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Terrorists, Zombies, and Robots: The Political Unconscious, Thematics, and Affectual Structures of the Post-9/11 American Fear Narrative

Nathanael J. Cloyd
Old Dominion University, natecloyd@yahoo.com

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TERRORISTS, ZOMBIES, AND ROBOTS: THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS,

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FEAR NARRATIVE

by

Nathanael J. Cloyd
B.A. December 2009, Northern Arizona University
M.A. December 2012, Northern Arizona University

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Approved by:

Edward Jacobs (Director)

Margaret Konkol (Member)

Kevin Moberly (Member)

Stacy Takacs (Member)

ABSTRACT

TERRORISTS, ZOMBIES, AND ROBOTS: THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS, THEMATICS, AND AFFECTUAL STRUCTURES OF THE POST-9/11 AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVE

Nathanael J. Cloyd
Old Dominion University, 2019
Director: Dr. Edward Jacobs

This dissertation examines the post-9/11 American fear narrative across media and genre. First, it proposes the concepts of the fear narrative, the primary fear theme, and the secondary fear theme. Second, it proposes that the fear narrative has a long tradition in American culture, in which its themes have adapted and evolved in historically sedimented layers of development. Third, it proposes that American fear themes change depending on its historical context of production, its cultural regime, its genre, and the form of media in which it is expressed. To help uncover the political unconsciousness of the American fear narrative, it employs the methodology of Fredric Jameson's three horizons of interpretation. At the first horizon, this methodology interprets a text by focusing on a formal contradiction in the narrative as a symbolic resolution to an irresolvable real-world contradiction. At the second horizon, this contradiction is re-interpreted as a social conflict between two different ideological positions in the text. At the third horizon, this is re-interpreted as a contradiction between sedimented layers of genres, and at this point the text can be interpreted as expressing both oppressive and Utopian ideological content.

To analyze the post-9/11 American fear narrative, this study turns to a variety of genres in several media forms. First, it examines the genre of the 9/11 novel. Here, it is

noted how fear narratives use the ten primary fear themes this study has identified to access their contradictions and that these narratives seem to have either ambiguous or hopeful endings. Second, it analyzes the zombie narrative, noting the role of five secondary fear themes that are more specific to this genre. Third, it examines the science fiction fear narrative to note how these texts after 9/11 often explored the secondary fear theme of the hybrid character, expressing an intertwining of anxiety and hope as cultures such as the East and West intermix after the terrorist attacks. This study notes an ongoing discourse among post-9/11 American fear narratives on how America as a Utopian project should move forward into the future.

This dissertation is dedicated to Jennifer Cloyd and Tyler Cloyd,

for all their support on this long road.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Here we go again, the world is coming to an end

Engage the fear machine and collect the dividends

………………………………………….

Keep your eyes on the bright and shiny

Just for you, a brand new-and-improved catastrophe. ("Engage the Fear

Machine," Lamb of God)

This study investigates the political unconscious of the post-9/11 American fear

narrative as a distinct and most-current period in the longstanding American fear

narrative tradition that extends across genre and media forms. In doing so, I propose

the post-9/11 American fear narrative as a new object of study. This narrative form has

two distinct characteristics: first, and most obviously, it is a narrative that focuses on

depicting and evoking fears related to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the fallout

therefrom; second, it is part of a fear narrative tradition with a long history in American

culture and beyond that over time has developed and historically sedimented a number

of persistent but evolving fear themes. In this way, fear has embodied itself in the

narrative as a series of ever changing, evolving, and adapting fear themes that I have

identified as stretching throughout American history. Within narratives, these themes

are essentially reoccurring elements of content that are highly reactive to historic,

cultural, and economic events, and span an intertextual network that crystallizes them

into formal elements within particular genres and within their different media expressions. I use the term "theme" in describing these cultural phenomena, as opposed to the more commonly used terms of conventions or tropes, largely in an effort to differentiate this intergeneric concept from the more established intrageneric academic terminology that I will use when I discuss aspects occurring within particular genres. This study argues that while the themes of American fear at different historical points circulate common content, how these fears formally represent themselves within a cultural text depends on its historical context of production, its cultural regime, its genre (or the genre regime that it inhabits), and the form of media in which it is expressed.

Specifically, this study will attempt to delineate and trace these threads through literary fiction, horror, and science fiction as they appear in post-9/11 American literature, film, and television. I will focus on fictional narratives in particular, since this frame provides texts that borrow and build upon each other intertextually across media and genres. By stating that these narratives are "fictional," I am utilizing Jean-Marie Schaeffer's pragmatic definition of the term, in which "factual narrative advances *claims* of referential truthfulness whereas fictional narrative advances no such claims."[1] While non-narrative and factual narrative genres certainly produce and transmit fear themes as well, narrowing my scope to fictional narratives provides a common focus and point of reference. At the same time, it also allows the measure of breadth that this study needs to observe the way that cultural themes transmit and modulate across

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[1] See Schaeffer's "Fictional vs. Factual Narration" on *The Living Handbook of Narratology* for additional definitions used to distinguish fictional from factual narration. Also, this focus on fictional narratives in this study omits numerous genres of fear narratives that fully deserve studies of their own as fear narratives, such as slave narratives and captivity narratives that make claims to referential truthfulness.

contemporary American culture, thus avoiding the cultural myopia and constraints of only focusing on a particular genre or media. Overall, this study will explore a trans-medial, trans-generic, and multi-cultural array of post-9/11 American fear narratives to explore how content, form, and ideology transmit and modulate in today's complex media environment.

In part, this dissertation is an investigation into the "fear machine" mentioned in the opening quote of this chapter from the song "Engage the Fear Machine" by metal band Lamb of God. If the emotion of fear is used within culture for instrumental reasons, as this song and other texts assert, how does this politicization of fear work and to what ends? Is it just a means to generate profit, or is there more to it? If fear is used to manipulate consumers, how can we better understand its ideological and formal workings in order to raise our consciousness of this phenomenon so that we can resist or redirect its efforts? While fear is often seen as operating in this way in news media and politics, how does fear operate in the fictional narrative? How do different genres and media forms alter this use of fear in the narrative, perhaps at the formal or ideological levels? Does fear only work in this illusory, Adorno-esque fashion, or can it also be utilized for other ends, perhaps ends more Utopic in nature? These are the questions that have motivated my research and work on this project, something that I have experienced as a felt urge to uncover and discover the workings of fear in the narrative not only in its detrimental and manipulative potentialities but also how it is used in American culture in ways that might be generative and valuable as we progress into the future. Even further, this project asks how fear changes within a given culture

through history, and how a fearful situation, such as the attacks of 9/11, might affect the cultural experience of fear?

A wide array of work has been done surrounding these questions, but none has put all the pieces together into an interpretation of the uses of fear in American culture after 9/11. Barry Glassner's *The Culture of Fear* offers a pre-9/11 sociological perspective of how fear is used by politicians, advocacy groups, and the media to manipulate, but it mentions little about fear in the fictional narrative. On the other hand, Brian Massumi's anthology *Politics of Everyday Fear* provides a pre-9/11 understanding of the emotion of fear and its relation to affect. Affect theory itself has grown in popularity after 9/11, but seminal texts in this field since 9/11 have tended to pursue aspects of affect other than fear, such as Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings,* Eugine Brinkema's *The Forms of the Affects*, and Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*. Other studies have begun the investigation into the formal and ideological aspects of the post-9/11 narrative in various media, such as Arin Keeble's *The 9/11 Novel: Trauma, Politics, and Identity* and Wheeler Winston Dixon's anthology *Film and Television after 9/11*. While these works at times address post-9/11 texts and their discussion of fearful situations or experiences, they do not go as far as to analyze the fear in these narratives at the level of its formal and ideological manifestations. This project advances the critical conversations in the study of American fear, affect theory, and post-9/11 narratives by bringing them together with considerations of class ideology and narratology so that we can identify how the fictional narrative use of fear has evolved in the past two decades and what ideological articulations it is forming today. Perhaps most importantly, the study of the post-9/11 American fear narrative remains relevant

today because, as we will see in this study, after 9/11, fear became both personalized and politicized in terms of nation, religion, and geography in ways that we still live within today. Conducting symptomatic readings of the cultural texts of this time reveals how 9/11 changed the nature of American fear and the narrative ideologies surrounding these culturally and historically contingent expressions of fear, changes that contribute to the underlying roots of American fear and culture at work today.

This gap in our understanding of the fear narrative is one that desperately needs to be filled, as can be seen by the recent concern in American culture over "fake news," "alternative facts," and "truthiness" in which the ideological operations of texts, especially narratives, have become increasingly difficult to identify, and this murkiness has seeped into the American imaginary and the narratives it produces. "Fake news" and its ilk have most frequently been deployed to elicit or ideologically form and direct fear, especially after 9/11, such as directing our attention to false threats or creating threats where there may be none. By researching the way that fear operates in the post-9/11 narrative, we can develop a critical awareness of how the "facts" and "truth" expressed in these texts have been manipulated to serve particular ends. By exposing these fearful manipulations, and uncovering Utopic uses of fear as well, we can come to a better grasp of how to resist, alter, and change the way fear works in contemporary American culture, steering us away from fears of things that might not really exist and placing our energies behind more productive urgencies.

To help examine the transmission of the thematic threads of fear through the intertextual fabric of American culture and into my central focus, the post-9/11 "era," I will turn to the Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson's three horizon methodology of

interpretation. Through this lens, these elements of content and their formal manifestations are symbolic acts of the American political unconscious, at once registering and intervening within the political, social, and historical issues underlying a particular historically situated understanding of American fear. My next chapter discusses Jameson's methodology in more detail, but in very simple terms, he proposes at the first horizon to analyze how the formal creativity of any narrative acts ideologically by inventing an imaginary solution to real world contradictions, at the second horizon to analyze how a text's formal ideology registers actual class conflicts rife in its own time, and at the third horizon to analyze how any narrative text at once repurposes the ideologies of previous texts and genres and looks forward to new narrative forms and ideologies. This study will use this Jamesonian methodology to focus on the way that the thematic threads of American fear manifest themselves in American cultural productions created after 9/11 to allow a better understanding of their transmission, circulation, and formation across genres and media, and to better understand their political, social, and historical meanings in these particular and situated cultural manifestations.

I have selected Jameson's three horizons method as the central methodology of this study because it understands narrative form from a political and historical perspective salient for my subject and both uncovers oppressive ideologies hidden in seemingly progressive texts and recovers Utopian aspects of seemingly oppressive texts, a double hermeneutic that seems apt to the ideological complexities of fear narratives after 9/11. However, in the past decade, this Jamesonian methodology has been the topic of numerous criticisms. Joseph North places Jameson's *The Political*

Unconscious, the originating source of the three horizons methodology, as the beginning of what he calls the almost Kuhnian "historicist/contextualist paradigm" that he argues has dominated literary studies since its publication in 1981 (1). He asserts that this brand of criticism has pushed literary studies into creating cultural studies that merely depict history rather than intervene to effect cultural and political change (2-3). As he argues, contrary to popular sentiments in the field, the dominance of this brand of scholarship has not been a triumph of the left, but rather a move to political passivity and "depoliticization" that has served the political right, as "for its explicit commitments to politicization, [it] has left us with a discipline of cultural analysis alone," in which "even those whose explicit goal is to intervene in the culture seek to do so by providing further and better analyses" (12). He states that in the political history of literary studies, this historicist/contextualist paradigm has been "symptomatic of the wider retreat of the left in the neoliberal period and was thus a small part of the more general victory of the right" (3).

Rita Felski also argues that Jamesonian symptomatic reading should not be the singular and dominant perspective in literary theory, borrowing from philosopher Paul Ricoeur to call this form of critique the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (*The Limits* 1). This hermeneutics creates what she calls a "critical mood" in which "[a] certain disposition takes shape: guardedness rather than openness, aggression rather than submission, irony rather than reverence, exposure rather than tact" (20-1). Elizabeth S. Anker and Felski describe critique as having a "*diagnostic* quality" that treats interpretation as the work of a lone expert who scrutinizes "an object in order to decode certain *defects* or flaws that are not readily or automatically apparent to a nonspecialist perspective" (4). In

an anthology co-edited by Felski, Christopher Castiglia places critique in the context of political history: "Like the ever-wary Cold War citizen, critics operating within the hermeneutics of suspicion treat the text's surface as a deceptive cover below which they discover and reveal dangerous ideological complicities in which critics themselves are unimplicated" (215). In response, Felski calls for the creation of alternatives to critique that she calls postcritique (*The Limits* 173). Overall, though, Felski states, "To ask what comes after the hermeneutics of suspicion is not to demolish but to decenter it, to decline to see it as the be-all and end-all of interpretation" (9). In short, Felski looks to destabilize the present binary in literary studies that if you are not being critical you "must therefore be *un*critical" ("Introduction" 215). In proposing alternatives to critique, Felski has presented curating, conveying, criticizing, and composing as four possible actions of the humanities that we can use to broaden our studies and justify the continuance of our discipline (217).

It is important to note here that neither North nor Felski call for the elimination of Jamesonian symptomatic readings or critique, nor do they think we should stop using this form of analysis in either literary studies or the humanities. As North states, "We will of course continue to need trenchant historicist/contextualist analyses of culture through a radical lens, such as those that are now provided by those on the left of the discipline" (211). His point is, and I would concur, that we need to supplement critique by finding new ways to more effectively and actively intervene and change culture (211). Similarly, Felski states, "*postcritical* can hardly be taken to mean that we are no longer influenced by the ideas of Marx or Foucault" ("Response" 386), nor is it "about hauling the intellectual giants of modern thought before a firing squad" (387). Further, she states,

"we cannot entirely forego suspicion (what has been learned cannot be unlearned); this, presumably, is the salient distinction between the postcritical and the noncritical" (389). These recent, much-needed examinations of Jamesonian-style of critique have prompted the discipline to look for new alternatives to critique in order to broaden our capacities as academics[2], and I would argue that these moves will be vital to the future of the discipline, moves that I would like to pursue in the future as well. However, these calls also note the importance of the continuance of critique alongside these new alternatives, and this dissertation aims to further this effort.

   In response to North, though, I would argue that, while historicist/contextualist critique admittedly has limited power to make social change under the present dominance of neoliberal culture, it does have some power. This circuit of power can be found in Felski's actions of the humanities, particularly in curating and conveying. While I acknowledge that cultural studies such as this will likely only be read by a select audience of academics in the field, and will thus, likely, be "preaching to the choir," these same academics tend to teach courses, and in these courses we convey our ideas from these academic studies to our students, who then go out into the world to spread these ideas, albeit often in partial, translated, or distorted forms, to others by word of mouth and online. Overall, it is hard to dispute that some political gains have been made under the historicist/contextualist paradigm. As Bruce Robbins states in response to postcriticism and to defend the ability of critique to affect political change: "The present backlash in the United States against decades of struggle for the rights of

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[2] For examples of alternatives to critique, see William Jeffrey on the new modesty in literary criticism; Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus in their call for the reading methods of "surface reading," (9); and, Heather Love in her proposition for "description rather than interpretation" to make thin descriptions that read "close but not deep" (375).

women and minorities can be read dialectically as a backhanded recognition that such struggles have in fact accomplished something" (373-4). Yet, I also agree with both North and Felski that we need to find new ways to expand our ability to engage with and enact political change, as I believe developments in these efforts can only benefit our discipline.

One valuable service that North and Felski's critiques provide is that they offer a much-needed analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of critique. One advantage I find in symptomatic reading is that it provides the interpreter with surprises, in that texts that seem progressive often turn out to contain oppressive ideologies as well. Likewise, oppressive texts can also be reclaimed as containing aspects that are Utopian. As Jameson's third horizon asserts, all texts are inherently and simultaneously ideological and Utopian, and, even while this can often be a bitter pill to take when reading texts that we enjoy, it is a realization that I have found to be beneficial to both the critic and their readers. Last, I would also question the view of critique as a diagnostic implemented by the lone expert. In writing this dissertation, I may have been a critic diagnosing the symptoms of my texts, but I was never alone. All of the interpretations in this study resulted in conversation with a multitude of other academic voices, narratives, and philosophical perspectives who have left their marks as the source material that supplement my analyses. I may have synthesized their voices and added my own to the chorus, but criticism, at least as it has taken shape in this study, has been anything but a lone act of an insulated individual asserting my authority over the clueless masses. On numerous occasions, these voices challenged my own sense of "expertise,"

diffusing it in ways that have enriched this study and can only be described as collective.

As another alternative to Jameson, Paul Saint-Amour presents the concept of weak theory, which draws from "feminism, queer theory, and disability studies" (439) in which "the various loads borne by weakness can productively decenter what they encounter" and can "make theory and modernism strange to themselves" (438). Yet, as Margaret Konkol writes concerning the field of modernism, the issue is not whether strong or weak theories are "better": "Rather, it's that strong theory had needed to play itself out in the field, first. The viability of surface reading does not presuppose that symptomatic or deep readings are invalid." Unlike the field of modernism, in which the objects of study and the boundaries of the field have previously been established and are currently in need of weakening in order to be subject to revision, I intentionally adopt the strong theories of Jameson to stake out the intellectual territory of my new object of study, the post-9/11 American fear narrative. This said, however, I eagerly invite future studies, by myself and others, that adopt weak theories in order to question, problematize, and destabilize the concepts I present in this dissertation. These efforts can only advance our understanding of the fear narrative, energizing the conversation that I aim to create in this study on fear and the American narrative.

With these criticisms in mind, I focus on the emotion of fear in this study, as opposed to other emotions, because the aspects of a text that direct us to fear something or to be afraid of a particular situation point the critic toward moments of conflict and contradiction that are particularly salient within post-9/11 culture. Further, I focus on fear because it is central to understanding post-9/11 American narratives and

culture and because in Jamesonian terms it is an emotion that particularly registers underlying social contradictions and historical tensions. These moments of narrative fear can be seen as the sites of tension brought about by dialectical contradiction occurring on political, social, or ideological levels. These are the anxious moments when the inherent contradiction between two social or material forces are still in contentious negotiation, when the outcome is still ambiguous, so the tension between these two forces in the throes of dialectic synthesis—and all of the desperate struggles for power and legitimacy this entails, the violence and discourse, the maneuvers and tactics of enacting and spreading ideological perspectives of our experience of reality—creates anxiety in the text over the uncertainty of the shape and the potential social hierarchy of the future to come. In short, looking at fear in a text is one way to help direct us toward the conflicts that are of interest to a cultural critic. These moments of fear in a text are conjunctions of sociocultural contention: the conflict of the status quo with the new, moments of potential change. Of course, there are certainly other ways to access these contradictions in a text but focusing on the elicitation and depiction of fear offers a fruitful heuristic toward the interpretation of these points of conflict as felt by their contemporaneous and intended audiences.

For example, if a text directs us to be afraid of an external enemy, who has a habit of contaminating our understanding of what defines our social in-group, then it is often the case that we are symbolically being directed toward the fear of a competing ideology, one that is coming from an out-group source but has the potential to convert those of our in-group to its ways. In post-9/11 American fear narratives, the ideological and symbolic unconscious of such fears are especially potent and pervasive. For

instance, in post-9/11 zombie films the contagious nature of the zombie turning who we thought were friends into enemies often symbolically directs us to the fear that terrorists themselves or their ideologies will convert those we thought to be red-blooded Americans into an enemy, a concern often felt in the American imaginary toward the possibility of sleeper cells living among us and domestically grown terrorists joining Jihadist causes. Further, during the Invasion of Iraq in 2003, contradictions between the efforts of American imperialism and Middle Eastern anti-colonial insurgencies can be captured and pinpointed in the fear elements of the post-9/11 narrative in stories of invasion and colonization, such as in James Cameron's film *Avatar* (2009), which identifies with the colonized aliens who rise up against the imperial power of the human characters. This also occurs in other historical American eras in different ways and directed toward different objects of fear, such as in the 1950s when many were afraid of the conformity inspired by the McCarthy trials, and we could explore these feelings through narratives wherein the external threat contaminates our in-group, such as in Don Siegel's film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), a film that could be seen either as expressing a fear of McCarthyism or the fear of being converted to a soulless or totalitarian sense of Stalinist socialism. These examples highlight how fear, even within a single text, is often amorphous and can be directed toward multiple targets simultaneously, allowing for a complex cultural analysis from multiple perspectives. Overall, the three horizon approach to fear as a socially symbolic act allows for a multivalenced discussion of numerous fears acting on a culture at a particular historical moment. Even more, it especially allows for the discussion of how fear narratives pull us into the cutting edge of the concerns and the formation of a culture, in the path of what

is directly to come, the nascent shapes of future articulations of power, into what Williams would call the structures of feeling, these "pre-emergent" or, in other terms, affective impulses that have yet to be articulated into the structures of power and hegemonic culture (132). In short, focusing on fear narratives, especially in the post-9/11 era, is one way to see the culture-in-progress, to see it in negotiation, before the conclusion of the contradiction becomes a crystallized, structured formation in which the threat to the status quo is neutralized.

In constructing this study, I made a number of limitations in its scope. First, of course, this study only looks at fear narratives that originate from American sources, more specifically excavating the American reactions of fear after 9/11. This limits the project to only texts by American authors, directors, or creators. I use the term "American" loosely as all authors, directors, or creators living in America during the time of the production of the text. Yet, the category of "American" is one that has been fraught with contention. Like all national divisions, it is a moving boundary that often evokes a sense of inclusiveness at its ideological core, yet has often been used as a shifting exclusionary border in historical practice, often cutting along racial, ethnic, or religious lines, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and President Trump's Muslim travel ban in 2017 that was expanded in 2020. Limiting this study to American narratives excludes a wide range of fear narratives from other countries or those that have a hybrid nationality of origin, such as an author born in America who moved to another country or texts with multiple sources of origination. This can be a surprisingly difficult line of division to follow when considering contemporary film and television texts, which typically enlist the contribution of many people from across the world. For the

purposes of this study, then, I resolved to only look at the nationality of the director and/or the "show runner" of screen media to determine their eligibility for this study. Establishing this limitation allows us to focus on narrative crystallizations of American fear, as opposed to narrative fear in other nations or cultures, and avoids having to pull from an even larger corpus of international fear narratives, which in its sheer mass would only multiply and dilute the generalizations that even focusing on only American fear narratives necessitates. Further, the complications of geopolitics mean that every country has a different relation and level of concern over the event of 9/11 on which this study focuses. Expanding this study to the analysis of world fear narratives would not reliably reveal much about any one culture's emotional reaction to 9/11, nor would it make 9/11 an appropriate event on which to focus.

Second, as this study looks only at post-9/11 texts, I limited my focus to those texts that were largely created after September 11, 2001. This means that novels published only a year or two after 9/11 have been excluded to allow for the event to influence the production of the concepts behind their narratives, as novels often require at least two to three years to make, a "time lag" that Appelbaum and Paknadal found in their research on terrorist novels (396). As they state, "novels published in 2002 and 2003 and even later may have been conceived and written before 9/11 and are often indistinguishable in kind from earlier efforts" (396). While some novels published within this time lag may notably react to 9/11, excluding these years removes a gray area of cultural transition in the history of the novel that can muddy the distinctions we make between novels conceived before 9/11 from those conceived afterward. However, I do not place this limitation on films and television narratives selected for this study, as their

production times are often much quicker than those of novels, and drastic conceptual re-writes in light of current events happen frequently. Texts that have long histories of development (e.g., the 2007 film *The Mist* that was originally a novella written in 1980 by Stephen King) have, for the most part, been excluded to help rule out historical influences more characteristic of previous eras that might only have peripheral relations to the post-9/11 imaginary and geopolitics. Third, this project restricts the texts it analyzes to narratives in the 9/11 novel subgenre of literary fiction, the horror genre, and the science fiction genre, and to those in the media forms of literature, film, and television, to help create a sense of focus and framing in my argument and because post-9/11 fear narratives are common within these genres and media platforms.

Although my overarching project is a three-horizons Jamesonian interpretation of the post-9/11 American fear narrative, this study also draws on and contributes to many other fields of study. By adopting a transmedial approach, this cultural study both draws on and expands upon the contemporary academic understanding of the post-9/11 novel and the considerable research done on the emerging themes and forms prevalent in novels of this era, such as Kristiaan Versluys's *Out of the Blue* (2009), Richard Gray's *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011), and Arin Keeble's *The 9/11 Novel: Trauma Politics and Identity* (2014), among the numerous articles and works by Micheal Rothberg, Bimbisar Irom, and John Duvall. In terms of method, within the overarching three-horizons approach, I draw on formal reading and narratology, and an understanding of the narrative based on the narratological concepts of "possible worlds theory" and "fictionality," or the "qualities and affordances of fictional genres" (Zetterberg Gjerlevsen). This study also acts to intervene in the field of science fiction studies,

building of the works of Darko Suvin, Gary K. Wolfe, Fredric Jameson, and others in order to update the field to post-9/11 historical and cultural developments. Likewise, it acts to add to the conversation of zombie studies, building off the work of Gerry Canavan, John Browning, and Kyle William Bishop in order to bring the discussion into what I am calling the present "post-zombie" phase and to place the recent boom in zombie narrative popularity in context with other narrative movements since 9/11. In less direct but persistent ways, this study also builds on and seeks to contribute to various aspects of gender studies, feminism, and critical race theory.

I ground my understanding of emotion on a reconsideration of Brian Massumi's branch of affect theory, that sees emotion as an ideological interpretation of affect, which is itself a felt intensity caused by external stimuli. As Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg note, "there are two dominant vectors of affect study in the humanities," one based on the works of Silvan Tomkins and Eve Sedgwick, and the other Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist concepts as forwarded by Massumi (5), and these two vectors exist among the eight main approaches that they outline toward the study of affect in contemporary research today (6-8). They state that the Tomkins/Sedgwick approach is a more "human-centered" set of theories that utilizes research from psychobiology and psychoanalysis that tend toward "a relatively unabashed biologism" (7). For the purposes of this study, in which I aim to chart the transmission of cultural themes as they move across genres, media, and history, this approach offers limited value, as my study focuses on both human and nonhuman actors, such as textual form. However, the Deleuze/Massumi approach I have adopted offers this study an angle on affect that de-centers the role of the human, posing a "nonhumanist" philosophy in which affect moves

processually among both nonhuman and human actors, such as texts, readers, authors, critics, media, and historical events. This post-human approach can better capture the social and cultural relations that I seek to study concerning the post-9/11 American fear narrative. Yet, I encounter the limits of this approach to affect theory in my later discussion of trauma as a primary fear theme, in which the psychological and internalized affective experience of trauma benefits from the Freudian theories associated with the Tomkins/Sedgwick approach.

I note that my approach to affect theory is a "reconsideration" of Massumi's views on affect due to recent trenchant and enlightening critiques of his concepts. Ruth Leys very effectively discredits the two experiments that Massumi uses to form a theoretical justification for his views on affect in *Parables of the Virtual*, both the snowman experiment (450) and the half-second experiment he uses to explain the separation of affect and cognition (452). From these experiments she identifies a strain of anti-intentionalist thinking in Massumi's theories, in which affect places the body as primary in the determination of ideology and consciousness, and cognition comes "too late to intervene" (451-2). This enforces a "dualism of body and mind" (455) even as Massumi aims to condemn the "subject-object split" (458). Similarly, Aubrey Anable identifies how Massumi's *Parables of the Virtual* divorces the corporeal body from the "discursive body (the body of signification)," fixing it into a grid of symbolic systems that ignores the role of "the markers of race, gender, class, and sexuality" as at least partial determinates of one's "abilities to feel and act" (8-9). Yet, even as Leys states, these problems with Massumi's theories do not dispel the value of describing the role of affect, biology, ideology, cognition, representation, and personal experience in the creation of emotion.

As Leys attests, "The problem here is not the idea that many bodily (and mental) processes take place subliminally, below the threshold of awareness. Who would dream of doubting that they do?" (456).

In response to such criticisms, Eugenie Brinkema has proposed using Deleuze's concept of "perpetual foldings," in which the interior is no longer opposing the exterior, but folded into each other so that the outside becomes the inside of the outside and vice versa, to contest the linear framework Massumi advances (22). Through the concept of foldings, "Interiority," she argues, "is brought to the surface, made exterior to constitute a new topography of the subject, the body, and knowledge in the process" (22). Though describing Massumi's process appears distinctly linear, as external stimuli creates affect which acts on the body and is interpreted through cognitive processes into an emotion, we can alternately conceive of it as enfolded, for while affect may inform the body, cognition also informs the affectual, embodied sensations. For instance, when watching a scary movie, we do not simply absorb the formal stimulation of the film and react afterward. Instead, we ask ourselves cognitive questions that inform our later reception of affect. Do we like scary movies? What has been our experiences watching past scary movies? How does this film's formal attempts to produce fear compare to these other scary movies I have seen?

Thinking of the affectual process of emotion as enfolded destabilizes the mind/body binary by highlighting the influence of numerous actors in the process of making emotion, no longer privileging the body over the mind, and it turns the process into a nonlinear interaction of networked forces that build on each other in complex ways rather than produce a predetermined result. This enfolded version of Massumi's

affect theory moreover seems apt for analyzing, as I do here, the ways textual

representations produce and enter into affect, since even the act of reading is far more

complex than Massumi's original linear process of external stimuli, affect, and cognition,

and it can work in a variety of combinations. For example, reading or viewing is a

cognitive/bodily process that arguably precedes and produces bodily affect (spine chills,

for example) that are often processed through cognition and ideological structures as

we interpret the text. In answer to Anable's objection, the Jamesonian methodology of

this study works as a corrective for Massumi's disconnect with representation. By

grounding this study in affect in order to understand the emotion of fear, the three

horizons can pull our focus back to embodied forms existing in a relational grid of

signification with other forms in order to understand them at the ideological and

historical levels that this method affords. This perspective places the fear narrative itself

as a crystallization of affect, an embodied form rife with a politics of representation and

a dynamic set of relationships to other textual forms. It is important to note, however,

that this study uses affect as a theoretical basis for understanding emotion and its role

in the object of study, the post-9/11 American fear narrative. It is not a study focusing on

affect theory per se. Thus, affect often works implicitly in the pages that follow,

underlying the discussions of this study rather than explicitly being its center of focus.

Overall, I utilize Massumi's theories on affect, as opposed to others, because its

emphasis on the materiality of the interaction of affect with ideology, hegemony, and

power mesh well with Jamesonian Marxism and because it forms the foundation of

Deborah Gould's understanding of the affective ontology (28), which I use to link

Massumi's concepts to textual interpretation and review in my next chapter. Just as

affect theory broadly recognizes and critiques when Marxist and other cultural critics

analyze emotion, there is too often a retreat to idealism, of conceiving of emotion as

disembodied abstraction divorced from materiality. It is this very kind of idealism that

motivated much of Marx's theorizing as a protest against the philosophers popular in his

time such as those that he called "the Young Hegelians" and Feuerbach in particular

(Marx 36). However, affects, as Jameson states, "are singularities and intensities,

existences rather than essences" (*Antinomies* 36) that "become the organ of perception

of the world itself, the vehicle of my being-in-the-world" (43). In short, treating affect as

felt, bodily sensations or intensities reacting to external stimuli, or narrative forms,

provides a materialist means of conceptualizing emotion as interpretations of affect and

helps avoid the pitfalls of idealism that Marx railed against so vehemently. I use

primarily Massumi and Gould because they so directly interrogate the material nexus of

affect, emotion, and ideology. Further, this perspective allows us to distinguish between

affect and emotion in order to study affect as a part of the process that creates

emotions, thereby allowing this study to see emotions as culturally contingent and

historically evolving interpretations of felt events, interpretations that interact with

biological forces but are not determined by them alone.

     By combining the theories of these fields together, under the methodological

umbrella of Jameson's three-horizon analysis, this cultural study can analyze narrative

expressions of the emotion of fear in materialist terms as formal crystallizations of affect

that manifest in a variety of media as ideological solutions to real world problems that

seem otherwise irresolvable. Fear in these narratives expresses the felt contradictions

of American culture after 9/11, affective impulses interpreted by their creators and

embodied in narratives of fear. This project therefore also intervenes in cultural studies by examining the narrative form and evolution of the emotion of fear in America primarily after 9/11, but over the course of American history in general, examining how emotions change over time and for what political aims they have served or utilized. Overall, this project is important to cultural studies, as it presents a way to trace the affective transmission of fear as a cultural force that spreads across the American imaginary, and takes on particular forms and centrality after the fear-inducing events of 9/11.

These concerns matter at a fundamentally practical level, because if we can understand how our culture reflects and produces fear in narrative form, we can better understand how contemporary American culture functions ideologically and in turn better understand how to recognize and counter its oppressive manifestations, such as the role of the politics of fear in the lived experiences of contemporary Americans (Takacs, "Monsters" 1). We can also attend to the ways fear works to pull us closer to a new state of social consciousness, urging us toward the production of future Utopic material conditions. Overall, I will argue that the post-9/11 American fear themes have manifested themselves in our narrative productions, changing the dynamic of American culture so that it increasingly justifies policies that have compromised our real-world freedom, autonomy, and privacy rights. I will also argue that, as crystallizations of affect and ideology, these symbolic expressions expose and at times even advocate a Utopic desire for a more unified, collective future.

Whereas this chapter has provided a general rationale for this study, Chapter 2 will describe in greater detail the theoretical and methodological approaches the project

will use to analyze the post-9/11 American fear narrative. This will begin with an overview of Massumi and Gould on affect theory and how this foundation impacts our understanding of emotion as an interpretation of affective potentialities stimulated at a given point in time. From here, I will focus on the emotion of fear and its theoretical connection to ideology and power in not only society but its manifestations in the narrative as well. Last, I will overview the methodology of Jameson's three horizons of interpretation. This includes the first horizon that focuses on a formal contradiction in the narrative as an imaginary solution to a contradiction in the real world (Jameson, *The Political* 77). At the second horizon, this is re-interpreted as a social conflict voiced in the narrative that highlights an "ideological confrontation between the classes" (85). Then, at the third horizon, this contradiction is interpreted through the genre sedimentation in the narrative and how this allows us to see the ways that the text is simultaneously oppressive and Utopic.

Chapter 3, entitled "The American Fear Narrative and the Fear Theme," will better define what I mean by the fear narrative, the primary fear theme, and the secondary fear theme. I then outline ten primary fear themes that I have identified as being particularly prominent and most pervasively deployed in what Jameson terms "symbolic acts" of ideology in post-9/11 American fear contexts. These primary fear themes include apocalypticism, contamination, entrapment, exclusion, the external threat, the internal threat, paranoia, the personalization of fear, transgression, and trauma. My summary of these themes focuses on how they have been used post-9/11, but they also point to a variety of texts that exemplify their historical use in action.

In Chapter 4, I trace the fear narrative historically through American history. To do this, I offer a genealogy of the form in seven historical periods, including the Colonial and Early American fear narrative, the Victorian-influenced American fear narrative, the Great Wars American fear narrative, the Early Cold War American fear narrative, the Fin-de-Siècle American fear narrative, and the Post-9/11 American fear narrative. This chapter argues that the primary fear themes outlined in Chapter 3 have a history and have developed over time in ways that reflect, build upon, and shape the particular fears endemic to a specific moment of production. In keeping with this historical process, Chapter 4 shows how these fear themes altered after 9/11 by, for instance, focusing on the external threat of the terrorist or allegorical representations of terrorists as a primary threat, enacting a preoccupation with post-9/11 trauma, depicting apocalyptic situations that evoke similarities to the attack on the Twin Towers, and presenting a pervading sense of the personalization of fear as threats to the nation or society became increasingly rearticulated as threats to the individual or to one's immediate family. The chapter ends by illustrating this historical process of sedimentation and transformation by contrasting the use of fear themes in Poe's "The Black Cat" with their form and use in the post-9/11 fear narrative.

The last three chapters examine how the post-9/11 American fear narrative not only ideologically reconfigures historical American fear themes, but also adapts those themes to different genres and media. Chapter 5 focuses the 9/11 novel in literary fiction, Chapter 6 focuses on a novel and a film in the horror genre, and Chapter 7 focuses a television show and a novel in the science fiction genre. This progression through the chapters allows an examination of the different ways genre modulates its

form across various media, each genre's different ideological stances, and how each

genre reproduces existing fears, develops new ones, or discovers imaginary solutions

to our unresolvable political, social, or historical contradictions (Jameson, *The Political*

79). Moreover, the texts selected increase in narrative and communicative channel

complexity in each subsequent chapter. I begin by focusing on what Herman would call

monomodal media, or "a print narrative with only a verbal information track" (*Basic* xii).

This allows the study to establish a baseline of conventions and formal devices to

compare with the succeeding chapters on specific genres and their associated

expressions in select media. From here, I move on to multimodal films with their "filmed

image-track and the audiorecorded sound-track" (xii), allowing two channels for

interpretation. Last, I will explore the more complicated narrative structure of the serial

and multimodal television show. This way, the objects of study are arranged to increase

in, first, communicative channel complexity, then narrative complexity. This structure

allows me to broaden my interpretations of the fear narrative as the study progresses.

Each chapter will begin with a general discussion of the genre and then focus on the

analysis of a few representative textual examples, chosen to highlight specific trends

within the overall genre. To enrich the analysis, I then, trace peripheral examples to

compare and contextualize my findings. Each chapter tries to balance these

representative texts between canonical white male authors and authors/creators of

marginalized social groups in order to widen the breadth of the findings.

  Chapter 5 on "Post-9/11 American Fear Narratives in Literary Fiction" explores

fear narratives in the 9/11 novel subgenre noting how charting their use of primary fear

themes is integral to understanding their political unconscious. Starting with narratives

from 9/11 novels allows me to establish a baseline of conventions as they have been inspired by literary fictions operating under what film scholar Steve Neale calls an ideology of realism (48). This is a concept that he draws from Tzvetan Todorov's understanding of realism, which "as an ideology can partly be defined by its refusal to recognize the reality of its own generic status, or to acknowledge its own adherence to a type of generic verisimilitude" (Neale 48). Starting with these monomodal texts will allow me to show how the conventions I find here continue and co-exist in other genres and media of the post-9/11 American fear narrative to be explored in the following chapters. In this chapter I have selected examples that each foregrounds at least two primary fear themes, even as other fear themes are present to a lesser extent in the narrative. First, I will look at Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2006) through the lenses of the themes of trauma and entrapment. Second, I turn to Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* (2014), a novel that prominently features the themes of the paranoia and the personalization of fear. Third, I will examine Porochista Khakpour's *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* (2007) that highlights the themes of exclusion and contamination. Lastly, I will look at Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) as an example of how the internal and external threats operate in the narrative. Overall, the chapter shows how historically resonant fear themes crystallize in unique ways in the post-9/11 context. It also traces the correlation between these themes and the formal structures of literary fiction to produce either ambiguous or hopeful endings.

Chapter 6 on "Post-9/11 American Fear Narratives in the Horror Genre" focuses on the zombie narrative, a genre that met with particular popularity after 9/11, in order to identify some of its common secondary fear themes. Secondary fear themes are

combinations of two or more primary fear themes that manifest as a narrative existent, either as a character or an element of setting. Since these secondary themes are more concrete in their depictions than the abstract primary themes, they are more specifically adapted to fit within a given genre and media. In the zombie narrative, I identify five prominent secondary fear themes, including the zombie-creature, the survival space, the wall, the hypermasculine character, and the survivalist. First, I analyze the morphology of the zombie-creature in film. Second, I turn to Colson Whitehead's novel *Zone One* (2011) to examine the survival space and the wall. Third, I will turn to David Trachtenberg's film *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016) as an example of what I call a "post-zombie" narrative that highlights the themes of hypermasculinity and survivalism. Through these textual analyses, this chapter argues that secondary fear themes create a network of cultural associations that build from genre conventions but often add a touch of inventionality to keep the narrative historically resonant.

Chapter 7 on "Post-9/11 American Fear Narratives in the Science Fiction Genre" explores how elements of the secondary fear themes of the zombie narrative translate into science fiction, but especially how the distancing nature of the science fiction genre pushes the fear themes further by hybridizing the monster. To examine this fear theme, I first look to Ronald D. Moore's television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) in which humans face off against robotic Cylons that blur the boundary between human and machine, incorporating the fear theme of transgression and thereby symbolically exploring America's anxious sense of identity after the terrorist attacks. Second, I examine Andrea Hairston's novel *Mindscape* (2006), which depicts the hybrid character as a source of liberatory potential that can help remove the barriers our society has

created between us. In this chapter, I argue that 9/11 disrupted Americans' national sense of identity, momentarily challenging the sense of American exceptionalism upon which this identity is based and exposing our fears of integrating into the international arena of twenty-first century late capitalism. The anxiety over integration manifests in post-9/11 science fiction through the theme of the hybrid character, one often surrounded with complex associations with fear and hope.

Together, these chapters present the fear narrative and many of its constituent themes as manifested in particular genres and media after 9/11. They trace the genealogy of common fear themes to examine how they crystallize within specific texts post-9/11, creating a variety of symbolic political acts in narrative form. By analyzing these American fear narratives, I hope to show how thoroughly fear shapes life in America. I also hope to point the way toward a more dialectical understanding of fear, as both potentially oppressive and potentially Utopic/Utopian. Americans must come to grips with the structure of fear in order to become more aware of the ways it manipulates them but also to understand how it can be used productively to promote liberty, social justice, and freedom.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: AFFECT, IDEOLOGY, AND THE THREE HORIZONS OF INTERPRETATION

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical and methodological approaches I will use in my analysis of the post-9/11 American fear narrative. This will cover how we can understand emotion through affect theory, and the affective operations of fear in particular. I will then connect this perspective on fear to power and ideology, which makes Fredric Jameson's three horizons of interpretation an ideal methodology for this project, allowing us to uncover the political unconscious of American fear as it takes form in the narrative.

AN ONTOLOGY OF AFFECT: ON AFFECT, POSSIBLE WORLDS THEORY, AND NARRATIVE RECEPTION

This project operates on an affective ontology (Gould 28), an understanding of reality that is founded on the relational and procedural flow of affective potentials. This ontology works under the assumption that affect interacts with and informs both emotions and ideology, and that these are inherently the effects of affect. As fear and its ideological impact through the narrative are of central importance to this project, we must begin by clearly establishing definitions for all of these terms and outlining their relationship to each other.

Affect has become a popular subject of discussion with academics across a variety of disciplines, and, as such, the precise meaning of affect is a highly contested issue. At times, the lack of a shared or at least explicitly stated definition dilutes and confuses discussions on the matter, so we will begin here by clearly establishing a definition of affect at the front to help dispatch with many of these occlusions, at least within the confines of this project. Perhaps the most critically acclaimed definition, the one that political theorist and philosopher Brian Massumi returns to often, is philosopher Baruch Spinoza's now popular maxim that "affect is the power 'to affect and be affected'" (Massumi, *Politics* ix). Yet, while this definition may have conceptual value, it lacks some of the specificity needed for the practical application of affect theory to textual and cultural analyses. Sociologist Deborah Gould provides a useful definition for these purposes, as she uses the term affect "to indicate nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body. *Registered* in that the organism senses the impingement and the bodily effects, but *nonconscious* in that the sensing is outside of the individual's conscious awareness and is of intensities that are inchoate and as yet inarticulable" (26). In this sense, affect is the embodied sensations stirred from a piece of communication, situation, or event, but they are feelings before we have attempted to interpret them into words, concepts, or ideologies. The interpretation of an affective state, then, does not capture all of the potentialities and intensities it makes available, but crystallizes it into a particular expression, one that "diminishes potential through inhibition and subsequent channeling of that which is actualized" (27). This means that an affective relation, and its potentialities of use, is not entirely captured in any one

interpretation or reaction, but that alternative interpretations and actions utilizing other potentialities are always possible, allowing for divergent, subversive, and contesting interpretations to arise beside the dominant narratives of an event or text.

Considered within the narrative, the potentialities of affect can be better conceptualized through a combination of kernel theory and possible world theory. Seymour Chatman describes a kernel as a major event in a narrative, one that "advances the plot by raising and satisfying questions…[they] are narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events" (53). As such, kernel theory notes the points of affective potentiality in the narrative when the character must choose how to interpret their stimuli into an action or a lack of action, but also when readers can sense diverging potential directions that the narrative could take. These moments of choice create branches of possibility, and as they are followed, they create a narrative path or kernel-skeleton that notes the narrative potentialities actualized and, by implication, those not. The possible but not followed paths still exist, conceptually at least, as alternate narratives. These paths not taken can be viewed theoretically as possible worlds within that fictional world. Possible worlds can also open up the relation between the actual world and the fictional world, giving us a philosophical foundation for fictionality.

A fictional world, in Lubomír Doležel's terms, is a possible world that branches off both the author and reader of a text's understanding of the actual world, which is our "real" world. There are an infinite number of possible worlds, as they are essentially any "world that is thinkable" (Doležel 281), and possible worlds become fictional worlds through the human act of composing: "By composing a written or oral text, the author

creates a fictional world that was not available prior to this act" (23). As such, "possibles are made fictional existents, possible worlds become semiotic objects" (23). When combined within our affective ontology, the possible world becomes an interpretation of actual affective stimuli that the author shapes into a fictional world, one that can deviate from the natural laws and affective relations of the actual world or attempt to adhere to them as much as possible. In accordance with this, Doležel states that these "fictional worlds are accessed through semiotic channels," and that this accessibility means that reader and author interpretation is "a bidirectional, multifaceted, and historically changing commerce between the actual and the fictional" (20). In this sense, "the world is constructed by its author and the reader's role is to reconstruct it" (21). This creates a complex web of the relation between the actual and the fictional world, one that in regards to the interpretation of the fictional world "relativizes the procedure and makes the implied meaning indeterminate" (177). The hermeneutic reception of a text becomes an interaction between the reader and the text: "Having reconstructed the fictional world as a mental image, the reader can ponder it and make it a part of his existence, just as he experientially appropriates the actual world. This appropriation…integrates fictional worlds into the reader's reality" (21).

Marie-Laurie Ryan provides a useful concept for understanding how we encounter a fictional world in relation to our actual world, what she calls the principle of minimal departure: "We will project upon these worlds everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text" (51). Our base for constructing a fictional world is the actual world, until the text directs us to deviate from our understanding of reality, a concept that is especially useful when understanding the

reading of nonnatural worlds, such as science fiction, horror, and fantasy fiction. Natural

worlds are, according to Doležel, defined as "A possible world in which the physical

laws of the actual world are valid" (281), and therefore, speculative fiction, in which the

possible world operates under alternate physical laws, are nonnatural worlds.

Doležel also offers a useful concept for understanding alternate interpretations

derived from the same text, which is similar to and intertwines with the principles of

minimal departure: the fictional encyclopedia, which encompasses a reader's "store of

knowledge" (176) and "shared communal knowledge [that] varies with culture, social

groups, historical epochs, and for this reasons relativizes the recovery of implicit

meaning" (177). Each of us operates with an actual-world encyclopedia that is different

depending on the accumulated knowledge and affective relations of each reader, but

also numerous fictional encyclopedias, each of which includes "[k]nowledge about a

possible world constructed by a fictional text" (177) and is gained by reading or viewing

the fictional text itself (181). A fictional encyclopedia, therefore, is built in comparison

with the actual-world encyclopedia, in a process in which the reader can "modify,

supplement, or even discard the actual-world encyclopedia" to better understand the

fictional world (181). Yet, in the end, this creates a variable domain of reception, in

which, based on the extent, depth, contextual particulars, or accuracy of one's actual-

world encyclopedia (not to mention the accuracy of our reading of the fictional text) we

can interpret fictional texts in widely divergent ways.

We can turn to Stuart Hall to better understand this connection of fictional worlds

communicated through semiotic channels—be they literature, film, television, or

however—to the indeterminacy of their interpretation and their consequent effect on

reality. As he states, "Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: and what we can know and say has to be produced in and through discourse. Discursive 'knowledge' is the product not of the transparent representation of the 'real' in language but of the articulation of language on real relations and conditions. Thus, there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code" (131). Further, "Naturalism and 'realism'—the apparent fidelity of the representation to the thing or concept represented—is the result, the effect, of a certain specific articulation of language on the 'real.'" (132). If we connect this with a view of ideology as a "belief system," we see that all language expresses such beliefs, and these, in turn, alter our understanding of the "real," or as Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us about such language expressions within narratives, "The speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an *ideologue*, and his words are always ideologemes" (333). Novels, and all semiotic texts, produce ideologically and affectively laden messages that to one degree or another influence our understanding of reality, but their final interpretation can vary depending on how we decode the semiotic discourse. Hall explains that authors of texts, when "coding," can attempt to "pre-fer" us toward one decoding position or another "constructing some of the limits of and parameters within which decodings will operate" (135). Of course, the articulation between the coding and decoding is not a natural process, but one highly influenced by affective potentialities that can result in unintended interpretations.

In order for us to begin to sketch the complex possibilities of alternate reader receptions of a text, Hall provides three codes or positions that can be adopted by the receiver (decoder). First, in the dominant-hegemonic position "the viewer takes the

connoted meaning…full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the

reference code in which it has been encoded, we might say that the viewer *is operating*

inside the dominant code" (136). Second, the negotiated code or position,

"acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions…of events while reserving

the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions,'" to create

"particular and situated logics" (137). This code, as Hall states, is "shot through with

contradictions" (137), as the decoder negotiates both the dominant view of reality with

their often divergent and particular affective experience of reality and the text. Third, the

oppositional code or position recognizes the preferred dominant interpretation, but

"retotalize[s] the message within some alternative framework of reference" in order to

essentially re-signify the text, finding new meaning in it when viewed under a new

critical lens (139). As this demonstrates, the interpretation of a text is a complex

affective and ideological interaction between the author, text, and reader, but one that

can be grounded in the dominant code, the code that the text ostensibly is meant to be

decoded with and represents the general interpretation of the majority of the text's

cultural consumers. In the course of this study, then, unless stated otherwise, we will be

discussing texts as seen through the dominant code and hegemonic ideology.

AFFECT, EMOTION, AND FEAR

If our array of possible reactions to affect is an interpretation of felt stimuli, then

emotion is essentially an effect of affect. As Gould states, emotion or emotions

"describe what from the potential of bodily intensities gets actualized or concretized in

the flow of living" (26). It is a selective interpretation of an affective experience, or as

Massumi states, emotion is "the expression of affect in gesture and language, its convention or coded expression" (*Politics* 32). Emotion, then, is a culturally contingent understanding of our affective experience. It is the coding of experience into words and concepts that are inherently ideological in nature, expressing a belief in what it means to be happy, sad, or, most important to this study, afraid. Historian Peter Stearns reminds us how fear, like all emotions, is an affective experience shaped by our culture. He states that emotions such as fear, "contain a mixture of ingrained impulse and a degree of cognition that evaluates and, to some degree regulates, the same impulse; and cognition, in turn, is shaped by cultural cues as well as the vagaries of individual personalities" (13). As a result, fear, like all emotions interpreted from the potentialities of a particular affect, is a combination of embodied, or biological, "ingrained impulses" interacting with evaluative cognition (such as asking, "is this an imminent threat?") that is filtered through public cultural beliefs about the nature of an emotion and the situation, which in turn is interpreted on the personal level through the lens of individual experience. In all, fear, like all emotions, is a complicated, collectively overdetermined, but individualized interpretation of an affective reaction, making it, essentially, an effect of affect.

Up to this point, though, we have discussed fear in the context of emotion in general, but it has its own specific attributes that deserve further explication. Fear, according to Massumi, "is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future. It is the felt reality of the nonexistent, loomingly present as the *affective* fact of the matter" ("The Future" 54). This definition provides a good starting point, identifying fear as the belief that a future threat is imminent, but the second sentence also asserts that while

fear is often experienced as an affective state in reaction to an as-yet immaterial cause,

it is real in subjective experience. From a narrative perspective, fear is typically a

proleptic emotion, in that it is an emotion that urges the reader to think not necessarily

of story events that are currently happening in the narrative, but what may happen next

or in the future. However, while a prolepse or flashforward occurs when "discourse

leaps ahead, to events subsequent to intermediate events" (Chatman 64), the proleptic

pull of fear may point to events that will happen, but more than likely fear will direct the

reader toward events that will not ever happen in the story and will exist only as

hypothetical, possible threats. Yet, the feared event can be depicted, considered, or

implied in the course of the narrative and in the reader's own speculations. The

temporality of fear is therefore typically future oriented toward the imminent threat, but it

exists and is affectively experienced in the present. However, in some cases, fear points

to an event in the past, such as in the case of trauma, in which the narrative can be

pulled back into an analepse, or flashback, through the subject's experience of the

repetition compulsion, in which the subject acts out or re-experiences the past trauma

made into a sensation felt and re-lived in the present. It is here, when fear moves into

the psychological experience of trauma that we meet the limits of Massumi and Gould's

thread of affect theory, which de-centers the human experience, and we turn to the

more psychoanalytic thread of affect theory of Tomkins/Sedgwick, which draws from

Freud in order to understand the psychological aspects of the felt, affective experience

of trauma. This psychoanalytic angle on affect theory meshes well with Jameson's three

horizons of interpretation, as this methodology utilizes Freud's concepts of the

unconscious and the repressed as foundational to its notion of culture. Overall, then,

fear is an emotion that, while not a necessary and defining trait of all narrative, has especially high narrativity, meaning that lends itself to narrative construction as it can potentially exist on all temporal levels of a narrative to act through one or more characters in order to motivate, influence, or alter kernel events.

Recent advances in the biology of emotion have shown that fear, like all emotions, is not, despite common thought, immaterial at all but a reaction to perceived external stimuli that produces neurological, biochemical, and bodily reactions that are empirically observable, measurable, and verifiable. These findings support Massumi's claim that fear is real and has immediate material consequences ("The Future" 65). Taking a more scientific approach to the study of fear provides further insight into this emotional expression, insights that both verify and develop upon Massumi's definition. For instance, clinical psychopharmacologist Thierry Steimer describes the phenomena of emotion as having multiple aspects: "emotion implies behavior (expression) and feeling (experience, subjective aspects)" (232). In particular, he describes fear, and its emotional sibling of anxiety, as adaptive: "The main function of fear and anxiety is to act as a signal of danger, threat, or motivational conflict, and to trigger appropriate adaptive responses. For some authors, fear and anxiety are indistinguishable, whereas others believe that they are distinct phenomena" (233). He states that in ethology, the study of animal behavior, fear is defined as "a motivational state aroused by specific stimuli that give rise to defensive behavior or escape" (233). Defensive behavior can manifest as active strategies, such as fight or flight, passive coping strategies, such as "immobilization or freezing," or as psychological defensive mechanisms, such as the displacement of anxiety (233), which in animals can be demonstrated as compulsive

grooming under stressful situations, but in humans could manifest as a variety of behaviors including projecting one's anxieties on a perceived group of others in order to create a scapegoat. Indeed, all of these reactions to fear translate well from the animal to the human world. How often have we heard of a person momentarily freezing when a friend jumps out to scare them, attacking when threatened, running away from a loud sound, or surreptitiously smoothing and adjusting their clothes and checking their hair and face in the mirror before an interview?

Other authors describe distinct differences between anxiety and fear. Anxiety, Steimer states, can be defined as "a generalized response to an unknown threat or internal conflict," whereas "fear is focused on known external danger" (233). As he states, anxiety is characterized by uncertainty, and the two can be distinguished "in that the object of fear is 'real' or 'external' or 'known' or 'objective'" (233). Yet, this clinical distinction and the claim to possessing the objectivity necessary to distinguish the two emotive states tends to fall apart in real world application and experience. Even Steimer states that fear and anxiety have overlapping biological components, and "anxiety may just be a more elaborate form of fear, which provides the individual with an increased capacity to adapt and plan for the future" (233). As such, if we adopt Massumi's notion that "[i]f we feel a threat, there is a threat" ("The Future" 54), then the distinction between the objective and unknown threat melts away; each threat is real in the subject's experience and each threat guides their behavior and choices equally. Even in popular usage, the terms often become indistinguishable. After 9/11 people did not say that they were anxious that another terrorist attack could happen at any moment, they typically said that they feared the next terrorist attack, and, as we know now, this fear

was real in that it had material consequences, even if the particular terrorist threat of this believed next attack, the objective stimulus supposedly required to qualify the affective state as fear rather than anxiety, never materialized. As a result, unless otherwise stated in this study, fear and anxiety, and their related family of emotions, including dread, terror, and a general sense of unease, will be considered as overlapping emotive states of fear itself.

Yet, Steimer's insights also make us further question the expressed temporality of Massumi's definition of fear as it exists in objective reality and in the narrative. While fear is certainly an "anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future" (Massumi, "The Future" 54), it also reaches into the past as well. Certainly, Massumi points in this direction: "If we feel a threat, such that there was a threat, then there always will have been a threat. Threat is once and for all, in the nonlinear time of its own causing" (54). This last mention of causation and etiology point to the past, into the origins of the imminent threat felt in the present, whether real or imagined. Yet, where this explanation leaves open how we come to associate fears with past events, Steimer gives us some direction. He states that fear is provoked by specific stimuli that can be conditioned (232). For instance, in ethology they have observed that "[a]fter a few pairings of a threatening stimulus (eg, electric shocks, the unconditional stimulus [US]) with a formerly neutral cue (eg, a tone or visual signal, the conditioned stimulus [CS]), animals will experience a state of conditioned fear when only the cue is present" (238). In human terms, while we normally are not conditioned by electric shocks (one would hope), humans learn to articulate particular meanings to different fearful stimuli, attaching signification to these empty or floating signifiers in a variety of ways. From this

perspective, Massumi's example of the fire alarm as a performative, a Peircean *indication* or index, one that stimulates a startled sensation in a precognitive manner, is a stimulus that in itself has no inherent meaning, other than those that we assign to it ("The Future" 64). The fire alarm is an example of Steimer's neutral cue that we have learned to associate with the threatening stimulus of fire. Massumi asks, "Now what happens when there is no fire and the alarm sounds nonetheless?" (64). Both Massumi and Steimer would likely agree that the conditioned response occurs with or without the actual threat, that once the semiotic articulation has been established between the two, the fear reaction occurs either way, and, as such, the "*abstract force"* of the performative "can be *materially* determining" (Massumi, "The Future" 65), causing us to spring out of bed even when no fire is present. In the context of the narrative, this conditioned response points toward an analepse, whether explicit or implicit in the narrative discourse, which can play out in the present and point toward the future in a hypothetical prolepse of a future potential threat. These prolepses and analepses can both be expressive of the reader's conditioned reactions and in the characters' conditioned reactions to threats, whether culturally ingrained or idiosyncratic to the individual.

AFFECT, FEAR, IDEOLOGY, AND POWER

Before analyzing fear narratives, then, it would be worthwhile to explore this semiotic process of the learned condition of fear, one that I argue is an ideological and proto-narrative response to affective, or performative, stimuli. Ideology, as I use it in this study, is seen in the large sense as a "belief system" that can be either oppressive and

illusory or liberating and Utopian, or both simultaneously. My definition of ideology begins with Althusser's definition, but updates it to more recent developments in poststructuralism and affect theory. Althusser's concept of ideology, as described by Jameson, is "a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities" (*The Political* 30). In this sense, ideology is a necessary element of human existence that expresses our various attempts to understand material reality, the Real that we have no direct access to other than through symbolic or imaginary representation and are essentially our beliefs about the way that reality works. Yet, the sense of structure that Jameson refers to in these representations is a temporary manifestation, as society is by its nature a continual and unfolding process. As Massumi notes, "A process is dynamic and open-ended, composed of ongoing variations of itself" (*Politics* 87), and society from this perspective is "a dynamic process of always ongoing self-structuration" (88). This perspective "makes variation and change more fundamental than the reproduction of the same" (87), and allows for the type of constant evolution that we see in narrative forms and popular culture, variation that would not be possible, or even necessary, if we were to work under the premise of a static, mechanistic notion of a truly structuralist philosophy.

From the perspective of this project's affective ontology, affective encounters effect power structures, and power structures effect ideologies that attempt to reproduce and stabilize the structure (Massumi, *Politics* 93), adapting it to the contextual and situational necessities of the current and emergent state of society in process. Massumi's concept of ideology as a means of stabilizing a power structure by

conditioning affective responses points us to Raymond Williams' understanding of hegemony as the dominant culture in constant processual flux, a concept that is also highly compatible with both Althusser's definition of ideology and Jameson's methodology of the three horizons of interpretation that this study uses and will describe shortly. Hegemony, to Williams, "sees the relation of domination and subordination…as in effect a saturation of the whole process of living," including not only culture, but also all of lived experience (110). Indeed, "It is a whole body of practices and expectations over the whole of living" and "a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming" (110). It is essentially the continually processual formulation of the dominant power structure, which creates ideology that sustains, replicates, and adapts itself to all challenges to its dominance.

Power, as used in these concepts, is conceived of in the Foucauldian sense as productive or positive power, not oppressive in the traditional, critical sense. This sense of power, in the subjective, embodied experience, "doesn't just force us down certain paths, it puts paths in us, so by the time we learn to follow its constraints we're following ourselves. The effects of power on us are our identity" (Massumi, *Politics* 19). Yet, we should not think of this affective chain of processual causation as linear, but as a system of relations that have affect always as their root. In an effort to explain this relation, Massumi at times refers to affect not as pre-ideological or pre-cognitive, which "connotes time sequence," but he associates affect with the prefix "infra-," to connote that it "actively lies below" all activity, or as he states, "[a]ffect is the infra-conditioning of every determinate activity" (212). This sense of affect as infra-ideological best

expresses the place of affect in this study: when we discuss ideology or emotion, it will be implicitly or explicitly acknowledged that affect influences these expressions, not as mediated through a static causative chain, but directly as in a constant, dynamic, networked fashion.

It is important to note that on the collective level of emotional experience, historical and geographical shifts in culture change the way we fear and what we fear. For instance, Stearns compares fearful situations from the twentieth century to establish that changes in a particular sense of American fear caused Americans to react to 9/11 in a way that differed from the way that Americans reacted to other attacks, such as Pearl Harbor. According to his research, Americans after 9/11 "were over three times as likely to be afraid" than Americans after Pearl Harbor, and they were "much quicker to connect attack with personal and familial situations" (36). While the two attacks surely have their differences, Stearns explains this greater tendency to admit to feelings of fear as involving "major alterations in cultural norms" (43), in that it was culturally more acceptable for Americans in 2001 to admit that they were afraid than it was for Americans in 1941. As to the increased personalization of fear, he states that a decrease in political confidence after repeated political scandals since the Nixon administration caused more Americans to believe that the country was not aligned with the interests of the people, and "it was easier [at this point in history] to believe that threats had to be faced as individuals and as families" (42). Further, the familial focus of the post-9/11 personalization of fear is linked to cultural change, as "[a]nxieties about children [after 9/11] reflected a greater belief in the vulnerability of the young" that Stearns traces in intricate detail (43). Aside from the way that history affects fear,

Stearns also points out that different cultures around 2001 reacted in different ways

toward fear, such as the British reacting to the 2005 bombings of the London public

transportation system with "anger and defiance" (24), and the Israeli reaction to the

numerous civilian bombings during the early twenty-first century revival of Intifada as

fearful but not deserving the high levels of public anxiety that Americans felt after 9/11

(45-6). He states, "arguably, most Israelis react to terror as a low-probability event,

something to think about, and doubtless fear, but not productive of widespread panic"

(46). Clearly, fearful reactions to particular events are experienced and interpreted in

different ways in different cultures, and fear cannot be considered as a universally fixed

emotion for all humans across the world.

In a different light, contemporary news media affects our understanding of fear in

ways that it did not in our recent past. Through mass communication and digital media

in contemporary America and in that which existed during and immediately after 9/11,

Americans experience a more unified and centralized dissemination of pre-interpreted

experience than they did a hundred or even fifty years ago. With this channeled flow of

information, contemporary media tends to both tell us what emotion we should have

regarding a particular event, thereby limiting our interpretation of a particular affective

state, and it redirects our feelings in ways that can work toward particular political and

ideological ends. In Hall's terms mentioned above, the mass distribution of media

information allows for more centralized means of unifying the dominant coding of the

media text regarding an event or issue. While everyone can participate in the

modification and distribution of digital media, as 9/11 illustrated, media conglomerates

control the flow of the primary source material and their commonly held ethos as

respected news sources make them the root if not the end determination of most affective interpretations. In regard to 9/11, we see this in the repeated news footage of the airplanes crashing into the towers, which is accompanied by the explicit affective interpretation of media personalities and reporters. As Wheeler Winston Dixon notes, "This onslaught of programming and counterprogramming scarcely gives one time to reflect and meditate on the true magnitude of the events of 9/11, as images of the collapsing twin towers are ceaselessly recycled to create 'new' programming" (12). This visual spectacle in overload often prevented critical or oppositional readings of the events, leaving many viewers only to passively consume the images in the dominant code, along with its attendant ideological baggage. This footage became so ubiquitous after the event that even many residents of New York watched the footage rather than witness it firsthand, and compulsive viewing became common for many citizens, as is often depicted in 9/11 narratives, such as Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) and Jess Walter's novel *The Zero* (2006), the latter of which we will analyze in more detail in Chapter 5.

Even though we can participate in digital media, the majority of the time, each individual's participation is grounded on the same sources coded in the dominant position and created by only a few media conglomerates, making the wide-spread distribution of a uniform ideology easy for those in positions of corporate or government power. As an example of how this plays out in ideology, Massumi notes how after 9/11 the fear that our economy would collapse under "a crisis in consumer confidence" was countered by the notion that spending to keep the economy going was a patriotic act (*Politics* 32), thereby ideologically harnessing and re-directing the affective encounter of

the attack to bolster the economy and then distributing the coded message instantly to a world-wide audience. Through this process, "the media picks up on fear and insecurity and feeds it back amplified, but in a way that somehow changes its quality into pride and patriotism—with the proof in the purchasing" (32). Yet, this feedback loop has to be "fed" to survive: "You can only produce more pride and patriotism by producing more fear and insecurity to convert" (32). This building of affective states to be harnessed to the political ends of supporting the economy is something that could have happened, perhaps, at the time of Pearl Harbor, but the intensity, interpenetration, and transmedial experience of our contemporary media is a more recent development that amplifies affect, allowing emotional reactions such as anxiety to take a larger place in our life and cultural imaginary.

As all of this demonstrates, fear is not a universal emotion, but an interpretation of an affective state that is culturally and even technologically contingent. Both historical changes and cultural changes alter the way that people react to and interpret a performative, fearful event, or situation, but also technological developments in mass communication and even transportation affect the rate of transmission and uniformity of particular interpretations of an event or the sense that individuals might be vulnerable to a threat. After all, at one time we may have thought that terrorist threats across the sea would not be able to travel to America, but 9/11, and its mass media distribution, disrupted this sense of American exceptionalism as advanced transportation technology in the form of airliners proved to be the means that brought foreign terrorism to the continent. Overall, these examples show that fear takes on particular flavors in different times and places, so any analysis of fear must take this in consideration to avoid gross

overgeneralizations and ethnocentrism. This awareness of the need for historicism in

the understanding of fear is why this study specifies that it focuses on post-9/11

American fear, a collection of fears that are unique to this particular time, place, and

various media affordances, even as it recognizes these fears have evolved out of the

sedimented genealogy of American fear that has come before.

As implied above, the need to interpret affective states makes them especially

vulnerable to being articulated with particular ideological purposes. In fact, under our

definition of ideology, there is no other way to interpret affect than through ideology,

since all action and belief is ideological in the formulations of Althusser and Jameson.

For our purposes, there are two ways that we come to articulate ideology with a

perceived fearful event: personal experience and social learning. We articulate fear

through these means to an object of fear, which can be either a physical or conceptual

focus for the feeling of fear, one that may be a real threat or a redirection away from a

real threat. First, personal experience allows us to make our own interpretation of

directly experienced events, but even this is mediated through our previously

established systems of belief, which for Althusser are always already ideological.

Personal experience, however, does allow for the generation of individual

interpretations of events, even if these interpretations encounter the often considerable

pressures of public or socially learned interpretations. This leads us to the second

means of the articulation of social learning, which encompasses all of the beliefs that we

are taught through language and everyday cultural exchanges, whether though

parenting, education, social interaction, the media, or through narrative texts. Each of

these sources introduce, reinforce, modify, or contradict extant ideologies and build

upon each other, establishing a complex and often conflicting body of beliefs that we use to imagine, negotiate, and understand our relation with reality, or "how the world works." In part, it is through this public/private interaction of personal and social affective interpretation that ideologies and hegemony in general encounter the processual variation that forces them and their associated power structures to continuously adapt. As mentioned earlier, ideologies support power structures, but it is the outcomes of affective encounters that create those power structures. According to Massumi, these encounters can create relations of advantage of one party over another, and if these "effects stabilize into an inequality between the parties that conditions subsequent encounters, the structuring of an emergent power structure has occurred" (*Politics* 92). Hegemonic structures, then, "are crystallizations of tendencies that have amplified and settled into a self-reproducing structure" (101). The oppressive ideologies that support and perpetuate hegemonic power structures, then, are transmitted and taught to others via social and material means. However, in Williams's terms, new, emergent affective potentialities can also take form and are similarly supported, marginalized, or resisted by other ideologies that are socially learned and transmitted or individually pieced together through one's own experience.

As a result, fear narratives teach ideology in this pedagogical fashion that can be either oppressive or liberatory, but possibly more often, they transmit a little of both in contradictory impulses. In this sense, fear narratives are performatives that teach complex systems of ideological interpretations of the affective states that they stimulate, articulating their meanings upon a variety of neutral cues that they condition into becoming fearful stimuli as well. This simultaneous transmission of contradiction and

antinomy in the text is something that my central Jamesonian methodology, which

follows in the next section, is especially apt at capturing. Yet, before moving on, it is

important to emphasize that ideology does not fully determine the interpretation of

affect. As Massumi states, "no situation is ever fully predetermined by ideological

structures or codings. Any account paying exclusive attention to that level is fatally

incomplete" (*Politics* 58). Any event, such as 9/11, exists first as affect before ideology:

"To be in effect, ideological predeterminations have to enter the event to *take* effect.

They have to reassert themselves, to make themselves effectively ingredient to the

event" (58). Therefore, for every hegemonic interpretation of an affective event that

becomes a dominant interpretation there is the potential for counter- and alternate-

interpretations that utilize affective potentialities that were not actualized in the previous

hegemonic interpretation. This means two things relative to this study: first, it is always

possible to re-interpret any event, and thereby create new narratives that can be more

productive and liberating than those supplied by the dominant discourse; and, second,

that transmitting a particular ideological message does not guarantee that it will be

interpreted with the same emotional reaction, or even the intended emotional reaction.

Concerning this second point, Lauren Berlant states, "The structure of an affect has no

inevitable relation to the penumbra of emotions that may cluster in the wake of its

activity, nor should it" ("After the Good" 225). In some ways, this polyvalence of affect

complicates this study considerably, as this means that formal elements of a narrative

do not uniformly or universally produce the same affective and hence emotional

reactions in all consumers of the text. For instance, jump scares, the sudden

appearance of a fearful sight in the camera frame of a shot, is an affective stimuli that

tends to cause a bodily, felt sense of being startled, yet this affective jump can be

interpreted the way it is probably intended in the dominant code, as eliciting fear, but it

can also cause excitement that evokes happiness, laughter, nervousness, terror, or

annoyance, depending on how it is interpreted. In short, Berlant reminds us that we

must be sensitive to the individuality of personal interpretation of fearful experiences

and realize that we may not all see the text as inspiring the same reaction. As such, this

study will look not just to form and ideology, but also toward consumer response and

reviews for interpretations that complicate, and balance, my personal analyses and

reactions to texts.

METHODOLOGY: THE THREE HORIZONS OF INTERPRETATION

To analyze my proposed post-9/11 American fear narratives, I will use

Jameson's three horizons of interpretation as found in his 1981 book *The Political*

Unconscious, because it provides a detailed methodology that probes into ideological

and historical meanings of narratives, while still offering the theoretical flexibility to adapt

to the challenges I may encounter along the way in my research. His methodology

incorporates a diverse Marxist tradition that can be especially useful when analyzing the

post-9/11 American fear narrative on formal, cultural, political and historical levels

through what he calls both a negative and positive Marxist hermeneutic lens (Jameson,

The Political 285-6), which will be explained below. Further, it is also flexible enough

that it can work within my affective ontology and I can supplement it with additional

narratological tools, which will act as refining lenses to focus my analyses on particular

narrative aspects and unearth formal contradictions at the first horizon of interpretation

in order to better uncover and historicize ideological stances. After all, Jameson's

"expanded Marxian framework" creates a horizon of interpretation in which "History itself

becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding

in general and our interpretations in particular" (100). This essentially means that all

critical theories co-exist within the purview of the analysis of History. From this

perspective, his three horizons of interpretation methodology is innately amenable to the

addition of other critical theories that scholars often traditionally believe to exist outside

the concerns of, or even see as opposed to, the traditional economic base focus of

more reductive formulations of Marxism.

To perform a three-horizon interpretation, "the individual work is grasped

essentially as a *symbolic* act," one analyzed through "three consecutive frameworks,

which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text" (Jameson, *The*

Political 75-6). The first is the political horizon, which focuses on a formal contradiction

in the work. I will use this in my study to look at a text for traces of two conflicting

aesthetic forms, sometimes genres, present in the text and note how they contend for

dominance. Yet, in doing so, Jameson reminds us, "the individual narrative, or the

individual formal structure, is to be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real

contradiction" (77). As such, he states that the text "is itself ideological, and the

production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own

right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social

contradiction" (79). In short, the underlying political unconsciousness of all texts seeks

to present imaginary solutions to problems that our society is not able to solve in the

real world. In this approach, the notion of the contradiction, or the conflict between "two

opposing discourses" within a shared text, characterizes each of the conceptual horizons of Jameson's interpretive model, and, he would argue, is an essential characteristic to any true Marxist interpretation (84). At this first horizon, however, I will focus on considerations of the single text, but always considered within its social and cultural context of production, noting that the meaning of the depicted social contradiction "derives from the way they provide a figuration of actual social and cultural anxieties," usually involving "the iniquities of entrenched social hierarchies, and in giving expression to them seem to resolve or at least contain them" (Buchanan 67-8). As such, one concern at this first horizon, as Jameson states, is to keep the historical focus narrow, "in which history is reduced to a series of punctual events and crises in time" (Jameson, *The Political* 76-7). At the same time, I will balance these contextual pressures with the concerns of praxis and human agency, as the production of a narrative is itself a performative "symbolic" and ideological act, not just a reductive reflection of the socio-cultural context of production (Butler, "Performative" 528). This means that narratives both produce and transmit ideology.

The second horizon is the social horizon. From this broader perspective, "the individual utterance or text is grasped as a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes" (Jameson, *The Political* 85). He continues, "within this horizon class discourse—the categories in terms of which individual texts and cultural phenomena are now rewritten—is essentially dialogical in its structure" (84). The dialogical form is "an *antagonistic* one, and the dialogue of class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (84). As such, the second horizon is the re-description of the interpretation

we made at the first horizon, re-written as a social contradiction from the time of the

production of the text. The social contradictions of the time are represented, voiced, and

possibly produced in the text as two opposing voices of class discourse, and as

Jameson states, "This larger class discourse can be said to be organized around

minimal 'units' which we will call *ideologemes*" (87). Ideologemes can appear in a

narrative as pseudoideas, "a conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion

or prejudice," or as a protonarrative, "a kind of ultimate class fantasy about the

'collective characters' which are the classes in opposition" (87). By identifying and

exposing these conflicting ideologemes in the narrative, whether in the form of

characters voicing ideological stances, or through symbolic conflicts of other elements

of the narrative, such as setting, theme, mise-en-scène, or character identification, we

can re-describe the formal tensions of the first horizon as culturally "unconscious"

representations of the social contradictions present in the time of the text's production.

At this horizon, we interpret these as ideologemes, the building blocks of larger

ideologies present and in conflict within the text, or as an ideology present while

omitting its oppositional discourse. As such, it is the critic's job either to highlight this

immanent social contradiction, or to reconstruct the marginalized and omitted

oppositional voice that does not appear in the text in order to re-create the contradiction

(86), allowing the reconstruction of the social contradiction that may seem to be lost

under the hegemonic pressures of the narrative. This allows us to recreate a dialectic

that seems invisible or reified in the text so that we can better understand the

ideological actions of the narrative in question within its own time and social context.

Last, the third horizon, or the historic horizon, allows us to see the text "now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations" (Jameson, *The Political* 75). To Jameson, the sequence of the socio-economic modes of production are "primitive communism or tribal society (the horde), the *gens* or hierarchical kinship societies (Neolithic society), the Asiatic mode of production (so-called Oriental despotism), the *polis* or an oligarchical slaveholding society (the ancient mode of production), feudalism, capitalism, and communism," noting that socialism is a highly debated but possible "'transitional stage between these last" (89). However, for Jameson, genres are the narrative "modes of production" of symbolic actions, such that the socio-economic modes of production are mediated through a historicized understanding of the narrative's genre, considered as "the history of the form" of the text's narrative (119). As such, at this horizon we re-write the formal and social contradictions of the first two horizons into a generic contradiction. This means that neither the economic nor the narrative modes manifest in a distinct, clearly separated and exclusive fashion within a text, but in co-existing, sedimented layers that point to the genre's layered lineage through different modes of production that remain in the text either as, in Williams's terms, dominant, residual, or emergent elements (121-123). In accordance, to Jameson genres exist as modes of ideological production themselves, or, as he states, the "genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or…an ideology in its own right," one that can "persist" and adapt formally to new "social and cultural contexts" (*The Political* 141). Genres do so to the point that the "ideology of the form itself, thus sedimented, persists into the later, more complex structure as a generic

message which coexists…with elements from later stages" (141). In the affect theory terms we have established above, genres are processual hegemonic power structures of aesthetic expression that carry weighty ideological freight from both their current historical context and the sedimented traces of previous contexts detectable through residual genres that it carries along with it, all with profound implications on the formal and content conventions of the text that impact the received interpretation of affect into emotion. As such, I will use this horizon to analyze the often conflicting and sedimented genealogy of the genre present within the text and show how this interaction structures and, to an extent, overdetermines its production and interpretation, even as these pressures mediate through performative human agency. Specific to this study, I will show how the American fear narrative's sedimented generic traditions carry with it layers of ideological messages from numerous historic periods and economic modes.

Further, under the three horizon's approach, all texts must be seen as simultaneously ideological (in the narrow, hegemonic sense of promoting false consciousness) and Utopian. Such a stance is often only apparent from the broad perspective of the third horizon. This allows us to examine a text through the traditional negative hermeneutic of Marxism, which Jameson describes as, "[Marxism's] demystifying vocation to unmask and to demonstrate the ways in which a cultural artifact fulfills a specific ideological mission, in legitimating a given power structure, in perpetuating the reproduction of the latter, and generating specific forms of false consciousness" (Jameson, *The Political* 291). However, to present the possibility of political praxis emerging from such an interpretation, we must also see these same narratives as Utopian texts. To Jameson, narratives are simultaneously ideological and

Utopian, because in order for a hegemonic text to control or manage potentially subversive impulses in the consumer, "these same impulses…are initially awakened within the very text that seeks to still them" (287). Essentially, a text cannot deny progressive stances without bringing them up, at least in part. To Jameson, the hegemonic process itself is "a complex strategy of rhetorical persuasion in which substantial incentives are offered for ideological adherence," and these incentives "are necessarily Utopian in nature" (287). As such, the positive hermeneutic of Marxism demonstrates how a text "project[s] its simultaneously Utopian power as the symbolic affirmation of a specific historical and class form of collective unity" (291). According to Jameson, something is Utopian "only insofar as all such collectivities are themselves *figures* for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopian or classless society" (291). This means a text can be hegemonic, supporting the dominance of the ruling class, while it also imagines a utopian collective unity, however flawed. When put together, this simultaneously negative and positive Marxist interpretation notes how texts are, under their present contexts, repressive, but also contain the seeds for Utopian collectivity, pointing the way to progressive change and allowing political praxis to move in these directions. This useful perspective provides us access to an often overlooked and productive level of meaning that all texts can offer. It is a balanced focus that reorients Marxist critics to not only demystify and deconstruct, but also to simultaneously engage in the productive act of constructing from a text inspiration toward the next historical phase of production, one reaching beyond the problems and limitations of our current state of late capitalism.

Yet, just as Jameson incorporates the theories of numerous others, including Althusser, Lukács, Macherey, Greimas, Marx, and Engels, to name only a few, his method still leaves room for the critic to bring in new theoretical tools as needed. Similar to the way that Robyn Warhol proposes to add the close reading of narratology to feminism and cultural studies (350), we can benefit similarly from adding the tools of narratological formal reading to the three horizons method. As David Herman states, narratology can be seen as the "[c]lose reading of individual stories…not a return to New Critical…practice, but rather a strategy for ideological demystification" ("Introduction" 26), an approach that aligns well with a Marxist interpretation. I will tend to only use these narratological tools when they can narrow my interpretive focus down to a particular formal contradiction in a text during the first horizon of interpretation, thereby highlighting a narrative element that will be a particularly useful starting point for my forthcoming interpretation. For instance, I might use focalization and positioning theory to add insight to the stance of particular characters as formal contradictions (Herman, *Basic* 55-63), and Gérard Genette's insights into the time and order of story and discourse (Chatman 62-67) can be helpful in noting omissions and absences of class discourses. In short, these narratological tools offer the potential to supplement Jameson's method, filtering my interpretation toward particularly productive elements of the text's form. Overall, with these narratological additions, the three horizons of narrative interpretation can be used as a methodology with a solid Marxist philosophical tradition that can filter the examples of individual texts to systematically uncover and reveal the formal, ideological and historical meanings and affective interactions behind my particular, overall object of study, the post-9/11 American fear narrative. In addition,

I want to expand upon this methodology to look into the contextual interaction of texts to note the different ways that they work through different interpretive communities and reception practices, but also how the material conditions of the cultural industries influence and determine the texts produced.

CHAPTER 3

THE AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVE AND THE FEAR THEME

With the theoretical and methodological foundation established in the previous chapter, we can now build on this understanding to better grasp the fear narrative itself as a form that formally and ideologically codes affect into the specific and innately ideologically-charged emotion of fear. In this chapter, I will first establish a working definition of the fear narrative, the primary fear theme, and the secondary fear theme. With these concepts in place, I will then outline the ten primary fear themes that I have found to be particularly prominent in the post-9/11 American fear narrative.

To define American fear narratives, we can note that the fear narrative, in general, has two distinct characteristics: fear narratives both depict and evoke fear. In the first sense, the narrative can depict fear through a character experiencing and expressing fear, and/or the text depicting a situation or event that is considered fearful in the dominant code. In the second sense, the semiotic composition of the narrative is designed to create an affective interaction with its audience that directs them to interpret the experience as fearful, thereby evoking fear when decoded from the dominant position. Of course, it is certainly possible that this attempt to evoke fear may be interpreted to produce an alternative emotion, such as what happens when individuals laugh at what ostensibly should be a terrifying scene in a horror film. To some extent, then, it is the popular, common, or dominant interpretation that qualifies a text as a fear narrative. Alternative, negotiated, or oppositional interpretations and even misinterpretations of a fear narrative are always possible, but it is the popular or most

common interpretation that qualifies the text to participate in the genealogy that we are

establishing here, even if these other positions may offer fruitful insights into how these

texts operate within alternate interpretive communities.

In my research thus far, I have identified a number of themes that unite and

connect the tradition of the fear narrative in American cultures. However, these themes

of fear are not themes in the sense of "[t]he statement(s), expressed or implied, that a

text seems to be making about its subject" (Murfin and Ray 514). Instead, they are

themes in the sense commonly used in popular cultural studies, which John G. Cawelti

describes as "any prominent element or characteristic of a group of works which seems

to have some relevance to a social or cultural problem" (731). As Cawelti notes, this is a

vague definition that has been used to indicate a variety of elements in texts, and one

that can lead to oversimplification and reductionist thinking when dealing with a body of

texts (731). To help dispel these issues, I will further specify the particular type of theme

that I will be focusing on in this project, and note that my interpretations utilizing these

themes are never meant, as Cawelti states, "to deal with the total structure of the

themes and its relationship to the story elements in the complete work" (731), but as

targeted interpretations of the texts to help understand and illuminate them from

particular perspectives. Themes, as I am using the term, flow across genres and media,

creating constraints of tradition and precedent that guide the author of the text and

influence the reader's interpretation, processes that both carry and develop cultural

values and interests. Similar to Williams's description of the genre convention, themes

are social constructs that are "historically variable," and often become naturalized during

a certain period (173-4), which can often make them seem nearly invisible and not even

worth noticing to many of its contemporaneous consumers. Also like Williams's

description of conventions, themes are historically situated, meaning that themes in

stable historic periods themselves become stable "'rules' of a particular art" and "[i]n

other periods the variation and indeed uncertainty of conventions [or themes] have to be

related to changes, divisions, and conflicts in the society" (179). It could easily be

argued that American culture after 9/11 was one of these moments of cultural

uncertainty after many American values and beliefs became disrupted by the attacks.

While there are strong currents of continuity with the themes of the fear narrative that

have come before this period, there is also a flurry of change and adaptation, a struggle

to match the historical moment through various narrative forms. As a result, the themes

of fear that we will focus on in this study are not bound to one genre and can act much

like floating signifiers in that they are easily articulated with new meanings in different

texts. However, they also act as Jamesonian historical referents that carry with them

traces of prior significations for the knowledgeable reader and author. Altering the

typified meanings and affects associated with a theme of fear, whether in content or

form, is something that knowledgeable consumers of the texts tend to notice and see as

relevant in a contrastive and creative manner.

This element of variation in each of its particular manifestations is an essential

characteristic of the theme of fear, as it adapts to the current affective, historical, and

ideological pressures that are always in process, thereby maintaining, in each of its

manifestations, a sense of cultural relevance to consumers and producers during its

moments of production, if not longer. This means that the theme of fear is an

intertextual, intermedial, and cross-genre motif, of sorts, one that comes up repeatedly

within a particular culture and historical period and evolves in a sedimentary manner into new periods. To exist in this manner, the theme of fear must be abstract enough to transcend the formal constraints of individual media and the content constraints of individual genres. In total, the fear theme is a reoccurring aspect observable within an intertextual continuum pertaining to the emotion of fear that stretches across the narratives of a particular culture in a particular historical moment. As mentioned previously, the contingent historicity and processual manner of the theme of fear is the reason why this study is careful to specify that it is studying those found in American narratives produced after 9/11/2001. Themes of fear, or of other emotions, in other historic periods and in other cultures would be very different and would each warrant separate studies of their own. When considered in combination, thinking in terms of the themes of fear emphasizes the interconnected nature of contemporary narratives, as well as allowing us to conceive of vast weaves of threaded narratives connected in rhizomatic ways (Deleuze and Guattari 21), enabling aesthetic, ideological, and affective variation in cultural productions, or improvisations off of established and preexisting textual elements to create new narrative iterations that, in turn, develop and build off each other in complex and often contradictory ways.

I have divided these themes between what I call the primary and secondary fear themes. Primary themes are the most abstract in nature and typically take the form of intermedial motifs, such as concepts or problems that are repeatedly returned to in narratives of a particular time and place. In the post-9/11 American fear narrative, I have identified ten of these primary themes, though I am sure others exist as well. Presented alphabetically, these include: apocalypticism, contamination, entrapment, exclusion, the

external threat, the internal threat, paranoia, the personalization of fear, transgression, and trauma. Secondary themes represent concrete narrative events or existents, which are "characters, [or] items of setting" (Chatman 19), that manifest primary fear themes in the text, either singly but more often in combination, in particular forms of media and genres. The survival space (Browning 43), for example, is a good example of a secondary theme. It is the home that is defended from zombies or the fortress besieged by monsters. It combines numerous primary themes, such as the external threat, paranoia, the personalization of fear, and entrapment, into a single setting that not only embodies these primary themes, but builds upon, questions, and complicates them both individually and in their relation to each other.

For the remainder of the chapter, I will outline the ten primary fear themes that I have observed to be particularly prominent in American narratives after 9/11. Overall, each of these primary fear themes are ideologemes that interpret affect into the emotion of fear and that over time have taken shape in the American imaginary as intermedial and transgeneric motifs. These themes reoccur, albeit in different formations, across a wide variety of narratives as seemingly unresolvable problems or contradictions that American culture repeatedly attempts to either confront, resolve, utilize, or simply revel in. They form the substance of the political unconscious of narratives that aim to evoke the emotion of fear and that are ubiquitous in American history, even if they differ widely across particular times and places.

APOCALYPTICISM

Apocalypticism is the fear of the impending end. This end might be caused by a variety of means, such as a religious, nuclear, viral, natural, or human-made catastrophe, and is most often thought of as happening on a collective level of a nation or the world, but it can also occur on the personal level of the individual. Often, apocalypticism is a proleptic fear, looking toward a potential, prophesized, or fated future, culminating in an apocalyptic Event, but in post-apocalyptic narratives it can also be an analeptic fear reaching back to a catastrophic Event previously survived, even as this past event often leads toward a second event that may finish what the first had started (Berger 7). As James Berger notes, there are three different ways that apocalypses take form in the narrative: first, as "the *eschaton*, the actual imagined ending of the world"; second, "as catastrophes that resemble the imagined final ending…as an end of something, a way of life or thinking"; or, third, as having "an interpretive, explanatory function…as revelation, unveiling, uncovering" (5). In this last sense, the apocalypse "in its destructive moment must clarify and illuminate the true nature of what has been brought to an end" (5). In this way, an apocalypse in a narrative might be the actual ending of the storyworld, but more often than not, it is merely an end that leads to a new beginning, an end that opens up either dystopian or utopian possibilities.

Apocalypticism has a long, sedimented legacy in American culture. As Peter N. Stearns notes, "the persistence, or at least periodic recurrence, of an apocalyptic strain" of fear has been a characteristic feature in American fear throughout much of its history (63). American apocalypticism, he states, finds it origins in European Christianity, even

if much of its religious teachings taught its followers not to fear the apocalypse, but to rejoice in it, as in the Second Coming or Rapture, wherein the sinners would perish and the faithful would ascend into a paradise in heaven (66-67). Still, despite this focus on the apocalypse as having a happy ending, the sheer scale of the impending catastrophe took firm root in the American imaginary of fear. Within Christianity and even in many other religions, apocalyptic fear "was central to discipline in a dangerous modern world" (68), and, as such, a profound sense of anxiety found itself affixed to the end. After all, what if you were not good enough to ascend to heaven with the rest? To many, the apocalypse simply meant death, or damnation, and this clearly held fearful connotations. While the use of fear in European Christianity began to decrease in the eighteenth century, and the American Catholic emphasis on fear of the impending end diminished with the reforms of the 1960s, it still holds a strong place in various American Protestant denominations today (68).

This religious perspective on apocalypticism has spread throughout American culture and provides its particular flavor to even more secular perspectives on the end, ranging from fears of Cold War nuclear annihilation, environmental catastrophes, and even "concerns about a Y2K cyber catastrophe" (Stearns 74). Many Americans are quick to associate these concerns, and just about any catastrophic event, as potentially being an apocalypse in the sense of an *eschaton*, while others maintain a paranoid vigilance toward spotting what are believed to be the potential signs of the coming of such an apocalypse, the coming of the Event, such as those noted in and often cited from the Book of Revelation. All of this has merged together to form a view and concern with the apocalypse that is, according to Stearns, somewhat peculiar to our nation, as

fears of the end can often be experienced as horrifying, but they are also often mingled with almost religious hopes of salvation (73). As one post-9/11 example, we see this admixture alive in popular culture in the zombie apocalypse bumper sticker: "Deep Inside We all Want a Zombie Apocalypse." Rather than seeing the apocalypse as a fearful event, these stickers celebrate it as a radical form of salvation, a catastrophe as a form of liberation from everyday world. This bumper sticker and others like it borrow their sentiments from the Christian roots of American apocalypticism still active today in Rapture bumper stickers, such as, "What this Planet Needs is a Good, Old Fashioned Second Coming."

In contemporary American culture, Stearns notes, "It proves particularly easy to attach apocalyptic fervor to racial or foreign threats, real or imagined, converting certain kinds of international issues into battles against evil" (74). We see this repeatedly in the past hundred years, whether as Reagan's labeling of the Soviet Union as the evil empire in 1983, or Bush calling terrorists "evil-doers" in 2001 (Bush, "Remarks") or warning us of the dangers of the "axis of evil" beginning in 2002. This religiously tinged Manichean paradigm sees these external threats through an us/them binary of a holy war, turning conflicts into visions of apocalyptic wars in which we must defend our nation against a protean and eternal tide of evil that hopes to end our way of life, threatening to extinguish the American people just as surely as any nuclear threat or extinction-level asteroid collision. This obfuscation and re-articulation of actual events into exaggerated fights for our very survival distorts how America engages with the world, steering us away from the possibilities of peaceful resolutions in favor of war and imperialism. Overall, apocalypticism is a fear theme that finds its way in to a variety of

fear narratives, including post-apocalyptic films such as Lawrence's *I Am Legend* (2007) and Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013), disaster films such as Maté's *When Worlds Collide* (1951) and Haskin's *War of the Worlds* (1953), and zombie narratives such as Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and Fleischer's *Zombieland* (2009).

CONTAMINATION

The second primary fear theme we will discuss is contamination, which can be expressed as a fear of miscegenation, ideological contamination, or cultural change resulting from an outside influence that leads to a loss or change of one's identity, especially when one cannot control or exert agency to prevent it. If the binary opposite of exclusion, in general, is inclusion, then the binary opposite of the primary fear theme of exclusion is the fear of contamination, and these two often work in tension with each other in narratives. Essentially, contamination is the fear of the transference of something deemed undesirable to the self or to your culture, which often leads to a sense of incorporation into another social group, either as an oppressive hegemonic overpowering or as a radical overthrow of an established norm.

The way that contamination is depicted depends on one's relative position within established relations of power. Contamination is often a fear endemic to the hegemonic culture, as it depicts a threat from outside sources that might try to change its position of dominance. Yet, contamination can also be portrayed from a marginalized position, as a fear of being overpowered, of becoming completely appropriated, nullified, incorporated, or converted into an alternate or hegemonic culture. In either variety, the fear of

contamination is a fear of self/other borders collapsing either personally or culturally. The object of fear can be either physical or conceptual, and it can either pose a real threat or it can be a redirection away from a real threat.

In many ways, contamination is a fear of incorporation. While in theory we can separate contamination as the fear that external others will change you and incorporation as the fear that others can change you by attempting to turn you into them, in practice they are often two parts of one interrelated fear theme. For instance, cannibalism is a consummate form of incorporation, as the self becomes incorporated into and consumed by the object of fear. However, in the zombie narrative, a form extremely popular after 9/11, cannibalism merges with contamination as a zombie's bite can now infect the host, turning them into the walking dead and thereby incorporating them into their ranks.

Even in more realistic portrayals, the incorporation of cannibalism is first a form of contamination. Cannibalism begins as the bodily contact and penetration of the flesh from one considered external to or Other than the self, so that this form of bodily and personal change enacts a violation of the body's boundaries by the Other. This violation contaminates the self, making it no longer pure of elements and influences formerly seen as existing outside of it. The contaminated individual is now impure in comparison with its former "untouched" state and is now infected with the Other. As an example, cannibalism's violation of the body's boundaries contaminates the body, leading to its literal incorporation into the Other as the self is consumed, either in part or entirely.

As this summary of these two concepts illustrates, contamination and incorporation, whether on symbolic or physical levels, are really just two intertwined

aspects of the same theme that this study, unless specifically stated, will consider as grouped together as the fear theme of contamination. For instance, virus outbreak narratives, such as Wolfgang Peterson's *Outbreak* (1995), are obviously about contamination, as the virus infects and then often kills the host. Yet, becoming contaminated changes one's identity as they are now one of the "infected," often losing much of their previous rights and power. This shift in identity alters one's sense of subjectivity, effectively incorporating the individual into a new social group, a group so marginalized that, for instance, an individual who was once your child or father must now be contained or killed before they spread the virus to others. As a result, virus contamination changes you into one of "them," incorporating you into an out-group. In most instances, contamination and incorporation become intertwined into a temporal process of othering. The fear of being contaminated is the first step, but once one has been contaminated, one encounters the fear of becoming incorporated into the Other and losing the established sense of self.

ENTRAPMENT

Entrapment is the fear of being confined, trapped, limited, or held against one's will. It manifests in the narrative in two different varieties, depending on the subject's relation to power. From a marginalized perspective, entrapment involves the oppression of an individual or individuals of a marginalized class by those of a dominant class, often taking the form of confining the characters to a culture, situation, or place that they cannot, or at least cannot very easily, escape. While these can take the form of narratives of government oppression, they also can address entrapment in patriarchal

society from a woman's perspective, such as Loden's film *Wanda* (1971), Joanna

Russ's novel *The Female Man* (1975) or, more recently, Hulu's television adaptation of

The Handmaid's Tale (2017-Present). From a dominant perspective, entrapment

narratives often take the perspective of a member of the dominant class entrapped,

often physically, by individuals or actions of the marginalized classes, whether portrayed

explicitly or metaphorically. This latter version typically communicates an often

unconscious conservative backlash of fear toward potential real world demographic and

power changes, whether real or imaginary, and can be found in "The Shadow over

Innsmouth," by H.P. Lovecraft (1931) and Robert A. Heinlein's novel *Farnham's*

Freehold (1964).

　　In either variation, entrapment has a long tradition in narrative history, but

particularly in the American fear narrative, encompassing the fearful (if not outright

terrifying) experiences captured in the tradition of the slave narrative, the live burial

narratives of the Victorian-influenced period, tales involving imprisonment, narratives of

oppression in which a character can find no way out of their predicament, and captivity

narratives in which "heroic men save threatened women," which Faludi aptly describes

as compensatory masculinity tales that re-assert a myth of American masculine

invincibility in the face of defeat or vulnerability (278-81). Entrapment often manifests as

a central theme of many fear narratives by building on these traditions, such as in

Tractenberg's film *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016); the novel *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison

(1952); Craven's film *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984); or, Fincher's film *Panic Room*

(2002).

EXCLUSION

Exclusion is a fearful state which is often experienced when someone who had formerly belonged to a particular social group, who had belonged to the "us" side of the us/them binary, suddenly becomes thrust against their will into the "them" side, becoming an outsider to a group they once believed themselves to be a part of. This can result from economic causes, such as the declassement experienced by many Americans during the Great Depression or the Great Recession, wherein people were thrust against their will into different economic classes, but it can also result from social changes in the dynamics of race or gender, such as what occurred to Arab-Americans after 9/11 or Japanese Americans during WWII in internment camps. Two notable examples of fear narratives using this theme in this way include the novels *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925) and *When the Emperor was Divine*, by Julie Otsuka (2002).

Exclusion and inclusion often exist in a constant state of tension, and their division is often mutable, especially to those from marginalized groups. In a 2004 study, sociologists Roxanna Harlow and Lauren Dundes note that 9/11 and America's reaction to the events demonstrate this shifting nature and its division across axes of power, between the hegemonic and the marginalized: "Whiteness, viewed as synonymous with 'Americanness,' has become the gatekeeper of the American in-group identity" (454). 9/11, then, "highlighted the fragile nature of what many be thought of as a pseudo-American status for nonwhite groups who may be accepted but also excluded if viewed as too troublesome or threatening" (454). In response to the threat of 9/11 and the stereotype of the Middle Eastern terrorist, "the boundaries of acceptance shifted; Arab

Americans were regarded with suspicion, having lost their American standing" (454). As

a result, such a marginalized racial group experiences Du Bois's condition of double-

consciousness, "a sense of being simultaneously part of yet excluded from a nation and

its people" (455). It is this fear of exclusion that the fear narrative often utilizes for its

affects, but it can be mixed with other fear themes to produce different affects as well.

For instance, their study also shows that the sense of inclusion experienced by white

Americans gives them a sense of ownership in the nation (455), a condition of inclusion

that typically causes them to react to 9/11 "in a much more personalized way" (446),

essentially creating a sense of the personalization of fear, a fear theme that we briefly

introduced in the previous chapter, and will describe in greater detail later in this

chapter. In contrast, those of racially excluded yet geographically included groups do

not tend to feel this personalization of fear. The theme of exclusion, then, helps to

highlight how differences in one's position within power relations can affect the

operation of other fear themes, a point that will be increasingly important as this project

continues.

Alternately, the fear of exclusion can also be depicted as the lived state resulting

from exclusion, such as the experience of living life after being excluded from a

particular society or living with another group from which you are excluded. This can

often take form as exclusion from a society that the individual wants to be included back

into, to be included in at all, or to at least not be threatened by. In this sense, exclusion

can be depicted in post-apocalyptic fiction as a nostalgic longing for the world as it was

before the disaster or the event that changed everything, but it can also include

narratives of a social groups threatened by a more powerful group. Examples of these

kinds of exclusion include AMC's *The Walking Dead* (2010-present); *The Road*, by

Cormac McCarthy (2006); Ragona & Salkow's film *The Last Man on Earth* (1964); and

Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison (1952).

In all cases, exclusion is a fear that larger events, those beyond the individual's

control and power to change, might place them into a social grouping that excludes

them from their previous understanding of their identity or that threatens their existence.

This sense of identity crisis through exclusion can also take the form of the hybrid

character's experience of unhomeliness, especially when the character finds that they

do not belong in any social group. In the political sense, exclusion can either be

depicted from the perspective of a character or set of characters in a conservative

sense as those who were excluded from their in-group and want back in, such as we

see in *The Road*, or in a progressive sense as those who have become externalized

threats to a particular social group, such as the rebellion against the Capitol in Suzanne

Collins's novel *Mockingjay* (2010, film adaptation 2014 and 2015). Overall, exclusion is

the felt experience of being othered, while, in contrast, confronting the external threat (a

fear theme that we will cover in more detail in the next section) can be the felt

experience of othering. Seen from this perspective, exclusion and the external threat

are often two sides of the same experience. If to Other is to define someone as "not one

of us," then exclusion is often this push outside of an in-group into an out-group against

or without the subject's will.

THE EXTERNAL THREAT

The external threat and the internal threat are two themes that often work together in the fear narrative since the border standing between them, and one's status as internal and external, can shift with surprising rapidity. Yet, at the analytic level, they deserve consideration as separate fear themes as it is not entirely uncommon that one of them will exist in a fear narrative alone or that one is emphasized over the other. Overall, the notion of the exterior and the interior refers to the relative position of various social groups in relation to the individual's sense of self and the social group affiliations that they feel are integral to their subjecthood. The borders between self and other, of course, are constantly in motion and under the influence of numerous political, economic, material, and cultural forces, making the division fickle and often landing marginalized individuals as out-group members with little warning. Yet, these fear themes are different from exclusion as not only is the object of fear excluded from the social in-group, but they are also deemed by that in-group as a threat that cannot simply be ignored.

The external threat is the threat that lies outside one's accepted borders of the self; it is an Other that exists as an object of fear. For instance, the external threat has taken many popular forms in American fear narratives, such as the foreign invader featured in such films as John Millius's *Red Dawn* (1984), in which the US is invaded by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua; or, as in Dan Bradley's 2012 remake of the film in which the US is invaded by North Korea. However, the external threat can also originate from what appear to be different sources, such as the alien threat showcased in films such as Guillermo del Toro's *Pacific Rim* (2013), Steven Spielberg's *War of the*

Worlds (2012), and Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996). Alternately, it can even be the invasion of an external evil, as in Ridley Scott's fantasy film *Legend* (1985). In all instances, the external threat is clearly depicted as an Other, but one that cannot be simply excluded and ignored. As Niven Kumar and Lucyna Swiatek note, "This Othered being lies in the peripheries…a source of fear and terror, a potential threat, and hence one that must be subjugated and controlled" (312). After the attacks of 9/11, the American imagination flared with fears of external invaders, or as Pepper states:

> The fact that US territorial borders were violated on 9/11 by foreign terrorists has led to the reassertion of traditional accounts of sovereignty, especially in the popular imaginary, pitting 'here' (either characterized as the United States or somewhere inside the state system where democracy, freedom, political community, and so forth are all possible) against 'there.'" (407)

As a result, fear of the external threat, especially after 9/11, has helped reinforce in popular American culture a dichotomous world view of us/them in which "you are either with us or against us," either part of the in-group or part of the external threat that we fear is mounting at our borders, serving to reinforce, for example, the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences we will discuss in the next chapter in our discussion of Porochista Khakpour's *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* (2007).

The external threat is not new to American culture, and has a long history dating back to the country's origins and beyond. As David Campbell notes, "In the invention of America the confrontation between the European, Spanish, and Christian 'self' and the 'other' of the indigenous peoples is an encounter of lasting significance for the way in which it brings to the New World the orientations towards difference and otherness of

the Old World" (111). As such, the creation of the external threat is an effort to erect a conceptual, if not material, border to delineate a communal and individual sense of identity, which distinguishes between what one considers as being part of the self and everything else that is excluded from that identity. Yet, Campbell's quote is also instructive as it notes how, since the origins of America, one common way to draw these lines of identity was through racial affiliation, as Europeans became the in-group and the indigenous tribes the threatening out-group. As Stearns notes, American culture has long held a "tendency to link fear to concerns about racial others" (63). This construction of the racialized external threat found focus in the European immigrants' imagining that Amerindians worshiped the devil since their beliefs were different (Campbell 123). The English "employed both the civilized/barbarian and the Christian/pagan dichotomy in order to firmly locate the Amerindians as so completely other that they could not aspire to the qualities of the self" (124). This helped to mark the boundaries of the English identity within the new sense of the colonial American identity in order "to attempt a clear distinction between themselves and those they encountered" (124). Yet, whatever means an in-group uses to differentiate itself from the external threat, this shared, communal fear functions as a social glue that helps bond the in-group, motivating them to work hard against the machinations of their perceived external enemy.

THE INTERNAL THREAT

The internal threat, on the other hand, is a threat that originates within the conceived borders of the self or homeland. Here, we find fears of the spy or the duplicitous neighbor that we see expressed in the popular concepts of the third column,

betrayal from within, sedition, disloyalty, and the post-9/11 nativist belief that Western

Muslims are the fifth column in both Europe and America. One sense of the internal

threat, then, is an agent of the external threat that is found to exist within the geographic

borders of the social in-group. As such, in the popular imagination, it is believed that the

internal threat may be identified through characteristic or stereotypical physical

indicators of its true affiliation with the external threat, often found along the lines of

race, gender, ethnicity, behavior, or sexuality. Through these apparently discernible

outer appearances, it is believed that one can identify an internal threat living amongst

our ranks. However, it may also be that the physical appearance of the internal threat is

indistinguishable from that of the rest of the in-group, making its presence even more

threatening. For instance, on a lesser note, we see betrayal from an interior threat in

Speilberg's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), when "Mac"

(Ray Winstone) lies to Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) about being a CIA agent when he

is actually helping the Soviet villains track the heroes. Films in which the internal threat

is even more central include Walter Wagner's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956),

Philip Kaufman's remake of the film in 1978, and NBC's television series *V* (1984-85),

all of which feature internal threats that are practically indistinguishable from true social

group members. Or, from a different angle, George A. Romero's *Day of the Dead*

(1985) is a good example as human survivors in a world overrun by zombies hide from

this external threat in a bunker, only to find that the soldiers protecting them are actually

a more immediate internal threat to their survival.

The internal threat also has a long history in American culture, often working in

conjunction with the external threat to reinforce one another in the social construction of

American subjecthood. The fragile, burgeoning identity of the American Puritan was, as

Campbell notes, founded on a strict us/them paradigm that began to "construct dangers

from within," which had to be purged from their societies (121-2). In order to maintain

this border between the external threat and the internal identity of the social in-group,

the English colonies severely punished miscegenation and living with the Amerindians

(125-6), essentially in an effort to prevent the creation of what they saw as internal

threats. To maintain the "fiction of civility" that the English used to differentiate their

identity from the native peoples required a strict enforcement of the "externalization of

barbarism" (126), and the latter became articulated with the natives to differentiate them

as an external threat. In a similar way, accusations of witchcraft, such as in the Salem

witch trails, have long been used to externalize, or exterminate, perceived internal

threats or those not fitting within a society's sense of identity. Unlike barbarism,

Witchcraft, of course, maintained the border between in-group and out-group largely

through the physical differentiation of gender, as "over 85 percent" of those accused

"were women" (128).

This fevered maintenance of the border between the external threat and the

social in-group, and the fear of contamination leading to the spread of internal threats,

betrays the tenuous nature of this border of identity creation. As Campbell states, "The

boundary between inside and outside, self and other, is never static nor is it singular.

There are a multitude of boundaries implicated in the construction and maintenance of

identity, boundaries that are as much shifting gray areas as they are distinct lines"

(128). Further, Kumar and Swiatek note that in our modern transnational world, "Such

strict boundaries do not exist since what is pure already contains traces of that which is

excluded" (319). Yet, throughout American history, Campbell notes that this use of

delineating external and internal threats in order to construct social identities initiated a

pattern of defining the dominant male European American group against other

marginalized groups to show what the enactment of "Americaness" was not supposed

to include, a pattern of defining oneself in the negative that resulted in women being

accused as unholy witches in Salem (128) and defining Africans as dependent, infantile,

and savage slaves (129-31). Building from this interplay between external and internal

threats, America displays "an oft-repeated tendency to interpret all threats to order and

stability as coming from an alliance of internal and external enemies," often linked

together "in a subversive network" that is believed to exist even "without evidence"

(132).

There are numerous and often complex processes that transition a member of an

in-group into an internal threat, leading to their termination or exclusion as an external

threat. In general terms, to be turned into an internal threat means that once one is

deemed as no longer belonging to the in-group, one is then articulated with a separate,

external group believed to be a threat to the in-group. One's status as an internal threat

remains as long as one continues to reside within the geographical space allotted to the

threatened in-group, or if one somehow manages to prove themselves to once again be

a member of the in-group. Seen in this way, the distinction between the external threat

and the internal threat is a concern with embodied space or the violation and

transgression of the physical boundaries between us and them. If one is expelled from

the homeland of the in-group after being identified as an internal threat, one becomes

an external threat.

Takacs directs us towards one process that can transform the subject into a threat, as she notes how terrorism is portrayed in popular narratives through a process in which it is "personalized, pathologized, and absolutized" (*Terrorism TV* 59). This process applies equally well to any group who has become articulated as a threat, whether internal or external, yet we will use its original application towards terrorism in our explanation of the process, as it has particular relevance to our post-9/11 discussion, wherein the label of terrorist often became articulated to Muslim Americans when the attacks inflamed the underlying currents of Islamophobia in American culture. As such, to personalize involves showing that terrorism is a threat focused on the self, and not necessarily on the nation as a whole, a personalization of the fear that shifts the subject of fear from the nation to the self, depoliticizing the terrorist's motivations. To pathologize the terrorist is to represent terrorism as a disease or a condition that results from individual deviancy, often portrayed as stemming from one's deviant race, ethnicity, sexuality, or psychology (Carlsten 158-9). Takacs also discusses the process of ontologizing the terrorist, which is to essentialize the terrorist by determining and delimiting the nature of their existence or being, often in simplified formulations that decontextualizes and reifies them (*Terrorism TV* 59). Finally, to absolutize is to simplify the terrorist into a single thing in a way that is deemed unchangeable or immutable, which, especially under the Manichean rhetoric of the Bush Administration, turns the terrorist into an immutable incarnation of evil and destruction that the forces of good, the United States in this instance, must eradicate from the world, a message supported by many of Bush's speeches after the attacks (cf. Bush, "Text" and "Remarks").

When applied to actual terrorists, this processes of representation results in their depoliticization and decontextualization (Carlsten 155-6), transforming them from individuals or groups fighting for a political cause to individuals fighting because their own ontologically deviant natures have caused them to target you and your family, not a political institution. This also has the effect of delegitimizing the terrorist cause by effectively negating its existence (159). Further, pathologizing the terrorist turns them into a contagion that could spread to anyone, including oneself. As Takacs observes: "One effect of this systematic decontextualization of terrorism was to make the category of the terrorist flexibly expansible: it could include anyone who opposed U.S. interests of any sort in any way" (*Terrorism TV* 60). On the affective level, this depicted mutability and permeability of the terrorist identity further spurred anxiety and fear reactions as the terrorist could now be anyone, even yourself if you started to think in ways that opposed the policies proposed by the state, inspiring a paranoid condition of self-policing and community watch that further divides Americans into the us/them paradigm of either you are with us or against us.

This leads us to a second sense of the internal threat, that of the *internalized* threat in which an in-group member believes or suspects that they have become a threat themselves. In this way, the absolutized evil threat has invaded our borders and threatened our inner-most levels of family by invading and turning ourselves into complicit agents of our own destruction. We see this symbolically explored in the post-9/11 zombie narrative as the pathologized terrorist threat becomes the contagious zombie, especially when the hero/heroine becomes infected, such as at the end of Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), when one of the main characters, Michael (Jake

Weber), realizes that he is contaminated, thereby internalizing the threat unwillingly, and chooses to sacrifice himself before he fully becomes a part of the threat. This sense of pathologizing the threat has led to numerous paranoid incidents in American history, such as McCarthyism, the Red Scare of the 20s, and even the Cold War concept of the domino effect in foreign relations.

PARANOIA

Paranoia is a complex primary fear theme that first deserves some clarification and explication. Keniston and Follansbee note that, for Freud, paranoia describes an "individual psychosis, but Americans have increasingly used it to describe their collective anxiety" caused by perceiving reality as networked and interconnected (16), wherein nothing happens by chance and everything is linked, typically with what is depicted as malevolent intention. Sianne Ngai describes paranoia as "one's perceived status as a small subject in a 'total system'" (3), and as "a species of fear based on the dysphoric apprehension of a holistic and all-encompassing system" (299). In short, paranoia typically involves feelings of persecution and conspiratorial thinking, wherein someone is out to get the paranoid individual. In *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (1992), Jameson notes one narrative form of this fear theme, the conspiracy narrative, in which the narrative attempts to represent "the social totality itself" of its contemporaneous state of global capitalism, but necessarily fails under the individualist constraints of the narrative form (45-6). Building on this, Ngai states that the protagonists of these narratives "find that they are subjects caught in larger systems extending beyond their

comprehension and control" (299). At times, this can include "fear of unintended collusion with a system in which one is already inscribed" (303).

However, Ercolino extends our understanding of paranoia in the narrative through what he calls the paranoid imagination, "an essentially North American phenomenon…that is characteristic of the contemporary imaginary in a broader sense" (249). Richard Hofstadter traces the roots of this imaginary as an integral part of American culture, dating as far back as the creation of conspiracy theories about Illuminism in 1798 (79), and extending through to McCarthyism (77) and the culture of the political right wing of his own time (82). Yet, Ercolino notes that paranoia can emerge in narratives in ways other than conspiracies, such as "political and religious terrorism…nuclear psychosis…state apparatuses and corrupt forces of order…compulsivity and psychotic disturbances" (250). The object of fear of the paranoid imagination, according to Ercolino, "is often a question of hypothetical threats—impossible to demonstrate and at times absolutely implausible or ridiculous—but always and nevertheless feared and, precisely for this motive, all the more obsessively present and concrete" (250).

While often seen as socially dysfunctional or psychologically pathological, paranoia can also be depicted as a justified and valuable instinct. Keniston and Follansbee state that after 9/11, paranoid thinking began to be seen as "logical and rational responses to contemporary life" (16). They believe novels are an especially good form for exploring post-9/11 paranoia since they have a particular affordance for describing the collective, individual, political, and domestic spheres in conjunction (16), thereby allowing for the discovery of interconnections across domains of social

experience that might provoke paranoia. Further, the narrative structure of the novel, especially the realist novel, tends toward one in which "contingency is eliminated and every action is meaningful" (16), in terms of the central plot, creating a system that can easily "depict paranoid constructions of reality" (16). In the post-9/11 novel, paranoia became increasingly seen as appropriate, useful, and often necessary for survival in a world of growing surveillance infrastructures and unidentifiable enemies that can turn out to be anyone (17), and this observation can certainly extend to other multimodal forms of the narrative that this study will explore in later chapters, such as film and television episodes.

THE PERSONALIZATION OF FEAR

The personalization of fear has a long, if somewhat unrecognized, history in American culture, but it experienced a resurgence in the wake of post-9/11 political rhetoric. In Stearns's research comparing American reactions after Pearl Harbor to those after 9/11, he found that Americans after 9/11 were "much quicker to connect attack with personal and familial situations" rather than seeing them as directed toward the country or a larger community (36). This is what he calls the personalization of fear: "a striking aspect of the September 11 accounts involves the narrow focus, the use of individual and small group as primary frame of reference" (36). This first sense of the personalization of fear manifests when large, historic, and political events which are directed at a collective target, such as those made against America in general, are seen as personal attacks re-directed to the individual self alone, even if the individual is far removed from the actual threat. This phenomenon occurred after 9/11, when even

though the attacks were made against the WTC and the Pentagon, and their collective,

symbolic importance as totems of American capitalism and imperialism, many

Americans, even those who lived far from New York, felt the attacks were aimed at

themselves directly. This establishes a felt connection between the individual and

America as a nation, implying that if you attack America, you are attacking me, a

perspective that results in the collective concern transforming into the individual.

Yet, the personalization of fear can extend in two other directions as well, not just

toward the self, but toward the immediate family and even the home itself. Takacs notes

that the rhetoric of the Bush administration after 9/11 utilized the personalization of fear

by its "construction of the family as a target of terror," which "has helped to discipline the

public to accept an increase in political and social repression for its own good"

("Monsters" 3). This practice has become part of the ideological arsenal used by

politicians to justify the "violation of individual privacy rights" in the name of national

security (16). Faludi, too, while she does not use the term, describes the personalization

of fear at work in Bush's speeches, noting, "The threat, according to this revised script,

wasn't to our commercial and governmental hubs but to our domestic hearth" (7). As

Pease notes, "Bush endowed the state of emergency that he erected at Ground Zero

with the responsibility to defend the Homeland because foreign aggressors had violated

Virgin Land," which, in effect, "exiled the people from their normative nationality so as to

intensify their need for home" (168). Pease cites Amy Kaplan to note the unique

understanding of home in American culture: "within the U.S. structures of feeling the

domestic has a double meaning. It not only links the familial household to the nation but

also imagines both in opposition to everything outside the geographical and conceptual

borders of the home" (168). This links any attack to America as an attack to the home, the center of domesticity, our sense of security, and the dwelling of our closest family, the atomic family structure often imaginatively excised from its larger familial relations. As a result, our emotional reaction is intensified considerably by this conceptual isolation. The personalization of fear can see threats as targeting the self, one's immediate family, or towards the home.

Overall, the personalization of fear is a fracturing fear that simplifies political conflict and removes the individual from a communal sense of belonging to a nation, state, or collective. It isolates the subject and divides the collective into individualized and monadic family units, thereby magnifying our feelings of vulnerability as it makes it appear that we and our immediate family must face the threat alone. Further, the personalization of fear re-directs our attention from the larger, political polities who may have potentially motivated such threats and to which these threats are often actually directed and re-articulates them against individuals who feel that they have done nothing to deserve the attack. Not only does this obfuscation muddle the individual's ability to construct causative chains for these threats, thereby crippling their ability to create effective solutions, but it disguises those who may actually be to blame for retaliatory terrorism, making terrorism seem inscrutable, irrational, or nonsensical. Rather than hearing the true, political motivations of the terrorist, the personalization of fear re-routes Americans to ask, "Why would they want to attack me and my family?" while, through habitual use, conditioning Americans to ask predictive questions like "Who else might want to?"

In narrative form, we see the personalization of fear, in the first sense, manifest as political threats targeting the protagonist themselves rather than the nation, or, in the second sense, as those targeting the protagonist's children, wife, husband, or, in the third sense, the physical home itself. This, of course, is also a useful tool for heightening dramatic tension in the narrative, as it places the protagonist and those they care most about in danger, making the conflict personal. Both the character and the reader, who has likely established a sympathetic bond with the former, then become emotionally invested in the resolution of the threat. Yet, the degree of the personalization of fear experienced by the individual may be contingent and attenuated by the level of belonging one feels toward the collective group targeted by the threat. Harlow and Dundes note that white students felt a more personalized reaction after the attacks of 9/11 than the black students in their study (446). Their qualitative research indicates that this division is due to the "feelings of inclusion and exclusion from a national identity" often drawn along racial lines (440), but it also implies that gender (447) and class (453) play a role as well, combining to create varying degrees of alienation and marginalization that can distance an individual from the sense of the personal attack.

Integral to the personalization of fear, in every instance, is a re-direction of the subjectivity of fear made through an ideological misinterpretation of the Real, and this re-articulation of the subject of fear makes it somewhat unique among the other primary fear themes described in this study. In the traditional example of the fearful situation, such as encountering a mountain lion in the wild, the *object* of fear is the mountain lion, and the *subject* of fear is you. The distinction here is that the object of fear is that which we are afraid *of*, while the subject of fear is that which we are afraid *for*. Typically, most

fear themes involve fear for the self that the audience feels by extension through one of the narrative's focalized characters who functions for the audience as an emotional channel. However, the personalization of fear can re-direct the subject of fear in one of three different ways. In the first sense, what we can call the first-person sense, it re-articulates the subject of fear from the collective target to the individual, creating a first-person subjectivity of fear where it should be third-person subjectivity. The second sense, what we can think of as the second-person re-articulation, the personalization of fear switches the collective subject to a point external to the self as our most immediate, nuclear family. Last is the symbolic re-articulation, in which the personalization of fear moves the subject from the collective or social to the symbolic target of the home. In each sense, the personalization of fear acts as an ideological mystification, reducing threats directed toward larger, social or collective targets, into other targets that serve to isolate the individual and what they value most. This has the effect of breaking the social collective of a group into smaller units that are easier to politically manage and manipulate, breaking down the potential for the unification of the masses and the possibility for raising consciousness and organization among the working classes.

 We see the personalization of fear manifest in narratives in a number of ways. The first-person re-articulation often appears in conspiracy narratives with a personal focus and allegorical representations of collective powers aimed against the individual, such as Hackford's film *The Devil's Advocate* (1997) that pits the protagonist (Keanu Reeves) against Satan (Al Pacino), used in the film as an allegorical personification of the seductive powers of capitalistic greed itself. The second-person re-articulation is utilized almost to a cliché in action films in which the character's family is killed or

abducted, and the hero must either avenge their death or rescue them, as in the Netflix

television series *Punisher* (2017-) or Winner's film *Death Wish* (1974). Last, it can also

manifest as a symbolic re-articulation of the subjectivity of fear in the form of a home

invasion or threat to the sense of security found in the home, as in such films as Lurie's

Straw Dogs (2011), Bertino's *The Strangers* (2008), Fincher's *Panic Room* (2002), or

Rosenberg's *The Amityville Horror* (1979).

TRANSGRESSION

Transgression is the fear of the consequences of crossing a boundary

established by one's society, culture, or religion. As a fear theme, it has long roots

extending back into the mythological tales of Prometheus, Icarus, or even the Sudanese

tale of how the hyena and the weaverbird lost humanity our immortality by disobeying

the High God. American narratives focusing on this fear theme typically take the form of

cautionary tales that warn of what might happen if we attempt to cross a specified

boundary, one typically established by an authority figure, whether parental or deific.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, narratives centering on transgression can often be

seen as revolving around disobeying various symbolic representations of the Freudian

superego, such as in narratives that centered on breaking the law, committing a sin, or

defying one's parents.

Politically, transgressive narratives in this sense are often conservative in nature,

as they fearfully depict the dangers of breaking the rules or progressing beyond the

status quo. As anthropologist Mary Douglas states, "the ideal order of society is

guarded by dangers which threaten transgressors. The danger-beliefs are as much

threats which one man uses to coerce another as dangers which he himself fears to

incur by his own lapses from righteousness" (3). Such transgressive fears are often

found in science fiction narratives as many of the boundaries believed to exist between

human experience and the purview of the natural order or God are what science

actively pushes against. We see this in the numerous post-WWII narratives of

punishment for the development of nuclear technology, such as the giant radioactive

ants in Douglas's film *Them!* (1954), or narratives of the consequences of finding

terrifying alien life as we push the limits to explore outer space, as in Espinosa's more

recent film *Life* (2017), in which astronauts discover the first life form from Mars. Treated

this way, Brian Murphy "sees the Creature as 'the symbol of what we have to fear: it is

not fear itself; it is the horror of what we have done, scientifically and militarily to bring

the world to the brink of destruction'" (qtd. in Sobchack 47). Transgression also links to

the Frankenstein formula, in which a character violates a boundary, such as the

boundary separating what is seen as the place of humanity in relation to God, by

creating something that ultimately leads to the character's destruction. As this

connection to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818/1823)

implies, this transgressed limit often has Biblical or religious origins as established

within Western society, but it can also extend to scientists going too far, such as the

networked artificial intelligence in Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) or the genetically

engineered sharks of Harlin's film *Deep Blue Sea* (1999).

Often, transgression is embodied in the narrative through what philosopher Noël

Carroll calls the transgressive monster. Carroll draws from Douglas, noting that "Things

that are interstitial, that cross the boundaries of the deep categories of a culture's

conceptual scheme, are impure" ("The Nature" 55), and hence elicit the reactions of fear

and disgust that we have when faced with the monster, whether in print or on a screen.

The four categories of the impure are interstitial, contradictory, incomplete, or formless

(55), and a creature that exhibits one or more of these traits can be seen as a

"categorical transgression" (56). For instance, the undead is a transgressive monster

that can be considered a categorically contradictory impurity as they are both living and

dead, and even haunted houses are both animate and inanimate (55). Missing body

parts and advanced states of decay can be categorical incompleteness, and Carroll

states that in literature, sometimes "their vague, suggestive, and at times inchoate

description of the monsters, leaves an impression of formlessness" (56). This sense of

categorical formlessness is often imitated in film, especially in the low budget monster

flicks of the 1950s, in which the monster looms in the shadows, unseen, and, in a way,

more threatening for its lack of explicit depiction. Carroll explains the theoretical

advantages of thinking of monsters as transgressive:

> [It provides] a way in which we can account for the recurrent description of our
>
> impure monsters as 'unnatural.' They are unnatural relative to a culture's
>
> conceptual scheme of nature. They do not fit the scheme; they violate it. Thus,
>
> monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening.
>
> They are threats to common knowledge. (56)

The transgressive monster, then, is fearful because it defies our cultural schemes of

categorization, our way of understanding the world. They defy our comfortable efforts to

put things in their place, because if the sentient robots in Alex Proyas's film *I, Robot*

(2004) are neither dead nor alive, animate nor inanimate, how do we handle them? How to we understand them? What rights do they have? In this way, the fear of the transgressive monster is often rooted in the fear of the unknown or the unresolved contradiction given shape and becoming something we can no longer hope to ignore.

TRAUMA

The term "trauma" has been used so much in psychology and critical theory that it often goes loosely defined, its meaning a seemingly established and settled definition, but one often just as difficult to articulate as the experience of trauma itself. Laplanche and Pontails, from a psychological perspective, offer a good, general definition of trauma from which to begin: "An event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organisation" (465). From this perspective, traumas are events in the life of the subject, or, in our case, the collective experience of a society that are so disruptive that they defy affective processing and understanding, forcing the victim to repeatedly revisit, through a repetition compulsion, vivid flashbacks to the event as their mind attempts to integrate the event into the victim's established sense of identity, an identity thoroughly disrupted by the seemingly incomprehensible nature of the trauma itself and the inability to process its affect into recognized emotion. On top of flashbacks, trauma can manifest numerous symptoms in an individual, ranging from self-destructive acts, memory repression, anxiety, emotional detachment, paranoia, suicidality, depression, and self-medication to a diminished sense of safety, agency, self-esteem, emotional stability, and ability to negotiate interpersonal

relationships. However, what is traumatic for one may not be traumatic for another or may affect individuals differently, as there are genetic, cultural, situational, and environmental factors that come into play. Takacs, drawing from Neil Smelser, states that, largely, "trauma is a socially constructed and culturally conditioned way of *responding* to events" (*Terrorism TV* 30).

Building on this observation, in the theoretical framework of this study, trauma is an affective experience that defies either individual or collective interpretation through available ideologies. Without the available capacity for interpretation, the traumatic experience cannot be properly integrated into the identity of the subject. This means that, in response to a particular event, trauma may not be experienced by all or experienced in the same way and that all trauma does not have some universal, essential characteristic that makes it traumatic. However, for the purposes of this study, what defines trauma as a fear theme in the American fear narrative is that it is—or is represented to be—an affective experience that defies or at least resists available ideologies that could integrate it into individual or collective "American" identities.

While most of the themes of fear that this study will discuss concern themselves with present or anticipated threats, trauma is more temporally complex. Psychological trauma theory often traces its roots back to Sigmund Freud, who, as Aimee L. Pozorski notes, suggested:

Trauma is not simply a horrific event, but it is also an event that misaligns our perception of time. Such an event occurs too soon for consciousness to process it during the moment in which it occurs, so that subsequent time for the survivor

turns on the repetition of the key aspects of the event—with no beginning and no

end—in search of that missed encounter with death. (71)

As such, Pozorski states, "After a traumatic event, there appears to be neither a before

nor after" (71). In an interview between Pozorski and Cathy Caruth, the latter a seminal

scholar in trauma theory, Caruth states that the traumatic "moment necessarily affects

all other moments in time" (72), leaving behind "the haunting imposition of these events

in the lives of the survivors" (73). This haunting of the trauma, ever-present in the victim,

re-writes their past as well as shaping and limiting the affective possibilities of their

future. As a result, Caruth observes, "The trauma…lives in the present, and in the

future, as much as the past that carries with it the original event" (73).

One path to recovery from a traumatic experience, according to Versluys, is to

integrate it "into narrative memory" (3). Significantly in the context of the subject of this

study, these observations suggest that the political unconscious of narrative

representations of trauma imagines a way to plot or otherwise integrate a trauma into an

ideologically coherent narrative. Placing the trauma into a narrative series of events

gives it "a place within one's recollection in order to be (se)cured," thereby escaping the

"ceaseless imaginative reiteration of the traumatic experience" (3). This reiteration, or

flashbacks of the event, are seen in psychoanalytic therapy as a form of acting out, an

often unconscious refusal or inability to integrate the traumatic event as a part of one's

past in a narrative whole. Successfully narrativizing trauma, on the other hand, is a

means of working through the trauma, overcoming the psychical resistances to

integrating the event into the psyche, which frees the victim from the symptoms of

trauma and "from the grip of mechanisms of repetition" (Laplanche and Pontails 488).

However, from my Jamesonian perspective on narrative, any overcoming of trauma via narrativization is an ideological and symbolic act that provides an imaginary solution to trauma's defiance of interpretation and the class conflict trauma encodes. Consequently, in this study, my focus is less on how American fear narratives evoke the affective experience of trauma than on how they use narrative form to at once repress and remember class conflict as the ideological "master narrative" behind trauma.

For collectively traumatic experiences such as 9/11 that affected both the victims present at the attacks and those who viewed it in a mediated form, narratives can serve as a form of therapy that satiates what Versluys sees as "a globalized need to comprehend, to explain, and to restore" (4). This aligns with Jameson's assertion that all narratives—whether novels, films, or television episodes—are socially symbolic acts of ideology, meaning that narrativizing imposes ideological interpretation upon affective, pre-ideological, pre-symbolic, pre-linguistic phenomena that is based, in some manner, upon the Real. Specific to our study, this points to one important function of the post-9/11 narrative, either those explicitly discussing 9/11, as in the post-9/11 novels of our next chapter, or those symbolically coming to terms with the cultural impact of the attacks as in many horror or science fiction fear narratives after 9/11. These narratives can help society negotiate collective or individual ideological interpretations of the affective potentialities of 9/11 as a traumatic event through its fictional narratives, exposing and concealing the class conflict behind the fear theme of trauma. Post-9/11 narratives, then, often serve as a source of narrative trauma therapy, and many of these texts have dealt with the fear theme of trauma directly, thereby also directly infusing

particular ideological interpretations of the traumatic event into their reader's individual therapeutic processes.

Pulling this back to 9/11, Takacs reminds us that news media pre-packaged the attacks as traumatic events: "By framing the story of September 11 attacks in traumatic terms, news media primed the public to interpret the events in certain ways and to conveniently 'forget' other aspects of the story" (*Terrorism TV* 30-1). This pre-interpretation of the event, in other words, limited the interpretative potentialities of the affect produced by the attacks, pointing it in one direction that precluded some possible alternatives, such as the lost chance to join the global community mourned by Judith Butler (*Precarious* xi). This initiated an essentially hegemonic process that produced what Takacs calls "a simplified narrative of national violation that echoed and legitimated the Bush administration's call for retributive violence" (*Terrorism TV* 31). As we will see, my position is specifically that the preconditioning of 9/11 as trauma pushed audiences of fear narratives towards the fear themes I identify, all of which engage (if often in the political unconscious) with a national identity under threat. In fear narrative across American history, the primary fear theme of trauma often takes shape as a fearful condition that the characters experience to ideologically encode class conflict, as when we see characters trying to escape the grips of "cowardice," such as in Stephen Crane's novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895); struggling with war-induced trauma, such as in Michael Cimino's film *The Deer Hunter* (1978); or dealing with post-9/11 trauma, such as in Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007).

While we can discuss the ten primary fear themes that I have so far identified in isolation, they rarely manifest in the narrative in this manner. Instead, most fear narratives incorporate numerous fear themes, some as a central focus and others more in the thematic periphery, but their admixture often alters their meanings into new or variant permutations. In other words, from a Jamesonian perspective, these themes are akin to generic conventions that by historical and ideological acts are overlaid, admixed, and sedimented together in any particular fear narrative. Consequently, in the next chapter, we will outline the genealogy of the fear narrative to see how these primary fear themes have manifested, combined, and sedimented in the fear narrative throughout American history.

CHAPTER 4

A GENEALOGY OF THE AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVE

In the last chapter, I introduced the concept of the primary fear theme, the secondary fear theme, and I summarized the ten primary fear themes that I observed as being prominent in post-9/11 American fear narratives. These ten primary fear themes have a long history in American culture that I will now outline by tracing its narrative manifestations throughout American history and breaking its evolution down into seven functional if loose historical periods. I will conclude the chapter by contrasting the fear themes in the Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" (1843), a Victorian-influenced fear narrative, with the way these fear themes tend to manifest in post-9/11 American fear narratives in order to highlight the way these themes have changed over time and to underscore the uniqueness of the post-9/11 fear narrative as a part of this tradition. Overall, this understanding of the historical development and change of the American fear narrative will allow us to better contextualize the post-9/11 American fear narratives that are my central focus in this study.

To begin, Stearns identifies some inklings of these fear themes by noting that throughout its history American culture has had two reoccurring features: "a tendency to link fear to concerns of racial others" and "an apocalyptic strain" (63). Indeed, as Massumi states, "Fear is a staple of popular culture and politics" ("Preface" vii). Fear has long been a constant feature in American culture, even as it adapts and changes to history, altering and accumulating over time, as, what Williams would call, residual aspects of former fears mass into hegemonic structures of power that attempt to either

incorporate, alter, or dispel other emergent fears forming in response to new events. That the exigence for these fears arises, at least in part, from events, means that before we can understand the nature of American fear, we have to explore the term "event" itself. According to philosopher Jacques Derrida,

> The event is made up of the 'thing' itself (that which happens or comes) and the impression (itself at once 'spontaneous' and 'controlled') that is given, left, or made by the so-called 'thing.' We could say the impression is 'informed,' in both senses of the word: a predominant system gave it form, and this form then gets run through an organized information machine (language, communication, rhetoric, image, media, and so on). This informational apparatus is from the very outset political, technical, economic. (89)

Derrida's concepts work well within our framework of affect and its interpretation via ideology in that the impression is constructed both affectively ("spontaneous") and ideologically ("controlled") and thereby is a necessary interpretation of the real event itself. This process becomes especially conflicted and often ambiguous in our attempts to understand the sort of historic events that seem to defy our comprehension, ones we refer to as major events, such as the attacks of 9/11. As Derrida states, "A major event should be so unforeseeable and irruptive that it disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such*" (90). While Žižek (*Welcome* 16) and Baudrillard (30) may contend that we anticipated and thereby foresaw 9/11 in our fictions, it is this transference across the boundary between fiction and reality, the crossing of the border between fictional, possible, and actual worlds, which made the attacks, in all their disturbing, irruptive, and overwhelming reality, even

harder for some to believe. While many witnesses likened the attacks to films they had

seen, such as *Independence Day* and *Towering Inferno* (Versluys 4), I doubt few would

say that they foresaw that these fictions would ever cross over to reality. After all, we

are taught from childhood that these "are just movies" and that they are not real. The

uncanny familiarity of 9/11 violated this essential tenant of our ideological stance toward

the separation of reality and fiction, which did not decrease the importance and irruptive

nature of the event, but actually increased it for many. As such, 9/11 certainly qualifies

as a major event under these terms, one that has left a discernible impression on our

culture and has inspired a variety of conflicting ideological interpretations as we attempt

to grasp its damages, implications, and consequences.

America's efforts to understand and interpret our fears and anxieties surrounding

major historical events find form in cultural artifacts, and contemporary American

narratives offer themselves as objects of study to better understand how new

impressions of events interact with cultural fears. As Michael Rothberg states in

reference to terrorism and 9/11, "literature and art can become sites for exploring the

intersections between the public and the private and for understanding the feelings that

terrorism draws on and produces" ("Seeing Terror" 131). In essence, narratives provide

a space for us to make sense of reality in their production and consumption, thereby

constructing and negotiating through fiction our often fearful reactions to actual affective

events, especially those events that we feel are incomprehensible. Through this social

function of attempting to understand our fear, and thereby, in Jameson's terms, to

create imaginary solutions to fearful contradictions that seem unsolvable, the fear

narrative has a continuous tradition in American culture, in which its primary ideological

messages and formal elements have adapted to changes in historical conditions. This malleability has allowed it to take a prominent place in our present millennial culture, one that, as we will see, has become dominated by the politics of fear, characterized by the emotional reactions of the neurotic citizen, and, at least in part, motivated by the personalization of fear itself.

We can come to better understand the Post-9/11 American fear narrative if we consider it as, in Jameson's terms, a genealogical construction, in which "we begin with a full-blown system…in terms of which elements of the past can 'artificially' be isolated as objective preconditions" (*The Political* 139). Essentially, we can discern the composition of the Post-9/11 American fear narrative by finding its narrative and ideological predecessors, thereby establishing "a model of formal *sedimentation*" (140). To denote this genealogical sedimentation, we can divide the American fear narrative into roughly seven periods, each characterized by a major historical event or the cessation of an historical event, as in the sixth category. As a note, I have left the first three periods intentionally large, general, and schematic. By doing this I can simultaneously acknowledge and build from their essential role in the sedimentation of contemporary American fear, while still keeping my intended focus on the periods just prior to the post-9/11 American fear narrative, which I have elaborated in greater detail. The seven periods of the American fear narrative include

1. the Colonial and Early American fear narrative,

2. the Victorian-influenced American fear narrative,

3. the Great Wars American fear narrative,

4. the Early Cold War American fear narrative,

5. the Late Cold War American fear narrative,

6. the Fin-de-Siècle American fear narrative, and

7. the Post-9/11 American fear narrative.

It is important to note that these divisions should not be seen as rigid taxonomies, but, at best, "fuzzy" categories, meaning that they should be thought of as divisions of "more-or-less rather than binary, either-or logic" that permit "borderline instances and hybrids or blends" (Herman, *Basic Elements* 100-1). I employ the divisions only as imposed and artificial conceptual aids to help discern the process of formal sedimentation, and not as defined periodizations that imply absolute changes at fixed historical points. Jameson notes this about genres and his concepts can easily be extended to efforts to erect structures of periodization as well: "*all* generic categories, even the most time-hallowed and traditional, are ultimately to be understood…as mere ad hoc, experimental constructs, devised for a specific textual occasion and abandoned like so much scaffolding when the analysis has done its work" (*The Political* 145). In short, Jameson points out how the practice of utilizing historical periods is both conceptually flawed but practically necessary for historical interpretation. With this in mind, we can utilize the periodization of the American fear narrative as conceptual and analytic scaffolding that can be removed as needed to note how the themes of the American fear narrative often overlap these bounds, oscillating and occurring unevenly across these periods. I readily invite future research to expand upon, complicate, and further divide these periods of the American fear narrative, but for the purposes of the current project, their proposed broad strokes of history and culture fulfill our needs.

The Colonial and Early American fear narrative emerges as early as the first European contacts with the New World, which we will simplify for this study as starting in 1492 and extending until the end of the eighteenth century (1492-1799). This era begins two primary themes of American fear: the racialized other and the apocalyptic strain (Stearns 63). The first took form as European, especially Protestant, settlers fought to delineate their emerging sense of identity as American colonists, cleaving distinctions between themselves and those they deemed as outsiders, including Native Americans, African slaves, Asian immigrants, and Hispanics (Campbell 120-131), creating the theme of the external threat. Simultaneously, this period also created the sense of the internal threat, one that can emerge from inside a society, often in the form of friends and relatives who turn out to be one of *them*. These themes were also highly influenced by early Catholic and Evangelistic cultures that habitually promised the end of the world and taught the theme of apocalypticism, the belief in the coming divine retribution for our sins, which plays a major role in the fear narratives of this period and survives in some part in all the eras to come. Some examples of these narratives, all novels in English, include *The Power of Sympathy: or, The Triumph of Nature,* by William Hill Brown (1789); *Charlotte Temple*, by Susanna Rowson (1794, American publication); *The Coquette: Or, the History of Eliza Wharton,* by Hannah Webster Foster (1797); and *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker,* by Charles Brockden Brown (1799).

The Victorian-influenced American fear narrative ranges from 1800-1901. A strong Victorian influence marks the attitude toward fear expressed in these narratives, which, while building on earlier American themes, focuses on a precursor to the

personalization of fear, a theme of fear that features "threats to individuals, at most to families or villages, not to whole societies" (Stearns 77). We can trace this theme back to Victorian Gothic literature, as Alison Milbank notes how something like the personalization of fear manifested in British texts of the time through "a new preoccupation with the individual psychology" and a focus on "individual injustice" (150). Further, Milbank states, "there is often an attempt to enter the consciousness of the protagonist and render his sufferings with psychological verisimilitude" (150), drawing the reader further into the personally oriented threat of the object of fear. This personalization also extends to the preoccupation with the home or dwelling, which can be fruitfully read as a symbolic extension of a character's psyche. As such, the Victorian Gothic narrative isolates the narrative to the domestic concerns of a handful of characters by "emphasiz[ing] the enclosure, albeit luxurious, of the [characters]," wherein "the claustrophobic interior is also the central site of the urban historical fiction of the 1840s" (149), and its American narrative contemporaries borrow, build, and adapt many of these traits. As this implies, in the American narratives of the period the theme of entrapment became increasingly strong, including narratives of slavery, entrapment in patriarchal society, premature burial, and concerns of family heritage versus individual agency. In another adoption from Victorian Gothic literature, we also see the beginnings of the theme of transgression as developments in science and culture led some to fear that we would push beyond pre-established limits and that this could have negative repercussions. David Punter notes this theme occurring in Victorian Gothic texts that precede and co-exist with American fear narratives of this period, noting that one of their themes include the "transgression of the boundaries between the natural

and the human, the human and the divine" (17). We see this sort of transgression played out frequently in American fear narratives through what is commonly called the Frankenstein formula, in which a scientist violates the laws of nature only to make a creation that proves their undoing and demise. Last, the theme of the internal and external threat becomes increasingly intertwined with the popularity of narratives relating unholy temptation towards sin, which leads to the theme of contamination, a fear that is never far from a fear of incorporation. Some examples of fear narratives from this era include "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," by Washington Irving (1820); *The Last of the Mohicans*, by James Fenimore Cooper (1826); "Young Goodman Brown," by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1835); "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), "The Black Cat" (1843), and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), by Edgar Allen Poe; *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave*, by Frederick Douglas (1845); *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852); *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* by Harriet Ann Jacobs (1861); *A Long Fatal Love Chase,* by Louisa May Alcott (1866); *Caesar's Column,* by Ignatius Donnelly (1890); "The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892); and *The Red Badge of Courage,* by Stephen Crane (manuscript completed 1894).

The Great Wars American fear narratives occur between 1901 and 1945. This era focuses on the increasing threat of industrialism on former modes of life and on impending, occurring, and reoccurring total warfare, including concerns over the rise and fate of fascism. Some characteristics of this era include fears of deformity, war, the need for killing, and domestic or social entrapment. Apocalypticism became an increasingly popular theme as many texts focused on the devastation of the world as it

is known, the loss of home, dystopias, and the loss of financial security during the Great

Depression with its implied sense of the failure of the American dream. This last

concern marked an emergence of the theme of exclusion, as many feared that they

would be pushed away from their dreams and hopes as American citizens. Some

examples of fear narratives in literature from this era include *The Scarlet Plague*, by

Jack London (1912); *The Heads of Cerberus,* by Francis Stevens (real name Gertrude

Barrows Bennett) (1919)*;* "The Rats in the Walls" (1924) and "The Shadow over

Innsmouth" (1931), by H.P. Lovecraft; *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925);

A Farewell to Arms, by Ernest Hemingway (1929); *The Blacker the Berry: A Novel of

Negro Life*, by Wallace Thurman (1929); "Shambleau" by C. L. Moore; and "The

Escape," by John W. Campbell (1935). In film, a relatively new media of the era, some

examples include Lois Weber and Phillips Smalley's *Suspense* (1913), Winsor McCay's

The Sinking of the Lusitania (1918, animated film), Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931),

Browning's *Dracula* (1931), and Freund's *The Mummy* (1932).

The Early Cold War American fear narrative refers to texts published from 1945-

1970 that focus on fear inspired specifically by the conditions of the Cold War, but it also

overlaps with and, at least for our purposes, subsumes many narratives inspired by

World War II and the Cold War proxy wars of the Vietnam and Korean Wars. As such,

Early Cold War American fear narratives introduce, or resurrect, themes such as

paranoia, exclusion from home, entrapment through imprisonment or oppression, and

the apocalypticism of mutually assured destruction. They also feature such fears as

inspired by mass deaths, war, survival, the holocaust, anti-Semitism, and conditions of

insanity caused by trauma and war. The Cold War itself increased the use of the

themes of internal and external threats, whether through silent invasions of the

homeland, fear of authoritarian governments, national security, the red threat, or secret

military operations. These concerns over communism, authoritarianism, and new

concerns about radiation also manifest in heavy doses of the theme of contamination.

As such, narratives of transgression also flourish, often focusing on the dangers of

atomic power and radiation. On its evolution from the Great Wars narrative, Sorin Radu

Cucu states that the meaning of the Atomic Bomb, in particular, changes from the WWII

"symbol of US military supremacy into the technological horizon of total warfare or

Mutually Assured Destruction" in the Cold War (18), essentially from an object of

national pride to an object inspiring profound anxiety.

Many critics see the Early Cold War era as an important turning point for

American fear. For instance, media scholar Nick Dyer-Witheford notes how, as a

counterstrike to the civil rights movements of the 60s and 70s, the government switched

from "the Planner State" to the "Crisis State," "a regime of control by trauma in which 'it

is the state that plans the crisis'" (76). Similarly, Massumi sees the assassination of

Kennedy as a crucial moment of cultural confusion and doubt that spawned a series of

fears, creating a feeling of "imminent disaster" ("Everywhere" 10). This created a sense

of paranoia as, "The founding event," or the accident, "has always already happened…,

yet persists as a possibility," which makes, "[t]he accident as advent and threat: the pure

past of the sudden and uncontrollable contingency, and the uncertain future of its

recurrence" (8). This sense of continual crisis and the ever-present possibility of the

threat looming on the future horizon instilled in Americans a sense of low-level fear, or

"naturalized fear, ambient fear, ineradicable atmospheric fright, the discomfiting

affective Muzak that might come to be remembered as a trademark of the late-twentieth-century America" (Massumi, "Preface" viii). According to Massumi, this sense of low-level fear is "a power mechanism for the perpetuation of domination" and is part of "the capitalist culture of fear" (ix). Some examples of fear narratives from the Early Cold War era in literature include *The Naked and the Dead,* by Norman Mailer (1948); *Invisible Man,* by Ralph Ellison (1952); *I Am Legend*, by Richard Matheson (1954); *Fahrenheit 451,* by Ray Bradbury (1954); *Giovanni's Room*, by James Baldwin (1956); *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* by Walter M. Miller, Jr. (1960); *Catch-22,* by Joseph Heller (1961); and *The Crying of Lot 49*, by Thomas Pynchon (1965). Some examples in film include Wellman's film *Battleground* (1949), Gordon Douglas's *Them!* (1954), Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and Barbara Loden's *Wanda* (1970).

During this era, we start to see the emergence of what social and political theorist Engin Isin calls the "neurotic citizen," which we can understand from a poststructural perspective as a hegemonic pressure toward a particular performative embodiment of the American subject, one that originates from and strives toward the unobtainable identity ideals fundamental to neoliberal culture. Isin's concept expands upon Foucault's theories of biopower to help explain the current affective state of fear and anxiety in Western culture. Isin's argument begins with what he calls the "bionic citizen," a conceptually constructed but impossible to embody ideal subjectivity produced by, according to Isin, both liberal and neoliberal cultures as "a subject whose rational and calculating capacities enabled it to calibrate his conduct [sic]" (222). When the subject repeatedly meets with the frustration of not being able to enact this rational ideal, these

failures turn the subject into its double as the "neurotic citizen," one "who governs itself through responses to anxieties and uncertainties" (223). To Isin, the oscillation between the two subjective roles begins when the bionic citizen attempts to embody the impossible ideals, thereby experiencing such levels of psychic conflict that they develop neurotic symptoms of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty, becoming a neurotic subject. To Isin, Western culture itself promises the subject impossible ideal states that should result from a life of rationality, such as absolute security, safety, the perfect body, tranquility, wealth, happiness, and serenity, thereby turning the desires of a subject who subscribes to these beliefs into the perceived rights of the neurotic citizen (232). However, the persistent denial of these "rights" drives the neurotic citizen further into a permanent state of frustration, anger, angst, and "chronic discontent" (232). As he states, "The formation of neurotic claims reproduces [the] illusions of the neurotic citizen and enables it to shift responsibility to objects outside itself with hostility" (233), essentially meaning that the neurotic citizen utilizes scapegoats, on which it projects the hostility it feels toward its own failure to perform the role of the bionic citizen.

The neurotic citizen sees these scapegoated targets of frustration as the focuses of their neurotic sense of fear and paranoia, as the objects of their fear, blaming them for often entirely imagined threats, a process that ingrains fear and the concept of the imminent threat into contemporary American ideology, while often directing it toward irrational and unfounded threats. Last, Isin states that political practice in predominantly neurotic societies, what he calls "neuropolitics," becomes that which "is neither focused on causes, nor cure nor care but on [the] tranquillization of anxiety understood as a normal way of being" (228). Within a culture dominated by the neurotic citizen and in

which this neurotic state becomes the new normal, interested parties can tap into this

constant and unresolved affective state of anxiety through what Takacs calls the politics

of fear ("Monsters" 1), a concept we will return to shortly. This is an effort not to remove

anxieties, but to reduce their felt presence temporarily, creating a constant cycle

motivated by fear (or neuroses) that does not fix or solve the neurotic state, but lives

with it, much like briefly relieving the symptoms of an incurable disease with a daily pill.

Such neuropolitics occurred after 9/11 as Bush urged us to go out shopping, using

consumerism as a means to distract and redirect our affective tensions, thereby

managing but not resolving our anxieties. Overall, we can turn to the concept of the

neurotic citizen to see how fear narratives of this period both deconstruct and construct

the hegemonic formation of the neurotic citizen as the contemporary American citizen.

In the second half of this period, the Late Cold War American fear narrative

becomes an emergent form from 1970-1991. While these narratives share and build

upon many of the characteristics of the Early Cold War American fear narratives, those

of this period seem to mark a transition away from the established Cold War ideology,

especially as they demonstrate a budding awareness of a new perceived threat in

terrorism. Most terrorist novels, with their tendency to center on the themes of paranoia

and the internal/external threat, qualify as fear narratives, often by turning the threat of

Massumi's imminent *accident* into the terrorist *incident*. In Robert Appelbaum and Alexis

Paknadel's study of terrorism from 1970-2001, they find that terrorism became a

popular topic in literature in the late 1970s, early 1980s, and then again in the mid-

1990s on, the latter focusing on "right-wing and religiously motivated terrorism" (395). In

these novels, "Terrorist violence is often portrayed as random and anonymous" (405),

the discourse centers "on the terrorist/counterterrorist incident" (419), the significance of

the violence is the "experience of victimization" and "violation" (420), and the focus on

the violent event almost completely "disconnects it from political meaning" (422).

Overall, the novels studied strive to legitimate the victims as innocent and portray

terrorism as "the violence of the Other; it is illegitimate violence perpetrated from an

illegitimate position. Legitimacy is *for us*" (427). As such, these novels play with the

theme of the internal threat as they "articulate the subject position of the nonterrorist,

who is not quite at fault, but not quite uninvolved, either" (427). From their study, we can

generalize that the Cold War terrorist novel (and by extension other narrative texts,

including news coverage, films, and television as well) depoliticizes the act of terrorism,

turning it instead into an imminent threat, a looming fear forever possible and waiting on

the horizon, rather than an act of violence that is itself a message. In addition, this

building anxiety about the terrorist marks the beginning of a shifting of focus from

fearing the racial other and external threat of the Russian communist to that of the

Middle Eastern terrorist, even if many terrorists in the real world do not come from the

Middle East. Some examples of fear narratives in literature from the Late Cold War era

include *The Forever War,* by Joe Haldeman (1974); *Black Sunday,* by Thomas Harris

(1975); *The Word for World is Forest,* by Ursula K. LeGuin (1976); *Patternmaster*, by

Octavia E. Butler (1976); *The Stand*, by Stephen King (1978, television miniseries

1994); *The Bourne Identity,* by Robert Ludlum (1980); *Maus,* by Art Spiegelman (1980,

graphic novel); *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker (1982); *White Noise*, by Don DeLillo

(1985); and *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison (1987). Two examples from film and television

include Phillip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and NBC's *V* (1984-5).

Yet, it is important to note that the American terrorist narrative does not tend to construct the terrorist or their motivations from historical records or political statements. Terrorist novels, according to Appelbaum and Paknadel, engage in the mythography of terrorism, as "terrorism is inserted into an 'enabling fiction,' a myth of terrorism and its causes, dangers, and meanings, which ends up making its own realities" (389). As they state, "The result…is not simply a distortion of perception; it is the replacement of the perception of things with a reaction to representations" so that the resulting terrorist narrative "both responds to this mythography and contributes to it, adding its own coloration to the mythic identity of terrorism" (389). This fictional construct of the Middle Eastern terrorist aligns well with Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which is essentially the West's fictional construction of the Oriental subject that serves as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). This construct has "less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (12). As Said states, "we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate" (71). This is equally true of the American terrorist novel and film, as they have tended to feed off other fictional representations for information on the terrorist, depoliticizing the terrorist into a reified threat while expressing no attempt to understand the terrorist, but rather focusing on the subjective experience of the victim threatened by an inscrutable and random danger.

This brings us to the seventh era, that of the Fin-de-Siècle American fear narrative, which roughly ranges from 1991-2001. Beginning after the end of the Cold War, this transitional period focuses on free-floating fears that are no longer anchored

by the historic events of the Cold War, but are increasingly redirected toward the new

racial enemy of the Middle Eastern terrorist, apocalyptic end-of-the-millennia anxieties,

and the various results of the expansion of transportation and communication

technologies. It often includes dystopian futures, various ways the world could end,

virus contamination, and the threat of wars in the Middle East, which increasingly began

to grow in the American imaginary as terrorism begins to feel ever more real, but still

like something that largely did not happen in the US itself. There are continued

concerns about social collectivity as a sort of incorporating contamination, such as in

DeLillo's *Mao II,* a consummate fear narrative of this era that explores "media culture,

mass movements, and transnational terrorism" (Cucu 11-2). Some other examples of

the American fear narrative in literature from this era include *Dreaming in Cuban*, by

Cristina García (1992); *Leviathan*, by Paul Auster (1992); *In the Time of the Butterflies,*

by Julia Alvarez (1994); *The Hot Zone*, by Richard Preston (1995); *Native Speaker,* by

Chang-Rae Lee (1995); *Indian Killer,* by Sherman Alexie (1996); *Fight Club*, by Chuck

Palahniuk (1996, film adaptation in 1999); *Ender's Shadow*, by Orson Scott Card

(1998); *Koolaids: The Art of War,* by Rabih Alameddine (1998); and *The Pillars of

Creation*, by Terry Goodkind (2001). In television and film, some examples include

Fox's *The X-Files* (1993-2002), Rusty Cundieff's *Tales from the Hood* (1995), Wolfgang

Peterson's *Outbreak* (1995), Michael Bay's *Armageddon* (1998), and Spike Lee's

Summer of Sam (1999).

Sociologist Barry Glassner's notion of the culture of fear adds to our

understanding of this era. He states that fear in America is often produced through

"[d]isproportionate coverage in the news media" (xxi) that makes "small hazards appear

huge and huge hazards disappear from sight," such as the over-enlarged Ebola virus scare of the 1990s, and this often happens in a way that serves to profit "businesses, advocacy organizations, religious sects, and political parties" (xxiii). Typical fear mongering strategies of media outlets that he observes include "the use of poignant anecdotes in place of scientific evidence, the christening of isolated incidents as trends, [and] depictions of entire categories of people as innately dangerous" (208). In addition, fear campaigns and scares often "enable criticism of disliked groups and institutions" by others in power (xxvi). Overall, the reason why he believes that so many often baseless fears have emerged in American culture is because "immense power and money await those who tap into our moral insecurities and supply us with symbolic substitutes" for our own guilt and anxieties (xxvii). If we put together what we have discussed so far, the culture of fear is the result of the lived, affective experience of the neurotic citizen and its management through the politics of fear.

Massumi also notes two important shifts in the fear narrative during the Fin-de-Siècle era. First, Massumi observes the resurfacing and dominance in the American cultural imaginary of the concern for internal threats rather than external ones: "Today, conspiracy theories for both the JFK and King assassinations favor a domestic culprit, the CIA…The enemy is no longer outside. Increasingly, the enemy is no longer even clearly identifiable as such. Ever-present dangers blend together, barely distinguishable in their sheer numbers" ("Everywhere" 10). This marks a resurgence of a predominant theme of American fear, the internal threat, as domestic threats increasingly seemed to be everywhere. Second, he states that the Cold War notion of deterrence has evolved into a state of constant paranoia that manifests as "a permanent state of emergency

against a multifarious threat as much in us as outside," and "the now unspecified enemy is infinite. Infinitely small or infinitely large: viral or environmental. The communist as the quintessential enemy has been superseded by the double figure of AIDS and global warming" (10-1). In short, Massumi's findings illustrate the formal sedimentation of fear accumulating from the anxieties of former eras of the American fear narrative, evolving into new ideological constructs that respond to the perceived threats of the time.

Last, all of these layers of formal inheritance lead to the current era of the Post-9/11 American fear narrative. This period ranges from 2001 to the present, yet, as Appelbaum and Paknadel note, its manifestations in literature typically require two to three years to begin responding to 9/11, due to the typical time it takes to write and publish a reaction (396). In this period, the fear narrative focuses on the fears inspired by the 9/11 attacks and the events that followed, such as the War on Terror. This includes the increased presence of the survival space (Browning 44), a general state of paranoia that texts often portray as justified (Keniston and Follansbee 16-7), post-9/11 trauma, metaphoric fears of contamination by zombie hordes, Islamic fears of exclusion from American culture, the solidification of the Middle Eastern terrorist as the racial other and national enemy (whether external or internal), and the transformation of some apocalyptic concerns from end-of-the-millennia flavored fears to the terrorist allegory of the zombie apocalypse, manifesting in numerous apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. As Gary K. Wolfe notes, the post-apocalyptic narrative, at least in part, revolves around the desire "to restore something of the stability we feel in our own technological culture," and that "we want to see the protagonist re-create the familiar" rather than a different world (130), even if this proves impossible in the narrative. From

this perspective, post-apocalyptic narratives tend to serve a conservative function, which helps to explain its post-9/11 popularity: after the attacks, many Americans wanted to enact a symbolic return to the normal world they felt they lost to the disruptive incident/major event that was 9/11. Of course, many post-apocalyptic narratives of this time also began to question this conservative function, but I would argue that the ultimate efficacy of this effort of creating an alternative political narrative is debatable. Rather, what we tend to see is the repositioning of conservative values after their disruption in the attacks. Some examples of fear narratives in literature from this era include *When the Emperor was Divine*, by Julie Otsuka (2002); *Pattern Recognition*, by William Gibson (2003); *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005, film adaptation in 2011); *Cell*, by Stephen King (2006); *Falling Man*, by Don DeLillo (2007); *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy (2007, film adaptation 2009); *"Exhalation,"* by Ted Chiang (2008); *Boneshaker*, by Cherie Priest (2009); *The Submission,* by Amy Waldman (2011); *Zone One,* by Colson Whitehead (2011); *The Corn Maiden,* by Joyce Carol Oates (especially "The Corn Maiden" and "Helping Hands") (2011); *Mr. Churchill's Secretary*, by Susan Elia MacNeal (2012);and *The 100* novel series, by Kass Morgan (2013-16) (YA fiction, adapted to television 2014-present). In television and film, some examples include the HBO television series *Band of Brothers* (2001); ABC's *Lost* (2004-2010), Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), Showtime's *Homeland* (2011-present), and Marc Forster's *World War Z* (2013).

Stearns and Takacs offer invaluable insights into the post-9/11 evolution of fear. By comparing American reactions to the tragedy of Pearl Harbor to those after 9/11,

Stearns found that Americans "were over three times as likely to be afraid" after 9/11,

and were "much quicker to connect attack with personal and familial situations" rather

than seeing them as directed toward the country or a larger community (36). This points

to what he calls the personalization of fear: "a striking aspect of the September 11

accounts involves the narrow focus, the use of individual and small group as primary

frame of reference" (36). Investigating this concept, Takacs asserts that the rhetoric of

the Bush administration utilized the theme of the personalization of fear by its

"construction of the family as a target of terror," which "has helped to discipline the

public to accept an increase in political and social repression for its own good"

("Monsters" 3). This practice has served to justify the "violation of individual privacy

rights" in the name of national security (16). It could be argued that this resurgence of

the personalization of fear, or the political strategy of redirecting the perceived target of

terror to the self and our immediate family, was easier to accept by the now increasingly

reactionary and already paranoid neurotic citizen. While this may seem like a drastic

claim, our construction of the lineage of the American fear narrative shows this to be

only a small jump from the resurfaced notion of the domestic, internal threat in the Fin-

de-Siècle period. As we have noted, this sense of the internal threat, of course, evolved

from the Cold War and World War II internal and foreign threats, and from even as far

back as the efforts of English settlers to distinguish their nascent American identity from

native populations and internal dissenters.

Overall, by tracing the genealogy of the American fear narrative, we can discern

numerous insights into the present formal sedimentation of the post-9/11 American fear

narrative. For example, the neoliberal evolution of the neurotic citizen, perceiving itself

surrounded and beset upon by numerous threats, combined with the utilization of the

politics of fear by the interested parties that Glassner outlines, has allowed the

personalization of fear to take firm root in post-9/11 American culture. Yet, through the

narrative, Bimbisar Irom sees the possibility for change and resistance, but also

conversely for the solidification of hegemony. He believes the responses to 9/11 from

both the state and from cultural productions in "the ethical-aesthetic sphere" are

"attempts to appropriate the event into comprehensible modes of narration that serve

the purposes of power, hegemony, and resistance" (Irom 517). Building on this, Anthony

Kubiak implies that a terrorist act is itself a narrative disruption of an environment,

disrupting one narrative to insert another (300), except terrorism needs an audience to

interpret it: "Terrorism intends its story…to be understood by those who watch, by the

'readers' and voyeurs of terror's moment, not by its first-line victims" (298). As such, we,

as receivers of these terrorist narratives, have a responsibility in how we interpret the

affective performatives presented to us by historical events and the ideological

impressions we insert into our culture through the possible worlds of the narratives that

we construct. It is up to us to write a better narrative for the events of 9/11 and the

conditions of contemporary American fear, one that leads to liberation rather than

oppression, one that allows us, as Jameson states, "to wrest a realm of Freedom from a

realm of Necessity" (*The Political* 19).

    With these periods of the fear narrative established, I can now give a brief

example of how fear themes change over time by turning to a canonical example of a

Victorian-influenced fear narrative in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Black Cat"

(1843). This narrative serves as a 19th century historical touchstone to contrast the

peculiarity and difference we find in the post-9/11 fear narratives that will be the focus of

the rest of this study. True to the Jamesonian methodology of this study, I will analyze

"The Black Cat" and all the narratives in this study by using contemporary scholarship

that places the text in the concerns and cultural contexts of its own time of production,

so as to highlight how fear themes have changed from then to after 9/11. Jameson also

reminds us that thinking of narratives genealogically does not imply that there is a

historical break between one period and others but rather a formal sedimentation that

carries aspects of previous periods into its later iterations as residual elements co-

existing with newer formal inventions that update the fear narrative to the material and

ideological concerns of its new historical context (*The Political* 138-45). From this

perspective, it is not accurate to say that post-9/11 American fear narratives are entirely

different than Poe's Victorian-influenced American fear narrative. Instead, formal

sedimentation means that post-9/11 texts have built from a base that contains the

generic and thematic elements of not only the Victorian-influenced period but all its

former and subsequent periods.

In brief summary, "The Black Cat" is told through a retrospective first-person

narration of a man sentenced to die tomorrow. It recounts the story of his downfall,

beginning with his lifelong fondness for animals over humans, as the latter have been

known to make fun of his "tenderness of heart" (Poe 209). He also tells of his marriage

to his wife who was "not uncongenial" to his own disposition (210), and his fondness for

his many pets, particularly his black cat named Pluto. Yet, the narrator takes to drinking

and mutilates Pluto by gouging out his eye and later hanging the cat. When the

narrator's house burns down, one wall remains with what appears to be an engraved

image of "a gigantic *cat*" with a rope around its neck (212). Shortly thereafter, the narrator comes across a second cat that is strikingly similar to Pluto, and this cat follows him home. Yet its presence torments him, and when the cat nearly trips him down a flight of stairs, he attempts to strike it with an axe. However, his wife holds back his blow. Enraged, the narrator swings the axe into his wife's skull, killing her instantly. Immediately, the narrator plans how to hide her corpse, deciding to put it in a wall of the house to brick and plaster her therein. When the police come to investigate, they seem unable to find any clue as to his wife's disappearance, much to the glee of the narrator, who covertly celebrates his triumph over them by bragging about the soundness of the construction of his house as he knocks on the same wall which conceals his wife's body. In response, a shriek emerges from the wall and the police tear it down find the black cat standing on the head of his wife's corpse. The narrator realizes that he must have walled the cat in the tomb with his wife, allowing the cat's howl to expose his crime and sentence him to the hangman.

Most research on the narrative revolves around either the subjects or objects of fear in "The Black Cat"—such as the narrator's fear of punishment, the narrator's fearful act of murder, the narrator's fear of the black cat, or the wife's fear of the narrator—even as few ever directly discuss fear itself. In James W. Gargano's oft-cited 1960 article, he interprets the story through the lens of symbolism, stating that the meanings of the characters, events, and settings convey their most coherent message when seen as a series of symbols that describe the narrator's descent into evil and the loss of his moral senses, which culminates in him murdering his wife ("The Black" 172). In the 1970s through the 1990s, criticism often favored a psychoanalytic approach, such as in Ed

Piacentino's 1998 article that constructs from the story a psychobiology to understand

the motives behind the narrator's murder of his wife (153-67)[3]. Susan Amper's work in

1992 sees the story as a lie, a deliberate cover-up, in which it is the reader's job to look

for clues to the real, underlying narrative of the murder of the narrator's wife (485). In

1993, Christopher Benfey draws from Wittgenstein to note how the killers in Poe's

stories, such as "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart," essentially defend their own

exceptionalism both by stressing their separateness from other people and by believing

that their actions are secret from all others, even while they believe they understand and

know the thoughts and experiences of others (Bloom 50). When either of these illusions

begins to falter, they react with violence to maintain the fantasy, killing those that violate

their sense of exceptionalism (50). Ann Bliss asserts in 2009 that "The Black Cat" is

about the narrator's failed attempts to mask his own femininity, which results in his

escalating hypermasculine acts of violence and the ultimately the death of his wife (96).

In 2014, Vicki Hester and Emily Segir look at the text through the lens of recent

psychological research on psychopathy, noting how the narrator exhibits all of the

symptoms of a psychopath, including impulsivity, shallow emotions, egocentric lack of

behavior controls, caring only about the consequences as they apply to his self, blaming

others for his own actions, being incapable of feeling guilt, and feeling no empathy for

those around him (175-93). Still other articles approach the text through different

disciplines, such as John Dern's 2017 rhetorical analysis of how the language of the text

uncovers rhetorical signals of the narrator's hidden thoughts that surface despite his

intentions to blame the murder on an external force, such as the perversity of the

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[3] For other psychoanalytic interpretations of "The Black Cat," see, for example, Rein (1960), Hoffman (1973), Reeder (1974), Crisman (1984), Silverman (1991), and Madden (1993).

human soul, alcohol, or the titular black cat (163-82). Dern performs this analysis by exposing how the narrator's language conflates the black cat, especially the second one, with his wife (169). In 2019, Dewi Fatmawati et al. even look at the text through a linguistic lens to perform a "qualitative descriptive analysis" to uncover the patterns of thematic progression in the story, dissecting the text into clauses and recording the relations of these clauses (64-73).

Despite their differences, most of these critical traditions often implicitly approach the story as centrally concerned with fear, whether it is the fear felt by the narrator or the fear felt by readers of the narrator or of his uncanny victimization. To interpret the narrative as a fear narrative, I will explicitly analyze "The Black Cat" through its contextualized manifestations of primary fear themes and their combinations into secondary fear themes to produce new meanings, ideologies, formal structures, and affectual potentialities. To do this, I will not conduct a close reading of the particular phrasings and techniques used in the narrative but instead I will focus our methodology on a larger, Jamesonian ideological reading of narrativity, focusing more on formal structures and their ideological and historical implications. It is important to note, though, that very few fear narratives ever include all ten fear narratives. Most only include a few or emphasize a couple over others. In "The Black Cat," the most prominent primary fear themes that we will focus on include paranoia, contamination, and the internal/external threat.

By looking at a historically contextualized understanding of "The Black Cat" we find that the narrative psychologizes its fear themes, opposed to how post-9/11 fear themes instead tend to focus on political/cultural content. As Joseph Stark explains,

during the 1830s-40s, America was influenced by the tumultuous events of Europe's Industrial Revolution and its own nascent entry into an industrialist economy, which began changing the understanding of and relationship between religion and science. In the text, this ideological conflict between rationalism and the supernatural presents itself in several primary fear themes. First, we can see this in the primary fear theme of paranoia, as the narrator inconsistently attempts to blame his actions on an array of either internal threats or "external" supernatural forces working against him. In this, we discover that the narrator is far from reliable as his objects of blame and descriptions of events are not consistent (e.g., Bloom 53; Dern 174; Piacentino 153). As Hester and Segir state, "Though the narrator tries to blame alcohol, on the other hand, he ultimately blames Pluto [or the second cat] for his violent behavior" (188), and, by the end, he completely forgets an earlier attempt to blame it all on the "spirit of perverseness" (Poe 211). As the Temperance Movement was gaining cultural momentum in the 1840s, this initial attempt to blame alcohol grasps for a convenient and all-too-easy suspect, while simultaneously evoking in the text the fearful connections between alcohol, domestic violence, and dissolution that this movement hoped to counter. Even while alcohol may at first seem to be a seemingly rational explanation of his actions, the narrator refers to his supposed alcoholism as his growing submission to "the Fiend Intemperance" (Poe 210), positioning it as an internal condition inflected with supernatural devilry. Seen in this light, alcohol itself becomes the fear theme of the external threat ingested in order to contaminate the self and become an internal threat. Further, this use of paranoia couples with Stearns's notion, mentioned above, of the precursor to the personalization of fear that existed in the Victorian-influenced era that could better be described as the

personal threat. While the post-9/11 personalization of fear typically rearticulates threats to society as threats to the self or one's family, the threat of the Victorian-influenced era is directed, first and foremost, to the self and, possibly, to the family, without the narrative ever seeming to consider that the threat could also be directed toward society as a whole, as if all threats were immediately and essentially personal in nature. This focus on individual psychology and individual justice is characteristic of the narrative's place in the movements of American transcendentalism and romanticism of its time, formal roots that the text foregrounds in its limited first-person focalization through the experiences related to us by the narrator. If there is a larger social threat at work in "The Black Cat," its use of narration draws our attention away from such concerns, focusing only on the woes of the narrator dealing with what seem to be internal and supernatural threats and the possibility of these threats contaminating the self and the home. In this way, these transcendentalist elements urge the text toward psychologizing its fear themes rather than politicizing them, as was more often the case after 9/11.

This personalized use of either internal or supernatural links to legitimate one's paranoia differs from the typical form of paranoia we find in post-9/11 American fear narratives. In very general terms, these later narratives, influenced more by the Cold War fear narratives they build upon, tend to direct their paranoia toward more secular and external threats, such as the machinations of terrorists, an external enemy, secret governmental agencies, and big business greed that we see in narratives like Thomas Pynchon's novel *Bleeding Edge* (2013), which we will analyze in the Chapter 5. Of course, exceptions to this post-9/11 generality abound as contemporary fear narratives continue to enact residual manifestations of religious and supernatural paranoia as

inclusions of formal sedimentations from the Victorian-influenced era, yet the cultural move in the twentieth century to secularism and to the concern with the "nation" as the entity that must fear threats has altered the typical form of paranoia encountered in the narrative today.

As the primary object of the narrator's blame, the titular black cat of the narrative, Pluto, is depicted as one of the most supernatural elements of the narrative. The cat itself evokes a host associations between black cats and superstitions of witches and witchcraft that the narrator's wife makes explicit: "In speaking of [Pluto's] intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise" (Poe 210). Yet, the cat also manifests as the fear theme of the transgressive creature when it seems to cross the boundaries of life and death to appear again as the second cat. This connection between the living cat and death is reinforced in the cat's name, Pluto, which refers to the ruler of the underworld in Greek mythology, carrying with it infernal associations of death and judgment. The second cat also bears a white mark on its chest that the reader can connect to tales in popular American folklore of people or animals taking on white marks after being struck by lightning, being scared by a ghost, experiencing a close call with death, or otherwise being touched by death, either literally or figuratively. A similar obsession with a mark during the Victorian-influenced period can be found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Birth-Mark" (1943), in which a husband's obsession with ridding his nearly physically perfect wife of her small red birthmark leads to him administering a potion that removes the mark but simultaneously kills her. In "The Black Cat," the addition of this white mark on a black cat that uncannily

resembles the thought-to-be-dead Pluto, and the fact that the mark eventually solidifies

into a shape of the gallows (a foreboding symbol of death), cements the second cat's

fearful violation of transgressing the categorical barriers between life and death. While

we can see the legacy of Pluto reappear in narratives after the Victorian-influenced

period, such as in the famous undead cat of Stephen King's Late Cold War era novel

Pet Semetary (1983), which was adopted into Mary Lambert's filmic version in 1989 and

remade as a post-9/11 film in 2019 by Kevin Kölsch, a much more common

transgressive monster of post-9/11 fear narratives would be the zombie (which we will

focus on in Chapter 6), an incarnation that the post-9/11 era typically strips of the

supernatural implications we find in the black cat. Instead, as we will see, the

transgressive and contaminating nature of the post-9/11 zombie is typically explained by

a scientific apocalypse or left unexplained, revealing a shift away from religious

causalities of the Victorian-influenced era to scientific causalities and ideologies

underlying the worldview that tends to be more common in the post-9/11 era.

Ultimately, the narrator's unreliability undermines his excuses and points the

blame for the murder squarely back at him to enact the fear theme of the internalization

of the threat. In an article published in *American Literature*, John Clemen counters

previous decontextualized readings of Poe to place the story in the political climate of

the 1840s, noting how Poe's short stories like "The Black Cat" engage in the

controversy in England and America over the use of the insanity defense by accused

murderers (624). From this perspective, the narrative's contradiction between the

rational and the supernatural presents an imaginary solution to the seemingly

irreconcilable political issue of the times, an issue that has since come to resolve itself

under the accumulation of legal precedent and the development and continued

legitimation of the field of psychology. However, "The Black Cat" resolves this conflict by

undermining the insanity plea as little more than an attempt to erect flimsy excuses for

what ultimately amounts to our own evil actions. As Stark states about this time period,

"Evangelicals emphasized the power of the human will to overcome sin and crime…,

while scientific examination narrowed the gap between the rational human and irrational

animal, and thereby posited a kind of naturalistic determinism" (257). With the collapse

of all of the excuses the narrator makes for his actions, in the end we realize that the

underlying cause of his downfall turns out to be the machinations of his own psyche, a

truth of which the narrator himself seems to be completely unaware. In the end, as Stark

attests, the text offers us no satisfying answers to explain why the narrator killed his wife

(262). Yet, rather than this resulting in a meaningless standoff, Stark states, "by

depicting a motiveless murder whose actions cannot be sufficiently explained" the text

places "difficulties in both scientific and religious thought and ironically uph[olds] the

mysterious nature of the human will in a time dominated by intellectual rationalism"

(255). In effect, the narrator's own psyche becomes his own greatest threat, manifesting

the deeper contradiction between rationalism and supernaturalism in Victorian-era

society, so that insanity is not enough to rid the narrator of culpability. Yet, this assertion

of the mystery of human nature and psychology is not enough to resolve the social

conflict in the narrative. As Gargano states on the end of the narrative, "His swaggering

confidence in the presence of the police represents, I feel, a blind trust in the power of

his intellect to triumph over the superstitions which he feels are formulated in the moral

code" ("The Black" 177). However, in the end the narrator's attempts at rationalization,

even his attempts at creating a rational means of hiding his wife's body, melt away in the narrative as what seem to be events beyond rational explanation result in the a supernatural justice brought about through the black cat's howling, seemingly from beyond the grave. This can be read as a Victorian-era fear that the relatively new ideologies of rationalism would ultimately prove ineffective in the face of the established beliefs in the power of the supernatural, a doubt in the hegemonic transition towards rationalism. In contrast, after well over a century of cultural transition, in the post-9/11 era, this sense of doubt in the ideology of rationalism has largely given way, as the two ideological forces rationalism and supernaturalism have either resolved into a largely secular culture or synthesized into a neoconservative hybrid of rationalism and religion. Of course, residual aspects of supernaturalism remain in modern culture, but the cultural crisis of the contradiction between these two ideologies has largely leveled out, making it no longer a focus in the concerns of hegemonic culture.

The narrator's apparent fear that his internalization of evil will result from the sins of his own actions as they contaminate his soul is a common convention in the Victorian-influenced fear narrative, in which unholy temptation (here, perhaps, embodied in the black cat) pulls the protagonist toward the damnation of their soul and their eternal ruin. Such fears of the theme of contamination draw on the cultural foundation of not only Catholicism but Puritan Protestantism that carried so much weight in this era. For instance, on the killing of his cat, the narrator states, "[I] hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God" (Poe 211).

We can see this fear of the contamination of sin in numerous other works of the time, particularly in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), in which the protagonist's walk in the woods at night leads to an encounter with a man carrying a serpent-shaped staff, symbolizing the Edenic temptation of sin. The results of this encounter leave the protagonist forever altered and cynical by the loss of his religious faith. The Victorian-influenced fear of sinful contamination also works in conjunction with the theme of transgression, as it is the character's act of transgressing the laws established by their religion that amounts to sin itself.

Combined in this way, the themes of the internalization of the threat, contamination, and transgression become the secondary fear theme in Victorian-influenced fear narratives of sinful contamination. While the concern over such contamination still exists in some narratives after 9/11, our largely secular modern culture tends to transmute this concern with sin into questions of personal ethics and accountability. Alternately, it can also, at times, manifest as the fear of ideological contamination in which you discover that you have been tempted into transgressing the boundaries of your American subjectivity to unwittingly become a terrorist yourself, often due to not much more than your encounter with or your exposure to terrorists. Similar to these Victorian-influenced fear narratives, the psychological internalization of the threat in which one becomes one's own worst enemy is far from uncommon in post-9/11 fear narratives. Indeed, Jess Walter's novel *The Zero* (2006) is a prime example of this fear theme that we will analyze in the post-9/11 era in Chapter 5. However, in *The Zero*, the narrator's fear of himself is blamed on the more secular contamination of social and political forces as trauma resulting from his living through the apocalyptic aftermath of

the collapse of the Twin Towers splits his mind into two personae, one plotting against the other. In the post-9/11 American fear narrative, the internalization of the threat operates in social or cultural terms rather than through the spiritual concerns of the Victorian-influenced fear narrative that we find in Poe and Hawthorne. This secularization of sinful contamination can be found in a variety of post-9/11 narratives, such as the protagonists of Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) themselves becoming zombies and Ahmad's conversion into a terrorist in John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (2006).

Last, "The Black Cat" also echoes another secondary fear theme of the Victorian-inspired era in its depiction of premature burial. This theme combines the themes of entrapment, often within a coffin or sarcophagus, with a sense of exclusion often expressed as a desperate feeling of loneliness and isolation in the grave. In the narrative, his wife's burial in a wall calls forth these strong fears of premature death. While not as central to this story as it is in some of Poe's other works, such as "The Tell-Tale Heart" in which the narrator hears the heartbeat of the dead man buried beneath the floorboards, or "The Fall of the House of Usher" in which Madeline of Usher actually rises from her grave, "The Black Cat" evokes the secondary fear theme of premature burial as the cry from the wife's tomb reveals her location in the end and evokes thoughts of entrapped, living people screaming out from their graves. While we see this secondary fear theme resurrected recently in horror narratives such as Corin Hardy's 2018 film *The Nun*, in most post-9/11 American fear narratives this sense of being separated from the world by the wall of the grave has transformed from this Victorian-flavored personal association with the individual into walls that divide whole social

groups, such as the walls used to divide survivors from zombies in apocalyptic zombie narratives of the post-9/11 era that we will analyze in Chapter 6, such as we find in the novels by Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* (2011), Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker* (2010), and Justin Cronin's *The Passage* (2010).

In summary, utilizing "The Black Cat" as a contrastive example, we can see that the primary fear themes of the Victorian-influenced fear narrative have evolved in the post-9/11 era largely by their secularization and a move from a focus on the individual psychology to the social psychology. As a result, post-9/11 narratives stress the social, political, and apocalyptic traumas over the Victorian tendency toward more personal, psychological, and individual threats. In this way, the personalized paranoia in "The Black Cat" that is linked to internal and supernatural external threats becomes a post-9/11 paranoia based on external and secular threats often portrayed as operating at the national rather than the personal level. Supernaturally transgressive creatures such as the black cat have been transmuted into secularized zombies that are both transgressive and contaminative. The internalization of the threat through sinful contamination felt by Poe's narrator on psychological, religious, and personal levels becomes ideological after 9/11, often tied to the experience of trauma involving the American apocalypse of 9/11, whether depicted explicitly or allegorically. Last, the secondary fear theme of premature burial in the Victorian-influenced era that combined entrapment and exclusion has become the post-9/11 wall that separates large groups from one another.

With these formal sedimentations of the seven historical periods of the American fear narrative in mind, we will next turn our attention to directly analyzing the post-9/11

American fear narrative in different genres and media forms. I will apply the Jamesonian

methodology of the three horizons of interpretation to specific texts in order to discover

how the post-9/11 American fear narrative manifests primary fear themes and their

combinations into secondary fear themes on a formal, ideological, and generic level. In

the next chapter, I will turn to four fear narratives from the genre of the 9/11 novel,

noting how these texts combine a particular pair of fear themes as their central focus.

Yet, as we will see, numerous fear themes can co-exist within a narrative, providing a

deep wellspring of creative potential, as the fear narrative grows, wilts, and reforms

processually in an ever-changing cultural formation that affectively, and hence formally,

responds to the ever-changing currents of history.

CHAPTER 5

POST-9/11 AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVES IN LITERARY FICTION: THE 9/11

NOVEL

This chapter will explore the fear narrative as it appears in post-9/11 literary

fiction, in particular the genre of the 9/11 novel itself, whose at least initial genealogy is

outlined by Arin Keeble (5-11). For our purposes, the 9/11 novel is one that is either

about 9/11 itself, whether before, during, or after, or features 9/11 in some way.

According to Keeble, the first phase of the 9/11 novel is the experimental early

depictions of the event in fiction "marked by unorthodox formal qualities and strained

efforts to balance references to history and individual trauma," such as in *In the Shadow*

of No Towers (2003) by Art Spiegelman and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

(2005) by Jonathan Safran Foer (14). The second phase of the domesticated novel runs

from 2005-2007 and consists of the novels that novelist Pankaj Mishra and scholars

Richard Gray, Michael Rothberg ("Seeing Terror" 129-30), and Bimbishar Irom (520)

have criticized as domesticating 9/11, pulling the focus to personal and relationship

dramas that strip 9/11 of its political and international meanings and implications,

neutralizing "the unfamiliar into familiar structures" (Gray, *After the Fall* 30). Keeble

notes that these novels seem to attempt "a return to normality" after the attacks and

include Don Delillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Claire Messud's *The Emperor's Children*

(2006) (14). Interestingly, Keeble argues that the third phase consists of the 9/11 novels

published after hurricane Katrina, which he describes as a move towards 9/11 texts that

are overtly politicized and characterized by dissent and reconciliation (15). These

political novels include Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011), the latter of which we will examine in detail later in this chapter. Yet, as we will see in this chapter, the creation of these three phases (experimental, domestic, and political) tends to create a mindset of overgeneralizations about the 9/11 novel genre that overlooks outliers and texts that defy this topical chronology.

Overall, though, by starting with fear narratives from 9/11 novels, I can establish a baseline of post-9/11 themes as they have been inspired by literary fiction texts operating under what Steve Neale calls an ideology of realism (48). The ideology of realism is a concept that he draws from Tzvetan Todorov's understanding of realism, which "as an ideology can partly be defined by its refusal to recognize the reality of its own generic status, or to acknowledge its own adherence to a type of generic verisimilitude" (Neale 48). Jameson would likely agree with Todorov here, as he states, "Realism…is a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal" (*Antinomies* 5). While Jameson may be referring to the nineteenth century literary movement and Todorov to a more contemporary sense of its use in film, the two express the same sentiment: creating a text and claiming it to be a depiction of the Real is an advancement of a particular version of reality, one soaking with political, ideological, and moral claims, but not one that depicts reality "as it really is" in some sort of objective sense. Realism, in any of its forms and incarnations is a move to assert a version of reality in the eternal epistemological and political struggle to maintain or gain control of reality. By starting in this chapter with analyzing 9/11 novels as monomodal fear narrative texts, I can, for the

time being, remove the formal complications of multimodality to focus on the themes I have found in 9/11 texts at large. Then, in future chapters I will broaden my scope to multimodal texts in other genres to see how these aspects affect the nature and execution of my proposed fear themes and their combination into secondary fear themes in post-9/11 fear narratives.

This chapter will explore political, social, and historical implications uncovered through the formal contradictions present in post-9/11 American fear narratives of literary fiction. In particular, it will filter these analyses through primary fear themes in order to better explore and explicate these concepts and to better understand the novels as fear narratives and what this means in regards to their ideological functionality as responses to 9/11, noting how they engage in cultural work by often simultaneously perpetuating and constructing both oppressive and Utopian cultural messages.

My approach to textual selection throughout my project will be to focus my analysis on a few representative examples of specific trends that I have found within fear narratives of the overall 9/11 novel genre, peripherally tracing other texts as contextual, comparative or problematizing examples to enrich the analysis. As such, the analyses of these novels are not meant to be comprehensive (were that this was even possible) or even especially multifaceted, but are meant to use Jameson's three horizons approach to focus on the analysis of a particular fear theme or related set of themes as they appear in the narrative and the formal techniques used to articulate those themes in order to depict or evoke fear. As such, this chapter will focus on four 9/11 novels that each serve as especially apt examples of various primary fear themes. First, in Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2006), I will explore the novel through the lenses of the

themes of trauma and entrapment, as, after experiencing 9/11 first hand, the

protagonist, Remy, repeatedly experiences gaps in his memory, which he cannot seem

to escape, all while attempting to come to terms with his darker urges that seem to take

on a life of their own after the terrorist attack. Second, I will turn to Thomas Pynchon's

Bleeding Edge (2014) to explore the formal manifestations of the primary fear themes of

paranoia and the personalization of fear. It is a novel concerning events both leading up

to and following 9/11 that are filled with conspiracy theories, invisible and largely

unidentifiable threats, and fears of the imminent incident, all somehow targeted at the

protagonist or her family rather than at the nation as a whole. Both of these first two

novels also allow us to establish some foundational understanding of the aspects of the

fear narrative as it is authored by the dominant social group, i.e., white males.

To help put these texts in contrast with those authored by marginalized groups,

the next two novels will be by an Iranian-American woman and a white woman,

respectively. This will begin our exploration of the differences of fear narratives

produced by different social groups and the effects of power on narrative expressions of

fear. The third novel will be Porochista Khakpour's *Sons and Other Flammable Objects*

(2007), in which we will focus on the themes of exclusion and contamination, as the

novel follows an Iranian-American character at odds with his hybrid position between his

heritage and the only nation he calls home. The fourth and last novel is Amy Waldman's

The Submission (2011), in which we will explore the dichotomous theme of the

internal/external threat as the novel relates the experiences of protagonist Mohammad

Khan, an American Muslim attempting to create a memorial for the victims of 9/11 only

to face the othering of Islamophobia that flared in America after the attacks, when the

lines between the citizen and the threat began to blur for many Americans and we turned on each other, often across racial lines. In all of these 9/11 novel fear narratives, as we will see, generic contradictions or mixtures are key to how the fear themes act ideologically and symbolically to construct imaginary relations to 9/11.

TRAUMA AND ENTRAPMENT IN WALTER'S *THE ZERO*

If we see 9/11 as a traumatic event, which is, perhaps, the most common way that scholars and the public have approached the subject, we can generally agree with Kristiann Versluys's assertion that 9/11 "is a limit event that shatters the symbolic resources of the culture and defeats the normal process of meaning making and semiosis" (1). While many have argued against the post-9/11 slogan "Everything has changed," it would be hard to deny that many also felt this way through some experience of trauma after the event, and for a variety of reasons. Delving into this, Susan Faludi gives voice to this affective sense of disruption:

> The intrusions of September 11 broke the dead bolt on our protective myth, the illusion that we are masters of our security, that our might makes our homeland impregnable, that our families are safe in the bower of their communities and our women and children safe in the arms of their men. (15)

While Faludi utilizes this insight to analyze the American myth of invincibility (18), this sense of 9/11 as a culturally disruptive event has even wider-reaching applications to understanding American culture as well. Essentially, 9/11 functioned as an affective performative that could not be interpreted and understood via the extant ideologies of

the time. Explained in another way through Jamesonian terms, 9/11, as an affective

event in American culture, was a felt intensity that defied linguistic expression and the

capacity to be categorized into the established, named emotions available, emotions

that, by being previously nominalized into their socially accepted forms, objectified

ideological content that no longer addressed the situation at hand (*Antinomies* 29-32).

From this perspective, 9/11 left America ideologically adrift, seemingly entrapped in a

traumatic state that our established beliefs and myths, which had previously served so

well as the foundation for the pre-9/11 American identity, were unable to incorporate

into the narrative of what it meant to be an American citizen and nation.

This spurred a cultural effort to adapt and replace our failing ideologies with new

ones that addressed the material conditions of the times, and, more implicitly, the

trauma 9/11 inflicted on American ideology itself. As such, the years after 9/11 were a

destabilized arena of cultural struggle, of clashing dialectic contradictions, all seeking to

create a new, relative sense of equilibrium, of attaining a hegemonic narrative through

which we could once again pull together an effective American identity that addressed

the material conditions of our times. In narratives produced at this time, we frequently

capture instances of these struggles, often failed attempts at cultural synthesis, but

each pointing toward a diverse range of cultural and political potentialities. Judith Butler

notes the historic potentiality of the moment, and the direction that these potentials

ended up taking: "It was my sense in the fall of 2001 that the United States was missing

an opportunity to redefine itself as part of a global community when, instead, it

heightened nationalist discourse, extended surveillance mechanisms, suspended

constitutional rights, and developed forms of explicit and implicit censorship"
(*Precarious Life* xi).

Capturing this sense of historic potentialities, *The* Zero, by Jess Walter is a
useful example of the primary themes of trauma and, to a lesser degree, entrapment in
the post-9/11 American fear narrative. *The Zero* entraps Remy in his own trauma, as he
seems to lose his agency or ability to change the events around him that seem to be
determined by his other personality during the gaps. Further, through most of the novel,
Remy can see no way out or any way to work through his trauma as he, apparently, has
no access to causation and thus no way to place his trauma in a larger narrative of his
life. As we will note, Remy's entrapment also seems to restrain him from any agency to
act morally and politically, which has interesting ideological implications.

It is worth noting that this novel is often excluded from the academic canon of the
9/11 novel and, being published in 2006, defies Keeble's chronology of the genre, which
should have placed it in the domestic phase, even if, as we will see, it would better fit in
the political phase that followed. *The Zero* uses extradiegetic third-person narration
focalized through only the more innocent of the two personalities of Brian Remy, a New
York City police officer and survivor of the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC),
who is left traumatized in the ever-present sense of life after-the-event, after it
happened. The narrative begins with Remy waking up on the floor after he may have
attempted suicide or perhaps just had an accident while cleaning his gun. The problem
is that Remy can't remember how he ended up inflicting a bullet wound to his head, and
this is only the beginning of his memory problems. He increasingly experiences "gaps"
wherein he does not remember what he has been doing. Yet, the narrative reveals in

hints that between the gaps Remy is continuing to act with what seems to be a different personality, leaving our protagonist scrambling to figure out what the other Remy, the novel's chief antagonist, has been doing in the intervening time. In his struggle over personal agency, the protagonist-Remy also deals with a host of other problems including "*macular degeneration*" and "*vitreous detachment*" of the eye that increasingly impair his vision with "floaters" that mirror the novel's opening scene of paper falling from the sky after the attacks on the WTC (Walter 26). On top of that, his own son tells everyone that Remy died in the attacks (31), and his psychic split makes for a complicated romantic relationship with April Selios. All of this is set in conflict with the actions of his other that lives on during his gaps and is omitted from the narrative's discourse except via the clues that Remy discovers along the way. This antagonist-Remy seems to be heading a counterterrorist organization dedicated to collecting all of the lost paper from the rubble of the WTC and following the fractured clues it finds to track down terrorist threats. Further, this villain has selected April as a possible lead to a terrorist plot and is sleeping with her for information. However, rather than finding legitimate terrorists, this organization competes with the FBI and CIA to turn innocent Arab Americans into fake terrorists so that the organizations can bust them for their own personal gain. In short, in creating a terrorist cell led by the character they codename as Jaguar, they justify their continued existence. As Duvall notes, "Jaguar represents the Boss's [an apparent stand-in for former Mayor Giuliani] freelancing to ensure that there will be some credible minor terrorist threat that will show Americans how they are being protected from major terrorist attacks" (291). At its core, *The Zero* is a postmodernist novel that utilizes its strong sense of conflict in a hybrid-thriller plotline mixed with

generous amounts of parody and irony that satirizes post-9/11 culture and politics, recovering our own implication in global terrorism and oppression that many Americans feel separated from through complex layers of American exceptionalism.

Of course, there are a number of other 9/11 novels focused on trauma that I could have selected for this study, but few offer the ideological breadth of the exploration of trauma offered by *The Zero*. Further, at present, a select cadre of novels have attracted heavy critical attention, and have thereby formed a sense of a canon of 9/11 novels, much to the detriment of numerous overlooked texts, such as *The Zero*, and, I would argue, much to the detriment of the study of the 9/11 novel itself. For instance, in a popular anthology Mitchum Huehls reviews two popular texts, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, as portraying 9/11 trauma to "chronicle different attempts to mend the relationship between temporal experience and consciousness" (42). Perhaps even more of a popular choice is DeLillo's *Falling Man*, but this novel only depicts the experience of being trapped in the experience of trauma. As Versluys notes on the novel, "In psychoanalytic terms, it describes pure melancholia without the possibility of mourning. The endless reenactment of trauma presented in *Falling Man* allows for no accommodation or resolution" (20). In short, *Falling Man* is an excellent case study in the affective experience of trauma, but it offers no sense of agency, means of therapy, or a sense of the future beyond the trauma; in *Falling Man*, we are only the victims of trauma. In many ways, this fear narrative is an expression of a felt state, the affective experience of melancholia, and in this it is a notable exploration. Yet, as an exemplar of the ideological function of the fear theme of trauma, it offers limited value, as it does not,

itself, include the ideological interpretation necessary to depict or lead toward working through the traumatic experience, other than implicitly to say that no such interpretation is possible.

This limitation of scope is part of why these 9/11 novels of trauma have been described as constituting the domestic era of the genre, yet even this criticism may prove only a generalization based on selective academic canonization. On the Mishra/Gray/Rothberg debate mentioned above that proposes what they deem to be the disappointing domestication of the 9/11 novel, John N. Duvall and Robert P. Marzec state, "Gray and Rothberg are both unwilling to look very closely at what 9/11 fiction sets out to do because they are both sure that they know what 9/11 fiction ought to be doing" (384). Rather than seeing the problem of domestication as intrinsic to the texts, Duvall and Marzec imply that the focus of 9/11 literature scholarship on trauma theory is itself what has steered this very same scholarship away from analyzing 9/11 novels that would better explore the political aspects of 9/11; it is the focus on trauma theory itself that has pushed the scholarship towards the personal and domestic experiences of particular texts (385). As such, this unified hypothesis of the domestication of the genre only works if we restrict our analysis to the same works that have attracted the bulk of academic attention. Yet, other more overlooked 9/11 novels during this period certainly exist. As Duvall and Marzec state, *Falling Man* and Foer's novel "have already become hypercanonical in the discussion of 9/11 fiction…[and] it is time to look at other fiction of 9/11 in the future" (394).

The Zero is itself one example of a 9/11 novel largely ignored in critical discussion, but one that has much to offer, especially through a three horizons

interpretation. Duvall and Marzec describe *The Zero* as offering "paranoid plot and characters" and "political and domestic satire" (385). As such, the novel extends the exploration of the theme of trauma into the individualistic and domestic concerns of its canonical contemporaries, but it also connects these aspects to collective and political horizons as well. According to Duvall, "Even what appears in *The Zero* as overtly domestic ultimately returns us to ethical problems of the geopolitical and the war on terror" ("Homeland" 287). As such, at the first horizon, the novel uses the formal solution of the "gap" in order to resolve the contradiction between the thriller and postmodern satire novel, allowing the narrative to be both mysterious/suspenseful and parodic/satirical. While thrillers typically use gaps to heighten suspense with ellipses and paralipses, postmodern novels often use gaps to disrupt realism, allowing for the defamiliarization of the familiar to enable cultural critique through satire, parody, and pastiche. *The Zero* combines these uses of the gap to disrupt the ideology of realism common in the 9/11 novel by stripping the narrative of its ability to claim or project objectivity by highlighting the limitations of the traumatized individual as focalizer. Seen at the second horizon of interpretation, the gaps express an ideologeme of post-9/11 innocence through trauma, one which the novel both parodies and endorses. In this ideologeme, our post-9/11 traumatic state enables and justifies a sense of innocence from all moral responsibility for our actions, an innocence that operates through an obscured sense of etiological understanding, the spectatorial passivity of the citizen as the virtual imperial grunt, and a reformulation of the established national fantasy of American exceptionalism. Essentially, trauma frees one from moral obligation, and, when entrapped in this condition, it frees one from political and personal agency as well.

At the third horizon, we see the contradictions of these two genres at once perpetuating

the ideologeme of innocence by stressing the impossibility of political and moral agency,

while simultaneously critiquing innocence through trauma by utilizing fear to motivate

the reader to act before we lose all ability to change the direction of American culture

after 9/11.

At the first horizon of interpretation, then, perhaps the most conspicuous formal

invention of *The Zero* is its use of gaps. In the discourse of the text, these gaps are

indicated through a double-space scene break and often the use of dashes to denote

the abruptness of the interruption on Remy's consciousness. In narratological terms,

these gaps are ellipses, in which, as Chatman states, "the discourse halts, though time

continues to pass in the story" (70). As such, these ellipses serve as temporal

disruptions that omit important sequences of Remy's life, leaving the character often

feeling confused and lost. In this way, they have a dual-purpose as paralipses, "where

deletions are not intervening events but rather components of the very situation

unfolding" (65). Overall, the gaps are a formal ideological resolution of the text's

fundamental generic contradiction of marrying a thriller novel with a postmodern novel,

since gaps are conventional formal elements of both thrillers and postmodern narratives

but they function differently in each genre. In *The Zero*, they allow the narrative to be

both suspenseful and satirical simultaneously.

As James Scott Bell notes, "In a thriller, the feeling is more like a vice closing on

the Lead. And the events get tighter and tighter, threatening the Lead in some drastic

way" (219). This increasing forward momentum of the thriller novel leads to a climactic

scene that is often a showdown with an opponent of some kind, creating a strong

tendency toward linear narratives fed with ample uses of suspense, a delicate epistemic

tension created by the concealing and revealing of information that is often important to

the wellbeing of the characters with which the reader has established a sympathetic

bond. Rather than only using scene breaks in the typical, elliptical way to follow Alfred

Hitchcock's axiom that "a good story [is] life, with the dull parts taken out" (Bell 20),

Walter often uses these gaps as paralipses to conceal important information from the

reader, thereby heightening suspense.

Yet, as a postmodern novel, the gaps add layers of irony, ambiguity, and

indeterminacy as the two points in time that each gap conjoins are often brought

together in disorienting or humorous ways that ideologically and tonally disrupt the

affective experience of the thriller novel, allowing for the injection of satire. The gaps

even provoke a momentary sensation of the confused, reified amalgamation created by

pastiche, even if this tension is slowly resolved as Remy comes to understand his new

surroundings and the intervening events of the gap. For instance, at one point when

Remy is in bed with April, it goes from "Remy reached out and stroked—" to "THE MAN

was in his fifties, tall, thin, and aristocratic, with an expensive haircut and braces on his

teeth" (Walter 103). Later, in a moment of juxtaposed disorientation, Remy has a

contemplative conversation with Jaguar that ends, "Remy looked up, but the man's car

was gone, and the next thought he had was—," which transitions into, "SLIDING,

CLUTCHING, hands and toes clenched, hail streaking behind his eyelids, Remy woke

in a gasp of stale air, claustrophobic, strapped in, his face pressed against a cold round

window" (129). Anticlimactically and sardonically, it turns out that he has only awakened

after falling asleep at a window seat on a plane, the hail streaks only his familiar floating

tissue from the macular degeneration that he always sees when he closes his eyes. Yet, the abrupt transition leaves him disoriented, like waking from a dream or switching the channels on a television, metaphors used repeatedly in the novel to describe the experience of the gaps (103, 235, 325).

Further, Walter uses these gaps in Remy's memories as formal representations of his symptoms of trauma. This use of the fractured narrative to denote a protagonist's trauma or psychological deterioration has a long tradition in American narratives including Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and, in a different but productive way, Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) and its movie adaptation directed by David Fincher (1999). While these examples may arguably not qualify as fear narratives, as they use the trope of the fractured narrative to focus more on the amelioration of fear and anxiety through an atemporal sense of narrativization ("So it goes") or the psychological struggle for the release from socially ingrained inhibitions placed on late capitalist masculinity, respectively, Walter adapts the trope to explore the frightful and traumatized fracture of the American psyche after 9/11. When the omission of parts of Remy's memories and actions are coupled with his increasingly degenerating and impaired vision, these two physical symptoms create what Duvall would call a condition of "serial ignorance" and "an ironically impaired point of view" (284). With these conditions embodied in Remy, the novel implies that Americans after 9/11 have increasingly been losing their ability to perceive and understand, much less control, events in the world around them.

On a formal level, though, this implies how the gaps allow the disruption of the ideology of realism common in the 9/11 novel. The gaps strip realism of its claim toward

objectivity by using the traumatized individual as focalizer in order destabilize the belief that reality is universally experienced by all in the same way. As such, trauma problematizes the notion of a single sense of objective reality as it alters the experience of reality on a subjective level. Remy, as a result of his particular traumatic symptoms, seems to experience the storyworld differently than any of the other characters in the novel, each of whom struggle with symptoms of their own, hinting at a variety of subjective and conflicting experiences of the events in the narrative.

This individualization of trauma pulls us into the second horizon, wherein the gaps can be re-interpreted as formal representations of the ideologeme of post-9/11 American innocence through trauma. This is an illusory concept in which exceptional trauma enables and justifies a sense of innocence freed from the moral responsibility for one's actions. We can access this ideologeme by analyzing the narrative's characters as ideologues, particularly in Remy's two ideological stances that are enacted in his two personalities.

In that pursuit, if we read Remy as a representation of the American "everyman" after 9/11, a popular reading of the character, then Remy, according to Duvall:

> [R]epresents the failure of American citizens to credit what otherwise should be
> obvious—a complicity with government policies, most notably the Patriot Act, that
> curtail the civil rights of all Americans, but most particularly those of Arab
> Americans, in the name of making the US safe from future terrorist plots. (285)

Remy, in this light, represents the post-9/11 state of American citizenship of the "Everyman of American political blindness" (285). Of course, I would argue that Duvall is

making a gross overgeneralization in calling any character an "Everyman," not to mention that this term can lead to a conspicuous gender bias. While no single character can or should be seen to encompass all Americans' experience on anything without threatening to engulf the multitude of divergent, subjective experiences in America after 9/11 into some hegemonic and, hence, oppressive and proscriptive form, Remy does stand in as representing an experience that, perhaps, was felt in one way or another by many Americans, whether man, woman, or otherwise. With this caveat firmly in mind, returning to Duvall, we can probe into this contradiction even more productively:

> Remy's divided identity also points to something even more uncomfortable: in order to feel secure in our consumer society, we perhaps secretly desire and unknowingly support what we think we oppose. Remy is but the latest in a long line of American Adams, guilty precisely because of his innocence. (285)

At times, the protagonist-Remy attempts to resist the pull of the narrative, either through denial, medication, or active resistance to the actions of the antagonist-Remy, only to repeatedly submit to the inertia of events to which he seems to morally object.

For instance, in one important scene, Remy accompanies the antagonist-Remy's counterterrorism partner Markham to a freighter in international waters where a terrorist suspect, Assan, an Arab American citizen taken from his home in the middle of the night with no charges given, is being tortured for information. Remy, finally, decides to do something, to act against the horrors initiated by the antagonist-Remy, and cuts Assan's restraints, taking him to a boat to escape. However, when Assan opens up to the sympathetic Remy, they realize that the boat was actually taking them in a wide loop back to the freighter. Here, the boat's pilot praises Remy's amazing interrogation skills

and Markham waits to receive the two of them and any information that Remy has found. Rather than continuing to resist, or to put up any resistance at all, Remy gives up and hands over the information to Markham. In this moment, we see protagonist-Remy's complicity, albeit reluctantly, to the horrors perpetrated in the name of counterterrorism that his antagonist personality has initiated. It seems the "good" Remy is not entirely innocent after all.

These gaps indicate, however, not just ignorance in the sense of epistemic gaps, but end up causing etiological gaps in Remy's awareness, as, at times, he seems to know some of the details of the moments of his life that were skipped, but he consistently does not know the causes of his present state or the events taking place in his life. For instance, when he finds himself drinking coffee at his ex-wife Carla's house (Walter 26-7), he has no idea what caused him to make the visit. This is much to Carla's frustration as it turns out he is there to ask his son why he told his school that Remy had died in the WTC attacks (30-1), a subject Carla has to bring up, even though it should have been broached by Remy himself, had he any memory of the causes of his present situation. Other situations without a cause that Remy encounters include when he discovers that he is in a field apparently staking out a woman living in a distant house (196), when he wakes up naked in bed with April's boss (200), and when he repeatedly finds himself in his car distantly watching his son leave his ex-wife's house for reasons unknown (275).

Yet, the lack of etiological structure is perhaps even more apparent in the storyworld observed by Remy. As Remy reads missing person signs of 9/11 victims in New York street windows, the narrative uses implicit narration to peer into what appears

to be his thoughts: "Some of the notes were pleas for mercy, as if the missing had been kidnapped and might be released if the kidnapper found out they had two children, or had just overcome cancer" (72). Later, when looking through scraps of paper collected from the WTC rubble, he finds "a ledger sheet with several columns of numbers, although the top row had been burned off, so he couldn't see what the numbers referred to" (98). In this scene, he has the results of the numbers but no way to understand their origins or causes in order to give them meaning. These, and other instances, imply that these gaps are, in part, disruptions of etiological reasoning that extend beyond Remy, becoming a collective condition of post-9/11 experience, a traumatic symptom felt by many.

As such, the gaps function ideologically to both explain and excuse Remy's and, by extension, American culture's post-9/11 lack of understanding. Just as the novel depicts Remy as not being at fault for his complicity in the boat scene described above, these gaps in etiological reasoning explain and excuse traumatized Americans for their actions after 9/11. On an ideological level, it asks the reader: how can we blame trauma victims if they make terrible decisions, such as attacking the wrong countries, turning on Arab American citizens, or sacrificing freedoms for increased security? Essentially, it asserts that the traumatic condition affords them a position of seemingly impeccable innocence, exempting them from the consequences of their own actions. In this sense, the novel implies that traumatized American citizens, like Remy, had no access to causation and thus could not narrativize their experience to cure themselves of their trauma, entrapping them in a condition wherein they could not even understand what

had caused the traumatic events to occur. How could we find them at fault for their subsequent actions?

Entrapped in this ideological state of innocence, Remy and many post-9/11 American citizens lost much of their sense of agency, as without having access to the underlying causation of events arising around them, they often had to work under the assumption that these disjointed events would simply have to take care of themselves. When combined with the media coverage of military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, this created a sense that citizens should be passive spectators to the violence (Pease 173). This instituted a model of citizenship that lacked an ability to take responsibility for, or even to be concerned about, the state of the world in which one lives, therefore further deferring accountability for one's actions. In some respects, this resembles Lauren Berlant's observed phenomenon of the infantile citizen as an enactment of national identity. As Berlant states, "democracies can also produce a special form of tyranny that makes citizens like children, infantilized, passive, and overdependent on the 'immense and tutelary power' of the state" (*The Queen* 27). Building on Berlant, Takacs notes how after 9/11 the cultural push towards identifying with the soldier in the narrative, and the creation of an either-you-are-with-us-or-against-us dichotomy (i.e., American citizen/terrorist) mingled with Berlant's already established infantile citizen to create what Roger Stahl calls a "virtual-citizen soldier" (*Terrorism TV* 26). From here, Takacs notes how this identification with "the noble grunt" promoted a military culture that naturalized American imperialism in the middle east, transforming our sense of citizenship into the "virtual imperial grunt" (145). This evolution of the subjecthood of the American citizen and of the national identity denotes our acceptance of the ideology of

innocence and the stripping away of our agency as citizens, and it directs us toward our uncomfortable complicity with the current state of the world that Duvall finds satirized in *The Zero*. In this way, the novel asserts that the post-9/11 citizen, like Remy, is blind and unaware of what their actions, left forgotten in the gaps of life, are producing, and innocently surprised and not to be deemed at fault when undesirable consequences arise. Remy's trauma and split-personalities represent a fundamental contradiction in the post-9/11 American conscience, one that feels that it is passively innocent of the imperialism of the military in all of its actions, and is simultaneously compelled by the us-versus-them dichotomy to support the military in all its actions, imperial or not.

This collective national state fantasy of exceptional American innocence in the face of exceptional trauma is an ideology that has its roots in the overall genealogy of the beliefs underlying the national identity of the American citizen. Donald Pease identifies this genealogy as the historic evolution of the US state fantasy of American exceptionalism, a concept, which, in the terms of this study, is a major thread of American ideology that we see reformulate as innocence through trauma in *The Zero*. Yet, not only is the concept of American exceptionalism important to interpreting this one novel, but it is also one that we will return repeatedly in this study, so it is worth our time to take just a moment to lay its foundations before we proceed. Overall, the state fantasy of American exceptionalism has been supported, sustained, and justified through various historical conditions by a series of national myths. Pease states that these national myths become outdated as collective or national traumatic events "precipitate states of emergency that become the inaugural moments in a different symbolic order and take place on a scale that exceeds the grasp of the available

representations from the national mythology" (5). To Pease, 9/11 is one such event that defied the extent national mythology, requiring a new one to be constructed in order to maintain the viability of the state fantasy of American exceptionalism. A state fantasy, according to Pease, "does not refer to a mystification but to the dominant structure of desire out of which U.S. citizens imagined their national identity" (1). It is ideology writ large, not only as oppressive, but as an overall system of belief. To Pease, American exceptionalism, then, is "a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire" (7).

This fantasy portrays the American citizen as an exception to the perceived shortcomings of the world, as an innately innocent exception from the hordes of sinners, the misled and unwashed masses of the world, who wish they could only be as pure as Americans. Often, this fantasy serves to wash clean all American acts as being done with the best of intentions for the rest of the world, despite the actual outcomes they have on the lives of others. In order to maintain this state fantasy, events that contradict it, such as "Japanese internment camps, Operation Wetback, and the Vietnam War," must be disowned through "structures of disavowal" as "'exceptions' to the norms of American exceptionalism" (12). Myths, then, "do the work of incorporating events into recognizable national narratives" that support the state fantasy (5), or disowning those that do not fit. As Pease notes, myths also function to overcome historical trauma, wherein by integrating events into its narrative, "myths give closure to traumatizing historical events by endowing them with a moral significance" (156). For example, under the pseudo-logic of American exceptionalism, much like Remy is not at fault for his

actions in the novel because of his trauma, the Puritans and their descendants, traumatized by their religious persecution, cannot be seen as being at fault for killing the native inhabitants of the Americas or enslaving Africans.

However, this state fantasy needs to be adapted to historical conditions through national myths that change to meet the unique needs of the times. As Pease describes, the attacks of 9/11 were traumatic events that escaped the bounds of the extant myth of the Virgin Land metaphor, a myth constructed in 1950 and retrospectively applied to all of American history, establishing a new sense of American tradition and identity (165). It centered on "the belief in the inviolability of the Virgin Land" (155), which is justified by the subsequent belief that the "Virgin Land was inviolate because the American people were innocent" (158), creating a myth based on a confoundingly tautological and circular line of reasoning that is as difficult to articulate as it is to critique in its everyday use. However, when the attacks of 9/11 violated the inviolable, this myth no longer served to explain reality and had to be replaced by the Ground Zero myth that focused the national attention on the geographical location of the violation, thereby "[linking] the people traumatized by the events" (155). This, in turn, allowed the declaration of a state of emergency that focused on defending a new myth, the concept of the Homeland (168). In the end, without the Virgin Land myth to fortify our national fantasy, Ground Zero forced us to look at our nation as the Homeland and as the Homeland Security State, a state of exception that justified exceptional actions taken by the government as effectively innocent. However, the creation of this new national myth excluded the people from "the normal political order" that they had previously known (169). This estrangement from the political sphere decreased the sense of political agency in the

national subject and paved the way for the institutionalization of the American citizen as Takacs's virtual imperial grunt, a national subjecthood that entrapped the citizen in their own sense of trauma and urged them to give away their privacies and freedoms to the needs of the new national myth, the Homeland Security State. Yet, before the creation of the Homeland Security metaphor, America existed in a moment of transition that was filled with incompatible contradictions that exposed our past and present acts of exception, acts that violated our sense of American ideals.

The Zero captures this moment of social contradiction through Remy's experiences of ideological conflict made literal through his split personalities. Seen from this new perspective, Remy's gaps are now more like unconscious acts of psychological protection from an overwhelming sense of identity dissonance. The gaps are acts of enforced ignorance creating the absences or omissions in consciousness necessary for the individual national subject to support the continued existence of the state fantasy of American exceptionalism, now based in inalienable innocence through trauma, especially since the extant national myth no longer sufficiently supported this fantasy.

As such, the ideologeme of innocence through trauma captured in the novel is a facet of the evolving nature of American exceptionalism, one that existed in the gap between the myths of the Virgin Land and Homeland Security. Without an acceptable myth in place, individuals and the nation had to confront reality without the structures of justification that disavowed historical events and political policies that contradict our innocent notion of American exceptionalism, including gross violations of international and humanitarian laws and values. This ideological rupture often manifests in post-9/11 narratives through reminders of national traumas long thought forgotten and

suppressed, such as the genocide of the Indian Wars, Jim Crow, the bombing of Dresden, and the holocaust. Overall, innocence through trauma is a transitional pseudoidea expressed in the novel through the class struggle between the middle class of the protagonist-Remy as police officer and the antagonist-Remy that enacts the dictates of the ruling class's emergent Homeland Security rhetoric. Throughout the narrative, this burgeoning rhetoric is fed to Remy both directly from "the Boss," an apparent stand-in for former mayor Rudy Giuliani, and indirectly from the president at the time, George W. Bush, whose quotations line the walls of Remy's workplace.

In all, *The Zero* illustrates how even a trauma as seemingly incomprehensible as 9/11 can be readily incorporated into this state fantasy, merely by reconstituting itself into the ideologeme of innocence through the vehicle of trauma, a stance the novel struggles with as it both endorses and parodies its implications. Yet, the novel ultimately does not truly expunge Remy of moral responsibility, as it does not depict him as entirely innocent, and in this it succeeds in exposing the illusory pseudoidea for what it really is. Throughout the much of the narrative, Remy is complicit with the events happening around him, either through his inaction or by allowing them to happen, as in the scene on the freighter with the innocent terrorist suspect, Assan, mentioned above. As Duvall notes in regards to this scene, "Remy may be sickened by the incident, but that does not prevent him from doing his duty as a counterterrorism agent: his 'innocent' self passes" the note with the name on it of another truly innocent terrorist suspect to his fellow agent, Markham (286). Throughout much of the novel, Remy performs as a model virtual imperial grunt, spectatorially and complicitly aiding the imperial aims of the emerging Homeland Security State, but not without struggle and a few exceptions.

As such, the narrative utilizes the trope of trauma to depict Remy struggling to synthesize the contradictions of American policies, actions, and desires into a single identity, one that he ambiguously seems to attain in the end. Seen in this way, when trauma defies narrativization into the extant myths supporting American exceptionalism after 9/11, Remy's consciousness splits between the innocent, exceptional protagonist-Remy, an embodiment of violated Virgin Land innocence struggling to remain intact, and the vicious, amoral, and selfish antagonist-Remy, a representation of all the worst of the Homeland Security myth seen clearly before it integrates into the national structures of disavowal, a myth that later justifies, for instance, the violation of human rights enacted in Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, events which are echoed in *The Zero* in scenes depicting off-scene torture and the murder of innocents. As Pease notes, these events and others like them are blatant acts of exception, logical contradictions that are justified under the State of Exception incited by the national trauma of 9/11: "The state violated its own rules, that is to say, in the name of protecting them against a force that was said to operate according to different rules" (177). With Remy as embodying the internal struggle between the traumatized national subject in the process of freeing itself from the Virgin Land myth and confronting the emergent dominance of the Homeland Security myth, the novel is a dialectic that seems to resolve its class conflict by its end, as the traumatic gaps seem to stop and his identity meets some form of unification.

Yet, if state fantasies are, as Pease notes, "the dominant structure of desire" (Walter 1), what sort of desire does *The Zero* capture forming, or re-forming, in America after 9/11? Certainly, as Faludi reminds us, there was a strong desire to re-assert a

national sense of capable and effective masculinity after the attacks violated our Virgin

Land myth, but the novel seems to add something else to this sense of desire. In a

conversation with The Boss, Remy threatens to quit, but The Boss tries to convince him

to stay with the mission, finishing with, "'You want to know what caused this, Brian

[Remy]?...Ask yourself this: What causes hunger?...Hunger'" (298). This statement,

however, is never overtly explained. Is The Boss pinning the blame for 9/11 on the

hunger of the terrorists? Or does he imply that it goes back forever, in an infinite loop of

hunger with no origin? Or, do we read this as irony, as Remy might see it as the hunger

of the antagonist-Remy that started the counterterrorism plot gone wrong? This

explanation comes up again near the end of the novel, when Remy confesses to Jaguar

that they set him up and that all of the terrorist suspects actually work for either the FBI,

CIA, or Remy's organization, and that there never were any real terrorists among them.

When Jaguar asks why, Remy gives the only response that he thinks seems true:

"Hunger" (321). Under this context, hunger seems to take on new connotations. Is it

referring to America's hunger to take revenge on someone, anyone, after the attacks of

9/11? Perhaps, and this would point to some of the nation's motivation to engage in the

often problematic War on Terror. However, this description for post-9/11 hunger

originally comes from The Boss himself, who makes statements that mirror Bush's pleas

after the attacks to have citizens go out and shop in order to do their part to fight

terrorism. As The Boss states, "'in today's world, there is no separation between civilian

and soldier, between business and government. The private sector is the ultimate covert

ops" (296).

Desire, here, dressed in the new rhetoric of the Homeland Security State, is the pure drive for profit. Coming from Remy's lips at the end, "hunger" sounds more like his admission of complicity with his other self, a moment that solidifies his unification of self, of the dialectic synthesis of the national myths as represented in Remy. As such, the hunger Remy speaks of here is the desire for the resolution of the ideological gap after 9/11, a hunger to unproblematically embrace the ideologeme of innocence through trauma, a hunger for an illusion that will justify an American freedom from morality and once again satisfactorily mask the amoral acts of America's past, settling the conscience of the American citizen, now the virtual imperial grunt. It is a hunger to find a way to treat the trauma by narrativizing it under a new ideological framework, to reduce the ideologeme of innocence through trauma to simply an ideologeme of innocence, a new American exceptionalism that later took form under the myth of the Homeland Security State.

However, in its specific context within the narrative, this admission of hunger is also a satirical criticism that the creation of terrorists where they do not exist has been motivated by personal profit, for greed, that has only been masked in the justification of a pursuit of an illusory sense of justice. It is hard not to draw parallels between the counterterrorist plot gone wrong with its final admission of hunger and the wide-spread real-world belief, at the time, that America had invaded Iraq as a response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Especially when in 2006, years after the combat operation was over and Saddam Hussein was captured and soon to be executed, Bush admitted that Iraq was not responsible for the terrorist attacks of 9/11 but had only posed "a clear threat" that was entirely unrelated (Goldenberg). In both cases, America is shown as

creating terrorists were there were none, and, as it has been argued, it has done so for the hunger of profit and personal gain (see, for example, Hanson).

From Jameson's third horizon, *The Zero* historically registers this long-standing contradiction in American exceptionalism into a contradiction of the formal and historical traditions of the postmodern and thriller genres. As Duvall and Marzec note on the novel's genre contradictions:

> Both using and repurposing the genre of the detective/spy thriller, Walter
>
> satirizes the hero narrative to examine the conflation of personal and collective
>
> grieving that emerges at a time when the forces of nationalism, media, and
>
> capital work in concert to mobilize public support for the notion of just wars in
>
> Afghanistan and Iraq and for curtailed civil rights at home. (281)

As Duvall notes, the novel tends to trade the realism that is characteristic in the thriller novel for the ludic play of the postmodern novel (282), allowing for a satire of post-9/11 culture that can depict its proposed absurdity without having to adhere to the established formal and ideological conventions of realism, all while borrowing the narrative technique of epistemic suspense typical in the thriller genre. These conventions of realism are, after all, only the dominant ideological understanding of a particular relation to the Real, and as such are social constructs that are always in process, just like any other convention. By combining these two genres in this way through their shared reliance on gaps, Walter finds a way to escape many of the hegemonic ideologies of his time to explore what lies beneath. In the novel, this technique tends to make many of the real-world commonplace post-9/11 practices look absurd. Even Remy's split personalities and gaps serve to defy the conventions of

realism, but as Duvall notes, "Remy allegorizes Jameson's sense of historical amnesia inasmuch as he experiences a form of literal amnesia that prevents him from recognizing his crucial role in the Homeland Security State" (282). While most American citizens did not have such gaps to justify their culpability in global concerns, the satire of the novel exposes that many Americans live just such a double life, one that is justified by ideologemes of innocence. Yet, the postmodern satire itself is not entirely free of the use of innocence through trauma either, as the genre invites us to simply laugh at the absurdities of post-9/11 culture rather than take action towards change, such as passively allowing the invasion of Iraq, the wrong country, because we no longer have an alternate agency of resistance anymore under the auspices of innocence. As such, it is important to realize that neither realism nor satire are entirely free of the pull of this ideologeme, as both utilize gaps to enable tonally different but ideologically similar escapes from the responsibility of being a free agent.

While this ideological resolution of genre contradictions allows for satirical demystification, what hope does it give for a progressive future that escapes the social absurdities that it portrays? In this sense, *The Zero* at first appears to be a fear narrative that is simply oppressive in nature, telling its readers through Remy's entrapment in his trauma of etiological gaps that we, as passive, spectatorial, post-9/11 American citizens, are doomed to live a life without agency, pulled along by the machine of American culture toward unconscionable acts that we may consciously abhor. Because of the novel's function as a source of trauma therapy, it, by necessity, displaces reality in order to narrativize the trauma of 9/11, establishing an illusory framework in order to integrate the event into a larger national narrative, in this case through an ideologeme of

innocence through trauma. However, at the same time, its use of parody exposes the absurdity of this ideologeme, urging us to the social consciousness of its presence. Ultimately, it is the tragedy of the story that gives it its dramatic power at the end as Remy finally does try to take action, to take control of his life (Walters 212), but is too late to fix the acts of his repressed self, leading to the death of April and four others at the train platform when Jaguar finally embodies the suicide bomber that he has been pushed into becoming (322-25), even if in ways that no one had expected ahead of time.

From a progressive perspective, then, this story's ambiguous ending works as a warning to the American reader, using fear as a motivating force. The narrative serves not only as a tragedy, but as a satire of post-9/11 America, urging us to take action now so that we don't befall the same end as Remy. Seen in this way, the narrative pushes us to liberate ourselves from enacting the disempowering identity of the post-9/11 State-of-Emergency American citizen, the virtual imperial grunt, and to open our consciousness to the reality that our consent to inaction is really a consent to the domestic and imperial atrocities and injustices committed by America, such as Islamophobic acts dehumanizing Arab American citizens at home and the human rights violations at Abu Ghraib that dehumanized human beings abroad. In the end, the novel points to liberation through political and civil action, but Remy's failure to secure his relationship with April pushes us to fear that it may already be too late, that the actions set in motion by the Homeland Security myth may be too far advanced to avert future disaster.

PARANOIA AND THE PERSONALIZATION OF FEAR IN PYNCHON'S *BLEEDING EDGE*

Many 9/11 novels dabble in the murky waters of the primary fear theme of paranoia, exhibiting hints of conspiracy theories, anxious glances toward the sky for the next hijacked plane to come plummeting out of the sky, or increased security measures to address all possible terrorist contingencies (however ineffective this may turn out to be), but few focus overtly on paranoia like Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* (2013). While chronologically later than many of the selections in this study, as Joseph Darlington notes, its historical distance from the attacks of 9/11 allows it to place the attacks within a larger historical picture (244-5), as opposed to seeing the attacks as some sort of historical discontinuity, one that came "out of the blue." Paranoia has long been established as one of Pynchon's primary themes throughout his oeuvre, so much so that when Stefano Ercolino posited the existence of the maximalist novel, a genre of the postmodern novel that lists the paranoid imagination as one of its required characteristics, the very first novel he selected as paradigmatic of this form was Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and two of Pynchon's other novels were also included in the extended corpus of the maximalist novel, including *Mason & Dixon* (1997) and *Against the Day* (2006) (241-42). Had *Bleeding Edge* been written prior to Ercolino's 2012 article, it would certainly have been included in this list as well.

As such, Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge*, with its tangled and interconnected web of clues that lead to one possible evil source behind it all, is an exemplary model for the exploration of the ideologeme of post-9/11 justified paranoia, one also tempered by the personalization of fear, as the nebulous dangers all seem directed at the protagonist

and those she loves. The narrative follows Maxine Tarnow in New York after the dotcom

bust, through the attacks of 9/11, and into the return of a sense of normalcy after the

historic event. As a decertified certified fraud examiner (CFE), Maxine has been hired

by Reg Despard, a documentary filmmaker, to look into a computer-security firm called

hashslingrz. Once described in the novel as "an arm of [the] U.S. security" apparatus

(Pynchon 462), hashslingrz hired Despard to make a documentary on their company

but refuses to give him full access to the workings of the company, even as they claim

that he really does have full access (8-11). This makes Reg suspicious, so he goes to

Maxine to see what he has gotten himself into. As a former CFE, Maxine is trained "to

look for patterns" through the language of money (22) (see Pöhlmann for an excellent

analysis on the representation of money in the novel). And Maxine certainly does find

patterns as fraud leads to money laundering to off-shore accounts, embezzlement, post-

dotcom bust information theft, possible terrorist connections, Deep Web corporate

infiltration, and maybe even a little time travel, 9/11 conspiracy theories, and two

possibly interrelated murders, each stretched along seemingly separate cases and

personal and even familial relations that all seem to connect back to the same

malevolent source, hashslingrz CEO Gabriel Ice, the novel's allegorical personification

of late capitalism and the novel's most despised sin: "the perimeters of ordinary greed

overstepped" (90).

Clearly, there is plenty to work with in this novel for a Jamesonian three horizons

analysis, and the following is a brief outline of my interpretation. At the first horizon, the

narrative symbolically resolves the formal contradiction of combining the narrative

inertia of the detective novel with the diegetic exuberance, or information overload, of

the postmodern maximalist novel through the formal device of rhizomatic plotting. Rhizomatic plotting, as used in the novel, is a formal manifestation of both paranoia and the personalization of fear that enacts the paranoid belief that all people and events are somehow connected and united in a conspiracy revolving around the self. It does so, essentially, by structuring a storyworld in which a series of seemingly disparate plot events and characters connect back to the protagonist. In the novel, this formal structure serves to destabilize the realist ideology of epistemic certainty found in the traditional detective novel, showing that in the late capitalist information age such objective solutions are implausible. Extended to the second horizon, this manifestation of paranoia through rhizomatic plotting evolves into the ideologeme of justified paranoia, a form of paranoia seen as a justifiable survival mechanism in a world without access to definitive knowledge, one that justifies any action one takes as long as it is intended to lead to a sense of justice or personal safety, whether or not the action actually meets this end. This ideologeme of justified paranoia, in part, mirrors how, after 9/11, the Bush administration could justify retaliatory attacks against Middle Eastern targets that later were deemed unconnected to the 9/11, such as the invasion of Iraq, and why the public, also operating under this ideological lens, largely accepted these actions. At the third horizon, we see that the combination of these two genres effectively allows the narrative to capture this post-9/11 paranoid state, one that simultaneously presents the late capitalist system it depicts as so far beyond comprehension that changing it may be impossible, while also utilizing its personalized paranoia to expose this oppressive ideology to the reader, raising our social awareness about this present condition of the world, once again utilizing fear to motivate action to change our conditions, however

much the conservative epistemology of the detective genre makes this seem impossible.

At the first horizon, a principle feature of the *Bleeding Edge* is its attempt to use both paranoia and the personalization of fear, combined into a personalized paranoia, to resolve the genre contradiction between what Ercolino calls the maximalist novel, which is a particular genre of the postmodern novel, and the classic detective fiction genre. Here, it is important to note how in many ways this is similar to how *The Zero* uses gaps, formal symptoms of the primary fear themes of entrapment and trauma, to unify the postmodern and thriller genres in order to move beyond the ideological limitations of realism popular in the 9/11 novel. Likewise, *Bleeding Edge* uses different fear themes to formally unify the maximalist and mystery genres, liberating the latter of its realist view of epistemic certainty, as we will see shortly. In both of these texts, we see the use of fear themes to resolve formal contradictions in ways that destabilize objective ideologies ingrained in generic forms, and this potential social function of fear to subjectivize experience may have further implications as this study progresses. In *Bleeding Edge*, one way this ideological use of personalized paranoia presents itself is in the formal contradiction between diegetic exuberance and the detective novel's need to come to a definitive solution to a crime through the accumulation of clues and suspects.

The maximalist novel, according to Ercolino, first appeared in the U.S. in Pynchon's earlier works (241). As he states, "It is called 'maximalist' due to the multiform maximizing and hypertrophic tension of its narrative" (241), which essentially means that these postmodern narratives attempt to maximize the sheer volume of information in the novel, with some interesting interpretive and formal results. One of the

required characteristics of the maximalist novel that he describes is diegetic exuberance, in which "its stories and characters are innumerable" (247). This formally manifests as a series of digressions or a "digressive narrative system" (247), wherein digressions are not seen as deviations from the central narrative logic of the piece, but as:

> a sort of extended *turbulence* produced by the omnivorous and encyclopedic *élan* of the story, a turbulence generated by the tension that is created between an extraordinary dialogic openness, on the one hand, and the necessity, on the other, to give form and order to that which would otherwise end up being ungovernable narrative chaos. (248)

In *Bleeding Edge,* we see this in the information overload of objects, characters, and seemingly unrelated events that Maxine encounters along the way which all somehow manage to remain relevant to the central narrative.

However, under the logic of the detective novel, all of these characters and the abundance of information are seen as suspects and clues, which must somehow lead to the definitive solution of some sort of crime. As Peter Hühn notes on the classic detective genre, "From the perspective of the detective, the traces left by the criminal appear as 'clues,' possible indicators of the hidden story of the crime" (454). Further, "it is an essential premise of the classical formula that there ultimately *exists* such a determinate meaning" (455), "that there is one and only one true meaning," which has a vital social function: "the crime and its solution concern the basic order system regulating the life of the community in the book, and these systems normally cannot tolerate indeterminacy (as is already evident from the urge felt to solve the mystery in

the first place)" (456). As such, the fictional world of the detective narrative operates under what Doležel would call an affirmative and constative epistemic modal system, ultimately affirming the ability of subjects to find the solution of even the most puzzling enigma (126). However, in this novel, the tension between the need to deduce pertinent clues and its diegetic exuberance lead only to suspicions, to likely suspects, and hence a more conditional epistemic. Yet, due to the transnational, embodied, and digital nature of the information age of late capitalism that this novel depicts as an evolving historic form, it is impossible in the maze of rhizomatic threads of information to definitively resolve the crimes with an "arrest and punishment" (Hühn 460). However, it is this sense of resolution that is normally required in a classical detective narrative to return the fictional world back to a sense of social order (452).

In order to resolve this formal contradiction, *Bleeding Edge* employs what I am calling rhizomatic plotting. This plotting structure, as it is used in this novel, is a formal, symbolic representation of personalized paranoia that creates a narrative consisting of a maximalist overload of characters and events that are somehow all connected together by and revolving around the protagonist. As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, rhizomes are essentially acentric networks of causation and influence, which, in real practice, are forever changing and growing (21). Of course, this novel does seem to center itself on the focalization of the protagonist, and, in print form, we are seeing the rhizome synchronically, as a series of moments frozen on the page, not as a constantly changing form. Despite all of this, I still call it rhizomatic because all the characters and events in the novel exist interlinked, networked together in a way that they each become points somehow connected to all other points in the narrative. Further, the narrative

itself is not centered on a sense of beginning and end, as the traditional detective novel resolution of solving the crime and arresting the criminal are not possible. Instead, the narrative is structured in the middle of events, only framed at the start and finish by Maxine and her children going to school in different ways. Maxine pursues answers to the crimes that occur in the novel, but never attains a resolution. In addition, while the narrative appears synchronic from the perspective of the reader, the characters encounter the material conditions of the storyworld as constantly changing, as moving from a post dotcom boom economy to 9/11 to life thereafter. In this way, its rhizomatic plotting decenters the traditional narrative structure to depict a segment of the middle of life that is constantly in motion, but not resolving. This rhizomatic plotting embodies a personalized paranoia because all of the events in the storyworld actually are connected together, manipulated by forces unseen, but always centering around and threatening Maxine and her immediate family. While this personalization of the threats in the narrative may seem to disqualify it as a rhizome, this protagonist center is really only an illusion brought about by focalizing our experience of the narrative through a single, subjective perspective: if we are only able to see the total system from one perspective, one that is interconnected at all points, it would appear that all points are connected to the subject, because they are, but only because the subject is just one point in an interconnected system, not a true center of anything except her own conscious awareness of the total system. In this sense, subjectively experiencing the Real as a rhizomatic network itself creates personalized paranoia, as, from this perspective on reality, all the points really do connect back to you, even if their overall meaning both for you and for the world remains elusive in the vast complexity of the

rhizome. As such, rhizomatic plotting makes a narrative with an objective, fixed, knowable solution impossible, making it, at best, seem entirely naïve, and instead substitutes in its place a false perspective of all events and existents in the system connecting back to the protagonist-as-focalizer as a false nexus whose limited perspective makes them incapable of giving the events any discernible meaning.

Overall, though, by combining these two forms together into a rhizomatic plot, Pynchon gives the often sprawling maximalist novel the narrative structure of the quest for knowledge and then removes the clean resolution of the mystery novel, allowing for a postmodern sense of indeterminacy and ambiguity. This allows the novel to epistemically update the detective genre and the 9/11 novel genre simultaneously to reflect the death of objective, or definitive and singular, knowledge forwarded by poststructuralist philosophers since Derrida and Foucault. In combination, we now arrive at a novel form that denotes the late capitalist search for and the accumulation of information in the digital age, but notes that this search never ends and does not lead to clean, definite answers or to a transcendental signified that would allow an absolute sense of causation, and thus definitive accusation or explanation. As such, it demonstrates how accusation and culpability in the rhizomatic and networked postmodern world is complex, fuzzy, and often beyond something that can be verified, possibly dispersed beneath layers of mystification and thereby affectively naturalizing paranoia as a "realistic" or appropriate response to epistemic failure and moral shots in the dark.

In this new form, this open-ended search for information means that the threat, the problem introduced in the mystery novel, is never entirely resolvable. It can seem to

be made irrelevant, such as the possible neoliberal hit man Nicholas Windust's murder

that is never definitively solved and directed toward a particular murderer, even if

Windust and Maxine's paranoid imagination points the reader toward the likely culprit of

Windust's mysterious and unidentified employers. After all, if a murder is perpetrated by

an organization that we cannot even name or identify, how can the detective make an

arrest? And so, the solution of the murder becomes indeterminate and a conclusion that

Maxine does not even need to pursue. Even the murder of Lester Traipse, likely

perpetrated by Windust, becomes lost in a web of conspiracy. If Windust was the

murderer, acting as a hitman, who was ultimately responsible for calling the hit? In this

storyworld, an arrest is irrelevant; all that is important is the epistemic quest, the search

for and likely identification of the criminal, yet no restoration of a social order led by an

agent of law and justice is accessible. Even Gabriel Ice, the antagonist that seems to be

at the center of nearly all the criminal and even immoral events of the novel, never

meets justice. As Sascha Pöhlmann notes, "Gabriel Ice certainly is not a happy

billionaire by the end of the novel, but he is still a billionaire" (27). Without definitive

solutions, and in a rhizomatic world, personalized paranoia is presented as the only

effective means of navigating through late capitalist life.

At the second horizon, this formal representation of personalized paranoia

through rhizomatic plotting can be reinterpreted as the ideologeme of justified paranoia,

which the novel both endorses and criticizes. Justified paranoia is a form of paranoia

that is doubly justified: first, it is seen as a justifiable survival mechanism in a world

without definitive knowledge (or perhaps accessible causation as *The Zero* noted), and,

second, as we will see, it justifies any action taken by the paranoid individual, as long as

it is intended to lead to some sense of justice or personal safety. This ideology of justified paranoia after 9/11 is part of what motivated some Americans to want to retaliate by attacking any target in the Middle East, allowed the Bush Administration to invade countries that were not involved in the attacks (such as Iraq), motivated the rendition of terrorist suspects without evidence to prisons such as Guantanamo Bay, and convinced the majority of the public that these actions were justified, so long as they led to greater safety and served a sense of justice to those lost in the attacks. After all, seen through this paranoid ideologeme, the terrorists could be anyone, anywhere, so why not attack everyone?

In the novel, one way to find the ideologeme of justified paranoia at work is through the protagonist, Maxine, and how she uses it as a survival mechanism to understand her world. As a decertified CFE, Maxine can be seen as something of a hybrid figure that can walk between the worlds of law and crime. She can work outside the restrictions of the legal system that the novel depicts as outdated and no longer able to resolve the social disruption of the crime. In this epistemic fictional world, only she has the ability to find what can approximate for truth in the postmodern age of information, and this truth is all that can be used to restore a tentative sense of order, even if by the end of the narrative the spectral organizations behind the crimes are still at large, still looming as a threatening presence that can seemingly never be identified, much less brought to justice. The tool that Maxine uses to access this sense of truth is paranoia, which she sees as one of her most valuable assets. For instance, as she states, "'paranoia's the garlic in life's kitchen, right, you can never have too much'" (Pynchon 11), and at one point the activation of her investigative instincts are described

as paranoid: "A paranoid halo thickens around Maxine's head, if not a nimbus of certainty" (183). Her paranoia here can be read as a way to understand, comprehend, and detect the spectral structural power that is above all traditional divisions, influencing all things, the rhizomatic structure of information age capitalism. In this effort, Maxine is an exemplar of Jameson's concept of the social detective, one who, rather than convict an individual as the criminal detective once did, is a collective agent focused on "the indictment of a whole collectivity" (*Geopolitical* 37), who is an intellectual dealing in knowledge, just as Maxine is a fraud investigator dealing in the language of money, the blood flow of capitalist power, which enables her to see some of the workings of the social totality, the underlying system that paranoia can attempt to grasp (63).

While Maxine may use paranoia as a means of survival in her daily life to understand her world locally, its relevance as a means of survival on a global scale also points to the increasing irrelevance of traditional definitions of sovereignty, and how this erosion of the efficacy of borders can erode our personal sense of safety. Traditionally, sovereignty has been defined as a political concept "founded on a sacrosanct boundary between an ordered domestic realm and an anarchic international realm" (Pepper 410). Yet, as Andrew Pepper notes, 9/11 and our responses to the attacks have had the effect of "transforming the political significance of borders, territory, and indeed sovereignty" (410), and the traditional internal/external and national/international dichotomies are "increasingly rendered moot" (413), so much that the international today is more like the way it is portrayed in the novel, as "a complex and unstable spectrum comprising powerful and less powerful state and non-state actors" (418).

As such, for those experiencing personalized paranoia after 9/11, the destabilization of these concepts of division inflamed concern over re-establishing a sense of safety that these concepts had once conveyed, thereby ushering in the national myth of the Homeland Security State described by Pease. Under the urgency inspired by this state of fear, a sense of safety had to be created and maintained no matter the cost. Yet, in light of the advances in communication and transportation technologies in the information age, the notion of the border became only more porous and supple than it had once been. These developments have had the effect of greatly widening the sense of rhizomatic networks at work in the lives of the contemporary individual, expanding them to the point that they become practically beyond comprehension and control, leaving paranoia as the only viable alternative to navigating the total system. In the novel, this new transnational reality is seen as existing prior to 9/11, and Maxine's hybrid legal status and use of the paranoid imagination allows her to work within its new, more fluid trajectories, enabling her to enact the role of detective in ways superior to traditional law enforcement, whose adherence to outdated ideology of traditional sovereignty make them ineffective and largely irrelevant against the dealings of multinational corporate entities, such as the novel's villain, Gabriel Ice.

While the text revolves around Maxine's perspective of her life and her domestic concerns, the breakdown of the traditional boundaries of the criminal detective is everywhere evident, and with this loss comes a loss of a sense of safety, of control and understanding of the world we live in. As a result, the local corporate concerns she investigates frequently sprawl into international territories. For instance, Ice embezzles money from hashslingrz through the Middle Eastern *hawala* transfer system (Pynchon

81); Russian torpedoes Misha and Grisha's involvement with Lester Traipse (370-1);

and Maxine's son's krav maga instructor, Emma Levin, in all likelihood being an ex-

Mossad sleeper cell (414). Everywhere boundaries once thought permanent and

inviolable are proven fluid, and, perhaps more important to justified paranoia, easily

crossed by actants who are somehow interconnected. Safety, then, can no longer be

granted by the boundaries of borders, as the terrorist attacks of 9/11 made clear with

their disruption of the Virgin Land myth, and cannot be ensured by law enforcement

institutions that are bound to jurisdictional limitations that the criminals are not. Justified

paranoia, then, motivates subjects through the personalization of fear to look out for

their own safety on an individual level, and, without access and the security of definitive

knowledge, any action is justifiable in the name of safety. For instance, when Maxine

and Windust take cover from an unseen gunman in the streets of China Town, she, in

broad daylight, responds by opening fire into a random open window that may or may

not contain the shooter, after which the shooting just so happens to stop long enough

for them to escape (Pynchon 392). This action, taken to defend their safety, may have

injured innocents and may not have even been directed toward the actual shooter. Yet,

under the ideologeme of justified paranoia, the action is a justified because it is done

with the intention to pursue their safety, and Maxine suffers no subsequent punishment

or even judgment for her dangerous retaliation.

However, in America after 9/11, despite epistemic uncertainty creating webs of

paranoid suspicions, the desire for justice, answers, truth, and the identification of those

responsible were major concerns. After all, terrorists can often be identified individually,

but finding out who is behind their attacks and even the motivation for the attacks often

becomes lost in an increasingly dissipating causative network of financial backers,

political organizations, and opaque charity organizations funded by individuals who may

not even be aware that they are funding terrorist exploits. At this level, *Bleeding Edge*

ideologically reframes the question of who is to blame by simply finding these

conclusions irrelevant and impossible. Instead, what matters is that the karmic

"accounts are balanced" in the end (Pynchon 370). This implies the existence of a

personal sense of justice that is at best vaguely defined, but one that is enforced by

individual acts of judgment that Maxine and others in the narrative carryout, actions that

are justified because the law in the storyworld is no longer able catch up with

information age criminals and mete out justice. For instance, when investigating the

murder of Lester Traipse, the police believe that the murder weapon points to a KGB

assassination, but, as a hybrid figure, Maxine can access her contacts outside the law

to find out that it is only an urban legend that this is a Russian weapon. Rather, she

finds out that it is more likely that the weapon was used to make the murder look like a

Russian hit in order to throw off the investigation (206). Again, there is no resolution for

the crime, and even the clues that Maxine finds are not definitive, but the police

consistently prove ineffective throughout the narrative, and only Maxine is able to figure

out that Windust was the likely killer. This sense that vigilante justice as the only option

for Maxine to set things right reflects the way that America after 9/11 repeatedly violated

international laws, and made exceptions to its own laws, to hunt down and interrogate

terrorist suspects both at home and internationally, such as in Abu Ghraib and the illegal

wiretapping of US citizens. Under the ideologeme of justified paranoia, the law is

ineffective and limited, and individuals must be free to take justice into their own hands, especially if they want to ensure the safety of their loved ones.

Another danger of the ideologeme of justified paranoia is that it functions as an economic motivator and as an infinite generator of forever imminent threats, creating pre-cognitive, vague affective performatives, open signifiers easily available for articulation to just about any political aim. As Pepper notes, the foreign terrorist attacks of 9/11 that violated the Virgin Land myth, threatening the stability of our belief in the efficacy of traditional borders, prompted a sort of conservative backlash through the "reassertion of traditional accounts of sovereignty, especially in the popular imaginary, pitting 'here'…against 'there'" (407). Rather than diminish paranoia, this established a contradiction between traditional geopolitical concepts and the extant transnational totality that only served to inflame paranoid sensibilities. After all, are the traditional concepts, and the ramped-up securitization that have been implemented to re-assert them, really just a way to hide the "real" connection behind all things? In a similar fashion, the War on Terror resulting from 9/11 has become the ultimate war of paranoia, one without end, in which the evil terrorist might always still be out there. We can fight, and the ideological message is that we must fight whatever we fear, but we can never be sure the war is over as evil may still be out there. This creates a political logic that is an endless justification for furthering war and increasing surveillance, whether toward outside threats or the possible internal threat located among our own citizens. In short, paranoia can become a constant, low-grade affectual state, a conditioned background static that can be utilized as an ideological tool ripe for manipulation and the infinite re-assignation toward any imagined threat, whether present or not. In this state, paranoia

can lay dormant as a form of low-level fear, in Massumi's terms, that spreads throughout American culture, creating an endless stream of justification not only for worry and anxiety, but also for random, seemingly "unreasoned" action or lashing out. After all, maybe there isn't a threat and maybe we actually are being ideologically manipulated by dominant culture, but, well, maybe we aren't? What if the threats are real? Can we afford to ignore the possibility of a threat, even if it is unlikely? And thus starts the infinite and uncertain ball-rolling of paranoia, one that appears haphazard, but becomes justified under the lens of this ideologeme.

At the third horizon, combining these two genres of the postmodern maximalist novel and the detective novel allows Pynchon to register the long history of American epistemic ideology, from the objective certainty that we can use information to find definitive resolutions, to the rhizomatic information overload that not only prevents resolutions but overrides a belief in personal agency, leaving us with only the ideologeme of justified paranoia to navigate our daily life. Effectively, this combination of genres allows the novel to demonstrate why objective resolutions are gone, while still combining together as a postmodern narrative with the drive, interest, and momentum of a detective novel. However, as a true, consummate fear narrative, this novel leaves us with no hope for the resolution of the fearful state of the world, but instead valorizes the ideologeme of justified paranoia as the necessary means of survival in a world rhizomatically interconnected by oppressive centralization around nexuses of capital. For instance, while Maxine champions the internet as a site of almost radical freedom, her father, Ernie, reminds us that it was the military who made the original form of the internet, DARPAnet, and that it is a technology steeped in Cold War ideologies of

control, not freedom: "It was conceived in sin, the worst possible. As it kept growing, it never stopped carrying in its heart a bitter-cold death wish for the planet, and don't think anything has changed, kid" (Pynchon 420). As such, the novel asserts that the internet still serves the desires of the wealthy ruling class, who continue to use it to pursue their goals of infinite capital accumulation in ways that seem inexorably indeterminate and invisible to all but the most skilled social detectives learned in the arts paranoia. In addition, we see corporate and private interests contaminating Maxine's world as Gabriel Ice buys up internet infrastructure to control its future (156); real estate barons gentrifying and sterilizing Times Square in a process that Maxine compares to Disneyfication; and the suspicious post-9/11 hack and subsequent commercialization of DeepArcher, a site on the Deep Web that once offered those skilled enough to get in untraceable freedom on the web. After all, at the end, the true threat is revealed not to be Gabriel Ice after all, but the shadowy figures he must work for, the "Death Lords" or "overlords [he] always worked for" (474-5). Even if the proposed threat of Ice has been identified and encountered at the end, the system—i.e., global late modern capitalism— that gives birth to such capitalists remains shadowy, unresolved, and, in their insubstantiality, a forever imminent, possible threat.

Seen in a Utopian way, this novel points to the use of paranoia as an intuitive means of navigating the rhizomatic postmodern world, as opposed to the more modern notion of using rational, definitive reasoning, which it asserts is no longer capable of grasping the maximalist complexities of Maxine's storyworld, and, by extension, our contemporary late capitalist world. While, as noted above, the narrative clearly demonstrates that paranoia is far from a perfect solution to the problem, its use of

paranoia seems to grope toward something just beyond its comprehension that would allow society to unite as a collective force against the distributed systems of hegemony, a means of not just surviving, but of collectively thriving in the social rhizome. Through the fear theme of paranoia, it almost seems to be grasping for a sort of affective reasoning, one that is pre-linguistic and can navigate the felt intensities of affective potentials in an intra-cognitive way that is much more rapid and diffuse than filtering these same potentials through ideological interpretations. After all, Maxine's acute paranoid instincts do allow her to create a collective web of human contacts that she utilizes throughout the narrative in a way that is unrestricted by the traditional boundaries of legality or sovereignty and helps her stay one step ahead of the antagonists. It allows her to navigate her reality instinctually and find practical solutions to issues that are just beyond her rational understanding, such as the exact connection between the murder of Lester Traipse and Gabriel Ice or who really is responsible for the death of Windust. Further, her intuitive navigation of the social rhizome of her fictional world allows her to survive the threat posed in the narrative by Gabriel Ice, something that may not have been possible if Maxine had attempted a rational strategy of arrest and prosecution. While far from perfect, Maxine's intuitive use of paranoia seems to point beyond it toward a means of social collectivity through the navigating and negotiating of intra-cognitive affective potentials that utilizes the connections of the rhizome in ways that appear to exceed the individual human capacity to reason through ideological lenses, as we do today.

In an alternate direction, which is likely the novel's intended aim, we could also say that the novel is Utopian in that it serves to raise the class consciousness of the

reader by exposing them to the larger historical reality of late capitalism so that we can recognize the vital historical moments of collective potential that have been lost so that we can better recognize them in the future. It asserts that these moments of opportunity for Utopic liberation, such as the countercultural movement of the 1960s, the Internet, and 9/11 itself, have each fallen under the oppressive forces of corporatization and commercialization. As Jason Siegel notes, in its quest for knowledge of the total system, the novel does aim to "offer one final possibility for resistance" by raising our class consciousness (24). As this novel explores the historical foundation behind many of our current and naturalized technologies, such as the Internet, texting, smartphones, smartwatches, and even YouTube, it helps "to make readers more conscious of their position within a technological global capitalist system" (25). As such, *Bleeding Edge* shows how the advancements forwarded by the technologies of the information age have made the identification of causation and definitive solutions to threats practically impossible as their origins and perpetrators range across distributed, rhizomatic, and transnational networks. From a different perspective, Albert Rolls presents another potentially liberatory aspect by asserting that the framing technique used in the narrative by beginning it with Maxine walking her children (Ziggy and Otis) to school when they do not need the supervision anymore and ending it with her children getting ready for and going to school by themselves points to a future wherein the next generation does not need our help, guidance, and, potentially, denotes their resistance to the status quo set by their parent generation.

While Rolls's other interpretations may have some currency [especially in relation to the videogame depicted in the novel, "If Looks Could Kill" (Pynchon 34)], I cannot

help but see the ending of the novel differently. Considering how recent 9/11 occurred in the story and the fact that one of her children were nearly just attacked by a possibly-privately-contracted gunman who targeted her children because of Maxine's investigation, it is hard not to see her last gaze at her children as fearful for what the future has in store for them. After all, as the text states when she realizes that she may have placed her children in danger, "Every place in her day she's taken for granted is no longer safe, because the only question it's come down to is, where will Ziggy and Otis be protected from harm?" (412). Further, even during the last gaze at her children leaving for school, the text reminds us of "the spiders and bots" that still threaten to corporatize and control her children's future (476). Since we have been positioned to sympathize with Maxine, it is not the children's freedom and independence that we exult in and feel at the end, but Maxine's paranoid fear of what their future has in store for them. After all, the system is still intact, the guilty parties are still free, order has not been restored, and her children are going out into that chaotic and seemingly unfixable world without her protection. In this scene, the threats generated by her object of fear, the transnational and dehumanizingly rational late capitalist system, have become re-articulated as personalized threats not just targeting Maxine anymore but now turning on her children (and her husband when they momentarily fear that he might have been killed in 9/11). The message at the end is the enduring nature of paranoia and the personalization of fear combined as personalized paranoia, a fear theme felt by Maxine after 9/11, and, by extension, throughout American culture after 9/11. As such, personalized paranoia has become especially difficult to move beyond, as it continually

asserts that future threats are always imminent since we cannot know that they have been resolved.

As a result, the ending of the novel refuses to return to the sense of safety typically offered by the detective novel, and in this way escapes this genre's politically oppressive and conservative sense of comfort in the status quo. Yet, at the same time, the diegetic exuberance of the postmodern maximalist novel occludes any sense of a way out of the bind, as the perspective of the rhizomatic plotting only offers personalized paranoia as a replacement for any sense of agency. This sense of paranoia, in turn, justifies self-righteous aggression because of the mystifying maximalist overload of information, resulting in devastating real-world consequences and compromising any sense of ethical American behavior in domestic or international relations. However, as Jameson states, narratives such as this that pit the characters against conspiracies often must end with the threat still at large and tensions unresolved, because in the end "the conspiracy wins, if it does…, simply because it is collective and the victims, taken one by one in their isolation, are not" (*Geopolitical* 66). As such, in this conspiratorial storyworld, the future is not safe, Maxine's family is not safe, and her paranoid imagination, the same one that has allowed her to detect crime and keep herself safe throughout the novel, now tells her to be very afraid for her family's future as the threat is forever immanent and ever-present. However, despite appearances, this ending is indeed still liberating because it increases our social awareness by demonstrating how the dead end of the ideologeme of justified paranoia is ultimately oppressive, creating only a lived experience of constant anxiety, one in which solutions to systematic problems seem impossible, and, thereby, future

improvements to the world seem beyond control, killing any real sense of human agency. Similar to *The Zero*, we can read *Bleeding Edge* as employing a fearfully ambiguous ending in order to motivate social change by increasing our awareness, only while Walter arrives at this point by exploring the felt experience of the traumatized post-9/11 American, Pynchon utilizes the historic origins of America's present conditions and the oppressive effects of contemporary American fear to drive home a similar point: act now before it is too late.

EXCLUSION AND CONTAMINATION IN KHAKPOUR'S *SONS AND OTHER FLAMMABLE OBJECTS*

To continue our exploration of primary fear themes in the 9/11 novel begun in the analyses of the two texts above, we will now move our focus away from fear narratives authored by the dominant, white, male hegemonic group, and turn our gaze toward fear narratives authored from various marginalized positions. First, we will analyze Porochista Khakpour's 2007 novel, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects*, as a fear narrative seen primarily through the lens of the fear themes of exclusion and contamination. Overall, *Sons*, is a 9/11 novel even more ignored by academia than *The Zero*, as my research did not turn up any academic articles on the text, but only book reviews, interviews with the author, and her autobiographical newspaper feature articles. It is impossible to tell if this academic oversight could be attributable to its marginalized authorship, but *Sons* is certainly a text whose stylistic complexity, multilayered ideological explorations of pan-Middle Eastern concerns after 9/11, and dark humor make it a 9/11 novel that deserves more attention.

Sons centers on explaining, depicting, and resolving the tension between Darius Adam and his son, Xerxes, as the narrative centers around a miscommunication that causes them to vow to never speak to each other again. When Xerxes is twenty-five, Darius visits his son in New York, and they attempt a series of strained conversations. In one instance, Xerxes asks his father about an incidence when Xerxes was twelve and his father had attempted to save the neighborhood birds from the cats of their apartment complex, calling it "the whole bird thing," a part of his childhood that he had never quite understood (Khakpour, *Sons* 28). Darius misunderstands his question and instead tells him how when Darius was a child in Iran, they would capture doves, light them on fire, and release them to fly off into the sky to burn like "shooting stars" (31). Unprepared for this story that Darius blurts out like a confessional, an apparent attempt to testify about this childhood trauma, Xerxes tells his father that he had never known about that and was only asking about the neighborhood birds and cats from his childhood. Darius is embarrassed by this social misstep, this unwanted sharing of a moment so emotionally raw for him, and bursts in rage at his son, exclaiming that he came from this past, that Xerxes cannot hide from his past, and that he should just accept it already instead of trying to deny it. Xerxes, unprepared for this response, emotionally shuts down at this point, and the two part ways vowing to never speak to each other again. The novel spends much of its time exploring their past that led up to this event, and then moving ahead to how witnessing the attacks of 9/11, Xerxes romantic relationship with Suzanne, their attempted trip to Iran, and Xerxes's ultimate nervous breakdown all lead to the father and son to once again talk to each other on the phone, re-uniting the two men and breaking their vow of silence at the end.

To relate this story, the novel is primarily told through the three perspectives of the Adam family, Darius, Xerxes, and his mother Lala, through extradiegetic third-person narrative sections focalized separately on each of these characters in turn. This constellation of perspectives limits the storyworld only to the view of the Adam family itself, an immigrant family excluded from its former home in Iran. Many Iranian immigrants fleeing the 1979 Iranian Revolution came to America forming what is often called Tehrangeles, a diaspora consisting of a large population of affluent Iranian refugees in Los Angeles. However, as Khakpour notes, the novel ended up becoming somewhat autobiographical, as the characters in the novel, much like Khakpour's own family, lacked the financial means to move to Tehrangeles, and instead had to move to more affordable apartments (Khakpour, Interview), which in the novel are the fictional Eden Gardens, where "there were secret immigrants everywhere in the neighborhood" (Khakpour, *Sons* 87). As one of these family units of secret immigrants themselves, the Adam family is an isolated cultural unit, a nuclear family, and the novel formally represents this sense of exclusion by limiting its focalizers primarily to only their perspectives.

However, the real focus of the narrative is on Xerxes and his efforts to negotiate his Iranian heritage with his identity as an American, a journey that Sepidah Saremi aptly describes as "the young protagonist's initial rejection of, and ultimate steps toward reconciliation with, an identity that feels untenable, uncertain, and not his own, an identity complicated by geography, family, language, and current events" (201). Rejecting his heritage, upon graduating from high school Xerxes flees to New York with the aid of a college scholarship, only to become a witness of the attacks of 9/11. As

Jessica Boudakian notes, "9/11 initiates Xerxes' relationship with his girlfriend Suzanne and sets in motion events that resolve the novel's father-son tension. This vision of 9/11 is still tragic, bleak, and terrible, but it nonetheless encourages readers to move forward and, in whatever way possible, to progress" (13). Yet, far from uniting the Adams with a national sense of American patriotism, the attacks only seem to be the catalyst that bonds the family itself back together. As Harlow and Dundes note, this may be a common reaction to 9/11 for many marginalized groups: "Rather than bring people together, this tragedy may have served to solidify already existing racial and ethnic divisions by making explicit the previously hidden boundaries of American inclusion and exclusion and further alienating already marginalized populations" (453-4).

With all of this in mind, through the lenses of exclusion and contamination we can interpret *Sons* in the following way. At the first horizon, we can see the formal contradiction as the separate, limited third-person perspectives typical of the American immigrant novel are repeatedly interrupted by the voices of other characters in places where the established rules of its limited third person perspectives should not allow. This crossing of the conventional borders of narratorial perspective introduces elements of the maximalist postmodern novel's polyphony, the inclusion of numerous voices, into what I am calling polyphonous interruptions, which begin to bring the isolated characters of the Adam family together, seeming to merge the extradiegetic and diegetic levels of the text for both the readers and the characters themselves. This allows the text to resolve the seemingly unresolvable issue of Xerxes integrating his Iranian heritage, as represented by his father, with his identity as an American, a feat that was especially difficult to conceive of during the Islamophobia that erupted after 9/11. At the second

horizon, the characters can be seen in conflict with the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences, one that pulls Xerxes between the forces of his Iranian heritage and Americanization, an ideologeme that the novel asserts can be demystified only if we discard the toxic elements of hypermasculinity by balancing it with a more unifying femininity. The novel's resolution to this social contradiction points to an imaginary resolution to the perceived irreconcilable differences between the East and the West that leads toward reconciled, hybrid, and integrated individuals and futures. At the third horizon, the novel utilizes postmodern polyphonous interruptions to generically hybridize the American immigrant novel in a way that creates a formal logic of amalgamation permitting Xerxes to strive toward the utopic and seemingly impossible subjectivity that allows the hybridizing the East and the West. Yet it does so only after relaying a narrative that delves into the oppression of the fears of exclusion and contamination, even if its hopeful ending of integration offers a Utopian hint of a future wherein the West and the Middle East are no longer in opposition.

At the first horizon, the novel resolves its generic contradiction of integrating a maximalist postmodern novel and an American immigrant novel through the formal resolution of what I am calling polyphonous interruptions, breaks in the extradiegetic limited third person perspectives in which multiple perspectives converse together momentarily. These polyphonous interruptions have the function of bringing the isolated characters of the Adam family together, allowing Xerxes to achieve what often seems impossible in the real world: to begin to synthesize his Iranian heritage with his American national subjectivity, becoming a functional, hybrid individual. In the real world of post-9/11 American Islamophobia, this sort of identity integration was especially

challenging as the media and the political rhetoric of the time made it seem that what made one American was to not be Middle Eastern, a paradigm of exclusion that believes that these two identities are to be forever separated by irreconcilable differences.

Most of *Sons* portrays this experience of exclusion—from American culture, Iranian culture, and even each other within the family unit—but as personified in the character of Xerxes who tries to find some viable solution to living with these two sides of his identity. The novel depicts the story fragments of the three members of the Adam family primarily through separate sections of limited third person perspectives: Darius, who often represents their Iranian heritage resisting American cultural contamination; Xerxes, who tries to escape his heritage in order to assimilate and avoid American exclusion; and, Lala, who often acts as a bridge between them and perhaps attains the most successfully hybridized identity of the three of them. Yet, separating the three family members into different third-person sections, a formal convention often used in the immigrant novel, only serves to heighten this sense of mutual isolation even from each other, as at the level of the story, the misunderstandings, traumas, and tensions between the characters prevent them from being able to communicate with each other effectively. In each of these sections, "Khakpour invokes the past through the characters' remembrances" (Boudakian 12), and this has the effect of trapping their fragmented stories inside their heads, only allowing miscommunications to fracture their identities further, isolating them from each other for much of the narrative.

However, even with these generic conventions of the immigrant novel present, Khakpour states in regards to *Sons,* "I wrote it actually in some ways [as] a reaction

against…the traditional immigrant narrative" (Khakpour, Interview). Khakpour instead

states that she sees herself as a "language writer," in that she prefers to focus on

playing with language, and states that she sets up a "maximalist tone" in the first few

sentences of the novel, below, that set the pace for the rest of the text:

> *Another in the long line of misunderstandings in their shared history, what*
>
> *caused Xerxes and Darius Adam to vow never to speak again, really began with*
>
> *a misplaced anecdote, specifically an incident that happened many years before*
>
> *in the summer of Xerxes's twelfth year, known always in the Adam household as*
>
> *'the summer when Darius Adam began terrorizing the neighbor's cats,' known*
>
> *privately to Xerxes's future self as 'the summer in which I realized something was*
>
> *very wrong with my father, something that would cause us to never have a*
>
> *normal father-son bond—the summer, years later, accidently triggering the very*
>
> *last straw that would cause us to never communicate again.' Ever? 'Well, wishful*
>
> *thinking, for starters.'* (Khakpour, *Sons* 1, italics in original)

The maximalist tone we find here, with its strings of clauses united in rambling, almost

stream of consciousness-sounding flow of language, finds outlet in the diegetic

exuberance of much of the novel, as the formal complexity of her sentences seem to

convey the difficulty the family has in communicating through the many traumas of their

past and the difficulties of their present.

Yet, it is the maximalist use of polyphony that allows these separate family

identities to begin to integrate, setting up the narrative for the moment of reconciliation

at the end. To Ercolino, polyphony in the maximalist novel allows multiple voices to be

heard, or, as he explains it, "The languages, the registers, the styles, the genres, the

knowledge and voices of the various characters are there accumulated paroxistically, creating an extraordinary openness and dialogic richness" (247). Yet, in maximalist terms *Sons* restricts itself to relatively few voices. Instead, the polyphony of the narrative comes in the form of diegetic interruptions wherein another character's voice interjects where it seems like it could not, if the text were following the conventional limits of the third person perspective. By doing so, these polyphonous interruptions allow the characters to converse at the extradiegetic level of the discourse of the text in ways that they could not at the level of the story, the linear temporality of the fictional lives of the characters themselves (Chatman 19). These polyphonous interruptions manifest in the novel as brief moments in which the consciousness of Xerxes can intrude across the boundaries of perspective from which they are otherwise excluded, and even Darius and Lala can communicate retrospectively about the events of the story.

In the text, these polyphonous interruptions come in numerous forms, serving initially as puzzles for the reader to solve by often leaving it up to the reader to determine who these voices belong to and how they can appear where they do. For instance, the italicized introductory paragraph, quoted above, at first sounds like the voice of an omniscient narrator who describes the narrative's central problem of the miscommunications causing Darius and Xerxes to never talk again, thereby establishing the situation and plot of the whole novel. Yet, the paragraph ends with a negation that tells us that they actually will talk again, but that it may not occur the way the narrator would like it to happen. This begs the question of the identity of the narrator, a hint of which can be found in the tone of its last few words: "…never to communicate again.'

Ever? 'Well, wishful thinking, for starters'" (*Sons* 1). While this narrator could be some other voice not present in the novel, the fact that it is not excited that the father and son will talk again implies that we are hearing Xerxes acting as a narrator and, perhaps, either as the retrospective author of this entire tale or at least as one of its readers with the capability of adding in his own commentary.

Yet, Xerxes as the omniscient narrator is not the only way that he and others can interrupt the discourse. Xerxes's thoughts often intrude in other people's sections, such as in Lala's section where she seems to be engaging in what Chatman would call a conceptual interior monologue (188), one that describes the death of her parents. Xerxes thoughts in italics interrupt this by interjecting that Iranians are obsessed with the tragedies of their past, but Lala does not seem to notice the interruption and continues with her monologue (Khakpour, *Sons* 59-60). This polyphonic intrusion of a second voice makes us question our understanding of the narration, as what appeared to be Lala's thoughts suddenly now seem to depict that Lala had told Xerxes this story before and that he was tired of hearing it again. Placing this interruption here implies that these are not her private thoughts at all, but a level of narrative that is accessible to Xerxes, if not to others as well. Similarly, when Darius tells his story of Xerxes, King of Persia, his son's namesake, the Xerxes of the novel makes comments that sound like he is listening his father tell these stories to him as a child. For instance, when discussing the historical character of Xerxes, who "while interesting, ruined everything" (64), we see the following dialogue:

> They say it was his vain ways and the prospect of topping his father's fame that
> fueled him so crazily.

And why am I named after this total loser?

Because after Darius, Xerxes comes next, no stopping it, son—enough! Besides, some call it a kind of greatness—Xerxes became a legend in his own way. (65, italics in original)

At this point, Xerxes interruptions are either his conversations with his parents, or his comments on stories he was familiar with during his upbringing. While Xerxes interrupts unheard in Lala's section, he is directly conversing with his father in the latter section. However, it is not always Xerxes who can interrupt, as at one point an "older Darius" intrudes on his own conceptual interior monologue to "talk" in italics across time to an older version of his son not present in the story in order to explain his inability to communicate at the time (74). Moreover, these interruptions are not always limited to one voice, as a later section written as an extradiegetic screenplay script allows Lala and Darius to discuss the events of the story to an unknown audience as if they were reading the text along with the reader, and then Xerxes interrupts with comments on their comments that Darius and Lala seem unable to hear (91-94). Further, one of Darius's sections is interrupted by what appears to be a response by Xerxes, as "[i]f his son had been there at that moment" (210), but a response of which the story-level Darius is not aware.

In total, these polyphonous interruptions allow the characters to interact across the discourse of the narrative in ways that they were not able to within the events of the story, giving the impression that you are reading the text along with the Adam family with Xerxes able to get in the last comment at all point. The polyphonous interruptions effectively act as commentary made by the characters who are reading the discourse

along with the reader. In this way, these interruptions imply early in the novel that the family has actually already reconciled the problems described in the narrative as they actually are talking with each other at this extradiegetic level. From this vantage, the family is now retrospectively looking back at the events of the story. With this formal logic in place, the reader can easily believe the novel's resolution when they bridge their differences, because the polyphonic interruptions prove to be evidence that it has already happened. Therefore, within the novel's complex temporal logics, the family's reunion is inevitable. The polyphonous interruptions make it perfectly acceptable that by the end of the narrative Xerxes can resolve this unresolvable contradiction and come to some sort of peace with both the Iranian and American parts of his identity. Further supporting this interpretation, it is worth noting that as the narrative progresses, these interruptions occur less frequently, as the text needs progressively less formal help to bring the characters together as their reconciliation becomes increasingly imminent and logically inevitable. In total, the polyphonous interruptions are used in the novel in ways that defy the normal markings of voice as intradiegetic or extradiegetic, and thereby function to simultaneously get the family talking at some level while refusing to say how or where this could happen within the logics of the storyworld.

At the second horizon, the three central characters of *Sons* can be re-interpreted as ideologues in a social clash with the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences, a belief made increasingly popular after the 9/11 attacks. This pseudoidea essentially posits that the West and the Middle East are so different that they can never work out their problems and exist in harmony. Thus, the only solution to these differences is to engage in a never-ending War on Terror that can only lead to the utter destruction of the

opposition. Yet, this ideologeme leaves individuals who are both Middle Eastern and American, such as Xerxes, in a difficult and seemingly impossible situation. Is it true that they can never integrate these two aspects of their identity into a functional, hybrid form? *Sons* argues against the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences, as its conclusion shows that reconciliation is possible, even if in the novel it is shown to be extremely difficult to achieve to the point of driving Xerxes to a nervous breakdown. Formally, the ambiguous identity of the interrupting voices heightens this difficulty for readers who are often not given any textual clues as to who they are listening to or from what point in time the intruding voice belongs. Further, it asserts that the belief in irreconcilable differences can be demystified by working past the more toxic elements of post-9/11 hypermasculinity and balancing in aspects of a more unifying feminine approach. Of course, by extension, the narrative symbolically asserts that this real-world confrontation of the classes between the hegemonic American culture and the Middle East, whether domestic or abroad, actually can be reconciled in the same way.

The novel captures this struggle over the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences through the two opposing cultural pulls that Xerxes experiences, his native Iranian culture and Americanization. Xerxes experiences this first pull towards his traditional Iranian culture through the urgings of his parents, Darius and Lala. However, Xerxes soon learns that his Iranian culture can often exclude him from being perceived as belonging to American culture, as when his childhood friend had gotten revenge on him by drawing a camel on a Christmas card to Xerxes, an incident that was his first real encounter with racism (Khakpour, *Sons* 70). Yet, part of the reason that Darius and Lala choose to remain excluded and, at least initially, resist assimilation, is because, as

Khakpour notes, among Iranian immigrants who had fled the Iranian Revolution, "there was always this idea that Iranians would go back to Iran that even Iranians perpetuated" (Boudakian 14). This belief in their temporary existence in America cast assimilation in a fearful light as a force of contamination that might threaten to overwrite the Iranian identity they would need when they returned to their home country. However, this sense of living for a future return to Iran leads the family to the awkward condition of exclusion from the American culture surrounding them, and, as they learn by the end of the novel and as Saremi notes, "it is ineffective to try to return to a pre-revolutionary Iran, as it no longer exists" (202). Instead, this dream leaves the family unit isolated from the world around them. Khakpour captures this unmoored unhomeliness in her own childhood's felt experience of exclusion and isolation from American culture: "[I would] think about my father and mother and me as a galaxy of just three planets, hopelessly alone, revolving around and around and around ourselves, while circling epicenter America, a big beaming blue and white marble" (Khakpour, "Pool Waters").

The second force of Americanization exerts an almost overwhelming pull on Xerxes as a first-generation American immigrant. This pull takes form in nearly all of his interactions outside the home, such as at school and through the media, particularly in his obsession with *I Dream of Jeannie* (Khakpour, *Sons* 89). Lala and Darius cannot seem to understand his obsession with the show, and, misunderstanding it as a girl's show, fear he may be gay, an identity that could prove a permanent form of exclusion from the heteronormativity of their Iranian culture. As a result of being steeped in this culture, Lala believes that homosexual men do not exist in Iran, and Darius believes that any homosexual men who do exist in Iran hide their sexuality out of fear of persecution

(93). Yet, Xerxes is unable to explain to them or anyone what he finds so appealing about the show, and can only express it solipsistically within his own narrative sections: for him, Jeannie was an escape from his heritage, as to him, in part, she represented the opposite of the "dark, doom-loving, heavy with the weight of history" worldview that he learned from his parents and associates with Iran (94). Darius works endlessly in the hopes of preventing his son's contamination by Americanization, fearing that it will incorporate his son. Yet, the persistent evidence of Xerxes's contamination and his willful exclusion of his Iranian heritage are what often makes it so hard for Darius to accept his son as he grows up, leading to Darius's outburst at Xerxes in New York just before they vow to never talk again: "You can't face that you were built of my past—hell, even the past before me—can you? You've decided to be of no past!...But it doesn't work, I am telling you!" (33).

One result of this struggle of forces on Xerxes is his learned fear of mixing the two worlds (Khakpour, *Sons* 34), a fear that works toward supporting the thesis of irreconcilable differences. Throughout his life, Xerxes has come to believe that the two worlds of his heritage and American culture should never mix, as things repeatedly go horribly wrong for Xerxes whenever they do. His solution is "compartmentalization," that he calls his "dual-citizenship agreement" (136) and "his double agent status" (137). However, the narrative reveals that these things go wrong not because of the mixing of the two cultures, but because of other forces of which Xerxes is completely unaware. For example, in one scene, Xerxes sneaks his first female friend, Sam, to the Adam apartment, he has his first kiss, and he accidently breaks a frame containing a family picture of them in Disneyland. When his parents return home early, Sam sneaks out,

but when Darius finds the broken frame, he beats Xerxes severely, leaving two black

eyes (145). At this point, Xerxes vows to leave home immediately after high school,

using college as a way out to get as far away from his family, and the heritage that

came along with them, as possible. Interestingly, it is a feminine force in the novel, Sam,

who almost integrates the two sides of Xerxes at this point in his life, nearly mixing his

worlds together, forcing him to "consider his existence so comprehensively" (157).

However, from this perspective, we could say that her marginalized position as a minor

does not provide nearly enough power to contend with Darius' hypermasculinity,

resulting in a backlash that has the opposite effect, as the trauma of the beating creates

an almost permanent wedge between Xerxes's two worlds.

Finding his opportunity, Xerxes moves across the country to New York to go to

college. As Saremi notes, "New York City, a place synonymous with anonymity, affords

Xerxes a fantasy of reinvention" (202). Here he willingly succumbs to Americanization,

shedding his heritage, and his family, entirely. Yet, during 9/11 he meets Suzanne on a

rooftop, and their romantic relationship is the first step to leading Xerxes back toward

integrating the two parts of his identity. Saremi asserts that Suzanne's own name

denotes her important role in the novel: "In Farsi…her name is 'needle'; appropriately,

then, she is both the catalyst that causes him to examine himself in the context of his

relationship with Darius and, later, a driving force in threading together their

relationship" (202). Yet, Xerxes's struggle with the two irreconcilable parts of his identity

come to a climax when, through a series of events, he and Suzanne set out to fly to Iran

to meet Darius, where his father hopes to make a return visit to their homeland. This

mixing of the two worlds sends Xerxes into a panic attack, causing him to be detained at

a German airport, questioned, and returned to America to the JFK airport. Yet, it is the final feminine influence in his life that finally unites him with Darius, and, hence finds reconciliation between the West and the Middle East, as Lala, who travels to New York in what seems like a wasted trip to find her lost brother and visit Darius, just so happens to be in town when Xerxes is sent back to America. She brings Xerxes back home, and finally gets him on the phone with Darius (Khakpour, *Sons* 396), the first step in the process of their reconciliation and the breaking of the oath to never speak to each other again. By opening himself to his father, an ideologue of his Iranian heritage, while being in the space of his New York apartment, its status as his home making it a psychological representation of his self, we see Xerxes first allowing his heritage to have a place in his Americanized New York life, and thereby taking the first step to becoming a hybrid identity that functionally integrates these two, supposedly irreconcilable, cultures. In the end, through Xerxes's struggle, the novel symbolically asserts the falsehood of the ideologeme of irreconcilable difference by showing that these two worlds can come together.

Yet, it notes that the way to reconciliation is through balancing the forces of hypermasculinity with the mediating forces of femininity. The hypermasculine personality that post-9/11 culture called for as compensation for the violation of the Virgin Land myth is characterized both by the individuality that Xerxes enacts by moving to New York, and by the taciturn verbal expressions, physical violence, and emotional reticence that leads Darius to the initial miscommunication that starts their vow to never talk again. And their competitive desire to win the resulting dispute has become a toxic form of what R. W. Connell calls hegemonic masculinity (76). Thomas Scheff states,

"the hypermasculine pattern leads to *competition,* rather than *connection* between persons" (3). As such, this dysfunctional post-9/11 hypermasculinity only serves to prevent reconciliation, seeming to prove the irreconcilable differences thesis. Yet, it was only through the introduction of compassion, forgiveness, communication, and the efforts toward social reunification taken by the two feminine forces of the novel, Lala (representing Xerxes's Iranian heritage) and Suzanne (representing Xerxes's Americanized identity), that reconciliation is possible at the end. Seen in this light, *Sons* asserts that it is only through the re-introduction of aspects of femininity into our culture and international relations policies that post-9/11 America can achieve a sense of balance, connection, and reconciliation that would allow a future in which both the West and Middle East might come together in a way that does not result in the destruction of one or even both sides.

Of course, similar to how, at the formal level, the polyphonous interruptions only allow the reunification of the family to occur via an imaginary extradiegetic level removed from the more realistic possibilities of the diegetic level, the resolution of the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences through the introduction of feminine influence in Xerxes life at the end also occurs within the narrative along somewhat unrealistic and accidental means. After all, Xerxes only meets Suzanne by accident on a rooftop during the attacks on 9/11, and Lala only incidentally happens to be in New York at the end because she is searching for her brother. The artificiality of these coincidences, much like the experimental artificiality of the polyphonic interruptions, highlights the actual difficulty of arriving at these same resolutions in real life. If the imaginary resolution to the narrative's contradictions seem somewhat contrived, it is likely because the actual

world resolutions to these problems seem so far removed from the post-9/11 culture in which Khakpour was writing. In effect, at both horizons so far, the novel presents an imaginary if not somewhat romantic solution to its contradictions, and, because it has to resort to such artificial and unrealistic means to arrive at these solutions, it simultaneously suggests how hard it would be to reproduce these solutions in real life, in which such atemporal interruptions and coincidences are not realistic or practical answers to political or social problems.

At the third horizon, *Sons* is a generic contradiction between the American immigrant novel and the maximalist postmodern novel. As a result, the isolated third person perspectives of the immigrant novel and its focus on the processes and problems of assimilation are mollified and symbolically resolved through a curious use of postmodern pastiche, allowing for a sense of hybridity rather than cultural incorporation. Its use of polyphonous interruptions is in many ways a unifying form of pastiche, bringing various conventions of other genres together, such as the omniscient narrator, screenplay script dialog, and extradiegetic commentary. As Jameson notes, the use of pastiche in postmodern visual works has become a "'form of commodity reification'" (*Postmodernism* 18). However, rather than just reifying the genres that these insertions borrow from, the textual representations of the genres as used in this novel utilizes their implicit historical and social processes to symbolically create a generically hybrid narrative that integrates the now culturally hybrid character of Xerxes. At the same time, the narrative trades the typical narrative closure of the immigrant novel for a classic postmodern novel ending of indeterminacy and contingency, as even though Darius and Xerxes once again talk over the phone, there is no indication of how

permanent this reunification ends up being, or even if Darius responds to Xerxes's

voice. Rather, the narrative's Utopian ending of reconnection and reconciliation is

almost as imaginary as the polyphonous interruptions or the coincidences we found at

the last two horizons. Rather than explicitly depicting their moment of connection, the

ending only offers the hope of the beginning of their reconciliation, while most of the

novel depicts the results of the fears of exclusion and contamination that support the

existence and lasting power of the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences. However, it

is in this hopeful ending that we find the keys to a Utopian future that can overcome

these differences through the re-introduction of the feminine, allowing not only the

dichotomous thinking of hypermasculinity, but the possibility of unification,

amalgamation, connection, and hybridity in order to become something new that is both

functional and has the potential to be at peace with itself. The key, the novel asserts, is

finally getting both sides to talk to each other, to mix both worlds to become something

not exclusively one or the other but contaminated by both.

It is worth noting here, though, that this is a somewhat different kind of fear

narrative than we have seen thus far in this study, as the ending of this novel is

significantly different from the endings of our two previous 9/11 novels of hegemonic

origin, *The Zero* and *Bleeding Edge*. Whereas these novels featured a fearfully

ambiguous ending that utilizes fear to motivate its reader, *Sons* follows a narrative

riddled with fear that concludes by offering a hopeful ending. The use of the hopeful

ending appears to be a relatively common convention of fear narratives written by

marginalized authors, appearing in such works as *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison (1952)

and *Boneshaker*, by Cherie Priest (2009) to much the same effect. While the fearfully

ambiguous ending presses for change by making us fear for the state of the world, marginalized authors tend to portray a fearful world, but end it with the promise of something better to come. It is important to note, however, that this "better thing to come" is not depicted and can only be hinted at. This lack of depiction likely points to the inherent impossibility of depicting Utopia, as it is something that escapes the oppressive confines of our present ideological outlook on reality, or as Jameson states, "our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself [is]…not owing to any individual failure of the imagination but as the result of the systemic, cultural, and ideological closure of which we are all in one way or another prisoners" ("Progress Versus Utopia"). This structural difference in fear narratives is something to keep in mind in the upcoming textual analyses, but, whatever the cause, marginalized fear narratives often seem to point towards reconciliation, hope, or the possibility of living beyond fear, whereas dominant, hegemonic narratives often utilize ambiguous endings to prolong a sense of fear and to keep its tensions unresolved.

THE EXTERNAL/INTERNAL THREAT AND EXCLUSION IN WALDMAN'S *THE SUBMISSION*

The next novel, *The Submission*, by Amy Waldman, is a second example of a 9/11 novel written from a marginalized position, though one arguably less to, as it comes from a white female perspective. Amy Waldman was a former reporter for the *New York Times,* where she was a co-chief for the South Asia bureau and covered the aftermath of 9/11. While receiving mostly positive reviews, *The Submission*, her first novel, is sometimes criticized for its elements of journalistic style (cf. Crispen, Jones),

while others see these generic inclusions in a more positive light (Keeble 171). Overall, this novel has received more academic attention than most of the novels mentioned so far in this study (excluding Pynchon, who has a devoted academic following), and Keeble describes it as one of the third phase of the 9/11 novel, what he calls "political 9/11 novels" (15), texts that successfully engage with the political aspects of the attacks, not just the domestic concerns of the characters. Yet, as we will see, it ironically achieves its status as a political novel by engaging in the domestic lives of six individual characters, successfully fusing the domestic and the political in an ultimately ideological symbolic act.

In *The Submission*, a jury conducts a blind selection for the 9/11 memorial, only to discover that their final pick out of the thousands of design submissions entered, named The Garden, was designed by a Muslim architect, Mohammad Khan. When Mohammad's identity gets leaked to the public, it erupts in an outburst of debate and emotion across the country as people take sides on whether a Muslim should be allowed to design a memorial to 9/11. The narrative depicts the national debate through six individuals as focalizers. Mohammad Khan, who initially goes by Mo, is an up-and-coming architect and first-generation Indian immigrant, raised in Virginia, who leads an initially very New-York lifestyle, considering himself at least an agnostic and hardly a Muslim at all (Waldman 30). Paul Rubin is a successful chairman of an investment bank that heads the selection jury as a means to satisfy his wife's social climbing desires. Claire Burwell, whose husband, Cal, died in the WTC, sits on the selection committee as a representative of the families of the victims, and is at first the strongest supporter of Mohammad and The Garden. Sean Gallagher is the brother of a firefighter lost in the

WTC and represents the volatile position of Islamophobia popular in America after 9/11.

Asma Anwar is an illegal immigrant from Bangladesh and devout Muslim, whose

husband, Inam Haque, was a janitor who died in the WTC. Last, Alyssa Spier is an

ambitious and decidedly unethical journalist who leaks the jury selection story first and

whose later stories lead to Asma's deportation order and death before she is able to

leave the country. Together, we see the conflict played out through these six characters

as events culminate with Mohammad ultimately withdrawing from the competition and

leaving the country.

In overview, my three horizons interpretation of the novel is as follows. At the first

horizon, by blending the investigative journalism article and aspects of the domestic

9/11 novel genres, Waldman constructs a developed panoramic cast of characters and

formally resolves the contradiction between the 9/11 novel and simplified depictions of

people in current events as portrayed in the media, offering a problematized view of

people as more than just embodying an absolutized type or a single political position.

This formal solution works to question the reification of the human agents behind the

current events that shape world history, exposing the way that the media masks

complex problems under sound bites and stereotyping as shorthand, while

simultaneously using journalistic form to question the often limited focalization of the

domestic 9/11 novel. At the second horizon, the cast of characters can be reinterpreted

as allegorical representations of the numerous social positions and ideological stances

that, after the attacks, engaged in dialogue over the inherent contradictions of the

ideologeme of the clash of civilizations, one which encourages the exclusion,

dehumanization, and absolutization of Muslims to transform them into threats to be

externalized, as happens to Mohammad Khan in the novel. In this process, the novel

rewrites the ideologeme of the clash of civilizations into a sense of an expanded and

integrated national subjectivity that incorporates Muslims into its definition of the

American citizen, but does not go as far as breaking down the nationalistic and spatial

divisions between the terrorist and the American, the East and the West. At the third

horizon, the contradiction of genres in the novel allows a Utopian unmasking of layers of

American ideology that turn people into quick stereotypes that simplify current events

into dichotomous debates for easier understanding. Simultaneously, it avoids the

individualizing tendency of the domestic 9/11, and this mixture allows the 9/11 novel

genre to develop from what Keeble calls its domestic subgenre into the political

subgenre, but not without carrying along with it many of the devices, themes, and

concerns of the domestic 9/11 novel in its formal sedimentation. The ambivalence the

narrative shows in the ambivalence of its hopeful ending that both notes the oppressive

endurance of Islamophobia in American culture and gives us hope that future

generations more removed from 9/11 will overcome the racialized divide of

Islamophobia.

At the first horizon, we find in *The Submission* (2011) the clash between the

genres of investigative journalism and the domestic 9/11 novel that Waldman combines

to create something more like Keeble's political 9/11 novel through a developed

panoramic cast of characters that utilizes the novelistic depth provided by interiority to

create a formal solution to the dichotomous and simplified depictions of people in

current events as portrayed in the media. Doing so it also combats the individualistic

pull of many 9/11 novels that isolate their focalization to one or two main characters,

opening up a more collective perspective on the storyworld. As Keeble notes, at the

point of the publication of this narrative, the 9/11 novel was a relatively established

genre, allowing Waldman to write one of the first generation of "'self-conscious' 9/11

novels" that in many ways works with a metafictional understanding of the conventions

of the genre to intentionally alter them in ways that create new formal affects (15). As

such, Waldman pushes the 9/11 novel form to better implement the fairness, balance,

and completeness of the news article by including narrative sections devoted to

separate characters that represent their different sides of the story (Mencher 43-46).

Waldman utilizes these journalistic conventions to create a cast of characters that

Keeble calls a "schematic panorama of American society" (186). Rather than divide the

family unit, as these separate sections did in *Sons* as we saw above, *The Submission*

uses them to present multiple points of view to the reader, allowing an exploration of a

media event from numerous angles that the reader can witness in conjunction. In this

way, Waldman uses journalistic investigation to challenge and symbolically solve the

us/them binary of the ideologeme of irreconcilable differences that often plagues many

9/11 domestic novel, such as *Sons*, not to mention American culture in general.

This combination of genres, however, has brought this narrative some mixed

critical reactions. Particularly, the inclusion of the news article conventions and stylistic

elements of investigative journalism has earned it the most criticism, such as Crispen's

assertion that the narrative is weighted under so many "facts and figures" that "the story

services the information that the author believes he or she must convey to the reader."

She also states that the "[c]haracters can become stand-ins for the viewpoint they

express" (Crispen), characters which Radhika Jones states "are there to say the things

we know must be said" (56). However, Keeble sees these generic aspects in a different light. Regarding the panoramic cast of characters, he states, "several 'types' are established or suggested, and then subverted to the extent that every cliché is challenged" (Keeble 171). As he continues, "[T]he real complexity of the novel rests in its ability to move beyond simplistic two-sided debates and explore its characters' internal conflicts" (171). As such, the novelistic inclusion of the interior dialogue of the characters gives the reader access to how these characters are more than the stereotypes that they appear to be externally. This novelistic and specifically domestic-9/11-novel style of exploring of the interior motivations and the inherent complications of the psychology of individuals through its use of characters as allegorical representations of types prompts the reader to question the stereotypes they see portrayed in the media concerning real world debates, such as the 2010 "Ground Zero Mosque" and the 1981 Maya Lin controversies that likely inspired the narrative (Keeble 166, Crispen).

Often, the formal constraints of the news genre, including limited print space and rushing stories to publication, necessitates an abbreviation of real-world events that can absolutize and simplify the concerned parties into expected types that represent defined, immutable positions. However, the novelistic interiority introduced in *The Submission* problematizes its depiction of the news controversy. The novel presents characters battling with doubts, changing their minds, and working under philosophical positions that they later find to be at fault. Further, the final chapter of *The Submission*, set twenty years in after the events of the main narrative, shows that key players in current events do lead their own lives after the story has ended, a life that might not align with the simplistic representations often presented in investigative journalism.

Simultaneously, the journalistic style balances the often limited focalization offered by 9/11 novels to demonstrate how there are many positions to every historical event, fictional or actual. This notion that people and situations are more complex and less black and white than they often seem in the media destabilizes the dichotomous, us-versus-them thinking that Peter Ferry sees as a dominant social force of the time: "Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001…hegemonic white American masculinity once again defined itself in terms of opposition: them and us, Western and Muslims, the beardless and the bearded" (167). This pushes people in post-9/11 America as either a member of the in-group or a threat to the nation, often an internal threat that needs to be resolved in one of three ways: re-incorporation into the in-group by changing their mind, exclusion to become an external threat, or, as happens with Asma, elimination by being killed in order to remove the threat entirely.

In short, at Jameson's first horizon, the novelistic inclusion of the interior thoughts of the journalistically-researched and (stereo)typical characters not only complicates the positions that they represent and that are too often absolutized into immutable positions, but it also has the effect of taking dehumanized stereotypes that are only too familiar to the reader and re-humanizing them, countering the reification of their political positions by giving insight into the social processes that made them who they are in the narrative. This humanization of the character types pushes *The Submission* to exposing the Islamophobia that erupted after 9/11 from all perspectives, not only in Sean's overtly bigoted rants, but even in the liberal-minded Claire succumbing to the social pressures that pushed her to ask Mohammad to withdraw because she could not trust the nature of his true intentions behind the design of The Garden. Was it intended as a martyr's

paradise or an Islamic Garden as many in the narrative fear? From the distance of

twenty years later in the last chapter, this idea appears embarrassing, but even as

Claire admits regret and apologizes for her final choice, and even states that she felt

that "we were in the grip of some frenzy, possessed almost, at the time" (Waldman 332-

3), she still holds Mohammad as suspect for no other reason than because he is a

Muslim and finds that she can never trust the motives behind The Garden (336), forever

seeing it as a potential threat, a possible insult to the memory of the dead. At least in

Claire's mind, her persistent doubts toward Mohammad position him forever as a

Muslim threat, whether internal or external.

Reinterpreting this at the second horizon, the cast of characters becomes a

series of allegorical representations of different social positions and ideological

orientations toward the central problem of the narrative, which for our purposes is not

actually the memorialization of 9/11, but the post-9/11 Islamophobia that creates threats

out of American in-group members by drawing racialized borders around the

constructed and hegemonic definition of American identity. As such, the panoramic cast

of characters comes together in a dialogic mock-social arena concerning the

ideologeme of the clash of civilizations, finding that the us/them binary logic of the

concept does not hold up to the dynamism of its more developed characters who prove

to defy simple categorization. In the end, the narrative rewrites the ideologeme by

integrating Muslim Americans into a new, integrated definition of American subjectivity

as part of the in-group, even if it does not dismantle the out-group divisions between

America and the Middle East. As such, while the novel does promote the disintegration

of the divisions of groups along racial lines, it does not go as far as removing from the

clash of civilizations ideologeme the irreconcilable divisions it places along the spatial

lines of national residence.

As Peter Morey and Amina Yaquin state, "'Clash of civilizations' discourse begins

from the assumption that cultures and nations are fixed, finished, and stable" (80). It is a

belief that the East and the West are so different, and their characteristics so

immutable, that the only way to resolve the tension is through the extermination of one

or the other. Since this ideologeme operates in the strict dichotomous structure of

America/Middle East, US/terrorist, or us/them, those operating under this ideologeme

must be sure to maintain the established "American" identity, without questioning its

boundaries, administrative policies, or actions lest they risk exclusion from its social

group by being labeled an internal threat—or terrorist—themselves. As a result, this

discourse is hegemonic in nature, as it "might be expected to favor with those who rule,

since it emphasizes both obedience and integration with what already figures as the

norm" (80). As Keeble notes, the "Clash of Civilizations or 'Islam versus the West'

discourse" directs one's attention not only to the external threat abroad, but to "the

enemy within" (170), which it primarily sees as the Muslim citizens already living within

the geographic borderlines of the US and those who sympathize with them. However,

Keeble states that "the reductive clash of civilizations dynamic" is destabilized in the

narrative through "the internal divisions within each 'side' of this crude polarization and

indeed within the inner worlds of the individuals involved" (170). As a result, the cast of

six characters as focalizers demonstrate the reductionism of the clash of civilizations

ideologeme to be an inadequate worldview, as it fails to encompass the true diversity of

positions that surround any given event or set of beliefs, not to mention exposing the reality that people often change their nuanced positions on issues overtime.

This mystifying ideologeme is implicitly written into the post-9/11 rhetoric of the Bush Administration, which Keeble calls the "unilateral rhetoric of the 'Bush Doctrine'" (186), one that "Waldman's novel challenges directly—the rhetoric of 'us and them,' of good and evil, and good guys and bad guys" (167). In this ideologeme, the terrorist is essentialized into what Kenichi Yamaguchi calls "the incommensurable other," an irrational, unreasonable enemy that can only be opposed by "aggressive tactics of violence by which the advantaged side does not aim to assimilate or indoctrinate the Others but to conquer them. Dubbing them as the evils of mankind, the advantaged side deploys the maximum force of death and destruction to achieve an unconditional surrender" (249).

In the novel, the clash of civilizations ideologeme initially finds voice through Sean, who later struggles with the pseudo-idea's limits through his interactions with others, becoming more aware of alternate perspectives on the world. Sean's initial dichotomous worldview is based on his understanding of team sports, which he translates to all of his interpersonal interactions, as he sees in all situations two teams in opposition with only one possible winner. However, Sean begins to see the limits of this worldview when he begins to feel empathy with Muslims after Asma's public speech at the hearing for the memorial: "But their claims weren't equal; he had to remember that…Pitying the other team…would erode Sean's will to crush them…so that he would start giving away plays without meaning to…Sean had to stamp out these glimmerings of sympathy. To lend his heart to the other side would weaken his own" (262-3). As

such, Sean becomes an increasingly conflicted character that has trouble maintaining

his clash of civilizations ideology as the narrative continues. According to Keeble,

"Sean…represents the average American who in 2003 was fully invested in the Bush

Doctrine" and thereby "driven by anger and fear" (181). In this character, "[t]he

suggestion is that, in order to cope with his traumatic loss and disorienting emotions,

Sean gravitates toward a clear narrative and set of objectives" with the "clear enemy"

that the Bush Doctrine supplies to its adherents (183).

The contradictions surrounding the clash of civilizations ideologeme is centrally

depicted in Mohammad and Claire's interactions in the narrative, two characters

attempting to weather the strong influences of numerous social groups and the historic

events surrounding the narrative. As Keeble notes on these two, "Both characters are

shown to be deeply conflicted and, crucially, to have other external pressures

influencing their emotions" (182). Claire represents the privileged liberal moderate's

philosophy of tolerance and multiculturalism, which she plays well when initially being

Mohammad's strongest supporter both before and after his identity is revealed.

However, as Aysem Seval states, the text "reveals the illusory nature of the liberal

discourse of tolerance and the impossibility of maintaining that illusion in emerging

representations of self and Other after 9/11" (103). This instability is illustrated in the

novel as Claire cannot find a way to tolerate all of the people she is supposed to

support, including Mohammad and the families of the victims, who have taken on

diametrically opposite positions.

Mohammad, on the other hand, plays the part of the Muslim American who

becomes racialized into a perceived out-group threat. At the beginning of the narrative,

Mohammad is a member of the American in-group, living a typical New Yorker lifestyle:

"He is [a] successful…stereotypical New York bachelor whose many ex-girlfriends of

multiple ethnicities are freely mentioned" (Keeble 172). However, Mohammad's social

situation quickly changes as the actual external threat of the 9/11 terrorists ignite a

wave of Islamophobia that rearticulates him to a suspected position, one that articulates

all Muslim Americans into internal threats until they can prove their trustworthiness,

which Mohammad refuses to do. After all, a non-Muslim would not be required to justify

their intentions in the same situation, and this makes their suspicions clearly

discriminatory. In the end, all of the events and actions of the narrative are motivated by

the omitted external threat, the actual terrorists involved in the September 11 attacks,

which are never depicted or represented in the novel. Even the name of the event and

the particulars of the attack they are memorializing are never specified in the discourse

of the narrative, only implied by the historic context of its publication. Still, 9/11 and the

terrorists involved play a central role in the debate surrounding the memorialization of

Ground Zero and serve as an ever-present affective performative that influences the

actions and thoughts of all the characters involved.

In this way, the attacks of 9/11 act as a catalyst that creates a pan-Middle

Eastern identity, conflating ethnic and national differences together into a new racially

defined group affiliation. While not using the same term, Ferry identifies this same social

phenomenon when observing that 9/11 initiated "the creation and consolidation of a new

identity category that grouped together all people who appeared Middle Eastern, Arab,

or Muslim, with this consolidation reflecting a racialization wherein members of this

group are identified as terrorists and are disidentified as American citizens" (169). The

novel itself notes the connection between the clash of civilizations ideologeme and the pan-Middle Eastern identity when, meeting the executive committee of the Muslim American Coordinating Council (MACC), Mohammad reflects that "the group was striking in its diversity" (87), while Sean, the narrative's primary representative of the clash of civilizations ideologeme, consolidates the group into one race, stating the he just sees them as "[a]ll shades of brown" (202).

Yet, not only does the pan-Middle Eastern identity link vast groups of people together through sweeping racial generalizations, it also articulates them with the 9/11 terrorists, creating the suspicion or even assumption that all Middle Eastern people are also terrorists, potential threats both external and internal. For instance, when Claire asks Mohammad why he refuses to explain if The Garden is really a martyrs' paradise, he refers to Asma's public speech in which she states that the American people should be ashamed for their unfounded suspicions. As Mohammad states, "'[Asma] was saying terrorists shouldn't count more than people like her husband. But your questions—the suspicions they contain—make them count more. You assume we all must think like them unless we prove otherwise'" (302-3). In other terms, the clash of civilizations ideologeme essentializes all Middle Eastern people in racialized terms in order to place them on the oppositional side of the us/them binary, making the pan-Middle Eastern conglomerate into an assumed threat, no evidence required.

Despite Mohammad's efforts to live a very typical American life, he quickly finds himself pulled into this pan-Middle Eastern identity. This exposes Mohammad's status in America as, what Slavoj Žižek calls a "Neighbour," essentially a marginalized Other that is provisionally accepted into a society (*Violence* 106), a condition faced by Muslims in

American society. As Seval explains, "The position of the Neighbour is tolerated at best. This politically correct tolerance is hypocritical as it could potentially turn into hostility at any time. Because the Neighbour is close to the self, it poses a threat to the internal psyche and the very core of personhood" (103). As such, a Neighbor is a status of one who is a conditional member of the in-group, and therefore, due to the aspects that differentiate them from full members of the in-group, can be excluded from the in-group at any time. Once articulated in such a way, their very presence can be seen as a threat. Seval states that it is this proximity of the Neighbour "to the self that makes the Other so threatening" (106). After Mohammad deals with ethnic discrimination that loses him a business venture in Afghanistan and incites public outrage over his design submission, he begins to realize the tenuous nature of his previous identity as an American, painfully becoming aware that he was only ever a tolerated Neighbour. In response, he grows a beard and fasts for Ramadan for the first time in his life, which Seval sees as "acts of protest rather than faith" (113). As such, "Mohammed's [sic] world shatters when he realizes that he is not an ordinary American but the tolerated Neighbour" (113), and he soon finds himself drifting between temporary homes and becoming increasingly disconnected from his work at the architectural firm.

It is through the racialized suspicion of the clash of civilizations that Claire, who for most of the novel is just about the only person on Mohammad's side, begins to question his affiliation with her social in-group as an American, wondering if he really could fit the stereotype and be an actual internal threat in her midst. The stereotyping process portrayed in the novel, however, is complex, involving multiple parties in its creation. Morey and Yaquin describe this as the dialogic nature of stereotyping in which

multiple discourses interact in order to negotiate the identity of those considered as either an insider or an outsider to the dominant discourse, which results in discursive representations of positive and negative stereotypes interacting to create an evolving meaning that is projected on the Other or those perceived to belong to that particular social group (31).

Mohammad enacts his struggle with dialogic stereotyping in his reactions to the personal encounters and media portrayals that start to push him out of the in-group, in which he "is portrayed as an enemy of everything that he is" (Keeble 174-5). His growing of his beard and fasting for Ramadan, in this light, are both acts of defiance, "defiance that grows quickly in response to the identity the media creates for him and projects onto him" (173). However, this stereotyping also results in him "taking on aspects of the identity that is created from him by a biased conservative media" (173). As Morey and Yaquin state, Mohammad is not the only one to find himself in such a situation, as Muslims find themselves increasingly in "a double bind of permformativity: called upon to demonstrate through performance their national identities, while at the same time performing what is sometimes viewed suspiciously as a conflicting allegiance to the overarching Ummah," the Islamic community (40). As they state, "Thus, Muslims in the West may find themselves overdetermined by the requirements of conflicting performances" (40). Mohammad clearly feels these pressures, as he reflects, "Mo had found himself reinvented by others, so distorted he couldn't recognize himself" (Waldman 330). Despite the conflictedness of these performances, both sides of the stereotyping dialogue tend to act as excluding mechanisms, as the Muslim is expected to act Muslim, but in doing so, they sow the seeds for public suspicion of their true

allegiances, as, after all, under the clash of civilizations ideologeme, one cannot be an American and a Muslim at the same time. Thus, to the Muslim American, the double bind is trap that articulates them as an internal threat, one to be watched, scrutinized, but never trusted, since there is a trace of the incommensurable Other in all of their actions, just as Mohammad's memorial is scrutinized and mistrusted only because of his Muslim ethnicity.

While some of the characters in the narrative become articulated as internal threats while others do not, all of the characters struggle to maintain the internal/external and us/them dichotomy that the novel itself deploys in order to critique. For both of the characters that are turned into perceived internal threats, Asma and Mohammad, race is the dividing line as they become incorporated into the pan-Middle Eastern identity based largely on their appearances, and hence are othered by racialized physical stereotypes that ignore all other aspects of their identity, such as their human decency or American citizenship status, respectively. Under this weight, the novel portrays the clash of civilizations ideologeme as an oppressive pseudoidea that nullifies political agency for both out-group and in-group members, as all of the characters in the text are ultimately unable to fight the social pressures of Islamophobia that shaped life in America after 9/11. This triumph of Islamophobia culminates as Claire sides with MACC to request that Mohammad withdraw his memorial design from the selection process (Waldman 309), an action that solidifies Mohammad's status as a perceived internal threat. Since an internal threat must be eliminated in some sense, Mohammad finds himself excluded from the American in-group, as, after hearing Claire's request, he finally leaves America, feeling stripped of his status as an American

citizen, his sense of belonging to the in-group of the nation, and becomes an international architect, a move that Keeble describes as "a complete immersion in multi-national capitalism" (172), a re-articulation of his identity as a citizen of the world, but no longer a citizen of America. This moves Mohammad from not only being culturally excluded from America and his sense of citizenship, but spatially excluded as well, reinforcing the belief that America and the rest of the world still exist on different sides of the binary clash of civilizations equation.

The final chapter of the narrative attests to the endurance of the racial discrimination and stereotyping at the heart of the clash of civilizations ideologeme, as we make a proleptic jump twenty years into the future, into the post-9/11 world of 2023. Not only is this a temporal jump but a spatial jump as well, as Mohammad, now in Mumbai, looks back at a long career as an international architect and is interviewed for a film documentary about the memorial competition controversy, now seen as a crucial moment in American history. At this point, we are given clues about a seemingly Utopian future in which post-9/11 Islamophobia is a thing of the past (Waldman 323). In this future, the decision to have Mohammad withdraw is seen as a mistake, one that Claire regrets (332). This ending solidifies Waldman's harsh criticisms of both American racism and the ineffectiveness of liberal moderate tolerance as Claire is depicted as living a life of regret over her choice, never quite able to come to terms with the 9/11 attacks without the effective memorial that she believes The Garden would have been.

It turns out that the nameless cameraman in the interview is actually Claire's son, William, and the interviewer, Molly, his girlfriend. William has spent his life longing for a memorial that he could connect to the loss of his father, Cal, and struck out to find

Mohammad in Mumbai. The flag memorial that was built instead of The Garden never seems effective to William or Claire. Yet, in his visit, Mohammad reveals that he was later commissioned by a wealthy Muslim to make The Garden, and he takes William there to see it. William quickly makes a pile of rocks there as a funeral cairn to his father, finally achieving the memorialization that he had needed all of these years to successfully grieve for his father. Crucially, though, William later shows the film of his visit to The Garden to his mother Claire, who notes that two changes were made to the design: the metal trees are planted upside down with the roots pointed up and the names of the victims on the wall are changed to verses from the Quran. William seems to accept The Garden for what it is, but Claire still sees the changes as some form of personalized message to Claire about his true terrorist intentions (Waldman 336). Even after all of these years, the tolerant liberal Claire still holds on to her Islamophobic suspicions and still proves to be under the grips of the clash of civilizations ideologeme. However, as Seval states, "the reader may eventually conclude that if there is anything sinister in 'The Garden,' it is in the eye of the beholder" (122), as each character seems to glean their own interpretation, and Mohammad never supplies an answer. Overall, at the second horizon, this future points to a Utopic time when the racial lines demarking the clash of civilizations dichotomies appears to be removed, at least within the borders of America. However, Mohammad is still excluded from America at the end, as all of his buildings have been made outside the country and he is still unable to get himself to travel back to the states, proving that the novel does not undo the ideologeme entirely. The spatial divisions of East and West still remain, and Mohammad finds himself excluded from America, permanently on the side of the East, unable to make himself

return. Perhaps the novel promotes the end of Islamophobia in America, even if it never actually describes how this comes to pass, avoiding the details of the issue through its futurist prolepsis. Yet, it still reinforces the spatial divisions of the clash of civilizations ideologeme, working to alter but not to dissipate its occlusions entirely.

At the third horizon, expanding and re-interpreting the clash of civilizations ideologeme to the historic production of genre forms, we see that the novel's imaginary fusing of the investigative journalism article genre and the 9/11 domestic novel genre results in ambivalent Utopian impulses that mirror the narrative's own ambivalence toward the two genres it mixes together. While this combination allows the novel to fit into Keeble's description of the political 9/11 novel, *The Submission* also has its own unique character that deserves analysis outside these often superimposed lines of subgenre-fitting generalizations. By utilizing this mix, *The Submission* engages in the Utopian unmasking of the formal and ideological pressures of investigative journalism that turns people into stereotypes, making it easier for the American public to take quick positions either in favor or in opposition to individuals and their actions. This stance critiques the formal pressures of the investigative journalism article toward the creation of strict demarcations, not only between social groups, but between asserting information as fact and fiction as well. Both of these formal urges can push journalism toward dichotomous worldviews, similar to what we find in Sean's team philosophy mentioned above. Yet, the narrative counters this problem by employing the interiority available to the domestic 9/11 novel, as the narrative presents multiple sides of the story, and the inner thoughts of the characters begin to complicate and destabilize the stereotypes the characters at first seem to enact, as with Sam, Mo, Asma, and Claire,

Of course, this all comes together to partially transform the clash of civilizations ideologeme, as we have mentioned. Simultaneously, though, this use of multiple focalizing characters critiques the novelistic pressures toward the deep exploration of a single, and hence individualistic, limited, and isolated, perspective. Seen in combination, the ambivalent formal composition of *The Submission*, one that both critiques the weaknesses and celebrates the strengths each of its constituent genres, creates an unresolved narrative tension. This tension was likely felt, if not so explicitly articulated, by it many during its mixed critical reception, as many critics seemed concerned with which genre it was trying to be, and whether or not it performed well as either of these genres in isolation. Of course, the novel was not trying to be any one of its genres, but a sedimentation of the two, and following the Jamesonian maxim of "the content of the form," this formal tension manifests in the content of its ambivalent Utopian impulses as well, offering mixed messages.

As mentioned above, even the destabilization of stereotypes that if offers only partial transformations the clash of civilization ideologeme, as the narrative's push toward the integration of group differences only extends to those within the borderlines of America as a nation, and the spatial borders between the East and West are still left as distinct as ever. An out group still remains in the futurist prolepse at the end, and, from the American perspective of the narrative, the out group is still the East. The clash of civilizations paradigm survives the novel, if only altered to include an integrated and re-negotiated sense of the West as both Christian and Muslim, white and Middle Eastern. As such, we end with a partial, ambivalent step toward Utopia. It has moved toward the uniting of the West, a noble and worthwhile effort, deploring the racialized

divisions of Islamophobia in its contemporary form, yet noting that these divisions still live strong in the transnational arena. If, as the narrative asserts, these divisions no longer exist in the near future along racial or ethnic lines, they clearly still exist as based on one's nation of residence, as those living in the East, such as Mohammad by the end of the narrative, are still considered separate from the West.

Contrary to this partial glimpse at progress, the ending is ultimately constructed as a hopeful ending. Even though, as Keeble notes, "each of the key narrative strands ends negatively" (186), it does offer hope for the future generations who come after these main characters, even if the characters we have spent our time with seem to be lost and unable to change. However, it is important to note that the ending does not actually depict the Utopian future of racial harmony that it claims as existing twenty years after the main narrative. Similar to how we noted in *Sons* that fear narratives of marginalized authors often end with a hopeful ending that points to a Utopic future that the narrative can never truly depict, *The Submission* ends with Molly and William telling Mohammad how America has changed, but only from the external geographical position of Mohammad's home in Mumbai. While it hints at the Utopic possibilities of an America in 2023 that has at least resolved the internal social divide between the West and the Middle East, we are never quite able to tell if this is true. After all, Mohammad never chooses to return to America, never feeling that he has been accepted back into the in-group. Instead, in the final scene we find that despite Claire's apologies, even nearing her own death, she still distrusts Mohammad, still not believing that his intentions in designing the memorial were to respect the dead of 9/11 (Waldman 336). This final moment calls the Utopic reconciliation hinted at in the ending into question, and

oppressively re-asserts the permanence of the irreconcilable difference of the East and West. Further, it denotes the need for the creation of false threats as sacrificial scapegoats to appease social tensions, as Mohammad remains excluded from America, and even Claire cannot trust that he has not become an external threat, that he has somehow become equal to the terrorists who attacked the WTC themselves (302-3). Despite the facts presented by the reportorial aspects of the narrative, and the diverse caste of representative characters, the roots of discrimination and racism are too deep for Claire to overcome, and, hence, her generation of Americans, of which she is a representative in-group member.

Yet, the punishment of Claire, who falls victim to an unnamed sickness, implies the novel's disapproval of her Islamophobic mistrust as a kind of counter-contagion, and points us toward the Utopian hope of the next generation of Americans as represented by Molly and William who accept his memorial, even with the changes, without question, apparently seeing past 9/11-era American Islamophobia. This acceptance conceptually unites the West and the East in mourning the victims of the attacks and removing from Mohammad his status as a threat, a status that, unfortunately, Mohammad seems to have internalized so deeply at this point that he cannot remove it from his own self-conception anymore and remains excluded at the end. With all of this in consideration, though, from the perspective of the reader, the novel offers the Utopian element of unmasking the ideologies that reify individuals and force people to fit into political positions that they may not actually feel they belong to, a process that can ultimately result in people being stereotyped into the dehumanizing role of the threat. While

ambivalence exists throughout, the narrative is still not without Utopic utility, if viewed from a particular interpretive perspective.

CONCLUSION

Overall, in this chapter's discussion of the 9/11 novel, we have seen how the primary fear themes operate in the narrative, and we have even discovered a few notable patterns emerging from the fear narratives of this genre that may prove applicable to fear narratives as a whole. In the texts we reviewed by authors of dominant positions, *The Zero* and *Bleeding Edge*, we found the repeated use of the fearfully ambivalent ending, one that utilizes fear as a motivating tool to either prevent change or to urge change in a particular direction. Opposing this, we found in the texts authored by marginalized authors, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* and *The Submission*, the use of the hopeful ending, one that follows a narrative stricken with fear with an ending that points to a hopeful future, but is unable to directly portray that future Utopia. I would speculate that this difference between the two types of endings stems from the likely unconscious political desires of the authors stemming from their different social standings, but also from their very different ideological positions. In either case, these resolutions point to a longing for a solution to the contradictions the authors experience in society, but the fear surrounding each implies that they cannot quite trust their own symbolic solutions as being adequate to the political challenges they face. Whereas the ambivalent ending itself tends not to change the world, but instead fears that it is changing or has already changed, the hopeful ending points to the possibility of

social change in which marginalized groups may better their position, even if, as we

have noted above, it is only a tenuous or largely imaginary possibility. As such, it is

possible that despite the various political beliefs of the authors, the ambivalent ending

may serve conservative forces and the hopeful ending serve progressive efforts.

One last notable observation from these texts is that few of them seem overtly

depict the terrorist. There are, of course a few notable exceptions, such as John

Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), two novels that have

received tremendous amounts of negative feedback for their allegedly flawed depictions

of the terrorist Other by such critics as Rothberg ("A Failure" 154) and Gray ("Open

Doors" 134). As such, for some, the omission of the terrorist or their failed depictions of

the Other has been often perceived as "[t]he great failure of the contemporary American

novel" (Ferry 166). However, Ferry sees this failure in political terms as an unconscious,

or possibly conscious, conservative reaction to 9/11:

> [P]erhaps we are expecting too much from our novelists, our urban spectators,
>
> our cultural mediators, to write this Other that, frankly, they can't possibly know.
>
> As will become apparent, the approach of contemporary American authors has
>
> been to fall into well-worn frameworks of seeing (a masculinity) crisis as
>
> opposition, endeavoring to set binary oppositions within traditional American
>
> mythic narratives that hopefully reach some sort of resolution. Perhaps this
>
> reductive dualistic approach is a (sub)conscious reaction to reaffirm their
>
> whiteness, rather than an attempt to understand the motives of the Other. (167)

With all of the information we have gathered in the analyses of this chapter it would seem that Ferry's suppositions are supported, at least in part. After all, in the texts by dominant authors we see the ambiguous endings making a conservative push to stop the world from changing before it is too late. However, in the marginalized authors we see a greater attempt to understand the Others, to momentarily become the other if only in narrative focalization, even if the terrorists themselves, the incommensurable Other of early twenty-first century America, are not directly approached. Yet, as Ferry notes, how can they depict that which they do not know? With this in mind, we can safely state that the 9/11 novel, at least as it currently stands, does not strive to understand the terrorist, but instead works to understand the American reaction to the attacks, our trauma, our conflicts, our racism, and our pain.

Consequently, even novels that overtly question divisive ideologemes such as the clash of civilizations, irreconcilable differences, or justified paranoia in an effort to diffuse their affective pressures as they relate to 9/11 and American culture seem at a formal and symbolic level only to re-inscribe these same mystifications at the level of the textual unconscious. Rather than dissolving these ideological and affective pressures, the fear present in many 9/11 novels serves to re-inscribe them back into the American imaginary by often altering but re-circulating these mystifications in new forms, while ignoring the real international scope of the political issues brought uncomfortably to our attention by the attacks of 9/11. In other words, in reaction to the shattering of the Virgin Land myth, which is essentially our belief in America's invulnerability to and separation from the possibility of foreign attack, rather than face the complicated questions of terrorism, the 9/11 novel has instead pulled America's

attention back into itself in a way that has served to repair our belief in American exceptionalism, if only under the justification of a new national myth. Just as Jameson notes that hegemonic texts must manage subversive impulses by kindling these same impulses before extinguishing them (*The Political* 287), this chapter's study of the 9/11 novel points to the conclusion that even texts that attempt to be subversive or critical of the hegemonic simultaneously reproduce these oppressive ideologies, even if in subtly altered forms.

Most American attempts at representing the terrorist, in any media, follow the process that we have outlined in the previous chapter—personalization, pathologization, and absolutization (Takacs, *Terrorism* 59)—which occludes the political and material aspects of the subject under layers of ideology and turns the terrorist or even the suspected terrorist into a Western villain archetype. It also has a second effect, however, in that the concept of the terrorist, when explicitly depicted, becomes so diluted and misdirected that the literal presence of a terrorist may actually serve to occlude the narrative's attempt to engage in a dialogue about terrorism and the terrorist after 9/11. Instead, if we look to other genres than the 9/11 novel that do not explicitly depict the terrorist, a narrative may actually be able to better examine their cultural impact and meaning, because it would no longer need to operate under the dominant ideological weight of the process outlined above. Instead, defamiliarizing the terrorist by depicting it in other forms, such as the zombie, robot, or walker, allows narratives to work under some of the ideological radar of their audience, enabling it to engage in often deeper, more controversial, and more sympathetic analyses that, if they were depicted overtly, would likely face public censorship as being unpatriotic or insensitive

to the grief of those morning the 9/11 attacks. Effectively, the implicit discussion of

terrorism and the attacks of September 11 that we find in horror, science fiction, and

fantasy narratives has the potential to more open, productive, and insightful

interrogations of the subject than those overtly depicting terrorists, such in the 9/11

novel. The nature of speculative fiction is often more open to positing controversial

positions through allegorical and symbolic representations than realistic fiction can, as it

allows, in part, both the reader and writers to circumvent the ideological screens that

seek to pre-interpret their discussions along the lines of the dominant rhetoric of the

post-9/11 Bush Administration. In the coming chapters, we will use what we have found

in the 9/11 novel as a conceptual baseline to see if works of speculative fiction have

lived up to their potential to dig deeper and stray further from the conservative status

quo than the realist novel.

CHAPTER 6

POST-9/11 AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVES IN THE HORROR GENRE: THE

ZOMBIE NARRATIVE

In the last chapter we analyzed post-9/11 American fear narratives as found in

the 9/11 novel, focusing on the role of primary fear themes in these works, both in texts

that illustrate dominant and marginalized cultural perspectives. In this chapter we will

continue to enlarge our understanding of the fear narrative by analyzing post-9/11

American fear narratives in the horror genre across various media. In order to limit our

analysis to a more manageable body of texts, we will focus on the zombie narrative sub-

genre, a tradition of horror that was especially popular in the decade after 9/11.

In general, defining the horror genre can be just as tricky and reductionist as

defining any narrative genre. Andrew Tudor calls the attempt to make a set definition of

a genre "the fallacy of concreteness," one in which we "adopt a nominalist approach to

defining the genre, identifying by fiat its allegedly universal distinguishing

characteristics" (456). As he states, "Genres change over time and sustain differently

constructed audiences. And in as much as audiences are composed of active agents

they can and do conceive genres variably, taking divergent pleasures from them" (456).

Further complicating the matter, in his discussion of television genres, Jason Mittell

reminds us that genres are social constructs, not just collections of formal elements:

"Television genres are cultural categories that discursively bundle texts together within

particular contexts, not simply sets of textual conventions" (233). The social and

processual aspect of genre classification is evident in other media as well, such as the

relatively arbitrary belief that Ridley Scott's film *Alien* (1986) is science fiction, even though it shares formal aspects of both science fiction and horror, or the ongoing debate about whether Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818, 1823) is a gothic novel or the first science fiction novel (cf. Aldiss).

With these thoughts carefully in mind, it is still useful to establish a general working definition before we attempt to analyze a given genre, at least to establish a sense of the borders of my object of study for the purposes of this particular project. As such, Gary Hoppenstand, while explicitly referring only to horror fiction literature, gives us a good start that seems to ring true to the everyday understanding of the genre in any medium: "the horror story is written and read for the express purpose of experiencing the emotion of fright in order to be entertained," even if it is also "the formal expression of our collective fears" and "a subliminal representation of the id" (8-9). While this does not attempt to reduce the genre to a single, oversimplified function or purpose for all audiences, it does provide a reasonable sense of our topic. The horror genre is dominated by the experience of the emotion of fear itself, and this experience is often evoked through powerful performatives (external stimuli that produce pre-cognitive affect) and visceral reactions in its audiences, who empathetically connect with either written characters or the virtual on-screen body of those threatened in horror narratives. As Xavier Aldana Reyes states, "The power of corporeal horror resides in its capacity to affect corporeally by making the fictional body a virtuality, a potential body-in-suffering that can be consumed. Alignment with the on-screen body is therefore crucial for affect to occur" (253). Making this connection with the endangered virtual-Other, according to David Pendery, stimulates the human fear response, but in a way that provides its

sensation-seeking viewers with pleasurable rewards at both the affective level through

autonomic neurochemicals such as serotonin and norepinephrine, but also later through

the cognitive stimulation of the "pleasurable involvement in narrative" (150, 153).

Of course, the horror genre encompasses many subgenres that enjoyed

popularity after 9-11, such as the torture-horror film—as in James Wan's *Saw* (2004)

and Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005) (see Aldana Reyes)—and the found-footage horror film—

as in Oren Peli's *Paranormal Activity* (2007) and Matt Reeves's *Cloverfield* (2008).

However, it could be argued that none of these movements were as popular during this

period as the zombie narrative. Zombie narratives can be found in just about every

media conceivable, from movies, literature, television, video games (on all platforms),

art, novelty items, cosplay, social media, and actual emergency preparedness

publications authored by legitimate public health institutes (Olney 2-6). With all these

zombie narratives considered in aggregate, the horde of texts becomes an

overwhelming cultural mass of influence and relevance that overpowers other post-9/11

strands of horror. Kyle William Bishop proclaims the era a "zombie renaissance" (12),

and, even in 2011, journalist John Ogg estimated that "today's zombie genre economy

is worth…$5.74 billion."

Bishop believes one reason for this strong cultural response to the zombie is that

the monster adapted within the American imaginary to its new historical context so that

"the primary metaphor in the post-9/11 zombie world" is "terrorism itself" (29), a concern

that generated the most central source of cultural anxiety since the attacks. Journalist

Warren St. John makes this connection between the fictional zombie trope and the

imagined fears of the terrorist explicit:

[I]t does not take much of a stretch to see the parallel between zombies and anonymous terrorists who seek to convert others within society to their deadly cause. The fear that anyone could be a suicide bomber or a hijacker parallels a common trope of zombie films, in which healthy people are zombified by contact with other zombies and become killers.

Given this new context, zombies have adapted to resonate with post-9/11 American concerns, and, as this quote implies, also act as a nexus for a number of primary fear themes, even forming into a number of insightful secondary fear themes that we will discuss shortly.

The zombie, of course, has a long history in American culture, and both the fear themes it utilizes and the zombie narrative itself has changed continuously in the past century, so it can help to think of this formal evolution as progressing through repeated, processual loops of a genre life cycle. Using this concept, we can think of the dominant trajectory of the genre and its formal elements as they have changed over time, moving from the stages of invention, convention, and finally cliché if they fail to inject new elements into their mix. John Cawelti uses the term invention in popular fiction in a way entirely different from the way invention is used in rhetoric. To Cawelti, invention, as we will use the term, refers to "elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator such as new kinds of characters, ideas, or linguistic forms" (Cawelti 732). Conventions, by contrast, are "elements which are known to both the creator and his audience beforehand" (732). Often, conventions include "favorite plots, stereotyped characters, accepted ideas, commonly known metaphors, and other linguistic devices" (732). Another way of looking at this is that the "[c]onvention is the fulfillment of an established

expectation" (Amend 132), what a consumer expects to find in a particular genre. However, as Cawelti reminds us, textual elements, or even texts themselves, cannot be exclusively categorized or conceived of as either an invention or convention, "because many elements lie somewhere along a continuum between the two poles" (732). Last, a cliché, in this sense, is a convention that has been so overused that it has lost its cultural meaning, resonance, affective impact, and originality, becoming what we might often call a tired story idea. Once an element becomes a cliché, though, it is not doomed to a permanent state of obsolescence and can be resurrected to cultural relevance through the injection of new aspects of invention.

For example, we can see this play out in the cultural evolution of the zombie as an existent in the American narrative. After the popular horror films *Day of the Dead* (Romero 1985) and *The Return of the Living Dead* (O'Bannon 1985) brought the convention of the zombie to the cultural center stage for a time, the subsequent lack of invention to its narrative form throughout the late 80s and 90s caused the convention to lose its fearful resonance in popular American culture, becoming something of a cliché. During this period, the zombie form was instead resurrected back to cultural relevance by transferring it to narratives of different hybrid genres with different audiences by injecting the form with comedy to provide an impulse of invention. In its new conventional form as the comedy zombie, the creature often lost its position as a starring monster and tended to surface as a two-dimensional or goofy minion, such as in the comical undead army in the dark fantasy comedy film *Army of Darkness* (Raimi 1992) or the friendly zombie character Billy Butcherson (Doug Jones) in the comedy horror fantasy film *Hocus Pocus* (Ortega 1993), the latter of whom becomes an ally that

actually helps the film's protagonists. However, once the comedy zombie began to lose its impact and novelty, it began to slide back toward the cliché end of the spectrum until the form became reinvigorated once again by international influences such as the Japanese videogame *Resident Evil* (Capcom 1996), its film adaptation by English director Paul W. S. Anderson in 2002, and the film *28 Days Later* (Boyle 2002), all of which added the invention of making the zombie a rapidly spreading viral outbreak with global implications. This formed the new convention of the viral zombie that especially found cultural currency after 9/11 and helped to usher in the American zombie narrative craze foregrounded by Bishop.

As we see in this example, thinking of narrative elements in this way as flowing through processual cultural lifecycles as conventions, inventions, and clichés does not just stretch them into a series of imitations and the re-combinations of disparate ideas. It is also a theoretical construct that aligns easily with Jameson's three horizons of interpretation. At the first horizon, this "lifecycle" approach foregrounds the ways that each work's "invention" is its aesthetic and ideological "symbolic act" in response to the cultural circulation of generic formal elements and how they have evolved as imbricated, genealogical forms. At the second horizon, it helps us to consider the ideologies of narratives and how they have served various social functions at particular times within a given society as they "[reflect] the needs and interests of its readers" (Hoppenstand 3). Further, it can even highlight the political nature of narrative form, as Cawelti states, "Conventions help maintain a culture's stability while inventions help it respond to changing circumstances and provide new information about the world" (732), illustrating its conservative and progressive impulses as well.

From the more distant, third-horizon perspective of the evolution of the genre

form, we can extend Cawelti's concepts to make generalizations not just about

individual narrative elements but about the interactions of texts both within and across

genres. We can say, then, that a narrative has a high degree of inventionality if it

exhibits a synthesis of ideas that were formerly seen as separate within a culture,

making it appear as a creative innovation in the context of a given genre. At times, such

texts can be seen as so new that they either branch off to begin their own genres or

take an existing genre in a new direction, becoming a foundational, seminal, or iconic

text that spawns a new artistic sub-genre movement. Of course, as Jameson reminds

us, when these genres branch off in this way, their form still retains elements of its

ideological content: "When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite

different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally

reckoned into the new form" (*The Political*, 141). This creates new generic forms with

sedimented layers of numerous genre ideologies that contradict and at times harmonize

into new historically grounded expressions.

When high-inventionality texts meet with the level of cultural success necessary

to branch off, they tend to engender imitation from other artists who seek to perfect and

refine its inventions in their own texts, causing its inventions to become conventional.

These low-inventionality texts work with established, conventional elements of a given

genre by injecting them with relatively small measures of invention, in a process that

Jameson describes as "renewal and substitution" (*The Political*, 131), thereby keeping

the text entertaining, interesting, and culturally resonant to its audience but working

largely within the bounds established by prior high-inventionality texts. In Jamesonian

terms, this works within his permutational scheme of the genre in which his three terms of the structural norm, textual deviation, and the limiting constraints of the historical situation (145-8), are here seen as the conventional genre form, elements of inventionality, and the confines circumscribing a sense of historical resonance. It is worth noting here how Jameson's notion of the historical situation combines with affect theory, at least in respect to the pre-cognitive or unconscious aspects of textual production within its historical situation:

> [T]he relationship of the 'third term' or historical situation to the text is not construed as causal (however that might be imagined) but rather as one of a limiting situation; the historical moment is here understood to block off or shut down a certain number of formal possibilities available before, and to open up determinate new ones, which may or may not ever be realized in artistic practice. (148)

Putting these concepts together, textual production is an act of selecting among the affective potentialities and intensities available under the constraints of the historical situation, making it a symbolic act that interprets affect into a particular formal and narrative expression in which some narrative potentials are realized and some are left untouched or unrealized.

Often, if a genre fails to reinvigorate its form through regular injections of invention, it begins to fall from a conventional form into a state of cliché, wherein the elements of its constituent texts have become so overused that they lose their cultural meaning and relevance. Many of these high-conventionality texts and genres can be rescued by adding in fresh elements of invention that explore creative directions not

previously exhausted, or by targeting them to new audiences who may see the cliché as original, as we saw in the comedy zombie example above. However, failing this effort at reinvigoration, a genre tends to move into a marginalized position aimed at a cult or subcultural audience or it will seem to simply disappear entirely—at least until its residual elements find new cultural resonance in other forms. As Jameson states, "The older generic categories do not, for all that, die out, but persist" (*The Political*, 107), as enduring formal elements that re-emerge along with their ideological content in other generic forms. Of course, while we can think of the genre life cycle as moving in these general terms in regards to an entire genre or sub-genre, as we saw above, individual narrative elements of a genre also go through their own cyclical changes, circulating through a given culture across genre and media boundaries. Such narrative elements as these also include primary fear themes and their re-combinations into more concrete secondary fear themes.

In this chapter, we will explore post-9/11 American fear narratives in the horror genre by looking at the zombie narrative sub-genre, focusing on how its use of the primary fear themes combine to form five prominent secondary fear themes: the zombie-creature, the survival space, the wall, the hypermasculine character, and the survivalist. In doing so, we will first analyze the morphology of the zombie-creature in film and its new incarnation as the millennial, or post-9/11, zombie, a term that we will define shortly. Second, we will delineate the symbolic structure of the survival space and the wall as seen from a marginalized perspective by focusing on Colson Whitehead's novel *Zone One* (2011). Third, we will map the fear saturated terrain of the hypermasculine character and the survivalist by looking briefly at the novel *The Road*

(2006), by Cormac McCarthy, and peering in greater depth into David Trachtenberg's film *10 Cloverfield Lane* (2016), both presented here as examples of what we will call the post-zombie narrative. Overall, in each of these zombie narratives, the secondary fear themes act as nexuses of American fear that embody multiple primary fear themes, creating a network of cultural associations that build from its conventional generic antecedents while giving each a twist of invention. As a fear narrative, each zombie narrative, then, is a symbolic act that creates an imaginary relation to the real conditions of its existence in the post-9/11 political environment in order to occupy its own unique place in the spectrum between inventionality and conventionality through its interactions with and re-combinations of primary fear themes to produce secondary fear themes in the form of concrete narrative events or existents (characters or elements of setting).

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ZOMBIE-CREATURE

The zombie-creature, considered in isolation as a narrative existent, is a consummate secondary fear theme that has littered the narratives of the past century, but particularly so since the attacks of 9/11. Their rotting forms embody contamination fears as they spread their blight, loom in massive hordes as external threats, personalize fear as they turn our friends and family into internal threats, incite paranoia as we realize anyone could become a zombie (or already is one), transgress the categorical boundaries between life and death, and trample contemporary society into the now famous zombie apocalypse. We refer to this secondary fear theme as the "zombie-creature" because, in practice, the zombie can either manifest in the narrative as a creature actually referred to as a zombie or they can take the form of another

creature depicted with characteristics suspiciously similar to a zombie. Essentially, these latter texts utilize the conventions of the zombie narrative but give its creature's form a twist of invention. The term "zombie-creature" encompasses both of these variants in order to refer to the zombie in a larger sense that can transcend genres and media forms, all while still referring to a narrative existent that is culturally recognizable as falling under the general category of the "zombie" as American culture has come to know them today.

It is something of a zombie narrative convention that the featured zombie-creature is one that the majority of the audience will quickly recognize as a zombie, even if it is called by some other name. For instance, in Romero's film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the zombies are never actually given a name at all and, off camera, even Romero refers to them as ghouls. In *28 Days Later* they are called the infected. In Cherie Priest's steampunk novel, *Boneshaker* (2010), they are called the rotters. In Frank Darabont's AMC television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-Current), the zombies go by numerous names often used independently by isolated groups of human survivors, including walkers, biters, creepers, geeks, rotters, and skin eaters, among others. However, even zombies that are not exactly zombies, but behave similarly and are described much like zombies, go by many names. At times, this can cause the distinction between zombies and vampires to blur. Typically, most audiences would agree that zombies are undead monsters that eat human flesh and, often, brains, while vampires are undead monsters that drink blood to survive. However, texts such as Justin Cronin's trilogy of novels—*The Passage* (2010), *The Twelve* (2012), and *The City of Mirrors* (2016) (and its one season Fox television adaptation *The Passage* in 2019)—

describe zombie-creatures that function as zombies but are actually vampires called "virals," a move that seemingly calls back to the seminal vampire as zombie-creature used in Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954). Further, as we will discuss later in this chapter and those to come, at times, other creatures take the zombie's place within a narrative that has all of the conventional markings of a zombie narrative, such as the human cannibals in *The Road* or the alien invaders in *10 Cloverfield Lane*. In the next chapter, we will even argue that the zombie theme has spread across genre boundaries, arising anew in science fiction as Cylons in Ronald D. Moore's Sci-Fi Channel series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09). In the fantasy genre, Benioff and Weiss's HBO series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) features the undead Wights (and to some extent the White Walkers that lead them) that share many characteristics of the zombie form, making them consummate examples of the cross-genre spread of the zombie-creature secondary fear theme.

Although the zombie has changed dramatically over the years, we can, in general, distinguish this secondary fear theme from other horror creature types by noting that they display some combination of all or some of the following characteristics or conventions. Of course, a creature does not qualify as a zombie simply by having one of these characteristics. It must have all or at least play with many of these basic conventions to be a zombie-creature in the terminology of this study. For example, mummies have decayed humanoid forms, but they lack many of the other common traits of the zombie, making them conventionally and easily socially distinguished from the zombie. However, these characteristics do give us a beginning point for

understanding the genealogy of the zombie-creature as they are conceived in American culture.

- **Decaying Humanoid Form**: The zombie creature has a humanoid form that exists in various states of decay, ranging from looking very human to corpse-like. Not only does this make the zombie a transgressive monster, conflating the boundaries between life and death, but it's browning or blackening flesh inspires racial interpretations of the zombie-creature (cf. Canavan, "We *Are"*).

- **Dehumanized**: The zombie creature is depicted as being of less value than a human, or the individuals who were once considered as human become less than human once turned into a zombie, a process akin to Aimé Césaire's "thingification" (42). This plays on our fears of exclusion, as turning into a zombie means expulsion from one's social in-group status of being a human and thrusts them into the marginalized position of being only a thing. This dehumanization also makes the zombie creature an excellent "bad guy" for videogames that can be killed indiscriminately without having to confront moral reservations or ethical concerns.

- **Fast or Slow Moving**: The zombie is either depicted as shambling and slow, as in the Romero films, or fast and predatory (cf. Roche).

- **Horde Mentality**: This characteristic has also been called "massification" (Carroll, *The Philosophy* 50) and the "multiple threat" (Waller 16). These creatures tend to form together in groups, sometimes very large ones. Often, they can be defeated when encountered alone or in small groups, but hold overwhelming and insurmountable power in large groups (Browning 44). This

stands in contrast to the typical portrayal of vampires or mummies who tend to be depicted alone or in small groups. In critical analyses, this horde characteristic often inspires questions of individuality versus collectivity.

- **Lack Individual Autonomy/Mindlessness**: The zombie is typically shown as lacking individual autonomy (as in the traditional enslaved Voodoo zombie), and/or lacking much of their former cognitive abilities, often unable to speak or only to speak in a rudimentary fashion. Some zombies retain a few of their former cognitive skills and can manipulate objects, such as tools, door handles, or clubs. However, it is typically not possible to reason with a zombie, even if you can trick them at times.

- **Infectious**: The zombie condition can be spread to others, usually by bite or other means that leads to contamination and eventual conversion into a zombie creature. Many millennial zombies emphasize this trait, spreading their condition in a virus-like fashion, as the zombies of this strain are often fast, aggressive, and spread throughout society quickly, infecting and converting at a remarkable rate.

- **Cannibalistic**: The ghoul-like zombie creature usually hungers for human flesh, and, particularly in the millennial variety, are very aggressive in their pursuit and consumption of flesh. This characteristic often produces the "zombie as consumer" critical analysis.

- **Difficult to Defeat or Only-the-Head-Shot-Kills**: Typically, as per convention, the zombie can only be killed by damaging the brain. Even when this convention is not followed, they are usually difficult to kill, unless done in a particular fashion.

- **Apocalyptic**: The introduction of the zombie into the fictional world, especially after the second stain (as described below), typically results in the collapse of civilization and often the death of most of the people in the world. Much as Marco Caracciolo states that catastrophe is "a radical instance" of Herman's world disruption (223), the zombie itself works within the narrative as an agent of world disruption (Herman 133-36). This characteristic often allows the zombie narrative to either satire actual-world society or to critically posit new political configurations, whether in a conservative or utopian fashion.

- **Unexplained**: Often the reason for the zombie outbreak or its cause is unexplained, since the fall of society often makes such causal links unattainable to the characters in the narrative. This tends to make the etiology of the zombie inaccessible or even irrelevant to the characters in the narrative, who are often more focused on simply surviving and cannot take the time to investigate the creatures' origins.

With these characteristics in mind, we can then begin to outline the morphology of the zombie-creature in the American narrative, and John Browning provides an excellent way to map out this evolution through zombie cinema. While his genealogy of the zombie focuses on its filmic representations, it also works well in capturing the morphology of the zombie-creature in general, as for some time film has been the dominant media of the zombie narrative. The affordances of film have historically worked well to capture the sheer visuality of the horror in facing the rotting flesh of the zombie, allowing its repulsive form an uncomfortable closeness to the viewer as an uncanny *memento mori*, inspiring the imaginations of artists across other media to

follow its thematic inventions. Browning divides the history of the zombie into three

parts, each epitomized by a particular iconic film that serves as an early high

inventionality text that inspired the subsequent conventionalization of the new zombie-

creature form. The first is the "proto-strain," that of the supernatural zombie (Browning

42). These narratives draw from Haitian voodoo to create the mindless zombie that is

resurrected as a slave to a voodoo *Bocor* or sorcerer. In Hollywood this can be best

captured in *White Zombie* (Halperin, 1932), staring Béla Lugosi. As Browning states, in

these films the zombie is "a distant, geographically isolated and relatively surmountable

(i.e. 'single') threat" (42).

Next, Browning's first zombie strain, per se, is "a cycle of 'straight' filmic

adaptations" of Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*, such as Ragona and Salkow's *The Last

Man on Earth* (1964), starring Vincent Price, and Sagal's *The Omega Man* (1971),

starring Charlton Heston (43). Browning justifiably asserts the often overlooked

importance of Matheson's novel in the evolution of the zombie, noting how the novel

changed the zombie by combining the insatiable, cannibalistic hunger and infectious

nature of the vampire with the apocalyptic and dystopian elements of narrative

disruption that have since been hallmarks of the zombie narrative. Further, his

"zombies" introduced the characteristics of the horde mentality, and, as Browning notes,

relocates the spatial orientation of the horror threat: "because the central 'threat' in the

story is re-centered *around* the Gothic edifice or enclosure (in this case, a house), rather

than *inside* it, the setting depicted in Matheson's novel is an inversion of typical Gothic

space and geography" (43). In contrast to the proto-strain zombie, "the novel firmly de-

orientalizes the figure of the zombie by relocating it from its previously exotic locale, to the western spheres of suburbia and civilization" (43).

Building on this foundation is Browning's second strain, that of the Living Dead (43). This strain, heavily influenced by Matheson's novel, begins with George Romero's high-inventionality text *Night of the Living Dead*. However, the movement comes into its conventional form in its sequel, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). In these films, the dead are no longer slaves of an evil will, but rove in infectious hordes, driven by an insatiable hunger for human flesh. However, they shed some of the vampire traits of Matheson's creatures, such as sun sensitivity and, for the most part, the ability to talk, becoming even more mindless. Among critics, Romero's films are most popular for their infusion of sharp social commentary, as his zombies-as-American-consumers metaphors readily inspire many critics toward Marxist interpretations and radical political criticisms of late capitalism.

Elsewhere, I have extended Browning's genealogy by proposing a third strain of zombie films, which, borrowing the phrase from Nicole Birch-Bayley (1137), I call the millennial zombie. In this article, I argue that the millennial zombie is "a filmic depiction that largely took form after the turn of the century, and importantly, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11" (Cloyd 63). Displaying the zombie narrative's "remarkable ability to adapt to changes in cultural anxiety over time" (Bishop 25), the millennial zombie changes the second strain conventions to better embody, as Birch-Bayley notes, the "fear of terrorism and epidemic" that gnawed at American culture in the early years of the twenty-first century (1137). As David Roche states, the millennial zombie finds its roots in "the video game *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996) and the movie *28 Days Later*

(Boyle, 2002), which triggered today's zombie movie craze" (77). Yet, this emerging

form of the zombie did not really take shape until director Zack Snyder's remake of

Dawn of the Dead (2004) reinvents Browning's second strain. In this film, the

conventions of the third strain congeals as a new zombie threat displaying increased

aggression, more-rapid virus-like levels of contamination, fast-paced movement,

corpse-like levels of decay, almost complete dehumanization, less cognitive function

(other than hunger and hunting), and a removal of Romero's anti-capitalist messages

(Cloyd 73).

With these conventions of the millennial zombie established, numerous films and

television shows imitated and refined the themes. In particular, the television version of

The Walking Dead became so popular that terms like "zombie apocalypse" and "head

shot" became household phrases. As Olney states, *The Walking Dead* "has become the

most watched program in the history of cable TV, its season 5 premiere drawing a

record 17.2 million live viewers in October of 2014 (St. John)" (2). Yet, with this kind of

cultural attention, the conventions that felt so new and fresh in Snyder's remake have

slowly begun to lose their resonance, sliding the themes of the millennial zombie toward

cliché. This has progressed to the point that in 2017-18, season eight of *The Walking

Dead* averaged only 7.817 million viewers, down 31.12% from season seven ("*The

Walking Dead*"). Attempts to revitalize the millennial zombie have resulted in a number

of genre hybrids, such as the zombie romantic comedy, or, as Olney calls them, the

"zom-rom-com" (85), a hybridity that we see in films as David Gebroe's *Zombie

Honeymoon* (2004), Ruben Fleischer's *Zombieland* (2009), Jonathan Levine's *Warm

Bodies (2013), and Burr Steers's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), to name a few.

There has also been a more recent off-shoot of this third strain of zombie films that we can call the post-zombie film. The post-zombie film is a prime example Jameson's generic process of "renewal and substitution" (*The Political*, 131), as it developed in response to the need for new elements of invention to culturally rejuvenate the now slightly decaying millennial zombie. These are films that utilize the conventions of the zombie narrative, but, since the idea of the zombie in the American imaginary has become somewhat oversaturated and cliché in its current form, have switched the zombie for a different creature, giving the tradition of the zombie-creature a new twist. This substitute creature, however, behaves remarkably like a zombie, and these narratives still utilize all of the other zombie narrative conventions, such as confronting hordes of creatures and dealing with the apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic trappings of survival and isolation. In the science fiction genre, we see this in Rodat's television series *Falling Skies* (2011-15) in which an alien invasion leaves the survivors to band together on scavenging runs and militia strikes, and in Joss Whedon's *Firefly* (2002-03), *Serenity* (2005), and *Dollhouse* (2009-10) in the savage Reavers or the modified human Dolls, respectively (cf. Canavan, "Fighting"). Other zombie-creature narratives could be included in this strain such as Cronin's *The Passage* trilogy, Hillcoat's film *The Road* (2009), *Game of Thrones,* and, as we will discuss at the end of this chapter, *10 Cloverfield Lane* and its alien invaders. Overall, the post-zombie narrative effectively allows these texts to continue to engage with the post-9/11 fear themes and concerns of the millennial zombie narrative even after the zombie itself has become so overused

that it has lost much of its symbolic and cultural potency. Just as the zombie-creature of

the 1990s merged with the comedy genre to help re-build the creature's cultural

relevance, the post-zombie narrative follows a similar strategy to borrow elements of

invention from science fiction and fantasy, two genres that conceptually and spatially

distance its creatures from the "here and now." In either case, authors and creators

often use experiments with genre hybrids to keep secondary fear narratives such as the

zombie-creature culturally "alive."

While conceiving of the zombie narrative in terms of different dominant strains is

helpful in our understanding of the history of the sub-genre, Olney's research insightfully

reminds us that many of these strains survive in more marginalized texts that overlap

and co-exist with each other as residual elements. For instance, the proto-zombie

strain, which Olney aptly calls "colonial zombie cinema" (31), returned in films such as

Maslansky's blaxploitation film *Sugar Hill* (1974), many of the cult-famous Italian zombie

films, and Wes Craven's *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988), which Olney describes

as "complicit with neocolonialism" (35-39). Further, Romero's more recent films, such as

Diary of the Dead (2007) and *Survival of the Dead* (2008) continue his exploration of the

second-strain zombie as consumer culture, and even Lawrence's blockbuster film *I Am

Legend* (2007) continues the first-strain tradition of adapting Matheson's novel, updating

it to post-9/11 standards as, according to Olney, "the film's postapocalyptic vision of

Manhattan as 'ground zero' for a global pandemic deliberately evokes 9/11 and the

bunker mentality of the Bush-Cheney years" (72). In all, Browning's divisions of the

zombie film and these new additions are helpful guidelines to use when understanding

the zombie narrative and the secondary fear theme of the zombie-creature, but they

should not be adhered to so rigidly that we unintentionally exclude marginalized and outlying narratives from this sub-genre's canon or ignore the fact that the various subgenres coexist historically, in keeping with Jameson's insistence on the "sedimentation" of genres and their ideologies. In short, these strains should not be viewed as historical periods, but as cultural emphases of the zombie-creature theme that occurred during particular times.

THE SURVIVAL SPACE, THE WALL, AND COLSON WHITEHEAD'S *ZONE ONE*

In the same article, Browning also introduces another secondary fear theme to academic discussion, one that is of fundamental importance to the zombie narrative: the survival space. Simply put, the survival space is the area that the characters, which we can call the survival group, flee to in order to hide from the zombie-creatures or the external threat. This space can often be seen as an allegorical representation of the home or the present conditions of society, whether cultural, political, social, or economic, that the survival group must defend from the external threat of the horde. This makes the survival space a spatial existent that conjoins numerous primary fear themes, such as the external threat that presses against its walls, the internal threat of intruders or even other survivors, and paranoia over its failure to protect the survival group. It also commonly engages the personalization of fear, since when the external hordes threaten the survival space, zombie narratives typically figure it as a surrogate for the domestic home and it acts as a social performance space for characters seen as representatives of various American types. In Michael Fiddler's discussion of home invasion narratives, he notes, "a threat to home becomes a threat to selfhood and

individuality. The boundaries between domestic space and individuality are also blurry.

An attack on one is an attack on both" (83). Seen this way, the threatened survival

space becomes an allegorical threat to the home, but also to individual personality and

one's social performance of identity as well. From a Jamesonian perspective, threats to

the survival space become allegories for a nation under siege by both external and

internal threats, threats that the personalization of fear often re-articulates so that they

seem directed toward the self and our nuclear family.

Browning traces the first use of the survival space as a zombie narrative

convention back to the novel *I Am Legend*, but *Night of the Living Dead* revised it from

sheltering only a single survivor to a whole survival group (44), creating a space for

characters to represent "a demographically diverse sampling of American society" in

interaction (Hantke 245), which transforms it into a "more socially and politically volatile

enclosure" (Browning 44) that symbolically and ideologically stands in for America.

Browning asserts that the survival space has built on these foundations to function as "a

highly porous 'performance space', one in which political tensioning and negotiation

have continuously swelled and contracted" in the sequels and films that followed (57). In

addition, life inside the survival space in the zombie narrative becomes a breeding

ground for the paranoia of the internal threat, as Gerry Canavan states: "Even those

inside the community have to be surveilled at all times for signs of treachery, weakness,

or growing 'infection'" ("'We *Are*'" 445). Failure to enact this form of justified paranoia in

many zombie narratives amounts to the collapse of the group, assorted deaths, or often

the catastrophic failure of the survival space to protect the group entirely.

Carl Swanson explains how the conventional pressure of the zombie narrative, which moves from a flight from the zombie, to a siege in a survival space, to a flight from this first shelter to, possibly, another (388), means that the survival space must inevitably fall (393). Canavan agrees, noting that the fallibility of the survival space is an essential part of the zombie narrative:

> So much of the pleasure of zombie narrative in both cinema and other forms originates in the audience's knowledge that the heroes' preparations and fortifications will *never* be sufficient, that no matter what happens in the end the zombies will break through and kill nearly everyone because *that is what zombies do*…The *telos* of the fortress, like the *telos* of empire, is always, in the end, to fall. ("'We *Are*'" 445)

Of course, there are certainly exceptions to this rule as there are for all generic conventions. For instance, Priest's *Boneshaker* injects a moment of invention into the narrative use of the survival space by spatially inverting it into a wall that contains the zombie horde rather than the survival group, allowing it to remain standing after the resolution of the narrative. But most conventionally, the futility of the survival space and its walls in the zombie narrative is a formal technique that at Jameson's second horizon often serves to transmit the ideologeme that we are never safe, a paranoid impulse that tells us that all of our efforts will fail to protect us from the threats surrounding us, whether they be external or internal to our social group.

The wall is an important variation on the survival space, one that symbolically functions as the slash that separates the us/them, human/zombie binary present in the zombie narrative. While the wall may imply more permanence than the survival space,

not all remain standing as the one found in *Boneshaker*, and, indeed, this narrative seems to act as something of an outlier. For instance, recently the wall as a secondary fear theme came to a central position of cultural attention in the television show *Game of Thrones* that prominently features a seven hundred foot wall of ice that separates the civilized human lands from the wildlings and White Walkers beyond, making a massive survival space out of the lands to the south. Despite its visually massive sense of stability, the Wall also succumbs to the narrative pressure of the survival space when a portion of it falls in "The Dragon and the Wolf" in season seven. Indeed, the inevitable fall of a wall has been a common theme in American narratives throughout its history, even appearing in Robert Frost's iconic poem "Mending Wall": "Something there is that doesn't love a wall, / That wants it down" (Frost 97). Much as Chekhov asserts that a gun introduced in the beginning of a narrative must be fired before that narrative concludes, a wall, merely by its presence as an existent in the setting of a narrative, seems call for its own destruction by the end of the American narrative.

Swanson also notes an important variant on the wall common in the zombie narrative: the barricade. The barricade functions much like the wall, if perhaps implying something more temporary, but Swanson states that the presence of the zombie itself "necessitates the construction of barricades" (383), as "[b]arricades are crucial in that the preservation of the *narrative* part of *zombie narrative* depends on maintaining living characters" (387). Due to the contagious nature of the zombie that transforms the individual into a member of their mindless collective, Swanson calls each zombie a "nonagential antisubject" that creates more antisubjects, essentially turning "agential subjects (characters)" into "anticharacters" (385-6). Threatening to remove all

characters from a narrative, the zombie is a formal threat to the continued existence of

the narrative itself, making it necessary to create temporary barricades that allow the

characters to live long enough to develop a narrative (386). At the first horizon, then, the

wall and the barricade serve as formal solutions to the inherent contradiction in the

zombie narrative between the survival of its agential subjects and the impossibility of

overcoming the threat posed by the zombie-creatures, a solution that delays the

inevitable end long enough to allow a narrative in the interim. At this point, we can note

that the zombie-creature is an excellent example of the transgressive monster, as

Swanson states that the presence of the zombie destabilizes the traditional living/dead

categorical dichotomy, establishing a "(living/dead)/zombie" model in which the

barricade separates the human (living/dead) binary from the zombie threat: "by

barricading the undead out, living characters can continue to function as if they

categories *living* and *dead* were still stable" (390). Swanson's observations show that

the wall and the barricade are essential to the zombie narrative, not only to evoke an

emotional reaction of fear as a secondary fear theme (an ominous separation between

the known and the unknown, us and them), but also to function structurally to allow the

continuance of its narrative as more than the quick incorporation of the human into the

zombie horde.

To better illustrate the operation of the survival space and the wall within the

narrative, we will now turn to Colson Whitehead's novel *Zone One*, in which the survival

space plays a central role both structurally and affectively. Due to Whitehead's

reputation as an author of high literature,[4] *Zone One* is seldom discussed comparatively with other zombie narratives. However, Swanson's reading of the novel highlights numerous places that the novel nods to, builds from, and works within the conventions established by Romero, placing *Zone One* "firmly within that tradition" (383). *Zone One* takes place in the near future after a zombie apocalypse has shattered civilization. Now, a quasi-governmental group, the American Phoenix, has formed around Buffalo, New York, calling its people "pheenies." They aim to restore and rebuild the world that was lost. Toward this effort, they have reclaimed lower Manhattan, building a wall to separate off everything south of Canal Street and clearing out most of its zombies, or "skels," to create the survival space of Zone One, a first attempt to re-take a city and create a permanent settlement since the night of the outbreak, an Event that the survivors call First Night. After teams of marines clear out most of the zombie threat, they send in three-person civilian sweeper units to clean up the few remaining skels from the buildings. However, there is also a second variety of zombies called stragglers that the sweepers must remove. Stragglers appear to be non-threatening and unresponsive undead that are simply stuck in a moment of their former life, such as making photocopies or holding a kite string in a field. In this narrative, we follow Mark Spitz, a survivor nicknamed after the former Olympic swimmer of the same name, and a member of a sweeper team, in the last three days before the fall of Zone One, learning about the post-apocalyptic life that has lead him here through a series of nonlinear flashbacks.

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[4] Whitehead's literary works previous to *Zone One* include *The Intuitionist* (1999), *John Henry Days* (2001), *Apex Hides the Hurt* (2006), and *Sag Harbor* (2009). For more on his literary background, see Duncan, Forsberg (132, 141), Keehn, Kennedy, Rosenberg, Saldívar, Sorensen (559), and Swanson (380).

As the narrative progresses, we learn that all the survivors suffer from a traumatic condition called Post-Apocalyptic Stress Disorder, or PASD, which is ironically pronounced the same as the word "past," a lost temporality that continually haunts the survivors (Whitehead 67). It becomes increasingly evident that their PASD has unmoored not just Mark Spitz but all the survivors' sense of time, fragmenting and filtering their experiences of the present through the traumatic lens of their lost pre-apocalyptic world. This results in their inability to comprehend their present material conditions and culminates near the end of the narrative when they experience a rapid succession of what Swanson calls "epistemological failures" (399). These include clinging to the false belief that a large dose of "anticiprant" will cure a zombie bite, the belief that racism ended after Last Night despite Mark Spitz being given a racist nickname by other survivors,[5] and even the belief that the stragglers are harmless, only to have one bite a sweeper at the end (399-400). All these revelations either occur or are revealed shortly before the Canal Street wall falls under a flood of zombies, demonstrating just how illusory and fragile the traumatic view of their present reality actually was. Overall, *Zone One* centers on the secondary fear theme of the survival space to show how this spatial existent can be used as a temporal divide that symbolically separates the nostalgic reconstruction of life before a traumatic and apocalyptic event from life afterward, and thereby, given the narrative's somewhat ambiguous ending, communicates the ideologeme that such nostalgia may be

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[5] Late in the narrative it is revealed that Mark Spitz is black and that the other survivors had named him after the Olympic swimmer when he chose to single-handedly fight off a swarm of zombies rather than swim away, reanimating the racist stereotype that black people cannot swim and demonstrating that racism lives on even after the apocalypse. As Mark Spitz reflects, "There were plenty of things in the world that deserved to stay dead, yet they walked" (Whitehead 287-8). See Sorensen and Saldívar for more on the role of race in *Zone One*.

comforting but is ultimately a trap that prevents one's adaptation to their political and material environment.

At the first horizon, the dominant formal contradiction of *Zone One* is between its postmodern nonlinear fragmentation of temporality that manifests in Mark Spitz's analeptic and interiorized memories, in which he recalls various past events of his life, versus the typically linear zombie narrative in which the division between the pre-apocalyptic past and the post-apocalyptic present is temporarily maintained by the spatial marker of the survival space and the wall itself. As is conventional in the zombie narrative, this temporal divide dislocates much of the past, especially the explanation behind the cause of the zombie apocalypse. Additionally, Zone One's wall spatially acts as the border between what the narrative calls the wastes and the Zone, or what we could also refer to as wilderness and progress, chaos and order, nature and civilization. For Mark Spitz it also creates a divide between his sense of before and after the mad scramble for survival, in which Zone One now offers him a comforting life after mere survival. In the wastes, Mark Spitz lived through a series of survival spaces, including the toy store (Whitehead 149) and the farmhouse (210), but these settings are relegated to analepses in a way that Caracciolo likens to Virginia Woolf's use of "tunneling," in which the "temporal shifts follow—or are at least inspired by—movements internal to the protagonist's consciousness" (235). When something in the present seems to trigger Mark Spitz, the novel goes into a flashback, but these are revealed in a nonlinear fashion, leaving it up to the reader to put the pieces of his past together. Only life in the survival zone of Zone One exists in the narrative present, temporally anchored by the paratextual chapter titles of "Friday," "Saturday," and "Sunday," which we come to learn

are the last three days before the fall of the Canal Street wall and the collapse of Zone One.

This spatiotemporal tension is resolved in the novel by focalizing itself entirely through Mark Spitz and his time-shifting traumatic condition, a distorting perspective shared by all the survivors of First Night. As Caracciolo notes, Mark Spitz's trauma affects his worldview and narration:

Mark's past…remains an incomplete patchwork…it becomes bound up with catastrophe-induced trauma…[and] the temporal structure of the novel mirrors the disruption brought about by catastrophe not just in the storyworld's external reality but—more importantly—in the protagonist's understanding of his life. (235)

Focalizing through Mark Spitz's as a traumatically analeptic survivor conflicts with the future-oriented aspects of Zone One, but it is simultaneously an imaginary narrative solution to the impossibility in the real world of living both in the past and in the present with a focus on surviving into the future. This connects to the real-world conservative push to return America to a pre-Event, pre-9/11, or pre-apocalyptic, sense of normalcy, with the contradictory strain of nihilistic American apocalypticism in which the only possible future is an impending end. Seen satirically, this move of the traumatized focalizer in the text questions the soundness of the reasoning processes behind the actions made by America during the post-9/11 haze of collective trauma, much in the same way that *The Zero* noted the inaccessibility of causation and *Bleeding Edge* highlighted our lack of access to definitive knowledge under our present stage of multinational capitalism.

Seen at the second horizon, this resolution of the formal contradiction between analepsis and the linear suspense narrative via focalization on the traumatically analeptic Mark Spitz subtly communicates the ideologeme that, after 9/11, nostalgia is comforting but that an effective response to the external and internal threats that we face must be found by adapting to our present conditions, not those found in the pre-Event past. As Leif Sorensen states, "The return to normalcy is the promise of the American Phoenix" (560). This pulls the pheenies and those who adhere to their goals toward the belief that the pre-apocalyptic world can be rebuilt, and establishes a nostalgic longing to re-create the past in the present, to re-occupy and re-store lower Manhattan, to return to the moment before the traumatic Event, even if the material conditions of their pre-apocalyptic storyworld no longer exist. Clouded by their shared trauma, this comforting nostalgia manifests among the pheenies in the novel much like a collective, and ultimately illusory, repetition compulsion, which the text formally grounds in Mark Spitz's analepses. This prevents the pheenies from being able to accept or even see the storyworld as it has truly become, leading to their ultimate downfall at the end.

Under this ideologeme, the pheenies can only see the present as the past and the continual re-creation of this past as a form of progress, constituting their only hope for the future. This ideologeme prevents them from accepting that the monsters have already invaded and that the ideological walls that once supported the pre-apocalyptic sense of American exceptionalism have already fallen. As Sorensen states, "Their futurist optimism is not a sign of an enduring capacity for progress but a symptom of their inability to adapt to an inhuman world" (578), and we could argue an inability to

adapt to the material conditions of their present post-apocalyptic storyworld. Opposing

this "pheenie optimism" is the belief that Mark Spitz's advocates for most of the

narrative, namely, that "survival is contingent on his ability to adapt to the new

world…and eschew any hope of a return to the previous order" (560-1). As Sorensen

states, from this position "the struggle for survival becomes the new normal" (568).

Rather than progress as nostalgic restoration, Mark Spitz advocates adaptation as

survival, even as his focalization continually countervails through analepses his own call

to adapt, emphasizing that the ideologeme of nostalgia after an apocalyptic Event may

be inevitable, but so is the failure of the wall and the survival space.

Adaptation, for Mark Spitz, is the urge he feels, and ultimately ignores, to leave

the comforting nostalgia that the survival space of Zone One offers. In this way, the

repeated failures of nostalgic reconstruction, seen in the analeptic failures of each

survival space that he flees from, authorizes a sense of survival through justified

paranoia that we previously found as a plotting vehicle in *Bleeding Edge*. The focus in

Zone One on the survival space, however, emphasizes the role that such paranoia

plays in the continual need to police the survival space against the ever-present internal

and external threat through heightened surveillance that Canavan notes above. As the

survival space is an allegorical representation of its present society, this perspective

symbolically transforms America itself into a survival space that justifies the real-world

post-9/11 breaches of civilian privacy rights and the preemptive strikes against anyone

America saw as an external threat, such as occurred in the occupation of Iraq. When

living in a survival space, justifiable paranoia makes such acts appear to be necessary

precautions. For Mark Spitz, the lived experience of being in Zone One eventually, if

only temporarily, overpowers his desire to leave, redirecting his sense of justified paranoia from individual survival to the preservation of the survival space at all costs.

Throughout much of the narrative, this internal conflict causes Mark Spitz to feel excluded and marginalized from the dominance of the pheenie optimism around him. He sees their slogans ("'We Make Tomorrow!'") (Whitehead 30), Nightly News (43), merchandising (99), and theme songs ("'Stop! Can You Hear the Eagle Roar?' (Theme from *Reconstruction*)") (240) as little more than a public relations campaign and marketing scheme that he has to resist "or else it would turn out bad for him" (30). He sees those who died on First Night as "unadaptables" (30) and notes this failing characteristic even among the current pheenie survivors, or as he broods, "the problem with progress—it made you soft" (181). Overall, Mark Spitz adopts a stance of posttraumatic hypervigilance through justified paranoia: "They never came when you were vigilant; they came for you when you had one foot in the past, recollecting a dead notion of safety" (108). In this way, the stragglers, whom Mark Spitz often feels a sympathetic connection with, represent a lure pulling him toward nostalgia, and threatening to get him stuck in the safety of the past, a lure that he knows will lead to the imminent death that the stragglers themselves represent. In one interview, Whitehead conceptually connects the stragglers and the pheenies, such as Gary and Kaitlyn, the two other members of Mark Spitz's sweeper team: "People like Gary and Kaitlyn are still stragglers in their own way. They're still tied to their pre-existing notions despite the apocalypse" (Rosenberg). This connects human nostalgia with a sense of "straggler thinking" (Whitehead 271), a nostalgic worldview sure to lead to one's death by getting stuck in the past.

Yet, as the narrative progresses, Mark Spitz increasingly succumbs to the ideological pressure of the pheenies' straggler thinking, converting to the comfort of nostalgia and attaching himself to the seemingly progressive promise of Zone One. Despite his earlier resistance, in a discussion with the Lieutenant, Mark states, "'I'm here because there's something worth bringing back,'" a nostalgic sentiment to which the Lieutenant, a pheenie himself, ironically warns: "'That's straggler thinking'" (270-1). However, Mark is clearly ambivalent about his conversion, his burgeoning longing to restore the old world, as he later considers, "If they could bring back paperwork…they could certainly reanimate prejudice, parking tickets, and reruns" (288). Mark Spitz realizes that resurrecting the pre-apocalyptic world would bring with it all of the worst elements of the past as well. Further, his use of the word "reanimate" functions as a subtle ironic metaphor for the zombies, or monsters, that we create when we nostalgically bringing back the past, as some things may be better off left buried. This realization releases him from his bout of pheenie nostalgia, and his adaptive survival instincts return as Mark Spitz regains his old paranoid intuition that had always allowed him to predict the fall of a survival space just moments before it happened. With this, he foresees the fall the Canal Street wall moments before the skels flood through the streets, but too late to save himself: "He saw the flaw…Mark Spitz saw the chink through now-wastelanded eyes…That's where every fortification splintered: where the nail pierced the wood, the rivet penetrated the concrete" (305).

In the somewhat ambiguous and pessimistic ending, Mark Spitz leaves the shelter of a shop to hopefully fight through a street full of skels to reach an escape route, yet his survival seems unlikely, even if his death or survival is never explicitly

portrayed (Whitehead 322). While Mark Spitz's demise may be safe to assume, the conclusion plays on the ambiguous portrayal of his end to evoke a lingering sense of fear and anxiety. Where an explicit death scene would add closure and finality to his life story, Whitehead's move to not portray his death leaves doubt, paranoia, and maybe even the hope that he lives on after the last page, as we may fear that his trials somehow continue, whether as a human survivor or as new a member of the zombie horde. In many ways, this ending modifies the conventional Romero ending that Browning observes as rewarding communal and collective action and punishing acts of individualism (51). In the Romero ending, those who survive work in groups, and those who die tend to work alone or are motivated by their own selfish ends. In *Zone One*, Mark Spitz's strategy of adaptive individualistic survival is presented as a better alternative to the collectivity of the American Phoenix, but not because the narrative is privileging individualism over collectivism. Instead, the novel demonstrates that even collective action is hopeless if it is poisoned by the ideologeme of nostalgia rather than addressing the material conditions of its present. In short, at this horizon, *Zone One* asserts that collectivism may have its benefits, but only if it adapts to and fits the world around it, reminding us of the importance of adjusting our ideologies to the material conditions in which we live.

In total, the American Phoenix's comforting nostalgia echoes the post-9/11 desire to resurrect and maintain our sense of American exceptionalism through the fallen Virgin Land myth, as mentioned in the previous chapter on the 9/11 novel. Indeed, the wall in *Zone One* along Canal Street that separates the world of human life from zombie life functions as an allegorical stand-in for the ideological sense of division and

protection that the Virgin Land myth once granted Americans prior to the attacks. However, just as the Virgin Land myth proved itself illusory and insubstantial in the face of terrorism, the secondary fear theme of the wall in *Zone One* falls under the weight of the external threat of the zombie horde. Nostalgia, in this sense, is a traumatized call to bring back a familiar and comfortable worldview that fell under the intrusion of the apocalyptic Event, whether that is understood as Last Night or 9/11, and to reclaim lower Manhattan, the site of Ground Zero, from the remnants of the contamination left over from the intrusion of the external threat, whether zombie or terrorist. This post-apocalyptic nostalgia survives even today in the "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) slogan that moves to incorporate American space and culture into the hegemonic sense of American subjectivity, even as it attempts to fit it into an "us" identity that no longer exists (if it ever existed), as the Event, the trauma, History itself, has changed the foundational conditions which underlie American existence. Such a nostalgic desire for a comforting old myth proved inadequate with the Virgin Land myth after 9/11, and American culture instead had to resolve the tension by adapting to the material conditions of its time to create a new, ideological shield through the myth of the Homeland Security State. Yet, *Zone One* warns us that our traumatized view after 9/11 has led us to the false conclusion that the familiar old wall of American exceptionalism will still work if we just put it into this slightly new form. Rather, as the zombies break through the wall, we are faced with the reality that the external world, the international community that American exceptionalism has tried for so long to barricade itself away from, still exists and that the divisions of borders and geography mean next to nothing in the face of contemporary communication and transportation technologies.

The repeated motif of the fall of the wall after 9/11 is the reminder of the fallacy of national separation under our current stage of multinational capitalism. Just as *Bleeding Edge* reminds us of the increasing irrelevance of traditional definitions of the sovereignty of national borders in our rhizomatically networked world, *Zone One* reminds us that we cannot keep isolated from the contemporary transnational world. *Zone One* argues that equating recovery with nostalgic reconstruction, rather than with adapting to the way things are, can only lead to our own destruction, our own obsolescence in the face of the Real pressing in at our walls and borders. The narrative cries out that the world has changed, its walls have become porous, and we must face that it has become a globally networked and interdependent rhizomatic structure. We must shed our American exceptionalism and adapt as a part of the global community in order to survive. Yet, our recent history of Abu Ghraib, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the fabrication of the Homeland Security myth, the creation of walls at the Mexican border, and the proliferation of MAGA caps all seem to argue that America has failed to rise to the challenge of our time. American exceptionalism continues, only altered by the disruption of 9/11, but not shattered or replaced by something new, and it appears that we have only moved toward a culturally regressive stance of isolationism rather than global integration. In this, *Zone One* warns us that we must adapt or fall under the weight of our own illusions. Indeed, in many post-9/11 American fear narratives we see this same unconscious echo repeatedly play out in the climactic destruction of the wall, from *Game of Thrones* to Stephen King's *Under the Dome* (novel 2009, television series 2013-15) to the fall of numerous survival spaces in *The Walking Dead*. Through our narratives we are returning over and over to the culturally traumatic moment when the

terrorist attacks shattered the Virgin Land myth and made us feel, perhaps for the first time in the lives of many, that America could be affected by external threats.

At the third horizon we can re-interpret this contradiction between analeptic nostalgia and the linear narrative as a genre contradiction between the postmodern 9/11 novel and the zombie narrative. Swanson has deftly documented this tension between high and low culture in both the novel's reception and marketing, as critics repeatedly seem to apologize for its genre elements, and even the promotional blurbs in the first few pages of the 2012 paperback edition seem to persuade that, despite its genre leanings, the novel actually is worth reading (379-80). As Swanson states, "The publisher evidently feels the need to assuage any lingering doubts the discriminating consumer may have about purchasing a zombie novel" (380). Yet, Whitehead feels that such worries are unnecessary, expressing in an interview that such distinctions between high and low culture are outdated: "The world is a junkyard—take the parts you need to make the machine work the way you want it to" (Keehn). *Zone One* resolves this contradiction by making this into essentially a 9/11-zombie novel, an allegorical representation of life in Manhattan and America after the terrorist attacks that utilizes the categorical instability of the zombie as a transgressive monster in order to critique, satirize, and distance the reader from the actual world. This distanced perspective allows us symbolically to see post-9/11 American culture from the safety of a fictional world that cannot actually exist, but Whitehead brings us into this world and unites the genres by focalizing us through Mark Spitz, the traumatically analeptic survivor, merging the character conventions of both genres to give us access to this distanced storyworld that is symbolically a way to access aspects of our own world. Through its narrative,

Zone One calls us to adapt to the new conditions of our world and warns us that a past sense of identity cannot be recovered after a traumatic experience, such as America faced with 9/11. We cannot nostalgically make America great again—we must make America great by continually, processually, making it anew. Attempting to recreate the greatness of America in the past is analogous to reliving a high school championship playoff victory in your forties. It is time we move on to something different, something that fits our present conditions, something that could potentially, despite the zombie narrative nihilism of *Zone One*, be even better if we let it.

Through the negative hermeneutic, the conclusion of *Zone One* presents the politically oppressive message that while comforting nostalgia is disabling and dangerous, it may be an unavoidable condition in the wake of a traumatic event. This is something of a logical leap of biological essentialism, however, as the experience of trauma, as we have previously established, is heavily influenced by cultural, psychological, and individual factors, and is not determined by a mechanistic sense of biological hardwiring alone. Yet, the fear theme of trauma posits that our very psyche is constructed so that in the face of a traumatic event we will generate repetition compulsions that will entrap our present in illusions of our past. Under this illusory traumatic haze, the narrative pull of *Zone One's* nihilistic zombie conventions presents no viable alternative for an American future other than enveloping ourselves in the delusions of our own comforting nostalgia, an opiate to ease our inevitable consumption by the hordes of invading threats at our borders. Yet, simultaneously, through the positive hermeneutic, the narrative's very insistence through its use of the survival space to show that all walls will inevitably fall presents us with a cautionary but utopian

hint toward the necessity of adaptation to historical change. From this perspective, the narrative utilizes the fear generated by the ambiguous elements of its ending to motivate action before we are too late to find our own place among the international community (i.e., choosing to leave Zone One) and instead become engulfed under its tides of change.

Perhaps then, we can read the millennial zombie as not just a symbolic embodiment of American fears of survival, terrorism, and categorical transgression, but as our cultural fear of change after 9/11 confronted us with the obsolescence of American exceptionalism and suggested the slow beginnings of the world's historical approach toward a post-nationalist future. As Canavan muses on the zombie narrative, "The *really* radical move…would be not to feel pity [for the zombie] but to throw open the gates: to erase the subject-object division altogether" (449). Of course, as Canavan reminds us, within logic of the zombie narrative this would mean suicide, but these are symbolic narratives attempting to present imaginary solutions to real world contradictions, not realities themselves. As Canavan states, "*we* don't live inside a zombie narrative; we live in the real world, a zombieless world, where the only zombies to be found are the ones we ourselves made out of the excluded, the forgotten, the cast-out, and the walled-off" (450). In our post-9/11 historical context, if we were to follow Canavan's suggestion of employing a "zombie embrace" (450), which in our terms would be to invite those in whom we have classified and excluded as external threats, would the nightmare illusion of their decayed flesh give way to the faces of allies instead? Would the bogeymen of our post-9/11 cultural imaginary really point the way forward to a progressive and more collective future? Often, the utopic hints found in

millennial zombie narratives, such as we find here in *Zone One*, softly but insistently say "yes."

HYPERMASCULINITY, THE SURVIVALIST, AND *10 CLOVERFIELD LANE*

Another prominent secondary fear theme is the hypermasculine character and its embodiment as the survivalist, a symbolic act that often appears in the post-9/11 zombie narrative as an imaginary resolution to the contradiction between the belief that our pre-Event sense of American hegemonic masculinity would provide us with safety and security and the revelation that America had become a victim of terrorism. With the attacks of 9/11 shattering the ideological wall of our Virgin Land myth, there was a sense that Americans had been "violated" by the attacks, and Julie Drew notes the affective impact of this feeling, as the term is a "customary euphemism for rape (being 'violated')" (71). Drew shows how rhetorical constructions after 9/11, such as news stories, editorials, and other forms of public discourse, "[f]eminized victim status" (71). In reaction to this unwelcome sense of "feminine" vulnerability, she states that presidential rhetoric after 9/11 sought to create a particular gendered national identity, one "highlighting physical strength and violently punitive responses to conflict as both desirable and necessary, as well as paternalistic attitudes toward injury and trauma, both of which are assumed to be predicated on weakness, and which are read as feminine" (71). As she states, "post-9/11 public discourse…argues…that the U.S. is far too feminine, and thus must work to become more masculine in order to be safer" (71). Faludi would apparently agree on the impact of 9/11 on the dominant perception of gender roles:

> The intrusions of September 11 broke the bolt on our protection myth, the illusion
> that we are masters of our security, that our might makes our homeland
> impregnable, that our families are safe in the bower of their communities and our
> women and children safe in the arms of their men. (15)

Clearly, 9/11 not only disrupted our national myth, but it also had a profound impact on our enactment of gender roles.

The American imaginary responded with the hypermasculine character, a socially performed role that is enacted in the narrative by both male and female characters. The hegemonic character exaggerates traits valued by hegemonic masculinity, including aggression, strength, ruggedness, capability, a relatively emotionless affective disposition (aside from anger), and a taciturn social style. From a cultural perspective, this is an existent that works to compensate for the perceived feminization of the American-as-victim and the correlating fear of the failure of American hegemonic masculinity to protect its people and its country. The hypermasculine character, then, is a conjunction of the fear of the external threat and a traumatic reaction to a sense of victimization. In science fiction, we often see this in the militarization of the storyworld, in which the characters are dominated during a state of emergency by some branch of the military. In these storyworlds, each citizen must become an embodiment of Takacs's virtual imperial grunt and enact the skill sets of a soldier, including survivalism, weapons training, wearing combat armor, and taking lives as needed. We especially see this play out in post-9/11 television shows, such as *Battlestar Galactica*, which we will investigate in the next chapter, but also in *Falling Skies* and Eric Kripke's *Revolution* (2012-14). In fantasy, we see this hypermasculinity embodied in the television show *Game of*

Thrones in its many massive characters such as The Mountain, The Hound, and (despite her female sex) Brienne of Tarth, but also in characters such as Arya, Yara, and Osha, or the devaluation of the effeminate boy Robin Arryn. In the horror genre, we see this especially take prominence in *The Walking Dead*, as, for instance, Stephen Gencarella notes that many of the female characters "are introduced as weak feminine figures who harden emotionally and physically and train in weapons to become effective slayers of ghouls and humans" (134).

At especially popular embodiment of the hypermasculine character that we will focus on in this chapter is the survivalist, which in the post-9/11 narrative is an embodiment of hypermasculinity as filtered through commodity acquisition that typically takes the form of a male rescue figure. Popular culture often associates the survivalist with the prepper, someone who prepares for apocalyptic Events, and even the hoarder, someone who collects material objects compulsively. Mick Broderick notes the growth of the American survivalist theme even in the Cold War era:

> During the late '70s and early '80s imagery of genocidal nuclear stockpiles
> increasing year by year and converging with a renewed bellicose Christian
> fundamentalism and heightened superpower tensions encouraged a subculture
> of survivalists to prepare to emerge from the anticipated holocaust in a position of
> dominance. (379)

In post-9/11 American fear narratives and media depictions, the survivalist, prepper, and hoarder are character types that are connected by a compulsion to gather material goods, consumables, and products in an attempt to alleviate their often apocalyptic and paranoid fears. Toward this effort, the fictional survivalist exerts a rugged sense of

capability though fetishizing the acquisition of a surplus of consumer goods in an attempt to ward off their own affective anxieties of becoming a disempowered and helpless victim in various potential or imagined future situations. However, just as the secondary fear theme of the zombie-creature has little connection with its actual world allegory of the terrorist, the version of the survivalist depicted in American fear narratives has at best only a loose connection with their actual world counterparts as well. In the real world, there can certainly be practical survivalists and preppers, or people who prepare for SHTF scenarios (shit hits the fan scenarios) in a way that might actually work in a particular apocalyptic event. However, sociologist Richard G. Mitchell Jr.'s ethnographic research on survivalist culture in general found it to be a predominately male-driven effort toward, essentially, exerting a sense of control over their lives: "Survivalism is neither intentional protest nor practical readiness for coming uncertainties…it is primarily resistance to rationalization, to fixed meanings and predictable process" (214).

As the fear theme of the survivalist has many of its roots in the real-world survivalist, it is worth out time, briefly, to outline the survivalist that Mitchell found in his research. Contrary to popular perception, Mitchell states, "the practiced survivalism I observed was less reactive than proactive, less a retreat from or renouncement of social life than a novel exploration of its possibilities" (8). In the face of the dehumanization and the continued focus on specialization brought about in post-industrial life, the survivalist engages in what Mitchell calls culture crafting, a creative act of "inventing new narratives" and utilizing the materials at hand in creative new ways (9). Among the survivalists he studied, the simple material accumulation of "survivalist-oriented

commodities" was not sufficient: "mere wealth or control of goods, tools, or knowledge

earns little respect" in this community, and instead "survivalism serves as a rhetorical

means of transforming depersonalized consumer society…into an aesthetic discourse

of valuation where survivalists are adventuresome architects of new economic orders,"

moving survivalists from contemporary cultural margins to a central place of importance

(37). Through creating catastrophic and apocalyptic narratives of the near future from

strings of conspiratorial re-interpretations of current events, "Survivalism is centered on

the continuing task of constructing 'what if' scenarios in which survival preparations will

be at once necessary and sufficient" (13). In regard to the use of material goods,

Mitchell states that the survivalist engages in bricolage, "nonstandard work, an inclusive

process of make-do…creative problem solving" (83), in which "survivalism arises from

the interplay of contextual restraints on the one hand and self-constituting social actions

on the other, from the interaction between biography and circumstance, perceived

capacities and constraints" (9). Essentially, the survivalist looks to create in themselves

a sense of capability, of consequence and personal relevance, through bricolage, the

ability to creatively use of the materials on hand to survive, not the stockpiling of

material goods as a consumerist safety buffer for the unknown. They construct near-

future apocalyptic narratives through something like Hall's oppositional code to make

scenarios, however unlikely, that will be manageable enough to prepare for, but dire

enough to disrupt the conditions of modern civilization so that their creativity will have a

place of expression and importance, offering safety and security to themselves and

those they love. These scenarios also find their exigence through the personalization of

their fearful narratives, as the survivalist "locates himself in the center of these

transformations," because "The center is a busy place…[where] survivalists want to be, busy among compelling challenges and consequent action" (230). According to Mitchell, the actual world survivalist, above all, constructs narratives where their creativity and ideas make them useful and provide them with opportunities for challenge and stimulation through action and creative bricolage. Seen from this perspective, the actual world survivalist creates apocalyptic narratives as imaginary solutions to the real-world contradiction of hegemonic masculine capability and their experience of alienation in late capitalist society.

In the fear narrative, we encounter traces of the real-world survivalist as filtered through the protonarrative of the survivalist fantasy, an imaginary construct that often resembles one of their own apocalyptic narratives. In the survivalist fantasy, the protagonist, typically a hypermasculine male character, functions as a nexus of the primary American fear themes of paranoia and an impending apocalyptic Event. In addition, much like the survivalists described above, these fantasies often incorporate the personalization of fear, as the threat, whether depicted as internal or external, serves to isolate the survivalist to either themselves as an individual or their immediate family, which they must defend and teach to live after the apocalypse. In this way, the focus of the survivalist fantasy narrative typically articulates the threat as directed to the self or family rather than to society or a nation, collectives that the protagonist has often lost communication with or have simply collapsed in the catastrophe, thereby becoming irrelevant in the narrative. The survivalist is hence generally far more isolated than the larger communities barricaded behind the walls in zombie narratives like *Zone One*, even if they may occupy their own series of survival spaces. In reality television,

numerous fear narratives revolving around survivalism have emerged, including

National Geographic's *Doomsday Preppers* (2012-14), Discovery Channel's *Dual*

Survival (2010-16), and Discovery Channel's *Naked and Afraid* (2013-present).

While there is nothing inherently dysfunctional with learning survival skills, these

shows derive much of their entertainment value from the evocation of fear, presenting

survival fantasy situations in which people's lives are in danger. By doing so, they

introduce viewers to frightening situations they may have never imagined possible,

making them look like credible and immanent threats, even if their likelihood of ever

happening to your typical city-dwelling audience member is quite remote. The narrative

solution to these survival situations typically comes in two forms, which outlines two

different views on survivalism. The first resembles Mitchell's creative survivalists

described above, in which the survivalist utilizes the limited resources that they have

around them in a creative way. The second is survivalism as consumerism, in which the

survivalist uses specialized equipment that many urban viewers would normally be

unlikely to own, such as survival knives, ropes, rations, dry food storage, homemade

water filters, and storage jugs. A prime example is the "bug-out bag," in which a

survivalist keeps a set of whatever they deem to be essential survival items, which

varies dramatically between individuals depending on what type of emergencies they

anticipate. As one website states, "The bags' contents project what people fear—war,

martial law, natural disaster—and how they intend to cope" (Murrmann). This second

strain of survivalism, as a means of ameliorating fear and anxiety through the material

accumulation of resources to create a sense of security, can easily be read as sprouting

from contemporary consumer culture, one that often depicts shopping as recreation and

raises its citizens to see spending and acquisition as therapeutic outlets. Rather than searching for lived alternatives to consumerism as the creative survivalist does, the survivalist as consumer has entirely appropriated and inverted survivalist culture so that it supports the economic endeavors of the modern world rather than attempting to find an empowering, if ultimately fictional, alternative to it. This sense of survivalism as consumerism momentarily came to the forefront of American culture in the days after 9/11 when Bush called forth every American to go out and shop as a form of patriotism and as a defense against the terrorists' efforts to destabilize the American economy.

This survivalist as consumer culture also finds voice after 9/11 in the vibrant online prepping culture and a recent concern with hoarders. Prepping is a cultural practice in which individuals (known as preppers) prepare for coming apocalyptic events, whether military, natural, economic, or other by accumulating vast amounts of resources to survive independently in case of a disaster. While it could easily be argued that prepping is nothing new, it has gained public interest after 9/11, particularly with the television show *Doomsday Preppers*. At the same time, hoarders became linked to the "feminized" victim status that post-9/11 culture taught us to abhor, as hegemonic popular culture has transformed the hoarder into the nightmare "feminized" bogeyman opposite of the survivalist, a social enactment to be avoided at all costs. Hoarders came under a cultural spotlight with A&E's television show *Hoarders* (2009-17), a series structured around staging numerous interventions on people deemed to uncontrollably accumulate material possessions to the point where it potentially presents safety and health risks to themselves and others. Contrary to the hypermasculinization of the survivalist and the prepper in popular culture, the hoarder is typically pathologized as a

"feminized" victim of their psychological compulsions. During the run of *Hoarders*,

hoarding even literally became pathologized as it was classified in the DSM-5 in 2013

as a mental disorder. While direct causation for this classification cannot be linked to the

show, *Hoarders* helped create a new embodiment of fear in the cultural imaginary,

pathologizing and absolutizing[6] individuals as hoarders. Overall, though, while hoarders

and preppers often enact a paranoid fear of apocalyptic events, they have not found as

much representation in fictional American fear narratives as the survivalist.

One typical example of a high-inventionality post-zombie survivalist fear

narrative would be Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*. This novel covers the journeys

of a father and his boy in a post-apocalyptic world reduced to ash and darkness, as they

travel south along a highway to the coast, dealing with questions of morality and

purpose in a dying world. Though this text was published in 2006, long before the

millennial zombie narrative began to show signs of cultural fatigue and cliché, it

established the practice of using the conventions of the millennial zombie narrative,

such as the world disrupting characteristic of the zombie, and transposing it into a post-

apocalyptic storyworld that substitutes the zombie, in this case, with the other human

survivors, which are depicted as cannibalistic threats to the man and boy. As is typical

for a high-inventionality text, *The Road* is hard to relegate into a particular genre as it

draws from many: since it was produced by literary fiction author McCarthy, many tend

see it as a postmodern novel, but others have noticed that it demonstrates conventions

of both post-apocalyptic science fiction (cf. Pizzino) and the zombie narrative (Canavan,

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[6] In chapter four, absolutizing is described as part of the process outlined by Takacs in which a threat, such as terrorism, is "personalized, pathologized, and absolutized" (*Terrorism TV* 59). To absolutize a threat is to simplify it into an immutable or unchangeable essence, a subordinating form of epistemological violence that seeks to define and thereby limit the potentialities available when encountering the threat and those available to the threat.

"We *Are*" 431). Overall, *The Road* reads much like the survivalist fantasy described above, one aligned with Mitchell's sense of creative survivalism, in which the male survivalist hero uses their creativity to utilize the limited resources around them to survive. In *The Road* this plays out as the taciturn hypermasculine man (unnamed throughout the narrative) scavenges through the objects found around him to provide for his son, utilizing his knowledge, wits and sheer determination to keep his son alive as long as he can. As Arielle Zibrak has noted, the novel can easily be described as a conservative narrative focusing on the generational transmission of patriarchal and heteronormative culture, even despite the fact that the post-apocalyptic storyworld no longer supports these pre-apocalyptic values (105). While *The Road* is an excellent example of a post-zombie survivalist narrative, it aligns too closely with Mitchell's observations of the survivalist fantasy to add much to our analysis at this point in the project. Further, as a canonical work by a white male author, it expresses conservative ideological ground that we have already described above, such as in the survivalist television shows, the concept of hypermasculinity filtered through commodity acquisition of the survivalist character, and the ideologemes of traumatic entrapment and comforting nostalgia already discussed in *Zone One* and *The Zero*.

Instead, we find a more nuanced articulation of the survivalist that covers new conceptual ground for this study in Dan Trachtenberg's film *10 Cloverfield Lane*, a post-zombie narrative that covers new ideological ground to better illustrate the ways that fear narratives can distort actual world cultures like creative survivalism into a nightmare reflection. This film follows Michelle (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) as she runs away from her presumably abusive fiancé only to get in a car accident. She awakens in a locked

room in an underground bunker, chained to the wall, and meets Howard (John Goodman). Howard is a somewhat twitchy and unnerving Navy veteran who tells her that there has been an attack, the air above has been contaminated, and everyone outside the bunker is dead. Naturally, she does not believe him until she sees proof and meets the only other survivor in the bunker, Emmett (John Gallagher Jr.), who tells her that it is all true, and that Emmett only just managed to fight his way into the bunker before Howard closed it. Howard says they may have to stay in the bunker for a year or two if there is nuclear fallout or chemical residue, and Michelle tries to make the best of her situation and Howard's troubling patriarchal behavior. Yet, she soon discovers that after Howard's ex-wife took his daughter Megan away from him, he abducted and killed a young girl named Brittany as a temporary substitute two years ago. As Howard repeatedly treats her like his little girl, Michelle realizes that he wants her to become the next substitute for his daughter, and that if she does not act soon, she will be his next victim, meeting the same fate as Brittany before her. Entrapped, Michelle and Emmett try to plan their escape, Michelle using her skills as an aspiring fashion designer to make a hazmat suit and respirator out of a shower curtain and some plastic bottles so they can survive in the air above ground. When Howard discovers their plans, he kills Emmett and dumps his body in a barrel of perchloric acid. He tries to stop Michelle from escaping, but she kicks the barrel of acid onto him, accidently starting a fire, and only narrowly escapes from the bunker. Outside, she finds out that the air is fine, but she is attacked by a crawling, worm-like alien creature and a massive alien ship, the latter of which she defeats through a clever use of bricolage, fashioning a Molotov cocktail out of items on hand. She then takes a car, speeds away, and hears a radio broadcast that

tells her that she could flee to the safe zone in Baton Rouge or join the fight against the alien invaders in Houston. Coming to a crossroads, she pauses but heads to Houston, making the conscious decision to fight her fears rather than succumb to her lifelong habit of running from danger. In doing so, she chooses to enact the hypermasculine post-9/11 fantasy of the capable citizen soldier rather than enacting the role of the "feminized" victim fleeing behind the safety of a walled survival space, such as we find in *Zone One.*

Here, we refer to *10 Cloverfield Lane* as a post-zombie narrative not because the aliens as zombie substitutes that it uses follow all of the conventional characteristics of the zombie-creature, but because their portrayal plays with each of these conventions in ways that remind the audience of other zombie-creatures seen in previously released zombie films. For instance, while the aliens may not display a decaying humanoid form (even if their dominant colors are brown, gray, and black), they are dehumanized as we are unable to communicate with them in order to understand their apparently relentless pursuit of human victims. This dehumanization in the film portrays the aliens as having less value than the humans they attack, as killing or attacking one does not confront the viewer or the characters with any moral or ethical concerns. Further, the dehumanization makes the aliens seem to lack individual autonomy, as they appear to all follow the relentless goal of attacking humans, but they do not display a capacity for individual or alternative choice in their actions. The worm alien that we encounter first resembles the fast moving and predatory zombie-creature tradition initiated in Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead*, but the alien ship, while fast moving, appears ponderously slow by scale, a looming vast shape framed above Michelle or lurking under the cover of storm

clouds at the end of the film. A horde mentality is never shown in the film, but it is

implied, as we know that while Michelle only directly encounters one worm alien and

one ship, it would have taken many more of the aliens to overcome the cities in the film

and to bring about the alien apocalypse through which Michelle struggles to survive.

While the aliens are not infectious, the ship does utilize green gas as a form of chemical

warfare, a threat that promises to contaminate and spread through the human

population. Contrary to many zombie-creatures, the aliens do not appear to be

cannibalistic, yet, despite their possession of futuristic technology, the worm alien's

primary weapon appears to be its large many-teethed mouth, with which it threatens to

consume Michelle, and the alien ship attempts to finish off Michelle with what appears

to be its mouth also, evoking cannibalistic connotations. The aliens prove hard to kill, as

the ship is only narrowly defeated by Michelle's quick and clever fabrication of the

Molotov cocktail that she throws skillfully into its mouth, and the worm alien simply

disappears after this, apparently undefeated. Overall, though, the aliens in the film

qualify as zombie-creatures because their invasion brings about an apocalyptic end to

civilization, and their attack on the planet is unexplained and not announced before the

onslaught begins. In the typical alien invasion science fiction narrative, the beginning of

the film is devoted to explaining how the aliens arrive at Earth and why they want to

invade, such as in Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996) or even in George

Pal's *The War of the Worlds* (1953). In *13 Cloverfield Lane*, however, and in many other

post-9/11 invasion narratives such as Steven Spielberg's remake of *War of the Worlds*

(2005), the aliens simply show up in mass and attack without explanation, just as

commonly occurs in millennial zombie-creature invasions. Clearly, the aliens in the film

are not zombies, but they are portrayed in such a way that an audience of its time of release would likely draw clear parallels to the zombie-creature, only portrayed now with new twists of invention that makes this film's monster seem more novel and original.

As a post-zombie narrative, *10 Cloverfield Lane* features the primary fear themes of the internal/external threat, paranoia, apocalypticism, and entrapment through all the secondary fear themes that we have discussed in this chapter. These include Howard as the survivalist as consumer and Michelle as the creative survivalist, both trapped together in the survival space of the bunker and facing the post-zombie threat of an unnamed alien invader as the apocalyptic and world disrupting zombie-creature. Overall, *10 Cloverfield Lane* resolves the formal contradiction between the spatial conflict of the below ground bunker as embodied in Howard and the above ground representation of the aliens through utilizing Michelle's character as an intermediary focalizer that can escape the narrative's fight or flight impulse plotting to consciously choose to enact a hypermasculine creative survivalism. It looks at all of this through the protonarrative of safety through enacting the aggressive individualism of creative survivalism to critique the inevitable fallibility of the survival space, and it resolves its genre contradiction between the zombie narrative and the science fiction genre by escaping the psychological threat of Howard's patriarchal entrapment to depict Michelle as emerging into an action-oriented science fiction space where she can attain a hypermasculine personal agency by actively choosing to face the external threat by joining with a collective resistance.

At the first horizon, the formal contradiction of the narrative expresses itself as a spatial conflict between the horror elements of the below-ground bunker as associated

with the cinematographic representation of Howard's character and the science fiction

elements of the above-ground world as associated with the cinematographic

representation of the aliens. The narrative resolves this contradiction by connecting

these two spatial realms (i.e., above and below ground) by focalizing through the

intermediary of Michelle's character as she negotiates the impulses of fleeing to the

bunker to hide from the threat versus going to the surface to fight the threat. This genre

contradiction is especially apparent in this film because, as a review by Brian Talerico

states, the script for *10 Cloverfield Lane* was "retrofitted from its previous script, called

The Cellar," one that does not include the science fiction ending of alien invaders. This

means that originally it was only supposed to be a horror film, but the science fiction

elements, which allowed it to fit into the larger science fiction Cloverfield franchise, were

added afterwards. The beginning clearly utilizes horror film conventions, as Harrington

states: "When Michelle wakes up, shackled by her injured leg to the wall in a

cinderblock room, the framing and *mise-en-scène* make deliberate nods towards so-

called 'torture porn' films such as those of the *Saw* franchise (2004-)." Once above

ground, Harrington notes how the film formally shifts: "The film's previously

claustrophobic framing and often long, tense shots give way to a rapid-fire, action

oriented finale that nods more towards tent-pole blockbusters such as the *Transformers*

franchise (US 2007-) and *War of the Worlds* (Spielberg US 2005)." As we will see, *10*

Cloverfield Lane combines the horror and science fiction film genres in a way that

critiques the millennial zombie narratives that have come before it, both pathologizing

the survival space and demonstrating that a consumer as survivalist masculinity would

be insufficient in the face of an apocalyptic Event. Instead, through the character

development of Michelle, the film urges for a creative survivalist hypermasculinity that

provides at least an individual sense of safety that can make-do with limited resources

at hand to face adversity with an aggressive directness.

The film utilizes Howard's character as an anthropomorphic extension of the

underground bunker setting but does so in a way that devalues the impulse to flee into

the survival space of the bunker that we find commonly enacted in millennial zombie

narratives such we found in *Zone One*. Throughout *10 Cloverfield Lane*, the characters

negotiate between the impulses of fight or flight, two automatic and affective coping

strategies for dealing with a fearful stimulus that the film utilizes to create a sense of

impulse plotting. Impulse plotting uses impulsive reactions to threatening stimuli to

motivate the actions of its characters, thereby controlling and limiting them only to

reactive moves aimed simply at survival. Thus, either the impulses of fight or flight

asserts themselves as the guiding principle at each of the story's kernel (major) events,

at least up until Michelle gets to the crossroads at the end and makes a conscious

decision between fleeing to Baton Rouge or going to Houston to fight. The film

represents the flight impulse through the oppressive and dangerous Howard and his

spatial association with the bunker, and it comes to represent the fight impulse once

above ground as Michelle faces the alien threat.

Howard's embodiment of the flight impulse through his close association with the

bunker turns his character into a nightmare reflection of everything that the American

imaginary fears of the survivalist, the confining potential of the survival space, and the

doomsday bunker. As Tim Grierson states about Howard in a review of the film, "With

his large frame, awkward manner and unsmiling eyes, Howard embodies our collective

impression of child molesters, rapists and murderers…it's a performance of unsettling stillness, which makes his occasional explosions all the more shocking." Visually, the film makes Howard an imposing presence, as he "is as broad and heavy as Michelle is slender and light. He looks like he could snap her in two with his beefy bare hands, and he seems twitchy enough to do so at any moment" ("'10 Cloverfield'"). Formally, the director and the cinematographer, Jeff Cutter, reinforce Goodman's natural physical presence and chilling performance by using Michelle as the camera's focalizer when filming Howard. This allows for low-angle shots that sympathetically create for the viewer a sense of helplessness and of being overpowered by his massive physical presence that fills the frame, often looming above Michelle.

Howard's visual depiction contrasts with his claims that he has saved Michelle and Emmett's life and deserves respect for providing them with safety, resources, and security. Despite Howard's outbursts, his offer for her to stay and hide in his bunker presents Michelle with an opportunity to flee from what he says is an external threat above ground. However, when Howard degenerates to greater acts of violence and we later learn that the alien threat is real, despite it at first only sounding like one of Howard's paranoid conspiracy theories, the meaning of the bunker changes, or at least stabilizes as being attached to a devalued and dangerous impulse of flight. As Tasha Robinson states, "the presence of actual aliens means that Howard's bunker isn't the practical option, but the cowardly one. He's effectively running away by hiding underground, not contributing to anyone's safety but his own, and threatening the people he pretends to offer safety." This association of the bunker with the dangerous and unstable Howard critiques the effectiveness of not only the survivalist as consumer

culture that his prepping efforts represent, but also the entire survival space theme of the millennial zombie narrative, asserting the illusory and diseased nature of this fear theme by highlighting how it no longer offers, if it ever did, the physical or psychological sense of safety that it once promised.

By the end of the film, it is firmly established that Howard is impulsively reacting to events and steering the narrative toward fleeing from a perceived threat. For instance, it is later revealed that Howard had actually panicked at the in the beginning of the film after hearing about the attacks and accidently ran Michelle off the road. In this way, Howard represents a facile masculinity, which hegemonic post-9/11 culture would read as traumatically "feminized" into the role of the fleeing victim. As the film's formal intermediary, Michelle is also, at times, directed by the impulse to run, even as she later leaves this stance behind. We see this happen as she runs away from her fiancé at the beginning, flees from Howard and the bunker, and speeds away from the ruins of the bunker at the end. Michelle is also presented with the option, which she cautiously but firmly refuses, of fleeing from reality by going along with Howard's attempts to play house, in which she would have to take over the role of Howard's deceased daughter, Megan, and he would solidify his fantasy role as the protective father. This momentary option presents Michelle with a potential way that she could have run from reality and bypassed having to take responsibility for caring for herself, submitting herself to Howard's and, by extension, the survival space's pathologized form of protection.

Above ground, we see a switch to a cinematographic approach grounded in the science fiction convention of the sense of wonder, or the sublime, an openness that communicates "new possibilities and greater horizons" (Bould and Vint 78). This opens

Michelle up to performatives that steer her gradually toward the fight impulse, which eventually gives Michelle the freedom to resist living through impulse plotting in order to make a choice of her own at the crossroads. Contrary to the claustrophobic framing in the bunker, the world above ground is filmed with extreme long shots of open night sky and vast expanses of land in which the threat of the alien ship is depicted in an even more oppressively exaggerated manner than Howard, as we see the ship approach though a contrast of scale, a massive floating shape looming over a farm house and the miniscule figure of Michelle at the bottom of the frame. This creates a comparative vastness of scale that evokes a science fictional sense of awe, as the aliens' appearance presents both Michelle and the viewer with a jarring departure from the aesthetics of realism that characterized the first part of the film in the bunker, and the sheer size of the alien ship inflates this violation of its established reality principle into the realm of the sublime.

When Michelle overcomes the threat of the ship simply through her own creative use of the materials at her disposal, this contrastive openness of expansive spaces and reality-defying relations of scale resolves the formal tension of impulsive plotting through fight or flight by synthesizing them into a space of affective potential and agency. After all, when the alien ship carries her and the truck she is in up toward its mouth, her environment itself provides the materials she needs to overcome the threat, as what she needs for the Molotov cocktail just so happens to be in the truck with her in that moment. In this way, the above ground world is depicted as even more resource rich than Howard's hoarder bunker was below ground. Repeatedly, her impulses to fight in the film are rewarded with resources, and her options to flee, such as staying with

Howard in the bunker, promise dangers potentially worse than that of the original threat itself.

Overall, Michelle's backstory of fleeing from the threats in her life and the practical actions she takes in the film itself make her an intermediary agent capable of moving between the two spatially symbolic ideologemes of the bunker and the above-ground world. This allows her to test both of the impulses of flight and fight before finally choosing to embody the post-9/11 sense of hypermasculinity through creative survivalism. Rather than succumbing to the traumas of her past, Michelle rises above them to fight her way free to a future in the storyworld with the potential for freedom. Michelle was abused by her father, and, as Robinson states, "her childhood fear and helplessness from dealing with him destroyed her courage." Michelle relates this to Emmett when she tells him of a child she recently saw abused by a dad in a grocery store, and how she did not have the courage to do anything to help. Instead, as Michelle states, "I did what I always do when things get hard. I just panicked and ran." Yet, once Michelle awakens in the bunker, she finds herself trapped and increasingly she no longer has the option of running if she wants to survive, which forces her to experiment with the impulse to fight instead. Rather than resort to the other fear impulse of freezing, Michelle shapes her crutch into a spear to attack her captor, kicks the barrel of acid onto Howard, and uses bricolage to take out the alien ship. Her resulting impulses to fight shape the ultimate narrative of the film, deciding many of the kernel events until we reach the last scene in which she makes a conscious decision. Along the way, she realizes that she is "resourceful, clever, and determined, and she keeps coming up with creative solutions that also happen to be aggressive ones" (Robinson). In short, her

growing impulsivity to fight in the film steers her away from Howard's pathologized and victimized masculinity, one evoking the failed pre-9/11 hegemonic masculinity, and instead moves her toward situations that awaken in her an aggressive post-9/11 hypermasculinity, in which she discovers, as Robinson notes, "She's always had the strength to fight."

At the crossroads in the end of the film, she stops and chooses to head into the threat by going to Houston to help others, rather than flee to the safety of Baton Rouge. Here, Michelle is able to make perhaps her first free action in the presence of a threat in the entire film, and she consciously chooses to fight. However, at this point the film ends and we do not see the results of her choice. On this ambiguous ending, Trachtenberg states in one interview, "'In fact, things are going to be potentially worse, but she's ready to face it. That is the theme of the movie for me.'" As a result, this ambiguous ending argues in favor of consciously fighting your fears and adopting the hypermasculine practice of creative survivalism that Michelle discovers in the bunker and in the truck above ground through her uses of bricolage. In contrast, if her actions had been steered by the impulse of flight throughout the entire narrative, it would have likely led to Howard taking her life eventually. Through the film's ending, the narrative resolves its formal contradiction between its horror and science fiction elements by giving Michelle the space to assert her agency and consciously choose how to react to a threat, rather than allowing impulsive plotting to continue to control how she engages with her storyworld. By choosing to go to Houston rather than Baton Rouge, Michelle demonstrates a hypermasculine and aggressive control over her own actions after fighting her way free

of a pathologized sense of pre-9/11 masculinity, whether embodied as Howard, her

father, or as the post-zombie nightmare of the alien threat.

At the second horizon, the resolution of the formal contradiction of the spatial

conflict of the below-ground survival space with the above-ground world by focalizing on

Michelle as an intermediary can be re-interpreted as a dialogic conflict over the

ideologeme of safety, in which, through Michelle, the film advocates for safety through

individualism as governed by the protonarrative of creative survivalism. As Mitchell's

research into survivalist culture revealed, the creative survivalist is a protonarrative in

which the individual attempts to exert control over their lives by inventing apocalyptic

survivalist fantasy narratives that would allow them to utilize the materials at hand in

creative ways in order to defend themselves and those they love. At the root of this

survivalist fantasy is the individual or the self seeking a sense of their own creative

relevance in order to counter the experience of alienation that they find in the post-

capitalist world. The only regard to any sense of collectivism in this fantasy is one in

which the individual as the patriarch takes care of their isolated family unit through their

creative use of bricolage, which usually amounts to the a narrative of generational

transmission of this patriarchal culture that spreads its sense of isolated individualism

along to their children. Yet, *10 Cloverfield Lane* utilizes Michelle as an embodiment of

the individualism of the creative survivalist in a dialogic effort to demonstrate the

inefficacy the corrupted collectivism of Howard's consumerism as survivalism.

While Michelle mostly struggles to survive on her own in the face of the

numerous threats she faces in her life, Howard's consumerism as survival

protonarrative attempts to hold together the film's three survivors in a dysfunctional form

of collectivism. Just as *Zone One* shows that collective action is hopeless if it is poisoned by nostalgic reconstruction, *10 Cloverfield Lane* shows that the collective action of the survival group is doomed if it is tainted by similar efforts to relive a lost domestic past. Once inside the bunker, Howard only grudgingly allows Emmett inside, hinting that he would have preferred if it was just him and Michelle alone, a situation wherein he could better relive his lost relationship with his daughter Megan. Echoing this desire to return to a nostalgic domesticity is the bunker's set design, which Harrington describes as the "shelter's cheery mid-century suburban American décor" (131), one complete with carpeted floor, worn-in family couch, television entertainment center, family board games, an assortment of DVDs, and stacks of teen girl magazines. Taken together, this "frames the awkward domesticity as a distorted 'father knows best' sitcom in which Emmett and Michelle take on the roles of wayward children and Howard becomes the long-suffering patriarch" (131). This retreat to the domestic in many ways mirrors the move that earned the post-9/11 American novel considerable criticism as the genre privileged the depiction of the domestic over the political. As Steffen Hantke notes, this move can be read as a retreat into the familiar after a traumatic event, an attempt to return to a personal and domestic pre-Event experience that the "moment of trauma renders…inaccessible" as its temporal disruption creates "a strict chronology that is only reversible by way of nostalgia, which provides a lens through which all actual flaws of this world are retrospectively erased" (251).

Howard retreats into just this sort of domestic fantasy in his attempt to re-create his lost family experience before his traumatic separation from his daughter, an event that is re-triggered by the Event of the alien invasion and the availability of Michelle as a

surrogate for his daughter. Yet, not only is this domestic fantasy an impossible delusion that will almost certainly mean Michelle's death when she can no longer manage to live up to her new role, but it is also an illusory avoidance of the traumatic intrusion of the external threat pressing on the present conditions of their storyworld. This is at trap that many Americans, perhaps directed by the very post-9/11 fear narratives that we create, fell into after the attacks of 9/11, which, as Hantke states, creates a stance that robs us of our political agency:

> "[W]ithdrawal into privacy becomes more reactionary with every year that has passed since the traumatic events occurred; as time passes, it stops being a reflex and becomes a deliberate stance…the renewed emphasis on the purely subjective dimension of human suffering, and hence its proper placement within the realm of privacy, comes at a high price…of disavowing *all forms of political instrumentalization…* [This] retreat from the public sphere constitutes a significant loss of critical or oppositional potential" (251-2).

Essentially, the retreat into a nostalgic sense of the domestic is a comforting illusion that the pre-Event life still exists after the trauma. Browning observes this performance also occurring in the survival space in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, in which the characters attempt to recreate a normal, or pre-Event, domestic life in the zombie-surrounded mall that "proves nearly fatal" (51). Howard's attempts lead to much the same result as his pseudo-family of survivors breaks down when Howard kills Emmett in a vat of acid and Michelle has to run from him to save her life. Overall, the film clearly shows the dangers of Howard's corrupted collectivism through his patriarchal enactment of consumerism as a means of survival. Further, his depiction as a homicidal and mentally unstable father

figure cements the devaluation of this protonarrative by pathologizing his regressive and nostalgic masculinity, and, by contrasting it with Michelle's successful use of hypermasculinity, the film subtly articulates Howard with the pre-Event hegemonic masculinity that American culture believes failed to defend it from the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

In contrast, the narrative rewards Michelle for her escape from the family collective when she relies only on herself to survive through hypermasculine aggression and creative survivalism. Michelle's previous attempts to find safety as an individual by running from danger proves to be just as fallible as Howard's nostalgically collectivist bunker, as her life up to the point of the narrative is shaped by her running from one environment of paternalistic violence and dominance to another environment that reveals itself to be no safer than the last. This approach to safety through flight has only proven to rob her of her agency in the past, casting her as a "feminized" victim of her circumstances. The film formally conveys this experience of victimization through sympathetic camera angles and claustrophobic cinematography so that the viewer becomes aligned with Michelle's initial entrapment in the patriarchal traumas of her past. As Grierson states, "10 Cloverfield Lane leaves us feeling as trapped as Michelle, putting us in her corner from the start." Importantly, much of her previous victim behavior is related only through analeptic stories about her history before the events of the film, stories that are related through dialogue only and not visual representation, devaluing this survival strategy by excluding it from the film's screen-time.

In the discourse-time of the film, if anything, Michelle is consistently portrayed as an individual who demonstrates courage under extreme circumstances. This inspires

such reviewer comments as, "Miles away from a traditional damsel in distress,

[Michelle] is refreshingly calm, tough, quick-thinking and competent" ("10 Cloverfield").

In this way, the screen-time of the film devotes itself to portraying Michelle's use of

hypermasculine creative survivalism, a strategy that allows her to emerge as the lone

surviving character of the film. By finding inadequacies in both the strategies of the

consumerist as survivalist hiding in bunker preparation and the individual fleeing from

the threat, the film dialogically endorses the aggressive hypermasculinity of the

protonarrative of creative survivalism. Yet, as the scene of Michelle arriving at the

crossroads by herself reinforces, this is a form of safety that isolates the subject to face

adversity alone. Despite Trachtenberg's assurances that she is now ready to face the

threats of her future, it seems unlikely that one person alone could survive the fight

ahead with the hordes of alien ships that we see lurking in the storm clouds as she

drives toward Houston, let alone all of the other aliens we assume she will find once she

gets there.

At the third horizon, we can re-interpret the ideologeme of individualist safety

through the genre contradiction of the nihilism of the millennial zombie narrative and the

action-oriented aggression of the science fiction film to demonstrate the failure of the

secondary fear theme of the survival space to offer safety and protection to the survival

group. Whereas Mark Spitz of *Zone One* almost leaves the survival space to abandon

its nostalgic collectivism, Michelle in *10 Cloverfield Lane* actually makes the move,

surviving the inevitable collapse of the survival space to outlast the nihilistic urges of the

zombie narrative in which everyone dies in the end. In this way, the film utilizes its

science fiction elements to create a post-zombie narrative that injects the millennial

zombie narrative with a sense of invention, avoiding the overplayed zombie as the apocalyptic monster in favor of something different that functions in much the same way. Not only does this allow for a twist on the zombie-creature theme, but it also lends Michelle the blockbuster science fiction film character agency to defy the millennial zombie convention of often killing off all of its characters, as we saw in *Zone One* and Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead.* In this post-zombie survivalist narrative, we find that there is a possibility for life after the zombie-creature apocalypse, even if it is cast in an uncertain light by the film's ambiguous ending that does not portray the results of Michelle's choice to fight the alien invaders. In this way, as we have noted, both the genres of horror and science fiction work together in this film to ideologically support hypermasculine fighting rather than the "feminized" retreat into the survival space as the best way to safety after the Event of 9/11. In this application, *10 Cloverfield Lane* is a late entry into ongoing discourse between post-9/11 American fear narratives that furthers the inadequacy of hiding behind the ideological walls of American exceptionalism to urge Americans to aggressive military action in response to a threat, a stance that could be seen as supporting the continuance of the occupation of Iraq and the War on Terror.

Yet, the generic tension created by the sudden transition from the bunker to the above-ground world of fighting a post-zombie alien invasion has met with some viewer confusion. Erin Harrington notes that this plays a large part in the film's mixed reception among viewers:

Although the film was relatively well received upon its release, a swift online

search indicates how divisive the ending has been among viewers, even though

the appearance of the aliens has been quietly flagged since the film's opening moments, and the film's intertextual relationships make ample space for a narrative involving an alien incursion.

However, as on viewer, "Richie," commented in a review, this generic tension can also be seen as an asset to the film: "'Half the fun while watching the movie was trying to figure out whether Goodman was Crazy or if Aliens have really attacked…Turns out the answer's 'yes'" (Chang).

As Robinson argues, rather than distracting, the genre shift actually allows "the necessary completion" of Michelle's story arc, in which she "comes to terms with her abuse," effectively integrating her past trauma into a unified identity that can survive life's threats and dangers. Robinson views the science fiction ending as "an extension of the abuse metaphor," as "[f]or victims of domestic abuse, just getting out of the house doesn't immediately solve all their problems." Often the abuser pursues their victim in the outside world, and the alien invaders in the film function as nightmare reflections of patriarchal entrapment as the controlling monster of the abuser turned murderous, literally attempting to consume the escaping Michelle. Effectively, the narrative synthesizes these two genres by substituting the typical zombie for an alien apocalypse, merging both under the theme of Michelle's character arc of facing the threats in her life in order to become a creative survivalist, a hypermasculine stance that the film depicts as providing her with a much more effective form of safety than simply hiding. This combination turns the conventional societal threat of alien invasion into a psychological challenge that encourages individual character development, but ultimately leaves its result unstated in an ambiguous ending that manages to be simultaneously hopeful and

foreboding. Michelle made great strides to choose to face adversity, but what was her fate in the end?

In a utopian sense, this film represents Michelle's psychological journey from simply fleeing from patriarchal domination but still being trapped within a patriarchal social structure, to actively resisting this entrapment by making the choice to fight and take back her autonomy to join a collective effort to resist the external threat in Houston, whether we see this as alien invaders, patriarchal domination, or a symbolic representation of our fears. However, ideologically, the ambiguous ending urges the viewer to question the efficacy of her decision to fight. How effective was Michelle's agency and creative survivalism once she arrived in Houston? Just because aggressive hypermasculinity through creative survivalism worked to get her through the events in the film, how do we know that fighting was really effective in this new situation in Houston? Would it have been smarter for her to flee from the overwhelming power of the alien invaders? Should Michelle have just let someone else deal with her problems for her once again? Essentially, the seed of doubt left by the fearful ambiguity at the end not only continues the zombie narrative convention of the inevitable persistence of the continued threat that we saw in *Zone One*, but it also allows lingering traces of Howard's patriarchal oppression to live on after the film's last shot, looming like the alien ships silhouetted across the skyline as dark shapes forever just ahead, immanent threats hiding in the thunderclouds to threaten Michelle's future.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this chapter analyzes how the secondary fear themes of the zombie narrative function as constellations of the more abstract primary fear themes, embedding these American fears deep into their symbolic and formal structures. Through the interaction of the zombie-creature and the survival spaces they mass around, whether in the form of a wall or barricade, these existents stimulate our actual world post-9/11 fears pertaining to the shattering of the Virgin Land myth of American exceptionalism and our consumerist desire to create a sense of safety behind the coping mechanism of material accumulation, as seen in the patriotic call to go out and shop. In both *Zone One* and *10 Cloverfield Lane*, we find various ideological approaches to re-establishing our sense of safety after 9/11. In *Zone One*, we encounter the dangers of comforting nostalgia as an attempt to re-create the pre-Event past in the postapocalyptic present. This critiques the conservative push to Make America Great Again that calls upon a narrative of a Utopian past to fix the problems of the present day. Through *10 Cloverfield Lane*, we see a similar attempt at this nostalgic reconstruction that the film pathologizes through Howard's attempts to isolate himself from external threats by recreating an illusory domestic scene of his past. Alongside this, the film critiques the "feminized" victim state of hiding from threats to find a sense of safety, as Michelle's impulses to run consistently send her back into the clutches of a new, if strikingly similar, threat. Finally, the conclusion of the film urges us toward the enactment of an aggressive post-9/11 hypermasculinity through an individualizing strategy grounded in the survivalist fantasy of creative survivalism.

Taken in their historical context, the concern of American safety stretches across the genres of the millennial zombie narrative and the post-zombie narrative to advocate that a nostalgic return to the same pre-9/11 hegemonic masculinity, as represented in the pheenies of Zone One and Howard's bunker mentality, will not work. The consensus here appears to be that it failed to protect us against terrorism and 9/11 the first time, so we need a new approach to safety that fits the world we live in now. At the same time, running from our problems to adopt the status as a victim of 9/11 as Michelle tries, perhaps by attempting to retreat behind an isolationist sense of American exceptionalism once again, no longer makes sense in the international relations of a post-capitalistic and globally networked world, as our problems will always be right there waiting for us when we stop running. Instead, for better or worse, these narratives urge for us to face our threats aggressively, and it appears that America has listened to these calls with our continuation of the War on Terror to this day.

In the next chapter, we will see how many of these secondary fear themes translate into the science fiction genre. As we have seen in our discussion of *10 Cloverfield Lane*, science fiction establishes a distancing effect by its often greater measure of minimal departure. At times, this masks its symbolic acts deeper into allegorical layers that allow the genre to explore manifestations of the zombie-creature, survival space, and the hypermasculine character in ways that would meet with greater objection by hegemonic American culture had they been represented in more realistic terms.

CHAPTER 7

POST-9/11 AMERICAN FEAR NARRATIVES IN THE SCIENCE FICTION GENRE

In the last chapter, I analyzed the post-9/11 American fear narrative as it appears in the zombie narrative, focusing on the secondary fear themes of the zombie-creature, the survival space, the wall, and the hypermasculine character as seen through two texts that explored the zombie from a dominant and a marginalized perspective. In this chapter, I will turn to the science fiction (SF) genre to see how these secondary fear themes transfer across the lines of both genre and media, and to introduce the secondary fear theme of the hybrid character, one that seems to find a welcome home in SF.

The debate over the definition of SF has a long history in science fiction studies, and is one often marred with spurious territory battles and lines drawn in the sand that often reflect particular interests more than they truly describe SF as we commonly know it through our social interaction with culture[7]. David Herman describes one way to distinguish between these different attempts at genre definition with the concepts "etic" and "emic" (*Basic* 3). As he states, "etic approaches create descriptive categories that are used by analysts to sift through patterns" and are "imposed on the data from without," whereas "emic approaches seek to capture differences that language users themselves orient to as meaningful" (3). In this way, many of the more problematic definitions of SF have tended toward the etic approach, imposing a particular

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[7] For more on this, see Darko Suvin's limited description of SF that dismisses many texts commonly held as SF (4), what Andrew Milner explains as a selective tradition for SF (221), or see the following summaries of attempts to define the genre in Sobchack (17-20), Bould & Vint (1-19), or Wolfe ("Theorizing" 38-54).

categorization on the SF genre for the use of the analyst or critic, and I could extend this to include even business interests as well. For instance, Hugo Gernsback, editor, magazine publisher, and one of the founders of SF who is often credited with coining the term "science fiction" itself in 1929, described SF as "charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (Wolfe, "Theorizing" 43). While some SF fits this bill, such as hard science fiction that attempts to predict the future, most SF does not. Yet, for Gernsback, this etic attempt at drawing boundaries around the genre was as much an attempt to "differentiate his magazine" and "stak[e] out his market" as it was to create a definition (43).

Instead, a more emic approach to the definition of SF can draw our attention to how people who use SF discourse more commonly think about the genre. Moving in this direction, it becomes apparent that much of SF treats its futuristic storyworlds more like what Thomas N. Scortia calls "thought experiments" (137), in which we ask, what if something happened, was discovered, or was created? How would that affect the future (or the past or present)? Further, SF often blurs the boundaries of Gernsback's insistence on scientific fact, straying into pseudoscience or entirely fantastic elements that the story does not even attempt to explain through science at all, such as Jedi Knights using a mysterious power known as the Force in the Star Wars franchise. Yet, few would claim that Star Wars is not SF. In fact, it is commonly held as one of the iconic examples of the genre, so this seems to complicate Gernsback's etic genre definition.

This study can move closer into the emic by adopting a more general framework. Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright describe SF as the literature of change, or as a way "of

dramatizing our hopes and fears around change" (7), often technological change, but also often concerning social, political, and demographic changes as well. Perhaps in one of the most emic responses of all, Damon Knight, SF author/editor/critic, was once posed with the question "What is science fiction?" He famously answered, "What we point to when we say it" (3). While this at first may simply seem like a way to avoid the question altogether, it highlights the social construction of genres in general: in most cases, we know SF when we see it, and if a given text defies our social understanding of the genre, we discuss it and classify it in a negotiated process that includes consumers, producers, creators, reviewers, and critics who assign a text a given label and see if others agree or not.

Overall, though, SF works in a way that distances the reader from their everyday experience by often establishing their storyworlds in distant times and places, and through its use of things that do not currently exist, but often could potentially exist, such as interstellar spaceships, robots, aliens, and ray guns. In the terms of possible worlds theory, I draw on Lubomír Doležel to say that SF changes the alethic modality of the storyworld (115), thereby changing what is possible through the introduction of elements either scientifically rationalized or that result from new technological advances. As will become apparent as this chapter progresses, though, this distancing by changing the alethic modality serves to connect its audiences to their historical presents in more allegorical modes. As Jameson states, in SF's detailed depictions of the future, "the apparent realism, or representationality, of SF has concealed another, far more complex temporal structure: not to give us 'images' of the future…but rather to defamiliarize and restructure our experience of our own *present*, and to do so in specific ways distinct

from all other forms of defamiliarization" ("Progress"). According to Jameson, SF allows

us access to the otherwise inaccessible present, a way through the ideological and

material complexities of life on the emergent, bleeding edge of existence:

>It is this present moment—unavailable to us for contemplation in its own right
>
>because the sheer quantitative immensity of objects and individual lives it
>
>comprises is untotalizable and hence unimaginable…that upon our return from
>
>the imaginary constructs of SF is offered to us in the form of some future world's
>
>remote past, as if posthumous and as though collectively remembered.

This access to the present allows us to see the world from a fresh perspective, or as

Takacs states, "Science fiction…works through displacement. The absorption of real-

world issues into the realm of fantasy permits social problems to be examined more

carefully and resolved in potentially unexpected ways" ("Monsters" 3). This observation

notes how SF seems to emphasize Jameson's observation about narratives in general

at the first horizon: "the individual narrative, or the individual formal structure, is to be

grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (*The Political* 77). SF is

hence by its nature a genre anchored in using science, technology, and/or futurity to

offer imaginary ideological resolutions to problems in the real world of its own time.

Analyzing real world events through its defamiliarizing and distancing veil of

allegory and metaphor also allows SF to approach controversial topics and present

potentially subversive content in ways that audiences might not find acceptable in more

realistic narratives. As Brian L. Ott states, all SF is allegorical in some sense (Ott 19),

and its connection to the actual world can be established through its use of a pretext. In

their research on allegory, Mike Milford and Robert C. Rowland state, "In many cases

works reference a pretext in the form of underlying audience knowledge about cultural/historical events but do so for purposes of commentary not simply reinforcement" (538). These pretexts "frame a message for a particular audience" (539), guiding their allegorical interpretation. SF utilizes this sense of allegory and a pretext of historical events, to create a sense of distance. In an interview, Jane Espenson, American television writer and producer known for her work in such shows as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2001), *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) (which I will analyze below), and *Torchwood* (2006-11), states, "Oh I think the thicker the metaphor, the more there are robots, or monsters, or big dinosaur puppets […] the more there is eye candy and clear science fiction or fantasy elements, the more you can get away with. In a way, sort of the more heavy handed you can be, the more overt you can be, because people are distracted" (Chow-White et al. 1215). In this way, through its futuristic and distant storyworlds, SF can discuss the present in ways that many other genres cannot, especially in American culture just after 9/11 when to question the Bush Administration often meant being labeled unpatriotic and only served to put you on the dangerous side of the us/them binary. Essentially, the formal logic of SF allows it the affective distance needed to broach sensitive topics and present controversial messages that a given culture would find too objectionable if approached directly through a different means such as realism.

From a theoretical perspective, this study can better understand the defamiliarizing poetics and the first horizon symbolic/ideological action of SF through Darko Suvin's concept of cognitive estrangement, a concept that ultimately expresses the approach to SF that this project will use, and one that relates well to the

narratological principle of minimal departure. Suvin states that SF is "the literature of cognitive estrangement," which means that SF allows us to recognize in it "the author's empirical environment," while simultaneously making it seem unfamiliar (4). This estrangement pushes us to consider this disjunction from reality, but to consider it cognitively through its connection to reality. This ambivalent estrangement allows critical reflection on our empirical environment and emphasizes the subversive quality of SF as it asserts alternates to our present material conditions, or our superstructural understanding of these conditions. Of course, this study can also extend Suvin's definition to include not just literature, but all media forms that engage in this brand of cognitive estrangement. Next, Suvin's second important concept is that this relationship between the science fictional and reality is centered on the presence of at least one novum, which is something new introduced into a SF narrative that makes the fictional world different, or estranged, from a common notion of reality. To fit Suvin's definition, the novum must be a "cognitive innovation," so it must be explained rationally or through scientific means (64). In this way, the novum becomes the variable responsible for the change in the alethic modality of the storyworld, and Suvin specifies its alethic creativity to this sense of scientificity. Of course, as our example of Star Wars above implies, the rational explanation of the novum can also be based on pseudoscience or ignored entirely as long as it is placed in the context of other nova that can be rationally explained. For instance, while the novum of the Force is not explained in the initial narratives of the franchise[8], the early Star Wars films were readily accepted as SF

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[8] However, in *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* (1999), creator George Lucas does attempt to rationally explain the Force as it is revealed that all life in the Star Wars storyworld contains a symbiotic race of intelligent microscopic "midi-chlorians" that can influence energy fields, allowing some beings who are sensitive to their power to use what has been known as the Force. However, this explanation was

because they also contained nova with more rational explanations, such as spaceships

and aliens. The requirement of the novum to have a rational explanation helps to

distinguish the SF genre from fantasy, as the latter does not normally attempt to explain

its deviations from reality with rationality or science and instead typically uses magic or

paranormal explanations, or it simply relies on no explanation at all.

In SF, it is the presence of the novum that distances the reader from their

empirical sense of reality and causes them to consider the nature of this estrangement;

hence, its alethic creativity causes the sense of cognitive estrangement. The novum can

then be seen as SF's primary vehicle of minimal departure, which Marie-Laure Ryan

describes as how readers interact with a storyworld: "We will project upon these worlds

everything we know about reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the

text" (51). In other words, when we encounter a narrative, we begin with the initial

assumption that the storyworld operates under the physical laws and conditions of our

understanding of the actual world, or, as Doležel would say, that it is a "natural fictional

world" (115). It is only when the text gives us clues that the alethic modality (or one of

Doležel's three other modalities of possible worlds) varies from our expectations of the

natural fictional world that we make adjustments to our growing mental construction of

the fictional world, what Doležel calls our "fictional encyclopedia" (177). The nova of SF,

then, act as part of the set of clues that let the reader know that something new has

been added beyond their understanding of the actual world, creating the known limits of

minimal departure in the SF narrative, whether through a new location in space, a new

time period a thousand years in the future (or millions of years in the past), the presence

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only presented twenty-two years after the first film of the franchise, *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* (1977), which left this novum without any attempt at a rational explanation for over two decades.

of aliens, and/or various advanced technologies. As Ryan states, the greater the sense of departure from reality, the greater the "increase of the distance between the textual universe and our own system of reality" (51). In these terms, the distance in SF can be thought of as an aesthetic affect created by the presence of nova, each of which signal to the audience how far and in what way the fictional world is different from their actual world. Of course, as a text of cognitive estrangement, this very comparison urges the audience to make connections between the way the fictional world is altered and the way they understand the real world they live in, opening interpretive channels to the satirical, critical, and subversive potentials of SF.

In its use of these distancing nova, SF utilizes all of the secondary fear themes that this study has discussed up to this point in the project, but it also has the symbolic, and therefore ideological, freedom to explore angles on fear themes that push the boundaries of acceptability established by hegemonic culture. Post-9/11 SF is especially drawn to the secondary fear theme that I will primarily focus on in this chapter: the hybrid character. The hybrid is a character that embodies a liminal space to integrate two different categorical distinctions or the two different sides of a binary contradiction to become something new. On the one hand, the hybrid character opens up new, often utopic potentialities. Homi Bhabha, from a postcolonial perspective, states, "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). In an interview, Bhabha adds to this notion, stating, "hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which

are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Rutherford 211). In short, the destabilizing nature of the hybrid character summons all the progressive and deconstructive potentials of Donna Haraway's cyborg (271), opening new possibilities of subversive potential, questioning and discarding the dichotomous logics of the hegemonic culture. Particularly important to SF, Haraway's cyborg breaches the human/non-human and nature/technological borders that the genre and its nova have attempted to negotiate or transcend through much of its history. In this progressive spirit, Bhabha states that hybridity gives a sense of empowering agency to the individual so that they can move between both cultures (277). Of course, seen from a different, perhaps more conservative perspective, this sort of potential for change and destabilizing of difference simultaneously makes the hybrid character a subject of intense fear. With respect to fear themes, the hybrid character brings up the contamination fears of miscegenation, the transgressive horrors of categorical conflation, and the blurring of the line between the external and internal threat. In this way, the hybrid character often, simultaneously, evokes reactions of fascination and repulsion in the characters around them, offering in its border blurring presence both the perceived dangers of the unknown and the utopic potentials for new social configurations. In Jamesonian terms, the "ideological function" of fearing the hybrid character is that the "dangerous and protopolitical impulses are 'managed' and defused," while, at the same time, "these same impulses…are initially awakened within the very text that seeks to still them" (*The Political* 287). This creates a system that offers utopian impulses of hybridity as "substantial incentives" for the audience members in exchange for their "ideological adherence" to conservative cultural binaries

(287). However, at times, SF has the cognitive distance to offer more than mere adherence, even within the constraints of the fear narrative. In SF, unlike in postcolonial fiction, the hybrid character's hybridity and ideological function is mediated and indeed often created by nova centered around science and technology rather than national or cultural borders, and hence are most often indeed what Haraway calls cyborgs in one sense or another.

This fearful reaction to hybridity creates a variation on the hybrid character in the form of the hybrid monster, which Takacs notes was especially prevalent after 9/11 ("Monsters" 14). Post-9/11 "transgressive, hybrid, and hybridizing monsters…question the symbolic boundaries between" established binary opposites (3), such as us/them, good/evil, inside/outside, private/public, and—in SF—human/artificial or human/alien. As she states, the hybrid monster embodies post-9/11 social anxieties, especially, in our terms, the theme of contamination: "Race, modes of dress, national origin, primary language, sexuality, religion and all sorts of other biological and cultural factors bleed together to constitute 'suspicious populations' as 'those who are not like us'" (Takacs, *Terrorism* 75). In an article, Takacs notes the hybrid monsters of three SF television shows from 2005, including *Surface, Invasion* and *Threshold*, and it is not much of a logical leap to see that these are the symbolic creations of a culture disrupted in the wake of 9/11. The transgressive integrations that the hybrid monster embodies question the ontological and ideological assumptions that were relatively stable in hegemonic culture before the attacks, as I have charted in previous chapters through the destabilization of the myths of the state of exception and of hegemonic masculinity. On this cultural front, however, the distance established by SF allows the genre to push

these questions in new, productive, and, at times, progressive directions, as this study

will show in the two example texts analyzed shortly.

Specifically, the remainder of this chapter will analyze the secondary fear theme

of the hybrid character and others as they appear in two post-9/11 American SF fear

narratives, Ronald D. Moore's television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) and

Andrea Hairston's novel *Mindscape* (2006). In general terms, at the first horizon, post-

9/11 American SF fear narratives use rationally explainable alethic minimal departures

from post-9/11 realities to create hybrid characters who's breaching of human/non-

human borders at once repress the racial and cultural conflicts of the so-called clash of

civilizations and imagine utopian solutions to racial, sexual, gender, and cultural

conflicts and differences. At the second horizon, these hybrid characters created by

SF's unique alethic modality via a sense of distanced allegory symbolically displace but

also call attention to the social conflicts prevalent after 9/11, such as those between

East and West, Muslim and Christian, and colored and white, offering ideologemes that

posit potential directions for how America should best survive these differences as it

moves into a post-9/11 future of a continual War on Terror. At the third horizon, hybrid

characters function to sediment and rewrite the conventions of the SF genre so that

they allegorically struggle with the limits of American exceptionalism and isolationism,

while simultaneously pointing toward collectivist potentials. This plays out in *Battlestar*

Galactica, as, at the first horizon, the formal contradiction of its fantastic and realist

elements resolves into the program's morally ambivalent narratives, which explore

issues from multiple perspectives without ever taking a side, a move that either incites

conversation on controversial topics or negates the viewer's individual's responsibility to

act. At the second horizon, the series arc focuses on its hybrid characters in a dialogic conflict between biological essentialism and social construction that ultimately resolves through the naturalistic ideologeme that our genetic heritage is the most determinative aspect of identity and cultural location. At the third horizon, its generic sedimentation as a remake of the 1978 original series and its legacy as a SF television series works to simultaneously posit that we can overcome our irreconcilable differences to become a hybrid society, even as the conclusion works against this impulse to advocate for American exceptionalism and isolationism. In *Mindscape*, the formal contradiction of its separate characters and their separate worldviews is depicted in their distinct uses of language that are displayed at first in separate chapters. This resolves as the narratives continue to converge until the characters finally integrate into an alliance that preserves their difference without assimilating into one another. At the second horizon, the social conflict between the characters working for integration and those working for personal gain through isolationism resolves into the at once utopian and quasi-colonial ideologeme that we must confront our differences in order to integrate into a cooperative and diverse collective front capable of bring about social change. At the third horizon, this can be re-interpreted at the level of generic sedimentation as the romance genre is displaced into SF in the almost "magical" novum of the Barrier. Unlike the rationally explained novum of the SF genre, the inclusion of this magical novum of romance allows the imaginary resolution of social and class division to allow for the storyworld's integration into a hybrid and sustainable collective, all while the narrative simultaneously forwards an oppressive call for competition and difference as prerequisites for this brand of survival.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA AND THE HYBRID CHARACTER

The television series *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*) is a consummate post-9/11 SF American fear narrative, and an example of one authored by the dominant social group, as the show's creator, Ronald D. Moore, is a white male. As I will discuss below, at one point or another in its four seasons, *BSG* features all ten of the primary fear themes described in chapter four, and it also utilizes versions of all the secondary fear themes covered in the previous chapter as well. Overall, the show has received abundant academic and critical attention, and many have noted how it engages in "the societal questions and political climate that characterized the years immediately after 9/11" (Chow-White et al. 1211). Much like the 9/11 novel, however, it takes a "domestic" approach to discussing 9/11 rather than exploring the international or political implications of the attacks, even if *BSG* approaches this in a metaphorically SF-distanced way through its use of nova. As Barry Buzan notes on *BSG*, "The main political tension is domestic, resonating with post-9/11 America's dilemma about how to balance between the demands of security hawks, and the concerns of civilians about democracy, representation and civil rights" (178). Even in SF, 9/11 often had the effect of turning American culture's attention inward rather than outward, to a contemplation of the affects that the attacks produced within our nation and social groups rather than on its connections to other nations and social groups.

As *BSG* ran for just over six years and consists of over 76 episodes, the program has a complicated storyline, but, for the most part, this study will focus on the series arc in general. In season one, humanity lives in twelve colonies on the twelve separate

planets of a solar system. We learn that before the beginning of the series, humanity

had created the Cylons, which were robots designed to do our work. In time they

rebelled, starting the First Cylon War that lasted for twelve years until the Cylons

mysteriously withdrew. After disappearing for forty years, the Cylons return in a carefully

orchestrated nuclear attack that wipes out most of humanity, with a body count in the

billions, an apocalyptic Event that in many ways echoes 9/11. The series follows what is

believed to be the last existing battleship, called *Battlestar Galactica*, and the ragtag

fleet of the last remnants of humanity as they search for a new habitable planet in the

mysterious lost 13th Colony of Earth. However, throughout the show, the fleet is

constantly pursued by the Cylons who are comprised of the robotic Centurions, Raiders

that are Centurions in the form of fighter spaceships, and a series of mysterious

humanoid Cylons that prove to be nearly indistinguishable from humans. There are

eight models of the humanoid Cylons, and later a final five are revealed, so for much of

the narrative, the humans are trying to figure out who is a Cylon and who is a human,

with numerous surprises along the way. The fleet follows a series of clues hidden in

ancient religious texts to find Kobol, an ancient human colony now occupied by the

Cylons. A Cylon mother, a Model Eight (Grace Park) later called Athena, and a human

father, Karl "Helo" Agathon (Tahmoh Penikett), have the first, and only, human/Cylon

hybrid child, Hera, who becomes increasingly important as the show progresses. Also,

two characters begin seeing what they believe to be hallucinations of each other that

are later revealed near the end of the series to have actually been angels sent to guide

them, angels that Van Leavenworth aptly names Virtual Six (Tricia Helfer) and Virtual

Baltar (James Callis) after the two characters, one Cylon and one human, whose

appearances they share (689). By the end of season two, the fleet discovers and colonizes the habitable planet they call New Caprica.

They are found and occupied by the Cylons as season three reverses the established human/Cylon or American/terrorist paradigm to show the humans forming insurgent rebellions and resorting to suicide bombings to fight their oppressors. After rising up and escaping Cylon occupation, the humans renew their search for Earth, and, by the end of the season, four of the human characters come to realize that they are actually four of the final five models of the humanoid Cylons (the fifth is shortly thereafter revealed to be Colonel Saul Tigh's wife Ellen Tigh, played by Kate Vernon). In season four, the Cylons begin a civil war that splits their forces between those embracing their robotic nature as led by the Number One model of the humanoid Cylons, and those following their religious faith to join with the human fleet so that they can be closer to the newly discovered final five models of the humanoid cylons and thereby re-unite the Cylon race. The fleet finds Earth but discovers that it was destroyed in a nuclear war two thousand years ago. We soon discover that Earth had been inhabited entirely by the final five Cylon models, who escaped the nuclear war to later create the other eight models of humanoid Cylons, inadvertently starting the return of the Cylons and the destruction of the Twelve Colonies that began the series when the final five were betrayed by the Number Ones. Further, we learn that the humans and Cylons have been repeating this cycle of creating the Cylons only to lead to a war in which civilization destroys itself and things start all over again for some time now, and the fleet struggles to find a way to stop the cycle. The humans struggle with the stress of integrating with the Cylons, whom for so long they have seen as their enemies, but

successfully come together as a hybrid group that defeats the other group of Cylons led

by the Number Ones. Guided by intuition and divine providence, the *Galactica* jumps by

interstellar travel away from the battleground to arrive at a new inhabitable planet that

they decide to call Earth. Here, the survivors decide to mix with the pre-linguistic

humans they find there, but, in an attempt to stop the cycle, they reject their own

technology, sending all of their ships into the sun. In a final scene, we flash forward to

learn that Hera, the hybrid child of the humans and Cylons, turns out to be the

Mitochondrial Eve[9] of today's actual world human race, genetically reinvigorating the

human race we, the viewers, are a part of today. As it turns out, the whole purpose of

the series was to get Hera, the hybrid character to a newly emerging human race to

replenish the genetic stock of humanity, and to potentially end the cycle of war between

the humans and the Cylons by making all humanity into hybrids. In this last scene, the

two angels, Virtual Six and Virtual Baltar, walk our present-day streets, speculating if all

of the effort of the series has really paid off or if we will only continue the cycle of human

and Cylon annihilation. Muting their tentative hopefulness, the show ends ambiguously

with images of our present day attempts to create robots to serve our needs. The

program ends by seeming to ask, "Is the cycle really is over, or will a new Cylon War be

in our future?"

Of course, this is only a sketch of the narrative of *BSG* that focuses on the series

arc itself, and many of the characters and episodic arcs extend beyond the limits of this

study. Overall, though, the narrative can be seen as essentially nostalgic and

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[9] Anne Kustritz gives a good explanation of how Hera as the Mitochondrial Eve would serve to spread her genetic legacy to present day humanity: "Because mitochondrial DNA passes from mother to offspring without recombination, scientists have attempted to track the earliest point of origin for all present human mitochondria…the ancestral mother to whom we all owe our mitochondria" (31).

regressive, as Buzan states, "*BSG* is a science fiction that "look[s] inward and close[s] themselves off" (180), as the fleet searches for its origins, abandoning its technological, cultural, and social developments for a return to a pre-historic past. As Buzan argues, this ideologically displaces America's post-9/11 return to a state of exceptionalism and cultural isolationism, but there is much more going on ideologically in *BSG* than that, especially at the politically unconscious level that Jameson and this study seek to unpack.

I can certainly justify this program as a fear narrative, as many of the primary and secondary fear themes play an important part in the narrative's affective effect, some more so than others. The apocalyptic Event manifests in the destruction of the Twelve Colonies, not to mention the apocalyptic scarcity of material resources that the fleet experiences, which echoes and historically builds alongside the postapocalyptic and zombie narratives that I discussed in the last chapter, such as *The Road* and *Zone One*. As Milford and Rowland point out, "the series began with an unprovoked attack by the Cylons on the human worlds resulting in smoking buildings and flaming craters that were an instant reminder of the Twin Towers and Ground Zero" (543). Paranoia and the fear of the internal threat, or even the internalized threat, is a constant tension in the series as one never knows who is a Cylon. And Moore overtly states his desire to keep this sense of constant high tension, saying he aims to keep the narrative in "a state of perpetual crisis" (34) that allegorizes the post-9/11 invention of a never ending "war on terror." Post-apocalyptic trauma motivates the characters to resort to torture as revenge against the dehumanized enemy, as seen in the torture of the Cylon Leoben in "Flesh

and Bone" (1.08)[10] and of the Number Six named Gina in "Resurrection Ship, Part 1"

(2.11) (Mulligan 59). Having the Cylons chase the fleet across space drives home a

sense of the personalization of fear as the Cylons really are targeting the individual and

the small group in their initial hope to eradicate the human race. For instance, in "Act of

Contrition" (1.04), Lt. Kara "Starbuck" Thrace (Katee Sackhoff) trains a new group of

fighter pilots who are suddenly attacked by Cylon Raiders, and back on Caprica Lt.

Agathon is being tricked into following a Number Eight while the two are watched by a

Number Six with a plan set out for him. In both instances and many others, the attacks

or threats are made at the personal and individual level, rather than just at the collective

level. In addition, characters such as Boomer, a Number Eight that truly believes she

was human until she is activated as a Cylon sleeper agent, experience exclusion,

entrapment, and fear of her own contamination by the enemy Other. As Matthew

Gumpert states, this fear of discovering oneself excluded as an out-group member is a

constant in the series: "Perhaps the most obvious symptom of the existential crisis

provoked by the Cylon is the fear that one is a Cylon (fear of being outed, either to

others or to oneself)" (150). And always at the core of the narrative is the fear of

transgression, as the borders between the human and the machine are forever

questioned.

The program even goes as far as utilizing versions of each of the secondary fear

themes that were discussed in the previous chapter. While the Cylons may not be

zombie-creatures per se, they are certainly external threats that display many trace

parallels to the zombie-creatures of other fear narratives that aired at the same time.

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[10] 1.08 means that the text in question is from season one and is the eighth episode in that season. This
numbering convention will be used throughout this project.

While the Cylons are certainly not decaying, the Cylon Centurions are thoroughly

dehumanized as they seem to exert no individual identity or agency but instead exist as

a collective and networked entity. Even how the humanoid Cylons are pre-programmed

with a base personality and have many copies evoke the horde mentality and the lack of

individual autonomy of the zombie-creature. Of course, the Cylons are not infectious,

but the condition of discovering that you are a Cylon, or even believing that you might

be a Cylon, as Baltar often does, seems to spread as doubt in oneself and others

throughout the fleet. Likewise, the Cylons are notoriously hard to kill as they can often

only be defeated with explosives, and the humanoid models do not actually die (until

later in the series) as they resurrect in new, identical bodies waiting in a nearly endless

supply of resurrection tanks. Last, while they are certainly apocalyptic, one SF invention

on the zombie-creature theme that the Cylons present is that they and their attack on

humanity are explained but only in the fourth season. Typical of the zombie-creature,

this leaves the motivations behind many of their actions, other than their implied drive

for revenge against their creators/oppressors or the seeming inevitability of the clash of

irreconcilable differences, unexplained throughout most of the narrative. Only in the last

season does the program present the rational explanation for their attacks: the Number

Ones believe that machines are superior to humanity and detest the humans for their

difference, which causes them to set in motion the events of the attacks on the Twelve

Colonies. In addition, there are clear examples of characters that fit the hypermasculine

character theme. This can be seen in the militarization of the storyworld, as the state of

emergency posed by the Cylon attack creates a scenario where the last survivors of

humanity must rely on the military leadership of Captain/Admiral Adama (Edward James

Olmos) to provide them with some sense of safety. Further, there are numerous examples of women as hypermasculine characters, such as the robotically strong Cylon named Number Six (Tricia Helfer) and the soldier-maverick Kara "Starbuck" Thrace, especially in the climactic season-finale episode "Kobol's Last Gleaming, Part II" (2.17), where the two fiercely fight for the possession of the next clue to finding Kobol. However, the conclusion of the series works to nullify some of the subversive cultural work done by what Sherrie Innes would call its many "tough girls"[11]. As more of a secondary emphasis, the show also features the survival space in the form of the ship itself, *Battlestar Galactica*, as, especially in the first two seasons, the humans hide within its defensive walls against the external threat of the hordes of Cylon Raiders and battleships called Basestars. In many ways, the *Galactica*, which LeiLani Nishime calls "the central metropolis of the series" (460), evokes Wolfe's science fiction icons of the city—in that it is xenophobic, authoritarian, stable (mostly), and a relic of the past (88-91)—while also of the icon of the spaceship in defining the inside/outside binaries of the wall in the narrative (59-61).

Yet, more central to the narrative of the show is the secondary fear theme of the hybrid character, as the Cylons blur the lines between themselves and the humans, ultimately producing the truly hybrid in the form of the infant, Hera, whom we learn is the potential savior of both the humans and the Cylons alike, at least genetically speaking. The humanoid Cylon models produce an uncanny doubling in their many copies as multiple copies of various models often appear in the same frame and duplicate copies

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[11] On Starbuck, see Carla Kungl on how *BSG* effectively balances her "strength *and* vulnerability" to "move…women characters onto new ground" (200), at least up to season three when the article is written. See Kustritz on Caprica Six and Laura Roslin's domestication and essentialism in season four (11, 20-1). Also, see Chow-White et al. for Grace Park's quote on the program's "agro-masculinity" (1218).

reappear to the human characters after another is killed (Peirse 118-9). Overall, as

Gumpert states, the humanoid cylons "are Haraway's cyborgs: hybrid beings, both

human and machine, and therefore neither human nor machine, whose very ontological

indeterminacy represents a challenge to the old essentialist notion of identity" (146-7).

In this way, the text turns their assumption of human form as a SF allegory for the

postcolonial act of mimicry into a military strategy intended to achieve liberation from

those who once oppressed them. The Cylons use this form of mimicry as the

appropriation of the embodiment of their former masters to not only infiltrate humanity

but to divide them by evoking the fear of the internalized threat, as the internal threat

may actually turn out to be you—that you may have actually been a terrorist all along. At

least within the first three seasons, the humanoid Cylons are portrayed as the hybrid

monster, while our increasing identification with them in season four begins to turn

many of them into hybrid characters, thereby opening up third space potentialities with

liberatory possibilities.

From a Jamesonian perspective, at the first horizon, the contradiction within the

series arc of *BSG* focusing on the hybrid character as both us and them is narratively

resolved through morally ambivalent narratives that present multiple sides to every

issue they raise without overtly taking a side. This stance simultaneously allows the

program to encourage conversations on controversial topics, while also presenting an

ideologeme of "if you don't know, you can't judge" that nullifies the viewer's individual

responsibility to act against post-9/11 policies that they may find objectionable. At the

second horizon, the ambivalence of the program is re-written at the level of the series

arc the ideologeme that it may be hard to distinguish us from them in the global/hybrid

world, but ultimately our genetic heritage is the most important aspect of who we are. At the third horizon, the program builds upon its generic sedimentation as a remake of the 1978 original series and as part of the evolution of SF television to simultaneously present the Utopic possibility that we can overcome our irreconcilable differences to become a hybrid culture, while oppressively ending the series in a way that supports American exceptionalism, isolationism, and reasserts the binary us/them paradigm of the Bush Administration and its naturalization of the eternal war on terror.

To put the first horizon of my analysis in another way, the program's formal move to capture the realism reminiscent of the genre of investigative journalism or combat footage that gives "objective" representation of multiple sides of any given situation without overt judgement resolves the contradiction inherent in its post-9/11 focus on hybrid/culturally ambivalent "third zone" characters. While in the 9/11 novel *The Submission* a similar use of investigative journalism pushes its narrative to represent a panoramic cast of characters to capture multiple perspectives, in *BSG* it pushes the narrative toward the use of ambivalent rhetoric to present two or sometimes more sides of an argument without privileging one as morally "better" than the others. As a result, the show takes a stance of moral ambiguity that Dzialo says creates a "rhetorical structure of 'balance'" in which "there are two or more legitimate sides to every story" (171). As a study by Peter A. Chow-White et al. notes, this is largely by design, as "*BSG* creators try to write narratives that avoid offering moral claims":

> [The] creators claim the ethos of creative openness, morally ambiguous
> storylines, and irreconcilable complexity enables the show to tackle challenging
> social issues. Showrunner Ron Moore considers social engagement and

problematizing notions of good and evil to be the cultural goals of the show.

(1215)

As a result of a series of interviews, they note that, "For *BSG* writers, constructing the story in a way that raises questions rather than imposes answers allows engagement with the audience and encourages dialogue about critical issues," and that "the creators express resistance to a one-way reception model for their media product, preferring the idea that meanings are negotiated and plural" (1216). This narrative ambivalence is an imaginary formal solution to the necessarily real choice between the us-versus-them mentality of either supporting or resisting the actions of the US government after 9/11. On the one hand, this means that the narrative form of the episodes is constructed so that there are no black and white answers to problems, such as being forced to choose between allegorically siding with America or the terrorists. Instead, its moral ambivalence allows the viewer to construct their own answers that destabilize this us/them binary to create new alternatives that gray the limits of debates that were too often simplified at the time into black and white terms, opening up new potentialities for alternative solutions. On the other hand, this moral ambiguity also does not offer viewers any strategies for critically engaging with the issues that it presents, potentially leaving the viewer to dismiss the problem as simply unresolvable.

While the SF elements of the show are more readily apparent in its use of distancing nova such as Centurions as robots, humanoid Cylons as androids/cyborgs, and space travel and high technology, the realist genre elements of investigative journalism can be found in both its use of balanced narrative structure and visual stylistics as well. The balanced narrative structure can be seen in most episodes such

as in "Dirty Hands" (3.16), in which a labor strike breaks out on a fuel refinery ship and Galen Tyrol (Aaron Douglas) serves as an intermediary to negotiate between the fleet's need for fuel and the worker's need for safe working conditions. In addition, the mis-en-scène and cinematography communicates this photojournalistic push for an "objective" sense of realism in the program. As Moore states in the *Battlestar Galactica: Series Bible*, a document that was made during the development of the show and distributed to the actors, producers, and writers of the program to establish its common themes, aims, and visual approach to the program, "Through the extensive use of hand-held cameras, practical lighting, and functional set design, the [B]attlestar Galactica will feel on every level like a real place" (5). Similarly, executive producer David Eick states, the goal was to create "something utterly real, and visceral and tactile" ("The Look"). As a result, in the creation of the *Galactica* sets, the crew was very careful to capture the details of military architecture so that it looked more like an aircraft carrier than a spaceship, doing research on World War II ships to adopt their aesthetic feel. In their cinematography, they strove for a shaky hand-held camera feel, like what might be found in investigative journalism and combat footage but in marked contrast to the smooth camera stylistics of SF television programs that came before *BSG*, and they did this not by using dolly shots but instead by putting a hand-held operator in the chair of a dolly to make the shots smoother while still shaky enough so give them that "real" feeling similar to found footage or documentary work ("The Look"). Even when making the CGI space battles, they focused on making it as if there was a real cameraman in space documenting the scene. This way, when a fighter ship goes by, the cameraman appears to get startled and must find the shot again ("The Look"). They also employ techniques such as quick

focuses, sudden zoom-ins, harsh lighting, and extreme close ups at odd angles to give the visuals that imperfect, gritty feeling reminiscent of military combat footage, but also to visually communicate the imperfections of the characters rather than put them in flattering lighting or framing that would make them seem exceptional or artificially perfect. This has the stylistic effect of visually decentering the characters we have come to follow and identify within the series so that they are not depicted as paragons of moral rectitude that should be emulated, but instead as imperfect human beings who do not have all the answers to the complex situations with which they are struggling, and are thus capable carrying the viewer with them as they switch between numerous sides of any given issue, justifying the ambivalence of the plot. In this way, the realism of the visuals of *BSG* pair with the balanced narrative structure to communicate the moral ambivalence of the program by showing that people are not immutable, perfected abstractions, but are instead allowed to grow and change their minds, and may not actually have all of the answers, rather than as ideologues that slavishly attend to a single side of an us/them binary.

The moral ambivalence of the show, however, has resulted in many stating that the cultural and ideological messages of the series are also problematically ambiguous and difficult to pin down. As Chris Dzialo states, "*Battlestar Galactica*'s self-consciously balanced narration—while not difficult to comprehend—is sometimes maddening to interpret" (171). This use of morally ambivalent rhetoric in how it addresses controversial themes means that the program simultaneously has the potential to do both progressive and conservative cultural work, depending on how it is received. As Brian Ott states, "The ambivalent frame encourages reflexivity—an awareness of our

complicity and cooperation in war" (19). This call to reflection means that on the more

progressive side, as Takacs notes, the rhetorical structure of the series serves in

"reminding us that the terms of the public debate are social constructions subject to

change" and that *BSG* and some other post-9/11 programs "invited viewers to wake up

from 'the terror dream' and embrace a more active role in the deliberation of the nation's

values and practices" (*Terrorism* 200). Takacs's interpretation of the program, however,

assumes that the readers are engaged in an active reception mode as that theorized

most famously by Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies reviewed

earlier in this study. For those with more passive reception practices, such moral

ambivalence can also be read as not presenting viable alternatives to the political

policies and practices of the day, putting the show in a position of complicity with these

same status-quo War-on-Terror actions while only presenting a false critical stance that

has no actionable substance. In short, more passive viewers could easily watch an

episode such as "Flesh and Bone" (1.10), in which Starbuck tortures a captive Cylon,

and simply come away thinking that, yes, indeed, torture is a complex issue, but then

defer their political agency on the matter to those in power, assuming that others with

greater authority or knowledge on the subject will resolve the contradiction for them. In

such instances, complacency with then-current policies like extraordinary rendition or

Guantanamo Bay leads to complicity insofar as a lack of a call to action or an

ambivalent ideological position taken by the narrative naturalizes the post-9/11 state of

emergency status as an unfortunate but seemingly "necessary" state of exception in the

face of terrorism. This stance, of course, leaves those in power to continue performing

morally reprehensible acts without opposition or even question, and it presents an

ideologeme of "if you weren't there, you don't know, and you can't judge," as the viewer

can assume that those fighting terrorism know better about what is necessary in that

situation than they do. Yet, from a more distant series-arc perspective, *BSG* has a much

more narratively complex structure that allows it to transcend what is presented in a

single episode or even over several related episodes.

At the second horizon, the rhetorical ambivalence is rewritten in the narrative's

series arc as a dialogic conflict between the primacy of the ideologies of biological

essentialism and social construction. Yet, despite four seasons of ambivalence on this

conflict, the final episode ultimately resolves the tension by asserting that our genetic

heritage is the most important aspect of life, a position that Anne Kustritz calls

evolutionary determinism (25). This stance serves to negate much of the ambivalent

stance of the program and communicates an ideologeme that while both sides of an

issue need to be given a fair hearing, in the end you must make a choice based on

biological affinity. Even though the show carries out this dialogue in a number of ways

and through numerous characters, a particularly instructive example is between two

hybrid characters as ideologues, namely two different copies of the Cylon Model Eight,

both initially named Sharon Valerii but who later distinguish themselves with the

callsigns Boomer and Athena, and who struggle in a way which Julie Hawk captures

well:

> The push and pull between an essence-based subjectivity and an active,
>
> process-based construction of subjectivity is precisely what is at stake in the
>
> narratives of both Boomer and Athena…The Eight model's struggle, ultimately, is

negotiating the space between essence and conviction in order to adapt and to

create something new, something hybrid. (5)

This codes the dialogue about biological essentialism and social construction as an

ontological issue over the level of one's choice in being human, Cylon, or a hybrid of the

two. In keeping with its rhetoric of balance, the show spends much of its screen time

using these two hybrid characters as ideologues to weigh out both sides of the debate.

As Margaret Rose states, "Sharon is set up as a hybrid figure, the human Cylon," and,

as such, "the cultural hybrid functions as a bridge between groups, either demonized as

the source of pollution or valorized as the source of strength" (1206). This hybridization

plays on numerous fear themes, with Sharon often embodying the fear of exclusion as

she is continually in a position of unhomeliness, her existence an act of boundary

transgression such that she is often not accepted by either the humans or the Cylons.

Further, since the Model Eight is played by Canadian Korean actress Grace Park, Lisa

Nakamura notes that the racial coding here reflects "the Asian American experience of

always 'having just arrived' no matter how many generations particular communities can

trace back their ancestry in the US." As a result of being racially coded so as to be

permanently seen as an out-group member, Nakamura states, "Sharon Valerii must

constantly and repeatedly prove to the crew that she belongs." In a comment on this,

Avi Santo notes, "Sharon's in-betweeness (unwanted/unclaimed by humans and cylons

alike) [is] as meta-commentary on the Asian immigrant experience."[12] Particularly in a

post-9/11 context, Sharon's "Asian foreignness" can be seen as orientalist code that

encompasses the Muslim other as well, denoting the efforts that Muslim Americans had

to go through to counter the reactionary upsurge of Islamophobia after the terrorist

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[12] Also see Nishime on the Model Eight and its connection to America's history of transnational adoption.

attacks in order to attempt to re-integrate themselves into the American in-group, much like I discussed earlier concerning the 9/11 novel *The Submission*. Through these two characters, this sense of attempting to find a way toward a post-9/11 Asian American identity takes two different paths, the first following essentialism and the second following social construction. But ultimately, the equal screen time that the program devotes to each of these two ideologies is narratively buried in the conclusion by the privileging of genetic determinism in the overall plot.

As the ideologue of biological essentialism, Boomer initially believes she is a human, complete with a life full of memories, but when it is revealed that she is actually a Cylon she embraces this biological nature as the core of her identity. At the end of the first season, Boomer makes a decisive victory for the human fleet, only to be activated as a Cylon sleeper agent who attempts to assassinate Captain Adama. In light of this revelation, Boomer is forced to integrate who she thought she was with her newly discovered nature as a Cylon. As Rose states, "The narrative of Boomer" can be seen as "embodying the struggle between her human culture and her Cylon nature" (1203), essentially a struggle between acculturated and genetic identity. After the assassination attempt, Boomer is killed by a human crewmember but awakens with the Cylons in a resurrection tank. This rejection by the humans sets her on a path to embracing her Cylon nature, even siding with the Model Ones during the Cylon civil war to oppose the human fleet, turning her character into something of a hybrid monster in the narrative. In this way, Boomer's narrative is of the internalization of the threat, or as Rose states, "the fundamental threat the Cylons pose, apart from their aggression, lies in the narratives of individuals discovering that they were always Cylons, as in Boomer's

experience" (1205). Boomer's move toward accepting her biological nature as a Cylon as the most important aspect of her identity emphasizes the fear that hybridity instigates treachery, a notion that finds its post-9/11 root in the rejection of Muslim Americans as always already terrorists and one that has roots felt even as far back as Theodore Roosevelt's 1915 speech "Americanism" that rails against "hyphenated Americans" (Fulford).[13] This suspicious, or paranoid, affect is often utilized and transformed in the American imaginary into an essentialist belief that codes race and/or religion as the defining factor in determining who is an internal threat, as national affiliation is ignored in determining this border between us and them. Essentially, this belief states that hybrids, such as Muslim Americans, will hold true to their genetic origins and turn against their culture and nation, a fear that also historically gave rise to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

In conflict with the depiction of Boomer, Athena moves to embrace the ideology of social construction in order to form her own hybrid identity that aligns with the human fleet. Athena begins the narrative knowing that she is a Cylon, but falls in love with Helo, becoming pregnant with a hybrid child that we later come to know as Hera. Athena chooses to stay with the human fleet to raise her child and even fights for them as a fighter pilot. Rose sums up Athena's ideological journey well: "Rather than her storyline being dictated by her blood, it seems to be dictated by the reactions of others to her newly perceived difference. Her narrative presents a struggle against the racism of the

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[13] As from Roosevelt's speech, "The man who calls himself an American citizen and who yet shows by his actions that he is primarily the citizen of a foreign land, plays a thoroughly mischievous part in the life of our body politic. He has no place here; and the sooner he returns to the land to which he feels his real heart-allegiance, the better it will be for every good American. There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else" (Fulford). For a rhetorical analysis of Roosevelt's public discourse and how "his mythic framing of race and ethnicity" plays a role in "the construction of American identity," see Dorsey (7).

bio-essentialist view, insisting that her identity is defined through her actions and choices, rather than her biological status" (1203). The difference between the two characters, Hawk asserts, is the conscious choice that Athena made to become a hybrid, as opposed to Boomer being forced into the position (11). In this sense, her hybrid status allows her to join the humans, but it also suggests early on in the program that hybridity ultimately requires a choice, echoing the ideological unconscious that surfaces again in the final episodes that negates the rhetorical balance overtly used throughout the series: as a hybrid, Athena still had to choose the humans over the Cylons, much as Boomer had to choose to side with the Cylons over the humans. Because of Athena's choice, Hawk states, "She *is* a cylon, but she *becomes* human. But because she *is* a cylon, she becomes not-quite-yet-more-than-human" (11-12). This hybridity "creates a third space—a space wherein Athena (and eventually Boomer) enacts 'new and hybrid agencies,' rearticulating and revisioning what constitutes being human, what constitutes being cylon, and what constitutes a possible hybridized human-cylon ontology" (12). Yet, through it all, Athena demonstrates that we can choose to enact an identity that runs counter to siding with our biology, a notion that allegorically supports the belief that Muslim Americans, and other "foreign" out-groups of Americans, can defy their alleged genetic nature and align with the culture of their choice.

As already noted, near the end of the narrative, the program makes a choice between the two ideologies that ultimately sides with biological determinism to forward the ideology that our genetic heritage is what matters most. After Boomer steals Hera, Athena takes back her child and kills Boomer. At first, this move seems a defeat of

Boomer's biological determinism that valorizes Athena's social construction. Yet, the

revelations of the last episode upends this stance, as we learn that the ultimate destiny

of all the characters, Athena included, has only been to bring her child, Hera, the

biological hybrid of the humans and Cylons, to Earth to pass on her mitochondrial DNA

to her descendants. Her descendants ultimately turn out to be all of us today in the

actual world, and the program tells us that Hera was our Mitochondrial Eve, that we are

all already human and Cylon hybrids ourselves. This ending does produce a sense of

SF wonder, transgressing the dominant belief of what it means to be human, but it also

forwards what Kustritz refers to as evolutionary determinism, which is not without its

regressive and eugenic ideological implications for the post-9/11 discourse on survival.

Despite Hera being Athena's child, the actresses used to portray the child appear

phenotypically white, which Kustritz notes as effectively "breeding [racial] difference out

of the future" through "a matter of genetic assimilation" (13). This echoes the way that

post-9/11 nationalism equated, and still equates, national citizenship with race (i.e.

whiteness), as the American subjectivity was increasingly articulated with an image of

the "white Christian heterosexual" in opposition to the colored terrorist Other. Further,

on the message of the ending, Kustritz states that *BSG* argues that "[i]ndividuals—their

histories, fears, hopes, and frailties—only matter inasmuch as they add to the number of

human beings left alive, and individual lives only matter inasmuch as they contribute to

the continued survival of the race" (8). "[T]his logic," Kustritz points out "solidifies value

as solely imparted through genetic survival" (15). As a result, she states, "They rely on

a purely genetic definition of survival, as though such a philosophy had no connection to

the ideologies of social Darwinism and evolutionary psychology that deny value to

cultural achievements and nonreproductive lives" (17). Indeed, as the show concludes, the fleet sends all of their ships into the sun in an attempt to end the cycle of war, essentially devaluing all of the tools, developments, and advantages of their culture and technology, while showing that only the genetic heritage of the characters is important in the end.

This assertion that genetics are more important than culture and individual achievements supports the biological essentialist notion that biology wins over in the end and that therefore hybrids are by their nature treacherous enemies within our ranks. This message serves to support the post-9/11 belief that Muslim Americans are inherently terrorists solely because of their genetic, or rather racial, composition. It also supports the notion that the War on Terror and its excesses like torture and human rights violations are necessary for the survival of the nation in order to preserve its "genetic" heritage. Further, this move does not just support the primacy of genetic heritage, but as Hawk states, it is "a problematic valorizing of sexual reproduction and, with it, compulsory heterosexuality" or a "problematic reification of sexual reproduction" (12). This means that despite the advanced technology of the storyworld, the only effective means of reproduction presented is heterosexual reproduction, occluding and silencing through omission all homosexual means of reproducing through technology, such as methods of artificial insemination at the very least. Yet, perhaps most disturbing, Kustritz states that the ending "ties the species's survival to careful selection and protection of certain children with ideal genetics, thereby reimagining a hybrid version of eugenics for the postmodern world" (2). This stance that the important outcome of hybridity is genetic utility devalues technology, culture, art, and any life not

spent dedicated to the heterosexual biological reproduction of the human species. This ending serves to nullify *BSG*'s earlier implication in the fourth season that hybridity between seemingly irreconcilably different cultures, whether human and Cylon or East and West in the post-9/11 world, can create a harmoniously functional hybrid culture. Instead, it seems to sidestep this possibility at the last moment to pull the debate back to an evolutionary determinism that reduces human (and Cylon) value to genetic heritage and a quasi-Darwinian survival of the fittest. In the end, contrary to its ongoing support of ambivalence, *BSG* subtly resolves itself with the protonarrative that while we should hear out both sides of any given debate, in the end we still have to make a choice. Just as the hybrid characters of Boomer and Athena had to choose their side, this ideologeme subsumes the third-space potentialities of hybridity back into the terms of the original us/them binary debate.

At the third horizon, *BSG* shows the ideological roots of its genre sedimentation in contradiction to its initially progressive post-9/11 impulses. Despite its initial progressive side as mediated through the SF genre novum of the hybrid character that provides and ideological answer to the post-9/11 contradiction of seemingly irreconcilable differences, the program's regressive roots show the determinism of the genre of American naturalism that emerges in the narrative's conclusion as residual ideological forces that pull the narrative into a reassertion of American exceptionalism, heteronormativity, and binary thinking. Moore's makes a direct connection to the genre of naturalism when he states that his intention when creating *BSG* was to update the SF genre with injections of television drama and journalistic realism in order to make what he calls "naturalistic science fiction" (5). The genre of American naturalism, as we will

see, formally strives for objectivity and a sense of determinism. This study can unearth these regressive elements by first looking at how Moore's *BSG* is a remake of the 1978 original series of the same name that was created by Glen A. Larson, a trace connection that has implications on the remake's inability to maintain its moral ambiguity in the conclusion. Larson is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and, as Iver Neumann notes, the original series "came close to being an allegory of Mormon theology" (228). Milford and Rowland would describe the original show's use of allegory as traditional allegory, one based on a pretext of "an ideological or mythic system" that "restrict[s] their meaning to" the reinforcement of this same pretext (537-8). In their description, Moore's remake utilizes a form of allegory capable of subversive connections because it works within the pretext of recent historical events rather than how the traditional allegory works within the pretextual authority of a particular ideological system, a religion in this case, in order to reinforce its messages.

While Moore states that he knew that Larson "used Mormon influences," he was "not familiar with Mormon belief or practice" himself when creating the remake (Neumann 227). However, Larson did stay on "as a special adviser for the reimagined show" (228), leaving the remake open to renewed appearances of its residual Mormon pretext. Essentially, much of the narrative framework of the remake comes from Mormon beliefs, including the "forced exit (*exodus*) to a place that is known from sacred texts" (230), the notion that human life on Earth has extraterrestrial origins (232), the idea of "resurrection where the flesh remains the same" (238), the series' end of "giving up on technology and tilling a new land" (238), "guidance by scripture and angels who are clearly of a kind with humans" (239), and similarities of names, such as the planet

Kobol and the Mormon planet of Kolob "that is closest to the Heavenly Throne" (232). However, when Moore created his remake of the series, he and much of his audience, as Neumann attests, encountered the narrative without being aware of its former religious pretext, allowing it to change to one based on a historical pretext instead. As a result, the remake is far from a Mormon allegory itself, often running counter to Mormon belief. As Neumann states, "Drinking, smoking, swearing and promiscuous sex, all of them anathema to the Mormon tradition, are on ample display, and the merging of good and evil things make for a central problematic of the show" (239). Yet, this formal sedimentation helps explain numerous residual aspects apparent in Moore's remake that at first seem to run counter to the progressive internal logic that the series establishes, such as the heavy religious aspects of the last episodes, as what we thought were hallucinations of Virtual Six and Virtual Baltar turn out to be angels and Starbuck's return from the dead is explained, apparently, as an act of God. The effect of this underlying religious pretext on Moore's remake contributes to the forces within the narrative that ultimately drive the end of the program to run counter to many of the progressive elements seen at work throughout the series, such as how its quest for Earth echoes the Puritan notion of the "City on the Hill" that was resurrected during the Cold War to help found the ideology of American exceptionalism. Further, this sense of isolationism echoes with how the Mormons left to occupy the Utah territories in 1850, and how these ideologies of exceptionalism and isolationism came together for Mormons in a way that, at least within the context of this study, appears compatible with eugenics, as they are a people who believe they are a chosen race, and one that is decidedly white.

In addition to these changes, a few of the major characters of the original series were re-cast as female characters, such as Boomer and Starbuck, which, especially regarding Starbuck's character, initially led to considerable fan backlash (Kungl 199). While the success of the remake and of Sackhoff's Starbuck has quieted much of these protests (203), Kungl notes how it shows "that physical toughness in women makes society uneasy" (208), as "women displaying toughness undermines the belief that gender roles are fixed" (202). Moore's expressed reason for changing Starbuck to a woman, however, is more practical than overtly political: "The [original] rapscallion Starbuck just seemed like such a cliché and I didn't know what to do with that" (1217). Of course, the roguish Starbuck of the original series, as played by Dirk Benedict, likewise markedly contrasts with the cautious, earnest, and religious Nantucket Quaker named Starbuck in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851). The almost playful contrast between these two characters denotes a dose of invention that helped to make Benedict's Starbuck work so well for its 1978 audience, preventing it from becoming an overused convention at the time. Similarly, in the *BSG* remake, changing Starbuck to a woman seems to have given Benedict's established convention the sense of inventionality that allows the character a renewed sense of historical resonance with its contemporary post-9/11 culture, especially considering the cultural push for hypermasculine characters that I have noted as emerging after the attacks.

At the same time, the remake of *BSG* is a reaction to the established conventions and growing clichés of the SF television shows that came just before it, such as Gene Roddenberry's fin-de-siècle television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-94) (*STNG*), on which Moore had previously worked. As Buzan states, the original concept

that began the Star Trek franchise itself is "an expression of America in the 1960s, confident in its right to own the future, blithely imperialist in a cultural way, willing but not eager to use force, having no interest in conquest and occupation, and with a deep commitment to progress, humanism, anti-racism and liberal values" (177). One trace connection between *STNG* and *BSG* is the Borg, a recurring alien threat in the series that consists of cybernetic organisms linked by a hive mind, which can be seen as a precursor to the depiction of the Cylons as hybrid monsters, even as the Borgs borrow more than the Cylons from the fear theme of the zombie-creature as a collective and dehumanized threat. In comparison, the element of invention that makes the Cylons resonant with post-9/11 culture is their depiction as being nearly indistinguishable from humanity, and how this blurs the line between human and machine even further than the shambling Borgs. Yet, perhaps due to the long run and success of the *STNG* series, the narrative structure became increasingly cliché in the final seasons, often revolving around exceptional scientific minds finding solutions either rationalized by scientific or pseudoscientific means to save the ship and its crew from seemingly certain fates. These plots express an overwhelming confidence that technology and science can save the day, representing its characters as nearly superhuman in their capabilities. Further, as Margaret Rose explains, *STNG*'s attempt at liberal anti-racism was beginning to show its contradictions: "Conflict between cultures is displaced onto conflict between species, and consequently the attempt to imagine a world without racial conflict winds up reproducing some of the worst assumptions of scientific racism" (1201). As Rose states, "in inter-species conflicts, culture is consistently conflated with species, and consequently ethnicity is depicted as biologically essential" (1201). In short, an alien

race such as Klingons act like Klingons because they are Klingons, and biological

essentialism overrides all hopes of divergent individuality or the social construction of

identity. These generic roots further denote the residual trace of the biological

essentialism of the genre of American naturalism that reasserts itself in the conclusion

of *BSG*.

As previously noted, in 2004, Moore felt that the Star Trek form needed to be

updated, and his answer was to inject greater elements of the television drama and a

journalistic realism into the genre in order to make what he calls "naturalistic science

fiction" (5). Rather than basing the series on the situational plots and exceptionally

talented scientists of Star Trek, Moore pushed *BSG* to emphasize a gritty visual realism,

to show people making mistakes, and to center the narrative on the actions and

concerns of believable, relatable, and flawed characters:

> Our show is first and foremost a drama. It is about people. Real people that the
>
> audience can identify with and become engaged in. It is not a show about
>
> hardware or bizarre alien cultures. It is a show about us. It is an allegory for our
>
> own society, our own people and it should be immediately recognizable to any
>
> member of the audience. (6)

This push for realism led the remake of *BSG* to its narratives of moral ambivalence,

pushing the series toward the progressive directions discussed above. Further, by

adding these realist elements, *BSG* found resonance with a post-9/11 culture wracked

with the paranoia of the next terrorist attack. As Moore states, "Terrorist attacks,

sabotage, and fomenting insurrection…will be a staple of their stories and keep our

heroes off-balance and constantly having to look over their shoulder even as they battle

Cylon fighters" (36). Further, "the Cylons *in our midst* should be a constant, lurking threat," which "means that anyone can be a Cylon and our characters should definitely experience the fear and paranoia that will become an ever-present result of this fact" (37). Here, Moore's aims for the show align with many of the fear themes this study has identified, including paranoia and the internal threat.

This strategy of adding elements of realism, such as flawed characters and gritty visuals, helped to connect the more distant feeling nova of robots and spaceships to the post-9/11 concerns of its audience. This way, when *BSG* aired and depicted wars in faraway solar systems with advanced, intelligent robots, it was not much of a leap to articulate these with post-9/11 imagery. As was already mentioned, the destruction of the twelve colonies in the beginning of the series visually echoes the devastation of 9/11 and Ground Zero. Similarly, the Cylons became a threat that drew connections to terrorists. As Milford and Rowland point out, "Their ability to blend in with the humans but still maintain their sinister goals in the name of their faith made them a clear reference to al Qaeda and generated a discourse of fear and suspicion similar to the aftermath of 9/11" (543). In addition, President Laura Roslin (Mary McDonnell) had clear allegorical connections to George W. Bush, as the two were portrayed with many similarities: "She was the forty-third person in line to ascend to the office…Bush was the forty-third president. She was considered unqualified for the position, an accusation many critics lobbed at Bush…she firmly asserted that she wouldn't negotiate with terrorists…and relied heavily on religion in making policy" (543). While these articulations with the fantastic elements of SF popularized in *STNG* to these more realistic, believable elements probably ended up drawing more from investigative

journalism than television drama as he had originally intended, they still opened the way

for the series to make comments on post-9/11 culture from behind the protective veil of

allegory necessary at a time when American official culture[14] was particularly sensitive

to such criticism.

With these layers of generic sedimentation in mind, it can be seen how *BSG*

worked within the evolution of the SF television genre in ways both Utopian and

oppressive. The remake's move toward greater cast diversity by changing some of the

original roles to women paired with its use of hybrid characters in major roles that are

central to the narrative of the series arc points us toward the text's more liberatory

meanings. Despite the final call for a naturalist sense of evolutionary determinism, the

series also allegorically insists that, even if only temporarily, there is a way for

irreconcilably different cultures to align themselves in order to become a collective,

hybrid culture that can work together, as seen in the fourth season when the Cylons

integrate with the human fleet to defeat the Cylon army led by the Model Ones.

Allegorically, this theme proposes that the seemingly implacable global divisions

between post-9/11 American and Middle Eastern cultures can be overcome and that a

future that deconstructs the us/them binary of the Bush administration is indeed

possible and more secure. Rose captures this Utopic possibility of a cyborg hybridity in

its SF coding as human/Cylon:

> If, as Haraway argues, there is not ontological separation between the human
>
> and the machine, then there really was no difference of essence between human
>
> and Cylon to begin with. Rather than presupposing two initially pure categories,

---

[14] Kustritz explains that "official culture" is a term that Lauren Berlant uses to refer to "the dominant, nationalist position of certain mass media and certain ideological formations within those media" (29).

Battlestar Galactica uses the process of hybridization between human and Cylon to reveal that the supposedly essential difference between them, the assumed purity, was always a construction. (1208)

Just as the difference between human and Cylon was always a social construction, *BSG* can point us to the conclusion that the same holds true with their allegorical extensions: there really is not an essential difference between America and the Middle East; it has always only been a construction. All that remains is to deconstruct our own reified codes of difference to come together in a third space as a hybrid culture.

However, the conclusion of *BSG* reveals the oppressive political unconscious that has roots in the underlying religious pretext of the original series and the biological essentialism of previous SF television programs such as *STNG,* sediments that have subtly extended via the longstanding conventions of American naturalism throughout the entire program and emerge to dominate the conclusion of the narrative, overriding many of the program's initially more progressive elements. In the final episodes, it is revealed that the entire series has been guided by angelic beings and a higher power, placing the narrative back within a religious ideological pretextual frame and negating much of the freedom of action that we believed the characters had been exerting throughout the series. It should also be noted that the angels of Virtual Baltar and Virtual Six are decidedly white in their representation, articulating holiness with a Christian, or more particularly Mormon, sense of American whiteness, as opposed to a colored representation that might be linked to a sense of an Islamic theology. At the same time, Buzan states that the inward search of the series for humanity's origins and the storyworld's ultimate rejection of all life outside of Earth have culturally regressive

connotations: "In today's America such sentiments can play to the country's isolationist tradition, seeing itself as the exemplary 'city on the hill', but eschewing external political engagements lest they corrupt the purity of its revolution" (180). Seen in this way, the series as a whole, with its absence of the traditional SF convention of aliens coded as international others, which instead have been displaced into robots coded in this way, can be seen as a step toward a reassertion of American exceptionalism, and a denial of the need for integration into the larger world beyond the borders of our designated in-group, as both humans and Cylons become one and the same in the end. Further, the ending negates the progressive call for hybridity, instead reasserting us/them binary thinking as it states that while both sides of an issue deserve a fair hearing, in the end we must choose one, as both Boomer and Athena had to choose a side. The program itself takes a side in the essentialist/social construction conflict to assert the importance of our genetic heritage as passed on through heterosexual relations over the transmission of learned experience through our cultural heritage. Almost heavy-handedly, this privileging of genetic heritage occurs when it is revealed that divine providence guided the fleet to Earth only to ensure that Hera would become humanity's Mitochondrial Eve. In short, the conclusion reverses much of the progressive potential of the program by allegorically pushing for isolationism, American exceptionalism, and a form of quasi-Christian biological essentialism in which the heterosexual transmission of our genetic heritage is the most important aspect of life.

Yet, as I have noted in previous chapters, the very last scenes of a text greatly influence the affective nature of the fear that the text evokes in its audience. Along these lines, *BSG* ends with what could arguably be called an ambiguous ending, in that

while the angels express hope that humanity will finally escape its repeating cycle of war, and these sentiments are followed by a montage of humans making robots to serve our needs once again. However, many critics seem divided on whether this ending forwards a fearful or hopeful message. As Kustritz states, "the very last frames [create] a rising doubt that genetics alone can cure social divisions without memory of how those divisions arose and caused such destruction" (17). On the other hand, Rose saw the show as "culminating in a hopeful messianic hybrid child" (1194). What can take away from this is that the ending, hopeful or no, utilizes fear to propose a call to action, to motivate humanity away from creating a technological slave race that could very well develop into something like the Cylons. Capturing the spirit of most of the show, these last scenes serve as a call to stimulate discussion on the matter, to debate the moral implications of technology, sentience, and the boundaries of the concept we call humanity. But on these debates, the show gives us no easy answer. The future is up to us.

MINDSCAPE AND HYBRIDITY THROUGH CONFRONATION AND INTEGRATION

In many ways, Andrea Hairston's novel *Mindscape* (2006) is a very different form of SF than *BSG*, but at the same time they both cover many of the same post-9/11 American fear themes, especially the concern with the hybrid character. Just in terms of author identity, *Mindscape* represents a marginalized perspective of SF, as Hairston is a black woman. Moreover, as Bogi Takács states in an online review of the novel, "It's also a very explicitly queer book by a queer author, and its Afrofuturist approach pulls no punches." Most sources agree that the term Afrofuturism was a term coined by Mark

Dery in 1994 to designate "Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and

addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century

technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates

images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (180). Since that time,

Afrofuturism has grown into an aesthetic, artistic, and philosophic movement that

combines technology with African Diaspora culture, taking the shape of visual arts,

music, narratives across all media, and beyond. Yet, as Mark Bould states, Afrofuturism

and SF are two different things that can at times intersect but are not the same; as he

argues, "SF and SF studies have much to learn from the experience of technoculture

that Afrofuturist texts register across a wide range of media; and that…studies, if it is to

be at all radical, must use its position of relative privilege to provide a home for excluded

voices without forcing assimilation upon them" (182).

Overall, SF has historically had a problematic relationship with depicting race. As

Bould states, "From the 1950s onwards, SF in the US magazine and paperback

tradition postulated and presumed a color-blind future" (177). He continues, "This

shared assumption accounts for the relative absence of people of color from much of

SF: if race was going to prove unimportant, why even bother thinking about it" (177).

Yet, the assumption of a color-blind future simply led to the whitewashing of the future,

as most SF authors seemed to consistently imagine a future for humankind that

somehow consisted almost entirely of white people. Like *BSG*, SF broadly tended to

approach discussions of race and the Other only allegorically through the depiction of

robots or alien races, and even among its human characters, blacks were the race that

was least represented (177). Bould is quick to identify the problem with the absence of the black presence in traditional SF:

> The problem with such a gesture, of course, is that rather than putting aside trivial and earthly things, it validates and normalizes very specific ideological and material perspectives, enabling discussions of race and prejudice on a level of abstraction while stifling a more important discussion about real, material conditions, both historical and contemporary. And by presenting racism as an insanity that burned itself out, or as the obvious folly of the ignorant and impoverished who would be left behind by the genre's brave new futures, SF avoids confronting the structures of racism and its own complicity in them. (180)

Afrofuturist SF, then, is an important corrective effort that has the potential to move SF into realms of social consciousness that it has seldom, if ever, attempted to discover. Also, Bould highlights how pulling the attention of SF back to overt depictions of race brings the genre back to analyzing and exploring the real material conditions surrounding the topic, which lends itself well to Marxist and Jamesonian interpretation, a possibility I will develop shortly. All of this, of course, is not to say that there have been no black SF authors over the past century. Quite to the contrary, Octavia E. Butler and Samuel R. Delany are two of the most famous and luminary examples, and Sheree R. Thomas's anthologies *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora* (2000) and *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones* (2004) have begun recovering the lost history of black writers not only in the SF genre but in fantasy and horror as well. Further, the convergence of Afrofuturism and SF has recently produced a new flush of creativity and invention, featuring such authors as N. K. Jemisin, Nalo Hopkinson,

Colson Whitehead's novel *The Intuitionist* (1999), and, our focus in this section, Andrea

Hairston.

Mindscape* is an Afrofuturist SF fear narrative, but one that utilizes fear themes in

a surprisingly unique and hopeful, if not naïve, fashion. However, it has garnered a

surprisingly small amount of academic attention, which this section hopes to do its part

to rectify, as this complex novel has deep wells of content and formal sedimentation that

this study will only be able to explore in basic ways. As a review from *Langston Hughes*

Colloquoy states, "The novel effectively represents a world forever changed by a

mysterious force" ("Mindscape"). With this echo of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in mind,

Mindscape is a consummate post-9/11 narrative that addresses issues stirred up by the

attacks through science fictional metaphor and the alethic creativity of distancing nova.

Overall, it is a novel that uses the secondary fear theme of the wall to show how the

hybrid character can make possible a third space that opens new collective

potentialities not available to those that create and maintain dichotomous boundaries

between each other.

To summarize its plot, in the twenty-first century an "extraterrestrial, epi-

dimensional entity" known as the Barrier, a "red cloud of unknown material," engulfed

the Earth (Hairston, *Mindscape* back cover, 4), breaking the world apart, re-arranging it,

and dividing it into three inhabitable Zones, the lifeless Wastes, and the uninhabited

Wilderness lands (4). The Barrier cut Earth off from space, stranding the astronauts

around Mars and the Asteroid Belt, and in the chaos of this apocalyptic Event most of

humanity died. Human contact with the Barrier means instant death. The only travel and

trade between the Zones are by seasonal corridors that the Barrier opens and by

corridors made by Vermittler, mutants created by human and barrier hybridity through a process called symbiogenesis, which I will return to shortly. The three inhabited Zones have been ravaged by plagues and wars over scarce resources ever since the coming of the Barrier, until 111 years later when the spiritual leader Celestina Xa Irawo created the Interzonal Peace Treaty only to be (apparently) assassinated by Piotr Osama just after signing it. Piotr Osama's last name and his disruptive terrorist act of shooting the Zone's spiritual leader, of course, is a relatively explicit reference that Hairston makes to Osama Bin Laden's masterminding of the attacks of 9/11 and the disruptive effect of these events. Much of the narrative takes place four years after the assassination, which is 115 years after the coming of the Barrier, or Barrier Year 115. Now, the Treaty seems to be falling apart as the initially unconnected actions of a small group of characters try desperately to hold it together against politicos hungry for power and ganglords looking to make a profit from human suffering.

The three inhabitable Zones are New Ouagadougou, Paradigma, and Los Santos. New Ouagadougou is the healer's zone, an area of lush rainforests that focuses on spirituality, pursuing the ancient ways, and whose fertile lands serve as the breadbasket of the Zones. It tends to focus on aesthetic beauty, but is also fiercely isolationist, as it fears cultural contamination from the other zones if they learn their mystical healing secrets. Through partnerships with the leaders of the other Zones, their medicines can be used to make a profit, whereas giving out the secrets of their healing arts would benefit the masses but not those in power who would lose out on these financial gains. Further, so the reasoning goes, if the other Zones were to learn of their secrets, New Ouagadougou would lose their competitive bargaining chip, leaving

nothing to prevent others from invading or wiping out their people in order to take their resources. This allegorically points to the profit inflating strategies of the American pharmaceutical industry that charges high prices for medical cures and treatments rather than make their secrets public knowledge for the betterment of humanity. It also more remotely alludes to the promotion of capitalism as necessary after 9/11 as epitomized by Bush's edict to go out and shop as a patriotic act. In both instances, the need to spend to keep the economy alive overrides potentialities of working together to negotiate peaceful relations between cultures. The next Zone is Paradigma, whose motto is "Civilization, Democracy, Free Market, Science," making this Zone an allegory of the official American culture after the Bush Administration's post-9/11 move to neoconservativism that advocates for the expansion of American democracy and the promotion of American interests in international affairs (e.g., preemptive war such as the 2003 Invasion of Iraq), while also pushing for conservative economic approaches that promote aspects of free market capitalism and the valuation of science and technology over the arts and humanities to enable the further expansion of the techno-military apparatus[15]. Again, the push to enliven the economy through spending is alive and well in this Zone. Paradigma is also home to a marginalized group known as "ethnic throwbacks," a group that Takács describes as "someone who keeps aspects of pre-Barrier Earth cultures alive" and the narrative racializes as black through its one representative character, Lawanda Kitt. Last, Los Santos is the entertainment capital of the world, specializing in making films for the rest of the world, allegorically pointing to

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[15] This connection between the neoconservativism of the Bush Administration and science was made overt when, at about the same time *Mindscape* was published, Bush announced the 2006 American Competitiveness Initiative that promoted educational reform to emphasize STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) but not HASS fields (humanities, arts, and social sciences).

the current role of Los Angeles and Hollywood in the film and television industries. However, most of Los Santos is a wasteland, and, due to food shortages, it has resorted to thinning their population by using Extras (the subalterns of Los Santos) in snuff takes to save production costs and also to selling human body parts in an open organ market. Allegorically, this is a criticism of contemporary Hollywood cultural products being little more than ethically depraved pornography that sells filmic objectifications of the human body for viewer gratification rather than providing texts that offer a sense of artistic edification. Taken altogether, the three inhabited Zones symbolically represent extrapolations of three different cultural focuses in the real world that are set in conflict within the storyworld: indigenous spirituality that stands for the entire third world in current life, scientific capitalism, and the entertainment industry as having become an inhumane perversion of the arts, respectively. Still, interestingly, all three Zones contain class divisions within them and are somehow penetrated by capitalist logics, if to different degrees and in different ways, emphasizing the pertinence of a Jamesonian reading of the novel.

Building upon this complex SF situation and setting, the novel has a character-centered plot that revolves around six point-of-view characters that at first appear divided into their own separate chapters that display their distinct voices and worldviews. As Monty Vierra notes, "What is significant is that all six characters have peace as their goal" (132). For our purposes, I will call these six point-of-view characters the Pro-Treaty characters that are opposed by a group of Anti-Treaty characters. The first of these characters, Celestina, as I have mentioned, is a diplomat and spiritual leader, who has been assassinated, but we soon learn that, rather than dying, she was

carried away through a corridor by an alien ship before she died and still lives in some other state of existence. Elleni Xa Celest is from New Ouagadougou and is Celestina's spirit daughter, or *Geistestochter*, the inheritor of Celestina's wisdom and position. Elleni is also a *Vermittler* with snakes for hair who drip colored liquid that appear to match her emotions. From Paradigma, Lawanda Kitt is the Vice-Ambassador to Los Santos, a self-identified ethnic throwback, who, in a review, Chris Rohman describes "as a sister who talks back and talks black." She both speaks and writes in a language similar to a twenty-first century African American dialect. Also, from Paradigma is The Major, who hails from Sagan City, the capital city of Paradigma that Hairston named after scientist/SF author Carl Sagan (Rohman). The Major is the Head of Sagan City's Secret Services, advising the Prime Minister, but he is also romantically involved with Lawanda. From Los Santos, there is Aaron Dunkelbrot a major producer/director that we later learn was once a black woman Extra who had a gene-art transracial and transgender operation to become a white male. As a white male, Aaron has been able to climb to a position of power that he never could have before. Last, also from Los Santos, is Ray Valero, an entertainment star who is romantically involved with Elleni. Ray serves to ground Elleni and struggles to be the real-life hero he portrays in his films, often unsuccessfully. Together with a web of supporting characters, these six steer the narrative to its conclusion, as the discourse alternates between the characters in an irregular pattern that allows for the advancement of the plot. This occurs mostly through a covert third person narration that omnisciently shifts its mental access to a single character in each chapter, except for Lawanda and The Majors' chapters that are initially presented as nonnarrated monologues through cross-barrier transmissions to

each other. Limiting the focalization of each chapter in the beginning of the narrative to

a separate character allows the discourse to display their distinct voices and different

perspectives on the world, especially since the covert narrator often uses free indirect

discourse forms to import the characters' distinct voices into its own still-third-person

voice.

As the story progresses, we learn that a group of power mongers have released

a devastating plague called the fire virus on the inhabited Zones in order to keep the

them divided and keep the people paying them for a cure. Meanwhile, Elleni receives

visions from the Barrier showing her that two *Vermittler* must sacrifice themselves by

walking naked into the barrier or the Earth will be destroyed. There are very few

Vermittler left in the world, so Elleni struggles to find someone who will join her in this

act of *Ebo Eje*, or blood sacrifice. In many ways, this use of sacrifice is an allegorical re-

writing of the suicide bomber who gives their life to defend their culture and beliefs.

Rather than giving one's life through an act of violence, however, the willing sacrifice

featured in *Mindscape* is portrayed as an act of nonviolent submission of the self for the

betterment of the collective whole. The Pro-Treaty characters individually receive a

series of turkey feathers as invitations from ghost dancers summoning them to a

gathering at Wounded Knee where a *Vermittler* known as the Wovoka promises to raise

the dead from the Barrier. Once gathered, the characters have a showdown with Jesus

Perez, the ganglord known as the "soybean king." In the end, they subdue Perez, and

Ray and Elleni walk into the Barrier to sacrifice themselves only to be joined at the last

minute by Elleni's spirit sister and fellow *Vermittler,* Sidi Xa Aiyé, someone who up to

this point appeared to be amongst the Anti-Treaty characters, only to have a last-minute

change of heart. At the end, Elleni and Ray emerge from the Barrier two months later, while Sidi remains within to become part of the Barrier. They soon learn that the Barrier has opened corridors between the Zones, even corridors to the Wilderness Zones and mysterious ones that seem to lead off into space. In the end, their sacrifice and struggle has led to a hybrid community unlike any ever known since the coming of the Barrier, but the characters steady themselves for the work they see coming ahead to maintain this fragile peace.

I can justify *Mindscape* as a fear narrative because the Barrier not only serves as the primary novum that creates the conditions for all other novum in the narrative, but it also serves as the fear theme of the wall that makes possible all other secondary fear themes in the narrative as well. The Barrier, then, serves as the primary formal focus of the narrative and the nexus of the sense of fear that dominates the novel, as it divides the storyworld into separate and isolated Zones. The presence of the Barrier in the storyworld allows the creation of the hybrid characters/monsters of the *Vermittler*, all of which come together as clear but slippery allegories of post-9/11 American and global culture. At the thematic center of the narrative, the autonomous and inscrutable Barrier re-writes the theme of the wall from one that symbolically separates a single us/them binary to one that allegorically points to the fearful and socially constructed class and cultural divisions of late capitalism that form the material conditions of our society at present, a temporal moment that Jameson reminds us is so ideologically and materially complex as to be "untotalizable and hence unimaginable" ("Progress"), just as the Barrier is often impossible to comprehend or understand. The Barrier represents all the divisions that society creates but that have become reified and naturalized to the point

where they take shape as material, physical, and embodied consequences. In this way, the Barrier is symbolic of the ideologies of division that make up an integral part of the superstructure of not only American but global late capitalist culture, including racism, nationalism, classism, sexism, and other walls that make up our everyday experiences. In the storyworld, while the Barrier is believed to be an alien presence that is not under human control, we learn through the effects of the sacrifices at the end of the narrative that it can be affected by human interaction, allowing for an allegorical means of social change through interaction.

To those in the storyworld, the Barrier appears to be something imposed upon humanity, and in many ways this matches the individual experience with such structures of social division: we often do not feel like we created and sustain these divisions but instead experience them as a condition that naturally exists that we simply have to live with. As a result, much like the structures of division in contemporary culture, the Barrier itself is seemingly natural and innocent unless you are aware of its existence, its impact on everyday life, and that it can change or be changed. As Elleni muses, "A traveler from the twenty-first century might have mistaken [the Barrier] for a harmless fogbank, rolling in from the northwest" (Hairston, *Mindscape* 19). Yet, to defy these seemingly harmless borders by transgressing its lines of distinction means instant death, much as such real-world violations of these walls have social consequences with often fatal results (e.g., crossing national borders or crossing the race line). Even all attempts to film or analyze the Barrier have proven nearly impossible, aside from the efforts of the storyworld's leading minds that use technology gleaned from experiments with the Barrier itself, much as it is deceptively difficult to analyze, measure, or study the

ideological aspects of real world culture that divides us, and yet most would readily acknowledge that they exist and have real effects in our world and everyday life.

The divisions brought about by the Barrier create the conditions that separate the Zones each into their own individual instantiations of the secondary fear theme of the survival space. As Vierra states, "In *Mindscape*, people are alienated from one another by a physical barrier that allows cultural differences to solidify into the barriers of spite and envy" (114). These Zones as survival spaces become breeding grounds for paranoia about the perceived external threats that the other Zones might pose. The Barrier also insulates the Zones from achieving cultural integration as well, a possibility that the Anti-Treaty characters see as a threat of contamination from "unwanted contacts" (108). Where the Zones prove to be different from the zombie narrative survival space is that these spaces do not collapse and fall under the threat of external enemies. Instead, in the conclusion of the novel the barriers separating the Zones "fall" in the sense that the Barrier itself opens what appear to be permanent corridors to connect all of the Zones together. In this way, the walls of the survival spaces do fall, but only so that they can allow hybridity to form between the divided Zones of the storyworld, not to usher in a nihilistic end of humanity typically found in the zombie narrative. The divisions of separate, isolated, and insulated survival spaces present throughout much of this narrative allegorically point to the similar cultural and ideological separations of the post-9/11 world, especially between America and the Middle East.

Further, the presence of the Barrier allows for the secondary novum and secondary fear theme of the hybrid characters, all of whom exist solely as a result of technology developed from the Barrier. These are found in both in the *Vermittler*, such

as Elleni, who are mutant crossbreeds between humanity and the Barrier, but also in Celestina, who we later find out is actually comprised of two lesbian lovers who were joined into one. Celestina was once the healer Thandiwe Xa Femi from New Ouagadougou who murdered her lover, the scientist Robin Wolf from Paradigma, when Thandiwe discovered that Robin had uncovered the secrets of the healers and planned to release them to the world. In punishment for her murder, Barrier technology was used to fuse them together into one body, making Celestina a truly hybrid subject but one that is not always at peace with the contradictions of her two selves and must continually struggle to integrate herself into a functional whole. Yet, in these depictions, *Mindscape* again re-writes this secondary fear theme of the hybrid character, nullifying much of its fearful content. The narrative arranges the hybrid characters as two among the point of view characters that we follow and come to identify with in the novel, making it difficult to fear their hybridity. While some of the other protagonists display an alternating sense of fascination and repulsion with the inhuman aspects of Elleni's body, we only see the Anti-Treaty characters, the narrative's antagonists, truly fear her difference. This alignment of hybridity with characters to whom we have established a connection, and Elleni's negative judgment at the hands of characters we have come to see as villains, serves to paint hybridity in a positive ethical and affective light. In short, *Mindscape* nullifies the fear surrounding the hybrid characters that it depicts, portraying it as a complicated yet desirable state of existence that can create positive change toward Utopic ends, just as Elleni and Sidi do by sacrificing themselves to the Barrier. In this way, while the theme of the hybrid character is central to the narrative, the sense of fear evoked by the novel primarily comes from the Barrier as the wall that creates divisions

between us. Yet, by the end of the narrative, even this fear theme is nullified as the Barrier becomes integrated into the community, allegorically nullifying the necessity of fearing and making war on Muslim culture because of the attacks of 9/11.

From a Jamesonian perspective, the formal registering of social contradiction at the first horizon is the divisions placed between the six point of view characters as each one is initially shown in separate chapters that display their distinct voices and worldviews. As the narrative progresses, however, it resolves this tension by increasingly bringing the characters together until in the conclusion the voices of all six of the characters cooperatively interact through direct speech with one another within a covert third person narration, illustrating their integration into a hybrid alliance through their increasingly hybridized dialogue. At the second horizon, this shift from separate narrative voices to mixed ones registers the dialogic conflict between the Anti-Treaty characters as the ideologues of isolationism and the Pro-Treaty characters as the ideologues of integrationism, a conflict that resolves into an ideologeme stating that we must confront our differences and divisions in order to integrate into a sustainable future society. At the third horizon, this ideologeme is manifest in the tension between SF and the injection of the "magical," or not rationally explainable, novum of the Barrier, a sedimentary inclusion of the romance genre that formally resolves the question of irreconcilable differences in order to make integration possible. At this point, we see how the narrative is both oppressive in its advocacy of competition and difference as prerequisites of sustainable integration and Utopian in how it shows that social groups divided by irreconcilable differences can form into a hybrid collective.

At the first horizon, the primary formal contradiction of the narrative lays in the divisions that separate the six point of view characters, divisions that each of the characters express through their cultural and ideological differences as communicated through the subtly or quite obviously different dialects that they use in their direct speech in dialogue or monologues. In the terms of Mikhail Bakhtin, this separation of different voices into separate chapters places the "pure languages," or "the dialogues and monologues of the novelistic characters" (365), in dialogic contrast with each other, emphasizing the novel's overall heteroglossia, wherein each character's unique social language exhibits their different belief systems and contests each other in so far as each "language [is seen] as a world view" (271). This creates layers of ideologies coming together in the novel as incarnated within the characters' voices, each in contradiction and conflict. As Bakhtin states and I have established previously in this study, the "speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an *ideologue*, and his words are always *ideologemes*" (333), so we can read the narrative structure of the opening of *Mindscape* as presenting pure dialogue between conflicting worldviews expressed through particular dialects, which I will refer to for our purposes as an "ideolect," as the characters of *Mindscape* demonstrate. Initially, this cultural division between the characters is evinced by their distinct ideolects and the fact that each is at first separated into different chapters that each follows seemingly independent narrative threads. As the narrative progresses, however, it resolves this tension of division by knitting these threads together so that the characters at first interact in pairings in which their differences struggle with one another, and then it finally brings them all together in the conclusion chapters at Wounded Knee that integrate their

differences through interactive direct dialogue presented through a covert third-person

narration as focalized through a different single character in each chapter. Within the

narrative, this strategy of progressive integration of divided ideolects aesthetically and

ideologically manages not to assimilate their unique voices, and, hence, their unique

ideologies and cultures, but instead allows them to work together while retaining their

difference, a formal "imaginary" solution to the seemingly irreconcilable cultural

differences between the Christian and Islamic "worlds" naturalized after 9/11.

Illustrating these divisions, the text initially portrays each of the six point of view

characters mostly in separate chapters, each with a slightly different ideolect that

denotes the cultural isolation and division of the survival spaces of the Zones, as the

Barrier has limited their interactions for the past 115 years, creating distinct worldviews

within each of the Zones. From Los Santos, we hear the professional jargon of the film

industry in Ray and Aaron, but each speaks it with their own subtle differences. Ray

inflects his language with the heroism associated with his film roles so that he often

speaks in the clichéd, clipped language of the masculine action hero and falls into

enacting conventional roles in actual emergency situations. For instance, when trying to

save a horribly burnt woman, he responds to her need to speak by saying, "'Yes.' Ray

nodded. 'Easy now…Just rest'" (Hairston, *Mindscape* 155), rather than listening to the

important clues she is trying to give him. On the other hand, Aaron's use of language

conveys his position of authority as a leading director in a culture that puts film

production as perhaps the most important aspect of life. For example, when asked

about safety on the set, Aaron states, "The audience wants action authenticity" and "I'm

on a tight budget and real life is dirt cheap. Nobody has an FX budget like in the glory

days" (100-1). His words value the making of the film over the safety of the people on the set and imply his position of authority as a director and his complicity with the tradition of violence toward Extras that he otherwise denies and decries.

In contrast, the dialogue of Celestina and Elleni who hail from New Ouagadougou illustrates the value that this culture places on aesthetic beauty and how this urges them to incorporate and borrow from a diversity of cultures in its music, dance, and even the languages it brings together into everyday speech. This makes the culture of the Healers of New Ouagadougou distinct from the other Zones in that it is a polyglot culture that relishes the embodied feel, nuanced contextual/intentional meanings, and historical connotations of numerous languages as a means of the artistic expression of beauty. Paradigma, on the other hand, has outlawed some languages (Hairston, *Mindscape* 50), and Los Santos is known for their poor education and high illiteracy rates (51). As a result of their cultural valuation of the use of numerous languages, characters such as Celestina and Elleni use terms from German, Yoruba, Japanese, Lakota, Ojibwa, and others in their daily conversations. In fact, they use so many integrated languages that the novel provides a glossary of their translations at the end, a move itself that could be read as a formal attempt at integrating the languages for the reader. Celestina's ideolect, however, is distinct as she is secretly a hybrid being of two different people from two different Zones, so her dialogue incorporates some of the scientific jargon of Paradigma into her polyglot use of language that inflects her position as being from New Ouagadougou and as the spiritual leader of all three inhabited Zones. For instance, to announce the signing of the Treaty she evokes her

spiritual role as a healer: "*Aboru, Aboye, Aboşişe*[16]…Our time is no worse or no better

than other times. We are not inevitable. We didn't have to happen this way. There are

many threads, many Earths" (11). In contrast, her scientist voice later expresses itself

as she discusses some of the secrets of the Healers: "In an extension of Gaia Theory,

Wolf saw the Barrier as an emergent life form; not an organism, but like Earth,

comprised of interconnecting ecosystems" (370). Elleni, on the other hand,

communicates her spiritual and ritualized position as a *Vermittler*, an intermediary or

griot between humanity and the Barrier who thus belongings to neither, as she

reflexively responds with ceremonial greetings even when exhausted. When the

Healers Council finds her naked, dazed, and wounded on the ground after attempting to

commune with the Barrier, she promptly greets one with an expected salutation: "'Duma

Xa Babalawo—father of mysteries, one who greets all with open hands'" (117).

However, her role as an intermediary with the Barrier is a position that pulls her

attention and energy between those she is presently interacting with and the shifting

time orientation of the Barrier with its disorienting visions, causing her to often find it

hard to socially interact with others in her presence. Because of this, later on the same

page she can barely seem to respond to their questions, using short phrases in a

variety of languages, seeming to blurt out phrases like "*Keine Feinde* [no enemies],"

"*Mo so awon enai mi po* [I tie all my people together]," and "We must be as one" (117-

18). Often, this makes her dialogue difficult for those around her to follow and increases

her sense of unhomeliness as the demands of her hybrid identity tends to exclude her

from common social ties with other people.

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[16] This Yoruba phrase translates as "May the offerings be carried, may the offerings be accepted, may the offerings bring about change" (Hairston, *Mindscape* 449).

In the two characters from Paradigma, Lawanda Kitt and The Major, the novel depicts perhaps its two most stylistically distinct ideolects. Throughout most of the narrative, they communicate with each other through a series of cross-barrier transmissions, which allow Lawanda's chapters to come across very much like long emails or letters and many of The Major's chapters to be expressed through his very different ideolect in a form that resembles a memo or a scientific journal. In these sections, the narrative pulls from the conventions of the epistolary narrative genre to allow a dialogic epistolary narrative to unfold between the two characters, in which they send transmissions to each other in an ongoing conversation that creates a narrative thread of their own. In this way, the two characters can communicate, as Chatman states, in a direct, "nonnarrated" way as a form of "unmediated narrative text" (169-171). This means that, through these chapters, the characters are able to utilize their voice to narrate "reports of what has happened since the last letter" and to include other speech acts such as "requests, commands, laments, questions, and so on" (170), but do so in a way that emphasizes and showcases their distinct ideolects.

Specifically, this form allows the novel to highlight their divergent ideological filters and epistemologies. Lawanda's chapters are expressed in her unique linguistic style that Vierra describes as "a dialect of current English known in linguistics as AAVE, Black English, and Ebonics…However, Lawanda's version isn't completely consistent, suggesting that she is interlacing 'Paradigm standard' into her speaking" (135). One example of her dialect from one of her chapters expresses her frustration after enduring discrimination for her use of throwback language: "Why anybody wanna speak the truth, raise they children, know themselves with gas-chamber language? Survival be havin'

words to call home, havin' idioms and syntax to hear the Diaspora" (Hairston,

Mindscape 51). Throughout the narrative, her dialogue filters her experiences through

the perspective of art as her status as an ethnic throwback means that she understands

her world through her use of "mind doodling," which allows her to find her thoughts

through the creation of art, a method that echoes Hairston's own creative process of

performing or writing narratives first in order to find her ideas about a given subject

("New" 1, 4). Lawanda has learned this worldview from being raised in the marginalized

ethnic throwback culture of Paradigma. In contrast, The Major responds with his own

transmissions that allow him to voice his more empiricist, militaristic, and scientific

personality in transmissions that the ever-organized soldier divides into clearly labeled

sections, such as Question, Assumption, Observation, Note, and Recommend. The

following example in response to one of Lawanda's transmissions captures not only his

voice, but also his sense of organization evident in his choice of page layout:

> Assumption: You don't mean you got lost; you believe forces disrupted
>
> spacetime and infected your will, resulting in an unintended
>
> Barrier confrontation.
>
> Observation: You should consider stress and your mental state as well as
>
> fantastic possibilities. Memory lapses aren't as uncommon
>
> as you might think. (Hairston, *Mindscape* 76)

As this sample implies, his perspective of events is filtered through the analytic action of

a more scientific or empirical approach to understanding life, an approach he has

learned from being raised in the dominant scientific culture of Paradigma.

Once the stylistic divisions between all six of the characters are established, the novel formally begins to integrate the narratives together. This move from division to struggle to integration of ideolects outlines Lynn Margulis's concept of symbiogenesis, the central SF premise of the story that Hairston claims "was an invaluable inspiration" for the novel (Hairston, "Heretical" 1753), even as it is not explicitly explained in the novel itself. As Hairston states, "Margulis holds that *all life*, *all* novel species developed from bacterial symbiosis rather than through the accumulation of random mutations in DNA" (1770). From this premise, "Margulis challenges the standard way of knowing the universe and proposes symbiogenesis, evolutionary change by the inheritance of acquired gene sets, as the creative engine of evolution" (1753). She continues, "Margulis also supports James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis, the controversial idea that the Earth's biosphere—life, water, air, and land—form a complex, self-regulating ecosystem. Powered by the Sun, Gaia is an emergent, self-sustaining entity" (1770). To Margulis, "Gaia is symbiosis as seen from space" (1770). However, this notion of integration does not mesh with official culture's interpretation of Darwinian evolution that advocates for the elimination of the competition (or threat) in order to survive, and that *BSG*, as we have seen, ultimately recurs to: "Symbiosis—from bacteria combining to form novel species, to ecosystems combining to constitute Gaia, a living planet— doesn't jibe with mainstream rugged individualist, Great-Chain-of-Being notions of the cosmos and human progress" (1800-1814). Overall, the sort of symbiogenesis portrayed in *Mindscape* formally and ideologically imagines that by confronting our initial state of division and struggling with each other, rather than ignoring or perpetuating these divisions, we can come together to integrate into a sustainable system in order to

grow and change. In such a system, no individual constituent is more important than the other, which destabilizes the dominant perspective that humanity is of central importance over nature. Instead, by becoming symbiotically integrated together, we come to realize that all the parts of the biosphere are interdependent upon the proper functioning of each for the rest to survive.

In this light, the Barrier can be read as an entity that has come into a symbiotic relation with the biosphere of our solar system by merging with Earth and the life found upon it. Rather than this making the Barrier an enemy that must be defeated through an us/them binary, Margulis's concepts—and the narrative structure of the novel—urge us to think of the Barrier as an entity that we must struggle with (not without) in order to integrate it into a sustainable version of our extended biosphere, but not an entity with which we are supposed to assimilate in order to create a new uniform sense of existence. In this spirit, as Vierra states, "Instead of aiming at a bogus universality, Hairston makes the all-too-human barriers of race, class, and gender an integral part of her storytelling by showing how people must confront them to overcome them" (105). From the clues in the narrative, it can be inferred that the Barrier must survive if the planet is to survive, as its act of re-arranging the Earth upon its arrival has made it so that the planet now requires the Barrier to hold itself together. From this perspective, all of the pieces of the biosphere are interdependent parts of an integrated whole, and to remove one would mean the destruction of the rest, just as is seen in Elleni's vision of warning in which the Barrier recedes from the Earth, leaving the planet to collapse upon itself.

Formally, the narrative enacts this sense of cultural symbiogenesis by initially establishing each character separately before putting them together in chapters in which they confront and struggle with their differences. This struggle through interaction also serves to change the characters, chipping away at their previously well-defined personalities and worldviews. One example is an interaction between Lawanda and Aaron as captured in one of Lawanda's cross-barrier transmissions, whom she has come to call "7-Stories" after he expresses his rather hegemonic belief that all stories and all lives come down to seven universal stories and no others. In this conversation that is narrated through Lawanda's ideolect, Aaron reveals the fate of his family to the organ market in an attempt to get Lawanda to talk Ray into playing a particular role:

> "Didn't know 'em." He shrug. "My whole family went for organs. I got a reprieve because Paradigma middlemen didn't want to glut the market and have prices drop."
>
> I ain't going to let him guilt me. Throwbacks never could afford the organ market no how. "You lucky," I say.
>
> "LUCKY? I was an Extra five years. I've seen everybody die, every kind of way."
>
> "So you should be pissed at these lyin', murderin' smugglers and do somethin'…"
>
> "What? Join the rebel Extras? No way, lying and cheating gives you a survival edge." (Hairston, *Mindscape* 62)

In this initial display of vulnerability, Lawanda recounts how Aaron opens up to her in a way that allows her to peer through his veneer of directorial authority to show a different

side of himself as a former Extra, the dispensable subalterns of Los Santos, and in doing so his voice becomes noticeably more vernacular, i.e., more like Lawanda's. As their interactions continue, Lawanda reacts to his cynical callousness. While she initially just wanted to go back home to Paradigma and leave all the gangsters of Los Santos alone, she grows increasingly involved in trying to make a change, a change of character that puts her steadily deeper into danger.

In the later chapters at Wounded Knee, even before the Barrier has opened the corridors to connect everyone, the ideolects of the point of view characters come together in one location as the six Pro-Treaty characters finally meet each other. By presenting their direct dialogue through a covert third person narration, these chapters formally integrate their ideolects through their interaction and struggle together often foremost through their dialogue, a possibility previously made exceedingly unlikely to occur due to the isolation imposed by the Barrier up to this point. In one example, Lawanda, Elleni, and Ray converge their perspectives to come to an understanding of what all the newly opened Barrier corridors might mean for the storyworld:

"Look Around," Lawanda said. "Newfangled Barrier openings in all the Zones—like expressways to everywhere. Inside you almost hear somebody scattin' astral blues to Kora riffs."

"Sidi, sculpt-singing," Elleni whispered as Lawanda was talking. "Or Mahalia."

"These corridors don't wink out, you understand what I'm sayin', so folk be steppen' out, getting' with each other, callin' for a world council at Wounded Knee."

>"Revolution solution," Elleni said.

>"A new world," Ray said.

>"When the walls come tumblin' down," Lawanda said. (433)

While this sample bears signs of the character's ideologies integrating, they are not assimilated by their interactions as formally registered by their using different ideolects to agree on the same thing. For instance, there is a switch of concepts typically associated with other characters as Lawanda borrows from Elleni's cultural connections to West Africa when she talks of an instrument called a Kora, and Elleni pulls from Lawanda's characteristic use of "mind doodling" in the connection she makes to "sculpt-singing," which in this sense is a metaphoric literalization of doodling, or using art, in order to create something new. Ray, on the other hand, re-asserts his clichéd, taciturn, action-hero dialogue by turning Elleni's poetic consonance of "Revolution solution" into something as banal as "A new world." To be fair to Ray's character, though, he does change through his interactions in these last chapters as he becomes both more sensitive and more brave, serving Elleni as her ground to the material world and even taking the heroic action of offering himself as a sacrifice in the end, something he would never have done at the beginning of the novel. Overall, while the struggle of the point of view characters with each other's differences brings about some degree of character change in each, these chapters also show how integration as seen in Hairston's symbiogenesis is not assimilation, as the unique voices of each ideolect remains intact in the end. Instead, the changes in their dialogue denote a metaphoric inheritance of each other's acquired "gene sets," so to speak, as the characters' ideolects inherit sets

of each other's language use, pulling with it the ideological freight that language inevitably carries.

In a post-9/11 world, this formally increasingly heteroglossic move to use the concepts of symbiogenesis to integrate their voices runs counter to the unilateral actions of the Bush Administration and the silencing of political dissent in the first years after the terrorist attacks, as well as to the us/them binary created by the War on Terror. By valuing the integration of these distinct voices to work together rather than silencing the different worldviews, the introduction of the Barrier and the concept of symbiogenesis into the storyworld serve as imaginary and almost magical solutions to the real world divisions between what were seen as seemingly irreconcilable cultures after 9/11, such as the East and West. In this way, Hairston points allegorically to an alternative way to solve our cultural and political disputes by working with each other to confront our differences in order to become something new and hybrid that still retains each constituent's unique cultural outlook. The future, for Hairston is not that America and the Middle East should merge as one, but that they should learn from each other so that they can work together for a sustainable future.

At the second horizon, the formal contradiction of the novel can be re-interpreted as a dialogic conflict between the post-9/11 ideologies of isolationism typified by the War on Terror and an integrationism that calls for outreach to the Middle East and non-terrorist Islam, each embodied in the Anti-Treaty characters and the Pro-Treaty characters, respectively. Present among both groups is a constant state of paranoia that often divides their efforts, or as Vierra states:

On both sides of the treaty fence, the characters are looking over their shoulders,

not knowing who to trust, who they can work with. *Mindscape*'s protagonists

succeed because they ultimately accept each other's differences and find ways

to build on each other's strengths; their human antagonists remain divided,

precisely because disdain for difference keeps them in power. (132)

In the terms of this project, for both groups of characters, a paranoid fear of both

internal and external threats dilutes their efforts by fracturing their collective action. The

Pro-Treaty characters only succeed when they form a hybrid collective front against the

Anti-Treaty characters whose fragile alliances based on individual benefit fall apart

under pressure. Further, these two ideologies add to the discourse on post-9/11 survival

that I began to see emerging in the texts of the previous chapters. By survival, I do not

simply mean practical survival, such as stockpiling barrels of water, but survival as the

route to whatever would be deemed the most desirable future for America as a utopian

project. In the previous chapter, we saw through *Zone One* that nostalgic reconstruction

is a dead end (pun partially intended), and through *10 Cloverfield Lane* we learned that

better results occurred through creative survivalism rather than survival as

consumerism. *BSG*, on the other hand, ultimately advocates for genetic survival by the

passing of our genes to the next generation as the most important way to continue on

(even if the ambiguous ending seems to undercut this very assertion). *Mindscape*,

advocates for survival in a different form, one based on the concept of symbiogenesis

through the ideologeme that we must confront our differences in order to integrate into a

cooperative but diverse collective that expands our considerations of society to include

its place in the biosphere as a whole.

The ideology of isolationism is voiced by the ideologues of the Anti-Treaty characters. As we continue through the story, we learn that this is a seemingly dispersed group of characters that are working for their own prosperity and power above all others, driven by individual gains rather than collective goals. As Vierra states, "[T]he opponents of peace are mainly politicos who have climbed the hierarchical ladders of their respective societies and who rely on their power to determine others' fates" (132). These characters include Jesus Perez, the Los Santos ganglord looking to climb to the top of the underworld hierarchy. Sidi Xa Aiyé is a *Vermittler* and spirit sister to Elleni who is at first a fierce isolationist driven by her fear that integrating with the other Zones will result in the cultural contamination of New Ouagadougou. Yet, in a heated discussion near the narrative's conclusion, Elleni seems to finally inspire Sidi to be a better version of herself and side with the Treaty (Hairston, *Mindscape* 424). Femi Xa Olunde is a now deceased leader of New Ouagadougou who began a xenophobic campaign advocating for the genocide of the *Vermittler* as abominations that must be exterminated, and who oversaw the killing of most of these Barrier mutants. Duma Xa Babalawo, is Femi's present day protégé who seeks to continue Femi's work as long as it puts him in a place of power. The Major initially works with Prime Minister Jocelyn Williams to undermine the Treaty in order to turn a profit for Paradigma. The Major only later changes sides when he starts to see visions from the Barrier that make his hand glow blood red, Elleni's healing abilities disable the brain bombs that hold him loyal to the Prime Minister, and his love for Lawanda pushes him to disobey Jocelyn's order to have her killed. Moses Johnson is Aaron's assistant director who is just another person in Los Santos struggling to make it to the top. Similarly, Daniel Ford is a middle-tier

gangster who allies with Jocelyn to get his ticket to the top. Last, Piotr Osama is the Los Santos Extra and a born-again Sioux from the Ghost Dancer cult who attempts to assassinate Celestina in order to stop the Treaty from diminishing his individual sovereignty (12).

Much like the War on Terror is a war waged against an ill-defined "evil" terrorist threat that must be eliminated, essentially pitting America against anyone who opposes America, the goal of isolationism is to destroy anyone deemed to be the enemy Other, which makes this destruction of the opposition and one's continued survival the only signs of success. Achille Mbembe helps explain the logic of this sort of ideological stance: "The perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to life and security—this, I suggest, is one of the many imaginaries of sovereignty characteristic of both early and late modernity itself" (18). As he notes, this is essentially a dehumanizing ideology, or "reification understood as the *becoming-object* of the human being" (18). In the end, these characters oppose the Treaty but largely do so individually or in contentious and temporary small groups in order to impose and maintain the hierarchy that isolates the Zones in a state of self-destructive competition that only benefits those in power. This same agenda for financial gain and power in the real world can also be said to be the primary motivation behind the Invasion of Iraq, as it allowed the Bush Administration control of a key geopolitical location with a rich oil supply, but it failed to actually be connected to those responsible for the attacks of 9/11, its original justification. Simultaneously, the motivation of the Bush Administration could be read as a displacement of their own greed onto the

Islamic other who they believe only wants to take us over, requiring us to take them over first. This justification of preemptive attacks against a perceived threat likely underlies the psychological motivations of the Anti-Treaty characters as well, as the Treaty would integrate the Zones and destroy their hold on the economic forces that maintain the storyworld's status quo. Opposing the Treaty for these characters is seen as a matter of survival, a means of maintaining their way of life, regardless of who else their actions continue to hurt.

On the other side, the ideologues of integrationism can be found in the Pro-Treaty characters that consist of the six point of view characters previously described in the summary. This use of a group of relatively marginalized characters as the protagonists is a common theme in Hairston's work. As Vierra states, "Those who imagine a new day are the ad hoc community of misfits, of renegades and castaways, to whom Hairston gives voice in all of her works" (103). The success of the Pro-Treaty characters, however, is founded on their largely unknowing adoption of living through the concept of symbiogenesis. Through the ideology of symbiogenesis, the best answer for the survival of the human race is through integrationism that advocates for confronting our differences in order to learn how to become an interdependent but diverse biosphere, not through a sense of isolationism that would value the survival of the individual over the whole, nihilistically collapsing the biosphere in on itself. The alethic creativity of the Barrier as a distancing novum creates an imaginary situation, a SF thought experiment, wherein the struggle toward integration through symbiogenesis can be dramatically played out. Seen this way, the Barrier's initial creation of divisions and restrictions of travel can be seen as an allegory of the 9/11 attacks, which had the

same effects, although ultimately *Mindscape* rewrites the Barrier—and 9/11—as an invitation to global cooperation on the basis of hybridity and the survival of the planet. Allegorically, of course, this rewriting of the Barrier within the storyworld means that the novel asserts that if we continue to utilize American exceptionalism, it will only lead to our doom, as we will be unable to integrate with our international biosphere in which all the nations of the world could thrive together.

Toward this effort to create change, Hairston extends the concept of symbiogenesis into the struggle of the three inhabited Zones and the characters as well. Like Margulis, Hairston "sees science as a liberal art, a way of knowing—more epistemology than technology" (Hairston, "Heretical" 1753). Similarly, Daoine Bachran states that in *Mindscape* Hairston calls for the "merging of science and art" (15). If we extend this in light of our new understanding of symbiogenesis and the allegorical meaning of the three inhabited Zones, their struggle together actually calls for the merging of science (Paradigma), art (Los Santos), and spirituality (New Ouagadougou), as they all come together as a cooperative biosphere in the hopeful ending. Considering the stance taken by the Pro-Treaty characters, Vierra states, "*Mindscape*'s protagonists provide the means to counter dystopian despair by building cooperative social networks dedicated to social change" (104). This perspective dispenses of the us/them, ally/enemy dichotomies pushed by the Bush Administration and post-9/11 neoconservativism to urge for the cooperation of all members of the biosphere to struggle together, including the Barrier seen as the divisions imposed upon us by society. I say "struggle" because the brand of symbiogenesis that Hairston advocates is not without competition. For instance, Celestina states, "'Symbiogenesis is the creative

engine of evolution, not genetic drift and fierce competition between random mutations.

Biodiversity is a result of competition *and* cooperation'" (Hairston, *Mindscape* 370).

Earlier, too, Elleni, in her heated discussion with Sidi, implies that struggling with others

is a means to humanize, to improve oneself, but to isolate or to destroy one's enemies

only leads to the destruction of all (350-1). Through the lens of symbiogenesis, the final

sacrifice of the *Vermittler* to the Barrier is not a spiritual renewal as it may appear at

first. Rather, it is a metaphorical confrontation with the divisions that separate us in

order to produce a successful integration of the biosphere. When the three characters,

Ray, Elleni, and Sidi, enter the Barrier, they are actually offering sets of their genes to

the Barrier for it acquire, allowing it to function better as a piece of the self-regulating

biosphere by better understanding the needs of humanity and opening all of the

corridors in order to connect the biosphere together in a more productive, hybrid, and

collective form. Rather than ignore or oppose the Barrier as the Anti-Treaty characters

do, the Pro-Treaty characters work with it to produce a peaceful solution that creates a

sustainable society rather than one based on a nihilistic spiral towards self-destruction.

In this way, as Geoffrey Glover states, "the narrative uses the concept of border

crossing as a metaphor for the creation of new hybrid communities around permeable

borders" (155). Applying symbiogenesis to real world political and social interactions

would eliminate the endless conflict of a War on Terror that seeks to eliminate the

enemies on the opposite side of the us/them binary. Instead, Hairston's symbiogenesis

would call for America to struggle with the Middle East in order to find a hybrid means of

co-existence that would lead to a sustainable international biosphere.

Seen at the third horizon, the contradiction between the divisions symbolized by the Barrier and the integrating ideology of symbiogenesis can be re-interpreted as a displacement of the romance genre into SF, wherein the very same "magical"—i.e., not rationally explainable—entity of the Barrier at once creates seemingly irreconcilable differences and ultimately by its agency as unexplainable magic fosters a universal Utopian community, much as Jameson states that magic became the formal solution to the conflict between good and evil in the romance genre (*Political* 118-9). In short, *Mindscape* utilizes the Barrier and the concept of symbiogenesis as "magical" allegorical solutions to the divisions created within society by the rupture of 9/11. In the narrative, these romantic elements become semi-rationalized into nova, as the Barrier is considered an alien entity and symbiogenesis is presented as an alternative scientific approach to the accepted theories of biological evolution, even as the Barrier defies most attempts to photograph or document it, thereby remaining magical. Of course, in the real world, cultural change is hard and seemingly unresolvable, even when there is a growing argument for its necessity. *Mindscape* utilizes the magical novum of the Barrier as taken from romance to magically naturalize symbiogenesis as an alternative to the biological determinism ultimately advocated by *BSG*. By absorbing the genes of the *Vermittler* who sacrifice themselves to it, the Barrier can better understand the needs of those it symbiotically interacts with in the biosphere of the Earth and our solar system. As a result of genetically "learning" more about the humans it must cooperate with, the Barrier opens its boarders at the end of the narrative, allowing the three inhabitable Zones easier routes of trade and eliminating the isolationism and exceptionalism that the divisions it had previously created were imposing. The success

of symbiogenesis as a means of learning about each other in order to remove the illusory need for divisions are evident in the end of the narrative, where everyone lives happily together, even if the narrative asserts that this peace is only temporary. Overall, this imaginary solution of symbiogenesis as enabled by the massive alien presence of the Barrier points to America's real world need after 9/11 to understand and integrate with the nations of the world rather than revert to our isolationist stance of exceptionalism through the Ground Zero myth. *Mindscape* asserts that these ideological divisions of humanity only lead us to a self-inflicted annihilation, much like how releasing the fire virus threatens to kill many at the benefit of the few. *Mindscape* instead calls on us to remove these illusory ideologies that no longer fit the material conditions of a real world that already has the technology of nearly instant global communication and low-cost international travel. Much like how the material conditions of the storyworld are collapsing under the divisions imposed upon it, Hairston seems to assert that we will too, unless we find a way to learn from each other and open our borders to the world.

As a showpiece for the concept of progressive hybridity and symbiogenesis, *Mindscape* forwards a new take on post-9/11 survival. Rather than eliminate the enemy, we can struggle with and confront our differences in order to cooperate with them on the higher and more crucial mission of saving the planet by adopting a more sustainable hybrid form, essentially crossing America's cultural genetics with the Middle East to work together. This formally plays out as the initially independent narratives of the six point of view characters increasingly converge as it draws closer to the conclusion in which they all manage to integrate into a collective but also diverse front that proves able to affect real social change. Yet, this stance of symbiogenesis is not without its

oppressive aspects, as it represents competition as necessary for survival, a seemingly capitalist interpretation of survival that almost has hints of social Darwinism lingering as residual elements of its form. While symbiogenesis does not aim to eliminate the competition, an important step in the right direction, it does impose a system of winners and losers that fails to maximize the pool of human potential in our midst, as this form of competition implies the duplication of efforts over multiple parties aiming to do the same thing. While this may be a step better than isolationism, it does not imply a harmonious collectivity that utilizes its potentials effectively or efficiently. Further, *Mindscape* naturalizes difference as the precursor to hybridity, and hence potentially naturalizes post-9/11 us/them wars as a necessary precursor for a multicultural and integrated future.

However, the novel does offer Utopian aspects that can be especially useful when considering current post-9/11 issues. The novel proposes that cultures that seem irreconcilable, such as the three Zones and the autonomously and inscrutably alien Barrier, actually can unite as a hybrid collective if only we see society not through Darwinism but through the different scientific paradigm of symbiogenesis. From this perspective, it is not through the elimination of one's competition but through integration that life forms become more complex and become better able to survive. As Vierra states, "Hairston's characters show how it is possible to imagine a new day. But to see things afresh, we first have to deal with what is, as well as what was; unworkable or deadly conditions won't go away by denying or erasing them" (105). Driving even closer to the point, she states, "One of the central arguments of *Mindscape* is that community will overcome these barriers, but that community cannot come about without a struggle.

Those in power will not relinquish their control quietly" (127). Perhaps most instructive,

even as Ray and Elleni overlook the hopeful ending of the open corridors and the three

Zones integrating into a hybrid society, Elleni asserts that Utopia is not something that is

achieved and attained as a fixed, teleological end point (Hairston, *Mindscape* 431).

Instead, echoing a commonly accepted SF understanding of Utopia[17], Elleni realizes

that Utopia is something that we must strive toward, something that requires constant

work and effort. After all, achieving some ultimate state of perfection would likely

foreclose innovation and adaptation, leading eventually to the stagnation of society.

Rather than celebrate her victory as something final, as if it were a defeat of her

enemies, Elleni reflects, "With all the open corridors, the balance of power would shift.

She was overwhelmed by the weight of the future, the enormity of the tasks as hand"

(434). Yet, this lack of a final victory is not depicted as a fearful glimpse into an

uncertain the future. Instead, it offers a hopeful ending in which the future is open to

Utopic possibilities. As Vierra states, "*Mindscape* does not indulge in despair. Instead, it

offers a message of hope, hope achieved by the 'impossibility specialists' who not only

have a dream of a better world but who actively work to achieve it" (103).

CONCLUSION

     In the end, this chapter has found that SF works with and utilizes the same fear

themes that this study has seen in operation across post-9/11 American culture in the

previous chapters on the 9/11 novel and the zombie narrative. However, the distancing

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[17] As Edward James notes, SF usually objects to the idea of a static future Utopia, as SF narratives have shown that this sort of final goal tends to create an endpoint to innovation and adaptation, leading to stagnation rather than any desirable state for society. Instead, SF tends to advocate for what he calls the technological utopia: a utopia that rejects perfection in favor of continued struggle and progress (222).

effect of the novum often allows SF to push the boundaries of accepted limits of social commentary. This allows television shows such as *BSG* to discuss sensitive subjects such as terrorism, torture, and the violation of human rights even while the memory of 9/11 was only a few years old and its legacy in the War on Terror remained at its full cultural power. Through the allegorical veil, the alethic creativity of SF can often discuss alternatives that other more realistic genres tend to shy away from. Further, through the analysis of the two texts in this chapter, *BSG* and *Mindscape*, this study was able to identify the discourse on survival that actually has run through the previous chapters as well, though unidentified up to this point. How is America supposed to move on after 9/11? What is the best way to pursue the future we want? What does "we" mean for that matter? As the chapter shows, *BSG* advocates for evolutionary determinism, while *Mindscape* pushes for an ideology of integrationism based on the concept of symbiogenesis. As implied by the multitude of propositions for America's future survival that have uncovered in this project, the debate is far from over, and with it comes an underlying fear of doubt. After all, historical conditions continue to change, and, as we adapt to the way things are today, we find that new conditions arrive and nothing remains certain: the struggle toward the Utopic is a constant effort, even if it is one often replete with setbacks.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to examine the post-9/11 American fear narrative across media and genre. To do this, I introduced the concepts of the fear narrative, the primary fear theme, and the secondary fear theme in order to trace the genealogy of the fear narrative across American history and, in turn, to frame a deeper understanding of its political, social, and historical operation after 9/11. First, I proposed that genre, media, and the historical context of production would affect the way that fear themes manifest in the text. Second, I proposed that fear is depicted, changed, or reinforced in texts in ways that have often unconscious political meanings. The ramification of this project for cultural studies is that if offers an example of how to map the evolution of an emotion in the narratives of particular times and places, and we now have a better understanding of how fear specifically circulates through American narratives in particular thematic forms. In particular, this study identified ten primary fear themes (though there certainly may be more), at least six secondary fear themes as they have manifested in particular genres, and noted that the fear narrative tends to have either an ambiguous, hopeful, or, I would now add, a pessimistic ending. The ten primary fear themes that I identified include apocalypticism, contamination, entrapment, exclusion, the external threat, the internal threat, paranoia, the personalization of fear, transgression, and trauma. The six secondary fear themes noted in this study include the survival space, zombie-creature, wall, hypermasculine character, survivalist, and hybrid character. By outlining the politics of fear in operation in this era of the fear

narrative, this study has identified the post-9/11 era as one of the major periods in American history when fear was deployed almost exclusively for conscious or unconscious political aims.

As previously noted, this study is designed with a number of necessary limitations that point the way for future studies. In an effort to limit the body of texts this study focuses on to a manageable corpus, this study intentionally excluded young adult (YA) literature and their filmic adaptations, as well as other genres that are rife with fear narratives such as the techno-thriller, suspense fiction, mystery fiction, fantasy fiction, police procedural drama, supernatural drama, and texts that are primarily and generically hybrid in nature, a trend within speculative fiction, at the least, which is producing some very interesting and exciting work, but which complicate this project's intent at introducing large-picture generalizations concerning the examination of the fear narrative in particular genres. I have also excluded numerous media, including graphic novels, video games, tabletop games, music, fine art (e.g., paintings, sculpture, and graphic design pieces), short internet-native videos (e.g., YouTube), social media, and nonfictional texts such as auto/biographies, true crime, journalism, reality television, and documentaries. All these categories of texts would likely make excellent follow-up studies to create a deeper understanding of the fear narrative, and each one could potentially become a dissertation in their own right. While they have been excluded as direct objects of study, often their presence in relation to the texts that I have selected unavoidably emerge, such as the generic influence of noir fiction in many fear narratives and the historical influence of journalistic broadcasts of 9/11, international events, and former-President Bush's speeches following the attacks.

I justified this study in the field of cultural studies because not only does it analyze the emotion of fear in the narrative, but it examines how fear has evolved in American culture throughout its history and exposes the ideological fallacies of many of its articulations. While many studies have analyzed fear in general, such as Massumi's or Stearns's work, or fear across a small sample of texts within a particular genre or media, no study, at least to my knowledge, examines the evolution of fear in the narrative across all of American history, so as to highlight the particular ubiquity and political overtones of fear in American narratives after 9/11 in a variety of genres and media. By raising our awareness of how the ideologies of fear have been used since 9/11 to direct our thinking in particular ways, and analyzing the political consequences of narrative elements often seen as playfully innocent, such as zombies, robots, and aliens, this study helps to raise our critical awareness of American culture. Further, it opens the possibility of continued future studies on fear narratives in other eras of American history or in other countries.

In Chapter 3 I defined the terms of my object of study, including the fear narrative, primary fear themes, and secondary fear themes. I then introduced the ten primary fear themes that I have identified in this study, noting their general meaning and citing examples of texts that utilize each of the fear themes. In Chapter 4 I explored the sedimentation of the American fear narrative itself, tracing the genealogy of the fear narrative through seven historical periods. This chapter establishes the existence of the tradition of the fear narrative and notes not only the historical sedimentation of various eras in its history into our contemporary understanding of fear in the narrative, but the impact of historical forces on the fear narrative, supporting my first proposal on the

historical adaptability of narrative fear. Further, it demonstrates specifically how primary fear themes have evolved through history, allowing a better understanding of what they have become after 9/11. With this foundation in place, I was able to move into the next three chapters in which I utilized these concepts in the analysis of particular texts produced after 9/11.

In Chapter 5, I examined fear narratives among the 9/11 novel genre, demonstrating how these texts interact with primary fear themes to express and embody their political, social, and historic meanings. While I used Jameson to establish the overall history of the fear narrative in the preceding chapters, this chapter is the first of the interpretive chapters in which I focus especially on using this methodology on specific post-9/11 American fear narratives. Further, this chapter begins to demonstrate how genre and media impact the formal aspects of the fear narrative. Here, I begin with the monomodal medium of the novel so that I could focus on the operations of fear themes in the narrative as coming from a single channel of communication. At this point, I noticed the presence of ambiguous and hopeful endings as a formal convention of the fear narrative. Based on the results of this project, it appears that ambiguous endings tend to be used more by white male authors and creators as an often-unconscious reactionary impulse to a threat to hegemonic culture that helps to cement the lingering sense of fear that the narrative produces for at once oppressive and Utopian ends, often through uncertainty about the resolution of the very same threat. On the other hand, the hopeful ending appears to be more often employed by authors and creators of marginalized groups as a hopeful wish for a better future in which the objects of our fear can be pushed away or overcome. Interestingly, very few 9/11 novels actually depict

terrorists, the lingering threat that drives much of their fear, and instead focus on American reactions to terrorism. This perspective pulls the attention of this genre inward to examining not America's place in the international community but who we are and how we felt after the attacks.

In Chapter 6, I turned our attention toward the zombie narrative to examine how fear narratives operate in the horror genre, and in doing so I discovered five secondary fear themes. These included the zombie-creature, the survival space, the wall, the hypermasculine character, and the survivalist. Through these secondary fear themes, I analyzed how two texts manifested post-9/11 American fear in how they relate to our fears of the shattering of the Virgin Land myth of American exceptionalism and our consumerist desire to hide behind the safety of our commodity acquisitions. In particular, I note in this chapter the beginnings of a discourse on how America can survive into the future, or, in other words, how it can regain its sense of safety after the terrorist attacks shattered our belief in our own untouchability or invulnerability. *Zone One* also highlights how the ambiguous ending can change into the pessimistic ending in the zombie narrative, as the very presence of the zombie urges the narrative form toward the complete annihilation of all human (read as American) life in the near future. In this way, pessimism works as a motivator, symbolically articulating fear with an unstoppable force already shambling among or about us today, whether this points to terrorism or oppressive masculinity, as in *10 Cloverfield Lane*.

In Chapter 7 I examined the post-9/11 American science fiction fear narrative, noting that while it shares elements of the secondary fear themes found in the zombie narrative, the form of the genre tends to alter them as they move into science fiction.

Instead, post-9/11 science fiction often emphasizes the different secondary fear theme of the hybrid monster or the hybrid creature. Whether as the fearful Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* or the *Vermittler* in *Mindscape*, hybrid characters captured the post-9/11 fears of transgression and the internal threat, in which what was seen as an external threat could easily invade our in-group and change who we believe we are. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates how secondary fear themes are definitely affected by transmission from one genre to the next, as while the Cylons share elements of the zombie-creature, it would be hard pressed to call them a zombie themselves. Instead, by filtering the zombie-creature through the iconic science fiction convention of the robot, the external threat becomes a hybrid monster with an often disorienting potential to blur our categorical boundaries between human/machine, nature/technology, and West/East, as the Cylon's allegorical connection to terrorists is flipped when the human fleet become occupied under the Cylons in the third season of the show, creating a critique of the Invasion of Iraq and the neoconservative foreign policies of the Bush Administration. On the other hand, *Mindscape* notes the Utopic potentials of the hybrid character, stripping it of much of its fearful aspects, and instead drawing its fear from its depiction of the Barrier as the wall that isolates, insolates, and separates global society into different social groups. Through the concept of symbiogenesis, the narrative urges that rather than ignore or perpetuate the divisions that separate societies of both American and the world, we should instead confront our differences to consciously struggle with them in order to integrate into a sustainable hybrid culture that can enact real social change. In this way, the hybrid character becomes a means of overcoming the ideology of irreconcilable differences that presides over much of the post-9/11

American imaginary, especially regarding the divisions felt between the East and West. Rather than eliminating the perceived threat of the enemy in an us/them binary, *Mindscape* urges us to work with them in order to integrate into a hybrid culture that avoids assimilation by preserving our unique voices so that we can learn from each other to adapt to the challenges of the future.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the format of this study might lead some to the misconception that literary fiction and the 9/11 novel do not have secondary fear themes, since these were not discussed in Chapter 5. However, if we zoom in our focus to individual genres within literary fiction, we see that secondary fear themes start to take shape in narratives by both canonical white male authors and by those by authors from marginalized groups. For instance, in the genre of the 9/11 novel we could point to secondary fear themes such as the metonymic antagonist who represents a larger institution, whether government, military, or corporate entity (such as Markham and the Boss in *The Zero* or Windust and Gabriel Ice in *Bleeding Edge*); the traumatized character who struggles through the symptoms of their trauma (such as Remy in *The Zero* and Darius or Xerxes in *Sons*); the victim who, while not necessarily being traumatized, is the target of attack or persecution (such as Mohammad or Asma in *The Submission*); and the witness space which is a setting where a character witnesses catastrophe, often 9/11 itself (such as the rooftop in *Sons*, Manhattan streets in *The Zero*, and the domestic television space in *Bleeding Edge*). Clearly, secondary fear themes exist in the 9/11 novel, and I believe that the genres of literary fiction should be treated the same as any other genre. My intent in the structure of this study was not to treat literary fiction as an exception, but to allow each chapter to build on the conceptual

foundations of those that came before it, and the foundation established in Chapter 4 allowed us to focus on primary fear themes in the narrative first before we moved on to secondary fear themes in Chapter 6 and 7.

Over the course of this study, I found that it was much easier to find American fear narratives by white male authors or creators than it was to find them by marginalized ones. One possible explanation for this may be that it reflects the dominance of the white male demographic within the media industry, such as the long bemoaned low number of women creators and directors in the television and film industry. However, this does not account for the low number of marginalized authors producing the fear narrative novel. It seems more likely that this implies that the fear narrative tends to be an often-unconscious, reactionary impulse to a threat to hegemonic culture, and that these works often function to nullify such marginal and emergent threats through personification, pathologization, ontologization, and absolutization. Yet, as this study has shown, other authors coming from outside of hegemonic culture have been able to re-appropriate this narrative form to critique this conservative use, utilizing the hopeful ending as a motivating push away from the objects of fear that it depicts. After all, it is often only a matter of perspective, and one's relation to power, that determines whether one more fears the massing hordes of the poor, culturally other, and unclean come to invade and pillage or the hyper-rationalized capitalist bourgeoisie who sees humanity as disposable commodities to be utilized for financial gain. In both strains of the fear narrative, though, fear seems to urge the narratives toward the dehumanization of the object of fear, casting them as monsters or stereotypes rather than fully developed and complex characters. Overall, while the fear

narrative can certainly be a tool of conservatism, it can also be a powerful critique of stagnant and regressive political forces in order to present progressive impulses as alternatives.

In very general terms, that span my organizational division by genre and media, post-9/11 American fear narratives appear to center on the redefinition of the us/them binary after an apocalyptic Event, much as America attempted to redefine itself by recreating its binary oppositions after 9/11. The 9/11 novel tends to focus on who "we" are after the Event, largely in opposition to the absent terrorist "them." Zombie narratives allow a metaphoric attack of "them" in the form of the zombie, allowing us to explore the fearful and pessimistic possibility that we will be no more. Science fiction explores what happens when the line between us and them becomes blurred into hybrid forms, questioning our definition of who "we" are and opening up possibilities for new, Utopic potentials. In all these narratives, we see the discourse on survival that intertextually debates how America as a Utopian project should approach its survival into the future after the Event. *Zone One* proposed nostalgic reconstruction as ending in disaster, *10 Cloverfield Lane* advocated for creative survivalism over survival as consumerism, *Battlestar Galactica* pushes for survival through our genetic heritage as primary, and *Mindscape* sees our future survival as dependent on the principles of symbiogenesis in which integration through our struggle with difference is the key to a sustainable future. Likewise, the 9/11 novels in this study also engage in this discourse on survival to argue for our active efforts toward integration as well. *The Zero* urges America to shed the passive identity of the post-9/11 virtual imperial grunt for political action before it is too late, *Bleeding Edge* argues that living through justified paranoia

only depletes human agency, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects* avers that the solution to irreconcilable difference is to just get both sides to talk to each other, and *The Submission* points to time as bringing acceptance and reconciliation to our irresolvable differences. Whether any of these proposals are effective options for the future survival of America is open for debate, but it is certain that this fear of what the future may bring and how we should best approach it is a major theme in the post-9/11 American fear narrative in general.

Overall, the fear narrative that we have examined in this project is not just about fear in general, such as confronting various phobias, but appears to be a reaction to change, especially change in the form of a quasi-apocalyptic Event such as 9/11. While it is tempting to consider this sort of fear as a contradiction between the known and the unknown, this binary paints the second term as the fearful intruder, betraying the conservative ideology underlying this known/unknown binary in favor of the known, the status quo. Instead, we can consider this sort of narrative fear as a reaction to change, an interpretation of an anxious affect that arises in the tumultuous moments and years after a traumatic Event. Indeed, this traumatic and apocalyptic Event appears to be the central convention of the post-9/11 American fear narrative, as all of the narratives in this study depict such Events, whether in the form of 9/11 itself or as an allegorical traumatic rupture such as a zombie/alien apocalypse.

In specifying the object of study for this project as "the post-9/11 American fear narrative," each term used here can be interpreted as a variable that could be changed or excluded to form a new study. For instance, new studies could be done on the different historical eras of the American fear narrative that I outline in Chapter 3, or a

study could even argue against these distinctions, further dividing them into more specific eras that better capture the evolution of American fear at these historical moments. Other studies could be done on countries other than America, as the impact of 9/11 was felt across the world. Some interesting studies would be post-9/11 British or Japanese fear narratives, or regional studies that discard national boundaries, such as post-9/11 South Asian fear narratives or post-9/11 West African fear narratives. Studies could also be done on narratives that focus on different emotions, such as happiness narratives, perhaps stemming off Sara Ahmed's chapter "Happy Objects" (29-51), or shame narratives to name only two possibilities. In addition, while this study uses Jameson's three horizons methodology to what I would argue was productive effect, other methodologies are certainly available to cultural studies, such as focusing on reception or production studies (cf. Chow-White et al.) that could be formed into qualitative or quantitative projects. A "distant reading" of the American fear narrative following Franco Moretti's quantitative methods of "graphs, maps, and trees" would be likely to generate numerous insights that this study has not foreseen (2). Clearly, there is much more to understand about the fear narrative, and emotion in the narrative in general, and it is my hope that others will join me in this study in the future.

Yet, this study makes a definitive and novel start in the research on the fear narrative, especially as that tradition functioned politically in post-9/11 America. It synthesizes affect theory and Jameson's three horizons of interpretation into a way to use points of fear in the narrative in order to identify aspects of political, social, and historical contradiction, illuminating the affective bleeding edge of cultural formation in process. It notes the tradition of the fear narrative across American history and justifies

the importance of studying this narrative form. By becoming aware of the historical

permutations of fear and its articulations to political ends, we become more aware of the

unconscious functions of the narrative and the role that fear has always played in our

everyday interactions, whether motivating us toward or away from things depicted as

threats, especially from the Utopian potentialities formulating continuously and

processually as affective impulses. By exploring Takacs's notion of the politics of fear

occurring in the narrative ("Monsters" 1), this study allows us to better understand and

respond to the fallacies and manipulations, as well as to the Utopian impulses that fear

and its narrativization attempts to nullify or clarify. Through interpretive cultural studies

such as this, we can better know the political and historical unconscious of our time and

unearth the Utopian in our midst, pointing the way to a future that manages, as

Jameson states, "to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (*The Political*

19).

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VITA

Nathanael J. Cloyd
Department of English
5000 Batten Arts and Letters
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, VA 23529

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in English Studies: *Old Dominion University*, Anticipated—December 2019. Emphasis Areas in Rhetoric, Writing and Discourse Studies and Literary and Cultural Studies.

Master of Arts in English, with Distinction: *Northern Arizona University*, December 2012.

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies—Enterprise in Society, *summa cum laude*: *Northern Arizona University*, December 2009.

Associate of Arts, with Honors: *Yavapai College*, May 2007.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, 2013-Current, Prescott, AZ, Department of Humanities and Communication. Courses taught: English Composition, Themes in the Humanities, Film Studies, Honors Seminar I, and Mythology.

Yavapai College, 2009-10, Prescott, AZ, Writing Tutor and online Writing Tutor Supervisor.

PUBLICATIONS

Cloyd, Nathanael J. (2019) "Placing 9/11 in its Historical Context a Generation Later." *In Media Res*, 10 Sept. 2019, http://mediacommons.org/imr/content/placing-911-its-historical-context-generation-later.

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