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## **The speed of the VCR: Ti West's slow horror**

**GLYN DAVIS**

In Ti West's horror film *The House of the Devil* (2009), Samantha (Jocelin Donahue), a college student short of cash, takes on a babysitting job. She arrives for the assignment accompanied by her friend Megan (Greta Gerwig). As Samantha discusses payment in another room with the unsettling couple who have hired her, the camera lingers with Megan. She sits on a sofa, centred within the shot, and picks through a bowl of sweets, eventually selecting a piece to eat. The scene is incidental, leisurely, quotidian; though not lengthy it serves to pause the film, to slow it down. As West notes of this scene:

In editing this movie ... a lot of my commercial instincts were saying 'there's no reason for this scene to be (a) in the movie and (b) certainly not that long ...' But you edit the movie and you go, alright, you know you don't need this scene, this scene does not do anything for the quote-unquote plot or moving the movie along, but in my mind you do need those scenes because it's really great to see in a horror movie people doing things that you don't normally see in a horror movie. [...] I think ... most horror has become ... kind of repetitive and boring, and ... I'm sure those are actually terms that [are used] about this movie as well, but for a different reason.<sup>1</sup>

Here West acknowledges his desire to insert content and sequences – digressions, lingering shots, halts and delays, fragments of the everyday – that are normally absent in genre cinema. The director acknowledges his frustration with genre cinema's routine and formulaic limits, and his recognition that cracking open that calcified format could risk the drift of a spectator's attention, their boredom or disengagement.

Across his output, though, West has repeatedly taken that risk. In *Trigger Man* (2007), three friends hunting in the woods for pleasure are shot at by a hidden sniper. There is a long stretch depicting their aimless wandering before the homicidal shooting, which is itself followed by a drawn-out sequence in which the sole survivor attempts to avoid detection while tracking down the assassin. *The Innkeepers* (2011) centres on a haunted hotel in its last days of operation before closing for good. Shocks and gore are pared back to several brief moments, while the film concentrates mainly on the relationship between the hotel's two remaining desk staff – their banter, flirtatious interaction and attempts to enliven their tedious jobs. The pacing of many of West's horror films, the space they make for the banal, makes them seem slow in contrast to much contemporary horror cinema.

I want to propose, however, that there exists a lineage of slow examples across the history of horror cinema as a globally deployed generic formulation. These are films whose narratives drag, in which 'not much happens'; in which tension is dissipated or attenuated rather than tightly wound and clinically deployed; films where anticipated genre pay-offs are not delivered, or are notably stripped back. Examples of such films can be found equally within arthouse and prestige studio horror genres, across the history of various national horror cinemas, in low-budget titles produced for home viewing (whether videotape, DVD or streaming), and in all manner of other places. Although I focus on horror in this essay, similar slow lineages can be unearthed in other popular genres, including melodrama and science fiction. Yet rather than judging these films as 'failures' for refusing to deliver expected generic content, structure and affects, I suggest that they share a particular temporal register: a slowness that makes space for digressive sequences, narrative lacunae, long takes and stretches of storytelling immobility. Within the horror genre, West's *The*

*House of the Devil* is not only a clear instance of this historical pedigree, but it pays tribute to its slow precedents through nods both to particular examples of horror cinema, and to a culture of consuming horror films on videotape.

This essay makes two interrelated arguments. First, I engage with the notion of cinematic slowness and the recent emergence of ‘slow cinema’ as an object of analysis. I challenge the canon of slow cinema as it has been constructed to date, and propose an expansion. In addition to the roster of examples of international auteurist art cinema now recognized as ‘slow’, I suggest that instances of slow films can also be found within the parameters of genre fiction such as horror. In order to support this proposition I provide an overview of the workings of horror as a genre, its dominant temporal forms and devices, and highlight various examples that could be characterized as slow. Second, I argue for a recalibration of the slow cinema debate, which tends to focus on matters of form and aesthetics, to include sustained considerations of *technological slowness*. Specifically I suggest that, especially retrospectively, videotape and VCRs can be understood as slow technologies: this slowness is lodged in the apparatus itself and facilitates decelerated modes of viewing. Bringing these arguments together, the final section of the essay examines nostalgically inflected contemporary horror cinema, in particular ‘VCR horror’, contemporary works indebted to a swathe of horror films that attained widespread distribution on videotape in the 1980s, as well as the affective experience of domestic consumption of horror on VCRs. I interrogate the ways in which these contemporary films – including examples made by West – reveal both the changing temporal dynamics of genre cinema across history, as well as the complex interrelations between genre texts, distribution platforms, viewing technologies, narrative form and aesthetics.

To argue that some of West's films are 'slow' requires an engagement with the library of writings on cinema and temporality that has blossomed notably over the last decade or so – and in particular with those texts that interrogate slow cinema as an entity of study. Slowness in relation to film is, of course, a relative term, one that is both difficult to calibrate scientifically (when does a shot length become too long, for example, and according to what criteria?) and, arguably, largely subjective. This has, however, not prevented the recent theoretical isolation and interrogation of a corpus of films, produced over the last twenty years, as specifically 'slow'. These titles, it is argued, share formal and aesthetic qualities to such an extent that they can be productively connected under a common rubric.

Although it has been suggested that the identification and naming of slow cinema can be traced to 2003 and a talk delivered by Michel Ciment at the 46th San Francisco International Film Festival,<sup>2</sup> debate only began to take off towards the end of the last decade, with pieces written by Matthew Flanagan and Jonathan Romney. Flanagan, in the journal *16:9*, identified 'active practitioners' of 'a distinctive narrative form devoted to stillness and contemplation', including Lisandro Alonso, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Pedro Costa, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Carlos Reygadas, Albert Serra, Aleksandr Sokurov, Béla Tarr and Tsai Ming-liang.<sup>3</sup> 'The formal characteristics shared by these filmmakers', he argued, 'are immediately identifiable, if not quite fully inclusive: the employment of (often extremely) long takes, de-centred and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and the everyday'.<sup>4</sup> In February 2010, in the film magazine *Sight and Sound*, Jonathan Romney similarly identified a 'varied strain of austere minimalist cinema that has thrived internationally over the past ten years'.<sup>5</sup> He went on:

The last decade certainly saw an increasing demand amongst cinephiles for films that are slow, poetic, contemplative – cinema that downplays event in favour of mood, evocativeness and an intensified sense of temporality. Such films highlight the viewing process itself as a real-time experience in which, ideally, you become acutely aware of every minute, every second spent watching.<sup>6</sup>

Romney's roster of slow directors (Alonso, Costa, Serra, and others) squared neatly with that identified by Flanagan.

The term 'slow cinema' started to gain traction and attention. The body of slow films gathered supporters and detractors as critical voices attempted to unpack their significance and distinctiveness. For Nick James, slow cinema offered spectators little reward for their effort. These films, he argued, 'are passive-aggressive in that they demand great swathes of our precious time to achieve quite fleeting and slender aesthetic and political effects'.<sup>7</sup> An essay by Dan Kois published in *The New York Times* identified the author's problems viewing 'slow-moving, meditative drama' such as *Meek's Cutoff* (Kelly Reichardt, 2010): 'As I get older, I find I'm suffering from a kind of culture fatigue and have less interest in eating my cultural vegetables, no matter how good they may be for me'.<sup>8</sup> In response, Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott wrote short tracts 'In defense of the slow and boring'.<sup>9</sup> All of these opinion pieces were centred largely on matters of taste; critics frustrated by slow cinema's sparseness of content, languid pace and infrequent editing stood against those to whom such aspects appealed.

More substantially some writers have questioned the originality of slow cinema. Steven Shaviro, for instance, criticized slow films for not offering anything fresh. Praising 'daring and provocative' films by Michelangelo Antonioni, Chantal

Akerman, Miklos Jancsó and Andrei Tarkovsky – all of whom experimented, at various points, with cinematic stillness, slowness and stasis – Shaviro argued that ‘today’s contemplative cinema’ lacks ‘provocation’, rarely ‘taking risks or pushing boundaries’.<sup>10</sup> One clear value of Shaviro’s short essay is that it identifies an ancestry of potential precursors of recent slow film. David Company, though not discussing contemporary slow cinema, inadvertently does the same when he isolates two distinct strands of slow film practice that manifested after World War II:

A stubborn resistance to the pace of spectacle and money-driven modernization ... came to characterize the landmarks of art and film in the latter decades of the last century. Slowness has structured the cinema of Vittorio de Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Ingmar Bergman, Robert Bresson ... and many others. A drop in tempo was a way to hold on to the decreasing opportunities for serious artistic reflection [...] Resistance to speed was also at the heart of the experimental films of Andy Warhol, Michael Snow, Stan Brakhage, Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, Hollis Frampton and others, all of whom took cinema into direct dialogue with the stillness of the photographic image.<sup>11</sup>

The lineages highlighted by Shaviro and Company are useful but, I suggest, could be taken further: where, across the history of global cinema, can we identify manifestations of slowness? Both authors associate slowness with innovation, edginess and political intent, but is this always necessarily the case? Where in more mainstream cinemas, deployed politically or otherwise, might we find directors experimenting with decelerated temporalities?

Particular ways in which contemporary slow cinema has been discussed to date require interrogation and challenge. It has become almost routine, for instance, to

claim that one of the benefits of slow films is that they allow for spectatorial drift, opening up possibilities for contemplation, meditation and psychological dissociation.<sup>12</sup> Tina Kendall has taken issue with this characterization, claiming that it risks ‘promoting slow cinema as if it were the cultural equivalent of incense or bubble bath’.<sup>13</sup> Such a defence, she argues, overvalues ‘slowness for its own sake, a move that reduces it to a form of contemplation without content, and distracts attention away from a full consideration of what slowness *does* in particular contexts, or what value it might have in a wider media ecology’.<sup>14</sup> It should also be noted that the association of meditation with slow cinema obscures the many opportunities that instances of mainstream cinema also provide for drifting off: the rapid editing speed and noisy barrage of a Hollywood action film, for instance, might equally afford the occasion for mental introspection.

‘Slow cinema’ is also, somewhat predictably, contrasted to ‘fast cinema’. Slow films are repeatedly framed as synonymous with global art cinema, fast films with Hollywood blockbusters. David Bordwell, for instance, highlights a ‘polarized film culture: fast, aggressive cinema for the mass market and slow, more austere cinema for festivals and arthouses’.<sup>15</sup> Song Hwee Lim argues that

directors of a cinema of slowness are often in opposition to fast-paced films not only in a globally dominant cinema that is Hollywood but also in mainstream cinema within their own national contexts. Shunned by a dominant mode of production and consumption at home, these aesthetic imaginations of slowness find refuge instead in the niche market of the international film festivals and art house cinemas across the world. If a cinema of slowness can be seen as a form of resistance ... what it resists is an



accelerated temporality whose material form is mainstream cinema and whose aesthetics is premised upon intensified continuity.<sup>16</sup>

Here Lim, along with Bordwell, sets up a strict dualism between temporalities ('accelerated' and 'slow'), each allocated to distinct forms of cinema ('mainstream' and 'art'), that is difficult to sustain.<sup>17</sup> What if some of those mainstream films are themselves slow, even if only in part? How might a mixed economy of temporal modes manifest across diverse instances of global cinema?

Although there remains a significant amount of analysis to be carried out on the roster of contemporary slow films and their directors, it is also vital that film scholars repeatedly question what cinematic slowness is and could be – its 'value', to reiterate Kendall's phrasing, in 'a wider media ecology'. In doing so, however, it is also important to bear in mind the potential pitfalls of fraying or dissolving a newly formed object of study. Tiago de Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge, identifying that the label 'slow cinema' describes 'a still-in-the-making and shifting canon', caution against the widespread proliferation of the term 'slow': 'it could be argued that the promiscuity of the "slow" descriptor risks weakening its own methodological vigour as it is applied too indiscriminately'.<sup>18</sup> They go on to note, however, that 'we believe that the ease with which the concept navigates across different cinematic modes, movements, practices and even media is, in fact, one of its strengths'.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, slow cinema has thus far survived a fair number of theoretical writings and interrogations that scrutinize the slowness of disparate and non-canonical examples, such as: a discussion of slow sequences in Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive* (2011); Ira Jaffe's comparative exploration of *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995), *Moartea domnului Lazarescu/The Death of Mr Lazarescu* (Cristi Puiu, 2005) and *4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile/4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (Cristian Mungiu, 2007), all of which 'relinquish

slow-movie traits to some degree'; a consideration of the pace of Sofia Coppola's films; analysis of what constitutes a 'slow road movie'.<sup>20</sup> This essay sits alongside these analyses, involved in a similar project: to identify, beyond the slow cinema corpus, the complex and hybrid ways in which decelerated tempos are articulated across heterogeneous instances of global cinema.

Slowness as a component of cinematic form, aesthetics and politics cannot – should not – be used alone to discuss 'slow cinema'. Not all slow films, or films which feature slow sequences, tropes or devices, are lodged within the sphere of international art cinema; there are many examples of more commercial, low-budget and exploitation generic cinema that can be seen as similarly slow, including numerous horror films. In addition, as Company, Shaviro and others have noted, slowness is not solely a contemporary phenomenon associated with the last twenty years or so. Film scholars concerned with the operations and intricacies of cinematic temporality need to look back and search further afield in order to unearth the ways in which various speeds – fast, slow and in-between – manifest in intriguing interlinked ways in unexpected corners and pockets of filmmaking history.

What, then, might it mean to talk of 'slow horror' – and, more specifically, of some of West's films as 'slow'? What template or indicators might such relative slowness be measured against? Temporal devices and ploys are central to the mechanics of horror, and influence evaluations regarding the effectiveness of specific examples. As one intended effect of instances of the genre is to scare and unsettle audiences, amongst its regularly deployed chronotropes are the sudden shock and the gradual winching of tension and suspense. For the contemporary horror film – whether the child possession drama *Insidious* (James Wan, 2010), fatal fish fantasia *Shark Night 3D*

(David R. Ellis, 2011) or any of the instalments of the ‘torture porn’ *Saw* franchise (2003–10, with a reboot in 2017) – stings of violence or terror (often accompanied by a sudden blast of orchestration on the soundtrack) are regularly situated throughout the running time. Carol Clover has identified connections between horror and pornography as ‘body genres’; she argues that they are ‘the only two genres specifically devoted to the arousal of bodily sensation’.<sup>21</sup> The genres also share structural similarities: just like porn’s money shots, many horror films feature bloody deaths or dramatic scares at regular intervals, each splash of red or white a crowning (or, indeed, climaxing) peak of affective, corporeal force.

Although theorists of horror rarely discuss temporality and time directly, many recognize the genre’s reliance on narrative structures and mechanisms that are deployed across a chronological span. Noël Carroll identifies horror’s regular use of suspense and repetition.<sup>22</sup> Andrew Tudor notes that the appeal of horror films, in part, ‘relate[s] to narrative devices, to the fascination of not knowing what is going to happen next and to the ambivalently pleasurable tension which attends that uncertainty’.<sup>23</sup> Anna Powell identifies that ‘Time permeates the horror film in all its aspects [...] Tension is experienced as an unbearable dilation of time, whereas shock intensively collapses a temporal force felt like a physical blow.’<sup>24</sup> For Philip Brophy, ‘The textuality of the modern horror film is integrally and intricately bound up in the dilemma of a saturated fiction whose primary aim in its telling is to generate suspense, shock and horror’.<sup>25</sup> Instances of the contemporary horror film, he argues, provide ‘gratification [...] based upon tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism’.<sup>26</sup> Suspense, repetition, tension, shock, fear – all are articulated across particular temporal formations. Brophy also perceptively highlights the significance of the immersive instant, the momentary now, in the impact of horror:

It is the *present* – the precise point of speech, of utterance, of plot, of event – that is ever of any value. Its effect disappears with the gulping breath, the gasping shriek, swallowed up by the fascistic continuum of the fiction. A nervous giggle of amoral delight as you prepare yourself in a totally self-deluding way for the next shock.<sup>27</sup>

While watching horror cinema, then, the immediate present is of significant import; yet this seductive *now* is always, crucially, part of a larger temporal span, a ‘fascistic continuum’ incorporating both impending scares and the ripple effect of former shocks.

For Linda Williams, the temporal register of horror’s power lies not in the immediate, the present, but in a mistiming in which the future arrives too quickly. Discussing horror, pornography and melodrama as genres of sensational excess, Williams highlights their structures of fantasy. Drawing on Laplanche and Pontalis, she makes a connection between their psychoanalytic ‘structural understanding of fantasies as myths of origins which try to cover the discrepancy between two moments in time and the distinctive temporal structure of these particular genres’.<sup>28</sup> Melodrama’s temporality of fantasy, Williams argues, is one that is ‘too late!’, and pornography’s is one that is ‘on time!’<sup>29</sup> ‘In contrast’, she writes,

the fantasy of recent teen horror corresponds to a temporal structure which raises the anxiety of not being ready, the problem, in effect, of ‘too early!’ Some of the most violent and terrifying moments of the horror film genre occur in moments when the female victim meets the psycho-killer-monster unexpectedly, before she is ready [...] This surprise encounter, too early, often takes place at a moment of sexual anticipation when the female victim thinks she is about to meet her boyfriend or lover. The monster’s violent attack on

the female victims vividly enacts a symbolic castration which often functions as a kind of punishment for an ill-timed exhibition of sexual desire.<sup>30</sup>

The deaths in such slasher films, then, are narratively marked as instances of bad timing. Characters are unprepared and misjudge how to behave, their actions out of kilter with propriety and chronology, and they suffer accordingly.

Taking these perspectives into account, it is possible to envision forms that slow horror could take. All of the above theorists stress the significance of particular temporal devices to the effective operation of horror. Resisting those devices, or failing to adhere to them, introduces alternative temporalities into the genre. Tudor's 'ambivalently pleasurable tension' leaches out, dissipates, disperses and ultimately evaporates; the pay-off moment of terror comes too late, or not at all. Brophy's immersive present fails to engross, giving way to alternative forms of spectator-text interaction. And Williams's 'too early!' not only loses its exclamation point but becomes complicated and undermined by imbrication in a decelerated narrative formation.

Examples of slow horror can be found globally throughout all strata of the genre, decelerated temporalities manifesting either across the whole or in select sequences of each slow film's running time. Here I comment briefly on titles from the fields of art cinema and low-budget/exploitation film (though these are not always easily segregated domains). The history of international art cinema includes numerous horror texts that incorporate slow time, such as *Les Yeux Sans Visage/Eyes Without a Face* (Georges Franju, 1960), *Repulsion* (Roman Polanski, 1965), *Flesh for Frankenstein* (Paul Morrissey, 1973), *Possession* (Andrzej Zulawski, 1981), *Nadja* (Michael Almereyda, 1995), and *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014). Joan Hawkins draws attention, for instance, to the 'long, slow

tracking shots and long takes' of *Eyes Without a Face*, its 'lack of clear cause and effect, the absence of an easily identifiable hero' and its 'lack of closure'.<sup>31</sup> Arguably, a number of the films that make up the slow cinema corpus might also be categorized as horror. Some of Béla Tarr's films are marked by a sense of existential horror: *Werckmeister harmóniák/Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) and *A torinói ló/The Turin Horse* (2011), for instance, are subtended by intimations of impending cataclysm. Vicious moments of violence break through the atrophied narratives of films by Bruno Dumont, perhaps most notably in *Twentynine Palms* (2003). Demons, ghosts and spirits make appearances in several of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's films, including *Sud pralad/Tropical Malady* (2004), *Loong Boonmee raleuk chat/Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), and *Mekong Hotel* (2012), though these figures tend not to pose a threat to the living.

As with art cinema, the history of independently financed, low-budget horror is peppered with examples of cinematic slowness. As Stephen Thrower notes in his survey of independent exploitation films made between 1970 and 1985, 'the exploitation industry [...] gave us some of the slowest, silliest, most hopelessly inept celluloid swarf ever to run through a projector'.<sup>32</sup> Though Thrower deploys 'slowness' as a negative critical marker, his use of the term (as well as synonyms and related formulations) throughout his book draws attention to marginal and lesser-known examples of the genre and their formal and aesthetic workings. For instance, he (quite correctly) describes William Rebane's film *The Demons of Ludlow* (1983) as 'plodding' and the same director's *The Alpha Incident* (1978) as having a 'perverse' 'refusal of incident and excitement'; he critiques *The Outing* (Byron Quisenberry, 1981), a film also known as *Scream*, as 'a painfully slow and inscrutable film'.<sup>33</sup>

Thrower discusses, at length, two notably slow exploitation titles – *Night of Horror* (1981) and *The Curse of the Screaming Dead* (1982) – both directed by Tony Malanowski:

They're each of them rife with padded dialogue and actionless longeurs [...] initially you tend to recoil from the repetition: the ultra-low energy levels, long takes, and drawn out elaborations of the simplest set-ups. The meandering dialogue is perhaps the biggest stumbling block for most viewers. Talk is, after all, frequently the genre's enemy; unless it's very well written it stymies both mood and action. *Night* goes further, interspersing very long dialogue scenes with actionless mooching around. *Curse* too opens with a good forty minutes of verbal filler.<sup>34</sup>

Contemporary slow cinema, as Song Hwee Lim notes, is often marked by its lack of dialogue, verbal exchanges reduced to a sparse minimum. This serves as a key component of an aural aesthetic which foregrounds hush if not outright silence, and regularly avoids the use of nondiegetic music.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Thrower's comments suggest that slow horror cinema is marked by an excess of talk: conversation between characters prevents expected generic temporal mechanisms, which are usually built around nonverbal action, from grinding into gear. I will return to this point below, in my discussion of West's films.

Other examples of slow horror could be added to Thrower's roster. For Kim Newman, *Satan War* (Bart La Rue, 1979), 'deserves to be remembered as the most minimalist, boring zero-budget ghost story of all time – the chief manifestations of this 70-minute ordeal are an out-of-shot hand slowly turning a crucifix upside-down and coloured porridge seeping from kitchen cabinets.'<sup>36</sup> Nick Pinkerton, reviewing a DVD re-release of *The Funhouse* (Tobe Hooper, 1981), frames slowness more

positively when he points out that ‘No genuine sense of threat pops up until nearly the halfway point – and it doesn’t need to. The film is riveting as a lived-in document of small-town aimlessness.’<sup>37</sup> To this list I would also add such titles as *The Boogens* (James L. Conway, 1981), *Night of the Comet* (Thom Eberhardt, 1984) and *Without Warning* (Greydon Clark, 1980), all of which feature negligible scares, with their running time largely devoted to character interaction and deliberate drift. Also slow is *The Video Dead* (Robert Scott, 1987), in which zombies escape from a paranormal television set and terrorize one small corner of US suburbia. Notably, despite its title, this film features neither videotapes nor VCR machinery of any stripe.<sup>38</sup> In relation to the arguments being put forward by this essay, however, *The Video Dead* valuably harnesses together home viewing technologies, the horror genre, and decelerated temporalities; if only in name, it adds video into this mix. It is to considerations of technological slowness that this essay now moves.

Home video plays a crucial role in the history of cinema with slowed temporalities. Here, I want to make two particular, interrelated arguments. First, home video technology altered the temporal relations between audiences and the moving image. Although advertisers and manufacturers at the time often stressed the speediness of video, discourses of slowness were also deployed. Retrospectively, I would propose that slowness is both more obvious and more evidently radical. Second, the boom in the home video market not only brought audiences (sometimes by accident) into contact with a variety of cinematic temporalities but also led to the development of films made specifically for viewing on video – many of which, in their economy of means, featured sluggish, sparse content. In other words, slow genre films, including many horror titles, proliferated on videotape.



Industrial experiments with videotape and its associated recording and playback technologies preceded the boom in home video by decades. As Bruce Klopfenstein notes, the transition of the technology into forms suitable for domestic spaces took many years:

A number of manufacturers unsuccessfully tried to crack the home market in the late 1960s and early 1970s with difficult to use open-reel video tape recorders (VTRs). Sony invented the cassette recorder with its professional U-Matic machine, which was introduced in 1972. The Sony Betamax was the first home video device to be adopted by consumers starting in 1975 with a combination television set and VCR.<sup>39</sup>

The Sony Betamax stand-alone VCR was launched in 1976, selling in the USA for \$1300.<sup>40</sup> Attempts by separate manufacturers to dominate the market with their own format – specifically, the rivalry between VHS and Betamax – led to swift developments in technological capacities and affordances. Tape length, for instance, grew from one hour to two in 1977.<sup>41</sup> Although 800,000 homes in the USA had VCRs by 1979, it was the 1980s that saw figures boom; in 1986 alone, 13.2 million VCRs were sold in the USA.<sup>42</sup>

As Lucas Hildebrand points out, ‘Videotape presented new modes of televisual temporality, existing both over time (as timeshifting, preservation or decay) and in time (as duration or manipulated playback speed)’.<sup>43</sup> Advertising and marketing rhetoric foregrounded this aspect of the technology: as one well-known advertisement for the Sony Betamax SL-8600 highlighted, for instance, ‘Watch Whatever Whenever’. The phenomenon of timeshifting fundamentally changed relations of status and control between audiences and the television industry, with

VCRs enabling the movement of material from one block of time to another more amenable to the viewer. For Sean Cubitt, the VCR opened up a range of new temporal relations between audience and screen, all of which afforded additional power to the spectator:

We now have video to thank for extending the viewing day, freeing viewers from the tyranny of the network schedules, freeze framing, fast forward and reverse vision, the chance to go back and forth in a tape and thence to disturb the diegetic hold of broadcast, the chance to watch in bite-size chunks, and thus for multiplying the available programme formats.<sup>44</sup>

Research by social scientists in the mid 1980s revealed that audiences had six main reasons for using VCRs: zapping past commercials, timeshifting, setting up a safe environment for children, expanding viewing options, building a videotape library, and speedy viewing by fast-forwarding.<sup>45</sup> Central to all of these is control over time: what gets watched when, and at what pace. The fast-forward button was, evidently, perceived as having significant value.

Pausing and slowing material down was also recognized – by both manufacturers and audiences – as being of use. In 1978, during the format wars, JVC announced the introduction of slow-motion and freeze-frame capabilities for their VHS machines.<sup>46</sup> Hildebrand, comparing videotape with DVD, writes that

In analogue video, real time meets reel time. Analogue video, because the tape must physically pass the VCR heads to play, exists in ‘wind’ time rather than in nonlinear digital chapters, thus marking temporal distinctions between the experiences of using the two types of technologies.<sup>47</sup>

The menu and chapter structure of DVDs and Blu-rays enables speedy skipping back and forth. Watching a digital video file online, where a swift click can jump the

viewer immediately to the desired point, is even faster. By contrast video seems extraordinarily slow; even when fast-forwarding or rewinding, 'wind time' is stubbornly sluggish. Of course when home video technologies were introduced, the capacity to fast-forward and rewind seemed revolutionary. Viewed retrospectively, however, the ability to slow and stop screened content seems more radical, more transformational. As Laura Mulvey has identified, the spread of domestic video equipment placed the power of stillness in the hands of viewers, an ability they had never previously possessed.<sup>48</sup> 'Timeshifting [...] fast-forward, vision-rewind and freeze-framing', argues Cubitt, invoking Derrida, 'reintroduce television to the qualities of writing'. In other words, the viewer, employing the VCR buttons or remote control as writing device, controls both the speed at which the text is authored, and the shape of the final content.<sup>49</sup>

Many technologies, retrospectively viewed, seem slow: rotary-dial telephones, fax machines, dot-matrix printers, dial-up internet connections. Technological progress is often reductively associated with enhanced speed. The introduction of video technology into the home, however, brought with it slowed temporalities: domestic users of the VCR had both enhanced opportunities to view decelerated content (of which, more shortly), and to themselves slow or freeze the movement of images on the television screen. Although the results of the viewer's manual slowing and pausing were of inferior quality to those available now with digital video, fans, cinephiles and others were able to isolate favourite moments or peak experiences and subject them to scrutiny through replaying them at varying tempos. Gory sequences in horror films, for instance, could be stilled or slowed, viewers unpicking the prosthetic skill involved in their creation while simultaneously attempting to deduce their affective force. (I confess to having done this numerous times myself.) In the UK, the

disruptive power of VCR slowness was tacitly recognized by the introduction of the Video Recordings Act (1984), a piece of legislation that responded to scaremongering about the widespread domestic uptake of VCRs and the so-called ‘video nasties’. Recommending that all films released on home video needed to be certified and approved by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the Act drew attention to the affordances of the VCR, and the (unknown) potential psychological impact of being able to repeatedly review, slow and still frames and sequences.<sup>50</sup>

The slowness of the VCR, however, is not solely about ‘wind time’, or enabling home viewers to freeze and decelerate the pace of taped materials. The widespread uptake of home video technologies, and the concomitant growth of video rental stores, brought many consumers into contact with films on tape that featured (in part or whole) decelerated temporalities. The home video owner, looking for an evening’s entertainment, might pick up a title with an unexpected temporal register, with Hollywood pacing, perkily varied content and continuity editing system all substituted by glacial arthouse glide or indie minimalism. Within the video rental store, complex histories of cinema filled the shelves, as new releases competed for consideration alongside movies of all types from previous decades. Many low-budget, independent and exploitation titles from earlier eras found audiences in the 1980s cassette rental market. As David Church notes, ‘the rise of home video [...] succeeded in tangibly placing decades’ worth of low-budget genre pictures at audiences’ fingertips for the first time’.<sup>51</sup> And a notable percentage of these titles, as Thrower’s survey of independent horror cinema reveals, were slackly paced, their content drawn-out and dawdling, soporific sequences stretched far beyond their formal utility laced throughout.

Also competing for home video rental attention in the 1980s was a new form of film production: movies made to be distributed direct-to-video (DTV). Usually produced on comparatively low budgets, these films were most often quickly made genre titles whose cover art offered more thrills than their sparse content could deliver. Shameless copies of successful, higher-budget films abounded; niche microgenres flourished and were rapidly populated. Struggling on meagre means to stretch their content out to feature length, DTV titles often incorporated scenes of filler: banter and bumbling, digressions, diversions and subplots, attempts at humour, meandering chase sequences, and so on. As home video formats have mutated from tape to DVD and then to domestic streaming, low-cost genre films designed to bypass theatrical exhibition have continued to be produced. The titles made during the videotape years of DTV cinema, however, are distinctive for their paucity of means, their threadbare content and aesthetics, a fact clearly revealed by the recent circulation of some of these titles on DVD/Blu-ray and online. In relation to this essay, it is notable that a recent nostalgia for horror films with spartan content that circulated widely on videotape in the 1980s – marked, for instance, by Arrow Video’s plush Blu-ray releases of titles such as *The Incredible Melting Man* (William Sachs, 1977) and *Squirm* (Jeff Lieberman, 1976), and by contemporary genre directors aping the style and form of such films – coincides with the growth of slow cinema and an associated theoretical exploration of slowness in its manifold forms.

The discourse around slow cinema, which has proliferated in recent years, has generally had very little to say about technology. The writing on this body of films is mainly concerned with matters of form, aesthetics and content. Lim, responding to a suggestion that slow cinema is retrograde in favouring the analogue over the digital, notes the existence of some ‘slow films whose extended duration would not have been

possible without digital technology'. Therefore, he proposes, there is 'no inherent contradiction between slow cinema and digital technology; quite the contrary, digitization has materialized previously unimaginable duration and, thus, possibly slowness'.<sup>52</sup> Lim uses the examples of *Russkiy kovcheg/Russian Ark* (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002) and *Five* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2003) to ground his argument; some of the long takes in films by James Benning and Lav Diaz would also provide support. Matthew Flanagan has explored at length the specific attributes of technologies such as the Bolex camera and the Panasonic DV camera, and their use by certain slow cinema directors. As he notes, 'In contemporary cinema, digital and analogue media co-exist within a digital regime that has enabled the establishment of new durational forms and new methods of observational practice'.<sup>53</sup> The technologies used for making instances of slow cinema, in other words, enable the deployment of particular chronotropes, specific time devices and strategies. These observations are invaluable, but require contextualization within a broader, detailed historical analysis of the slowness of technologies of moving image production, exhibition and consumption – including home viewing equipment such as the VCR.

Cinema produced during the boom decade of the VCR, the 1980s, has served as a major influence on West's films. In a 2009 interview he acknowledged the slowness of 1980s horror: 'There was just a different pacing and a different style of filmmaking back then. All of that ended at the beginning of the Nineties with MTV editing.'<sup>54</sup> West's disposition towards these earlier films, and their impact on the form and content of his own, has relegated him to a marginal position within horror cinema: 'Most hardcore genre fans don't really like my movies. If you're labelled a genre director, then you should feel like you're part of that world. I don't entirely. I'm on the fringes.'<sup>55</sup> West sits not only 'on the fringes' of generic horror cinema but also

of mumblecore – a movement worth exploring briefly here due to the particular temporal registers with which its filmmakers engage in their work, and for its connections to the horror genre. Geoff King provides a useful summary of this scene:

The term ‘mumblecore’ was coined, initially, it seems, as a joke, to characterize a group of features on the basis of a shared minimal-budget low-key naturalism that in most cases involved the use of hand-held DV footage, along with lo-fi sound quality and the vocal hesitations of non-professional performers, among them a number of the filmmakers themselves.<sup>56</sup>

Key figures associated with mumblecore appear in films by West. As noted earlier, Greta Gerwig plays Megan in *The House of the Devil*; Gerwig is also lead actress in the mumblecore films *LOL* (Joe Swanberg, 2006) and *Hannah Takes The Stairs* (Joe Swanberg, 2007), as well as the director of the movement’s *Nights and Weekends* (2008). Lena Dunham, director of and lead actor in *Tiny Furniture* (2010), provides the voice of a 911 operator in *The House of the Devil*; she has a slightly larger role in West’s *The Innkeepers* as a barista. (While working on *The House of the Devil*, West spent some time at the home of Dunham’s parents, sleeping on their floor.) Amy Seimetz and Joe Swanberg, both central mumblecore players, have significant roles in West’s *The Sacrament* (2013). West is thanked in the credits of the mumblecore films *Alexander the Last* (Joe Swanberg, 2009), *Nights and Weekends* and *Tiny Furniture*.

Maria San Filippo has suggested that mumblecore can be productively situated in relation to slow cinema. Noting that ‘temporality’s crucial importance to narrative is perhaps mumblecore’s most defining characteristic’, she highlights that in films of the movement ‘plots emerge from characters, focus on everyday details and ordinary speech, and stay rooted in real life even when there are extraordinary circumstances

[...] Endings, or what passes for them, are frequently inconclusive and rarely reassuring.<sup>57</sup> These observations are echoed by King, who notes that

One of the dimensions all films associated with mumblecore have most closely in common [...] is a commitment to very small-scale narrative frameworks, the primary focus of which is on what are presented as more or less everyday experiences of life and the difficulty of relationships among the particular constituency it depicts. A major plot turning point for the typical mumblecore production is something that barely exists; an event that often does not quite happen, a relationship that stutters and stalls awkwardly or a connection that does not come fully to fruition.<sup>58</sup>

Mumblecore films, then, are marked by narrative stasis or torpor, by characters that barely evolve, learn or move, if they manage these at all. These titles repeatedly focus on humdrum and quotidian detail. They tend to be shot on DV, a technology that enables intimate long takes, and a ruthless observational stare at the characters depicted. Sex scenes are filmed unflinchingly, allowing viewer access to the awkwardness of coupling, fleshy bodies. All of these are characteristics associated with slow cinema.

A number of mumblecore directors have also made films that play with the trappings and components of the horror genre. These titles, sometimes collectively referred to as ‘mumblecore’, include *Baghead* (Jay and Mark Duplass, 2008), *Silver Bullets* (Joe Swanberg, 2011, starring West), and *A Horrible Way To Die* (Adam Wingard, 2010).<sup>59</sup> *Entrance* (Dallas Richard Hallam and Patrick Horvath, 2011) serves as an indicative example of mumblecore. Set in Los Angeles, the film focuses on Suziey (played by Suziey Block), a barista suffering from anxiety whose dog goes missing. When the pet fails to materialise, Suziey, fed up, decides to move back



home; her roommate Karen convinces her to host a final dinner party. During the event a masked man invades the house and kills all of the assembled group except Suziey. The film ends with the killer cradling her on a terrace as they both look at the view. The first hour of *Entrance* evolves at a leisurely pace, focusing on domestic chores and the protagonist's hunt for her dog; the shift in tone when the murders start is considerable.<sup>60</sup> DV filming enables the employment of several long takes. Everyday chatter populates substantial stretches of the soundtrack, a tactic that runs counter to slow cinema's repeated use of silence, noted earlier, but connects *Entrance* to a history of low-budget horror films that fill their running time with conversation.

That history of horror also leaves its mark on West's *The House of the Devil*, a period film set in the 1980s, which stylistically echoes aspects of horror movies from that decade. In addition to mise-en-scene choices that recall the period (clothing and hairstyles, props, interior decor), specific filming methods are deployed that are redolent of genre cinema of the era, such as swift zooms. David Church connects West's film to other 'retrosploitation' movies, in particular *Run! Bitch Run!* (Joseph Guzman, 2009) and *The Sleeper* (Justin Russell, 2012), arguing that all three 'maintain a straight-faced tone of imitative homage throughout, as if seeking (however much in vain) to seamlessly disguise themselves among their historical referents'.<sup>61</sup> One device used by *The House of the Devil* – and by many other 'retrosploitation' films, such as *Machete* (Ethan Maniquis and Robert Rodriguez, 2010) – is an opening title card, often in freeze frame, with the title in bold type and the year of production in a smaller font. As Church notes, 'This particular cue recalls the historical need to copyright specific titles that might be selectively used as a film travelled through different regions and markets'.<sup>62</sup> West has acknowledged his

admiration for *The Changeling* (Peter Medak, 1979), which, like *The House of the Devil*, narratively centres on a creepy house and features a freeze frame title card.<sup>63</sup>

A marked aspect of *The House of the Devil*'s influence by 1980s horror cinema is its pace and speed. Despite the film featuring a strobe-lit bloody Satanic ritual near to its conclusion, and an unanticipated death around half an hour into its running time, the majority of *The House of the Devil* is notably devoid of graphic content or regular generic scares. As one of the film's producers has commented, the film's pitch included identifying that 'half of the film is the girl wandering around the house'.<sup>64</sup> After her friend Megan has departed, Samantha is left to her own devices. She bumbles around, tries on a pair of thick-lensed glasses, picks out a few notes on a harpsichord, puts a cassette in her personal stereo and dances to The Fixx. When trying to sell the film, the producers trimmed some of this content, recognizing its slowness, its uneventfulness; later they acknowledged that these minutes were 'the personality of the film' and reinstated them.<sup>65</sup> It is this leisurely pacing, which draws from an earlier era of horror cinema, that has come to mark West's contributions to the horror genre.

*The House of the Devil*'s indebtedness to 1980s video horror is evident not only in its content but through its paratexts. The poster campaign for *The House of the Devil* mimicked publicity images employed by examples of 1980s horror. A number of posters were produced, each of which echoed or referenced specific titles. For example, one poster depicted Samantha looking out of a window, with the sheer curtains (white, but stained blood red at their base) blowing around the frame – a reference to the poster for Wes Craven's *Deadly Friend* (1986). *The House of the Devil* received not only a standard DVD release but also a limited edition run on VHS: each of the thousand copies available to punters came in a white clamshell box,

featuring faux weathering on the sleeve and a 'new release' sticker. The film was prefaced, on the videotape, by the logo for 'video nasty' distributor Gorgon Video. *The House of the Devil* is not the only 'retrosploitation' film to have been released on VHS: *The Sleeper* and *Bloody Bloody Bible Camp* (Vito Trabucco, 2012) were also made available on tape. As Church notes, the VHS release of *The Sleeper* reworked the aesthetic of the film in order to afford it 'format-specific artefacting', the patina of battered videotape.<sup>66</sup> For the small number of viewers who encountered *The House of the Devil* on tape, the film's slowness would have been made more evident by the decelerated speeds of VCR technology discussed earlier: 'wind time', slow motion, freeze frames. This particular consumer item is thus emblematic of this essay's concerns: it reveals not only that instances of genre cinema can reject or toy with conventional strictures by injecting stretches of slowness or quiet into narrative form, but also that the temporalities associated with film viewing are inflected and shaped by technologies of consumption.

Ti West's mumblecore-inflected horror films, as indicative instances of slow generic cinema, invite a reconsideration of the recently constituted field of 'slow cinema'. Though evidently not as sparse in their content or rigorous in their aesthetic as works by Lisandro Alonso, Pedro Costa or Albert Serra, films such as *The House of the Devil* and *The Innkeepers* incorporate narrative elements and stretches of slowness that share much in common with the body of international art films identified as slow. In doing so they challenge the formation of such a canon, opening up for investigation the various forms that cinematic slowness might take, the ways in which these have manifested across the history of global film, and the interrelations among many cinematic temporal economies. Furthermore, in the indebtedness of certain of his

films to the consumption of genre titles on a particular platform, the VCR, West's films provoke a consideration of technological slowness – indeed, the unpacking of the imbrication of all moving image technologies with complex temporal registers. Elements of slowness can be detected in a broad array of generic cinema, not just a minor corpus of art cinema titles; it also operates not only through cinematic form and textual content, but has connections with particular forms of filmic apparatus. In his film *The Sacrament*, West adopts the format of a found-footage film, subjecting that genre and its associated technology to scrutiny. The plot follows journalists visiting a commune known as Eden Parish that is overseen by a sinister leader. Though set in the present day, the film is clearly influenced by the events of the Jonestown Massacre in 1978, and ends violently. For some critics the film was too slow.<sup>67</sup> West's preference for the unhurried, however – which binds together historical references and allegiances, technological preferences, and particular aesthetic and narratological tropes – serves as a theoretical stent: it breaks opens hardened knots of gristly material, allowing access to their inner workings whilst making a bloody mess.

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<sup>1</sup> Ti West, *The House of the Devil* DVD commentary.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew Flanagan, 'Towards an aesthetic of slow in contemporary cinema', *16:9*, November 2008, <[http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11\\_inenglish.htm](http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm)> accessed 17 November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Romney, 'In search of lost time', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2010), p. 43.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Nick James, 'Passive-aggressive', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2010), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Kois, 'Eating your cultural vegetables', *The New York Times*, 29 April 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01Riff-t.html>> accessed 17 November 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott, 'In defense of the slow and boring', *The New York Times*, 3 June 2011, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/movies/films-in-defense-of-slow-and-boring.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/movies/films-in-defense-of-slow-and-boring.html?_r=1&)> accessed 17 November 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Shaviro, 'Slow cinema vs fast films', *The Pinocchio Theory*, 12 May 2010, <<http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=891>> accessed 17 November 2017.

<sup>11</sup> David Company, 'Introduction. When to be fast? When to be slow?' in Company (ed.), *The Cinematic* (London: Whitechapel, 2007), pp. 10–11.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Ira Jaffe, *Slow Movies: Countering the Cinema of Action* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 45–46.

<sup>13</sup> Tina Kendall, 'Against slow and boring: reframing slowness in global art cinema', response paper delivered at SCMS conference, Seattle, 20 March 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. (emphasis in original).

<sup>15</sup> David Bordwell, 'Good and good for you', *Observations on Film Art*, 10 July 2011, <<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/07/10/good-and-good-for-you/>> accessed 17 November 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Song Hwee Lim, *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2014), p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> Admittedly, not all commentators reiterate the dualism. Karl Schoonover, for instance, notes that 'slow film is not [...] simply in a pointless headlock with Hollywood's temporal economy. Rather it speaks to a larger system of tethering value

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to time, labour to bodies, and productivity to particular modes and forms of cultural reproduction.’ Schoonover, ‘Wastrels of time: slow cinema’s laboring body, the political spectator, and the queer’, *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, vol. 53. no. 1 (2012), p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Tiago de Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge, ‘Introduction. From slow cinema to slow cinemas’, in de Luca and Jorge (eds), *Slow Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 3–4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Miklos Kiss and Anna Backman Rogers, ‘Dead time and intensified continuity in Nicolas Winding Refn’s *Drive*’, paper delivered at Fast/Slow: Intensifications of Cinematic Speed symposium, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, 4 April 2013; Jaffe, *Slow Movies*, p. 87; Tomas Hachard, ‘Passing time: Sofia Coppola’s *Somewhere*’, *CineAction*, no. 85 (2011), pp. 22–25; Michael Gott, ‘The slow road to Europe: the politics and aesthetics of stalled mobility in Hermakono and Morgen’, in de Luca and Jorge (eds), *Slow Cinema*, pp. 299–311.

<sup>21</sup> Carol Clover, ‘Her body, himself: gender in the slasher film’, *Representations*, no. 20 (1987), p. 189.

<sup>22</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990); see, especially, pp. 128–44.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Tudor, ‘Why horror? The peculiar pleasures of a popular genre’, *Cultural Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1997), p. 456.

<sup>24</sup> Anna Powell, *Deleuze and Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 154.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Brophy, ‘Horrority – the textuality of contemporary horror films’, *Screen*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1986), p. 5.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Linda Williams, 'Film bodies: gender, genre, and excess', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 44 no. 4 (1991), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 83.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Thrower, *Nightmare USA: The Untold Story of the Exploitation Independents*, 2nd edn (Surrey: FAB Press, 2008), p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 38, 412, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>35</sup> Lim, *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness*, pp. 116–49.

<sup>36</sup> Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies: A Critical History of the Horror Movie from 1968*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 1988), p. 169.

<sup>37</sup> Nick Pinkerton, review of *The Funhouse*, *Sight and Sound*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2013), p. 116.

<sup>38</sup> As Caetlin Benson-Allott identifies, the only horror films that have featured videotape and VCRs as technologies causing the eruption of the horrific are *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983) and *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998), the latter remade as *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002). None of these could be described as slow. Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 70.

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- <sup>39</sup> Bruce Klopfenstein, 'The diffusion of the VCR in the United States', in Mark R. Levy (ed.), *The VCR Age: Home Video and Mass Communication* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), p. 22.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.
- <sup>43</sup> Lucas Hildebrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 12.
- <sup>44</sup> Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 36.
- <sup>45</sup> M.G. Harvey and J.T. Rothe, 'Video cassette recorders: their impact on viewers and advertisers', *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 25, no. 6 (1985–86), pp. 19–27.
- <sup>46</sup> Klopfenstein, 'The diffusion of the VCR in the United States', p. 23.
- <sup>47</sup> Hildebrand, *Inherent Vice*, p. 13.
- <sup>48</sup> Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), p. 161.
- <sup>49</sup> Cubitt, *Timeshift*, p. 58.
- <sup>50</sup> As Graham Murdock notes, 'It should come as no surprise that moralists have seized on video tapes as a particular cause for concern [...] They have the visual power of films, with the extra options of repeat viewing and slow-motion.' Murdock, 'Figuring out the arguments', in Martin Barker (ed.), *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media* (London: Pluto, 1984), p. 56.
- <sup>51</sup> David Church, *Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video and Exploitation Film Fandom* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 12.
- <sup>52</sup> Lim, *Tsai Ming-liang and a Cinema of Slowness*, p. 35.



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<sup>53</sup> Matthew Flanagan, '*Slow Cinema*': *Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* (University of Exeter: unpublished PhD thesis, 2012), p. 199.

<sup>54</sup> Lena Dunham, 'Oh the horror: Ti West on filmmaking', *Interview*, 21 April 2009, <<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/ti-west>> accessed 17 November 2017.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Geoff King, *Indie 2.0: Change and Continuity in Contemporary Indie Film* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), p. 122.

<sup>57</sup> Maria San Filippo, 'A cinema of recession: micro-budgeting, micro-drama, and the "mumblecore" movement', *CineAction*, no. 85 (2011), p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> King, *Indie 2.0*, p. 128.

<sup>59</sup> Reinforcing Ti West's connection to the culture of the VCR, he contributed a short tale to the portmanteau film *V/H/S* (2012). Mumblecore directors Joe Swanberg and Adam Wingard also directed segments. Only Wingard returned for the sequel, *V/H/S/2* (2013). Despite their titles, the relation of the content of these films to videotape as a distinct medium is only partial, hence their relegation to an footnote in this essay.

<sup>60</sup> A valuable comparison: Kelly Reichardt's slow cinema *Wendy and Lucy* (2008) also features a lengthy search for a missing dog.

<sup>61</sup> Church, *Grindhouse Nostalgia*, p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>63</sup> *The House of the Devil* DVD commentary.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Church, *Grindhouse Nostalgia*, p. 121.

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<sup>67</sup> For example: ‘It’s clear we’ve got a Jonestown situation about to happen here. Still, it takes a full forty-five minutes to get this confirmed, and *The Sacrament* eats up the clock by basically watching [...] journalists at their job, talking to people about why they came to Eden Parish.’ Jordan Hoffman, ‘TIFF Review: *The Sacrament*’, 12 September 2013, <[www.film.com/movies/the-sacrament-review](http://www.film.com/movies/the-sacrament-review)> accessed 2 November 2017).