"Fucking Americans":

Postmodern Nationalisms in the Contemporary Splatter Film

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"What's worse, my movie or Dick Cheney? Nobody actually died in my movie. People actually die because of Dick Cheney, and he doesn't allow you to see it"

Eli Roth, director of Hostel (2005)[1]

In Eli Roth's 2005 film *Hostel,* two American frat boys and an Icelander are let loose on an archane and sexually licentious Europe. Lured to a hostel in Bratislava, Slovakia by the prospect of nymphomaniac women who just "love Americans," the trio slowly discover they have booked themselves in as victims for a torture chamber where the wealthy live out their sadistic fantasies by creatively murdering innocent tourists. *Hostel* presents dark images of the flipside of capitalism; a world where the fall of communism has led not to the fruits of capitalist labour but instead plunged Eastern Europe into a terrifying trade where life is easily bought and sold. Part of an ultraviolent wave of splatter films seen as driving a 78% rise in domestic horror box office profits from 2003-2006,[2] *Hostel* controversially combined dystopian representations of capitalism with the detailed exposition of brutal violence. Made for a little over US$4million, *Hostel* opened at

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number one at the US and Canadian box offices to generate more than US$20 million in its opening weekend, pushing Disney's *The Chronicles of Narnia* out of the top spot.[3] As one of the smash hits of the splatter wave, *Hostel* was read as cementing the trend towards violent cinema evidenced by *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *Saw* (2004), *House of Wax* (2005), *The Devil's Rejects* (2005) and the Australian production *Wolf Creek* (2005). Dubbed "torture porn" by critics who highlighted the verisimilitude between the violent images leaked from Abu Ghraib and the torture of ordinary Americans in these films, this association mobilized a narrative that linked the rise in popularity of the splatter film to audience's unconscious fears of the "Global War on Terror". This discourse, repeated by journalists, critics and the industry itself, positioned the post-9/11 horror as an avatar for debates over the limits, use and justification for state violence.[4] However, if *Hostel*'s images could be seen as a critique of US imperialism, this critique was leveraged off the presentation of Slovakia as a lawless state. Featuring lines such as, "I hope bestiality is illegal in Amsterdam, because that girl's a fucking hog", *Hostel* refuses the subjective alignment that characterizes much of American cinema. In this sense, *Hostel* might be seen as an example of what Fredric Jameson calls a "cultural text" in that its importance lies in the way it generates antagonism and debate over the ideological assumptions inherent in shaping social discourse. This provocation in *Hostel* centers on the fusion of sex and imperialism through the figure of the "fucking American", providing an example of how politics circulate under postmodern culture.

I. Postmodern politics

The term "postmodern" is one that has occupied a controversial position within cultural studies, engendering intense debate over its origins and meaning. First emerging out of the fascination with modernity in art criticism of the 1870s before becoming a buzzword in architecture in the 1970s to describe the rejection of modernist aesthetics, postmodernism is often associated today with the collapse of Enlightenment discourses of teleological progress.[5] As an aesthetic style, theorists generally agree postmodern texts are those that exhibit a high degree of self-reflexivity, evasiveness towards ideological positioning, and the recycling of previous texts in a hybrid style.[6] As a philosophical position, postmodernism refers to texts that signal the collapse of grand metanarratives about the way we structure our world. While discussions on postmodernism reached their high point in the mid-1990s, the advent of terrorist attacks from abroad on American soil saw a resurgence in its importance as a theoretical concept.

As Philip Hammond argues, the term postmodernism widely entered the public lexicon following the events of 9/11.[7] The collapse of the Twin Towers, symbols of American progress, capitalism and modernity, was widely read by academia and critics as a reorganization of the distribution of global power. Declaring that he would "hunt down and punish" the terrorists, President Bush announced on the day of the attacks that the US would not distinguish between terrorists and the nations that harbour them.[8] Nine days later, the President announced in his address that the perpetrators behind the attacks were al-Qaeda, a renegade band of Muslim fundamentalists bankrolled by Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden. There were thousands of these terrorists in over 60 countries, he continued, adding that "every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists".[9] Accusing the Taliban, a Sunni sect who ruled Afghanistan, of providing a safe haven to bin Laden and his men, on September 20, 2001, the US invaded Afghanistan. Thus began the so-called 'Global War on Terror', a war that would eventually spiral out to include the 2003 US occupation of Iraq under false allegations of the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction. While the war on Afghanistan and Iraq could be seen as a continuation of US foreign policy post-World War II, the linkage of these occupations with a Global War on Terrorism signaled dramatic shifts both in the distribution of global power and the presentation of warfare. Both of these conditions are easily lent towards interpretation through a postmodern lens.

At a global level, the attacks of 9/11 were read as postmodern by many commentators in that they symbolized the collapse of the previous order. The balance of the world superpowers from 1945 till 1991 had been defined by the Cold War politics of an arms race between the US and the Soviet Union, characterized as an ideological struggle between capitalism and communism. Comparing the threat from al-Qaeda to World War Two and the Cold War, Bush announced that Afghanistan would be a "lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen".[10] The US began to lobby other countries for military, economic and moral support. Perhaps the most significant of its strategic alliances in this early period was with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who in volunteering military support and intelligence overturned more than half a century of hostile relations between the two nations.[11] Bush, together with the US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, advised concerned citizens through media channels that America was up against a formidable and faceless enemy that passed porously through national borders and was organized through the multinational establishment of terror training cells. The National Security Agency instructed citizens across the US that they were

under a high threat of terrorist attacks, disseminating information on how to respond to a terrorist attack, including the building of 'safe rooms' in their homes that could protect their family from a gas attack.[12] Like the paranoia of communism that epitomized the Cold War politics of McCarthyism of the 1940s and 50s, emphasis was placed on the vulnerability of an attack from within.

While the threat of terrorism stepped into the void left by the easing of Cold War tension, this new menace could not be as easily defined. Unlike the geographical and ethnic parameters that identified the nation state, terrorism was by definition the actions of individuals or a group acting independently. Domestically, government resources were directed to the surveillance of citizens, enabled by the establishment of anti-terror legislation that stripped the individual rights of citizens. Passed into law in October 2001, the *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act* of 2001 (dubbed the 'PATRIOT Act) allowed citizens to be detained indefinitely, tapped and the Government to collect information on their library borrowings. Defining terrorism so broadly that American animal rights activists have been prosecuted, the Act paved the way for the establishment of the Homeland Security Department.[13] Charged with the responsibility of collecting data about potential threats, by 2009 Homeland Security employed more than 200,000 people.[14] However, if the word 'terrorism' was defined loosely internally and could be found anywhere, its pursuit and eradication globally was articulated as having a clear target in the media: the Muslim world.

State and individual were conflated by the Bush administration till they were indistinguishable, propagating a narrative that positioned bin Laden and al-Qaeda as interchangeable with Afghanistan and later Iraq. The press line juxtaposed the rise in women's status in America with that of Afghanistan under Sharia law (despite the Reagan administration supporting and arming the similarly jihadi fundamentalists called the mujahedeen in the 1980s). A US conquest was equated in the American media with freedom for the Afghani citizens, a strategy that was repeated with Iraq. This humanitarian message was underscored in its official name: 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. The US positioned itself as the great liberator, who policed rogue nation states primarily for the wealth of their people and distinguished between citizens and insurgents in their flexing of military might. Palestinian scholar Edward Said argued that politicians and the media were drawing from the opposition between East and West to posit a 'Clash of Civilizations', which positioned Islamic culture as a fundamental threat to the West.[15]

However, the Bush administration was increasingly coming under at-

tack from intellectuals who drew attention to the emphasis on media spectacle in discourses on the war. In his 2002 work *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: 5 Essays on September 11 and related dates*, Slavoj Žižek drew attention to the parallels between disaster movies and the coverage of the war.[16] This view of the war as a mediated event disjoined from reality was also articulated by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, who argued in *The Spirit of Terrorism And Requiem for the Twin Towers* (2002) that the attacks should not be seen as a 'Clash of Civilizations' but as a response to globalization.[17] For Baudrillard, the 9/11 attacks could be read as an expression of the fragility of US economic imperialism; it was "truimphant globalization battling against itself".[18] Closer to home, Noam Chomsky asserted in his work *9/11* that it was the US itself who was the most powerful terrorist state.[19] Douglas Kellner continued the critique by asserting that Bush's attempt to 'eradicate evil from our world' was a step towards postmodern warfare, which in focusing on a politics of media spectacle was bound to backfire.[20] Pointing to the proliferation of alternative media, including the growth of the World Wide Web since 1992, Kellner highlights the growth of images of counter-spectacle (such as those of terrorist attacks and the peace marches). The result of such aggressive unilateralism on the behalf of the US would be a world threatened with "genocide and an endless spectacle of violence and destruction".[21] In contrast, conservative discourses pitted the failings of the US to protect its national borders as a direct result of the decline of nationalism in postmodern society, linking the development of this aesthetic to a growth in liberal politics.

II. Torture porn and the 'cultural text'

The period following 9/11 in the US, then, was one characterized by an increased assertion of national unity through the mainstream media as well as a corresponding movement that highlighted the problems with such unilateral policy. Initially, such plurality in opinion was not reflected in the mainstream media, which presented a monolithic discourse on the necessity of the war. In terms of news journalism, this was aided by the Bush administration's media strategy. This included the use of embedded journalists who were trained by and travelled with squadrons, and were restricted by their agreement with the state in their reporting; staged media events (such as Jessica Lynch's rescue or Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' gaffe); and the banning of images of the coffins of returned servicemen. An increase in military and media partnerships, such as former Motion Pictures Association of America President Jack Valenti's meeting with the Pentagon and pledge to support the war effort, initially contributed to a relatively high

level of approval for the war.[22] When Bush declared war on Afghanistan, his approval rating was at over 85%, a rating that dropped steadily as the War on Terror progressed.[23] These ratings made it difficult for the press to initially critique Bush without facing accusations of unpatriotic behaviour. While this changed as the wars progressed, there is evidence that to some extent political debate was displaced onto the reception of media texts. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this at work is the extraordinary Scripps/Ohio 2006 poll that revealed that over a third of the US population believed that the attacks of 9/11 had been plotted and executed by federal agents. [24] These discourses were not circulated in the mainstream media; rather, they were the result of the growth of conspiracy theory on the internet. If the war itself was postmodern, so indeed was its reception.

This movement towards cultural texts as a means of asserting and debating nationalism can be seen in the example of the splatter film. Briefly defined, these are films that feature high body counts, graphic displays of violence and dispense with the traditional conventions of Hollywood psychological narratives.[25] Shooting to prominence in the years from 2003 to 2006, the entry of the splatter film into the mainstream was read by many commentators as a significant shift in US culture. The splatter film had largely been a marginalized media form since its emergence in the 1960s, originally screening in grindhouse theatres and drive-ins before being driven underground by restrictions in distribution during the 'video nasty' era of the 1980s, where legislation was introduced that prosecuted distributors who circulated these films. As one of the most violent veins of US cinema, these films regularly featured dismemberment, disembowelment and decapitation. Films such as *House of 1000 Corpses, Saw, The Hills Have Eyes* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* were initially interpreted as paying homage to the original films in the wave, around the time of the release of *Hostel*, the reception of the splatter shifted to incorporate a discourse of the Global War on Terror. The genre was renamed 'torture porn' by David Edelstein in an influential February 2006 article for the *New York Times*.[26] Edelstein argued that the rise in splatter films could be read against a wider surge of representations of torture in film and television. If the splatter film had begun its resurgence as a Sixties throwback, by 2006, its reception was now being shaped by its relevance to contemporary politics.

By far the most important film in this wave in terms of catalyzing this shift in the interpretation of the splatter was Eli Roth's 2005 film *Hostel.* Following the story of two American frat-boys who embark on a hedonistic tour of Europe, like Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat* (2005), *Hostel*'s play upon anti-American sentiment abroad was met with a storm of controversy, generating national debate in the United States and discussion by a number of

governments internationally. This maelstrom largely centered on the representation of nationalism in the film, with the domestic response centering on a rejection of the film's images of US nationalism and internationally its affirmation of stereotypes Americans held of Eastern Europe. This controversy began a full seven months before the release of *Hostel* with director Eli Roth's appearance on Fox News' *Your World Today* in April 2005 with Neil Cavuto.[27] When Roth was asked why he thought a fifth of the films released in 2005 so far had fallen into the brutal subgenre of splatter, he replied, "Thanks to George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney we have this whole new wave of horror".[28] Speaking against a blue screen image of stills from the film featuring Americans wearing Abu-Ghraib-styled hoods and images of Paris Hilton cavorting in lingerie, Roth claimed that the swelling audience numbers could be attributed to a broader malaise towards the Bush administration's foreign policy (in particular the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq), botched handling of Hurricane Katrina, and increased security measures and surveillance of citizens.

The controversy over the release of *Hostel* was founded in the way it juxtaposed images of American nationalism with the global, in the process undermining the stability of these constructions. The ensuing debate after its release (which was still reaching its height a full two years after it hit the theatres due to the upcoming publicity for its sequel *Hostel II*) centered around the film's ability to function as a micropolitical sphere around which the boundaries of nationalism could be organized, while maintaining the sense of division and antagonism around the competing discourses in these imagined communities. Domestically, critics were initially divided as to whether the film could be seen as a satire of the politics of torture in the Global War on Terror or whether it satiated the voyeuristic desires of youth who were that way inclined.[29] Internationally, *Hostel*'s response was no less controversial. In Slovakia, the film became the centre of debate over fears that its representation of their culture might kill off tourism in the same way the 1978 release of prison film *Midnight Express* sustained a significant impact on Turkey's tourism. SDKÚ MP Tomáš Galbavý declared "all Slovaks should feel offended. This monstrosity that does not at all reflect reality ... [*Hostel*] damage[s] the good reputation of Slovakia".[30] Responding to these criticisms, Roth appeared on Slovak television to argue that the film was not intended to offend Slovakians, rather it was a critique of the way Americans view Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism ("only 12% of Americans have passports", he surmised).[31] Roth's public appeal went some way to quell unrest over the film, with former Slovak Minister of Culture Milan Knazko appearing as one of the heavies for Elite Hunting (the organization behind the murders) in *Hostel II.*

Much of *Hostel*'s divisiveness in its reception is derived from its denial of a stable subject position within the text. Although *Hostel* is littered with metonymic markers that encourage us to interrogate elements of contemporary culture, the text effaces the assertion of the primacy of a preferred reading on how this should be interpreted. That is, while the images of hooded victims in *Hostel* clearly hold symbolic reverence for the news images emerging of torture and abuse at US military prisons abroad, the text avoids any resolution on how these images should be read. Violence is positioned as a mobius strip within splatter films such as *Hostel* – following its inception there is no hope of its resolution; it provides both the point of destruction and the only way out. This denial of a preferred ideological stance leaves the politics of the film as ambiguous – deprived of their social context, it is unclear whether these images of torture are satirical or are there for the audience's voyeuristic enjoyment. This is reinforced at the level of the narrative through the establishment of the characters as anti-heroes in the first third of the film's exposition, where our American protagonists Josh and Paxton are positioned as misogynist, homophobic and ignorant of local custom in a series of interactions in brothels, nightclubs and a marijuana café. At this point the power dynamics of the film reverse and our consumers become the consumed. The hostel in Bratislava they are lured to functions as a front for the Elite Hunting organization, who recruit unwitting tourists to be sold on to consumers for torture and slaughter, the price on their heads determined on the basis of their nationality and gender. This reversal obfuscates subjective identification, as the audience is presented with characters that are far worse than the unlikeable protagonists and we witness the brutal torture inflicted on them. This complication of subjective enjoyment is further confused by *Hostel*'s generic allegiance to the splatter film, where emphasis shifts from the psychological suspense and delay of violence that characterizes much of contemporary horror to its anticipation. Violence in the splatter is an aesthetic style, with the frequent sequences of dismemberment, disembowelment and decapitation that punctuate these films the culmination of the triumph of special effects. *Hostel* was promoted precisely on this promise of onscreen graphic violence, with posters featuring a man having his tooth drilled and a woman's severed head. Like the cinematic predecessors in the 1960s that give rise to its treatment of violence, *Hostel* impedes a simple reading of its text and thus can be considered an example of a postmodern text. Reviews were split between those who argued *Hostel* epitomized the moral decline of youth within contemporary society, and those who felt that the film was a criticism of the Bush administration's approach to foreign policy.

While postmodernism has often been interpreted within cultural stud-

ies as a death of the political due to its fragmentation of cohesive ideological positions, the case of *Hostel*'s controversial reception signals that even texts lacking cohesive ideological positions can propel political movements. This process is perhaps best elaborated through the work of Fredric Jameson. Shooting to fame with the publication of his 1984 article "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in the *New Left Review*, Jameson injected discourses on postmodernism with the economic focus of Marxism.[32] Jameson argues that under the economic conditions of late capitalism, postmodernism becomes the dominant aesthetic mode for textual representation.[33] For Jameson, the 1970s mark a shift towards an intensification of capitalist structures of organization. The commercial becomes the matrix organizing the construction of public life, fusing art and commerce in popular discourse. We now communicate in and through commodities as they move to the centre of everyday life, eroding traditional notions of a public sphere. History is replaced in the text by nostalgia as cultural products from previous times are recycled in an endless, schizophrenic interplay of pastiche. Distinctions between high and low culture, the political and the commercial collapse as capitalist imperatives extend further and further into everyday life. This causes the proliferation and fragmentation of culture, which is now engaged in the cannibalization of previous eras in an affirmation of nostalgia. For Jameson, "the advanced capitalist societies today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm".[34]

However, for Jameson, postmodernism is not the death of the political within texts; rather it is a shift in the mode of its circulation. All texts are inherently political regardless of their perceived cultural weight, including those made under the economic conditions of late capitalism. Reflecting the social and historical praxis of their production, the text is always ideological, performing the function of "inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions".[35] Texts are always connected to the social, moving to the centre of social life during moments of "cultural revolution" when competing discourses antagonize debate over established social structures.[36] With its connotations of China in the 1960s, Jameson's notion of the cultural revolution implies that it is History that happens in the interstices before dominant groups cement and abstract these changes through the creation of nostalgic texts and discourses. Cultural revolutions are moments of transition, interstices unable to be translated through the limiting structures of language. The rise of postmodernism is therefore not associated with political dissolution as even in their fragmentation, postmodern texts can encourage the antagonism and struggle essential to creating debate. For Jameson, the shift in society from an emphasis on pro-

duction to one almost entirely focused on consumption means that debates shift to the reification of commodities. As Colin McCabe underscores in his introduction to *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and space in the global system*, this means that the commodity can now interfere in the sphere of production, producing images that temporarily jam the system and generate debate.[37] As with other Marxists, Jameson's notion of the cultural revolution is embedded with the desire for this debate to lead to social transformation to economic equality on a broader scale as he identifies class as the essential dialectic organising cultural expression. However, this utopianism is circumvented in his work through the qualification that true History is one of constant, evolving cultural revolution.[38] For Jameson, some texts are more open to multiple interpretations than this process of transformation. He terms these texts "cultural", of which *Hostel* can be seen as an example.[39]

III. Torture porn abroad

A large part of *Hostel*'s success and controversy was generated by the way it departed from the formula of the other splatter films, and it is this departure that led to a shift in the interpretation of these films. While the other splatters in the wave all followed the narrative trajectory of an apocalyptic collapse from within American culture, *Hostel* reterritorialized this fear of a collapse from within to show a world where to be American is to live under constant threat. The relationship between America and the world is positioned as hostile, a theme underlined in the first turning point of the film when the boys return from a brothel to find themselves locked out of a Dutch hostel. Calling out to the owner to be let in, the trio wake those in the neighbouring apartments, who respond with hostility to their presence. In a hail of bottles and abuse, one neighbour yells loudly "fucking Americans", drawing attention to Josh and Paxton's alien status in a foreign land. Saved from this abuse by a fellow Slovakian backpacker called Alex who lets them into the hostel via a fire escape, Alex greets Josh, Paxton and their Icelandic companion Oli with the phrase, "don't worry, not everyone wants to kill Americans". Alex tells them of a hostel in Bratislava filled with beautiful local women who just "love Americans". "They just hear your accent and want to fuck you", Alex explains, showing the boys images on his mobile phone of naked women draped all over him. As these are the images that eventually lead to our protagonists' tragic demise, the subtext of *Hostel* from this turning point is that everyone *does* indeed want to kill Americans.

This analogy between American economic superiority, sex and colonization is continued throughout *Hostel* as the power relationships reverse

and our consumers become the consumed. Josh's hesitant wander down the hallway in the brothel where the doorways reveal silhouetted figures in various sexual positions is mirrored in a pivotal sequence where Paxton discovers the torture chamber. Having pressured the girls who function as his honey trap to reveal the location of Josh, Natalya leads him to a seemingly deserted factory under the guise that it is an art gallery. As he charges down the empty hallway, Elite Hunting heavies emerge and drag him down the hallway to reveal open doors with people being tortured. Cursing Natalya for her betrayal, Paxton yells "You fucking bitch" at her. Natalya smiles. "I got a lot of money for you", she purrs, "That makes you my bitch". The parallels between these sequences in both mise-en-scene and cinematography encourage the associative link between American capitalism and human trafficking. This rejection of US culture is reinforced through the way that Paxton's escape is only facilitated by the denial of his American citizenship – he tells his torturer he is not American in fluent German buying time for him to fight back. In the paranoid world of *Hostel*, it is Americans who hold the highest price on their head at US$25,000 per kill. The "fucking American" then becomes a metaphor for the relationship between sex and economic imperialism, but also for a violent rejection of US nationalism from other cultures.

However, if *Hostel* draws from a critique of US economic imperialism, then this critique is one that comes at the cost of the introduction of stereotypes of Eastern Europe in the text. Slovakia is positioned as a failed state after the fall of Communism, frequented by human traffickers, prostitutes, murderous children and complicit locals. Slovakia is constructed through its allegiance to binary oppositions that juxtapose the safety of American civilization with the violence of the developing world. Shot in the Czech Republic as a substitute for filming in Slovakia, the film presents the latter state as stripped of modernity, automobiles and televisions are replaced with models from the 1950s and 60s to convey the notion of a region frozen in time. This is reinforced by a constant misrecognition of local knowledge within the film; the locals speak Czech or Russian rather than Slovak, and the tourist who lures them to their death tells them that there is so much "pussy [in Slovakia] since the War", in the process conflating Slovakia with other states in the region, such as Bosnia.

In Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism* (1995[1978]), he argues that these kinds of racialised representations are a result of colonizing processes.[40] Drawing from a litany of texts on Arab cultures, Said traces how anthropological, literary and cinematic images reflect the ideological motivations of the period of European expansionism, a time where Europe or European-derived powers grew to control 85% of the globe by 1914.[41]

Prompted by a colonizing worldview that saw Europe as superior due to its scientific Enlightenment, representations of the Orient were distorted through the lens of the Occident and constructed through their allegiance to binary oppositions of "civilized Europe". The East thus becomes exoticized and embedded with the anxieties of the West, with the images revealing little about the peoples under the microscope. The sexual hierarchies of Victorian England were opposed to the licentious sexuality of the colonized, the civilized to the savage, the human to the animal and so on. In this way, the image of the Orient holds little relevance to the actual conditions of these countries, rather functioning to displace repressed elements of western culture onto the East in a process that he refers to as "Othering".

Said's work was both influential and controversial; like Jameson, his insistence on dialectics in articulating the global politics of power was received by many as totalizing and therefore glossing over the specificities that form the basis of assertions of local difference. In recognizing these limitations, it is useful to juxtapose these critiques with the influence that Said's framework of Self versus Other has had on the discussions of nationalism. The positioning of localized knowledge against the entrenched horizon of western thought has formed a key backbone and dialectic that underwrites much of indigenous studies today. In this sense, Said's methodological framework is not limited in its application to works from this particular historical perspective and is fruitful to the way that processes of cultural imperialism work in many societies, highlighting the influence that western epistemologies have had on the way we construct and discuss nationalisms. For Said, the repetition of ideas in the first Gulf War that Arabs cannot fight is evidence of the way that America draws upon modes of Orientalism to legitimize its aggressive foreign policy in a discourse that binds acceptance of its economic imperialism with the transition towards a democratic society where the rights of individuals are recognized.[42] In Said's work, economic and cultural imperialism are positioned as yet another colonizing process.

I want to suggest that *Hostel*'s incorporation of Orientalist discourses in the text is complex, functioning to both affirm and deny dominant constructs of American nationalism. The release of *Hostel* during a time that saw the resurgence of Orientalist discourses as part of the Global War on Terror is one of the reasons for the film's success and controversy. The film works to challenge the notion of the "American dream" by positioning the US' wealth as the result of aggressive global geopolitics rather than the oft-repeated myth of the nation as a frontier with an egalitarian approach to equal rights. Affluence in *Hostel* is aligned with exploitation rather than morality or working hard, challenging some of the fundamental moral tenets

that Hollywood articulates repetitively. As Thom Anderson notes, while many contemporary films challenge the notion of the American Dream through an interrogation of the conclusions of such a vision (*American Beauty, Requiem for a Dream, The Truman Show*), very few films introduce the notion of class struggle into this examination.[43] When the notion of class has been introduced, it has often been met with resistance by the state itself – think for example of the prosecution of filmmakers who were perceived to have communist leanings by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the 1940s and 1950s. *Hostel*'s controversy lies in the way it foregrounds discourses on class and the construction of US nationalism in a much more explicit way than any of the other films in the post-9/11 splatter cycle. This ambiguous discourse in *Hostel* is founded in the way that it takes Orientalist binaries of America's place in the world and collapses them until there is *only* the Other.

IV. Perseus' paradox

This difference in the construction of *Hostel* and other films in the post-2003 splatter wave can be explained through its distinction in terms of its generic allegiance and form. *Hostel* draws much of its influence from an even smaller hybrid of the splatter subgenre: the Cannibal film. Even more marginalized than the splatter film, the Cannibal film emerges as a generic form in the 1970s and 1980s. Italian or Italian-American co-productions, these films were accompanied by a cycle of Zombie films set abroad and were generally targeted at American audiences. Set in locations exotic to American audiences, such as the Sahara Desert in the case of Jesus Franco's *Oasis of the Zombies* (1981), Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in *Mountain of the Cannibal Gods* (1978), and Matool, Southern India for Lucio Fulci's *Zombi II,* these films draw on the tension between First and Third worlds. In the Italian Cannibal and Zombie films, the collapse of society is catalyzed through the refusal to recognise indigenous knowledge and is positioned as the direct result of occupying indigenous space. Perhaps the most infamous and certainly the most controversial film of this wave, Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), provides a major influence in the construction of *Hostel*, so much so that Deodato appears as an Elite Hunting customer dissecting a body in the sequel. As these films set much of the generic precedents for the treatment of Orientalist binaries, I will trace some of the key characteristics and tropes of *Cannibal Holocaust* before returning to *Hostel.*

Like *Hostel, Cannibal Holocaust* is a complex film because it invokes what it critiques. *Cannibal Holocaust* follows the plight of a New York Uni-

versity Anthropology Professor Harald Monroe who takes a film crew over to the Amazonian rainforest to trace the whereabouts of a group of filmmakers who have not returned since leaving to make a documentary on a tribe of cannibals. Deep in the jungle, the group finally encounters the Yanomamo tribe they have been searching for, witnessing a brutal ceremony where a woman is raped with a stone and beaten to death over the head with it. After gaining the trust of the tribe, they discover the bones of the original film crew on display and manage to smuggle the rolls of film out of their belongings. Returning to New York, producers for the Pan American Broadcasting Company bar the Professor from accessing the footage. It is revealed that this concealment is deemed necessary because the dead filmmakers have based their career on staging fake battles between indigenous peoples around the world. As the rushes are revealed, we learn that the blood is not fake in these battles: the filmmakers had forced the villagers to perform denigrating sexual and genocidal acts on their own people at gunpoint. The Professor and the Pan American Broadcasting Company recoil in shock as they watch rushes of the gang rape and murder of a local girl while the only female filmmaker, Faye, pleads for them to stop. The male filmmakers then impale her on a stick and shift tense from sadists to anthropologists, filming the scene as if they just stumbled across a local custom so that they can edit out the footage later. When the Yanomamo tribe avenges the death of one of their own by killing Faye in a similar fashion, the men in the crew film it, and the rushes finish with the men being slaughtered as the film reel runs out. Professor Monroe and the executives of the Pan American Broadcasting Company are then drawn into a conversation on the relationship between violence, imperialism and voyeurism, before the executives vow to burn the film.

What makes *Hostel* and *Cannibal Holocaust* such controversial films is that this invocation is achieved through a sense of hyperrealism in terms of their cinematography. Part of *Cannibal Holocaust*'s punch in terms of its colonial critique is in the deployment of what Sergio Leone called a "hyperreal" style of violence.[44] Deodato incorporates *cinéma vérité* techniques in order to heighten the tension of the film, in the process obfuscating the boundaries between reality and fiction, a technique he learned in his training under neo-realist Roberto Rossellini.[45] Like other cinéma vérité films such as *The Battle of Algiers* (1996), the film blends elements of actual politics with their reconstruction. The competing tribes in *Cannibal Holocaust*, the Yanomamo and the Shamatari are actual tribes played by indigenous actors and the film is shot in the relatively inaccessible Leticia in Bogota, giving an element of realism to the film's location. In reality these tribes have little conflict, and it is only the Yanomamo who practice canni-

balism as a post-death rite.[46] The documentary style in *Cannibal Holocaust*, later poached for films such as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *Diary of the Dead* (2007), positions the viewer in the subjective viewpoint of the character behind the camera, promoting suture that conflicts against the otherwise difficult material. Like *Hostel,* Deodato incorporates allegorical material on contemporary politics, claiming that the inspiration for the journalistic style shown in the film stems from the voyeuristic sensationalism exhibited in the media coverage of the Red Brigade, an Italian group of Leftist extremists who killed 272 people in the period from 1970 and 1982.[47] However, the film also begins with a news segment that parodies the United States as the land of progress, highlighting the way that these Italian produced Zombie and Cannibal films also functioned to circulate a distinctly national based critique of US dominance at the same time as orienting their representations towards the American market.

Cannibal Holocaust's controversial realism is achieved partially through combining real violence with very realistic special effects: six animals are slaughtered or dissected in the course of the film. It is this blurring of the boundaries between the real and the represented that nearly destroyed Deodato's career. While the film made over US$2million upon its premiere in Italy and was initially received with critical acclaim, the film was withdrawn on the orders of the Italian Government on the tenth day of release and Deodato was put on trial for murdering his actors.[48] Eventually the charges were dropped when Deodato was able to prove that the actors were alive. However, the Government continued prosecution and Deodato served a short jail sentence for animal cruelty.[49] This response from the state is undoubtedly related to the way that the film positions a challenge to stable images of western hubris. The only character who consistently is positioned as sympathetic to the exploitation of the indigenous peoples is the anthropologist Professor Monroe, who provides a figure of identification in a film otherwise populated with antagonistic protagonists. However, the authority of Monroe is ultimately undermined in *Cannibal Holocaust* through processes of casting – our only image of stable western identification is played by Richard Kerman, who at the time was infamous as a porn star, appearing in over 100 X-rated films in the 1970s and 80s (his most notable role was in *Debbie Does Dallas*). Aimed at a more mainstream audience, *Hostel* draws from *Cannibal Holocaust* in terms of the way it draws upon Orientalist discourses, but rather than utilizing *cinéma vérité* techniques it draws from mainstream film conventions in its construction.

Hostel opens with all the cinematic cues of a teen film, contrasting with the dark glimpses of bloody instruments and a furnace being stoked in the opening sequence (images that we later learn are from the torture cham-

ber). Blaring rock music, bright lighting and lambent colours introduce Josh and Paxton and the upbeat atmosphere of their holiday through Europe. The sequence in the brothel is positioned as pure fantasy: blue lighting shows Josh wandering through a hallway that functions as a catalogue of contorted coitus, the bodies of people engaged in the act silhouetted through rice paper doors. In shifting from an atmosphere of hedonistic celebration in the first part of the film to the punishment in the second part of the film, *Hostel* plays on fans expectations of the transgression of social boundaries. As Jeffrey Sconce argues, fans of B films, which includes violent cinema such as these films, position themselves in knowledge and opposition to Hollywood conventions, a movement that he refers to as "paracinema" (Sconce, 1995: 371- 393).[50] The juxtaposition of metonymic markers of contemporary politics (as in the torture chair) with the hyperreal images of mainstream American cinema works within the text as a broader commentary on the way that hegemonic culture works to gloss over inequality, positioning difference in class status as the result of an individual choice rather than social positioning. This self-reflexivity is emphasised in the film through a series of cameos that highlight the role of popular culture in creating our perception of violence: Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* plays on the television at the hostel, Japanese yakuza film director Takashi Miike (whose film *Audition* can also be seen as an influence on *Hostel*) emerges as a happy customer from the torture chamber, and Roth chokes on his bong and laughs back at the camera in the marijuana café while Paxton remarks, "aren't there any fucking Dutch people in Amsterdam". Despite these elements of reflexivity within the text, *Hostel* – like *Cannibal Holocaust* – plays its subversion so straight that many reviewers dismissed Roth's deliberate confusion of geography, linguistics and invocation of a misogynist narrative as a result of ignorance. However, both films display such careful construction in the introduction of these elements that they cannot be dismissed as unintentional. Like Perseus needing to stare into his own reflective shield to slaughter the monster Medusa, *Hostel* and *Cannibal Holocaust* ask us to gaze through the looking glass at our relationship to other cultures before coming to conclusions.

V. Everyone is other, or, we are all Americans

As Middle Eastern studies scholar Ella Shohat argues, notions of Orientalism are intimately bound up with constructions of sexuality. Imperialist narratives embed what she calls the trope of "rescue" which "forms the crucial site of the battle over representation".[51] The domination and expansion of the West in Orientalist texts is justified by narratives that position western

liberation as an aspirational ideal. Thus Shohat argues "the figure of the Arab assassin/rapist, like that of the African cannibal, helps produce the narrative and ideological role of the Western liberator as integral to the colonial rescue fantasy... provid[ing] an indirect apologia for domination".[52] For Shohat, who draws from feminist apparatus theory, this "colonising gaze" is instituted at both the level of the camera and the construction of subjectivity within the text. The disavowal of the rescue trope in the Cannibal film is key to understanding the way that these films, while circulating Orientalist discourses, promote a violent affront to the stability of economic imperialism. At the end of *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Hostel*, the Other is unable to be colonised and western culture is positioned as a site of instability. Hence Monroe is unable to understand or to rescue the Yanomamo in *Cannibal Holocaust*. Indeed, the film hints that the brutal practices of rape and murder we witness upon Monroe's arrival are a reenactment of the western film crew's behavior or attempt at appeasing the Gods for their intrusion. In *Hostel,* the complicity of the locals in disposing of foreigners is positioned as the direct result of an unequal economy where life is cheap. This is highlighted in the film through the absence of industry or progress, the deserted factory that doubles as a torture chamber functioning as a synecdoche for the unequal division of wealth that aids Josh and Paxton for the first part of the film.

This overturning of the rescue trope is further emphasised in *Hostel* during Paxton's bungled rescue attempt. After escaping by donning the uniform of the rich patrons who torture, Paxton hears the screams of Yuki, a Japanese woman at the hostel who bonds with Paxton and Josh when her friend is reported to have run away with Oli. Responding, Paxton rushes in and kills her assassin, who he interrupts in the process of blow torching Yuki's eye, which now forms a lengthy protrusion from her face. Unsure what to do to ease her excruciating pain, Paxton picks up the scissors on the torturer's table to cut off the abject eye, causing her immense pain and pus to pour out of the wound. The pair then escape to the train station, where Yuki catches her reflection and then promptly commits suicide by throwing herself in front of a train. Paxton's attempt at rescue, then, is positioned within the text as inept. Despite killing Yuki's torturer, he becomes yet another purveyor of torture by completing the bizarre action of amputating her eyeball. Our surviving protagonist Paxton is positioned as insignificant in the face of broader economic imperatives – merely another American (a status that is underlined when he is promptly beheaded within the first 15 minutes of the sequel). This refusal of assimilation occurs at the price of the reinforcement of ethnic stereotypes, a movement that ultimately renders these texts complex. In the Cannibal film's nihilistic abandonment

of the restoration or improvement of social order that characterizes the climax of much of Classical Hollywood Cinema, they institute a critique of Western imperialism that refuses to take a single ideological position, leaving the text in flux as the trauma is left unresolved. If the violence in the world is positioned as a result of western imperialism, it is a problem that is unable to be resolved through western hubris. This is emphasized in the Cannibal film through western violence being positioned as exercised indiscriminately whereas the violence of the local peoples is meted in response to colonization. Thus the violence of the Yanomamo in *Cannibal Holocaust* is situated as stemming from the invasion of the film crew, driven by the profit motives of commercial television, or on another level, from western presence itself. In *Hostel* this is linked to American economic imperialism and the unfettered commodification of aspects of human life as another form of capital that can then circulate on the market.

Hostel, then, is a film that has a complicated relationship to the gaze. Subjective identification as well as notions of stable nationalisms are constantly undermined within the text. This can be seen in the way that the traditional alignment of the camera's gaze with the lead protagonist is frustrated within the text. Significantly, the camera aligns with Josh during the fantasy sex sequence, the only one of the trio who is positioned as impotent through his inability to pick up women or have sex with a prostitute. Josh wanders the corridor awkwardly as his friends participate in sexual orgies. Rejected by local women at the club and emasculated for wearing an unfashionable "fanny pack" (a wallet around the waist used by tourists to protect their money from theft), Josh is further ostracised through his non-participation in this sequence and therefore his inability to assimilate with the masculine world. Clearly uncomfortable, Josh is positioned as naive when he hears a slapping sound and cries, only to open the door to find a bondage and discipline chamber. When peer-pressured into a room with a prostitute by his friends, the camera notably departs from Josh. A long shot shows his would-be lover offering herself to him in lingerie and a feather boa. As she turns away from him to remove her brassiere, the camera's identification shifts from Josh to the prostitute, and we are shown a point-of-view shot from her perspective of the empty hallway, signifying that Josh has fled. This notion that it is the audience who are equally voyeuristic as the camera mimics the gaze of our anti-hero protagonists, glancing down at the administrator's breasts as they check into the hostel in Bratislava. Identification is constantly complicated in subjective alignment – Roth performs what he refers to as a Hitchcock-styled *Psycho* switch when lead protagonist Josh, who has been positioned as the most sympathetic character out of the trio, is dispensed with only a third of the way through the film, forcing

audiences to attempt to switch identification to Paxton.[53] In a further complication of this identification, Paxton only manages to buy time to escape from the torture chamber by speaking in German and claiming that he is not an American (a claim that due to actor Jay Hernandez' status as a Mexican-American further complicates notions of stable nationalism within the text by challenging the notions of stable borders). If *Hostel* is about audiences looking at torture, the gaze in this film is continually complicated; a frustration that occurs at the level of nationalism.

Read through this lens, the immense popularity of *Hostel* as a text can be seen as founded in the way its constant reversals tap into wider discourses on America's place in the world. With the constant undermining of nationalism within the text *Hostel* can be considered as an example of postmodern nationalism, in that constructions of America are always superseded by notions of the global within the text. It is precisely this decentering of the subject that provokes controversy and allows for the text to function as a micropolitical sphere where debates over the limits of nationalism can be played out. The timing of *Hostel*'s release coincided with a broader ideological crisis in America's positioning, that of the emergence of a counterbalance to the US' role as global superpower through the imposition of a new threat of terrorism which could crumble the very symbolic structures that represent this dominance. As Jean-Marie Columbani declared for *Le Monde* in an editorial piece the day after the attacks, in this moment "we are all Americans", drawing attention to the way that the rearrangement of global geopolitics following 9/11 would affect us all.[54] *Hostel* then might be seen as utopian in spite of its very nihilistic themes and its decentering of traditional Hollywood subjectivity: in representing a world where US hegemony is usurped by its effects, it hints towards the construction of a new nationalism that incorporates class equality on a global scale.

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NOTES

[1] Andrew O'Hehir, "Beyond the Multiplex", *Salon.com,* 5 January 2006, date of access: 12 January 2006, http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2006/01/05/btm/index.html.

[2] David Lieberman, "Horror Genre Rises From the Dead – Again", *USA Today*, 25 October 2006, date of access: 14 January 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/money/media/2006-10-25-horror-usat_x.htm.

[3] Mary Egan, "Eli Roth Makes Box Office Gross – Literally", *Forbes.com*, 14 June 2007, date of access: 18 February 2009, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19231135/.

[4] For example, former Director of the Psychoanalytic Association of New York Charles Goodstein argued that the popularity of the splatter film was founded in the way it provided a cathartic release for audiences from television news images featuring the Global War on Terror. See "US Horror Films Boom Amid War and Terror", *The Dominion Post*, 4 May 2005.

[5] The first use of the term is allegedly in John Watkins Chapman's criticism of French Impressionism. See the following for discussions of postmodernism as an aesthetic form: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Jos de Mul, *Romantic Desire in (Post)Modern Art and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); and Iain Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journeys in Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Philip Hammond, *Media, War and Postmodernity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

[8] "Transcript of George Bush's address, September 21, 2001", *CNN*, date of access: 21 April 2006, http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Vladimir Putin, Washington's Pal?", *Business Week*, October 8 2001, date of access: 6 January 2007, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/01_41/b3752726.htm.

[12] The suggestion of such ultimately futile strategies by the National Security Agency could be seen as a response to public pressure. Within two weeks of the attacks, gas masks had sold out across much of North America and the waiting lists were weeks long (David Arnold, "Fear of Biological, Chemical Warfare Spurs Run on Gas Masks", *Boston Globe,* 25 September 2001).

[13] See for example Ann Fagan Ginger's *Challenging US Human Rights Violations Since 9/11* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005) 150.

[14] See Audrey Hudson, "Homeland Security: Help is Needed on the US Border", *Washington Post,* February 26 2009, date of access: February 29 2009, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/26/napolitano-urges-war-on-mexican-drug-violence/.

[15] Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation,* October 4 2001, date of access: October 5 2001, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011022/said.

[16] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: 5 Essays on September 11 and related dates* (London; New York: Verso, 2002).

[17] Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism And Requiem for the Twin Towers* (London; New York, Verso, 2002).

[18] Ibid, 11.

[19] Noam Chomsky, *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories, 2001).

[20] Douglas Kellner, *9/11, Spectacles of Terror, and Media Manipulation: A Critique of Jihadist and Bush Media Politics*, date of access: 26 May 2009, http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/.

[21] Ibid, 22.

[22] See Dana Calvo, "Hollywood Signs on to Support War Effort", *The Daily Press,* November 12 2001, date of access: 25 March 2009, http://www.dailypress.com/entertainment/movies/sns-worldtrade-hollywood-lat,0,223666.story. As a former advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson on the Vietnam War, Valenti's involvement was seen as crucial in rallying the industry together.

[23] Stephen Robinson, "Bush Ready to Widen War on Terrorism", *Daily Telegraph,* 23 November 2001, date of access: 1 November 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1363265/Bush-ready-to-widen-war-against-terrorism.html.

[24] Steve Hammons, "Poll on 9/11 Attacks Show Many Americans Have Suspicions", *American Chronicle*, 4 August 2006, date of access: 5 August 2006, http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/12137.

[25] There is much confusion over the definition of the genre within academic criticism, as authors tend to conflate the splatter with the slasher in terms of its characteristics. While the slasher's precursors are the psychological thrillers *Psycho* (1960) and *Peeping Tom* (1960), the splatter emerges in the 1960s as a distinct generic form through the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis. Indeed, as Michael Arnzen notes, "without Lewis' groundbreaking direction, without the bravura antitechnique, without the fool's courage to jettison all narrative essentials, it is likely the horror film would still be wedded to essential story structures that underpin each and every genre in the mainstream corpus" (Jonathan Crane, "Scraping Bottom: Splatter and the Herschell Gordon Lewis oeuvre," *The Horror Film,* edited by Stephen Prince, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004, 160).

[26] David Edelstein, "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn, *The New York Times,* February 6 2006.

[27] *Your World Today*, 21 April 2005.

[28] *Your World Today*, 21 April 2005.

[29] See for example Edelstein (2006); also Nathan Lee, "Movie Review: Hostel (2005)", *The New York Times,* 6 January 2006.

[30] "Slovakia Angered by Horror Film", *BBC News,* 27 February 2006, date of access: 1 March 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4754744.stm.

[31] Daniel Epstein, "Hostel Director Eli Roth Checks in for a Really Scary Chat", *Really Scary,* (n.d.), date of access: 1 April 2009, http://www.reallyscary.com/interview.asp.

[32] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review* 146 (1984).

[33] It is vital to note here that while Jameson resists periodicization as a homogenisa-

tion of heterogenous events, he argues that in the 1970s postmodernism becomes a cultural dominant. Jameson's reading therefore accounts for the use of the term earlier by positioning postmodernism as a reaction to capitalism that can exist simultaneously alongside modernist texts.

[34] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" 65.

[35] Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 75.

[36] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 95.

[37] Colin McCabe, "Preface" in Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, 75.

[38] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act,* 95-8.

[39] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1990) 28.

[40] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. (London: Penguin, 1995[1978]).

[41] Mazen Labban, *Space, Oil and Capital* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2008).

[42] Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient,* 284-328.

[43] Thom Anderson, "Red Hollywood" in *"Un-American" Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, ed Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale and Brian Neve (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007) 258-260.

[44] Leone expressed this in a letter to Deodato after *Cannibal Holocaust*'s release. See Jay Slater and Nick Alexander, *Eaten Alive: Italian Cannibal and Zombie Movies* (New Jersey: Plexus, 2002) 108.

[45] Chas Balun, *Beyond Horror Holocaust: A Deeper Shade of Red.* (Florida: Fantasma Books, 2003) 59.

[46] It is worth noting that the themes of violence and sex dealt with in the film are ones that are prevalent in Yanomamo cosmology, which positions the tribe as the descendents of the First People, who through cannibalism, rape and revenge give birth to the Fierce People that now live today. Interestingly, the most controversial image in the film of a woman impaled on a pole through her genitals and mouth references a Yanomamo originary tale where a First Person is raped by two men, turning her vagina into a mouth. She is still said to occupy large rivers and lakes to this day. The Yanomamo consequently use the same word for eating and having sex.

[47] Mike Quarles, *Down and Dirty: Hollywood's Exploitation Filmmakers and Their Movies* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2001) 183.

[48] Ruggero Deodato (interviewee), *In the Jungle: The Making of Cannibal Holocaust* (documentary, Italy: Alan Young Pictures, 2003).

[49] Balun, *Beyond Horror Holocaust: A Deeper Shade of Red,* 59.

[50] Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style", *Screen* 36, 4 (winter 1995) 371-93.

[51] Ella Shohat, “Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema” in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,* ed Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 39.

[52] Shohat, *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,* 39.

[53] Eli Roth in the DVD commentary with Quentin Tarantino for *Hostel* (2005).

[54] Jean-Marie Columbani, “We Are All Americans”, *Le Monde,* 12 September 2001.