant visual reminders that the characters are experiencing these

horrors abroad, *The Grudge* communicates the degree to which the culture shock

experienced by the American tourists consumes them as effectively as Tokyo does.

Wetmore argues that by transforming the irrational, albeit—at least to the Japanese

characters and original audience—familiar world of *Ju-on* into a world that is irrational

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[54] In the DVD featurette "The Birth of *The Grudge*," Shimizu and the film's American producers discuss the intentional ways that they adapted the film so that it would be palatable for an American audience.

because it is unfamiliar (to both the American characters and cast)[55], *The Grudge*

becomes a narrative in which the horror haunting the characters is, to a very real degree,

literally culture shock ("Technoghosts" 79). Relph discusses how our experiences

"inside" or "outside" shape our sense of a place. If being "inside a place is to belong to it

and identify it" (47), then being outside of a place creates an inherent alienation or

disconnect from a place, a sensation that can often lead to or cause a sense of

placelessness. *The Grudge* reveals that being outside of a place, a sensation that is not

only heightened but often encouraged through touristed interactions, makes it nearly

impossible to have any complete or meaningful exchanges within that place. This is

particularly emphasized through the female Americans' experiences in Japan. Jennifer

Williams struggles to make sense of domestic activities such as making purchases at the

grocery store. Later, she tells her husband: "I went for a walk yesterday. Just to explore.

And I got so lost. And I couldn't find anyone who spoke English, who could help me."

Susan, Jennifer's sister-in-law, finds herself unable to fully communicate to the security

guard at her office building that something evil is in the hallway. Emma, Jennifer's

mother-in-law, is attacked by the ghost of Kakayo in the most traditionally Japanese

room of the house her family is rented. Even Karen, who is revealed to know at least a

little about the Japanese language and culture and who manages to navigate the outside

world the most effectively of all 'the female American characters, nevertheless struggles

to retain her sense of independence and freedom in such mundane activities as she works

to traverse the public transportation system and ask for directions (figure 4.7). Through

each of these female characters' (as well as, perhaps to a lesser degree, the male

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[55] One of the included DVD featurettes, "Culture Shock: The American Cast in Japan," explores how the real-life American actors encountered and dealt with their experiences in Japan.

characters') attempts to find their places in this unfamiliar place, each exhibits a certain

vulnerability to the culture that is later mimicked in their vulnerability to the ghostly

horrors of the house.

Figure 4.7. The long shot reveals not only how little space Karen occupies (especially

proportionately to her surroundings), but also how she is literally not centered in this

place or entirely comfortable in her even relatively mundane interactions with this place.

The horrors of being placeless within the city of Tokyo are, however, largely

subsumed by the more obvious horror of the actual ghosts. Not only pale but often

completely ashen except for where the bruises and blood of their former traumas are

visible, the ghosts of *Ju-on* and *The Grudge* are very distinctive and characteristic of

Japanese horror iconography. Weinstock argues that ghosts become perfect metaphors,

especially in times of cultural transition, to reveal the unspoken but never completely

vanquished narratives that lurk below our histories ("Introduction" 6). In post-9/11

horror, Wemore suggests, ghosts address particular anxieties related to those events about

our promise to "never forget," however, as he points out, they also address anxieties by

revealing that it is technically impossible to engage in a "negative action;" one can

remember but one cannot actual not forget (156). Yet *The Grudge* does not actually let us fully remember as audiences (and characters) are never given all of the details of the past needed in order to remember it. Karen, in a spectral flashback, sees Professor Kirk learning that Kayako is obsessed with him, an obsession that drives her husband to jealously kill her and their son; however, this past is presented as fragmented, non-linear, and incomplete. Derek Gregory, speaking specifically within context of the "War on Terror," argues that when there are tensions between cultures and people, "'[t]heir' space is often seen as the inverse of 'our' space: a sort of negative, in the photographic sense that 'they' might 'develop' into something like 'us,' but also the site of an absence, because 'they' are seen somehow to lack the positive tonalities that supposedly distinguish 'us'" (17). In *The Grudge,* the Japanese ghosts—which often literally look like film negatives of the living (primarily American) people—reinforce this perception of how 'us' and 'them' interact with our respective places. The ghosts may be manifestations of past grief, but as the opening words of film suggest, they are also manifestations of the past and the haunting and placeless powers of how perceptions about and interactions with a place can untether even as they bind.

In both *Ju-on* and *The Grudge*, most of those who saw the ghosts end up dying and their dead faces often reveal the shock of horror and dismay of these ghostly encounters. *The Grudge* adds another element to the shocked expressions of the dead as the terrified faces of the victims are ones that the audience has seen before on those characters' faces. The looks on the faces of Jennifer, Susan, Emma, and Karen as they encounter the ghosts within their domestic spaces are uncannily similar to the expressions they made encountering the Japanese culture outside of the home. Theano S. Terkenli

suggests: "If the stability of human individuality rests on the condition and demonstration of a self-conscious and unambiguous separation between 'inside' and 'outside', then the tourist state of mind subverts this distinction" (250). To varying degrees, all of the Americans abroad in Tokyo (especially the women) find themselves experiencing a horrific sense of placelessness that stems from not only culture shock or the shock of seeing ghosts, but from the shock of having the horrors of the outside touristed landscape bleed into their lives within their domestic spaces. For Karen, in particular, this horror is taken a step further as the domestic horrors that she witnessed in the house are then carried back outside of the home, directly shaping her outside experiences as a tourist (figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8. After Karen tells Doug that she saw something in the house, Kayako's face appears in the train window. This is one of several times that the ghost manifests as a reflection rather than appearing in its (dis)embodied form; however, in this instance, the transparency of her face over the Tokyo landscape makes it seem as if Karen is being haunted not just by Kayako, but by her touristed experiences. Unsurprisingly, after seeing this apparition, Karen tells Doug: "I just want to go home."

Korstanje and Olsen argues that many horror texts reveal the fears of being an American abroad and anxieties about how interactions with foreigners can jeopardize our larger "ontological security of Western (American)" identities (305).   The placelessness of having boundaries of inside and outside conflated speaks to very particular fears linked to the events of 9/11. Susan Faludi states that "[t]he intrusions of September 11 broke the dead bolt on our protective myth, the illusion that we are masters of our security, that our might makes our homeland impregnable…" (12) and, although *The Grudge* does not occur in in the home of America, it does nevertheless occur within the homes of Americans. Herbert argues that *The Grudge*, far different from the original, portrays the horrors on the American psyche that occur with the intrusion of Japanese subjectivity upon the American domestic space (145). More than that, however, *The Grudge* portrays the horrific idea that within the globalized world, where interactions with places and people are so often situated within the framework of touristed encounters, the impenetrable American domestic space is (and perhaps always was) a fiction. The ghosts of the past will always haunt the present.

LAST STOP: DESTINATION UNKNOWN

The events of September 11, 2001 reconfigured the imagined geographies of the U.S. psyche by forcing America to confront both a literal and figurative sense of placelessness. According to Relph, there is nothing inherently evil about placelessness or engagements with placeless sites. For the American cultural imagination, however, placelessness became a menace that, like the faceless terrorists, was even more hostile and threatening in its impersonal, undefinable assaults on the places and peoples of American culture. 9/11 is, like many tragedies and cultural traumas, explicitly associated with specific

places—yet, as the rhetorics about 9/11 reveal, it was more than just those specific places that seemed to be under attack. Like most Americans of a certain age, I remember distinctly *where* I was when I learned about the events of 9/11. I had just rear-ended the car in front of me (that had rear-ended the car in front of it) and, although the accident was relatively minor, I was crying. The police officer told me that it wasn't a big deal and that at least I was not dealing with the situation faced by the people in the Pentagon. Rather than comforting me, however, this statement alarmed me even more as I did not know what had happened to "the people in the Pentagon." My radio had been turned off and I had not heard about any of the attacks that had already happened that morning.

I spent the rest of the day at home, on the couch in my family room, watching the footage of *those places* with my mother and aunt. As I watched the literal placelessness that was occurring as real places were being rendered place-less, I felt, though I did not yet know the word, a sense of placelessness. Returning back to the words of Casey discussed in this dissertation's introduction: "The emotional symptoms of placelessness—homesickness, disorientation, depression, desolation—mimic the phenomenon itself. Each of these symptoms involves a sense of unbearable emptiness" (*Getting x*). The events of 9/11, but just as importantly, the cultural presentation, treatment, and understanding of this day encouraged a sense of unbearable emptiness, disorientation, and homesickness that can perhaps best be described as a sense of placelessness.

Slavoj Žižek discusses how the cultural sentiment (which still echoes even decades later) 'that nothing would ever be the same after September 11' does not acknowledge the real possibility that 9/11 became a vehicle for hegemonic American

ideologies to ensure that things would be exactly the same as before 9/11 by re-claiming a desirable version of supposedly past beliefs and ideologies. He discusses how "on September 11, the USA was given the opportunity to realize what kind of world it was a part of" and to accordingly make changes to the ways they crafted and communicated their sense of place in the globalized world (47). Rather than seen as a liberating chance to make a difference, however, the opportunity of 9/11 fostered intense and paralyzing fears about the dangers threatening the USA from the inside out and the outside in. Unsurprisingly, the American consciousness turned to the horror genre, amongst other options, to express, explore, and work through these anxieties. Through narratives about the placeless consequences of cultural tourism, the horror genre was able to probe the fine lines between risk and reward, hospitality and hostility, authenticity and inauthenticity, and tourism and terrorism.

Often these texts, with their dangerous foreign threats and beleaguered American tourists, seem to be reaffirming many of the post-9/11 conclusions about the placeless and undeserved horrors awaiting American culture. Yet a deeper examination of these texts reveals a much more subversive statement. Korstanje argues that the governing forces of modern tourism are also often the trends that shape modern understandings of terrorism. In this way, he proposes "tourism (or mobilities) is terrorism by other means" ("Conflictive" 62). Through its destructions of the bodies and places associated with the tourism, post-9/11 American tourist horror films are thus able to untether cultural and individual identities by showing how tourists are both predator and prey, consuming torturers and consumed victims, and terrorist and tourist. The resulting sense of horrific placelessness as the anxieties about 9/11 are never entirely subdued through these

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narratives about cultural tourism ensures what Douglas Cowen calls a "denial of catharsis" (261) felt distinctly as these films reveal that there is no place out there for America to experience any emotional release or relief.

THE HORROR, THE PLACELESS HORROR: A CONCLUSION

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of
>
> us is completely free from the struggle over geography.
>
> That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not
>
> only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about
>
> forms, about images and imaginings.
>
> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (7)

> It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of
>
> mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and
>
> unplumbed depths be let alone; lest sleeping abnormalities
>
> wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving
>
> nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to
>
> newer and wider conquests.
>
> H. P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness* (101)

In 1931—with the horrors of WWI a recent memory and the terrors of WWII still on the horizon—H. P. Lovecraft penned *At the Mountains of Madness*, his novella about the literally unspeakable and ancient horrors unearthed by a scientific expedition in Antarctica. In the interceding decades, the novella has been adapted a number of times

into radio productions, stage plays, graphic novels, games, and the someday hope of a film. Furthermore, the novel's roots can be seen peeking out of countless works of American horror literature, film, video games, and music. The ability of *At the Mountains of Madness* to inspire and stimulate so many adaptations and variations stems well beyond the narrative's depiction of a scientific expedition gone wrong and even the presence of the fascinating and horrible, primordial forces known as the Elder Things. In his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft writes "that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities" (106). *At the Mountains of Madness* explores how the indescribable and unimaginable nature of the horrors we encounter untethers us in fundamental ways from our sense of identity, culture, and place. Although the novella firmly places its characters in Antarctica, Lovecraft's story nevertheless communicates a horrific sense of placelessness.

Long before he ever defines placelessness or describes the causes and effects of this experience, Relph begins *Place and Placelessness* by explaining that places do not just provide referential cues or even awareness of our various everyday interactions. Rather, the significance—the essentialness—of place can be seen "in the actions of individuals and groups protecting *their* places against outside forces of destruction, or is known to anyone who has experienced homesickness and nostalgia for particular places. To be human is to live in a world that is filled with places; to be human is to have and to know *your* place" (1). Without these places in our lives, we are denied not just locations to reside or embody but the knowledge needed to discover and decide who we are as humans, what we are as individuals and cultures, and where we are in the world. Finding

and crafting new places has, throughout the history of the world, been depicted as a desirable adventure and a liberating quest. Yet it has also been portrayed as a terrifying prospect, one that will thrust individuals and communities into the unknown (and therefore) dangerous world.

The horror genre, for centuries, has capitalized on the anxieties produced in these latter perspectives. Places in horror are not just where monsters dwell or terror occurs. Rather, through its figurative and literal destructions, the genre—from its earliest conceptions to its most modern forms—has managed to destabilize not only constructions of places but the understandings and knowledge informed, shaped, and created in those places. In doing so, the genre suggests that a world with broken and destroyed places is a world of uncertainty, danger, peril, and evil. Relph suggests that placelessness is "a weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience" (90). This definition of placelessness suggests an experience that, while perhaps undesirable or even boring, is nevertheless endurable. Yet, as the horror genre regularly reveals, placelessness can also be fundamentally destroying, devastating, and unbearable. Consequently, placelessness within the horror genre becomes a vehicle for a horrific untethering that detaches us not only from our geographical but from our cultural and ontological senses of place.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

In this dissertation I have sought to specifically explore the manifestations of placelessness within post-WII American horror. This focus does not reflect a belief that anxieties about placelessness are unique to American culture. If places make us human, then placelessness is equally a human experience. With that said, I do believe that there

are anxieties about placelessness that are discernibly *American* in tone, just as there are

perceptions of place that speak to specific American constructs, ideologies, and identities.

America is a nation and culture that, from its inception, has relied on its relationship to,

dominion over, and understanding of place. Unsurprisingly then, placelessness also

becomes a framework for representing and shaping a number of American views,

attitudes, and assumptions including larger cultural fears about the potentially horrific

and dislocating consequences of globalization on a nation and culture that has long

established its identity in terms of its place in the world.

Although there are some notable exceptions, the texts that I have analyzed in this

dissertation are not always explicitly discussing American fears about globalization nor

are they always overtly tackling anxieties about American cultural identity. Yet even

texts that never leave the highways of Texas or an apartment in New York City

nevertheless articulate in poignant ways an awareness that the situations, fears, and

horrors occurring throughout the narrative are directly informed by the disruption of the

cultural relationships to and understandings of places. These texts reveal that it is more

than individual identities and bodies that occupy places; cultural ideologies, perceptions,

and anxieties also live and grow in these places. Consequently, placelessness does not

just affect individual experiences with places, it also disturbs cultural identities and

bodies. In a post-WWII (and especially in a post-9/11) America, these cultural identities

and bodies are consistently configured, much like conceptions of America itself, within

the rhetorics and imaginings of globalization. In his discussion of the effects of

globalization on the concept of the American Century, Neil Smith argues that

globalization promotes "a new geography that is actually spaceless. It offers a new

cartography in the struggle to remake the global map in every particular ways and in support of very specific class and locational interests" (22-23). If globalization is indeed capable of producing not only new places and connections but an actually spaceless geography than it is unsurprising that American cultural anxieties about globalization would appear within horror texts as horrific and inevitable placelessness.

The texts examined in this dissertation may never use the word globalization and they definitely do not use the word placelessness; nevertheless, they reveal a generic pattern of individuals, groups, and communities confronted by the fear that their lives are fraudulent, that they are unable to live authentically in a life where they are experiencing incomplete, underdeveloped, and 'inauthentic' relationships with the places of their lives. Through depictions and manifestations of placelessness, American horror is able to expose cultural anxieties that perhaps, despite our cultural claims to the contrary, we do not fully understand our place (in the world), perhaps we do not even have a place. Placelessness, in this way, becomes a vehicle for not only discussing American anxieties about globalization; it also becomes a way to articulate a larger cultural anxiety that we are imposters, undeserving of the places we have claimed. Whereas these anxieties—a cultural Imposter Syndrome/Phenomenon if you will—can be seen in many horror texts, they are particularly noticeable in critical discussions and examinations of horror adaptation studies.

HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN

Many horror scholars (including some cited in this dissertation) have already discussed at length the ways that the genre can simultaneously support and subvert the status quo. American horror depicts the consequences of placelessness as a horrible untethering that

the characters rarely deserve; yet, at the same time, many of these texts suggest that it is not simply the placelessness but the incorrect assumptions about place and the failure to perceive the placelessness around them that lead to the horrific conclusions. Mike Pedler defines Imposter Phenomenon as "the condition where people find it hard to believe that they deserve any credit for what they may have achieved and, whatever their outward appearances, remain internally convinced that they are frauds" (90). I am not arguing that all Americans suffer from this phenomenon or even that it is something necessarily experienced or even registered on individual levels. Nor am I claiming that America's Imposter Phenomenon is part of the national or cultural consciousness. S. R. Ross and R.A. Krukowski argue, those who exhibit features of Imposter Phenomenon typically also possess certain maladaptive traits, such as "higher levels of anxiety, fear of failure, doubt, introversion, and sensitivity to evaluation" (478). It is in depictions of these maladaptive traits that American horror—which addresses the unconscious fears and anxieties of a culture—raises skeptical questions about America's cultural sense of identity and whether or not America deserves (or even possesses) the places it claims to occupy.

The anxieties of Imposter Phenomenon can be seen in the texts explored in this chapter from the fears of the Chowder Society in *Ghost Story* who are worried that their pasts prevent them from deserving their praised roles in their town to Karen's fears in *The Grudge* that her confidence will be exposed as an act that belies her insecurities as an American tourist being invaded by Japanese culture. These texts reveal the fears of exposure—of not being good enough—inherent in characters' quests to be the perfect father, the perfect teenager, the perfect documentarian. Additionally, a holistic look at

these works shows the ways that certain cultural and global events—such as 9/11—reinforce the anxieties, doubts, and fears of failure characteristic of Imposter Phenomenon. As horror texts, however, these works do not simply expose a cultural Imposter Phenomenon. Research on Imposter Phenomenon reveals that often those who suffer from this condition endure it *despite* their successes and the realities of their accomplishments. Yet, the texts explored in this dissertation are destabilizing and subversive as they horrifically validate the anxieties that these characters, these cultural identities, these places are fraudulent, fragmented, and fabricated. The terrible and inevitable placelessness of these works denies constructed and imagined cultural and individual identities.

While the texts I have looked at in my chapters speak, both individually and collectively, to a noticeably felt cultural Imposter Phenomenon and the accompanying anxieties, there is perhaps no more perfect voice for these concerns than within the spaces of adaptations and remakes. Linda Hutcheon argues that culturally and critically, adaptations and remakes are viewed—no matter their accomplishments or successes—as "inferior and secondary creations" (4). Certainly this rhetoric can been seen in both critical and casual discussions of adaptations and remakes; it can also be seen in the dismissal of genres, like horror, that are known for embracing adaptations and remakes. Rather than adaptations and remakes being considered in terms of what they offer or contribute to the existing dialogue, these works are more frequently seen as proof that the horror genre has run out of ideas, that it does not deserve critical attention as it simply wants to make money, and that it does not deserve its status as a cultural barometer of our real anxieties and fears.

HAVEN'T WE BEEN HERE BEFORE?

The reality of adaptations and remakes is, however, like constructions of place more complicated than these casual investigations initially reveal. In an interview conducted specifically for this dissertation, Wes Keltner—one of the creators of the upcoming *Friday the 13th* video game—discussed the challenges and achievements of adapting a beloved horror film franchise into a video game that would take the desired game mechanics "and wrap it into a package that is a love letter to *Friday the 13th*." Video games, he argues, offer affordances for horror not available in other horror media. In adapting a familiar story and place, Keltner and his associates worked to ensure that game players would be able to not only experience their game but engage in a dialogue with the places of the original *Friday the 13th* films. The creators actively sought to produce a unique sense of immersion—which allows characters to alternately be the camp counselors or Jason in an ultimate emphasis on player choices, freedoms, and mistakes—that would be "taking these things that make horror scary and saying 'no, you're actually participating in this. You have to get out of here or your character dies.'"

In their specific discussion of remakes of horror, science fiction, and fantasy films, Scott A. Lukas and John Marmysz argue for the benefits of seeing remakes as a fundamentally nihilistic category. They suggest that despite negative connotations that often chase the idea of *nihilism*, "[t]o characterize the film remake as a nihilistic category...is not necessarily to denigrate or insult it, but to elevate it and to celebrate its potential for encouraging in us an ongoing and never-ending search for truths that, in the end, inevitably slip from our grasp" (3). Approaching remakes and adaptations, particularly in the horror genre, from this perspective proves a useful way to move

beyond questions of fidelity (how faithful was it to the original?) and to instead see that in the placeless spaces between media, there is a unique opportunity to engage in a discussion about the portrayals of the tethers that bind us.

Such a method is particularly valuable in moving beyond mere critique of the differences of texts such as Max Brook's 2006 novel *World War Z* and the 2013 cinematic adaptation of the same name. Although both the novel and the film present a global zombie pandemic that wipes out much of the world, the two texts present two different narrative forms that allow each to articulate two quite disparate messages about America's place in a globalized world. The novel features a series of interviews and reports from survivors around the world well after the events have occurred; the film, on the other hand, follows a more traditional Hollywood narrative that follows one American individual (and his companions) as he pieces together and solves the world's dilemma. Whereas the novel creates an anxiety about America's lack of place within a post-apocalyptic world, the film suppresses those anxieties by affirming America's place as a savior figure. Separately, these texts both add intriguing layers to the zombie sub-genre of horror; however, when considered in dialogue with one another, these two texts show first a fear of a placeless America and then a response to that fear. Together, these two texts shed new light onto the novel's clam that "America is a very all-or-nothing society. We like the big win, the touchdown, the knockout in the first round. We like to know, and for everyone else to know, that our victory wasn't only uncontested, it was positively devastating" (52-53). Allowing these texts to engage in a dialogue between original and adaptation becomes yet another way to see the genre's frequent concern

about our inevitable placelessness and the possibility that others might see this cultural

untethering.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

The Sprint network had a series of commercials where a man, positioned in increasingly

random and isolated places of America, would ask the viewers: "Can you hear me now?"

This question became a synecdoche for the network's supposed nationwide ability to

connect people through the ability to communicate on the phone. Yet this question is

intriguing on a different level. What is it about the ability to be heard that becomes

symbolic of the successes of connecting across time and space? What is it about the need

to be heard that becomes a force powerful enough to drive someone to go anywhere and

everywhere in their quest for recognition? Certainly these commercials were not

intended to be much more than a catchy means of advertisement; however, the cultural

appropriation of this phrase "Can you hear me now?" suggests that something about this

specific question appeals to and speaks to the American cultural psyche. I argue that the

horror genre is filled with the repeated clamoring of individuals asking, demanding, and

begging "Can you hear me now?" Can you hear my cries for help and my screams in

pain? Can you hear my fears and anxieties about the consequences of this horrific

placelessness that is lurking all around? As long as the need to ask these questions

endures, the American horror genre will continue to feature people—positioned in a

variety of increasingly random and isolated places—hoping that someone cannot only

hear them but can find them in a world from which they have been horrifically

untethered.

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APPENDIX A:

PUBLISHER APPROVAL FOR INCLUSION

Parts of the introductory chapter of the dissertation were submitted as part of a separate article "Placing Horror: An Interdisciplinary Investigation" that will be part of a forthcoming issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Interdisciplinary Humanities*. Below is the emailed permission to include these section in this dissertation.

Re: HERA Consent to Publish form
Lee Ann Westman [lew80@camden.rutgers.edu]

To:
 Cueva, Edmund [cuevae@uhd.edu]; katherine.wagner.1@louisville.edu; Nowak, William [NowakW@uhd.edu]

hi Katherine --

I hope it will be out before May. Please consider this email permission to use the article in your dissertation. The copyright reverts back to you after one year, too.

Lee Ann

Lee Ann Elliott Westman, Ph.D.
Acting Director, The Honors College

Co-Editor, *Interdisciplinary Humanities*
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Rutgers-Camden
467 Armitage Hall
311 N. 5th Street
Camden, NJ 08102
(856) 225-6670

From: Cueva, Edmund <cuevae@uhd.edu>
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2017 12:21:22 PM
To: katherine.wagner.1@louisville.edu; Nowak, William
Cc: Lee Ann Westman
Subject: Re: HERA Consent to Publish form

Dear Lee Ann,

Please help Katherine with this query.

Thanks,

Ed

From: katherine.wagner.1@louisville.edu <katherine.wagner.1@louisville.edu>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2017 9:10 PM
To: Nowak, William
Cc: Cueva, Edmund
Subject: RE: HERA Consent to Publish form

Drs. Nowak and Cueva,

I hope that you are both doing well. I apologize for emailing you simultaneously, but I wasn't sure to whom I should direct this email.

When I was working on the essay for the special horror issue of the HERA journal, I referred to many of the core ideas and theoretical foundations of my dissertation's introductory chapter. Although the dissertation intro is ultimately quite different, I still want to indicate in my finished dissertation that many of the ideas presented are explored in an upcoming HERA issue. I do, however, need a letter indicating that I have permission to use the article in my dissertation.

I have two questions. 1. Do you know when the special issue will be published? Will it be out before this coming May?   2. From whom should I contact to request that letter of permission?

Thank you very much.

Best,

Katherine Wagner

CURRICULUM VITAE

Katherine A. Wagner
University of Louisville, Humanities Department
Bingham Humanities Rm. 303 Louisville, KY 40292
http://louisville.academia.edu/KatherineWagner#

Education

PhD in Humanities   **University of Louisville**   **ABD**
Pass with Distinction received on Exam One of Core Comprehensive Exams

Dead Places: Placelessness, Globalization, and American Horror
Drs. John Gibson (chair), Simona Bertacco, Michael L. Williams, Adam Lowenstein
I argue that post-WWII American horror literature and film addresses fears and anxieties about globalization (as it affects national, cultural, and individual constructions of identity) through depictions and representations of placelessness. Looking specifically at depictions of the home, everyday places, local travel, and global tourism, this dissertation examines how the horror genre frequently reveals the terrible consequences for those who become untethered from their assumed, place-produced identities.

MA in English   **La Sierra University**   **2009**
Comprehensive Exit Exam: Pass with Distinction (High pass on all 7 exam sections)

BA in English: Literature   **La Sierra University**   **2007**
BA in English: Writing   *summa cum laude*

Zertifikat Deutsch   **Friedensau Theologische Hochshule**   **2005**

Additional Pedagogical Training
Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning Part-Time Faculty Institute. Univ. of Louisville. 2013-Present.

Areas of Research and Teaching Interests
British, American, and Transatlantic Literatures; Film Studies; American Cultural Studies; Humanist Geography; Drama and Theater Arts; Genre Studies; Horror, Fantasy, and Speculative Fiction Studies; Creativity Studies; Adaptation Theory; Victorian Popular Culture

Research and Creative Activities

Publications, Scholarly

<u>Refereed Articles and Chapters</u>

Wagner, Katherine A., and Megan McDonough. "Claiming the Throne: Agency and Multiplicity in Cinda Williams Chima's *The Seven Realms* Series." *The Woman Fantastic in Contemporary American Media Culture,* edited by Elyce Helford, et al. UP of Mississippi, 2016, pp. 177-192.

McDonough, Megan, and Katherine A. Wagner. "Rebellious Natures: The Role of Nature in Young Adult Dystopian Female Protagonists' Awakenings and Agency." *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction,* edited by Sara K. Day et al., Ashgate, 2014, pp. 157-170.

Wagner, Katherine A. "Haven't We Been Here Before?: *The Cabin in the Woods*, the Horror Genre, and Placelessness." *"We Are Not Who We Are": Critical Reflections on* The Cabin in the Woods *(2012)*. Spec. issue of *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association*, edited by Kristopher Woofter and Jasie Stokes, vol. 10.2/11.1, no. 36-37, Fall 2013/Winter 201, n. pag.

<u>Refereed Articles and Chapters, Forthcoming</u>

Wagner, Katherine A. "Placing Horror: An Interdisciplinary Investigation." Spec. issue on horror in *Interdisciplinary Humanities.* Eds. Edmund Cueva and William Nowak.

<u>Film Location and Scene Analyses</u>

Wagner, Katherine A. "Copley Square in *Blown Away.*" *World Film Locations: Boston*, edited by Marcelline Block, Intellect Books, 2014.

Wagner, Katherine A. "Wenceslas Square and John Hus Memorial in *Le fond de l'air est rouge (A Grin Without at Cat).*"*World Film Locations: Prague*, edited by Marcelline Block, Intellect Books, 2013.

Wagner, Katherine A. "Grand Port Maritime de Marseille in *L'Immortel* (*22 Bullets*)." *World Film Locations: Marseilles*, edited by Marcelline Block, Intellect Books, 2013. <u>Trans. in French</u>: *Filmer Marseille.* Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2013.

Publications, Creative

<u>Fiction, Short Stories</u>

Troyer, Katherine A. W. "More." *Crack the Spine Literary Magazine,* issue 210, Feb. 2017.

Troyer, Katherine A. W. "Selling Happiness." *Calliope*, issue 138, Winter 2013.

Additional Creative Work

<u>Short Film: Writer, Director, Co-Editor</u>

"Placing *The Shine-O:* A Mockumentary" (In conjunction with B. Lee Broyles.)

<u>Theatrical Works, La Sierra University (Selected)</u>

Playwright and Director. *The Difference of One*. February 8, 10-12, 2008.

Director. *Twelfth Night*. William Shakespeare. November 29-December 2, 2008.
   o Adjudicated by John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Stage Manager. "Four Irish Plays: A Collection of Short Works." Produced 2005.

Actor, Amy (lead). *Teeth*. Tina Howe. Produced 2008.

Actor, Oedipus (lead). *Oedipus Rex*. Sophocles. Produced 2007.

Actor, Carol Matthews (lead). *American Sisters*. Bruce Gilman. Produced 2006.

Actor, Annelle Dupuy-Desto (lead). *Steel Magnolias*. Robert Harling. Produced 2005.

Actor, Mrs. Peters (lead). *Trifles*. Susan Glaspell. Produced 2003.

Actor, Mallory Forden (lead). *The Power of Priority*. Vanessa Nelson. Produced 2002.

Employment

Bellarmine University   **Louisville, KY**
> Part-time Lecturer in Interdisciplinary Courses (IDC) Program, 2013-Present
> Part-time Lecturer in English Department, 2015-Present

University of Louisville   **Louisville, KY**
> Part-time Lecturer in Humanities Department, 2013-Present
> Graduate Teaching Assistant in Humanities Department, 2010-2013

Jefferson Community Technical College   **Louisville, KY**
> Adjunct Instructor in ESL Department, Spring 2010-Fall 2010

La Sierra University   **Riverside, CA**
> Editor of Undergraduate/Graduate Academic Bulletins, 2009-2010, 2010-2011
> College Writing Instructor in English Department, 2007-2009
> Assistant to the Director of the College Writing Program, 2008
> Secretary to the English & Communication Department, 2006-2008
> Assistant to the Acquisitions Librarian, 2003-2004, 2005-2008
> Clerical Assistant to the Studies Abroad Program, 2006-2007

Courses Taught

Bellarmine University

> "Aargh…Zombies," Fall 2013, Fall 2014, Spring 2016, Spring 2017. Intended for freshmen, this course teaches critical thinking and research skills through the interdisciplinary and cultural study of cinematic and literary zombie narratives.

> "The American Family in Sitcoms," Fall 2013. Through an interdisciplinary and critical examination of specific sitcoms' narratives, visual elements, and cultural/historical contexts, this course explores U.S. culture through TV representations of the American family.

> "American Zombie Narratives," Summer 2014. This three-week intensive summer course explores how American zombie films address cultural attitudes, anxieties, and fears.

> "Crime in Victorian Popular Culture," Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2016, Spring 2017. This upper-division course critically examines how Victorian England depicted issues of crime, class, gender, and spatial relationships within various forms of popular culture.

> "Exploring Creativity," Spring 2014, Fall 2016. Intended for freshmen, this course teaches critical thinking and research skills through an interdisciplinary study of cultural, scientific, and personal forms of creativity.

> "Expository Writing," Fall 2015, Fall 2016. This course develops and hones college-writing skills through a series of multi-modal papers and readings that scaffold together to emphasize the writing process.

> "Films of Akira Kurosawa," Fall 2015, Spring 2016. This upper-division course explores the cinematic works of Akira Kurosawa and seeks to explore how these films reveal larger insights not only into the Japanese cultural landscape but also into what it means to be human.

> "Foreign Film Academy Award Winners," Spring 2014. This upper-division course critically examines specific films that won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and how these films shape both insider and outsider cultural perspectives.

> "Genre Crossing in Fiction and Film," Spring 2016. Intended for freshman, this course teaches critical thinking and research skills through an interdisciplinary and cultural examination of genres and genre-crossing.

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"Health in Global Cinema," Summer 2016. This upper-division online course, offered specifically for the RN to BSN program, seeks to develop a better understanding of health—in its many facets—by analyzing how film represents and shapes cultural narratives.

"Post-Apocalyptic Narratives," Fall 2014, Spring 2015. Intended for freshmen, this course teaches critical thinking and research skills through an interdisciplinary and cultural examination of the post-apocalyptic genre in literature and film.

University of Louisville

"Honors: Intro to Film," Spring 2014, Fall 2014, Fall 2015. Through presenting digital posters, writing critical essays, and creating short films, students in this course examine several films from a variety of historical, generic, formal, contextual, and cultural perspectives.

"Honors: Cultures of America," Fall 2013. This discussion-intensive course explores American culture, with a particular focus on specific ethnic groups, through an interdisciplinary study of literature, theater, film, pictorial arts, history, and culture.

"Creativity and the Arts," Summer 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012, Summer 2012. Through formal and contextual criticism as well as ekphrasis, this course considers definitions of creativity and art through a survey of eight creative and performative art forms.

"Cultures of America," Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014. This course explores American culture—focusing on Native American, Japanese American, and African American cultures—through an examination of literature, film, theater, pictorial arts, and history.

"Intro to Film," Summer 2013, Summer 2014, Summer 2015. Through a study of films from multiple genres, periods, and cultures, this course introduces film terminology and techniques with particular attention to the relationships between these elements and diverse cultural contexts.

"Intro to Film," PANAMA: Summer 2016. Offered as a two-week intensive in Panama to EFL students, this course fosters cultural and formal understandings of cinema through exploration of film terminology, techniques, and contexts.

"World Literature to 1700," Fall 2010, Spring 2011. Through a thematic approach investigating heroes, monsters, love, and gender, this course provides a comparative analysis of literature with a focus on cultural and historical contexts and literary forms.

Jefferson Community Technical College

"College Writing I and Grammar Lab," Spring 2010, Fall 2010. This course provides college-level writing, revising, and grammar skills for non-native writers of English.

"Intro to College Writing," Spring 2010. This course teaches basic college-level grammatical and structural writing skills for non-native writers of English.

"Low-Intermediate Conversation," Spring 2010. Through a study of common idioms, this course strengthens oral communication skills for non-native speakers of English.

La Sierra University

"College Writing 111," Fall 2007, Winter 2009. This course uses a wide-range of projects to begin developing the writing and revising skills needed for college writing.

"College Writing 112," Winter 2008, Spring 2009. This course focuses on the written argument through a study of opposing positions and persuasive writing.

"College Writing 113," Spring 2008, Summer 2008, Fall 2008. This course provides college-level research and writing skills through an intensive study of the formal research essay.

Presentations and Invited Lectures

* PCA/ACA- Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association

Conference Papers, Presenter

"Threatening to Capsize: The Upside-Down World of the Carnivalesque in Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat.*" PCA/ACA Conference. April 3, 2015. New Orleans, Louisiana.

"Rebellious Natures: The Role of Nature in Young Adult Dystopian Female Protagonists' Awakenings and Agency." PCA/ACA Conference. April 17, 2014. Chicago, Illinois.

"There's No Cooking like Mama's Cooking: Sweeney Todd's Mrs. Lovett as Monstrous Mother." PCA/ACA Conference. April 13, 2012. Boston, Massachusetts.

"The Thrill of Your Life: The Amusement Park in Fantasy Cinema and Zombieland." PCA/ACA Conference. April 23, 2011. San Antonio, Texas.

"Writing What One Knows: The Written Document within Restoration and Sentimental Comedies." Univ. of Louisville's Assoc. of Humanities Academics (AHA) 'Anti: Revisions, Reconstructions, Refutations' Conference. April 16, 2010. Louisville, Kentucky.

"Marks of Magic: Tattoos in Young Adult Fantasy Literature." PCA/ACA Conference. April 3, 2010. St. Louis, Missouri.

"All the World's a Stage . . . Or a Movie Set: Alfred Hitchcock and Movies about Theater." PCA/ACA Conference. April 9, 2009. New Orleans, Louisiana.

"Perhaps Tomorrow: Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone and the 'Peter Pan Theory' of India." Univ. of CA, Riverside Graduate (Dis)Junctions Conference. April 3, 2009. Riverside, California.

"Reflecting on Two Worlds: The Poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Pre/Post-September 11, 2001." Sigma Tau Delta 'Reflections' Convention. March 26, 2009. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"The Danger Unleashed Within: The Shadows Cast between the Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and His Poem 'Christabel.'" La Sierra Univ. Graduate Student 'Natures: Authenticity, Artificiality, and Authorship' Conference. February 20, 2009. Riverside, California.

"Once by Fire, Again by Ice: The Paradoxical Endings of the World according to Armageddon and The Day After Tomorrow." Conference on Christianity and Literature 'Fire and Ice: Literary Paradox & the Search for Truth.' May 16, 2008. La Mirada, California.

"Faces of Magic: An Examination of the Male and Female Wielders of Power in the Arthurian Legend." Pacific Ancient & Modern Language Assoc. Conference. November 7, 2008. Pomona, California.

"From the Page to the Street: The Myth of a Killer Realized [Jack the Ripper and the Gothic Novel]." PCA/ACA Conference. March 21, 2008. San Francisco, California.

Conference Panel/Roundtable

"International Horror Films: The Limits of Representation." Roundtable Discussion. PCA/ACA Conference. April 19, 2014. Chicago, Illinois.

"Libraries in Popular Culture." Panel/Roundtable Discussion. PCA/ACA Conference. April 21, 2011. San Antonio, Texas.

"The Ugly Duckling Stage: From Student to Scholar." Sigma Tau Delta 'Reflections' Convention. March 27, 2009. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Conference Creative Presentations

"Selling Happiness." Univ. of Louisville's AHA 'Fanaticism: Recollections, Representations, Reactions' Conference. March 25, 2011. Louisville, Kentucky.

"Wristbands of Righteousness." Sigma Tau Delta 'Necessary Contradictions' Convention. March 6, 2008. Louisville, Kentucky.

Conference Organization

Program Designer and Editor, Univ. of Louisville's Assoc. of Humanities Academics (AHA) 'Global Humanities' Conference. March 22, 2013. Louisville, Kentucky.

Program Designer and Editor, Univ. of Louisville's AHA 'The Phoenix Effect: Regeneration, Rebirth, Reformation' Conference. March 23, 2012. Louisville, Kentucky.

Program Designer and Editor, Univ. of Louisville's AHA 'Fanaticism: Recollections, Representations, Reactions' Conference. March 25, 2011. Louisville, Kentucky.

Conference Co-chair, La Sierra Univ. Graduate Student Humanities 'Natures: Authenticity, Artificiality, and Authorship' Conference. February 20, 2009. Riverside, California.

Invited Guest Presentations

Key Presenter. "PTFI Showcase: Seasoned Part-Time Faculty Members Share Tools, Strategies, and Insights." University of Louisville. Spring 2017.

Key Presenter. "Digital Media Assignments: Faculty Share Lessons Learned." University of Louisville. Spring 2017.

"American Theater: Staging Differences of the U.S." University of Louisville. Fall 2011.

"Visual Rhetoric and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." University of Louisville. Summer 2011.

"Fantasy and the Feminine: Henson's *Labyrinth* and LeGuin's *Tombs of Atuan*." University of Louisville. Fall 2010.

"The Art of Theater: A Polyvalent Perspective." University of Louisville. Fall 2010.

"The Ugly Duckling Syndrome: Student to Scholar." La Sierra University. Winter 2009.

"The Paradox: The World of Theater/Drama." La Sierra University. Spring 2008.

"Performing and Speaking Shakespeare's Comedies." La Sierra University. Winter 2008.

Awards and Honors

University of Louisville

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Humanities Department, 2010-2013.

Graduate Student Union Research Grant, College of Arts and Sciences, Fall 2011.

La Sierra University

College Writing Instructor, English and Communication Department, 2007-2009.

Graduate Student of the Year, English and Communication Department, 2009.

College Writing Instructor of the Year, English and Communication Department, 2009.

Graduate Research Recognition Award, English and Communication Department, 2008.

Graduating Senior of the Year, English and Communication Department, 2007.

Best Senior English Portfolio, English and Communication Department, 2007.

Organization Membership and Leadership

Popular Culture Association, 2007-Present.

Sigma Tau Delta English Honors Organization, 2006-Present.

- o President of La Sierra University 'Alpha Iota Upsilon' chapter, 2008-2009.
- o Vice-President of La Sierra University 'Alpha Iota Upsilon' chapter, 2007-2008.

Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association, 2008-2010.
Conference on Christianity and Literature, 2008-2009.

Services to the University and Community

University Committees and Organizations

University of Louisville
Association of Humanities Academics, Participating Member, 2009-Present.
Academic Disciplinary/Grievance Committee, Graduate Representative, 2011- 2013.
Officer for the Graduate Student Union, Humanities Division Representative, 2011-2013.
Humanities Undergraduate & Graduate Organization, Humanities PhD Liaison, 2011-2013.
Humanities Department Representative for the Graduate Student Union, 2010-2013.
Graduate Student Union Grant Funds Allocation Committee, Voting Member, Spring 2012.

La Sierra University
Graduate Council, Graduate Student Representative, 2007-2008.

Departmental Services

University of Louisville
Mentor for incoming Humanities PhD Student, 2011-Present.
Invited contributor to Humanities Department Newsletter, 2013.

La Sierra University
Invited contributor to English and Communication Department Newsletter, 2008, 2011.

Community Services

Layout/Design Editor. *Dreamland Film Journal,* Issue 2. Louisville Film Society, 2013.
Barnes & Noble Book Fair. Riverside, California, 2007, 2008.
  o Organized events to benefit non-profit literacy organizations.
Volunteering at Public Library, La Sierra Branch. Riverside, California, 2006.
Homebase Seventh-day Adventist Ministries. La Sierra University, 2002-2004.
  o Served as Team Drama Director and Team Member for church services.
  o Organized and created dramatic works, participated in music, performed liturgies.

Services to the Profession

Academic Conference Leadership

Roundtable Chair, "International Horror Films: The Limits of Representation." PCA/ACA Conference. April 19, 2014. Chicago, Illinois.
Panel Chair, "Technology and Terror in SF & F Film and TV." PCA/ACA Conference. April 23, 2011. San Antonio, Texas.
Session Chair, "Children's Literature and Culture: Young Adult Literature and Fashion." PCA/ACA Conference. April 3, 2010. St. Louis, Missouri.
Panel Chair, 'British Literature: Renaissance Poetry.' Sigma Tau Delta 'Reflections' Convention. March 26, 2009. Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Panel Chair, 'Nature's Destruction.' La Sierra Univ. Graduate Student Humanities 'Natures: Authenticity, Artificiality, and Authorship' Conference. February 20, 2009. Riverside, California.

Graduate Courses Taken

La Sierra University (4 unit quarter system)

Genre: The Short Story
Compositional Theory/Practice
British Renaissance Literature
Readings in Scripture: Revelation
Topics in Film: Akira Kurosawa
Modern India
Restoration/18th C British Comedy
Dir. Study: Writing the Long Project

Seminar: The Gothic Novel
Methods/Materials of Literary Study
Critical Theories: Rise of the Novel
American Post-modern Poetry
Seminar: Wilkie Collins
Creative Writing: Short Story
Vietnam War Era Literature

University of Louisville (3 unit semester system)

Playscript Interpretation
Western Humanistic Studies I
Western Humanistic Studies II
Fantasy Film
Creativity and Madness
The Creativity Question
Crime in Victorian Popular Culture
Interdisc. Humanities Capstone
International Horror Films
Film Adaptations and Remakes

Scenes of Reading 1800-1900
Interdisc. Humanities Theory
Religious/Literary American South
Ind. Study: American Fantasy
Ind. Study: Gender in Sci-fi
The Literary Fairy Tale
The Body in Popular Media
Films of Alfred Hitchcock
Film, Gender, Sexualities

Bolded courses indicate film studies courses: 24 semester system units plus 4 quarter system units