CINEPHILE

The University of British Columbia's Film Journal

cinephile.ca

CINEPHILE

Table of Contents

Editor's Note

Horror cinema has always held a strange place in the mainstream. On one hand, it is reviled by the moral majority and seen as a tool for corrupting impressionable youth, and on the other, it is a source of ritual enjoyment bound up in nostalgic memories of drive-in theatres and Saturday night viewings with friends. Perhaps it is this dichotomy that makes horror films such a guilty pleasure for so many of us; despite their often misogynistic and gruesome elements, they're just so damn enjoyable on the most basic of levels.

This issue of *Cinephile* explores the ways that more recent horror films have attempted to break free of established conventions and mirrored elements of their own cultural surroundings, and attempts to explain some of the shifts these films have taken in modernizing and localizing horror's tropes. Coming from a genre that has provided so many clichéd and stereotypical conventions (the one-dimensional character archetypes of slasher cinema, the killer's P.O.V. shot, and so on) the modern horror film needs to fight an uphill battle if it wants to leave an impression on audiences. One might think that with so many successful horror features being remade as we speak, there is little left that has not already been done. I would argue that there is limitless potential for horror cinema to recycle itself, perhaps no more evident than in the topic of the first article, Bruce McDonald's 2008 film *Pontypool*.

Steen Christiansen's opening article explores the ways in which the film transposes the site of horror from the visible to the aural, using the recent (although contentious) torture porn cycle to discuss how the film utilizes a critical approach to the cycle, perhaps initiating a new critical turn in horror cinema. From a more sociological perspective, Gregory Vance Smith explores the ways in which horror's "murderous child" changes throughout history to reflect the cultural traumas of its time, using both historical and modern examples. Keeping it in the horror family, Lindsey Scott focuses on the changes that occurred in the American remake of Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998), examining how the genre has shifted in its representations of motherhood. Matt Hills covers the shifts in horror on television using BBC Wales' *Torchwood* as a case study, and discusses the many articulations of the series across multiple platforms and incarnations. Caroline Verner examines French New Extremism, and the ways in which the globalization process can have an effect on cultural artifacts, using Alexandre Aja's *Haute Tension,* Julien Maury and Alexandre

Bustillo's *À l'intérieur* and Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs*. Finally, Joshua Ferguson takes a look at two of David Cronenberg's films not typically considered horror cinema, *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises*, and theorizes that their horror comes from the queer embodiment of gender and sexuality.

I must admit, I take a great deal of pleasure in the inclusion of a veritable cornucopia of video covers in the centerfold, mostly for the awareness of simply how many horror films have been made (many of which you will likely never have heard of). The term "ad nauseam" in the issue's title specifically refers to this, remembering horror cinema's recent past as an easy-in for burgeoning young VHS distibutors and as a cheap buy for video stores looking to fill their shelves with costly but attractive looking product. While the majority of these films have had little impact on the contemporary horror film, their dominance through the sheer number of films produced on the viewing public has left quite a mark on the consensus of what defines the horror genre. In fact, while you may not have seen a great number of the films shown throughout the issue, there is a good chance you will at least recognize many of their covers.

Horror's recent past, both good and bad, still serves as a site of authenticity (modern films are constantly compared to the "classics" of the 1980s). While this issue examines the more recent changes in horror cinema, it does so with one foot firmly planted in the past, hoping to expand upon the already established field of horror cinema studies. As the old saying goes, "you can't know where you are going until you know where you have been."

-Dax Sorrenti

Contributors

Steen Christiansen is assistant professor of English at Aalborg University and works at the intersection of cultural and media studies. He has researched mainly in the fields of film, comic books and cultural studies, recently publishing on shadows in Lars von Trier's *Element of Crime* and the rats of China Miéville. Currently, he is in the process of finishing a book on the hauntological effects of media and technology on a broad range of texts, ranging from books to film and music.

Matt Hills is a Reader in Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University. He is the author of a range of books such as *The Pleasures of Horror* (Continuum 2005) and, most recently, *Triumph of a Time Lord: Regenerating Doctor Who in the 21st Century* (IB Tauris 2010), both featuring chapters on TV Horror. Other recent or forthcoming work includes a book on *Torchwood*, as well as chapters on the *Saw* franchise, M. Night Shyamalan, and horror film festivals.

Joshua Ferguson has recently completed his Master of Arts degree in Film Studies at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Theatre and Film. His research interests include: gender and sexuality in cinema, Japanese cinema, feminist film analysis, Hollywood hegemony in relation to gender and sexuality, representation of women in comic book cinema. His thesis work explored and articulated an important queer history of Japanese cinema. He theorizes that both jidaigeki (period films) and gendaigeki (contemporary films) samurai and yakuza films, in representing specific time periods, work to either repudiate Japan's cultural history of queer gender and sexuality and/or represent it explicitly in relation to the time period which the film depicts. Consequently, these films allude to an intense queer representational and cultural struggle in Japanese cinema; and, illustrate the resilient sense of Japanese culture(s) via a (re)connection with ideologies of gender and sexuality that existed prior to Japan's modernization and assimilation of Western ideological frameworks.

Lindsey Scott received her PhD in English and Film from the University of Liverpool. She has a BA (Hons) in English and Media and an MA in Film/Fiction from De Montfort University. Her research interests include writing and screening the body; gender representation in horror cinema; popular literary adaptations; the Gothic in literature and film; and screen adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Her thesis examines the absent presence of Shakespeare's tragic women on film, exploring bodies that appear on the borderline of meaning and open up a marginal or liminal space of investigation. She has presented her work at Stirling, Chester, Roehampton, Stratford, Warwick, Leicester and Nottingham and has published articles in scholarly journals including Shakespeare Survey and Literature/Film Quarterly. Her current research projects include an exploration of the vampire's body in contemporary fictions and representations of the violated body in Julie Taymor's *Titus*.

Gregory Vance Smith is an independent scholar who received his PhD in Communication from the University of South Florida. His work focuses on issues of identity production of youth and explorations of deviance in the media. His current research ranges from disembodied gender in Japanese animation to the convergence of cultural production and horror films.

Caroline Verner, film scholar and aspiring screenwriter, is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Cinema and Media Studies at York University. She received a B.A.H. in Film Studies from Queen's University in 2005, and a Master's degree in Communication and Culture from York and Ryerson Universities in 2009. Her latest research considers both cognitive and semiotic approaches to narrative comprehension, and examines the contributory factors that have helped shape the surging trend in unconventional narration, as well as the ideological implications of plot formations. Her research interests are widely varied, and include American cyberpunk cinema as resistance cinema, the psychology of body horror, and the history of the screenplay.

CINEPHILE.CA

Visit our website for links to all the scenes featured in the issue, as well as web exclusive essays, interviews, back issues, a comments forum, a blog, an RSS feed, photos from events, subscription offers, and other embedded video clips.

Speaking the Undead:

Uncanny Aurality in *Pontypool*

Steen Christiansen

Sound has rarely been dealt with in the horror genre, yet carries immense importance for the mood of the films. For one film in particular, the Canadian *Pontypool* (Bruce McDonald, 2009), sound has a central role to play, creating a divergence from other, contemporary horror films. The current style of horror cinema has for the past five years been dominated by the so-called torture porn films, emphasizing grisly and extremely visual depictions of torture, pain, dismemberment and death. The success of films such as *Saw* (James Wan, 2004) and *Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2005) has spawned a host of imitators and sequels, in many ways reminiscent of the cycle of slasher films in the 1980s. However, there are signs that some horror films are currently moving away from this emphasis on visual terror and instead moving the monstrous and the terrifying back into off-screen space. One of these films is *Pontypool,* which follows William Burroughs's dictum that language is a virus. In *Pontypool*, however, it is only the English language which carries the virus, turning people first into echoes: beings who are only able to repeat the phrases they hear others say. In this way, the language of the affected people breaks down and finally they must kill to end the pain of utter lack of communication.

I will argue that *Pontypool* is not only an example of a change currently taking place in horror cinema, but is itself also critical of the recent cycle of horror films with an overemphasis on visceral images. In contrast, McDonald has chosen to scale back on the visual effects and have *Pontypool* remain a one-location film, set in a soundproof radio studio where reports of the virus and the attacks of the infected only come through via the radio waves. As such, it is a subtle film, locating the horrific infection in language and sound, rather than in onscreen space. In this way, terror is placed in what Michel Chion has referred to as the *acousmêtre* (*The Voice in Cinema* 21), thus moving away from the primacy of the image and calling for a renewal of horror cinema emphasizing mood and suspense over graphic exploitation.

The explicit and graphic representations of violence and murder that have overtaken the box office for horror films are indicative of a shift in the visual style of Hollywood horror; a visual excess of gory images stringing together a threadbare narrative. For torture porn, image prevails over narrative in what Russell Manning refers to as the "aestheticization of the technical" ("Taking Baudrillard to the Movies [To Talk About Death]"). The visual impact of

the image is what structures these films and as such, they are symptomatic of what Linda Williams refers to as "the frenzy of the visible" in her 1989 study *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible*. Indeed, the pleasure that we take from the torture porn films, is "neither an aberration nor an excess; rather, it is a logical outcome of a variety of discourses of sexuality that converge in, and help further to produce, technologies of the visible" (36). Rather than discourses of sexuality, torture porn employs discourses of violence and horror as a system for structuring the world. Following Manning, then, we can see how the technologies of the visible obscure any narrative or cultural significance. This is the argument which Brenda Cromb makes in her article "Gorno: Violence, Shock and Com-

erything (Tony Burgess, 1998). While it is language rather than technology which carries the virus, most of the horror and tension of *Pontypool* emerges from the presence of radio technology, both in terms of holding back much of the information typically shown in other contemporary horror films and from the realization that technology helps spread the language virus.

Pontypool's major contribution to a renewal of horror cinema thus lies in deliberately resisting the image as the locus of the horrific and instead placing the horrific in sound, the source of which is kept off-screen for most of the film's duration. The language virus of the film participates in the peculiar relationship of sound and image which Chion terms the *acousmêtre*. In *The Voice in Cinema*, Chion

> # What haunts Pontypool's screen is this proliferation of voices which the image constantly attempts to cage, to control and force meaning upon, yet it remains impossible.

edy," that torture porn films have been criticized for not being "about something" other than violence (21). Cromb's article, from which mine extends, further describes the origin, context and cinematic devices of the cycle.

The current cycle of torture porn then wishes us to consider horror as a visual genre, one which oversteps boundaries of what is acceptable to portray on-screen and demands that we squirm in our seats as the blood and intestines flow. To the extent that horror often deals with cultural anxieties, the torture porn cycle suggests that we are currently afraid of the visual, while at the same time deeply fascinated with it, which might explain its commercial success. Certainly it seems that there is another cycle in horror where technology and media are cast as horrific monsters; consider *Pulse* (Jim Sonzero, 2006, original Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001)*, White Noise* (Geoffrey Sax, 2005)*, Cell* (Stephen King, 2006), *The Signal* (David Bruckner, Dan Bush, Jacob Gentry, 2007) and, of course *Pontypool*, based on a novel titled *Pontypool Changes Ev-*

describes how the *acousmêtre* is at the same time inside and outside the filmic image. It is not inside, because the source of sound is not visible; it remains off-screen, only described by people calling the radio station. Nor is it outside, since it is not clearly positioned off-screen in an imaginary 'wing,' like a master of ceremonies or a witness, and it is implicated in the action, constantly about to be part of it (*Audio-Vision* 129).

Here, the presence of the main character Grant Mazzy (Stephen McHattie) complicates film's use of sound. As the radio disc jockey, we constantly see Mazzy's face and mouth as a central focal point, in many ways making him the film's master of ceremonies (something which becomes significant at the end of both the film and this analysis). Furthermore, Mazzy quotes Roland Barthes' argument from *Camera Lucida* that trauma is a news photo without a caption, yet we might argue that *Pontypool* gives us the caption (in spoken language, not written) but no photo (no visual information about the events is

provided). This is why *Pontypool* is so effective; because we are literally kept in the dark, the experience becomes more traumatic.

The acousmêtric voices of *Pontypool* do not originate from simply one person but many—people who call the radio station, the weatherman Ken Loney (Rick Roberts), and eventually those who become infected with the language virus. Yet what is shared between all these different voices, even as the bodies of the voices start emerging into the frame of the film, is that they originate within a peculiar ambiguous space lingering somewhere between the filmic stage and the proscenium, a place we do not have a name for, but that is always brought into play by the cinema (*The Voice in Cinema* 24). It is this space of the heard but unseen which *Pontypool* activates and where it locates its horror. The voices, ever encroaching on the image until they emerge as abject beings, are what generate horror in *Pontypool*, a very different kind of horror than that offered by torture porn.

Voices hold a special position in a film's soundtrack. As Chion points out that "the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it" (*The Voice in Cinema* 5). This is another reason why *Pontypool* is so frightening, because it is impossible to close your ears or 'hear away.' Sound envelops us as we hear the infected voices, which means we are also in danger of being infected by them, since voices are such a central part of our communication. We are unable to choose not to hear the voices, because they are always at the centre of our acoustic space, which is why the language virus is so infectious and dangerous.

Even the absence of voices becomes frightening, as in the scene when the technician Laurel-Ann (Georgina Reilly) has been turned into a zombie (ironically referred to as 'conversationalists' by director Bruce McDonald) by the language virus but is trapped outside the isolation booth. Attempting to smash her way into the booth but ultimately failing, we see her writhing and shaking, desperately trying to reproduce the sound of a voice, but there are no voices for her to echo. Met with only complete silence, she spews forth a mass of blood on the window of the booth and dies. In other words, the zombie conversationalists only exist as echoes of what is already there; silence will inevitably destroy them.

Interestingly, we find an unusual absence in the film—we barely see any of the infected, but instead only hear about the spread of the virus and the violent riots which erupt all over Pontypool. Our only information about the infected comes from sounds and voices, and this is where the weatherman, Ken Loney, plays an important role in
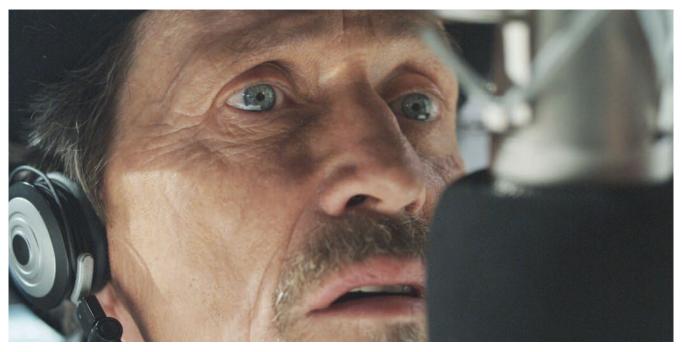
relaying information. His voice is the most prominent in terms of making us—the spectators and the characters in the isolation booth—imagine what is happening around the town of Pontypool. Significantly, Ken is constantly referred to and refers to himself as 'sitting in the sunshine helicopter,' until Mazzy is told that Ken is in fact simply sitting in his Dodge Dart on top of a hill overlooking Pontypool. As Sydney points out to Mazzy, Ken even plays sound effects in order to appear more convincing, further adding to the argument that sound is all-important for the people of Pontypool. Yet, everyone seems content to play along with this fiction, in order to have a news helicopter in this small, rural town. Sound, especially voices, are thus given primary authority in this case, giving us an indication of the importance of voices for the film.

This is the innovative move of *Pontypool*—it privileges aurality over visuality and through this aesthetic device it activates Chion's nameless space, which is what Jeffrey Sconce would call a haunted space: an electronic presence which runs through the entire film, constantly generating anxiety over what is heard but not seen (4). It is this *acousmêtre* of the sound-not-seen which is the primary horrific device in the film. Voices take on uncanny properties, unsettling us as we never know if they will infect us or if they already belong to the infected, such as in the scene where Dr. Mendez is sitting in the sound booth with Sydney and Mazzy. First Mendez starts repeating "breathe... breathe..." then starts speaking in another language, which makes Syd and Mazzy suspicious. The tension builds as they realize he may be infected and turn to speaking in French in order to communicate without spreading the infection. Sydney and Mazzy leave Mendez alone in the sound booth, yet it is unclear if he is truly infected or not. The mark of the virus is the onset of babbling, of communicative breakdown where the infected cannot break free from the feedback loop in which they are caught. The zombie conversationalists are, in effect, recorders trapped in an infinite loop, thus becoming, for lack of a better word, pieces of technology, emphasized by Mendez's statement about Ken Loney: "That's it. He's gone. This is what he is now [a conversationalist]. He's just a crude radio signal. He's seeking."

What haunts *Pontypool*'s screen is this proliferation of voices which the image constantly attempts to cage, to control and force meaning upon, yet it remains impossible. There is a satirical scene in which BBC World's Nigel Healing (a fictional character) goes live on TV with Mazzy on the line, trying to confirm whether or not the riots are in fact Canadian separatist terror attacks. Mazzy refuses to agree with Healing, yet is forced to acknowledge that no one knows what is actually

happening, allowing Healing to put his own spin on the events. The sensationalist Healing attempts to cage and control Mazzy's voice, but Healing's attempts are undercut for us as spectators by producer Briar, as she exclaims that Healing "knows nothing." Again we witness *Pontypool*'s insistence on the authority of the spoken word over that of the visual spectacle. There is a certain visual colonialism going on here, through an attempt to determine the meaning of words and to subordinate them to the visual. This colonial line of inquiry might be taken further, since it is only the English language which carries the virus, for

nity, to him generating a 'talking cure' for the infection. He cures Sydney from the language virus by de-semanticizing the meaning of words, effectively creating a language of silence (in the way that a language which does not communicate anything might as well be silent) which kills the infection. Yet there seems to be a very fine line between this de-semanticization and the echo-babble of the zombie conversationalists, emphasized by the Canadian military who order Sydney to stop broadcasting, thinking Mazzy is one of the infected. In the end, Sydney refuses, and as she rushes to kiss Mazzy we hear the military's countdown finish.

reasons we never learn. However, considering the propensity of Canadian films to comment on the interaction of English and French languages, we might argue that *Pontypool's* infection device enforces the English language as a kind of colonial mimicry. The zombie conversationalists are a blasphemous version of Homi Bhabha's argument about mimicry's power in his book *The Location of Culture*. We can see how authority becomes displaced aurally and how the colonial subject is disciplined by what Bhabha refers to as the metonymy of presence (128); yet, here we are dealing with the far more insidious strategic function of colonial power through sound and (by extension) language.

What is significant is that in *Pontypool* the image revolves around the origin of the embodied voice. We are constantly confronted with frames where Mazzy's head is the main focus and his mouth is central on screen, usually close to the microphone. Mazzy is given the highest authority of all the voices in the film, starting with his confrontational, 'full disclosure' news coverage about the dangers of pot growers in the local commu-

Just as we hear the building tension of what we can only assume to be an explosion, the screen goes black. The end comes not in the form of silence but instead in the darkness of the screen; when the image disappears and the credits scroll, we hear a news anchor relate how "French-Canadian riot police have successfully contained the violent uprising in the small town in Ontario, Canada, Pontypool... Pontypool... Pontypool... Pontypool...", indicating that the infection has not been successfully stopped. After the credits, we see a high-contrast black-and-white version of Mazzy and Sydney at a Japanese-style bar, with stylized snow falling outside, where they discuss where they will run now, since Mazzy cannot "live under the establishment rules any longer." The end comes with Mazzy pointing his gun at the viewer, cutting to a black screen with the red words "Fin", thus ending the film with the French language instead of English.

So, *Pontypool* moves away from the *gornographic* visualization of horror, and instead creates a tension between the seen and unseen, continually allowing

spectators to visualize the horrors outside the radio studio in their own minds, thus allowing them to make present the horror through their auditory imagination. While there are gruesome scenes in the film, *Pontypool* never emphasizes the visual spectacle of the horror genre; instead, it intelligently plays with the haunted space between onscreen and off-screen sound, and so stages an apocalypse just beyond sight of the spectators. The majority of the events taking place are never visualized, nor do we see the aftermath of these events. Generically, *Pontypool* reconfigures the place of the image in horror cinema and provides an example of how aurality may contribute directly to the genre and how horror can be reconfigured from its present state of a frenzy of the visible.

Not only are the technologies of the visible downplayed by keeping the action almost solely within one location, but there are few visual effects shots. At the same time, technologies of the aural are emphasized and brought to the foreground by locating many of the classical scenes of zombie cinema in the haunted space between onscreen and off-screen; never seen but always heard. The ambiguous use of sound and vision is a revitalization of earlier horror films, mainly from the late 1960s and 1970s, where we as spectators are left in a hesitant position, never entirely sure of what is happening. It is a subtle film which opposes the blunt, flat aesthetics of visuality from the current cycle of horror films. Separating horror films along an aural versus visual axis also allows us to pay particular attention to how the horrific effect is created, whether it is through Bernard Herrmann's shrieking violins in *Psycho*

(Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) or the brutal imagery of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974). For the last five years, the frenzy of the visible has dominated the screen. It remains to be seen if a frenzy of the aural will replace it.

Works Cited

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Trans. Claubia Gorbman. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

Chion, Michel. *The Voice in Cinema*. Trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

Cromb, Brenda. "Gorno: Violence, Shock and Comedy", *Cinephile* 4 (2008): 18-24.

Edelstein, David. "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn", *New York Magazine,* 6 Feb. 2006. Web. 8 July. 2010.

Manning, Russell. "Taking Baudrillard to the Movies (To Talk About Death)." *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* 7.1 (2010): n. pag. Web 8 July. 2010.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television.* London: Duke UP, 2000.

Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible*, Los Angeles. University of California Press, 1989.

The Bad Seed and The Girl Next Door:

Integrating Cultural Trauma through Horror's Children

Gregory Vance Smith

The murderous child of horror cinema today creates fear and revulsion with as much relevance as the archetype produced in Mervyn LeRoy's *The Bad Seed* (1956). The murderous child has the ability to carry the temporal baggage of a culture affected by trauma by allowing an apolitical outlet for memorializing the violence or the motive behind traumatic events that resist a narrative frame. Trauma is not the story of what bad things happened to someone, but the effect that persists both in individuals and cultures. As new traumas occur in a culture, the depiction of the murderous child may change to embody the trauma, thus constantly revitalizing this frequently used horror trope.

Trauma has both personal and social components. When traumatic events occur, the effects resonate through a population, changing the social and personal landscapes of those in its wake. In World War II, soldiers faced the trauma of being attacked by or attacking the enemy, but at home, the removal of the men from relationships, families, communities, and jobs required that those left behind reform the social landscape left in ruin. *The Bad Seed* performs a drama of separation; in her father's absence due to a military posting, a little girl becomes overly competi-

tive and amoral, eventually developing into a remorseless murderer. In Gregory Wilson's contemporary film *The Girl Next Door* (2008), a single mother corrupts the normal curiosities of children, turning them into militaristic torturers and rapists in a time when an exposé of American troops surfaces, developing both a civic and personal trauma of identity.

Cultural critic Mieke Bal notes the social significance of sharing the experience of trauma through narrative expression:

Traumatic (non) memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary event, not even an activity. In contrast, ordinary narrative memory fundamentally serves a social function: it comes about in a cultural context whose frame evokes and enables the memory. It is a context in which, precisely, the past makes sense in the present, to others who can understand it, sympathize with it, or respond with astonishment, surprise, even horror; narrative memory offers some form of feedback that ratifies the memory . (x)

Bal marks the emergence of narrative memory as trauma played out through drama when the present demands "the incorporation of the past in it" (x). This performance requires "a second person to act as a confirming witness to a painfully elusive past", thus moving it from a realm of personal memory and into the consciousness of "the culture in which the traumatized subject lives" (x). Bal posits that, through this process of witnessing, "[t]he acts of memory thus become an exchange between first and second person that sets in motion the emergence of narrative" (x).

In both films, secondary characters observe the trauma or its effects. These secondary characters operate as witnesses, but they do not have the agency to challenge the murderous children. As witnesses — powerless as the viewer to change the situation — the secondary characters offer a drama that allows a narrative to emerge. Through

The murderous child is a planned incongruity; a combination of symbolic elements that emphasizes aspects of normalcy and the traumatic that would not otherwise be foci (Burke *Performance* 111-112). In the cases of the films mentioned in this essay, the children are from middle-class homes, represented as the cultural norm, but their characters have been combined with aspects of the sadist, the sociopath, and the psychopath in a way that allows audiences to experience a view of both the middle class home and a social trauma. This essay analyzes two films engaging differing traumas to produce similar horrors. *The Bad Seed* explores how societal upheaval in WWII-America enacts a social trauma that shapes the murderous child. Further, an extended analysis of *The Girl Next Door* examines how the torture of prisoners by Americans in *Abu Ghraib* distorts the scope of children's acts, as they sexually

The murderous child is a planned incongruity; a combination of symbolic elements that emphasizes aspects of normalcy and the traumatic that would not otherwise be foci

the perspective of dramatist Kenneth Burke, the scene, act, agent, agency, and purpose interact to jointly determine each dramatic element's scope of characterization within the drama (*Grammar* 15-20). When a child (agent) murders (act) others in a middle-class home (scene), the relationship between dramatic elements appears skewed because the act is out of proportion with the scope of the agent and scene. Since the murderous children are framed within a scope beyond the middle-class norm (that is, they are labelled terrorists), they are circumscribed at a social level and imbued with the agency of those known to cause trauma. When analyzed through the lens of Burke's dramatism in tandem with theories from public memory studies, the murderous child can be seen to memorialize public trauma by integrating it into a narrative drama that becomes confessable. Through mutual performance of memory, a resolved narrative frames trauma in cultural memory.

humiliate and torture a teenage girl to death.

The Bad Seed introduces the contemporary murderous child archetype and demonstrates how the social trauma of WWII — combined with the rhetorical positioning of fatherless homes leading to juvenile deviance — creates a scope where the murderous child can exist as horror. Though the title character of the film is Rhoda, an eight-year-old girl who kills a classmate for receiving an award she covets, the narrative follows a group of adults — primarily her mother and landlady — as they argue nature versus nurture and express an interest in Freudian psychology. The drama begins with the father, a military officer, leaving for a temporary assignment. The father's absence and the undirected discourse and beliefs about childhood deviance distract the adults from Rhoda's actions, even when her mother begins to suspect her. Later the underclass groundskeeper discovers the truth but cannot inform anyone due to his position and

lack of credibility. A point that may be missed or incompletely analyzed by contemporary viewers is the fear that deviant youth would arise from homes and communities where male role models had been stationed overseas during World War II.

In *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*, Columbia University journalism professor David Hajdu demonstrates how this theory was extensively addressed in print, newsreel, and television coverage. A contemporary audience could dismiss the film as a reserved example of the murderous child developed on a setting of class and psychological theory, but the original audience was expected to understand the concept of juvenile deviance erupting when men spent time away from their families. Rhoda exemplifies these wild youths — the children left behind when their fathers had extended tours or never returned from the war. The murders she enacts reflect the trauma imposed on families due to the framing of the war by a public rhetoric of fear produced by the media, politicians and others with vested interests.

This vein of horror cinema memorializes traumatic events as they have been framed in the public discourse and reconfigures them for a parallel analysis. In his study on lynching and public memory, sociologist Jonathan Markovitz positions the role of movies that contextualize lynching outside its historical roots:

> By separating lynching from its roots in white supremacy and by changing the gender and race of its victims and perpetrators, these films help to sever lynching from its historical ties. In the process, the metaphor loses some of its specificity and weight, as its weightlessness enables it to truly become a floating signifier whose meaning is indeterminate. (68)

While the social history of lynching is removed from the films, the floating signifier allows for lynching to be examined outside its overly-determined political context. In other words, the scope must expand to characterize the scene and act of a lynching that would otherwise disrupt the audience's expectations. For *The Bad Seed* to successfully present a child murderer in an era when the term *serial killer* was unknown, it relied on the trauma of war and the understood effect of the absent father to make the character's agency and actions believable. Rhoda's actions fit within the scope of memorial, a signifier of trauma through the mimesis of the murderous child.

Jonathan Lake Crane argues in *Terror and Everyday Life* that horror has evolved to mirror a 1993 audience of "idiots living only to perish in deaths made memorable by their sound and fury" (154). Crane directly compares the audience's worldview to the scope of horror film, but he remains fixed on the horror genre as a continually changing commodity produced for an audience with a singular taste — in other words, a genre dying at the logical extent of its progression through changing style. On the subject of horror production and audience tastes, Rick Worland writes in his 2007 book *The Horror Film: An Introduction*:

> to say that horror films may reflect certain ideals, values, and fears of a period is not to suggest a simple or direct correlation between the form and content of a particular movie and an easily discerned set of predominant social feelings. To guess about the collective mood of millions risks claiming far too much for the predictive quality or relevance of particular mass-entertainment texts, each one only a small part of the deluge of mass-mediated messages and experiences with which people are drenched in the postmodern epoch. (266)

Worland continues further points out that anxieties related to the Y2K bug (the fear that computer networks would fail when the date changed to 2000) and anxieties in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks found their way into *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sánchez, 1999), *The Ring* (Verbinski, 2002), and the *War of the Worlds* remake (Spielberg, 2005). Genres may evolve and become refined at their logical end, but horror does not simply evolve through audience taste and changing cinematic styles. As new threats enter the public discourse, horror shifts to new foci instead of remaining dependant on refining the genre's style. New horrors become relevant when the public perceives new threats, and the pervasive effects of Y2K fears and the aftermath of 9/11 in the media and public discourse made these traumas dominant in the social consciousness.

A more recent trauma occurred with the publication of photographs and testimony of American soldiers humiliating Iraqi prisoners at *Abu Ghraib*. The concept of 'us versus them' as related to terrorism and victimization became confused in American public discourse. CBS News featured the story on its *Sixty Minutes II* program, with Rebecca Leung reporting:

> According to the U.S. Army, one Iraqi prisoner was told to stand on a box with his head covered, wires attached to his hands. He was told that if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted.

The candour of the photographs made them different from images associated with 9/11 and the military action surrounding the aftermath. According to English scholar David Simpson:

> They take us in other words, beyond or around the sublime and spectacular, into some interior zone of ongoing confusion and obscure identification. They do not disprove or discredit the role of the spectacle in the unfolding encounter with death that those in the homeland have been experiencing since 9/11, but they impose an added dimension and demand a different response. (133)

The initial description of the torture of Iraqi prisoners at *Abu Ghraib* closely mirrors the torture scenario in *The Girl Next Door*. The film presents two young girls, fifteen-year-old Meg and her polio-afflicted younger sister Susan, whose parents died in a car wreck that led to the girls' placement in the home of a single mother, Ruth. The neighbourhood children gather at Ruth's house where she gives them beer and treats them to sexually suggestive conversation. Most of the children are pre- or early-pubescent.

The movie is told through the memory of David, a man in his late fifties, as he looks at a worn painting of a boy and girl catching crayfish in a stream. Through David's memory, the viewer enters a1950s suburban world marked by deep, vibrant greens and the trappings of early commodity culture with stylish clothes and cars. The setting presents a nostalgic view of yards and houses shining with a Norman Rockwell cleanliness, but the details show the polish only applies to the veneer. The kids in the neighbourhood act like people their age would be expected to act when not under adult supervision. They have a juvenile interest in sex as a topic of conversation, as well as an undercurrent of aggression; the younger boy drops an earthworm in an anthill to watch the ants attack, and the oldest teen uses profanity and takes the persona of a greaser.

The most noticeable flaw in the suburban veneer appears in an early scene when Ruth's three boys corner and tickle Meg. The youngest brother gropes Meg, and she pushes him away. This provokes the oldest boy to begin calling Meg a bitch, but Meg, taller and stronger than the boys, pushes them aside as she leaves the room. The older brother drags out Susan who had been hiding in the closet, throwing her on the bed. Ruth returns and begins to question the younger sister with pseudo-authoritative jargon, and in the same scene she initiates the boys in their role as guardians:

> "Do you know what it means to be in connivance with somebody who does something like that? Well, it means you're guilty too. Even though maybe you didn't do anything in particular, it makes you sort of a fellow traveler. […] What she did was wrong, it's bad behavior. And you forgiving her, just because you love her, that isn't right either."

Ruth instructs Susan to lay down at the end of the bed and pull her panties down. When the girl does not comply, Ruth picks up her braced legs and pulls her to the end of the bed. As she pulls Susan's panties down, the boys looking down in embarrassment begin to walk out. Ruth stops them. "Boys you stay here. Girls just cry. There is nothing we can do about it. And this is for her own good, and you being here is part about it." As Ruth begins hitting the younger sister with a toilet brush, Meg runs in and is restrained by the boys.

Following this incident, domestic child abuse abruptly becomes ritual torture. Meg tries to tell a policeman what has been happening, but when he comes to investigate, Ruth directs his attention away from the situation and he leaves. Meg's punishment for informing the officer jumps to a scene similar to the reports from *Abu Ghraib*. In a dark basement, Meg stands on a stack of books. Her face is blindfolded in burlap, and she has been gagged. Her arms are high above her head, being held up by ropes tied to her wrists. Ruth, her three sons, the neighbour David, and Susan are in the room. The youngest boy tells David the game is that Meg has to tell something secret. Ruth stands back and asks how Meg can talk with a gag in her mouth. This prompts the oldest son to say, "we don't want her to tell right away." They begin taking books away one-by-one and demanding Meg to "confess." The older boy asks if Ruth minds if he cuts off Meg's clothes, Ruth responds, "No, it is part of the game." As Ruth prepares to leave Meg hanging naked for the night, she tells her:

> "You want to think about one thing, girl. Well, two things, actually. First it could be your little sister standing here instead of you. Second, I know some of the bad things you have done and am kind of interested to hear them, so maybe this confessing isn't

such a kids' game after all. I can hear it from the one of you or I can hear it from the other. You just think about that."

The children and Ruth leave Meg hanging from the ceiling, and are seen returning in incidents where the children physically and sexually assault her. A May 21, 2004 *Washington Post* article reveals accusations by former prisoners who faced similar sexual humiliation. One reported that "Graner [a guard] cuffed him to the bars of a cell window and left him there for close to five hours, his feet dangling off the floor" (Higham and Stephens 2). The film does not directly question the absence of purpose and the allegiance of the children involved in torture, but it meshes the juvenile curiosity with the scope of technical complicity of military hierarchy. In a May 10, 2004 *New Yorker* article, one of the defense attorneys involved in the *Abu Ghraib* case, Gary Myers, is quoted as saying, "Do you really think a group of kids from rural Virginia decided to do this on their own? Decided that the best way to embarrass Arabs and make them talk was to have them walk around nude?" (qtd. in Hersh).

The question of who ultimately bears responsibility for the *Abu Ghraib* actions may never be known, and similarly, the film introduces a question of control, complicity, and connivance. In a scene without Ruth, the oldest son looks at Meg and says: "Fuck her. I'm not even sure that I'm done with you yet. Then again, maybe I am. I don't know. I just don't know." His confusion presents an ambiguous motive, and as those Americans hearing the details of the abuse, the culpability of the son reflects the concern of the culpability of the guards.

In the final scene of torture, Ruth sits in a lawn chair in the basement, smoking. Around the walls, the neighborhood kids stand where two girls drink sodas as everyone watches the oldest son rape Meg who has been stripped, is gagged, and tied down to mattress springs. In her final acts of torture, Ruth heats a hairpin and burns "I FUCK"/"FUCK ME" on Meg's abdomen. Ruth suggests removing Meg's clitoris, justifying this by saying they do it in places like Africa and New Guinea, adding, "Who am I to judge?". As the older boys hold Meg's legs apart, Ruth lights a blowtorch.

The reportage of sexual humiliation in *Abu Ghraib* presented the situation as American soldiers purposefully brutalizing the prisoners' bodies and forcing them to break cultural taboos. David Simpson writes that the public othering of the prisoners falters when they are removed from the context of being perceived as terrorists:

There is every evidence to support and contribute to theory's emphasis on the self-generated identity of the

other and on the reflexivity of a violence that cannot be restricted to one part of the system, as we are promised it might be by the language of revenge, of justice, of good and evil. That Identity that is also, in its more positive potential, the common identity of the human form and the suffering body, which also must be suppressed if the idea of a war of good against evil is to be maintained. (138)

The archetype of the murderous child allows the scope of social traumas to be expanded beyond the political rhetoric that originally framed them, presenting a stark re-examination of the violence or trauma from within the home of the middle class norm. In circumstances where the original event has left a non-memory, the murderous child archetype provides film with an opportunity to memorialize the trauma for a culture still dealing with its effects. Horror films offer the possibility of mimesis of social trauma, and filmmakers continue to characterize the trauma through the archetype of the murderous child.

Works Cited

Bal, Mieke ed. *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. California ed. Berkely: University of California, 1969.

---. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California, 1984.

Crane, Jonathan Lake. *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of Horror Film*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.

Hajdu, David. *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*. New York: Farrar, 2008.

Hersh, Seymour M. "Torture at Abu Ghraib." *The New Yorker* 10 May 2004: n. pag. Web. 20 Jul. 2010.

Higham, Scott and Joe Stephens. "New Details of Prison Abuse Emerge." *The Washington Post* 21 May 2004: A01. Web. 20 July 2010.

Leung, Rebecca. "Abuse at Abu Ghraib." *60 Minutes II*. CBS Worldwide. 5 May 2004. Web. 20 Jul. 2010.

Markovitz, Jonathan. *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004.

Simpson, David. *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006.

Sturken, Marita. *Tourists of Memory: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke, 2007.

Worland, Rick. *The Horror Film: An Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007.

A Mother's Curse:

Reassigning Blame in Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* and Gore Verbinski's *The Ring*

Lindsey Scott

"Rachel starts out as a flawed person who's not the greatest mother, and she's not asking the questions ... It's only after all the drama and the chaos that she realizes ... it's about spending time, asking the questions and recognizing what your child needs before he states it."
-Naomi Watts (qtd. in Baughan 47)

"From the terrifying Davis baby or Damien ... to the terrorized Danny (The Shining) or Carol Ann (Poltergeist), we can trace a visible shift in the ascription of responsibility for the breakdown of traditional family relations. That responsibility has been transferred from child to parent."
-(Sobchack 151-52)

"Horror adapts; like a virus, it goes on and on."
-(Stringer 304)

By its own cyclic nature, the horror genre has spawned "more examples of sequels, prequels and remakes than any other popular film genre in the history of cinema" (Hand and McRoy 1). But as studios and producers continue to unearth new, potentially lucrative material for recycling, twenty-first century trends reveal an "acceleration in the number of remakes" (Hutchings 262) and "increasingly trans-cultural activity" (Hand and McRoy 4). Several Hollywood remakes of Japanese horror cinema have appeared over the last decade, broadening the genre's recycling trends and taking its cultural appropriations to new commercial heights. When DreamWorks acquired the film rights for the Japanese cult horror film, Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998), the remake became "a substantial commercial success" (Hutchings 265), but as the project also left director Gore Verbinski conceding that the genre has been "reinvented so many times that it's hard to set a shot, and not feel like it's a shot that's in someone else's movie" (qtd. in Ozawa 2), it would appear that, in the contemporary horror film, hyper-intertextualization has indeed reached its limit.

It is perhaps our very acceptance of horror recycling *ad nauseam* that has led spectators and critics to ignore some of the mutations that lie at the heart of Verbinski's remake. In several reviews, Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002) was described as "stick[ing] very closely to the original script" (Newman 50) of *Ringu*, but in Nakata's tale of the video curse, Japanese audiences were confronted by the ghost of

Sadako, a murdered young woman who was thrown down a well by her father.[1] For Western audiences, the story behind the video curse was somewhat different: in Verbinski's remake, it is a mother, Anna, who kills her adopted child-daughter Samara by placing a bag over her head and pushing her to her watery grave.

This essay moves beneath the murky surface of Hollywood's familiar appropriation of international horror cinema to examine the genre's changing representations of motherhood. Avoiding the narrow approach often found within discussions of adaptations that constitute "a series of binary oppositions" such as "literature versus cinema, high culture versus mass culture, original versus copy" (Naremore 2), this argument offers an analysis of the mother figure (Rachel/Anna) in Verbinski's film rather than an in-depth, comparative reading.[2] Fidelity, of course, has no relevance here (consider, for instance, Nakata's own loose adapting of Koji Suzuki's novel). As Brigid Cherry observes, "differences in the plots of the Japanese original and the Hollywood remake" allow us to "identify how different factors—either universal or cultural—might be presented in different ways" (169), and while there are many intriguing differences between the two films, passing the blame from the father figure (the male scientist who murders Sadako) to the mother figure (Anna's murder of Samara) is an alteration that has yet to be addressed in critical readings of Verbinski's film.

Anna's murder of Samara raises several important questions. If, as Julian Stringer suggests, the intention of Hollywood executives is to "absorb world culture and sell it back to the rest of the world in a more expensive version" (301), then what version of the story are they reselling, and to what end? If horror texts do have "their own

---

It is perhaps our very acceptance of horror recycling *ad nauseam* that has led spectators and critics to ignore some of the mutations that lie at the heart of Verbinski's remake

---

1. Although Nakata's film clearly implies that the scientist, Dr. Ikuma (already a father and a husband) was having an affair with Shizuko, Sadako's mother, Sadako's birth origins remain somewhat ambiguous. While it is assumed that she is the scientist's biological child for the majority of the narrative, the film's conclusions suggest that Sadako is not entirely human. As Eric White clarifies in a case study of Ringu, "the child's real father may not have been the scientist after all but a god or demon from the sea" (40); nevertheless, the fact that Sadako is murdered by a father figure, biological or otherwise, remains indisputable.

2. The *Ringu* phenomenon extends beyond any original source and includes novels *Ring* (1991), *Spiral* (1995), *Loop* (1998) and *The Birthday* (2000) by Suzuki Koji; Japanese film adaptations *Ringu* (1998) *Rasen* (1998), *Ringu 2* (1999), *Ring 0: Birthday* (2000); a Japanese TV series and a televised film adaptation; a Korean remake; a Manga comic; a videogame; and American remakes *The Ring* and *The Ring 2* (2005). Its countless inter-media and cross-cultural adaptations have influenced each other in so many varying ways that even Suzuki's first novel has been displaced as an original text (Stringer 299-300). Notably, its reach is too broad to be encapsulated in this short argument; rather, this essay serves as a starting point for exploring representations of motherhood and the family through other Ringu texts.

'politics'" and "real socio-cultural effects," defining "what is monstrous" and, indeed, "what should be seen" in societies (Gelder 1), then what does Verbinski's remake present for Western audiences to see regarding single mothers and the changing face of the American family? In the closure of both films, the video curse continues; an endless cycle of revenge that can be deferred but never broken. As is the case with all open-ended horror texts that anticipate another sequel, these endings continue to ring true in the popular imagination. Therefore, if Samara's viral-like curse "goes on and on" in the closure of Verbinski's film, then what socio-cultural messages are passed on with it? (Stringer 304)

From the outset, Verbinski's *The Ring* places the Japanese horror story of *Ringu* firmly in the post-*Psycho* (1960) era of the American horror film, creating "stark nightmare landscapes" and "situating atrocity and
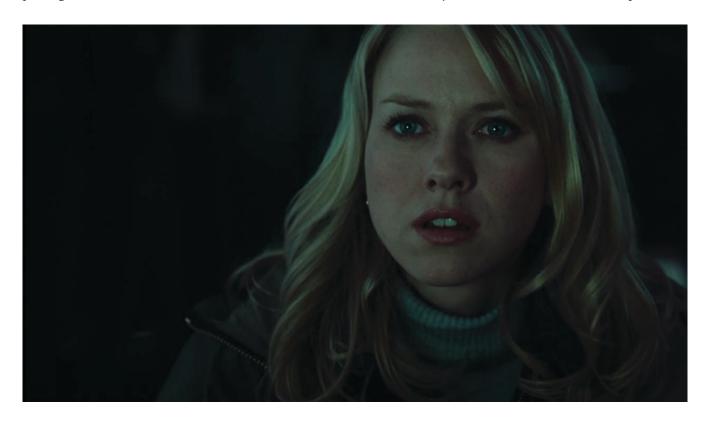
evil within the family" (Worland 116).[3] Although Nakata's film also centres on an estranged mother and father (Reiko and Ryuji) and their son (Yoichi), *The Ring* appears to focus more specifically on "conflicting views of motherhood and its outcomes" (Worland 270). From the beginning, Naomi Watts' Rachel is portrayed as "a flawed person who's not the greatest mother" (qtd. in Baughan 47). She arrives late at her son's school, shouts on her mobile phone and swears the moment she comes into the spectator's view. While her son's teacher is clearly sympathetic, Rachel receives a disapproving look from her son, Aidan (David Dorfman), as he

(Worland 270) begin to surface as *The Ring*'s underlying subtext.

While Yoichi in *Ringu* is very much the child, with his schoolboy clothes and his unwavering obedience to his mother's will, Aidan in *The Ring* often assumes the role of the parent while Rachel is portrayed as the child. At her modern apartment home, she wears bed-shorts and a ballerina tank-top as she throws her clothes around her bedroom like a typical teenager. Aidan, dressed smartly in a suit, stands on a chair that places him

collects up his belongings and exits to wait in the car.

Aidan is obviously at an emotional distance from his mother. His teacher knows more about his grieving (and his uncanny knowledge of his cousin's death) than she does ("Ms Keller, I'm bothered by these drawings"), and in the car-ride home, he sits in the back seat while Rachel can only observe his small reflection in the rear-view mirror. To him, she is always "Rachel," never "mom," and as this mother-child relationship subsequently becomes entangled in the film's other mother-child relationship (Anna-Samara), concerns over the "absence of a traditional nuclear family"

at his mother's height and straightens his tie in front of the living room mirror: "It's a little wrinkled," he says, and nods to the dress that he has already laid out for her to wear. At the funeral, Rachel scolds Aidan for being in his cousin's bedroom without permission, but he simply replies, "it isn't her room anymore." In the following scene, we see her approach a group of teenagers outside the house. She gains their trust by joining them for a cigarette and telling them how, when she was "that age," she and her girlfriend would "sneak up to [her] room and get high." This nod towards rebellious adolescent behavior earns Rachel some valuable information about the video curse, but it is also an element of her characterization that may leave the spectator questioning her ability to establish appropriate adult-child boundaries.

---

3. There are many references to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in *The Ring* (consider, for example, the film's ending score and the shot compositions in Rachel's shower scene) making this archetypal, mother-centred American horror film another underlying text of Verbinski's remake.

Elsewhere in the film, Rachel dresses in her Kirkland University sweats and an oversized waterproof jacket that infantilizes her body. She rows with ex-boyfriend Noah (Martin Henderson) about his inability to grow up, but she also plays childish games herself: "No, I'm not," she tells her boss at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer when he informs her that she's fired, and then dismisses him like a pushover father. At Shelter Mountain, she participates in the cabin manager's amateur card tricks, but as soon as her magician's back is turned, she steals the videotape and tells a simple lie to cover her tracks. After Rachel views the tape, we see Aidan in the kitchen carefully preparing his school lunch. Neatly replacing the lid on the peanut butter and returning it to the fridge, he calls to the closed door of his mother's bedroom: "I'm going to school." Rachel, sitting cross-legged on her bed like a sullen teenager surrounded by urban legend paraphernalia, fails to respond.

Mothers are everywhere in the background of this film, playing out an additional commentary to Rachel's uncomfortable relationship with her maternal responsibilities. When Rachel steps out onto her balcony (just as Reiko does in *Ringu*), she sees another mother in one of the opposite apartment blocks who leaves her child in front of the television before going outside for a cigarette. For one awkward moment, the two women appear to spot each other, and the spectator is drawn to note the similarities between them. Rachel will fail to prevent Aidan from watching the cursed tape on their television; she will also spend more time at work than at home with her son. Through her isolated research, Rachel pieces together the scattered remains of another mother's story—that of Anna Morgan and her adopted daughter, Samara—but at Moesko Island surgery, she is too removed to realize that the teenage boy with mental health problems in the waiting room is in fact the woman doctor's son: "It takes work, you know," the doctor tells her, "some people have limits."

By prioritizing Rachel's quest to discover the truth about the other mother, Verbinski marginalizes *The Ring*'s male characters, a virtual elimination of patriarchal authority that appears to instigate negative consequences throughout the film's narrative. Henderson's Noah has a much weaker presence than Hiroyuki Sanada's Ryuji in *Ringu*. He is very much the man-child, and while in the Japanese version it is Ryuji who possesses psychic abilities, in *The Ring* it is the boy Aidan who can sense things about Samara's curse. The knowledge of the father thus literally passes to the child, leaving Noah devoid of any authority or real paternal influence. Brian Cox's Richard Morgan is another ineffectual patriarchal figure who demands pity from the viewer after losing his wife and livelihood and then taking his own life in front of Rachel. While his suicide in the

bathtub is torturous to watch, the water imagery ties his death to Samara's, either making him culpable in his wife's crime or another victim like the child. Men in Verbinski's film thus too easily become victims—women, it seems, must evidently learn something.

For Verbinski, "emotional logic" and the "Western desire for linearity and resolution" were priorities in his remaking of *Ringu* (qtd. in Lopez n.pag), and Nakata's film, a "low-budget, low-key horror film" (Odell and Le Blanc 150) was evidently found to be lacking.[4] "Emotionally," Verbinski argues, "the film is inherently on the cold side, yet it deals with the relationship between mother and child. So we tried to use this in conjunction with the tape to create the feeling of a resolution" (qtd. in Lopez n.pag). But Verbinski's decision to place emphasis on the mother-child relationship locates *The Ring*'s source of horror in a mother's crime, a mutation that alters the trajectory of the film's supplementary resolution and its ideological message. Although Samara's curse cannot be broken, Rachel *can* learn to become a better mother, but as the child's curse continues to circulate, so do anxieties regarding single mothers and matriarchal families in Western society.

While Reiko in *Ringu* shares the psychic visions of her ex-husband to see the scientist, Dr Ikuma, murdering the much older Sadako, in Verbinski's remake it is Rachel who must learn the truth about Samara's death. An unhinged television sends her hurtling down into the waters below, and as the well's lid begins to close, Noah is entirely removed from this part of the story. We see the child Samara in a pastoral setting, surrounded by fields and grazing horses, and as she hums a song with her back to the camera, the ominous figure of a woman approaches. It is Anna, and despite these occurrences supposedly taking place two decades ago, her dress looks almost Victorian in its cut and style, a deliberate suggestion of her repression. As she looms over her adopted child, she appears as some mad Mrs Rochester escaped from the attic to commit her heinous crime, and in a shockingly swift motion, she places a bag over the child's head. The camera then cuts to a long shot of the struggle filmed through the branches of a tree, a viewpoint that implies a concealed observer and makes the spectator culpable in the mother's crime. "All I ever wanted was you," Anna murmurs, and then lets Samara's body fall. As we see Samara hit the water, the reflection of the mother is shattered.

Like Jane Eyre in Brontë's novel, Rachel is forced to confront her own potentially darker side in Anna Morgan, a mirroring that is emphasized visually through Watt's blonde-haired image and the much dark-

---

4. For an in-depth discussion of the film's fan-bases, see Hills.

er features and costumes of Shannon Cochran's Anna. As Rachel learns the truth about the mother who failed her child, the spectator is able to comprehend fully the emotional drive of this Hollywood horror mutation: a mother's redemption. We see Samara's body rise up from the water into Rachel's arms, and she appears as innocently as a sleeping child. "It's ok now," Rachel whispers. This simple act of maternal love appears to release Samara's ghost, as the sleeping child now slips away and becomes a decomposed corpse. After cradling Samara's discarded body, Rachel says to Aidan: "[Anna] wanted a child more than anything in the world. How could she have done that?" And then, about Samara: "She just wanted to be heard. Sometimes children, they howl or cry or draw pictures..." At this point, mother and father exchange a knowing, guilt-ridden look, to which Rachel responds: "I want to go home." This emotional ending affords a temporary narrative resolution that also neatly coincides with the restoration of the traditional family unit. Noah collects a sleeping and abandoned Aidan, and as the three of them head home in the car, Aidan dozes pleasantly on the back seat while mother and father tentatively hold hands. [5]

In a discussion of horror films from the seventies and eighties, Vivian Sobchack notes that, "the ascription of responsibility for the breakdown of traditional family relations" noticeably transfers "from child to parent" (151-152). In the contemporary American horror film, that responsibility appears to have shifted again—from absent parents (*Halloween*) and terrorizing fathers (*The Shining*) to the figure of the single mother in *The Ring*. As the open-ended formula of the horror film commences, we see Noah killed by Samara, an act of revenge that we are told "won't stop."[6] Now Rachel continues to be punished for the original mother's crime. "You *helped* her?" Aidan asks, appalled by his mother's failure to understand: "you weren't supposed to help her." Rachel pulls up Aidan's sleeve and sees the burn from Samara on his wrist, a hidden mark of abuse on the child's body that the mother has failed to spot. "She never sleeps," he declares. Once again, Verbinski's film implies that Rachel has failed to comprehend the needs of the child. As she attends helplessly to her son's nosebleed, Noah meets his fate at the hands of the vengeful Samara returning from the tomb. The well in Verbinski's remake now becomes far more symbolic: the mother who could not give birth naturally ends up rejecting her child and sending it back to an unnatural womb/tomb; a dark, dismal tunnel at the bottom of which lies a watery, amniotic grave.

While the Japanese *onryou* (or vengeful female ghost narrative) provides a viable space for interrogating patriarchal authority in Nakata's *Ringu*, Verbinski's decision to "replace the adult Sadako with the pre-pubescent girl child Samara" (Blake 222) and place the onus for the killing on the mother, firmly repositions this story in the territory of a dysfunctional matriarchy.[7] The mark of horror that Samara leaves on the faces of her victims is a sight that only the mother must confront (Ruthie, Rachel's sister, discovers her daughter's corpse, while Rachel is the first to discover Noah's body); a sight that, in turn, forces the mother to confront her own potentially monstrous self. As Linda Williams identifies on structures of seeing in the horror film, "in the rare instance when the cinema permits the woman's look, she not only sees a monster, she sees a monster that offers a distorted reflection of her own image" (64). In *The Ring*, other young, potential mothers must also look into the monstrous face of Samara's revenge. Noah's student girlfriend, Beth, will also find his body, while Becca is left traumatized in a mental institution after witnessing her friend's death. Ironically, Verbinski's film ends with mother and son making a copy of the video curse together, an act of maternal protection that is deliberately tainted with the likelihood of inflicting suffering on another family, another mother. "What about the person we show it to?," Aidan asks, "what happens to *them*?" As the video curse spreads to the spectator, carrying with it the threat of Samara's revenge, so too does the warning about the possible failures of motherhood. Regardless of current recycling trends, the horror genre continues to bring contemporary social and cultural anxieties to the surface.

The year before *The Ring*'s release was hailed "the year of the single mom" in Hollywood (Silbergleid n.pag), but while single mothers who adopt or raise their children by themselves are finding spaces of representation in Western popular culture, these representations are also being reined

---

5. Worland also notes how the film "uniquely reconciles the horror film's classic and contemporary modes" by "essentially presenting two endings, one cathartic and traditional, the other the pessimistic, unresolved finale of contemporary horror" (271).

6. Blake observes how, in the Japanese film version, there is "no implication, however, that such a quest may restore their relationship as there is in the US version. The preservation of the next generation is all important, and heterosexual romance, obligatory in America, is deemed an irrelevance" (218).

---

7. In Nakata's *Ringu*, it is the father, not the mother, who is most haunted by ghosts of the past. While Anna commits suicide after murdering Samara, the scientist who kills Sadako is never seen to be punished for his crime until the other scientist father, Ryuji, is killed for watching the tape. Jay McRoy takes this point further, highlighting the ways in which single mothers in Japan "continue to struggle against patriarchal authority" (80). He argues that, in Nakata's film, "tragically and historically repressed women must forever be acknowledged" (88) and concludes that it is "no mere coincidence that the first to view the viral video will be Yoichi's grandfather, a clearly patriarchal figure" (87). In contrast to my own reading, Linnie Blake describes Verbinski's remake as offering a "critique of the nuclear family" and argues that the child Samara is "a means of exploring the myths and deceptions that underpin the self-image of the United States" (222-23).

in by growing anxieties and conservative frameworks.[8] Tracing Hollywood's appropriation of *Ringu* allows us to hone in on these anxieties, as a stable family unit consisting of a mother, father, and biological child is considered to be the film's ideal solution. Therefore, despite the director's insistence that the Ringu story is about an inherent "lack of conclusion" (qtd. in Lopez n.pag), *The Ring* does reach an imperative conclusion—only, as Verbinski himself implies, it is an emotional one. As the open-ended formula of this horror cycle ultimately deems that the father cannot be saved, in Verbinski's remake, the only remaining option for survival appears simple: if you don't want to die, learn to be a good mother.

Works Cited

Baughan, Nikki. "*The Ring*." Rev. of *The Ring*, dir. Gore Verbinski. *Film Review* 628 Mar. 2003: 46-49.

Blake, Linnie. "'Everyone will suffer': National Identity and the Spirit of Subaltern Vengeance in Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* and Gore Verbinski's *The Ring*." *Monstrous Adaptations*: *Generic and Thematic Mutations in Horror Film*. Eds. Richard J. Hand and Jay McRoy. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. 209-28.

Cherry, Brigid. *Horror*: *Routledge Film Guidebooks*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Gelder, Ken. "Introduction: The Field of Horror." *The Horror Reader*. Ed. Ken Gelder. London: Routledge, 2000.

Hand, Richard J., and Jay McRoy. "Monstrous Adaptations: An Introduction." *Monstrous Adaptations*: *Generic and Thematic Mutations in Horror Film*. Eds. Richard J. Hand and Jay McRoy. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. 1-5.

Hills, Matt. "Ringing the Changes: Cult Distinctions and Cultural Differences in US Fan Readings of Japanese Horror Cinema." *Japanese Horror Cinema*. Ed. Jay McRoy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. 161-74.

Hutchings, Peter. *The A to Z of Horror Cinema*. Plymouth: Scarecrow, 2008.

Lewis, John. "'Mother Oh God Mother...': Analysing the 'Horror' of Single Mothers in Contemporary Hollywood Horror." *Scope*: *An Online Journal of Film and TV Studies* 2 (2005): n. pag. Web. 20 July 2010.

Lopez, Javier. "Interview with Gore Verbinski." *The Ringworld*. 2002. Web. 15 July 2010.

McRoy, Jay. *Nightmare Japan*: *Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.

Naremore, James. "Introduction: Film and the Reign of Adaptation." *Film Adaptation*. Ed. James Naremore. London: Athlone, 2000. 1-16.

Newman, Kim. "*The Ring*." Rev. of *The Ring*, dir. Gore Verbinski. *Sight and Sound* 13 Apr. 2003: 49-50.

Odell, Colin, and Michelle Le Blanc. *Horror Films*. Harpenden: Kamera Books, 2007.

Ozawa, Eimi. "Remaking Corporeality and Spatiality: US Adaptations of Japanese Horror Films." *49th Parallel*: *An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies* 19 (2006): 1-7. Web. 15 July 2010.

Silbergleid, Robin. "'Oh Baby!': Representations of Single Mothers in American Popular Culture." *Americana*: *The Journal of American Popular Culture* (*1900-Present*) 1.2 (2000): n. pag. Web. 30 July 2010.

Sobchack, Vivian. "Bringing It All Back Home: Family Economy and Generic Exchange." *The Dread of Difference*: *Gender and the Horror Film*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. 143-63.

Stringer, Julian. "The Original and the Copy: Nakata Hideo's *Ring* (1998)." *Japanese Cinema*: *Texts and Contexts*. Eds. Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer. London: Routledge, 2007. 296-307.

White, Eric. "Case Study: Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* and *Ringu 2*." *Japanese Horror Cinema*. Ed. Jay McRoy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. 38-47.

Williams, Linda. "When the Woman Looks." *Horror*: *The Film Reader*. Ed. Mark Jancovich. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 61-66.

Worland, Rick. *The Horror Film*: *An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

8. For a broader discussion of conservative representations of single mothers in the American horror film, see Lewis. For an excellent analysis of representations of single mothers by choice in American popular culture, see Silbergleid.

DON'T ANSWER THE PHONE!

SLUGS

THE BOOGENS

PIECES

AMERICAN GOTHIC

DEMENTED

The BOOGEY MAN

BASKET CASE

HIDE AND GO SHRIEK

PLUTONIUM BABY

THE KINDRED

CARDIAC ARREST

PROM NIGHT

DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT

EVIL JUDGMENT

HOUSE OF DEATH

SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT

THE HITCHER

THE BONE YARD

REVENGE of the RADIOACTIVE REPORTER

SLEEPAWAY CAMP

Slumber Party MASSACRE II

NEON MANIACS

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

STREET TRASH

FUNERAL HOME

I WANT YOU — ZONE TROOPERS

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

CHILLERS

NIGHT OF THE CREEPS

HOUSE on the Edge of the Park

Octaman

DOLLS

MANIAC

The Alchemist

The Company of Wolves

NIGHT SCREAMS

THE GATES OF HELL

HALLOWEEN

DON'T GO IN THE WOODS

PIRANHA II, The Spawning

OPEN HOUSE

MUTANT

THE CALLER

DAWN OF THE DEAD

AMITYVILLE 3-D

Rock 'n' Roll Nightmare

Your most terrifying nightmares now come to life.
Deadtime Stories
You'll pray for dawn.

hi-fi HI-FI
The VIDEO DEAD
You'll pray for dawn.
LOOK WHAT'S LIVING INSIDE YOUR TELEVISION.

NIGHT SCHOOL

Where shopping can cost you an arm and a leg.
CHOPPING MALL

AFTER TEN YEARS OF SILENCE, THE "SAW" IS BACK!
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

RETURN TO Horror HIGH
KILLER TO THE LEFT. KILLER TO THE RIGHT. STAND UP. SIT DOWN. FRIGHT! FRIGHT! FRIGHT!

The WILLIES

"A movie that gleefully wants to go all the way in its depiction of voracious gore."
THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

Where Escape From Your Fears Has No Parole
TERROR ON ALCATRAZ

By pick By axe By fire
The MUTILATOR

Don't Open Till CHRISTMAS

NEW YORK Ripper
Someone's taking a big slice out of the Big Apple...

A LIVING, CRAWLING, HELL ON EARTH!
KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS
Starring WILLIAM SHATNER

GRADUATION DAY
CHRISTOPHER GEORGE
The seniors at Midvale High are being fitted for caps and gowns - and coffins.

the severed arm
The Movie that Made Horror Film History!

HOBGOBLINS
Be careful what you wish for . . . You just might get it!

Bloody Birthday

MORTUARY
BEFORE YOU ARE BURIED... BE SURE YOU ARE REALLY DEAD!
WHERE NOBODY RESTS IN PEACE
MARY McDONOUGH • DAVID WALLACE • BILL PAXTON

MOTHER'S DAY
"I'm so proud of my boys— they never forget their mama."
LYNDA DAY GEORGE
CHRISTOPHER GEORGE

GHOST DANCE
When you disturb the dead, you must pay the price.

HONEYMOON HORROR
'Til death do us part

Midnight Madness
The LOCH NESS HORROR
SEE!
STARRING BARRY BUCHANAN MIKI McKENZIE

The SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE
THE ULTIMATE DRILLER KILLER THRILLER!

DAN HAGGERTY in ELVES
They're Not Working For Santa... Anymore

REMEMBER HIM BEFORE HE DISMEMBERS YOU!!
OFFERINGS

Abel's brother is a ghost. He likes to kill Abel's friends. This is making Abel very unpopular.
PHANTOM BROTHER

Look who's back!
BASKET CASE 2

Death by Dialogue

COULD THIS HAPPEN AT YOUR VIDEO STORE?
Video Violence
...When renting is not enough!!

THEY CHARGE AN ARM AND A LEG!
HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW Hookers

GHOST TOWN

schizo
When the left hand doesn't know who the right hand is killing.

FAT ETHEL II
WARNING Never come between Ethel and a well-stocked refrigerator!!

DEADLY DREAMS

TERRIFYING. FRIGHTENING. MUCH!

Better Watch Out Better Not Cry Or You May DIE!
Christmas EVIL

Devilfish
Sink your teeth into pure terror.
Wave goodbye...

RATS

The BURNING

HORROR HOUSE on highway 5
THEY WERE YOUNG. AND IN LOVE. HE WAS CRAZY. SHE WAS DEAD.

TERROR LIES DEEP.

You have been chosen. You are doomed. Prepare yourself for...
Savage Weekend

GO INTO THE BAYOU. AND YOU MAY NEVER COME OUT!
POOR WHITE TRASH II

The COMIC
HE'S A REAL CUT-UP!
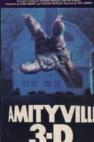
FROZEN TERROR

PSYCHIC KILLER

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF FILM STUDIES

REVUE CANADIENNE D'ÉTUDES CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUES

Scholarly articles in English and French on theory, history and criticism of film and media; book reviews; rare and archival research documents.

The journal is edited by Catherine Russell and Charles Acland at Concordia University. Submissions are welcome at cjfsedit@filmstudies.ca.

VOLUME 19 NO. 1   SPRING • PRINTEMPS 2010

In this issue:

Peter Lester on 16mm Film Exhibition in Canada

Erika Balsom on Bresson

Aimée Morrison on *You've Got Mail*

Marion Froger on *Les États nordiques*

Carlos V. Reyes on Film Noir

Book Reviews by Chris Robinson, David Foster, Bruno Cornellier, and Prakash Younger

BBC Wales' Torchwood as TV I, II, and III:

Changes in Television Horror

Matt Hills

Horror on television has recently attracted much scholarly attention (see, e.g., Hills; Peirse; Robson; Totaro; Wheatley). As Alison Peirse says: "there has been a distinct evolution of late in terms of horror television... [Though this partly reflects] network interest in capturing the post-*Buffy* audience, it can still be argued that the contemporary television series is growing increasingly obsessed with horror" (*Uncanny* 129). Writers such as myself (*Pleasures* 125) and Simon Brown and Stacey Abbott have argued that TV horror has shifted from a position pre-1980s where it was viewed as "inauthentic," or as less present in television schedules, to having a considerable presence today:

> the post-network, multi-platform landscape of contemporary TV has led to a much broader range of programming strategies beyond the 'Least Objectionable' approach of the network era. ...networks, netlets, and cable and pay-TV channels are specifically targeting smaller, loyal markets, making the horror

aficionado an increasingly lucrative, while still niche, market (Brown and Abbott 207).

However, this argument relies on contrasting network TV to the post-network age; it hinges on a binary of "mass" TV drama versus the "niche" of horror fandom. In *The Pleasures of Horror* I similarly argued for a tension between these two industry practices (128). Here, though, I want to complicate such binary approaches to TV horror. I will use arguments surrounding what have been termed TV I, II, and III (Reeves, Rogers and Epstein *Rewriting*; Rogers, Epstein and Reeves *Sopranos*) before presenting *Torchwood* (BBC Wales, 2006-present) as a case study to articulate the differences of TV horror in these changing contexts. I will argue that horror has not just become attractive to target niche audiences, but has offered a strategy for the branding and 'making-cinematic' of television drama. This branding relies on a symbolic equation of horror with film, meaning that *the genre's rapprochement with TV is relationally structured against a view of 'ordinary' television as not evoking horror's conventions.*

First, I will sketch out TV I, II, and III. These refer to periods of time in the US TV industry: "TV I (roughly 1948 to 1975) and TV II (roughly 1975 to 1995). ...American television has now entered its third stage of development: TV III (about 1995 to the present)" (Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 43). The first stage means "network TV," and a "period dominated by a three-corporation oligopoly [ABC, NBC, CBS]" (Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 24-5). This era focused on "least objectionable programming;" it was about brute ratings, and "resulted in the primetime schedule evolving into a nightly showcase for... "consensus narrative;" stories that attempt[ed] to speak for, and to, the core values of American culture (Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 25).

TV II eroded this focus on mass audiences, by reshaping "popularity in terms of the quest for 'quality demographics' — a giant step toward...'niche audience' strategies" (Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 30). This was still about attracting audiences that were desirable to advertisers, as 'quality' demographics meant those with disposable income, or more likely to be active consumers. *The X Files* has been analysed as an exemplar of TV II by Reeves, Rogers, and Epstein; it challenged the old networks, being a Fox show, and was aimed at a series of niche cult TV audiences rather than a mainstream, mass audience.

Rogers, Epstein and Reeves summarize their taxonomy by noting that "where TV I was the age of mass marketing, and TV II was the age of niche marketing, TV III...must be considered the age of brand marketing" (*Sopranos* 48). Linked to the importance of branding is a different commercial model, the "first-order commodity relations of TV III" (*Sopranos* 47). This means that rather than being sold to advertisers, and so paying indirectly for the TV shows they watch, now audiences pay directly for their viewing, e.g. subscribing to the likes of HBO. This is why Showtime, AMC, HBO, Syfy, etc. have to be strongly branded: customers need to be familiar with the values they are quite literally buying into. Texts can also act as brands; some can become "signature" products linked to their providers, reinforcing the parent brand. The exemplar of TV III for Rogers, Epstein and Reeves is *The Sopranos*, connoting HBO's distinction in terms of risk-taking, creative freedom and a liberal approach to representing violence and sex.

However, despite their broad periodization, TV I, II and III can and do co-exist:

> broadcast television continued to exist in the so-called "cable era," and... broadcast and cable television will continue to exist in the "digital era." The same could be said for mass marketing and niche marketing in the age of branding...Ultimately, we see the major developments that demarcate the three eras as additive.

Residual aspects of TV I...persist in the TV II and TV III eras (Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 55).

A further complication is that the model is based on US TV, and doesn't work as clearly in the UK context, particularly since public service television plays a stronger role here (in the UK). The BBC is not part of "first-order commodity relations:" consumers don't choose to subscribe, since it is funded through a universal licence fee. Neither is it a "second-order commodity," i.e. advertiser-funded commercial TV. BBC television thus confuses the model: strictly speaking it is neither TV I, II, or III. However, sections of the BBC can be thought of as akin to TV I in that they aim for a mass audience premised on primetime "consensus narrative." This would be 'mainstream' BBC1 output, competing with ITV1 in order to justify its licence fee. As Catherine Johnson has pointed out:

> ITV1 and BBC1 remain largely conceptualized as mixed programme channels for consensus audiences. As a consequence, the notion of 'cult television,' with its implications of exclusivity and specialness, goes against the very remit of these two main terrestrial channels... Even the NBC series *Heroes*...appears on BBC2 rather than BBC1 (145).

Niche, cult telefantasy shows identifiable as TV II are thus "more likely to find a home on BBC2 with its status as a 'minority audience' channel" (Johnson 145); *The X Files* started out as a BBC2 show in the UK. Within this publicly-funded, mixed ecology, TV I and II can operate side-by-side in the schedules.

TV III also has its UK analogies; Sky TV represents a pay-TV service, having recently bought up the UK rights to HBO's output. But other digital services available without subscription on Freeview are also closer to TV III than I or II. For example, E4 and BBC3 are branded so as to offer distinctive texts for youth audiences; as a result their shows are often 'edgier' or more permissive in terms of representation, moving closer to the symbolic economy of TV III. Robin Nelson argues that TV III's branded texts proffer pleasures of "ontological insecurity" via their innovative, unpredictable forms, as opposed to the ritualized familiarity of comforting TV I and the recombinant genres of TV II (19). In this sense, BBC3 and E4 stand out as brands which go beyond merely being 'niche', instead connoting values of edginess and innovation. The line between TV II and III is blurred here: BBC3 is niche TV, but it also stands at a symbolic, branded distance from the output of BBC1 and BBC2. The BBC's various channels can, at different moments in their scheduling, approximate to versions of TV I, II, and III.

Having set out these approaches to television drama, I now want to apply them to BBC Wales' *Torchwood*. A spin-off from *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood* is an unusual show in that it was commissioned by BBC3 (its first series in 2006), then moved to BBC2 (for Series Two in 2008), and then relocated to primetime BBC1 (for *Torchwood: Children of Earth* in 2009). The show has cycled through different UK production contexts, being reformatted after its initial BBC3 run.

Torchwood thus represents one brand that has nevertheless moved through different textual lives in relation to TV III (as a challenging, unpredictable BBC3 series); TV II (as a niche, telefantasy show suited to BBC2); and TV I (as a mainstream SF-thriller suitable for BBC1). I will focus on how such an evolution has affected the show's status as TV horror, building up an argument regarding the tripartite (or more) modes of horror in contemporary television. Although TV I, II and III may appear to fit *Torchwood*'s history rather neatly, if not too neatly (3 forms of television; 3 series to date; 3 different channels), this tidiness should

the biggest monster of all." Susan Wolfe and Courtney Huse Wika argue that "changes in mood and action occur continually in the series...we are kept continually off-balance by shifts between...the human and the monstrous" (32). This resonates with Trisha Dunleavy's observation that:

> TVIII's generic mixing is...a considerably more radical blending of programme ideas, forms, and styles than TVII's 'recombination'…approaching [greater] conceptual and/or aesthetic novelty...The success of high-end dramas characterised by generic mixing — leading TVIII examples including *The Sopranos*... and *Dexter* — has underlined the brand value of the conceptual novelty that it can provide (216).

Torchwood offers precisely this "brand value" by intertwining the horror genre with representations of moral ambiguity and fluid sexuality in Series One. Though episodes often carry a 'monster of the week,' they also dwell on emotional realism, particularly loss and alienation. In 'Out of Time' (1.10), Jack muses that there is "no problem to solve. No enemy to fight"; an observation which punctures the con-

...TV III can code its 'cinematic' difference precisely by deploying the horror genre in more full-blooded ways

not distract from the value of theorising contemporary TV horror as a branding strategy, as well as niche/mass television. It might also be suggested that *Torchwood* is *not* TV horror; that it is, instead, telefantasy or SF TV, and so my arguments here miss the mark. *Contra* any such genre policing, I would point out that *Torchwood*'s opening episode 'Everything Changes' features a monster attack which playfully refers to *Hellraiser*, and depicts blood jetting out of a character's neck wound: intertextual and generic debts to horror are placed front-and-centre at the show's very inception. Though horror intertextualities may weaken in later series, this forms part of my own argument, as shall become clear.

Torchwood begins as TV III. Series One mixes genres to take on marked tonal variation, veering from camp CGI action sequences (a Cyberwoman versus a pterodactyl) to intense emotional confrontation, and the questioning of heroic/monstrous roles. As Ianto (Gareth David-Lloyd) tells Captain Jack Harkness (John Barrowman) in 'Cyberwoman' (1.04): "You like to think you're a hero. But you're

ventions of telefantasy and creates a more existential depiction of fear than TV horror often attains. Here, John Ellis (Mark Lewis Jones) admits that he's scared of living without purpose, in a scene intercut with series regular Owen Harper (Burn Gorman) conceding that he too is scared – of powerful feelings of love. Characters are disturbed not (just) by generic monsters in Series One, but also by life's existential challenges. Ultimately, 'Out of Time' represents John's suicide, whilst Captain Jack comforts him — a hardhitting sequence which stands out as conceptual novelty against the niche telefantasy characteristics of TV II, and the 'least objectionable programming' of TV I.

The standardized imagery of horror monsters like Weevils which "we believe we are *supposed* to fear... is among the least frightening of the monsters we encounter" (Wolfe and Huse Wika 33), as genre codes are subverted by "ontological insecurity." Series One consistently articulates generic monsters with "the most terrifying of all...monsters: real life" (Waterhouse 280). Gwen Cooper

(Eve Myles) betrays her partner via a workplace fling, and Owen displays a damaged disregard for human affection. Captain Jack also evades "the strict categorization of either good or evil" (Rawcliffe 107), being prepared to sacrifice the little girl Jasmine (Lara Phillipart) in 'Small Worlds' (1.05). As Wolfe and Huse Wika state: "Jack's monstrosity has to do not only with his immortality, but with his...

wears its horror film intertextuality on its sleeve, citing hillbilly horrors in iconographic and narrative terms. It is not alone in obviously using filmic intertexts to promote "Not TV" distinction, for just "as 'Countrycide' paid homage to *The Hills Have Eyes* and its ilk, so 'Combat' [1.11] obviously draws a great deal of inspiration from the...movie *Fight Club*" (Walker *Inside* 197). And each narrative reinforces a

ethics...Jack is a Utilitarian, willing to kill...for the greater good" (40).

In its BBC3 series, *Torchwood* exhibits TV III's "'Not TV' difference from traditional broadcast product through... 'cinematic' sophistication" (Dunleavy 241). The horror genre's treatment by TV I and II — where it is either largely absent or coded through the restricted abjection of colourful, fantastical goo rather than bloody gore (Hills and Williams 2005) — means that TV III can code its 'cinematic' difference precisely by deploying the horror genre in more full-blooded ways. Horror offers one short-hand for connoting the 'filmic' among branded distinctions of TV III. This strategy is embraced in 'Countrycide' (1.06), described by fan-scholar Stephen James Walker as "the goriest, and scariest, episode" (*Darkness* 154). 'Countrycide'

sense of veering between human and monstrous: the killers in 'Countrycide' are not aliens, but cannibalistic locals, whilst the ultimate monsters of 'Combat' are thrill-seeking, disaffected young men. *Torchwood*'s BBC3 incarnation thus trades "on the...'subaltern' sheen of an erstwhile 'midnight movie' culture" (Tompkins), branding itself as "cool" via references to horror and cult movies. To be clear, I'm not arguing that the 'cinematification' of TV drama depends on, or derives from, the horror genre *per se*; 'filmic' TV is obviously a far wider trend, often linked with single-camera shooting styles and aesthetics. Rather, my point is that the horror genre offers one readymade short-hand, one specific strategy, for television drama to position itself as 'Not TV.'

Series Two of *Torchwood* may not seem to differ greatly from year one. Whereas BBC3, as a digital, youth-oriented brand, has sought edgy, challenging drama, BBC2's terrestrial, 'minority' channel is currently linked with more standardised telefantasy. However, *Torchwood*'s characters continued to "risk...becoming the alien Other" (Wolfe and Huse Wika 31) most notably in Owen's case. Series Two also continued another horror strand, that of "the human form which conceals an alien" (Wolfe and Huse Wika 34), with 'Sleeper' (2.02) and 'Adam' (2.05) carrying on the tradition of 'Day One' (1.02) and 'Greeks Bearing Gifts' (1.07).

Nevertheless, Stephen James Walker constructs a perceptive argument about Series Two, suggesting that the show moved

> further away from the domain of mainstream adult drama and a bit closer to the world of standard telefantasy: a world in which the heroes are always likeable, invariably friendly to one another and never swear or have illicit sex...In Series Two...*Torchwood*'s subtle shift in tone gave it a little less in common with shows such as *Dexter*...and...more in common with ones like...*Heroes* (Walker *Darkness* 241).

Series Two scaled back its representations of nudity, swearing, sexuality, and moral ambiguity, resulting in a difference that, for Walker, was encapsulated by the following:

> [W]hile it is easy to imagine that a character in...*The Sopranos* might ask something like 'When was the last time you screwed all night? When was the last time you came so hard and so long that you forgot where you are?' — something that Owen says to Gwen in 'Countrycide' — it is inconceivable that anyone in a standard telefantasy show like *Smallville* might deliver such a line of dialogue — and similarly unthinkable that Owen might say such a thing... in Series Two (Walker *Darkness* 241).

In Walker's argument, the shift is one of genre; he argues that "mainstream adult drama" has given way to "standard telefantasy." Yet his exemplifying choices are intriguing: Series One is compared to *Dexter* and *The Sopranos*, whereas Series Two is likened to *Heroes* and *Smallville*. I would suggest that what Walker is identifying here is, in fact, an ambivalent shift from TV III status (*The Sopranos* and *Dexter* being key examples of this), to *Torchwood* as TV II instead. The TV III branding of Series One, which took "science fiction...elements...and coupled them with the aesthetic and mode of expression of...adult drama" (Walker *Darkness* 242), is weakened in *Torchwood*'s second outing. As such, "mainstream adult drama" is an unhelpful term, since *The Sopranos* and *Dexter* are precisely not 'mainstream', TV I products.

In Series Two, *Torchwood*'s bid for brand distinction via horror film intertexts is also reduced: there is no gory 'Countrycide'; no slasher flick rendered as TV horror. TV III often symbolically competes with horror cinema, seeking to emulate its visual excesses, e.g. in *Dead Set* (E4, 2008) and Showtime's *Masters of Horror* (2005-7). Where Series One of *Torchwood* is at pains to be readable as 'like film', particularly horror film, Series Two surrenders this ambition. Likewise, tonal collisions between realist and generic forms of monstrosity are less pronounced — though Jack's brother Gray (Lachlan Nieboer) is ultimately revealed as the series' 'Big Bad' there is little moral complexity here. Gray is a generic 'black hat' villain, lacking emotional realism. 'Adrift' (2.11) approaches the existential bleakness of 'Out of Time': it features no generic monster, and challenges Gwen's view of what it means to help a mother whose child is missing. But 'Adrift' is at odds with the consistency of Series Two, whereas 'Out of Time' forms part of Series One's unpredictable diegetic world.

By the time of *Children of Earth*, *Torchwood* had evolved again — this time into 'event' television, scheduled across one week on primetime BBC1. This industrial recontextualization brought it closer to TV I, and resulted in some critics arguing that:

> *Children of Earth* can be seen as a kind of anti-*Torchwood* that deploys earlier characters and...relationships in the telling of its tale but is considerably more SF than gothic...A conceptually binaristic piece, *Children of Earth* thus pits good guys against bad guys, humans against aliens, Americans against Brits...in an entirely un-*Torchwood* way. It is shot and edited in a straightforward TV Realist style (lacking the...incongruous tonal juxtapositions of earlier series) (Blake).

Linnie Blake concludes that this "is...an anti-gothic *Torchwood* for a mainstream BBC1 audience...far removed from the first two series" (Blake). The loss of gothicized instability, seriality and fluidity in favour of a repurposed action-thriller can be read as a move into TV I and "consensus narrative." TV horror is recontextualized here too. Echoes of *Torchwood*'s former bleakness persist in Frobisher's (Peter Capaldi) shocking murder of his wife and family and his own suicide, though these are played out literally behind a closed door, unseen as shots ring out on the soundtrack. And the cliffhanger to 'Day Three' refers to Jack's monstrous utilitarianism, placing him as a collaborator with aliens known only as 'the 456'. When Gwen asserts that "he fights the aliens," Jack responds: "No...I gave them the kids...1965, I gave them 12 children....as a gift."

Rather than *Children of Earth* representing gore, the '456' creatures vomit yellow-green gloop. This abjection — an opening up of the body — is hence securely coded as science-fictional rather than realist (Hills and Williams 208). When pronounced human gore appears in the serial, it is in a science-fictional inversion of horror's codes: in 'Day Two' we see Captain Jack's disintegrated body reassemble under the cover of a body bag, before recomposing as a bloodied skeleton and then as a skinned body. Jack's raw red face is shot in tight close-up, fleetingly shown. The conventions of horror are thus drawn on, but in reverse — Captain Jack's damaged body is shown in the fantastical process of re-composition. This represents TV I's use of horror "in the service of…thematic elements...[e.g.] the ability of skilled physicians to salvage a body in torment" (Brown and Abbott 208) or, here, Jack's ability to salvage himself. *Children of Earth* thus has to "redefine the semantic and syntactic elements of the cinematic genre in order to create...televisual horror" (Brown and Abbott 209). This includes constructing horror that is conceptual rather than graphic, e.g. the Cabinet's discussion of surrendering 10% of the UK's children in 'Day Four', which audaciously links real-world policy on school league tables to a shocking notion of some children's dispensability.

This is certainly not TV I as a comforting "consensus narrative," but it speaks to core cultural values by placing these under threat — Jack and Ianto are both given families to defend, in a profound shift from *Torchwood* Series One and Two. And just as Frobisher takes an impossible decision to spare his family from science-fictional torment by the 456, so too is Jack given the ultimate utilitarian, monstrous choice. After all, the alien threat is not one of invasion, but is instead a challenge to the sanctity of the family, albeit on a societal scale. *Children of Earth* might almost have been entitled *Families of Earth*, given its TV I emphasis on meanings of 'the family.' *Torchwood* doesn't cease to act as TV horror altogether here, but its horrifying material is coded into a predominantly 'conceptual' rather than 'visceral' register, often occurring off-screen as well as being strongly inflected by science fiction. It shares these strategies with a longer history of horror as TV I, of course, where the genre has often been filtered through others (SF; comedy; even soap opera). As Brown and Abbott note, (re)inflected horror has always been there as part of mainstream TV: "You just need to know where and how to look for it" (209).

In short, *Children of Earth* presents a different symbolic economy, and a changed industrial context for TV horror in comparison with both Series One and Two. Using *Torchwood* as a case study here, I have aimed to demonstrate the mutability of contemporary TV horror, and

how this cannot be theorized simply as a matter of 'mass' versus 'niche' TV. Peirse reminds us that there is "not a one-size-fits-all approach to presenting horror...on television" (*Uncanny* 129), but neither are there convincing binary approaches. Scholarship can benefit from linking TV I, II and III to uses of TV horror. The genre's historical connection to film, and its relative (by no means absolute) absence in TV I, mean that it can brand TV III shows as 'Not TV.' TV horror can hence be deployed as a short-hand for 'edgy,' youth-oriented, conceptually novel television drama which emulates movies and seeks to transcend the genre limits of TV I and II — as in BBC3's *Torchwood*. But we also need to pay careful attention to national contexts, since the tripartite model fits US television more neatly than the UK's public service tradition. And the same text can be recontextualised very differently as TV I, II or III within different national broadcasting systems. For example, *Torchwood*'s 'parent' show, *Doctor Who*, was a mainstream, mass audience BBC1 show in the UK, but a niche, cable show initially bought by the Sci Fi channel in the US. Similarly, Fox's *Fringe* played as neo-network television in the US, but was targeted at a more specifically 'hip', youth demographic in Canada. As such, the nationally contextualised presence of horror within TV I, II and III needs to be further explored.

Torchwood's future suggests another mutation. As a co-production between premium cable channel Starz in the US, BBC Wales, and BBC Worldwide, the show's fourth run is likely to transmit on Starz in America (TV III), and on BBC1 in the UK (potentially TV I). Quite how these different contexts can be hybridized remains to be seen, but the outcome will no doubt generate further debate over the changing roles of TV horror.

Works Cited

Blake, Linnie. '"You guys and your cute little categories": Torchwood, The Space-Time Rift and Cardiff's Postmodern, Postcolonial and (avowedly) Pansexual Gothic.' *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, Issue 7, 2009. 27 July 2010 <http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com/Torchwood.html> .

Brown, Simon and Abbott, Stacey. 'The Art of Sp(l)atter: Body Horror in *Dexter*.' *Dexter: Investigating Cutting Edge Television*. Ed. Douglas L. Howard. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010. 205-20.

Dunleavy, Trisha. *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Hills, Matt. *The Pleasures of Horror*. London: Continuum, 2005.

---. *Triumph of a Time Lord: Regenerating Doctor Who in the Twenty-first Century*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Hills, Matt and Williams, Rebecca. '*Angel*'s Monstrous Mothers and Vampires with Souls: Investigating the Abject in "Television Horror".' *Reading Angel: The TV Spin-off with a Soul*. Ed. Stacey Abbott. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005. 203-17.

Johnson, Catherine. 'Cult TV and the Television Industry.' *The Cult TV Book.* Ed. Stacey Abbott. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010. 135-47.

Nelson, Robin. *State of Play: Contemporary "high-end" TV drama.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Peirse, Alison. 'Postfeminism Without Limits? *Charmed*, Horror, and Sartorial Style.' *Investigating Charmed: The Magic Power of TV.* Eds. Karin Beeler and Stan Beeler. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. 112-26.

---. 'Uncanny Cylons: Resurrection and Bodies of Horror.' *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica.* Eds. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall. London: Continuum, 2008. 118-30.

Rawcliffe, Daniel J. 'Transgressive Torch Bearers: Who Carries the Confines of Gothic Aesthetics?' *Illuminating Torchwood: Essays on Narrative, Character and Sexuality in the BBC Series.* Ed. Andrew Ireland. Jefferson: McFarland, 2010. 102-12.

Reeves, Jimmie L., Rogers, Mark C., and Epstein, Michael. 'Rewriting Popularity: The Cult Files.' *Deny All Knowledge: Reading the X-Files.* Eds. David Lavery, Angela Hague, and Marla Cartwright. London: Faber, 1996. 22-35.

Robson, Eddie. 'Gothic Television.' *The Routledge Companion to Gothic.* Eds. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy. New York: Routledge, 2007. 242-50.

Rogers, Mark C., Epstein, Michael, and Reeves, Jimmie L. '*The Sopranos* as HBO Brand Equity: The Art of Commerce in the Age of Digital Reproduction.' *This Thing of Ours: Investigating the Sopranos.* Ed. David Lavery. London: Wallflower Press , 2002. 42-57.

Tompkins, Joe. '"They Have the Oscars": Oppositional Telebranding and the Cult of the Horror Auteur.' *Flow* 12.04. 27 Jul. 2010 <http://flowtv.org/2010/07/oppositional-telebranding-and-the-cult-of-the-horror-auteur/>.

Totaro, Donato. '*Masters of Horror.*' *The Cult TV Book.* Ed. Stacey Abbott. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010. 87-90.

Beyond the Guillotine:

Theorizing the New Extremism in Contemporary French Cinema

Caroline Verner

When Bruno Dumont's *L'humanité* won three major awards at the 1999 Cannes Film Festival, the audience's outrage was decidedly off-putting for the director. The thunderous wave of boos and catcalls intimated more than mere disapproval over the jury's decision; the film's tribute was perceived as both a perversion of modern art cinema by the shock tactics of Hollywood's horror franchise, and a threat to the nation's ceremoniously political tradition since the dawn of the French New Wave (*La Nouvelle Vague*). With his intimate close-ups of an 11-year old blood-spattered rape victim, shattering the cool, idyllic vistas of the French countryside, Dumont had committed the ultimate in cinematic transgressions: he had mingled art-house prestige with sensationalist trash, and been commended for it.

There is something supremely abject about the violation of limits that Dumont and other so-called controversial filmmakers have been experimenting with since the radical restructuring of France's film industry by the Mitterrand government's socialist policy. Now touted as the New Extremism (or New French Extremity) by such critics as James Quandt, Martine Beugnet, John Wray, Kerstin Bueschges and Sarah Barrow, this *paracinéma* – or *cinéma du corps* – has brought about a kind of paradigm shift within the French horror genre, one that consists of a move toward a more corporeal, transgressive, and confrontational cinema than has ever graced the "silver screen." As the label suggests, the convulsive violence and sexual explicitness that characterize this body of films is nothing short of excessive, but beneath their fanaticism—which has, for the most part, been devalued as a superficial exercise in style and gore—lurks a fascinating critique of the binary oppositions still operative in film scholarship, specifically those aimed at distinguishing between mainstream American genericism and left-leaning French intellectualism. Arguably, this New Extremism embodies more than a reactionary discourse against the aesthetic traditions of France; it hyperbolizes the sociopolitical reality of the globalization process and its impact on cultural artifacts, however monstrous a shape those representations might take.

French Cinema in the 1990s

Broadly speaking, the proliferation of multiplexes on foreign soil throughout the 1990s can be considered one of the principal catalysts of France's emergent mainstream genre cinema. With their domestic box-office commanding a meager thirty-five percent at the time (Hayward 298), the state pushed for more big-budget pictures that could challenge Hollywood's then-reign over the spectacle-led *cinéma des producteurs*. The result was a national outpouring of heritage, action and comedy films, works like Luc Besson's *La Femme Nikita* (1990), Leos Carax's *Les amants du Pont-Neuf* (*The Lovers on the Bridge*, 1991) and Jean-Jacques Beineix's *IP5: L'île aux pachydermes* (1992) that proved more successful in the way of their commercial ambitions than by means of auteurist presence. This phenomenon quickly came to be regarded as the apolitical *cinéma du look*, a movement that emphasized the style of the image over narrative complexity, and drew young moviegoers back to theatres in droves.

Though it was dismissed by the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics as betraying national affinities, such as the psychological realism of France's "Golden Age" and the social concerns of its 1970s militant cinema, the Bessonian practice confirmed the influence and appeal of French cinema on an international scale. Today, Hollywood continues to maintain its grip on screen culture through star vehicles and other economically-driven strategies, but French filmmakers are levelling the score with an approach that combines a slight (if provocative) return to tradition, and deliberately contentious and confrontational themes.

Of interest here is not so much the way in which New Extremist narratives have incorporated the conventional codes of the Hollywood horror picture, but rather how the character of transgression has been re-inscribed by the noted paradigm shift, and works to amplify these codes through a more intellectualized system of meaning. Whereas the critical tendency in horror film scholarship has been largely fragmented so far—divided into those investigations seeking universal truths about horror narratives, and those looking to understand their allure in a specific sociohistorical context—New French Extremism lends itself to readings that trade on both the popular and counter-aesthetic theories of horror. In doing so, it correlates not only with our distinct experience of fear consistent with twenty-first century themes (e.g. cultural fragmentation, alienation, the abject/religious/racial "Other"), but it also provides evidence for the increasing interchangeability of high and low culture codes.

Crises of Identity and Sexual Politics: Alexandre Aja's *Haute Tension*

Alexandre Aja's *Haute Tension* (*High Tension/Switchblade Romance*, 2003) pays homage to the campy, lowbrow American slasher film by preserving the famous trope of the 'final girl' and the visual excess of its prototypical slaughterfest. The film does not, however, rely on a disproportionate supply of violence to distress its viewership, because the real impact transpires through narrative indeterminacy, which conceals the truth about the killer's identity until its final, gruelling minutes.

A hodgepodge of Wes Craven's surrealist-inspired *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (1984 onward) and the transgressive novels of Georges Bataille (*Histoire de l'oeil* [*Story of the Eye*, 1928] and *Le Bleu de Ciel* [*Blue of Noon*, 1935]), *Haute Tension*'s narrative framework sadistically plays with the boundaries between the imagined and the real. The film begins with the syuzhet's conclusion: a two-tiered point-of-view flashback cleverly disguised as the protagonist's nightmare. A young girl in a hospital gown sits, crinkling her toes, with her back covered in lacerations. She begins to speak into a video camera when the scene cuts to a forest setting, the film's "trick" ending. The same girl, now wearing a blood-soaked T-shirt, stumbles through the woods in an attempt to find her way back to the main road. Suddenly, Marie (Cécile de France), the same short-haired

format justifies the narrative pitfalls that one often encounters with the use of the split-personality character device; where it would be physically impossible for Marie and her "darker side" to be in two places at the same time, the narrative structure accounts for this glitch with the inclusion of a dream sequence that alerts us to the diegesis as Marie's subjective and misguided recollection. In hindsight, wherever Marie is shown watching from a distance as the killer butchers Alex's family in progressively imaginative ways, the audience recognizes that this is the version played out in the mind of a lonely, tormented girl.

Beyond Aja's sophisticated use of narrative ontologies, the film is also an incisive throwback to horror scholarship of the 1970s and '80s. Robin Wood, for

In keeping with the momentum of most New Extremist narratives, the film offers little in the way of exposition in order to maximize the bludgeoning of its subjects

girl from the dream, wakes up from a nap in the back seat of a car.

While such bits of expository information prefigure the ending almost immediately—whereby Marie is revealed to be the very killer she hunts—their proximity to the opening credits renders them forgettable, and their connection to the main storyline is just as quickly made inconsequential. What is signalled as the true beginning of the film—Marie recounting her dream to her best friend Alex (Maïwenn Le Basco) about a man chasing her who almost felt like a figment of her imagination—delivers an intense shock in the end when the audience is made to realize that Marie's real demons lie within.

From the very onset, style and content work in tandem to sever the illusion created by the familiar nuances of *Haute Tension*'s generic conventions. Commonly derivative and thematically impotent, the filmmaker counts on the audience's fluency with slasher narratives to obscure the horror masterfully plotted into the twisted relationship between Marie and Alex. The film's frame-narrative

example, theorized in a series of essays that the thematic core of the horror genre could be reduced to three connected variables: normalcy (under the guise of heterosexuality), the Other (characterized as the monster), and the relation between the two (79). If nothing more than a cautionary tale about the social pressures of being a sexual deviant from a heteronormative perspective, *Haute Tension* adopts an art-house posture towards its audience that reflects its attentiveness to the sexual politics of horror.

Inside the Maternal Abject: Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's *À l'intérieur*

Along similar lines, Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo's *À l'intérieur* (*Inside*, 2007) comments upon another popular wave of film scholarship: that of feminist film criticism and its focus on issues of gendered representation and spectatorship. Theories put forward by Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey, in particular, may urge critics to position the film as a direct response to

psychoanalytic claims that narrative cinema—and indeed horror cinema—tends to abjectify female roles.[1]

In keeping with the momentum of most New Extremist narratives, the film offers little in the way of exposition in order to maximize the bludgeoning of its subjects. In this case, a photo-journalist named Sarah (Alysson Paradis), who must face the reality that she will be raising her unborn child alone after she kills her husband in a car accident. Flash-forward in time to Christmas Eve, where Sarah spends the evening alone at home, still sick with grief as she prepares for her scheduled delivery the next day. As in *Haute Tension*, a stranger at the door gives the protagonist cause for concern; a woman feigning the need to use Sarah's phone breaks into her house, then stops at nothing (including an at-home Caesarean section) to steal her baby away from her.

As a home invasion narrative, *À l'intérieur* draws on many of the post-9/11 sensibilities operative in both American and European contemporary cinemas. Responding to the same paranoid landscape and urban malaise of films like Michael Haneke's *Caché* (*Hidden*, 2005) and David Fincher's *Panic Room* (2002), *À l'intérieur* functions to illustrate the dissolution of middle-class society in an era of anxious urbanities, particularly those that might be entertained by a single mother. This constitutes prime subject matter for an art-house cinema audience that connects with the bourgeois values of family and civility, both of which are violated by the woman's intrusion into Sarah's living quarters.

The similarities between the two women — such as their equally pronounced white skin, dark hair and facial features — also produces a striking conflation between the maternal abject coded in Sarah, and the monstrous sterility of her vicious female stalker. Their likeness also gives a subtext to the dénouement, whereby the woman, having murdered Sarah on the staircase and retrieved the crying baby from her stomach, sits on a rocking chair comforting the newborn child. By now, the audience has realized that during the course of the above-mentioned car accident that killed her husband, Sarah also caused the mysterious woman's miscarriage. Julia Kristeva observes that, "the corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life" (4). Understood in this light, the film's revenge narrative supports the desperate stranger's primordial desire to restore the life that was stolen from her. By the end of the film, both women have been forced to experience and fear the power and potency of the sexualized Other—that immoral, monstrous female who is ineffective in carrying her child to term.

1. See Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1977) and Mulvey's 1989 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema".

Human Sacrifice and Other Philosophical Questions: Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs*

Though Barbara Creed argues that, "the most popular horrific figures are 'bodies without souls' (the vampire), the 'living corpse' (the zombie) and the 'corpse-eater' (the ghoul)" (47), Paul Laugier's existential study of the martyr figure resurrects one of the more compelling images of horror from the dregs of ancient philosophy, in an effort to explore human depravity in its thankless search for higher knowledge.

Martyrs (2009), echoing the real-life case of Elisabeth Fritzl, begins with the story of Lucie (Mylène Jampanoï), a young girl who escapes from an abandoned abattoir where she had been held and systematically tortured for an indeterminate amount of time. Placed in an orphanage by the authorities who rescue her, she befriends a girl named Anna (Morjana Alaoui), who soon discovers Lucie's dark secret: a demon from her past—a psychological manifestation of her guilt over not having been able to save another girl with whom she was enslaved—continues to torment her, urging her to seek revenge on those who captured them.

Fifteen years later, Lucie rushes into a middle-class family's home, summarily killing every person inside — that is, both the parents and the children. Anna, waiting outside in the getaway car, reluctantly agrees to help her bury the bodies. Lucie's demon eventually drives her to suicide, and Anna is left alone to clean up the mess, when she discovers a secret underground chamber and frees an emaciated girl who is kept blind by a metal helmet drilled into her skull. In a spine-chilling twist, the audience is made aware that this will not be Lucie's story, but rather Anna's. As she tends to the skeletal hostage, trying to calm her in a warm bath, strangers burst into the home and immediately shoot the prisoner dead. Now Anna, knowing the terrible fate that awaits her, is taken against her will and made the latest test subject of a secret society headed by Mademoiselle (Catherine Bégin), who seeks to discover the secrets of the afterlife by making martyrs of her captives.

The film's emphasis on the emotional and psychological journey of its protagonist rescues it from the pejorative categories of French torture porn (*cinéma gore*) or the American "gorno" flick. Closer to what one might call an anti-exploitation film, *Martyrs* denies its audience the normative pleasures derived from torture spectacles like Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005) or John Stockwell's *Turistas* (2006) by adopting a vérité-style aesthetic that amplifies the unsettling realism of Anna's predicament. Put another way, Laugier's film offers an intellectual or even

spiritual motivation for the violence being inflicted; rather than give a voice to Mademoiselle, the tyrannical captor who enjoys very little screen time, *Martyrs* opts to focus on Anna's strength of will to tolerate and even to transcend the insufferable pain she is made to withstand through her years of incarceration. In true art-house form, Laugier allows his audience to commune with the film, writing an enigmatic ending that leaves the legitimacy of death-for-higher-purpose to the viewer's discretion.

Death To The Old…

For American audiences, one of the greatest achievements of the New French Extremism has been a reengagement with wider intellectual and philosophical lines of enquiry. For French audiences, the benefit has issued from a new receptivity to Hollywood's big-budget approach to the fear spectacle, with its affective power to bludgeon audiences to attention. The three films under scrutiny in this essay demonstrate that overlaps between the stubbornly independent traditions of cult European and American genre cinemas can in fact inspire greater fear and fascination with the cinematic apparatus, in all its gruesome splendour. By compelling viewers to concentrate on the formal ingenuity of their stories, then immersing them in their stylish eccentricity, New Extremist narratives arguably stay truer to film's ontological status as an art of pure, visceral experience, one that is as mentally stimulating as it is physiologically rousing. From a critical perspective, they also foreground structures of cinematic discourse—for example, the generic critique of the slasher film imbedded in *Haute Tension*'s narrative twists, or the psychoanalytic inflections that ooze from the different characterizations of the abject in *À l'intérieur* and *Martyrs*—which, like Jean-Luc Godard's generation of *Nouvelle Vague* filmmakers, endeavours to make the material identity of the cinema visible, and its ideologies palpable.

As Joan Hawkins notes, "horror is perhaps the best vantage point from which to study the cracks that seem to exist everywhere in late twentieth-century 'sacrilized' film culture" (131). In sealing the fissures that exist between popular and art-house cinemas, this latest paradigm shift mutually satisfies the intellectual pleasures of art cinema audiences who crave innovative narrative and stylistic techniques, and the affective delights of horror audiences who wish simply to be utterly terrified.

Works cited

Creed, Barbara. "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection" *Screen* 27.1 (1986) 44-71.

Hawkins, Joan. "Sleaze Mania, Euro-trash and High Art: The Place of European Art Films in American Low Culture" *Horror: The Film Reader*. Ed. Mark Jancovich. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hayward, Susan. *French National Cinema*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Wood, Robin. *Hollywood: From Vietnam to Reagan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

The Haunting of Cronenberg's Cinema:

Queer Monsters, Colonized Bodies and Repressed Desire in M. *Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises*

Joshua Ferguson

"Deru kui wa utareru. (The nail that sticks up gets ham-mered down.)"
-Japanese proverb

"Under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me."
-Song Liling in M. Butterfly

There exists a more entrenched type of fear in the interstices and intricate enmeshing within the corporeality of David Cronenberg's cinema. The representation of queer gender in *M. Butterfly* challenges normative ideologies that perpetuate the binaries of male/female (sex), masculine/feminine (gender) and is exemplary of what Robin Wood in "The Return of the Repressed" terms "monstrous" (26). Furthermore, in *Eastern Promises* the representation of queer sexuality also illustrates the monstrous. Queer gender(s) and sexuality, as forms of monster, represent the repressed, the marginalized and/or the fears of abnormality/queerness.

The queerness within *M Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* exists as a partial pathology vis-a-vis a new form of doppel-ganger that is strategically employed by both texts to juxta-pose the normal against the abnormal and, therefore, what Julia Kristeva theorizes is the "abject." Each film's queer character has a doppelganger of normalcy, a character that best embodies the Caucasian, heterosexual, masculine male. In *Eastern Promises*, Kirill's (Vincent Cassel) queer sexual-ity is contrasted against Nikolai (Viggo Mortensen). In *M. Butterfly*, Song Liling's/Butterfly's (John Lone) queer gen-der is contrasted against René Gallimard (Jeremy Irons). Therefore, I will explore how *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* portray the abject in a different "monstrous" form in relation to Cronenberg's past representations of horror.[1] Horror here becomes polymorphous with a direct connec-tion to queer embodiment of gender and sexuality whereby

1. I would like to make clear here that a lengthier version of this essay, edited down to fit Cinephile, discussed the problematics of assuming that Cronenberg is the sole author of his filmic texts. It is necessary to criticize auteur-based analyses of Cronenberg to discover a multiplicity of 'authors' at work.

queers are made into Monsters.[2] I will explore these cinematic representations through the critical framework of a feminist perspective, particularly queer and gender theory.

The Polymorphous, Queer Monster: Pathologizing the Marginalized

Both *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* are in direct opposition to Cronenberg's body of horror films, which usually include mutations of the body or body horror: *Crimes of the Future* (1970), *Shivers* (1975), *Rabid* (1977), *Scanners* (1981), *The Fly* (1986) and *Crash* (1996), to name a few. *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* do not relate to the explicit horror found within most of his

becomes the other body that works as a shadow to colonize the colonized or the Other.[6]

Wood theorizes that horror films are representative of our collective nightmares (26). These collective nightmares are formed in response to the abnormal as he states that "normality is threatened by the Monster. I use 'normality' here in a strictly non-evaluative sense, to mean simply 'conformity to the dominant social norms'" (Wood 26). These social norms include heteronormativity and ideologies that constrain gender to a male/female and masculine/feminine binary and race (non-Caucasian). There is a kinetic polymorphous aspect of the Monster as Wood goes on to say that the "Monster is, of course, much more protean, changing from period to period as society's basic fears

Horror here becomes polymorphous with a direct connection to queer embodiment of gender and sexuality whereby queers are made into Monsters

work, yet they embody a new form of horror: the element of transphobia and homophobia, which manufacture the marginalized as monstrous.[3] I argue that this is most apparent through the workings of the doppelganger that Robin Wood argued is a core component of the horror film (26).[4] Wood states that the doppelganger signifies an embodiment of normality and the Monster as two aspects of the same person (26).[5] The doppelganger effect in *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* is not within the same person, but is within two or three characters that are contrasted against each other to highlight the form of the monstrous. Wood states that the "doppelganger motif reveals the Monster as normality's shadow" (26). In these films, the doppelganger

clothe themselves in fashionable or immediately accessible garments" (26). These fears materialize themselves and are based upon the socially aberrant, the marginalized, the abnormal -- the queer.[7]

M. Butterfly: Song Liling/Butterfly as the Embodiment of Monstrous and Unfathomable Gender

To be clear, Song's sex is not coherently male; neither is her/his gender specifically masculine (or male, if one believes gender is only male/female).[8] At one point in the film, Song states that "only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act," but never explicitly acknowledges his/her biological sex as male. There are others that try to prescribe it onto him/her like the lawyers in the courtroom and Rene who calls him "just a man," which Song swiftly counters by replying "I'm not just a man." Song is not "just a man," he/she is transgendered and occupies a fluid gen-

---

2. This aspect of my argument borrows from Harry Benshoff's *Monster's in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film.* Benshoff's text explores the constructions of monsters in Hollywood horror film through the classical horror period of the 1930s into the 80s and 90s.

3. By transphobia I mean a fear of "queer gender" and homophobia "queer sexuality".

4. Wood's argument here borrows from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical views about the "return of the repressed."

5. Wood points to films like *Metropolis* (1927), *Nosferatu* (1922) and *Frankenstein* (1931) among others which represent this type of doppelganger.

6. I am borrowing here from Said's theory of the Other. See Orientalism for more.

7. This is where I expand upon Benshoff's ideas of homosexuality as monstrous to include queer gendered embodiment.

8. I will employ both masculine and feminine pronouns when referring to Song because her/his gender is instable, non-normative and queer. However, as I will argue, the film attempts to repudiate this.

der identity. Instead of allowing Song and Rene to embrace in the film's penultimate sequence in the police van, there is an avoidance of queer love between the two characters. Song's indescribability is commented upon by de Lauretis with the title of *M. Butterfly* as she states that "M. stands for Monsieur in French, not Madame or Miss or Mrs or Ms" (312). Thus, there is already a "problem" with gender in the title of the film and de Lauretis goes on to say that "the problem of how to refer to Song Liling remains, as we shall see, a constant reminder of the constructedness of gender and its overdetermination by language" (313).

The problem with how to refer to Song continues not just within the film itself, but by scholars who appropriate terminology like transvesticism, homosexuality and masculine pronouns. By employing the term transvesticism in relation to Song's gender identity, it implies a sense of impermanence to her/his gender crossing and acceptance of the binary of male/female.[9] Not only does Song's gender transgressions adhere to a normative binary of male/female, masculine/feminine through the term transvestite, but it implies a momentary performance – or an "acting out" of body experience that repudiates what is rather a fluid and polymorphous subject position(s). Suner states that "Song's presence in the film as a transvestite body is consistently contained within the boundaries of performance" as spy (off-stage) and as actress (on-stage) (57). Moreover, Suner agrees that Song challenges the "binary oppositional categories of male and female as ontological essences," yet only through the performative aspect of her/his gender (57).[10] When contrasted against other Chinese officials, specifically Chin (Shizuko Hoshi), the term transvesticism is complicated by what is really a transgendered state of being. This is where I agree with Suner because "Song continues to wear feminine clothes even when s/he is giving reports to the Chinese officials" (58). However, transvesticism, whether it is "on-stage" or "off-stage", relates to performance and the pleasure of dressing like the opposite sex, and, therefore, it adheres to the binary of male/female and masculine/feminine. Transgendered embodiment refers to a fluid gender, one that directly challenges a static acquiescence to binaries.

In cinema, as in reality, the body is also the marker of sex and what is now viewed as gender.[11] In an effort to maintain Song's transgenderism, the film manages to avoid portraying the explicit indicator of his/her gender or sex. The scene in the police van manages to avoid giving us closure with regard to Song's gender and sex (Suner 58) – we do not see anything but a body without genitalia, and, therefore, one cannot assume Song is male/female and/or masculine/feminine. Furthermore, Song states in this scene that "under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me," and this statement repudiates a masculine or feminine pronoun (Suner 58). To continue the problem with language in referring to Song's gender and sex, Cronenberg refers to Song as a male when he speaks about the casting of Song Liling. Cronenberg says "I wanted a man. When Gallimard and Song are kissing I wanted it to be two men. I wanted the audience to feel that" (327). However, Cronenberg also refers to Song as "she," which de Lauretis believes "suggests his identification with Gallimard" in identifying Song as a woman (329). And to complicate matters, de Lauretis herself identifies Song as a man with a masculine pronoun. In addition, two noted scholars on David Cronenberg's body of work, Ernest Mathijs and William Beard, both ultimately refer to Song as "he" in their respective analyses of the films. Mathijs' analysis of the film employs the feminine pronoun for Song until he states that "Song is a man" and then begins to refer to Song as "he" (174). Beard also changes from using "she" to "he" after he makes a statement about coherent gender and/or sex as he says "But Song Liling is precisely not a real female, she is precisely a creation of male fantasy, she is in fact a man" (359).[12]

Beard states that "the filmmaker himself declared that in this film, for the first time, absolutely no creatures and no special effects, 'John (Lone) is the creature' and 'John was my one big special effect'" (361). On the contrary, the special effect and the monster in this film is the transgendered figure of Song – the unfathomable gender that cannot even be uttered by language itself. Furthermore, Beard goes on to say that the true monstrosity of the film, "is that a man-woman is far more a 'creature' than a woman-as-woman could be," (361) which is certainly valid because a man-woman, or in other words, a person that deviates from accepting either male or female as their gender/sex is a Monster. There is gender ambiguity, then, or forced assumption of gender onto Song not only by characters with-

_____

9. I want to clarify here that there is a cultural and historical foundation for transvesticism in Chinese opera and stage-play. But, I'm arguing here that Song's fluid gender extends *beyond* the stage and male/female binary.

10. Certainly, Butler's theory of gender performativity enabled the deconstruction of gender, which argued for its fluidity. However, this theory has been misinterpreted to mean that all performances are controlled whereas Butler means that the performativity is already inscribed onto us and is a "doing, thought not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (25). See Gender Trouble for more.

11. Science's narrow, definitional view of gender has infiltrated other discourses to the point that gender and sex have been conflated in our society.

12. I don't have the space to argue against Beard's notion of a "real female", but see Monique Wittig and Simone De Beauvoir's work on the constructedness of woman in The Straight Mind and The Second Sex respectively.

in the diegesis, but also by scholars, critics and the director who all seek to make sense of Song's queer, and monstrous, gender.

Kirill as Queer Monster: The Colonizer/Heterosexual/Masculine/Male as Haunting Doppelganger

My theoretical framework of a queer Monster is furthered in *Eastern Promises* with the character of Kirill whose queer sexuality is represented within the film and rendered explicit. The doppelganger who illuminates Kirill's sexuality as monstrous and, thus, Kirill as Monster, is Nikolai. *Eastern Promises* portrays Kirill as dominant and controlling of Nikolai; however, I will suggest how Nikolai acts as the dominant force in this film not only to colonize the Other (Kirill), but along with the film, Nikolai makes Kirill into a Monster similar to Song in *M. Butterfly*. Mathijs states that "the homoerotic S&M play between Kirill and Nikolai parallels some of the situations Cronenberg had previously explored in *M. Butterfly* and *Crash*, with Nikolai, like Gallimard and James, not wholly uninterested or victimized" (240). Nikolai, like Gallimard, is not victimized because he is the one controlling and containing Kirill's queerness as doppelganger. Furthermore, Nikolai is partially interested in Kirill's sexual advances because he represses that what he also desires. Mathijs also makes a point about the "queer disease" that Semyon (Armin Mueller-Stahl) speaks about in the film, and I believe this queer disease is a further iteration of the pathologizing of queerness in Cronenberg's films; Kirill's queerness has to be demonized and made monstrous in order for the film to represent and then contain his sexuality.

Kirill's status as queer Monster rendered by Nikolai as doppelganger will be made clear by an analytical deconstruction of some of *Eastern Promises'* scenes.

Nikolai and Kirill are almost always connected by embrace and touching. There is a motif of having either Nikolai's hand on Kirill's back or vice versa – this reinforces the notion that they are really shadows of one another. In other words, the monstrous/abnormal and the normal are connected through physical contact. The film also complicates Kirill's morality as Wood states that "the monster is clearly the emotional center and much more human than the card-board representations of normality" (27). There is a sense of moral ambivalence in Kirill and this illustrates itself throughout the entire film in different ways. When Nikolai and Kirill first meet Anna (Naomi Watts), Nikolai states "maybe somebody sent your Father a hooker for Christmas," while Kirill replies by saying "You're so fucking unbelievably disrespectful." This works as an example of Kirill's sensitivity, not only towards disrespecting his Father, but also disrespecting Anna.

In the following scene, Anna enters Kirill's family restaurant, called the Trans Siberian, and a following shot of Kirill renders him as Monster. Kirill is positioned next to a stuffed animal's head in the mise-en-scene of the Trans Siberian, which implies a sense of associational wildness and/or savageness onto him. Kirill has done nothing up to this point in the film to garner such an image, but yet the film constructs this for us to think of him in a certain way. In contrast, the status of Nikolai as colonizer and Kirill's doppelganger is supported by the film's mise-en-scene(s). Directly after Anna leaves Trans Siberian, Nikolai is positioned erect beside a pole by Anna's motorcycle. Considering that Nikolai almost penetrates her motorcycle in a previous shot by driving his car in close proximity to it, his heterosexual phallocentrism is cemented in this scene, which juxtaposes itself clearly against Kirill's queerness.

In another scene, again in the Trans Siberia during a party (or family event), Kirill is consistently alienated in the mise-en-scene. Kirill is not sitting with family and/or friends for dinner; he is alienated and relegated through his seating next to the kid's table. His adult subject is denigrated here and he is also, again, framed with creatures. Only this time, the animal is a two-headed, bird-like animal chiselled into a stone pillar, which is a metaphor for the film's quick construction and containment of Kirill from a protruding animal's head to an object in stone. This specific connection constructed through the mise-en-scene between Kirill and the two-headed, bird-like animal is also metaphorically reaffirming the doppelganger effect as a leitmotif in the film.

Later in the film, Nikolai and Kirill enter the Trans Siberia, and Nikolai throws Kirill to the floor once they enter. The shot is from a low-angle that suggests Nikolai's dominance over Kirill, especially when Nikolai sits down in a chair after Kirill is shown on the floor. Kirill struggles to get up in his drunken haze and grabs onto Nikolai's ankle. While this is happening, Nikolai's legs are spread and he is leaning back in his chair with his right arm concealing half of his face. Kirill places his head directly onto Nikolai's shoe, which suggests his submissive position, and extends his buttocks into the air. This shot represents that what cannot be fully represented – sexual intercourse between Kirill and Nikolai – this must always be represented in symbolic ways to contain the queerness within the diegesis. Furthermore, Kirill's Father, Semyon is witness to this behaviour and punishes the implied queerness of the scene by physically attacking his son with kicks to the stomach, which works metaphorically to suggest that Semyon is punishing Kirill for his transgressions.

This representation of queerness or the sex between Kirill and Nikolai that the film cannot represent is furthered in a following scene where Kirill commands Nikolai to have sex with a prostitute while he watches to prove that he "ain't no fucking queer" as he si-

multaneously caresses Nikolai's face. The motif of anal intercourse is again reaffirmed here when Nikolai chooses to rape the prostitute from behind while Kirill watches.[13] However, considering that Nikolai actually works for Scotland Yard, could he not find a way out of this predicament? Surely, there could have been an alternative and a better way to "save-face" that would not have resulted in the rape of a woman. Could the alternative be Kirill and Nikolai having sex? Why is the rape of a woman able to represent itself clearly in Cronenberg's cinema while queer sexuality is repudiated or relegated to obscurity with metaphors and connotative meanings? This scene makes Kirill seem like a monster because he commands Nikolai to rape the prostitute; however, Nikolai *did* the raping, and this action is certainly more horrific and criminal than Kirill's voyeurism. Regardless of this fact, Nikolai is treated as the saviour here when he helps the woman after he rapes her. Nikolai is framed by a low-angle shot with a crucifix tattoo on his chest, and he also gives the woman money to return to her family. However, Nikolai is the *one* who rapes her, and yet Kirill bears the burden of responsibility and disgust.

---

13.   "Rear-entry" sex is a sexual choice represented in other Cronenberg's directed works in addition to M. Butterfly and Eastern Promises: *Crash* (1996).

And again later in the film, Kirill is forced to take responsibility for an action he did not commit. After being made aware of the murder of a fellow *vory v zakone*, which occurred at the beginning of the film, Semyon remarks "My son commits a murder on my own doorstep." But, Kirill did not do the killing; he may have ordered it, but this is the point – Kirill is forced to take responsibility for other's actions: he is colonized by the film's formal and semantic structure. Kirill is made into a queer Monster.

When Kirill takes Tatiana's (Sarah Jeanne-Labrosse) baby from the hospital, which Anna is protecting, this is the moment of the film whereby Kirill's moral ambivalence is most explicit. Kirill stands next to the water and says "She's just a little girl," and his conscience overcomes him when Nikolai and Anna come to rescue the baby. Kirill is abused, beaten and discriminated against by his own Father and this would be the first time Kirill would commit an act directly. However, Nikolai takes the baby from Kirill and then embraces him. They hold one another in a loving embrace – a queerness that the film quickly repudiates by replacing it with heteronormativity. This embrace is juxtaposed against the preceding shot of Nikolai, Anna and the baby as the heterosexual, white, nuclear family. Nikolai also kisses Anna, which quickly erases the queerness existing in the previous shot. Again, the doppelganger effect juxtaposes Nikolai's normativity against Kirill's queerness, which renders him as a Monster.

The Other is represented in cinema in different ways, and I do not suggest that my theory of the queer Monster can be mapped onto every film that features characters who do not adhere to normality. What I do suggest is that the representation of queerness in *M. Butterfly* and *Eastern Promises* is transformed into the monstrous by the workings of the doppelganger and the level of repression in relation to queer gender, sex and sexuality. The queer bodies become abject, similar to the other abject bodies in Cronenberg's films; they exist on the border-lines, the interstices of Cronenberg's cinema. They can only be represented on the level of symbolic order and semantic structure. Cronenberg may well be the "eternal outsider," yet these two films disavow explicit representation of the queer "outsider" in an effort to replace/colonize the queerness with monstrosity.

Works Cited

Beard, William. *The Artist as Monster: The Cinema of David Cronenberg*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc, 2006.

Benshoff, Harry. *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*. Manchester University Press, 1997.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York & London: Routledge, 1990.

de Lauretis, Teresa. "Popular Culture, Public and Private Fantasies: Femininity and Fetishism in David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24: 2 (1999): 303-334.

Eastern Promises. Dir. David Cronenberg. Alliance Films. 2007.

Grist, Leighton. "It's Only a Piece of Meat": Gender Ambiguity, Sexuality, and Politics in *The Crying Game* and *M. Butterfly*." *Cinema Journal* 12:4 (2003): 3-28.

Lawrenson, Edward. "Written on the body." *Sight and Sound* 11 (2007): 16-18.

Mathijs, Ernest. *The cinema of David Cronenberg: from baron of blood to cultural hero*. London, Wallflower Press, 2008.

M Butterfly. Dir. David Cronenberg. Warner Bros. 1993.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage. 1979.

Wollen, Peter. "The Auteur Theory." *Film Theory and Criticism*. 1975. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford, 2004. 865-580.

Wood, Robin. "Return of the Repressed." *Film Comment* 14:4 (1978): 25-32.

Rock 'n' Roll Nightmare

THE VIDEO DEAD

Night School

CHOPPING MALL

TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

Return to Horror High

THE WILLIES

DEADLY STORIES

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD

TERROR ON TAPE

THE MUTILATOR

Don't Open Till CHRISTMAS

NEW YORK RIPPER

KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS

GRADUATION DAY

the severed arm

HOBGOBLINS

Bloody Birthday

MORTUARY

MOTHER'S DAY

WHERE NOBODY RESTS IN PEACE

GHOST DANCE

HONEYMOON HORROR

THE LOCH NESS HORROR

Midnight Madness

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

The SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE

ELVES

OFFERINGS

PHANTOM BROTHER

Look who's back!

BASKET CASE 2

Video Violence

GHOST TOWN

schizo

WARNING
Never come between Ethel and a well-stocked refrigerator!!

DEADLY DREAMS

Christmas EVIL
Better Watch Out Better Not Cry Or You May DIE!

Devilfish

RATS

EVIL DEAD 2
DEAD BY DAWN

cinephile.ca

ANIME

Coming Spring 2011

UBC

CINEPHILE.CA