NEGOTIATING THE NON-NARRATIVE, AESTHETIC AND EROTIC IN NEW EXTREME GORE.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the economic and aesthetic elements of New Extreme Gore films produced in the 2000s. The thesis seeks to evaluate film in terms of its aesthetic project rather than a traditional reading of horror as a cathartic genre. The aesthetic project of these films manifests in terms of an erotic and visually constructed affective experience. It examines the films from a thick descriptive and scene analysis methodology in order to express the aesthetic over narrative elements of the films. The thesis is organized in terms of the economic location of the New Extreme Gore films in terms of the film industry at large. It then negotiates a move to define and analyze the aesthetic and stylistic elements of the images of bodily destruction and gore present in these productions. Finally, to consider the erotic manifestations of New Extreme Gore it explores the relationship between the real and the artificial in horror and hardcore pornography. New Extreme Gore operates in terms of a kind of aesthetic, gore-driven pornography. Further, the films in question are inherently tied to their economic circumstances as a result of the significant visual effects technology and the unstable financial success of hyper-violent films. The method of the thesis seeks to explore the relationship between language, cinema as a visual form and the elements of the inexpressible that appear in the scenes of torture.
and pain that characterize these films. Overall, the project of the thesis is one of questioning the necessity of narrative value to film studies and the potentiality of non-linguistic expression through editing, cinematography and style.
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INTRODUCTION

The sound track is little more than low buzz, the screen is completely black. Suddenly a fuzzy opening appears. It appears to be a point of view shot from an unseen character, presumably with a bag over their head. You can hear his labored breathing as you begin to see around the space. It is a dark warehouse, a dingy, industrial space. The shot moves with the movements of the character's gaze, visually constructing the environment - a broken mirror, a dim, industrial light and finally a workbench covered with metal tools: pliers, wrenches, tools both medical and mechanical. Frantically the camera moves, more tools, a drill, goggles hung from a nail in the wall, a large, filthy fluorescent light. It casts a dim green glow on the dank space. The gaze moves back and forth, the breathing rattling out of the lungs. Suddenly, the sound of a heavy door moves in the darkness, the large metal door, cracks open and a figure moves into view. You can't see the figure's entire body, just his midsection and lower jaw. As the figure enters you see his entire body, clothing somewhere between a butcher and surgeon. Heavy black boots, rubber gloves, a long, butcher's leather apron, a surgeon's cap and medical mask - little more than his eyes peering from the clothing. The breathing becomes more labored as the figure approaches; his light blue eyes seem curious and excited. The sound of his boots echo in the small space. Finally, the figure, the man reaches towards the camera, pulls the bag from the other character's head. For the first time the camera angle shifts, and you are allowed to see the whose gaze you've been sharing. He is a young man, bare shouldered, disheveled, his breathing still rattling in his chest, making barely intelligible questions. Finally, amid frantic breaths, he manages to say, "Who are you?" to the man in the room.
Beyond the expected experience of being scared while watching a horror film and intertwined with the affective results of the horror film resides the question of how visual articulations of pain, torture and suffering operate on screen. The aesthetic construction behind scenes of incredibly violent, shocking visual content opens up a space in the horror genre where formal and visual elements are able to transcend narrative content and operate purely through visual affect. The idea that there is an element of power and purpose in the carefully constructed representations of torture attempts to examine the gore film beyond shock and instead as an aesthetic project. The image of the mangled body transcends the narrative of the media and enters a space of pure visual affect.

In beginning a project that is deeply invested in extremely violent, bloody, disturbing and unusual film, there is always the question of enjoyment. Cinema has long been a thing of pleasure, positioning the viewer to the greatest advantage of a complicated, though enjoyable experience. The new wave of gore films create trouble for the notion of enjoyable cinema. They do so not through content, as the documentary genre is capable of, but instead through content carefully managed through aesthetics. The pleasure of the gore film is fundamentally generic pleasure, one which emerges when the film delivers the visual material the audience desires and expects, regardless of its graphic or gratuitous nature, as Altman defines “generic pleasure” where the film reaches the “generic crossroads” (Altman 145) and moves in the direction the audience expects. In the case of the New Extreme Gore film this is in the direction of destruction.
In March of 2011 news emerged that Angel Sala, the Director of the Sitges Film Festival, based in Barcelona, was charged with child pornography as a result of including *A Serbian Film* (2009, Srdan Spasojevic) in the selection for the festival in October 2010. The issue that led to the accusations was whether minors where involved in the production of the film, and whether minors had the potential of being exposed to the film during the screening. These issues create a space where the content of a film intersects with a wider cultural and audience response, and how these factors affect the film’s availability. When considering the motivating elements behind this project, the issue of why write about difficult, often deeply troubling films arises. The problems that arose from Sitges raise questions of why and how films such as *A Serbian Film* are consumed. This incident also raises the question of where the boundaries lie in how the gore film is constructed and consumed. In the weeks following the initial accusations of Salas, there was considerable outcry and attention paid to the situation by the greater film and horror community.

It emerged as an issue of censorship, of whether a film should be condemned and questioned based on content that may be difficult. While the vast majority of responses to *A Serbian Film* have been negative, the desire to see any film screened regardless of content emerges as positive. As I began this project, many months prior to the issues surrounding Sala, my motivation was unclear. However, in light of an opportunity to think about hyper-violent media in context with greater viewing practices the motivations of the project come into focus. Films such as *A Serbian Film* represent a kind of media that skirts the very boundaries of social acceptability and yet can be passionately defended, regardless of content. The problems that *A Serbian Film* presents are those that straddle the line between offensive content and an
unmanageable vision. The emergence of this particular incident demonstrates a cultural moment where the stylistic content of horror, specifically in extremely violent horror becomes important and relevant.

What this thesis intends to do is firstly, to examine the ways in which the economics of the film industry shapes the production of gore films, particularly in the case of the franchise and in turn how financial success effects their reception. The economic apparatus is highly visible because of the presence of traditional and digital body effects. Secondly, to move toward defining graphic torture as an aesthetic element in film, one that complicates notions of violence, and visual representations of blood, flesh, pain, bodies and torture as carefully constructed aesthetic elements. Finally, this thesis attempts to explore and rationalize the relationship between the violent and the sexual, which emerges in the form and aesthetic style of these particular films. Furthermore, to consider the location of the films in terms of the greater horror industry as a key factor in their negotiation of the erotic and the pornographic.

Watching bodies being destroyed and tortured is not unusual. Humanity has a rich and varied history of conceptualizing suffering as entertainment. The public have often gathered to watch bodies being eviscerated by various creative and diabolical methods. The watching of suffering is not new. Crowds would gather in town squares to watch the burning of heretics and witches throughout Europe during the medieval period, as they would later gather in Paris during the Reign of Terror to watch the guillotine at work. Even through the turn of the century and beyond, a lynching was a public event in the United States. While today in Western countries there are very few opportunities to watch public displays of bodily agony and the resulting deaths, and certainly none which are socially or morally sanctioned. The closest the public is
able to get is the death by lethal injection, which by its very construction maintains the external integrity of the body. However, vestiges of this practice remain in the numerous opportunities to indulge in the illusion of suffering by way of the cinema and more specifically gore and torture films.

Since the early 2000’s there has been a resurgence of extremely violent films, focused on themes and visuals involving graphic, bloody scenes of torture, cruelty, sexual violence and various other manifestations of bodily viscera. Perhaps the most notable early instances of these films are Gaspar Noé’s Irreversible (2002) and Alexandre Aja’s High Tension (2003). While the majority of these films have been produced in the United States, there have been significant and notable contributions produced Internationally, some of the most effective of which are produced in France. The emergence of New French Extremism and what has been termed "torture porn" in the US represent a unusual and interesting kind of cinema that reworks elements of the traditional horror film, in that they undo notions of narrative as a governing construct and places emphasis on the aesthetic work of cinematography, editing, sound and visual effects. While each of the films I have chosen to examine is different, and while they are not all clearly defined horror films, they do operate within the genre, and certainly the community surrounding horror media. The key films discussed in this thesis are American, French and Eastern European. By examining both US and International productions, as well as productions of varying budgets, success and infamy I intend to put them in conversation with each other and the horror genre at large. While also considering the notions of production and conventional aesthetics of film. The US films I've chosen are Saw (2004 - 2010, James Wan and Leigh Whanell), and Hostel (2005, 2007, Eli Roth). While both Saw and Hostel's first installments are impressive visualizations of
New Extreme Gore, the franchises which have emerged around these films make a more compelling argument. The French films are: *Irreversible* (2002, Gaspar Noé) and *Martyrs* (2008, Pascal Laugier), in addition to these I've also considered *A Serbian Film*. The New Extreme Gore film is not constructed like other horror films. Rather than being frightening, the content and images are troubling, shocking, and excessive. They are more abject than thrilling. Seemingly dwelling in a space between the highly popular, violent Slasher of the 1980’s such as John Carpenter’s *Halloween* and the splatter films of the 1970’s. It is precisely this difference that allows the New Extreme Gore film to be stylistically interesting, challenging and innovative in terms of aesthetics and the work of special effects.

The motivation and rationale behind the horror film’s function appears in three approaches: the psychological, the social and the aesthetic. A psychological take on horror media is based on the effect of the material on the individual experience. The theory perceives horror as a cathartic release, exorcising the internalized bestial subconscious of the viewer. The social perspective regards horror media as a grand metaphor. Invariably as a mechanism to negotiate complex social issues through symbolic expression. Finally, the aesthetic perception on horror traditionally identifies pleasure the experience of fear. I would argue that New Extreme Gore can operate and be understood through each of these perspectives, but also has the potential to undo them.

This thesis makes extensive use of Elaine Scarry's "The Body In Pain" in the rationalization of these visual manifestations of agony as a rethinking of pain as a point in the breakdown of language. By analyzing the use of dialog and sound alongside scenes of abject and horrifying violence as a creative expression of the inexpressible. As well as the cinematographic
construction of the gore film as an aesthetic space which allows through visual representation of suffering, the departure from narrative and the visual emphasis on style and form. In terms of economics, the New Extreme Gore films can be read through the notions of uncertainty and its hold on the popular film industry in Arthur De Vany's "Film Economics". The horror film and specifically the New Gore films serve as examples of American cinema, which continuously affirm the essential nature of its economic context. It also expresses the fundamental importance of the economic apparatus of the film industry in contextualizing and exploring the production and development of this sub genre in relation to the horror genre, as well as in relation to the financial motivation surrounding the production of perceived "difficult" films.

I am addressing these new manifestations of hyper-violent, bodily horror in relation to Linda William's analysis of the artificial nature of horror compared to the reality of pornography. In "Hard Core", William's discusses the 1976 film, Snuff and then ensuing controversy surrounding the "reality" of it (Williams 189). In using this as an entry point into the exploration of an aesthetic argument surrounding the relationship between hardcore artificial violence in New Gore and hardcore real sex in violent pornography as rationalization of the pleasure of the gore film. Finally, I want to move toward rationalizing torture and bodily destruction as an ultimately erotic aesthetic. In doing so Bataille's "Tears of Eros" and "Eroticism: Death and Sensuality" emerge as key texts in thinking about representations of the body as a site of horror and the erotic, as well as the peculiarities that are present being of the nature of visual artistic objects.

The Naming of Films:
While the term "torture porn" has become an acceptable and popular term to describe films of this sub genre. However, in order to avoid sensationalism, it is essential to unpack the term thoroughly. There are similarities between these gore films and pornography. The gore film makes use of similar structure, form and cinematography, but instead of sex, the product is violence. It becomes violence depicted on screen as if it were sex. However, in many of the New Gore films the violence sexually charged and operates similarly to BDSM and fetish pornography. However, it is the negative associations with the word "porn" that come into play here. The continued assumptions that media objects labeled as “porn” regardless of sexual content will always be considered gratuitous and low culture. However, it is more important to consider the nature of the pornographic and the explicit and the affective intent of those elements. If one is willing to go along with describing these films as a kind of pornography, then a comment is being made about their intent. While horror films may have physical effects on viewers, they are not always intended. The intent of the sexually explicit pornographic film is one of physicality, and it is this physicality that carries over to the expression of violence in New Gore. It is shot, edited and visually curated in order to invoke physical responses from viewers. It is this relationship which renders the term “torture porn” useful. Furthermore, while torture is frequently an element of these films and while it does play an important part, there is often more than torture occurring. Deeming the films “torture films” again, is reductive and fails to take into consideration the very specific, process-driven nature of torture. While I personally find the term "torture porn" appealing and impressive in its range of potential meanings, it falls in with the various amusing monikers for these recent productions, such as "gorn" and "carnography" and while being catchy is not a specific enough term to adequately refer to these productions.
However, I do not intend to refer to the films in this work as “torture porn” in an effort to distinguish between artificial, horror sub-genre productions (gore) and sexually explicit adult films (porn). While gore films have been a part of the horror genre since the development of 1970's splatter and exploitation gore, the particular films I am engaging with are tonally and stylistically different, and thus referring to them simply as "gore" is insufficient, especially considering the fact that gore films of the traditional ilk continue to be made and horror films are often gory without being expressly gore.

Fortunately, the French productions have been categorized as "New French Extremism" allowing for a different set of vocabulary to describe stylistically similar films. However, the American productions have been named and renamed and never so clearly, while "torture porn" is a popular term it fails to make reference to the rich horror history which spawn these films as well as emerging from moral criticism of them. As a result of this, I intend to refer to the American productions as New Gore, allowing them to refer to the traditional models of gore films as well as orienting them in terms of their historical location. Similarly, I will refer to the French productions as New French Extremism, thus allowing them to maintain their space in the wider context of French cinema and extreme cinema. Collectively, I intend to refer to these films as New Extreme Gore.

**Defining Torture and Gore:**

It is the stylistic presence of the act of torture that separates New Extreme Gore from the traditional notions of the horror genre. Horror films often focus on the fear of death and dying. Murderers, serial killers, the undead and the walking dead have all played significant roles in the development of the genre. The deaths in mainstream horror films are important, but from a
narrative perspective. The difference emerges in the location of the victim: in the conventional horror film there is the element of chase, the hope (for the identified viewer) that the victim might overpower her killer, might not run up the stairs and instead get out of the front door and find help - films punctuated by the constant potential for survival. Mainstream horror perpetually poses the question of *if* a character will die. In the New Extreme Gore film, the question shifts toward, when and how a character will die. The work of torture on screen is not concerned with killing, but in the process of suffering.

In much of the horror genre death serves as a fundamental element of the narrative, working on the main characters and pushing toward the conclusion, in the New Extreme Gore film death serves as a punctuation point. If the pleasure of the film comes from the watching of suffering, then death acts as a release point, when the scene must end because the character is no longer in any way useful because they can longer suffer. While it is possible to consider all horror films to be possessed of a sense of perpetual propulsion toward inevitable deaths, it is the manner of dying that becomes interesting in the torture film. The body is the site of interest, and it is the processes of physical suffering through bodily destruction that provides the entertainment and the constant knowledge that there is no other end than the inevitable death. In the teen Slasher film the plot is motivated by the character's struggle for survival in the face of the seemingly indestructible monster, the torture film's plot enacted on the flesh of each individual as they are deconstructed.

In thinking these films as manifestations of torture as an enacted process on the bodies of characters, it becomes important to define what exactly constitutes torture. The word emerges from late-Latin (*torquere* meaning to twist) through French (*tortura* meaning twisting, torment).
The significance of the definition emerges from "the action or practice". What I consider to be fundamental to the creation of New Extreme Gore through torture is the difference between torture as an action, an ongoing process laden with elements of exchange and feedback and death. There is something quite different from the dynamic of the killer kills and the victim dies in the perpetual process of possibly dying in a torture film. Indeed, no one need die at all. Death is an infinite moment, both in reality and in narrative, while torture has the potential to be an unending and ongoing process, a perpetual twisting, a perpetual torment. It is this unique intricacy of torture that enables the New Extreme Gore film to transcend the conventional horror film and to enter the space of a constructed and process driven system of suffering that is not dependent on death but instead exerts its narrative release through the continued expression of pain.

**Method:**

Throughout this thesis I make use of thickly descriptive scene analysis as a method illustrating the stylistic impact of the films. This is motivated by the goal of having the aesthetic content of the scenes work as detailed spaces of gore construction. By working through the cinematic material, I intend to think about subversive and violent media as operating beyond narrative in terms of an aesthetic presence of extreme violence. However, a hallmark of New Extreme Gore is the reality that many of the films are deemed unwatchable. Either this is due to content or because when faced with scenes of gore, viewers tend to actually look away. While these film visualizations of abjection and suffering are all entirely artificial, they are often the pinnacle of technological development in visual effects and as a result are very realistic. Even when the scenes work actively against biology and physics, bodies continue to perform when
realistically they wouldn’t. New Extreme Gore (and other horror sub-genres) is considered subversive and challenging because not everyone wants to or even can stomach watching bodies being eviscerated. I argue that the aesthetics of this kind of gore are so affective and torture is something so rooted in our internalized imaginations of the body and of pain that the scenes from these films can be explored in terms of analysis of their aesthetic content, rather than through actual viewing. It is, at its core, an attempt to make available analysis regardless of exposure to the films themselves.

Furthermore, the chief methodology of this work is scene analysis. Entering into the texts through rich and vibrant establishment and description of cinematography, sound, color and mise en scène and thus creating a space where the actual material of these productions is able to articulate itself aesthetically. Due to the fact that I maintain that a non-narrative perspective is most useful for these films, the scenes can be dislocated from the plot and examined as individual objects, governed by a stylistic logic rather than narrative logic.

**Historical Context:**

New Extreme Gore emerges from the horror genre, specifically from what Cherry describes as “exploitation cinema, video nasties and other forms of explicitly violent films” (Cherry 6). Films that were initially produced in the 1970’s, such as *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and *I Spit On Your Grave* (1978). Prior to the American films of the 1970’s, the visual, pleasurable depiction of bodily mutilation can be connected to the French theatre, Le Theatre Di Grand-Guignol. Poplar at the turn of the century and through the Second World War, Grand Guignol performances comprised simple story lines punctuated with scenes of simulations of extreme violence, cannibalism, beheading, mutilation and sadism. The fact that Grand Guignol
and the emergence of theatrical gore originates in France is not to be ignored. The often graphic, potentially erotic nature of violence in French theatrical and literary history pulls together themes of violence, torture and sexuality, perhaps most notably in the words of the Marquis de Sade and George Bataille. This established aesthetic provides a logical backdrop for the development of New French Extremism. Simultaneously, these elements play a significant role as a steppingstone in the development of gore media as a whole.

Other sub-genres of horror that offer possible points of origin for New Extreme Gore are Slashers\(^a\) and “Body horror, splatter and gore films” (Cherry 6). While films in both sub-genres contain extreme examples of violence, the New Extreme Gore films are tonally and stylistically different. Regardless, there are films produced in the 1970’s by Herschell Gordon Lewis, widely considered today as “gore films” which serve as a blueprint for the aesthetic construction of New Extreme Gore. Lewis, the self-described, “godfather of gore” produced and directed a considerable number of extremely violent, bloody films from 1960 to 1972, establishing a defined aesthetic for gore and exploitation cinema. Films such as Blood Feast (1963) and 2000 Maniacs (1964)\(^b\) established the possibilities for the potential of the gore genre, by imbuing films with considerable amounts of blood and guts and sense of fearless taboo breaking. The films focus on bodily violence and do through narratives including cannibalism. The combination of social and moral taboo, with visual representations of grotesque bodily destruction, Blood Feast particularly stands out as a key moment in the development of the sub-genre.

\(^a\) Examples of relevant films would be The Texas Chain Saw Massacre (1974) and Halloween (1978) (Cherry, 6).
\(^b\) 2000 Maniacs was remade in 2005 as 2001 Maniacs, starring Robert Englund of the Nightmare on Elm St. franchise.]
As the often over the top and kitschy splatter and exploitation films were gaining popularity in the US, the always comparatively small French horror industry was being readily defined as a space available and willing to produce challenging and often gory films. Georges Franju's *400 Blows* (1959) and *Eyes Without a Face* (1960) form the backbone of what can be considered the original French Extreme cinema. These originating films are where the stylistically distinct elements of French horror cinema emerge. Though not usually as bloody as American films, the French films experimented with cinematography and sound, making use of color editing and unusual soundtracks. The films strive to create discomfort in the viewer through disparate and chaotic audio/visual elements.

The splatter and exploitation films remained popular throughout the 1970's and into the 1980’s and 90’s. It is with the release of Tobe Hooper's independent Slasher film, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) that a turn toward torture becomes apparent. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was produced on a small budget for the time and as a result included no on screen deaths. instead the film makes use of implications and representations of torture, skinning and cannibalism as a technique for creating a powerful sense of horror. While *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* doesn’t make use of explicit torture on screen, it is one of the first horror films to find mainstream success while invoking torturous themes. The MPAA eventually designated Hooper's film as R, and while it remains classified as a Slasher film and does have the key characteristics of the Slasher genre, specifically throughout the creation of Leather Face as a classic Slasher villain. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* marks a particularly important element of the development of the gore genre. There are no actual killings on screen during the narrative of

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* The primary antagonist in Hooper’s film is apparently based on 1950's serial killer, Ed Gein.
the film, because of this, it moves towards a space where the "pre-deaths" of characters become more important than the actual deaths themselves.

Emerging alongside the splatter and gore films are increasingly specialized varieties of sexual pornography in the 1970's and 80's. Identifying the correlations between sexual torture in New Gore and the emerging genres of porn, making use of torturous sex allows the fully dynamic interface between the production and structure of fetish porn and fetishized violence in the gore film. Seeing one as being intrepidly connected to the other through the expression of violence as a constantly sexualized force.

_The camera pulls back; you see that the young man is bound to a metal chair, dressed only in black underwear, his body glazed in a thin sheen of sweat. His arms bound behind his back and his feet shackled to the chair's legs. "Where the fuck am I? What the fuck is this?" His voice is loud, a shout, desperate and angry. "What the fuck is this shit?" He is set against the dark room's dismal background, dark concrete floor and walls, pipes, no superfluous details. His skin appears particularly pink, alive against the dark space. You can hear the man's footsteps as he glances frantically here and there. His voice breaking, beginning to cry in panic. It eventually collapses into a beg, "Please, please...fuck..." The following shot is from over his shoulder, the man stands at the workbench, illuminated by the fluorescent light. He moves his hands over the table, remaining silent as he continues to shout and beg. A shot-reverse-shot moves between looking at the young man and looking over his shoulder. He begins to shout, “please, fuck, stop”. His voice is uneven and begging. A shot of his feet, shackled to the legs of the chair. A shot of his hands, handcuffed behind the chair, moving urgently and unable to escape. The shot of his
fingers grasping at the restraints cuts to a close up of the workbench, the tools are metal, savage, arranged in lines, but no particular order. They are reminiscent of the tools of surgeon or dentist preparing to work. The man's gloved hand hovers over them, as if choosing an implement. You see his lower body, his hand, and hear his desperate pleas. The hand pauses on a pair of pliers for a moment before moving to an automatic drill. The hand grips the drill and lifts it from the gruesome collection. As the drill is picked up the young man's voice reaches the height of frenzy. The shot focuses on the drill as the man walks back toward him, and the camera.

**Review of Literature:**

The majority of literature informing this thesis occurs at the intersection between scholarship on horror, the erotic and the nature of bodily pain and destruction. I intend to draw from writing which negotiates the appeal of horror, and the complexities of horror sub-genres with writing which delves into the intricacies of the visual contents of the films. One of the goals of this work is the reconciliation of New Extreme Gore as a sub-genre that operates through unusual aesthetic construction rather than narrative. In thinking through New Extreme Gore as an aesthetically motivated sub-genre, I am addressing work which deals with the horror genre as a whole, the aesthetics of it and then work which is concerned with the aesthetic elements that emerge in these films, particularly the visualization of bodily destruction and the construction of the erotic.

The importance of thinking about horror cinema beyond the narrative and in terms of it's aesthetic potential manifests in considering the visual implications of the content of films rather than the content as an element of narrative. Fundamentally, to reconsider the images on screen
as being in service of an aesthetic project, rather than being in support of a narrative plot. In moving away from work pertaining strictly to the horror film, but rather to the elements of the films I am interested in work that addresses the elements of New Extreme Gore that form the aesthetic structure of the films. The key texts which serve to establish the theoretical framework of this thesis can be organized along thematic lines. At its core, the elements which attempt to move toward thinking through film gore as an aesthetic, erotic manifestation draw heavily from the theories in Georges Bataille's “Tears of Eros” and "Eroticism: Death and Sensuality” and Linda William's "Hardcore". Elaine Scarry's "The Body in Pain" deals with real torture and real bodies and can be rethought to apply to the medium of film and to the artificial, manufactured bodies of the horror industry.

However, it is important to orient these sub-genre examples of horror in context with the genre at large. Andrew Tudor's essay, "Why Horror?" is a represents a traditional approach to the genre. The essay addresses the question of why particular people enjoy horror films and what about horror films people enjoy? Tudor points to two fundamental characteristics of scholarship regarding the horror genre. From Joseph Grixti's "Terror's of Uncertainty", the horror film as catharsis for the viewer or articulation for the viewer emerges. Both are dependent on the perspective that the horror film serves as a way of addressing the viewers "beast within", "the psychoanalytically intelligible repressed desires" (Tudor 48). As catharsis, horror serves as a release, preventing the viewer from indulging his or her bestial inclinations, as articulation, it serves to "encourage consumers in their own horrific behavior" (Tudor 48). The conventional analysis of the genre tends toward perpetually linking the narrative and violent content of all horror films to specific events, or the general mood surrounding their production. Tudor points to
the analysis of post-1970's "body horror" as "intimately related to aspects of 'postmodern' social experience" (Tudor 51). Furthermore, the analysis of horror manifests through the development of symbolic codes indicating the representative meanings of the films and tether them to their context. These analyses of horror are consistently linked to the narrative and content of films with considerably less attention paid to the stylistic intricacies. Rather, horror is stylistically considered in terms of the many sub genres, each with their own specific tropes. The notion of horror as a genre is discussed in the first chapter of "Horror" by Brigid Cherry. The chapter, "The Horror Genre: Form and Function" describes the word as "an umbrella term encompassing several different sub-categories of horror film, all united in their capacity to horrify" (Cherry 4). The way style has been considered in horror is in terms of its sub-genres.

Adam Lowenstein's "Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and The Modern Horror Film" begins to enter into a consideration of the aesthetic properties of horror, but firmly locates his analysis in relation to the horror as narrative, metaphorical object. The book situates popular modern horror as a responsive form. He focuses on several films that emerge from traumatic, nationally located events. Of particular interest is the essay on Georges Franju and French surrealist horror. While Lowenstein's work is concerned with considering films from around nationally traumatic moments have an allegorical potential, he does not limit this perception to the narrative of films. Rather, he draws attention to stylistic elements, content and the viewing practices surrounding films. In the chapter on Georges Franju, Lowenstein draws attention to his disparate and complex influences as a manifestation of "a shocking, allegorical encounter with historical trauma" (Lowenstein 18). Lowenstein points to World War II as the key cultural and nationally traumatic instance that shapes the influential, stylistic works,
such as Eyes Without A Face (1960). Specifically, in negotiating Franju's work from 1949 to 1960, Lowenstein points to Henry Rousso's "Vichy Syndrome," which is defined as "a diverse set of symptoms whereby the trauma of the Occupation [1940 - 1944] reveals itself in political, social, and cultural life." (Lowenstein 27) and serves as a spring board for thinking about the stylistic implications of film outside of their narrative function.

Particularly relevant to gore and splatter films as a sub genre of horror is John McCarty's "Splatter Films: Breaking The Last Taboo of the Screen". McCarty moves towards identifying the key characteristics of splatter cinema and the cultural tradition that it emerges from. Most importantly, McCarty draws attention to the relationship between the visual elements of the splatter film, specifically the importance of visual effects and the narrative of these films, effectively placing greater emphasis on aesthetics and their potential over that of narrative. "Splatter movies have a lot of the same appeal. They steal plots from anywhere; after all, a plot is only a method for getting from one gory episode to the next" (McCarty 1), and it is this function of plot that exposes the gore as film which is not dependent on plot but on it's visual potential. It is this de-emphasis of the importance of content and narrative that removes the splatter films from the realm of traditional film scholarship. What Lowenstein's work does not address is the possibility of imagery in violent film not being allegorically tethered and instead working for its own sake, similarly, in Cherry and Tudor's analysis of horror as a genre the variations in affect become lost. However, McCarty points out that the aim of the splatter film is "not to scare their audience, necessarily, nor to drive them to the edge of their seats in suspense, but to mortify them with scenes of explicit gore" (McCarty 1) and thus considers the possibility of the splatter
film being significantly dependent on the affective nature of images of gore rather than the social, cultural or even plot implications of that gore.

McCarty draws attention to the development of the splatter films, with the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis as being a response to the inclusion of more nudity and sexuality in mainstream cinema. "Lewis discovered that his first love, the skin flick was being absorbed by mainstream moviemakers" (McCarty 3) and thus begins to further challenge the taboos of popular film and "carve out some new territory" (McCarty 3) with the inclusion of scenes of explicit gore. McCarty points to splatter as a responsive genre, but the response coming in the form of shocking visual content.

While McCarty readily emphasizes the importance of visual effects and the aesthetic component of the splatter film, his introduction is rooted in a drawing attention to and explication of splatter as a type of film. However, In Mikita Brottman's "Offensive Films: Towards an Anthropology of Cinema Vomitis" the move toward considering the gore on screen as key element in the films appeal becomes more apparent. Brottman’s work also pays close attention to the economics surrounding the production of gore films. The economics of the horror film, much like the aesthetics are generally ignored in traditional horror scholarship. Brottman not only draws attention to the economics of the low-budget gore film, but in the relationship between money in production and blood on screen.

There are two significant elements of subversive, sub genre horror addressed, the notion of taboo and the question of cost and realism. When discussing Lewis' Blood Feast (1963) as a significant early contribution to the gore genre. Indeed, the first line of the essay, "Made for a mere $24,000 in 1963" (Brottman 77) draws attention to the importance of the film as not only
shocking but as cheap thrills. While Brottman regards *Blood Feast* as a blue print plot for Slasher films to follow, inadvertently the importance of the advertising, hype and sales structures surrounding low-budget high-gore cinema become apparent. In locating the film in terms of low culture cinema in general, Brottman refers to Carol Clover, "By operating at the "bottom line," argues Clover, "low" or exploitation horror remind us that every movie has a bottom line, no matter how covert, disguised or sublimated it may be" (Brottman 78). The bottom line being referred to works both as the most revolting and exploiting film content, and as the lowest possible amount of time and effort that can be put into a film and have it still make an impact, and turn a profit (*Blood Feast* was shot over just four days with mostly untrained actors). The importance of the "money-spinning" element of the exploitation and gore film cannot be ignored (Brottman 77).

In order to consider the visual representation of gore on screen as a constructed aesthetic component of film, it becomes necessary to consider the complexities of what is being represented. New Extreme Gore films are aesthetically comprised of bodies being destroyed. However, the damage being inflicted is entirely artificial and thus attempts to create a visual language that may express the trauma of physical suffering. Elaine Scarry's "The Body In Pain" forms an essential theoretical background for this work because of her addressing of the complexities of pain, and the difficulties of expressing pain comprehensively. Scarry points out that “ordinarily there is no language for pain” (Scarry 12), this collapse of language is describing real pain crosses over to the screen in the delicacies of visually conveying pain through the aesthetic elements of film. “The Body In Pain” serves as an entry point into a vocabulary that may consider the potential for pain as a generative event and also for exploring it’s linguistic
inexpressibility and thus the work of the New Extreme Gore film as an aesthetic rendering of pain through the artificial. Most importantly, Scarry addresses the notion of torture specifically, in her first chapter "The Structure of Torture: The Conversion of Real Pain into the Fiction of Power". Scarry asserts that, "while torture contains language…it is itself a language" (Scarry 27) thus establishing the pain associated with torture apart from regular, internalized inexpressible pain, and understanding it instead as that which is wrought upon the body and simultaneously heavily expressive. The difference between pain from torture and regular pain is tremendous, "[torture] bestows visibility on the structure and enormity of what is usually private and incommunicable" (Scarry 27). It is through this revealing power that torture becomes language. She defines torture based on the exchange between parties and the complex nature of precise, purposeful pain. While Scarry's work focuses on real torture enacted on real bodies and this thesis is concerned with cinematic representations of torture, the language she uses to convey the movement of agency, language and power is fundamental. Scarry moves through the process of torture, placing great emphasis on the constructed and intent based nature of that process, while uncovering a "structure of torture" (Scarry 51) as that which is key in the undoing and "unmaking" of the body through the process of experiencing pain. The artificial torture of the film works through Scarry's emphasis on the act of feeling pain and reception of pain in actual bodies, as a way of troubling issues of viewing practices and the affective and emotional response to visualizations of torture. Scarry goes on to rethink pain in the broader sense, and torture in the specific as potentially productive. The first part of the book focus on the "undoing" of the world through pain, with an emphasis on the breakdown of language. In the second part she attends to "that world's construction and reconstruction" (Scarry 161). It is through this
cyclical and dualistic nature that Scarry's writing about pain is illuminated by Bataille's "Eroticism" and “Tears of Eros”.

As Bataille collapses the notion of productive erotic sexuality and terminal death into an ongoing cycle, Scarry draws connections between torture as constantly undoing tortured and torturer and always reconstituting both parties. In thinking through the relationship between the visual implications of gore and body-based bloody scenes in New Extreme Gore and notions of the erotic, I intend to make use of Georges Bataille's “Tears of Eros” and the preceding, "Eroticism: Death and Sensuality".

In "Eroticism", Bataille draws the connection between the point of death as an unavoidably and continuously erotic state. By considering the nature of death and reproduction as conflated elements of the same construct, one that revolves around the continuation and discontinuation of states. As the sexually erotic, primarily linked with reproduction is tied to the moment of continuation through the potential creation of life, it also indicates the moment of collapse of the individuality of the previously extant elements. Comparatively, the moment of death represents the conventionally perceived moment of discontinuation and also an instance of perpetual, unaccountable continuation. Bataille cautiously approaches De Sade and the violent, erotic representations in his writing as the "aberration exceeds that limit" (Bataille 19) the representation of that which goes beyond the conflation of the erotic with death but actually articulates death, specifically murder, “as the pinnacle of erotic excitement” (Bataille 18). He proceeds to address examples, such as Sade, as reminders of the potentiality of the excesses of erotic desire, "to remind us constantly that death, the rupture of the discontinuous individualities to which we cleave in terror, stands there before us more real than life itself” (Bataille 19). In
"Eroticism", Bataille endeavors to reconstruct notions of the operations of sexuality, and eroticism as a violent and destructive force through Sade's "The Sovereign Man" and "The Ordinary Man". Bataille enters into a dynamic space between spirituality, death, violence and the erotic. Through this reading of violence up to the point of death as being a comparable process, and experience of sexual eroticism that a sense of the intertwined nature of the two states begins to emerge. What "Eroticism" moves toward is not only an erotic reading of the process of dying, but one where the inherent violence of sexuality and eroticism and the violence of death become a conceptualization of living.

“Tears of Eros” revolves around Bataille’s exploration of visual art and the collision of the erotic with the horrific in the visual medium. The text moves through history, examining works of art from prehistorical periods to the 20th century. The work culminates with Bataille’s analysis of photographs of voodoo practitioners and early 20th century Chinese executions. It is at this point that the line between real violent images and eroticism blur. This also complicates the work of the earlier part of the text, as this focuses on the relationships surrounding artistic representations. Bataille draws together the potential of the erotic image as a space of horror, “Today, nobody recognizes that eroticism is an insane world whose depths, far beyond its ethereal forms, are infernal” (Bataille 69). It is through this “infernal” perspective that Bataille draws a connection between the manifestation of actual death and the representation of orgasm as symbolic death. In imagining the New Extreme Gore film in Bataille’s terms, the films become the collision between the representations of the erotic merging with the horrific and the images of real people being imbued with a kind of eroticism. Bataille describes the affective
event this produces as “being obsessed by this image of pain, at once ecstatic (?) and intolerable” (Bataille 206).

Through the unavoidably violent notions of sex that Bataille addresses, both in actual reproductions and in erotic renderings of sex, such as those in fiction (and arguably film) I intend to further make use of Linda William's "Hardcore", in which she explores the political, social and identity based component of pornographic material and the effect of this material on the subjectivity and identity construction of the viewer. Particularly interesting and relevant is Williams' discussion of Snuff (1973), a notorious, low-budget gore film, which brought sex, violence and the drive for realism together. She addresses the boundaries of genres and the spaces where pornography and horror are able to brush against each other. The most important element of Snuff is the ending, where the film pulls away from narrative and performs "real (hard-core) violence belonging to the genre of pornography" as opposed to "fake violence belonging to the genre of horror" (Williams 192). Creating a space where the audience is able to question the realism of the ending and of the whole production. William's emphasizes that one of the most important differences between horror and pornography is the question of reality. While the content and visuals of horror and pornography could be nearly identical and address similar issues, horror isn't real and pornography is, "[Snuff] does not belong in the pornographic genre, unless the fantastic special effects of the exploitation horror films are included in its definition" (Williams 190). The issue that arises from this is that if the affects of exploitation and gore films allow them to transcend to pornographic material then the two genres become intertwined not only through content but through the affective response of the audience. What is most important about this connection to my work is the conflation of violence and the culmination of violence,
whether real or fake with the audience's affective response. "For many, the horror shifted from the bloody content of the film to the spectacle of viewers who would pay to see what they thought was the ultimate orgasm" (Williams 193), even in the manufactured violence of films such as *Snuff* (or its more modern counterparts) the relationships between audiences and horror films becomes similar to the relationships to pornography.
CHAPTER I: ADVERTISING AND ECONOMICS
SURROUNDING NEW EXTREME GORE

The shot then cuts to a medium long shot of the young man, calling out, frantic and in full panic as the man approaches him.

"Oh my god, no no no" he begins to wail, as the drill makes it's grating buzz, once, twice. "Oh my god, oh my fucking god". You see the man and the drill enter the right side of the frame. He cowers and begs. The man walks closer and the shot pulls in, framing just the two figures. The view then cuts to see the man from over the young man's shoulder. The man's body and the drill, but not his head are visible. You begin to hear the drill go off and see it move down. It moves out of the view of the camera toward the young man's thigh, his screams intensify as the drill's buzz is interrupted by the impact with his flesh. He screams and the shot cuts to his feet, pulling reflexively up and being splattered with his blood. The screaming continues as his feet flex. The shot then cuts to an extreme close up of the drill bit and his skin. An angry red hole has been made by the violent whirring of the drill. As the drill is forced through the skin and flesh deeper into the muscle. A small pool of begins to lightly spill out of it and begins spraying in a fine mist from the spinning of the drill bit. The bit moves in and out in a pulsing rhythm.

The shot cuts to the dark hallway beyond the door, lit with dim industrial lighting. Empty, lined with doors and punctuated with the lights, as well as the sounds of the drill and suffering of the previous shot. The young man’s screams rattle through the space. The shot cuts back to the room, and a close up of the industrial goggles hanging below the dirty light, as the drill continues to buzz and the screams rip through the stillness of these singular, unmoving shots.
The camera then cuts to an extreme close up of the tools; they are disordered. Amongst them is a screwdriver, a chainsaw, some tweezers. This is followed by a second still shot of the tools. Again, you are able to see the impressive array of potentially torturous implements, various clippers, wrenches, a jagged saw, a box cutter, and long nails, dark against the well-lit metal surface of the table. At last, the screaming subsides. The man's black, gloved hand reappears and replaces the drill amongst the other tools. Clinging to the drill bit are bright red, moist chunks of flesh. They are luminous against the monochromatic tool table. The drill is laid down and the hand retreats. The shot of the tools cuts to a long shot of the young man. He is silent, breathing, and shaking. His body is littered with drill holes, each with threads of blood issuing down his skin in streams. The camera slowly moves toward him as he shivers and shakes in pain and shock. Again you hear the man's footsteps and see the table, you see his gloved hands shaking the bloodied medical mask off his sticky fingers. As the camera pulls back and pans to see the man walking back toward him, you hear his labored breath, coughing, gurgling as he begins to helplessly vomit.

Economics are an unavoidable element of the film industry, however in the horror industry and particularly in the case of New Extreme Gore film this financial apparatus is particularly visible. The movement of money in the horror industry moves along the pulsing arteries of the film’s bloody visual content. In the consideration of the economics of the horror industry it is essential to consider the product being sold. What exactly are audiences paying to see and what is the value of those visualizations? More so, how does the level and nature of violence in these films contribute or hinder their economic success? The bodies in exploitation,
body, gore and splatter horror are continuously affirmed as objects for purchase. While most scholarship perceives horror as successful as a result of its ability to negotiate the anxieties of the audience (Cherry 11), I maintain that it is the scenes of torture and suffering in these films that provide the motivation for purchase. Not in terms of a catharsis or narrative representation, but as a pleasurable aesthetic experience. As a result of stylistic elements that draw attention to bodily violence as extant for its own sake, the New Extreme Gore film operates differently than other violent media. While violence is important and motivating, it is the effect of that violence on the human body that transforms into a consumable element. However, major US releases such as Saw and Hostel function in much the same way as other major horror franchises. They utilize the same practices of establishing a reliable fan base and capitalizing on the consistency and formulaic reliability of the franchise. Regardless of this, the American productions are rooted in a visual project, which exists underneath the economic construction of the franchise. These films also do not hesitate to capitalize on the major financial gains to be made from paratextual material - action figures, posters, and so on. Comparatively, the New French Extremist examples of the genre resist franchising and typical Hollywood commodification, though continue to receive critical and moderate financial success in the United States. As a result of this it becomes apparent that New Extreme Gore is not being sold through pure Hollywood marketing, but garnering financial success through the extraordinary content. There are clear cultural and economic differences between the American manifestations of torture films, and those being produced overseas. These differences become visible through the uneven financial successes of US films compared to international films. While emerging from two very different film
traditions, the content in the French and American films, in terms of violence and gore are comparable, though often different in tone and style.

This chapter intends to address the economic apparatus of the film industry as it pertains to the horror industry and more so how the presence of extreme violence and torture operates as a moneymaking element of these films. Exploring how despite cultural and critical questioning the violence of these productions creates an incredibly financially viable film object and does so through both an adaptation of and a rejection of traditional film sales methods. Through examining the coded advertising methods, allowing torture films to sell their explicit content despite the inability to feature extreme violence, sexuality and torture in mainstream advertising, the effectiveness of these films becomes apparent. Furthermore, in considering the location of the New Extreme Gore film in the economic apparatus of the film industry and finally the financial and cultural value which becomes associated with gore, torture and bodies in these productions it becomes clear that they are films for whom economics are unavoidable. The relationship between New Extreme Gore and film economics shapes both the production, through visual effects and construction, advertising and eventual reception of the New Extreme Gore aesthetic.

**Film Economics:**

Though film scholarship often neglects the discussion of the economics surrounding the industry, it is an industry undeniably concerned with profit, and horror films are no different. Horror film is considered a consistently low-culture form of entertainment, one of the reasons for this is that horror is often cheap to make and quick to make a profit. Often cycling faster than other genres. Quick scares and quick money characterize the genre. While films often go on to
make far more than their original budget after leaving theatres, they are still driven by the desire to keep costs low and profits high. Horror films, and more so unusual and sub-genre horror films have a tremendous amount of potential in this regard. They are almost always relatively inexpensive to produce, and almost always have the potential to become “cult films” appealing to be a very specific and devoted audience of thrill seekers.\textsuperscript{d} Each year there are more horror films made than in any other genre. They varying form major studio, high-budget productions to small scale, independent endeavors. However, horror films consistently, especially those which garner higher ratings or resist distribution, are low cost to produce. Often consisting of casts of virtually unknown actors and being comprised of DIY effects. They often occupy a precarious space, one where a film might become a cult phenomenon, or one where it might flop, meet with searing reviews and fail to make its budget. Horror films are the business of corporate studio financing, major directors and effects, as well as being the realm of low-budget amateur endeavors ranging from made-for-TV films, to first time filmmakers in their basements. What this chapter is concerned with is how the economic structures surrounding the New Extreme Gore films plays a roll in the development of their distinctive aesthetics and how these extreme visual displays affect the economic location of these films in terms of advertising and eventual profit.

The \textit{Saw} franchise, created by James Wan and Leigh Whannell, can widely be considered the most financially successful example of recent endeavors in New Extreme Gore. A series of six films, with an interwoven narrative, \textit{Saw} primarily revolves around a series of

\textsuperscript{d} In the 1970’s when realistic body effects where expensive, filmmakers cut corners and accepted an excessive aesthetic, while as of the early late 1990’s body effects and digital effects are considerably less expensive and are pervasive even in low budget productions.
highly mechanical traps, which force the subject to face and address their misgivings through bodily violence, usually in a given period of time before the machine destroys the victim’s body and thus doles out retribution. The films comprise a series of scenes featuring these devices, more often than not resulting in intense bursts of gory and creative violence. While the body count for a Saw film does not compare to many zombie or Slasher movies, the manner in which the violence is enacted is generally intricate, peculiar and excruciating to watch. The pleasure of Saw emerges from a fascination with the manner in which the machine works on the body, often a pleasurably excruciating process. The first Saw film came out in 2004 was produced on a relatively modest budget of $1.2 million and was considered a surprising film as a result of extreme content. Saw went on to make $18.2 million its opening weekend and become one of the most popular horror films of the year. Saw also proved to be one of the most controversial films of the year - challenged for graphic torture, violence and typically less than excellent performances. Saw also presents other issues, particularly in its presentation and negotiation of a kind of bodily destruction that rarely saw major production. The style of the film initially lingers in between the representations of violence characteristic of New Extreme Gore and an excessive over-wrought style familiar from earlier gore productions. Saw in 2004 did not hold up to other horror offerings, being beaten out at the US box office, even at $55.2 million by Dawn of the Dead ($58.9 m), The Grudge ($110 m), The Village ($114 m) and Van Helsing ($120 m). But what it did do was draw an unexpected audience willing and wanting to watch torture.

Two years prior to the release of Saw, in 2002, Gaspar Noé’s French-language shock film, Irreversible, met with critical acclaim at The Stockholm Film Festival and Cannes. The film was scorned by critics as “gimmicky” and “meaningless” (McKay). The film features a
troubling 8 minute rape scene, makes use of infrasound and generally does its utmost to render
the audience as uncomfortable as possible. Not un成功fully, considering the film did poorly
at the American box office, making a mere $753,501. *Irreversible* serves as the opening act, and
sets the stage of the films that come out of the US in 2004/2005. While *Irreversible* does not
feature as much bloody gore the way the American films tend to, the subject matter is searing
and has little consideration for genre boundaries. The film is generally regarded as one of the
first examples of a resurgence of interest in French horror, and particularly in hyper-violent
horror. The New French Extremist films, while usually more sexual in tone and content, and are
less reliant on special effects are in many ways comparable to the US New Gore films, with one
consistent difference: financial success. The films are similar in style, making use of comparable
visual effects, sets, and cinematography. While the French films are not ostentatious with
budgets, they tend to be equally modest in profit. While the films may be significantly successful
in French and Francophone markets, they are consigned to independent movie theaters in the US
and as a result receive exposure to much smaller audiences.

In 2005, *Saw II* came out. Again, on a comparatively modest budget of $4 million, *Saw II*
did better at the box office; it was 21st highest grossing film of the year. At $87 million, it was
also the highest grossing horror movie - besting successful franchise and sequel offerings, such
as the *Ring II, The Exorcism of Emily Rose* and *The Amityville Horror*. Perhaps more
importantly, in 2005, Eli Roth’s *Hostel* was hot on the torture trail. Similar to the success of the
original *Saw, Hostel* was met with decidedly mixed reviews and couldn’t compete with major

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*Infrasound is sound at 20hz, lower than that of normal human perception, however, infrasound can be
subconsciously detected and is known to cause sensations of discomfort and fear in humans. Both *
Irreversible* and *Paranormal Activity* (2009).*
money making films. However, every year since 2004 there has been a new Saw film, the franchise has made a total of $859,343,873 worldwide and is the most profitable horror franchise in history. Making in excess of twice the money of fan favorites such as the Halloween, Friday the 13th, and Nightmare on Elm Street franchises. Similarly, Hostel spawned a sequel - despite critiques about crude subject matter, questionable treatment of sexuality and the perpetually gratuitous violence. Following the genre success of the Saw franchise and Hostel, the aptly named, ‘torture porn’ became a suddenly familiar sub genre, spawning considerable offerings, both high and low budget. The reality that Saw’s six years of franchising has resulted in the most financially successful Horror franchise in history is more than remarkable. While most of the torture porn films have been relegated to the limited release fate many horror movies are, they continue to be made. What this indicates is that despite the high cost requirements to produce New Gore of this style and volume of visual effects the films continue to be made and are incredibly successful. However, what is important about this is the reality that the low-narrative, high style mode of Saw generates tangible financial success in the mainstream horror market. The financial success of New Gore films over the more traditional narrative horror offerings demonstrates a space in American cinema being forged. This process occurs regardless of criticism and constant controversy surrounding the film’s content.

Simultaneously, the French horror market explodes with a wide selection of films. Perhaps most famously, Alexandre Aja’s Haute Tension (2003) was reedited for an American release and did very well despite being a French-language horror film. Produced on a $3 million budget, it managed to make $3.6 million in the US and launched Aja as a successful extreme horror director, following Haute Tension with The Hills Have Eyes (2006), Mirrors (2008) and
the massive scale gore remake, *Piranha 3D* (2010). Though Aja’s films have been released by major production companies, the French New Extremism is not consistently distributed in the US. However, the similarities between these films and their American counterparts are enough that in economic competition for the US film market; they are at the disadvantage as a result of language. That said the nature of the New Extreme Gore film and the visualization of suffering transcends the need for intense dialog as the films are fundamentally composed of visuals and soundtrack. While the French films are not as explicitly linked with torture as their American counterparts, the content is always violent, visceral and unrelenting. Films such as Kim Chapiron’s *Sheitan* (2006), Xavier Gens’ *Frontière(s)* (2007) and Pascal Laugier’s *Martyrs* (2008) have constituted successful and controversial examples. Laugier has been vocal in defining (and deconstructing) the movement in France, pointing to the relative smallness of the French horror industry and the difficulties of getting any film produced, let alone those with violent content. Along those lines, the films are produced in French and as a result have received remarkably little attention in the US, being instead being gleefully praised and consumed by genre enthusiasts.

One of the key industry consistencies regarding New Extreme Gore is that whether they are produced in the US or overseas, the US distribution is almost inevitably through Lions Gate Films, a noted Canadian/American distribution studio known for being willing to distribute films which are considered too controversial and disturbing for major US studios. While Lions Gate is notoriously the company that distributes the *Saw* franchise, and *Hostel*, as well as various other ‘torture porn’ films, such as *Captivity, Midnight Meat Train, High Tension* and *The Devil’s Rejects*, the company has consistent critically acclaimed films such *American Psycho, Monster’s*
Ball, Precious and 3:10 to Yuma - however, Lions Gate makes money off films which are generally of a higher rating and contain more challenging material. The relationship that has developed between Lions Gate and the New Extreme Gore films is one of mutual benefit. The films gain major support and distribution, and are thus more financially successful. Also, backing from a large studio ensures sufficient budget for the filmmakers to extend the aesthetic project of New Extreme Gore to its highest level. In contrast the problem that emerges from major distribution is that of censorship. In order to see New Extreme Gore films in mainstream cinemas, and to reap the profits of that, they are severely edited and thus run the risk of compromising their full visual potential.

Valuing Gore:

In the case of New Extreme Gore it can be said that audiences are paying to indulge in visions of excessive bodily destruction. The body moves around the screen, an icon of the film's intention and the audience's desire. The object that simultaneously embodies that which is powerful and intriguing about the film and also what is repulsive. The body in the gore film is that which is being worked on, on and off the screen. It is the desire to see these bodies realistically rendered that demands the need for compelling and naturalistic visual effects, and in turn drives ticket sales. The better the bodies, the better the audience. As the success of Saw attests there is a distinct financial gain to be wrought from the torture in these films. Due to smaller audiences, the film industry does not seem to consistently favor the horror film, however, what horror movies offer that many of their peers do not is a consistent, reliable audience. The creation of a horror film franchise often marks the difference between the flash-in-the-pan of the majority of horror films, and establishment of an enduring cultural object. In De Vany’s
“Hollywood Economics”, he negotiates the dynamics of the life span of a movie in the box office. The life and death of a film is based on where the film enters the box office industry and where in turn it moves in the sales system throughout its run. The idea that success in American cinema is based on the intricacies of the time a film spends at the box office and the amount of money it makes while there presents a, though effective, troubling truth for non-American films. The manifestations of torture and physical violence in these films serve both as a key element in their marketability as well as a potentially problematic element. While Saw and Hostel have both proved triumphant at the American box office, neither film proved particularly lucrative overseas, particularly in the French film market, however, neither did their French equivalents. While Saw pulled in $3.1 million in Francophone countries in 2004, Irreversible, just a year prior, made a smaller profit, at $2.9 million. The limited volume of the non-American film industry is not something that can be ignored, and films such as Irreversible perhaps make up for their relatively sluggish performance at the box office with critical acclaim.

The New Extreme Gore films are often confronted with difficulties regarding US distribution. While films that are unable to get distribution are undeniably accessed through various non-accountable means, it becomes difficult to gauge their financial success. A perfect example of this is A Serbian Film (2009). While A Serbian Film has undoubtedly been watched, despite both extreme content, and lack of international distribution, it remains under the radar, moving through festival circuits. According to IMDB the only statistics regarding the film’s earnings refer to a gross total of approximately $10,000 (IMDB.com). While it is clear that there is profit in the production of hyper-violent, torture driven films, they are clearly limited by the boundaries of the American film industry, one that demands that films are rated, creating yet another
boundary for films containing content that is perhaps, unmarketable. Due to the immense complexity of each individual viewer’s film selection process, the fact that there is any way to successfully determine what does or does not constitute a successful film before it reaches the theaters is precarious at best. In addition to this, the franchise film is so ideally located in the greater scope of the film industry, that to resist the franchising of horror films is to remain on the sidelines of the genre. When considering the immense success of \textit{Saw} as an example of New Extreme Gore, it becomes more viable to consider it an example of widely successful franchise horror. In Wilkinson’s “Hollywood Horror from the Director’s Chair”, conclusions emerge about the necessity of the franchise to the genre. Citing Cronenberg as a director who continuously resists the financial triumph of the franchise, however, Cronenberg remains firmly ensconced in “body horror” and with the lower box office numbers that visceral sub genres are bound to.

The films are not centered on death, but rather torture as a constructed action. Instead of looking at death as a moment of completion, it is the instances around death that are fundamental. In this sense, there is an element of suffering. The movement of this violence works for the audience both in terms of creating a sense of destructive sadism and also in terms of the potential that the audience may identify and find themselves in the traditional horror viewer's masochistic fantasy. As Carol Clover discusses the location of the usually female victim in the horror narrative as a masochistic feint for male viewers, capturing “the terrors and masochistic pleasures of the underlying fantasy” (Clover 51).\footnote{It is interesting to note that the majority of horror audiences and New Extreme Gore audiences are male, and that the majority of victims in the scenes I intend to examine are women. However, the vital aesthetics of New Extreme Gore break the body down, past its gender.}

Gore as a sub-genre of horror occupies an even more specific location in the overall culture, one where effects form the
backbone, where blood, guts, bodies and digital rendering oscillate between the eerily real and the laughably fake. These films traffic in a variety of culturally developed horror commodities; in bodies, in blood, and in flesh as well as carving out their own niche in the economic structure of the film industry. Furthermore, the New Extreme Gore films are identified by these elements; they are constructed and defined by the presence of these visual markers. When audiences see these films in theaters or when they access the films by alternative means it is presumably out of a desire to experience the scenes of destruction, debauchery, violence and chaos. Whether the experience is physical, as it is with the traditional horror movie scare or whether it is an aesthetic experience is more complex. If horror is conventionally appealing in its expression of anxiety and cathartic properties and these elements are explored through narrative construction then in films which shift emphasis from narrative to aesthetics the appeal moves to one which is tethered to the pleasurable experience of visual elements. However, this relationship is deeply dependent on the relationship between the viewer and the film.

Whether or not the images of torture, which are fundamental to these films can be considered a potential cultural commodity, an actual motivating force in the consumption of the media is difficult to pin down because of the wide array of affective audiences responses to gore on screen. While horror movies are advertised and discussed based on the level and manifestations of violence within, cultural context for the selling of violent material is fractured and difficult to measure. While New Extreme Gore as an acknowledged part of the American horror film industry is difficult to ignore, based on finances and box office success alone; the films are popular and viable. However, due to their content, they become perpetually questionable. That said, in considering New Extreme Gore divorced from narrative implications
the problems inherent in their content fall away exposing the visual presence of the films as their driving force.

**Advertising the Unspeakable:**

A secondary commodified structure has emerged above the content of the productions and is not dependent on the audience’s visual experience of the films. New Extreme Gore films are sold and experienced through reputation. While many non-mainstream extreme gore films may never have a preview screened in the theaters, while they may never get a TV spot or a billboard over the highway, the graphic nature of their contents worms into conversation. Even when films fail to get major studio distribution, they are watched and discussed. Today, the reputation of a film provides an overarching cultural narrative that accompanies every willing viewer into the viewing, and very likely hovers, spectrally throughout greater film culture. The New Extreme Gore film’s reputation blends into the narrative and visual style of the film. Through this, the word-of-mouth that generates reputation operates as a kind of advertising in itself. One that focuses on the audience’s interpretation of the media through what gets passed along.

The relationship between the audience and the film is developed through the audience's ability to understand the content of the film without it being directly illustrated through advertising. As with the *Saw* posters, the most engaging violent content can’t be shown in theatres as trailers. The trailers that are produced are able to hint at the potential for violence, but do not show it. Furthermore, the censorship enacted upon the material through the trailers and posters create a complex relationship between the unseen and the desire to see. The audience is unable to see the gore "money shot" on the posters, or on the trailers - they are effectively
required to pay to go to the cinema or purchase the film. Following this dynamic emerges a secondary layer where the exposed viewer becomes like a trailer for the film, effectively offering more through conversation than any teaser trailer could. What is remarkable is that the individual does not emerge from the theater to detail the plot, but rather to recount the manifestations of violence, to relay whether or not the film fulfilled the promise of violence made in the advertising. It becomes an economic exchange where audience pays to see what they have been promised - rape, blood, torture and in the face of having that desire fulfilled repeat the exchange process through the exchange of salacious details. The reviews for particularly notorious torture films which appear on horror focused websites, such as bloodydisgusting.com tend towards the same cautionary language that dominates the reviews (when gore films receive them) in major newspapers. The reviews are widely varied. While the major American productions go from the violence inherent to the narrative being effectively ignored, treated as if it is simply a part of the horror machine, to the French films being praised as challenging and imaginative examples of film making, while *A Serbian Film* received one of the lowest ratings across the board. What emerges from the mysterious dynamics of audience driven advertising is one where the violence in these films forms an integral element in the selling process, but neither redeems or condemns the films themselves. Indeed, what is successful and what is not is far more rooted in the manifestations of availability and distribution than in the content of the films.

**The Selling of *Saw***:

These films also do not hesitate to enter into a dynamic exchange in the market of notoriety with their would-be audiences. The advertising for the *Saw* films have featured various disembodied parts as a way of visually illustrating the tone, style and content of the films while
creating posters than can be shown in public places. The first film poster featured a slightly
erotten hand which acted as a gruesome and confounding representation of what the film would
feature. The following posters have extended the convention to both disturbing and often
amusing effects. For Saw II, the poster featured two lonely fingers, decomposing and perched as
they would be on a hand. In the third, three human teeth, dirty and strung on wires. The fourth
Saw film’s advertising feature the franchise’s primary antagonist’s head, removed after autopsy,
resting on a scale. By the fifth film the posters ventured into the territory of bloody medical
instruments, saw blades and various pieces of splattered machinery often arranged as to indicate
the Roman numeral of the appropriate film. The lack of motion in these images, as well as the
absence of characters indicates the movement of the films, the movement of machines, traps and
bodies in space. For the purported final Saw film, Saw 3D the poster hosts a vacant staring
eyeball. While the posters for these films have been creative and managed to capture the tone of
the franchise, they offer another significant purpose. The advertising for Saw works as a promise
to the audience and fuel for conversation.

The posters are clinical; the background is white with the body parts being the only
objects to accompany the title. They are without identity and without meaning, a symbolic
representation of the content of the film. The posters tell the audience that the bodies on the
screen could be anyone; the identity is not what matters, what matters are their limbs.
Furthermore, the introduction of the mechanical elements provide another layer of meaning one
which assures the audience of the possibility of ever more ingenious traps, ever more chilling
scenes of torture and destruction. The most important promise made by this advertising is the key
to filling the theaters, the bodies will be dead, and the machines will be covered in blood. The
audience enters the theater with the advertising already assuring them that they will receive the carnage promised and that each Saw film will be more excessive than its predecessor. It is this pattern of a promise of violence and a fulfillment of that violence that fuels the economically motivated advertising structures of the New Extreme Gore industry. It is this representation of the New Extreme Gore film and the franchise as a space of promised violence that allows the content and style of the film to move from the mechanisms of traditional film advertising into the realm of audience conversation.

The reality of New Extreme Gore is that despite Saw’s considerable success, both as a franchised horror film in comparison with similar films, it remains an exception. Effectively, Saw’s impressive traditional advertising and success is able to communicate the nature and aesthetic quality of the film. However, the franchise’s considerable financial success is far more complicated than that. What Saw does present is the complexity of selling extreme violence, while the films do not skimp on blood and guts they are also profoundly formulaic, with traditionally constructed villains, intricate and labyrinthine sets and frankly, a killer score. Saw, as a franchise, manifests all the reliable money-spinning elements of successful horror. However, what the films do not capitalize on is original narrative. At the end of the day, any New Extreme Gore film is consumed with its aesthetic qualities front and center. The advertising for Saw manages is translating the visceral style of New Extreme Gore into comprehensible movie stability.

A Market for Blood:

In New Extreme Gore bodies form a space where violence is enacted. Instead of being subjected to violence, they are often the site of violent action, as bodies are broken, opened and
dismembered. Beyond this, blood and flesh form important visual markers. While independent and international New Extreme Gore productions do not have the same access to visual effects material and technology as major studio productions, they continue to place considerable emphasis on the importance of blood. Even when the films are not awash in blood, they emphasis remains in the imagery surrounding the films. All the films in question (*A Serbian Film, Martyrs, Irreversible, Hostel* and the *Saw* franchise) make use of red and bloody imagery in their advertising. The presence of blood acts as a potent symbol for the violence of these narratives. Similarly to the disembodied parts on the *Saw* posters, even this minimal indication acts as a representation of the desired bloodshed for the purchasing audience. In this, blood, images of blood and even blood (whether it is red corn syrup or digitally rendered) spilt on set become heavily coded, and allow audiences to understand what is being bought and sold in the New Extreme Gore film. Blood acts as a referential connection between even the most abject and graphically visceral exploitation gore and the legacy of horror marketing. The red on black or white, blood splatter visual acts as a common connection between the audience and the film. One of the other significant elements of the presence of blood as representative, promising symbol in the horror economy is the connection to the vitality of the potential victim. The process of torture assures the presence of blood and thus the assurance that there will be a degree of expected physical destruction.

**The Infamous:**

The reputation a film is able to garner manifests itself as a kind of grassroots form of advertising, one that works in two distinct ways. On one hand the information about the violence present in a given film, particularly a non-American or independent production, will be passed
from fan to fan, a non-commercial network of interested parties able to bypass the rules of the Film Ratings Board and the major distribution companies and encourage each other to seek the film out. With the growth of fan communities online, the speed and effectiveness with which viewers can share opinions, articles and even clips has become ever more effective. As this information moves from person to person it has the potential to continuously re-legitimized. It is important to note that the horror industry, particularly sub-genre horror is the cultural production of a comparatively small group of people. Due to the excessive and often offensive nature of these films they are fundamentally limited to audiences with both the proclivity and the stomach for the viscera within.

The second manifestation is the movement of the New Extreme Gore film from the realm of recommendation to infamy. More often than not films which are primarily marketed by their violent, bloody content become ideal fodder for scandalized rumor. The passage of information through inexperienced or scandalized viewers (or non-viewers, as the case may be) can be translated as more intense, violent, and revolting than the actual content of the film. The imaginative, exaggerated retelling of the gore film becomes an example of the imagination of the individual outside of a film often being more extreme and potentially horrifying than the media itself. What this points to is a clear desire on the part of the film-going audience to experience horror, and perhaps more importantly to consider the possibility of horror as a marketable object.

While offering a strange moment of rupture between admiration and repulsion, the economic politics of infamy are a sticky business. On one hand the viewer enters into the film with perhaps unreasonable expectations, on the other they enter with a preconceived notion of what will constitute the major points of a film. The advertising significance of the notion of film infamy is
that the material from within the film becomes transferred into a commodity through conversation. Just as a film's official advertising draws attention to the aesthetic elements, the scandalous conversations do the same thing. The machinations of the external apparatuses serve as a way of isolating the salable elements of the films from the typical narrative conventions of film. Effectively, in the case of New Extreme Gore visuals become separated from narrative, as it is the visuals that usually find their way into conversation, much as they find their way onto movie posters.

Due to the fact that extreme cinematic productions become the fodder of conversations apart from their viewing audiences, they begin to take on a cultural significance outside of the actual content. The viscera of these films become the hallmark, the gauge by which public conversation can be measured. Furthermore, this constant swirl of infamy begs the question of whether these productions are bound by their opening titles and end credits, or even by the experience of viewing. The body, destroyed on screen has the potential to work outside of the cinema form, a vision, whether actualized or imagined that is so potent and so articulate that it is able to operate culturally, and indeed financially beyond the boundaries of the film's form.

Despite the reality that the majority of these productions will not make box-office gold, they do have the potential to become key cultural objects as a result of their affecting and powerful visual imagery and the complex movements of that imagery inside the content of the films and around them. The New Extreme Gore film enters into a complex space where it negotiates the economics, not only of financial film success but also of cultural capitol. Regardless of the critical reviews, profit, recognition, or even distribution, films such as these become solidified as pieces of cultural history.
Conclusion:

While US audiences have veered between shock and enthusiasm for New Gore, there are boundaries. A possible explanation for the Saw franchise’s success is the separation of torture and sex, while Hostel and Hostel II notoriously included both explicit sex and torture; they were not in the same frame. A Serbian Film, however, is constituted on the very premise of sex and torture together. One of the distinct differences between the European films and the American films is the inclusion of sex, torture and a myriad of other taboos in the same scenes. While sexuality has proven consistently problematic for the MPAA, the inclusion of necrophilia, and sexual torture, and even female nudity immediately render films NC-17, a handicap in the distribution and sales process.

The economic viability of New Extreme Gore is undeniable with Saw standing as the key example of what can be achieved in terms of financial success with the correct distribution practices and willingness to participate in traditional franchise horror. It is less important that these films are successful than why they are. The visual and aesthetic mechanisms that alienate the New Extreme Gore film from traditional horror also allow them to transcend the boundaries of normative film reception as the emphasis moves away from the narrative and towards aesthetics as an economic driving force. However, even in the case of the American productions the motivation behind the production of New Gore is not bound to be lucrative out the gate. Furthermore, the films are metered by the always smaller audience created by their unusual content. While New Extreme Gore is appealing, it is still only appealing to a relatively small section of the population. What is particularly problematic for New Extreme Gore is the conflict between the desires of the audience and the ratings system. Just as horror in general, New
Extreme Gore is generally “aimed at the 18 - 24-year-old demographic and the typical horror fan is represented as male” (Cherry 7) and horror viewing is generally a group activity. Ideally, the viewers are enthusiastic about the films content, and able to engage with more than one format of paratextual media, from novelizations to video games. However, in the case of New Extreme Gore the films are met with inevitable R ratings, and even R ratings limit the number of younger viewers allowed to access a film.

Due to the fact that the MPAA rating system is not a requirement for public screening of films, the filmmakers and distributors opt in to having films carrying ratings. The alternative to being slapped with an R rating by the MPAA is considerably less profitable. While the rating system does restrict the audiences likely to access a film, a film marked by notoriety is even less likely to be viewed without the rating. Wilkinson points out that while the NC-17 rating is an alternative to no rating, it has proven to problematic economically, leading studios to demand films to comply with R rating standards. While this has “inadvertently prevented directors from competing with their predecessors on a visceral level” (Wilkinson 171) what it has also done is prevent US directors who are bound to US studios from competing in terms with their contemporaries in France and other European countries. Conversely, the economic necessity of the R rating rather than no rating or NC-17 prevents International directors from competing financially. The result of this is a space where films of comparable content are unable to compete against each other. While there are remarkably few remakes of New French Extremist films being produced for American audiences, there are talks regarding a remake of Martyrs, and it is likely that these films will be remade. Just at there were highly successful US remakes of Japanese horror films, deemed to visceral and frightening in their original state. The combination
of different rating and production standards with the added financial incentive and ease of
marketing films in English causes a fracture in the viability of these films. What is interesting is
that it is not simply because of content that some torture films are widely successful and others
fail to get distribution. While, arguably, the French offerings tend to more challenging in a way
the American films are not, much of this could emerge from the lack of exposure to the level of
violent content, that the MPAA protects the majority of American viewers from. Both European
and American examples of visceral horror have proven to be both a challenge to the genre
dominance of the franchise and ratings driven horror market. Proving that there is both critical
acclaim and financial gains to be had in the torture game, while still maintaining a degree of the
independent ideologies and aesthetics that provide horror productions with much of their
unpredictable and taboo effectiveness.
CHAPTER II: THE AESTHETICS OF GORE

The man sets a small stool next to the chair the young man is restrained in. His head is turned away from the man, sickly green vomit is clinging to his chin and his blood splattered chest. His whole body is now sweating and convulsing. The man sits down on the stool. The shot cuts to a close up of his face. The man's expression is peculiar, difficult to read. He is a familiar character, from an earlier scene in the film. His demeanor is unsettling. The shot reverses to focus on the young man, blood, tears and sick covering his face as his shoulders shake uncontrollably. His head tilts. The shot reverses; again the man looks intently at him. He looks down and raises a shiny, silver scalpel into view. Turning it in his fingers, examining it. The reverse shot again, focuses on the young man, his expression is not perplexed and panicked, in shock, horror and fear. He begins to weep in earnest, his voice barely manages to hold up as he sakes the man, "why?" before looking down, overcome. The shot returns to the man, holding the scalpel out in front of him, he gestures with it, his face emotions, "I always wanted to be a surgeon," he pauses, and you can hear the young man crying, "but the boards would never pass me." The man pauses, "can you guess why?" As he speaks, he brings the scalpel back into view. The shot reverts to the young man’s face, helplessly crying, his eyes shut. Again, the shot returns to the man, he holds up his gloved hands, so close that they are out of focus; he is still holding the menacing silver scalpel. His hands quake. The shot pulls back to see both figures, his bloody convulsing body and the man's hands, shaking stretched toward him. In a close up of his face, he begins wrenching and coughing again, spitting down onto himself. Then you see the man lower his hands. "You see... so I went into business. But business is so ... boring." The shot
returns to Josh, looking frightened at the man, he continues to speak, "you buy things, you sell things, you make money, you spend money - what kind of life is that?" The film then cuts to a shot of the young man, head lowered, tears streaming down his face. The shot returns to the man, "a surgeon" his voice impassioned, "he holds the very essence of life in his hands." He pauses and you can hear the sound of his breathing, snuffling. The man begins to speak again, "your life. He touches it." As the man says this the shot cuts to the view of them both, the man places his hand on the young man's thigh, squeezing and causing him to squirm and pull away, his cries intensifying. The shot returns to the close up of the man's face, "he has a relationship with it. He is part of it."

The shot lingers on the man's face, his eyes wide, before cutting back to the young man, who is now cowering, threads of vomit stringing from his chin. He begins to cry again, "please, please, please just let me go." The shot returns to the man, who looks curiously at him, "you want to go, is that what you want?" The shot moves between them twice, before focusing on the man as he leans down toward his restraints, you see his face, wrought in fear and nervousness; you hear the sound of the scalpel slicing into flesh. The sound is visceral and louder than the young man's labored breathing. As this happens, he lets out a sudden and agonizing scream, leaning forward, his face twisted in suffering. He gasps, squeezing his eyes shut, going red, and rocking back and forth. You hear the scalpel again, hear his screams as the shot focuses on his hands, desperately clenching unable to free themselves. His hands are curled into fists, as the shot goes back to the close up of his face, his head and shoulders frantically rocking back and forth, his sweat soaked hair wildly around his face, again, mouth strained open in a scream.
**Introduction:**

In an effort to organize the various manifestations of gore and viscera in the New Extreme Gore films and to examine them in terms of aesthetics, it becomes helpful to examine various types of scenes. While some of the most characteristic scenes may not be as bloody as expected, they are connected through the aesthetic tone of the film and the affective power of the violence. I've organized the scenes I want to utilize along general themes. Scenes of extreme gore usually fall into these three types, either they are scenes of bodily torture, massive destruction, or scenes of striking abjection. At times scenes occupy all three categories, these are by no means exhaustive, and there are a variety of ways in which these films express the bodily aesthetics of the sub-genre, with or without the inclusion of blood and guts. Furthermore, this chapter does not intend to make a case for the valuation of the violence in these films, but rather to consider them apart from the narratives they inhabit and as scenes, that when dislocated, have a potential for a kind of aesthetic interest and appeal that transcends their context. It is important to note that the notion of what constitutes gore is complicated. For many the definition is rooted in gratuitousness, or in actual numbers of bodies eviscerated, amount of blood spilt - for my purposes gore becomes a way of thinking about excessive, bodily trauma. It is also tethered to an affective response of discomfort, unease, revulsion and also curiosity in the viewer.

Due to the unusual location of the gore film in the horror genre, and its peculiar relationship to the economic apparatus of the film industry the New Extreme Gore film works as a perpetually re-articulating style. In that the films that feature the most excessive scenes do not do so to cater to the needs of the audience, but rather work toward violence justifying itself. This justification occurs on the basis that it is interesting, perhaps somehow beautiful in the precision
and care that goes into the cinematic construction of the scene. Similarly, the position of these films also factors into their specific use of violence. Both in terms of their cultural position and in the film industry, as "sure things" in the heavily franchised productions such as *Saw* and in terms of their separation from the requirements of financial success, either due to alternative markets, or lack of distribution, in the case of the New French Extreme films and *A Serbian Film* respectively. These scenes occur in each film and across the sub-genre, both separately from each other and as perpetual repetition of the familiar imagery. Thus they each enact a specific aesthetic in the scene in question, but also over the course of an entire film, and I argue throughout the collection of films. The gore scene in the New Extreme Gore film is that which is able to justify its existence through the excesses of its visual composition. What this chapter seeks to do is explore the ways in which visual displays of extreme violence, and bodily destruction rendered in a realistic manner works as a contributing and stylistically defining element of the New Extreme Gore film.

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which the New Extreme Gore film operates on a visual level. The question of whether these visuals can be considered art is less important, though the emphasis is functionally on the aesthetic elements of the New Extreme Gore film. However, the question of the artful does present itself specifically in the context of how to interpret scenes that are continuously present and yet are not narratively required. Specifically the dynamic emerges in terms of films that include violence, but does not show it. However, the principal visual aim of the New Extreme Gore film is the showing of violence, rather than its implication. The treatment of extreme gore is generally that it is a gratuitous deviation, motivated by a kind of perverse enthusiasm. Reviews such as Michael Phillips’, a film critic for the
Chicago Tribune of *Saw II*, “No point in labeling this a horror film. This is a sadism film, and while all good and great horror films know what sadism tastes like, a sadism film settles for nothing of lasting, imaginative horror” (Phillips). Designating the films as sadism as opposed to horror and dismissing them as being capable of effective horror. While this is entirely plausible, the level of extremity in these films often pushes the viewer past the point of "morbid curiosity" and into the space of excess. Excess that is transcendent of the narratively valuable and is only able to operate for its visual appeal. It is from this space of excess, and through analysis of key scenes of distinctive varieties of gore that I intend to imagine the destructive, abject and torturous visual components of the films functioning above notions of the gratuitous and instead as a kind of purposeful aesthetic project enacted through cinematography, editing and visual effects. An aesthetic project that works towards visually articulating the inexpressible notion of torture and suffering. The complexity of dealing with scenes of this nature as aesthetically driven comes from the relationship between aesthetics, beauty, cinema and pleasure. One of the primary goals of thinking about scenes of gore in terms of their aesthetic nature is to evaluate their visual appeal and cinematic construction as potential sites of expression, and that expression as space of potential pleasure. While the content of that expression, being pain, may not be pleasurable, the act of visually expressing is it rich in aesthetic and filmic pleasure.

While the general assumption about New Extreme Gore is that the violence is gratuitous, and unnecessary to the progression of the narrative, I would argue that the narrative of the film is secondary to the importance of the visual and stylistic composition. These are films built on their visual components, and the cinematographic elements, such as sound and editing, which support these strong visual elements. Rather than being accessory to the development of conventional
film narrative the scenes of destruction, abjection and torture which punctuate the New Extreme Gore films are the motivating force. It is the scenes of gore which motivate the production of the film and also the complex modes of reception and viewing practices that surround these films. They are unified and defined based on their visual construction, and the content of their visuals. In addition to this, the technologies that support and make effective the scenes operate within a specific space that is dependent upon the economic apparatus of film.

The three kinds of scenes I intend to examine all operate differently, while all making use of editing, sound and visual effects to create a consistent comprehensive stylistic project that carries through the material of each film. Torture: chiefly is concerned with the visual representations of bodily torture, specifically the destruction that moves the figures toward an inevitable death, regardless of whether we see that death. Abjection: moves away from the typical gore aesthetic of blood and flesh and instead create a sense of loss and abject suffering, either in the figures on screen or in the audience, thus moving toward an aesthetic that functions through the visualization of pain, psychological and physical. Destruction: works toward undoing the traditional structure of the horror film, by co-opting the space to allow for the visual impact of the destruction to be enacted. All of these differently oriented scenes within the New Extreme Gore film all work within the film as a whole and towards the goal of creating an aesthetically interesting and affective scene.

What is one of the important fundamental elements of these film's aesthetics that I want to draw attention to is the deviation from the other iterations of gore and splatter cinema. Often even the most horrific and taboo imagery in the horror film appears as camp due to its excess. The use of camp in horror allows for films to veer into dangerous territory while maintaining
perpetual awareness of the film’s artifice, and thus assuring that they are not serious films, that
do not need to be taken seriously. Films such as Blood Feast (1972) with its spurting streams of
day-glo blood and cannibalism is shocking but also frivolous, similarly the recent remake,
Piranha (2010) makes use of thousands of gallons of fake blood and hundreds of extras with
serious body effects, the sheer volume of the film combined with a cast consisting of adult film
actors and an aesthetic reminiscent of an MTV Spring Break Special imply the kind of playful
excess that fails to operate in the New Extreme Gore film. These films make extensive use of
shocking excess but they are not camp. The move away from a camp aesthetic removes the New
Extreme Gore film from the context of traditional splatter horror and into a space far more
concerned with a sort of hyper-realism. Instead the stylistic use of the camera and soundtrack
locate these productions firmly in the territory of a much darker, and more serious aesthetic. One
which is dependent on the affective response audiences are likely to have to the visual content of
the film. In these scenes the shots are neatly composed, moving between fast, frantic tempos and
long takes punctuated by harrowing and realistic sound effects.

Torture:

Due to the fact that this sub genre has been to heavily aligned with imagery of torture, it
is immensely important to think about how torture and scenes of extremely visceral torture work
in terms of their aesthetic implications. The scene of torture lays its stage on and in the bodies on
screen. The visual state of the torture scene is one which, like the scene of abjection revolves
around the orientation of the body in a spatial context. The body becomes firmly contextualized
with the space as well as in terms of the origin of the torture. In the case of the Saw films, the
orienting point of the torture is the trap, mechanized apparatuses with triggers, timers and
switches, usually requiring that the subject perform a task in order to stop the mechanism. However, the aesthetic element which is more prevalent in the Saw trap is the process. Whether or not the trap can be stopped becomes irrelevant as the screen is occupied with the process of moving towards an undefined stopping point. The emphasis is continuously placed upon the body through the shifting angles of the camera and editing which assure that the body is perpetually undone and reconstructed in the space and then deconstructed through the visions of the bodily injury occurring.

The scene I've chosen to illustrate the aesthetic of torture is from the fifth Saw film. The opening scene to Saw V features a trap in which the subject is chained to a table, with a swinging bladed pendulum over head, as the timer starts the pendulum begins to lower, and will eventually chop him in half. In order to prevent this, he has to insert his hands into vices on either side of his head. He then has to depress two triggers, which activate the vices thereby crushing his hands. If this is done successfully, the pendulum will stop and he'll be released. While the subject in the scene does successfully crush his hands, and the pendulum does stop, it is only momentarily. The pendulum swings back into action and proceeds to chop him in half, steadily killing him. At the beginning of the film there is no context given for the trap or a complete identity for the subject. The scene is completely dependent on the two elements of bodily torture being enacted. Similarly to both the scenes of abjection and destruction, the environment plays a significant role in the aesthetic development and tone of the scene. Furthermore, the Saw franchise is particularly appropriate in thinking about how sound and visual images contribute to a unified aesthetic in film, and particularly in conveying the affective nature of torture.

The scene in question begins to develop during the opening titles of the film, this scene of
torture is the first scene of the film and thus not only exemplifies torture as an aesthetic trope but also establishes the tone and style for the rest of the film. As the opening titles fade, the first shot is of a body laying on a metal structure, shrouded in darkness and illuminated by flashes of lightning accompanied by claps of thunder. The camera moves up over the body, the room is barely visible in the light, but it can be identified as a derelict, industrial space. Then again the shot fades into black, is interspersed with more titles. When the second shot appears it is of the subject’s head and shoulders. The subject is apparently unconscious, bare-chested and with a dark metal device hanging around his neck. The shot is almost completely black, the body is barely lit. As he wakes up and begins to realize the fact that he is restrained, bright, fluorescent lights come on accompanied by the sound of their bulbs powering on. The shot shifts to the body from a different angle, now well lit. The camera continues to move over the entire body. Shooting the ankle and neck restraints and orienting the body in the space. Finally, the film speeds up briefly to allow for a shot of the subject's entire body in context with the space. This shot is particularly visually pertinent because of the fracturing nature of the trap in question. The camera works toward allowing the audience to conceptualize the body as a unified whole, and as something which is both a part of and at odds with the manufactured environment of the chamber. The tension chiefly emerges in these early shots between the softness and vulnerability of the body in conversation with the mechanical, metal surroundings.

When the television in the chamber turns on and Billy (the Saw franchise's mascot ventriloquist dummy) appears on the screen to describe the intricacies of the trap, the scene becomes more complex. The aesthetics of the scene become tied into not only the location of the body in the scene, but in the "body" of the machine he is attached to. The camera moves around
the chamber focusing on the different elements of the trap. Perhaps the most interesting visual moment in this collection comes at 00:02:18 when the blade of the pendulum is first lit. The bright metal of the blade sits in comparison to the pallor of the subject's skin in the low light. It becomes a visual beacon. It is during this segment that the soundtrack becomes increasingly more fundamental to the scene. Throughout there is the occasional presence of thunder, the low growling voice of Billy, the subject's frantic breathing and screaming, the clinking of the chains, the heavy musical score and the sound of the lights illuminating the various elements of the trap. The implications of this much sound layering results in a scene that is both visually and aurally complicated. The space is crowded with sounds and objects; the viewer is thus pulled into a moment of ocular frenzy. However, simultaneously the viewer is bound to the simplicity of the set up - body and machine.

In the moments before the pendulum is activated, the film slows down for moment, and then speeds up at the camera spirals up above the subject, once again allowing the viewer to conceive of his body in terms of its completeness. The shot shifts to view just the pendulum, it begins to swing, and the shot focuses on the mechanical apparatus supporting it. Creating a frame occupied entirely by the dark, metal object. It is once the pendulum begins to swing that the scene really begins to establish torture and the tortured experience as one of distinct aesthetic value. The pendulums swings and the terrified face of the subject are shot in slow motion. The emphasis is placed on what it looks like when machine and man being to interact. The focus on the subject's face remains a constant throughout the scene and creates a kind of visual reference. Though the scene, like many gore scenes is not rife with dialog the visual implications of slow motion shots of the face allow for a visual interpretation of the undone language of torture and
pain to emerge. The scene makes use of the slowed down and sped up shots in place of language. The shots move between the apparatus of the pendulum and the body below. As the camera moves away from the pendulum, again the entire body is legible. Perhaps the most aesthetically important shot of this section of the scene occurs at 00:03:12, when there is an extreme long shot of the subject on the table, from an upper right hand corner of the space. The lit body is framed by the dimly lit windows, and then industrial structures of the space. In this shot the viewer is firmly able to conceptualize the torture of the scene as being a rupture in the visual material of the space, both the chamber, which appears to be a warehouse and the body. Finally the shot shifts to allow for a view of the body from over the subjects left shoulder, seeing the pendulum in much the same way the subject does. All the while the largeness and weight of the device is emphasized by the whooshing sound it makes as it moves over the body of the subject.

The first element of torture expressed in the scene is one of anticipation. One of the distinctive visual hallmarks of torturous gore is that it ideally builds up, moving from a lingering sense that it may occur to the undeniable reality of it. There is a period of time, in this case the first four minutes of the film that are psychologically and emotionally traumatic but are not concerned with the damage inflicted upon bodies. However, the scene does begin to develop the visual style that allows for a kind of cinematic gore to begin prior to the destruction of the body. The harshness of lights, sound and editing create a sense of perpetual undoing that is then continued by the interaction between the visual effects of the actual bodily destruction.

The physical injury of the scene is organized into two distinct sections: the self-inflicted crushing of the hands, and the bisection performed by the machine. The idea that torture is always a process creates a very carefully articulate aesthetic path between the beginning and end
of a period of torture. What the hand-crushing effectively achieves is an ongoing process where the prevention of pain is bound to the body of the subject. The hands are visually acting, as they are inserted into the vices, and once the button is pressed, the device acts. However, it is at this moment, the moment of bodily harm that the scene begins to visually dislocate the physical locus of torture from the environment of the body. Even the first time the subject places his hands in the device and presses the button, though he pulls back, the camera begins to play extraordinary attention not to his anguish by to the moving gears of the machine. It transfers the emphasis away from the subject as whole and visually puts the hands and the machine into conversation with each other. They are not the hands of the subject, as far as the gaze of the camera is concerned, rather they are just something in the way of the machine and the movement and completion of the machine's mission is the most visually striking element. As the subject pulls his hands out of the machine the first time, they angle shifts to first his frantic and panicked expression, perpetually on the verge of collapse as the ever dropping pendulum all but scrapes his midsection. The second angle allows the audience to visually gauge the potentiality of torture. There is already torture being enacted, despite the fact that the blade has not reached the body.

When he does successfully place his hands in the vices and depresses the buttons, the same series of shots are invoked. The machine takes precedence. From the initial shots of the hands in the machine, it becomes apparent that they may as well be detached, as far as the filming is concerned the machine and the hands in the machine operate separately from the screaming body they are attached to. However, at 00:04:00 the button has been fully pressed and the vices begin to crush the hands. It is at this point that the body of the subject is reformed. A
shot of his face, watching his hand in the vice allows the viewer to follow the logic of the arm, and thus allows the experiential element of pain to move between the site of suffering (the hand) and the articulation of pain, or lack thereof (the screaming face). At 00:04:01 there is a shot of the hand in the vice, filmed down the length of the arm. It is during this shot that the soundtrack complicates further, as the sound of the bones of the hand being crushed begins. This sound, the churning of the gears and the screams of the subject create a layered sense of connectivity that is then complicated by the shot-reverse-shot between the machine/hand assemblage and the subject's head. A sort of audio/visual conversation emerges in the passage of pain and exchange of sound between crunching and screaming. The gore of the scene begins when the vices push down on the hands. For this moment, the hands are shot from the outside of the machine, presumably in part due to the necessity of visual effects, but this also serves to enforce the aesthetic unmaking and remaking of the body and machine dynamic that is so fundamental to the visual signature of torture on screen. While there is an expected amount of blood as the hands are crushed, the amount that runs down the side of the machine is not gratuitous. The gore in this scene is construction through audio. The sight of the blood oozing between the fingers is not so affective as the sound of the hands being crushed.

Once the crushing mechanism is in full effect, the angles move between the external view of the tips of the fingers emerging from the vice, and the blood spilling over them, to an above shot of the subject's face, perpetually screaming and then in slow motion to move to a elevated position above the head, allowing for a view of the pendulum moving just above the subject's abdomen. Once the hands have been fully crushed the machine grinds to a halt, and the shots focuses entirely on the machine as the gears go into reverse. In this instance, the importance of
the interaction between the body and the machine as a visual marker of torture becomes apparent. The important element is that whether inflicted by the self, the machine or another body - torture does not always have an end point. While the vision of the hands being crushed create a strong sense of ongoing, process-driven torture, the slow, reversal of the gears works similarly. As do the following shots, which focus on the anguished face of the subject as he draws his bloody, mutilated hands up to his chin, presuming that his agony is over and that the trap will release him. One of the most effective elements of Saw as a stylistically driven franchise is it's ability to make use of effective sound, color and editing to maintain a perpetual torturous tone regardless of what’s happening to the body on screen.

The shot following the moment of the withdrawal focuses entirely on the clock which has been measuring out the machinations of the trap. Suddenly, the sound of the blade begins again. A close up of the pendulum's mechanism show it as it drops the one more essential level in order to make contact with the subject. The shot of the first slice into the abdomen is shot from lower left hand side of the body, looking up the length and side of the torso. The shoulders and head are out of focus, while the area of impact is the main visual object. The moment when the blade cuts through abdomen marks a significantly different visual pace. While the tone and style are similar, it is an unrelenting inuring process, rather than the slow self-inflicted injury of the hand-crushing. Following the first shot of the impact, there is a shot of the face in shock, and then a higher, further back shot of the body shot from the knees, looking at the entire torso, as the blade swings back and forth. Each time the blade moves over the abdomen the gash widens and more of the viscera within becomes visible. At 00:04:35, the camera leaves the body momentarily and instead follows a flying piece of flesh as it splats against a piece of plastic over the exposed
window. The blood splatters out, thus creating a tapestry of flesh against the environment of the chamber. A re-articulation of the body on the table, located just out of frame. Following this, the shots move between the face of the subject, the bloodied blade of the pendulum and the now gaping rupture in the abdomen. The angles are such that it becomes possible to see the internal structures of the body as the pendulum swings back and forth. It is this sort of bloody, internal viscera that characterizes torture in New Extreme Gore; it is the method and the relationship between body, injury and infliction that aesthetically characterize this as torture as opposed to conventional gore. At 00:04:41, the angle shifts back to the subject's head, as blood begins to spurt out of his mouth and over his face. The shadow of the blade is visible moving across his face, as his eyes and features still register responsiveness. There is one final medium long shot of the mechanism of the pendulum and then one of the blade at work as it makes the final slice all the way through the abdomen and then back up to the face of the subject, who jerks at the moment of death. As the shadow is still in motion swinging between the two severed pieces of body, the metal neck restraint opens, the shot is of the subject's face, head to one side, eyes wide open and clearly dead. In this moment it becomes apparent that while the torture is over in the narrative, the visual articulation of horrifying torture is still ongoing. The final shot of the scene is an extreme long shot of the body, inverted with the pendulum still in motion. This final shot reconstructs the first shots of the scene and aligns the visual experience of torture as one that is always a cycle of movement and experiential affect.

Abjection:

The aesthetics of abjection are the outlier in the conventional perceptions of what constitutes gore. The traditional definition of gore is dependent on the excessive presence of
blood, wounds and flesh. However, one of the distinctive elements of the New Extreme Gore films, and these films in particular is the fact that they are not dependent on blood for the aesthetic creation of these scenes. While the distinction between the scene of destruction and the scene of abjection are narrow, scenes of abjection are long, often lasting the majority of a film, or develop a highly recognizable visual marker than defines the stylistic tone of the rest of the film. What is particularly distinctive about scenes of abjection is the avoidance of the death in them. While in torture scenes move towards death as a conclusion, the scene of abjection is concerned with the space of enduring misery. A stylistic space that is a continuous process, one that is not required to kill a character, but instead to place the emphasis on his or her ongoing suffering, for long periods of time. The scene of abjection works aesthetically in its use of sound and space in creating an ongoing and continuous sense of scene. Another important element of scenes of abjection is their location in the overall image of a film. While a film is generally categorized in terms of genre based on key characteristics, it is not scenes of abjection which make these films gore. They are rather longer visual narratives of the kind of suffering and thus tone that separate these productions and their brand of visual excess from the conventional horror film, or the splatter films that precede them.

Pascal Laugier's 2009 New French Extremist film, Martyrs is organized into three stages. The third stage revolves around a young woman being kept in a secure, minimalist basement area, and continuously and repeated beaten, deprived of sleep and privacy, force-fed, and forcibly bathed and shorn. The scenes are continuous, almost completely silent and though relatively devoid of bloodshed, are profoundly troubling and torturous. The scene I've chosen to examine occurs toward the final stages of the narrative and develops a clear aesthetic tone, which
is developed throughout the film and becomes consolidated in this final part.

The scene is punctuated over a period of approximately 6 minutes by completely black fades; I've organized my analysis of the scene by these punctuation points. The narrative of the film involves the systematic torture and physical abuse of a young woman to the point of her transcending her physical form and entering into a state of martyrdom. The film constantly moves toward this altered state of perception, however, what is important about this is the expression of ongoing physical abuse without the promise of death as a visually compelling construction that operates above and beyond the narrative connection. The reason of this conclusion emerges from the amount of time devoted to the process of "martyring" the character. Her body becomes a site of profound visual abjection and the space she occupies perpetually re-articulates its dominant vision in the creation of a torture scene that is more like a museum exhibition than an explanatory part of a narrative.

The point of entry into the scene is a moment of total blackness and the sound of the metal access ladder being dropped into the basement area where the character is being kept. She is chained to the wall and a metal chair by long, shining silver chains. This portion of the scene takes place from 1:14:46 to 1:15:43. The first shots of the scene are of the metal ladder dropping and then the character cowering, covered in bloody cuts against a metal grate. The shot is taken from the perspective of the person entering the space and looks down upon the captive figure. Immediately, the sounds and lights of the scene establish the body of the captive in visual conflict with the harsh, metal environment around her. The body becomes the visual space where pain and destruction is possible, and thus the ultimate site of visual interest. The assault on this delicate body is immediate; the first beating of the scene is ungainly with the camera moving
rapidly around the two figures. The emphasis is on the woman's body, but not her face. The scene is almost completely silent, apart from the sounds of her body enduring the punishment and her voicing crying out, almost involuntarily. Once the figure has been placed in the chair and her assailant departs, the most affective aesthetic mode of the scene begins.

The character is almost always shot from behind. The back of her head, with her dark hair blending into the darkness and her frail, bruised shoulders dominate the frame. Her head becomes the emphasis, but it is a head without a face. Her identity becomes dislocated, she is merely a body. These shots of the character's back and close ups, allow the audience to see the bumps of her spine as well as the welts and bruises appearing on her skin. The continuous emphasis on the character's back continues for about 30 seconds. Without sound except unsettling, undefined noises, and the character's breathing. The second section of the scene, from 1:15:43 - 1:17:02, again reestablishes the intense, mechanical cold environment of the chamber. One of the captors enters, wheeling a cart with two metal bowls. One is empty and the other contains liquid and a yellow sponge. The metal cart is the focus of the early shots, the cart pauses next to the chair. A metal bucket is removed from beneath the chair and noxious yellow urine is poured from the bucket into the empty bowl. Again, the shot excludes views of the figure’s faces. The soundtrack is again, almost exclusively is comprised of the sounds of metal on metal. The aesthetics that emerge form Laugier's torture scene are those based around the stark and continuous nature of a bare and artificial space being put into conversation with the living decomposition of the human body. The second part of the captor’s visit involves the body of the captive woman being roughly bathed by the figure rolling the cart. The soundtrack again operates minimally, focused entirely on the character's frantic breathing, the sounds of her chains
rattling as she is manhandled and washed down. The visual representation of the characters in this section enters into the full impression of how the scene of abjection in gore and torture can operate. While there is little blood, and she is not currently being wounded there is the sense that the inclusion of humiliating or exposing imagery, particularly over an extended period of time create a sense of the body as a visual space that can be steadily deconstructed by acts and shots that place emphasis on the exposure of that body, and more so its suffering and limitations.

The third section of the scenes reiterates the imagery of the character's physical abuse. Running from 1:17:02 - 1:17:55, the section emerges from darkness to the focus on the character's body, the back and top of her head and her physical implications and limitations in the environment. The film sound is limited to the clanking of the chains, the footsteps of her captor and the sounds of her breaths and cries. Much like the first section she is contextualized within the cold, metal environment. The aesthetic that emerges is one where the body is perpetually changing, by this section; her face is almost unrecognizable from repeated bruising. Her lips are swollen, purple and cracked, hey eyes are sunken and there is a pronounced blackish bruise across the bridge of her nose. When the viewer is allowed to see her face, it is a face which the visual implications of pain and torture etched upon it. She becomes devoid of her human characteristics and instead becomes bound to the space in which her experiences are literally and figuratively tethered. The work of the camera is to continuously remind the viewer of both the fragility of the body in question, and thus the degree of the ongoing torment, and secondly to mimic the spatial implications of the environment and action. The punishment and harshness of the visual image is unpleasant, but by the same token, organized and logical. The final moments of this section fully capture the visual project of Laugier's film: after a brief
moment of spirited backlash, the captor walks toward the camera, a black mass, which vanishes into the cut. As he walks, in the background, the character begins to collapse, the uniform consistency of the metal space, and the other figure point to her body as the destroyed. It is this visual collapse that encapsulates the tone and style of the film. Bloodied and defeated, she curls into the corner of the frame. Her restraints gleaming in the darkness, barely visible except for a shadow and her bruised and injured skin. Her face is obscured. As she settles herself amongst her chains, tentative, again we hear the sound of ladder to the basement.

The fourth section of this scene is where the film's aesthetics begin to complete themselves with the most comprehensive and affective use of both sound and visual effects. The section runs from 1:17:55 - 1:18:40 and at 1:18:15, for the first time since prior to this scene there is a musical soundtrack. This is also the scene where the viewer is allowed to fully see the extent of the damage rendered on the character's body, and in this, the full potential of the film's work in wound effects. The effect of the scene is the process of transformation occurring on screen. In this sense the work of make up effects are not unlike those of original Hollywood monster movies, such as *The Wolf Man*. The method of creating tension on screen was heavily dependent on the opportunity to have Jack Peirce’s transformative make up effects occur on screen, similarly, the power of the scene in *Martyrs* requires the audience to perceive the character’s physical break down through make up effects seen on screen (Glut 13). The opening part of the section, before and as the music begins is a close up, single take shot of the character from the shoulders up. Her heads lolls back and forth, she sniffs and weeps, while her damaged face and upper body is visible in relatively clear light. The camera does not move, instead it looks on the face and body of the figure as the space were visual interest is constructed. The
character is dehumanized and unrecognizable, and yet for 45 seconds the camera focuses entirely on her face and head. This moment in the film works both to emphasize the degree of abject suffering, but works aesthetically in its excess and intentional display of the injured body as a spectacle. The tone of the abject is conveyed here, not through the injuring, but rather through the examination of those injuries on the part of the camera. The shades and tones of purple and red littered over her skin are the elements of varied color, the sound of her head thudding against the metal blends into the slow, melancholy piano soundtrack. The film, in this moment, undoes language and depends on the visual impact and effectiveness of abjection. As the screen fades to black the music continues to play, and we continue to hear the character's sobs. The authenticity, simplicity and power of the scene emerge from the viewer being forced to see, perhaps for an uncomfortable amount of time something dislocated from the film's narrative.

In the final section, the character is again seated and shackled to the metal chair. The shot is from above and again places considerable visual emphasis on the composition and as the section progresses, decomposition of the character's body. The music begins to get louder as a soft mumble joins it. The initial shot is from behind the character, her palm pressed against her forehead, the clanking of her chains apparent as she rocks back and forth. The shot then moves down from the original above angle and as she raises her head, and rotates around her body, allowing a full view of her to be seen. Again, her appearance is markedly different. Her face is covered in lacerations, now many of them open and glistening. In this section she is clearly illuminated from above, allowing shadows to be cast down over her face and body. As the section continues this format, of viewing her from behind at first and then a close-up
examination of her face and upper body from the front reappear. All the while she moves her hands, perpetually causing the chains to clink, while mumbling inarticulately.

The camera rotates above the character; the visuals are close up, intimate and detailed. The shot is lit, and though this portion of the film is not fully saturated, the colors appear stark in the lighting. The space she occupies throughout this scene is minimal, almost completely empty, in this particular section, this fact supports the clear aesthetic implication that her body and the various contusions on her skin are the most visually interesting and compelling thing in the room. For the most part, the section is shot close up, however in a medium shot, the entire spectacle of her body becomes apparent. The aesthetic significance of this scene emerges from simplicity, excess and pacing. The cuts are minimal and the shots generally tight and focused. After at cut at 1:19:27, the camera pans down to a close up of the character's entire face. The movement of the camera is slow and steady, the moment in the scene are the character's slow and delicate movements. Her face is the a tapestry of suffering, eyes are wide and vacant. As the shot progresses, fade cuts occur, moving the angle or distance slightly but maintaining the harrowing focus on her damaged body. There is a disembodied whisper, which speaks to the character, the only dialog since the beginning of the scene and finally the scene concludes with the character actually speaking, "I miss you".

**Destruction:**

Scenes of destruction, they can be identified by their violation of the conventional patterns of the horror film. They disrupt narrative flow and conflict through the dissolution of the visual environment into a state of unmediated chaos. Usually, even in a scene of tremendous destruction the destruction emerges from an antagonistic force and is enacted on victims. In the
New Extreme Gore film the scene of destruction undoes the entire space of the scene visually and sets the destroyed body as the centerpiece of this undoing, as opposed to the linear structure of the antagonist/protagonist structure. In considering what is distinctive and productive about the scene of complete destruction on a visual level, as opposed to its narrative value it becomes fundamental to consider the scene in terms of bodies and the spaces the inhabit, rather than the locations they inhabit in the flow of the story. The scene being considered here is the main torture scene of the main character in *Hostel* (2005). The subject is a young, American tourist. The scene takes place well into the narrative of the film and is the second lengthy torture sequence. What is particularly interesting about this scene is the damage that is done to all the bodies in the scene, and more so how this damage is spatially and physically oriented through the positioning of the camera.

More so, I've chosen to enter the scene after the majority of casual torture has been inflicted, as the scene actually makes a deliberate turn away from traditional torturer/tortured structure towards a non-linear destruction. Through the first part of the scene, the subject is very vocal - crying and screaming. However, as he begs his captor to stop and finally transitions into his basic knowledge of German when he realizes the captor’s nationality, it becomes too difficult to continue with the torture. As a result of this he is fitted with a ball gag at 1:02:22. It is following this moment that the scene begins to move toward its chaotic visual conclusion and style. As the gag is being buckled on, there is a medium shot of the captor, and the sound of the buckle being done is audible. However, the subject only becomes visible as the camera pulls back and pans across, to focus on a close up of his head and shoulders. Stylistically, this focused shot on his head and thus, facial expression becomes the hinge point for the rest of the scene. As
he is whimpering around the gag, the image of the captor is visible, though blurred over his left shoulder. The soundtrack in this scene is initially dominated by low, atmospheric sounds that don't interfere with the in scene noises of footsteps, clinking chains or muffled cries. A dialoguesque shot-reverse-shot emerges as he begins to descend more into panic, shaking his head back and forth as the man looks calmly upon him. In the second moment of the shot-reverse-shot, he cries and struggles, the angle is such that his head and left shoulder are visible, with the small, dark, industrial chamber visible behind him. Slowly, the captor's black, rubber-gloved hand enters the frame, holding a black handgun to the subject’s forehead, launching him into an even deeper sense of panic. The scene, at this point, is steady as it returns to the face of the captor, looking down at his victim with a look of earnest seriousness. The soundtrack at this point reaches a kind of crescendo, pushing the stillness of the captor and the ever-increasing sounds of anguish from the subject into a moment of almost frenzy. In the final moment of the shot-reverse-shot, the captor casts his eyes upward, as if looking at something over his victim's head. Then, the angle shifts to allow the viewer to see the subject, watching his captor walk towards the workbench and drop the gun with a metallic clang. As the captor walks out of the frame, the subject in the foreground becomes blurred as the gun (on the workbench) is the focus of the image. It is the transition from one mechanized weapon to the next, the chainsaw then begins to launch the scene into a state of visual destruction. At this point the relationship between the two characters is firmly established, one at the mercy of the other. However, the gun immediately begins to undo that, not only because it fails to enact the kind of bodily sundering the other tools would offer, but also is positioned such that the bodies of the scene become briefly irrelevant. It is at this point that the scene removes itself from language and the sounds of
the chainsaw and the inhuman cries of the subject become the governing aural message of the scene. As a result of this the scene degenerates into a soundscape of chaos as well as a visual space which is mediated by the movements of the unpredictable chainsaw. Furthermore, the scene is launched to this point by language, after the subject begs for mercy in the captor’s native German, and is fitted with the ball gag.

Once the captor is out of the frame, the logic of the scene allows it to fully dislodge from the original expectations of a death scene. The subject rocks back and forth frantically, and as he does so, the camera refocuses on his face and then cuts to a shot of his feet, from behind and beneath the chair. At this moment there is no soundtrack apart from the noise the metal chair, his shackles and the concrete floor produce in his panic. The shot continues to focus on his feet, when the sound of a revving chainsaw begins. Surprisingly, as the chainsaw bursts into life, the subject’s feet become still, and the camera pans up the length of his back, with only his hands and eventually his head, giving away movement. The soundtrack also picks up again, a building musical score, moving with the chainsaw and matching the camera's visual ascent of the bodies. At this moment the body on screen is brought back to the fore. Much of the scene is shot in such a way that the space they occupy is irrelevant, and rather the faces and voices are the central visual focus. The shot then cuts to the captor reentering the frame, presumably armed with the buzzing chainsaw. He is positioned in the center of the shot, lit from the front and is seen raising the chainsaw dramatically over his head. The shot then cuts back to an extreme close up of the subject's face, at first the scene is established as the captor continuing toward the conclusion, however it is continually marked by a steadiness and slowness of development that visually prevents the audience from getting to the goal. The fact that the scenes have been so heavily
oriented on the characters as objects, and not on any wounding action undoes the narrative of "torture" running through the scene and instead builds a much more harmonious, communicative system.

The scene cuts back to an extreme close of up of the subject's face, as he squeals, again we see his feet kicking frantically, as the shot reverts back to the view of the captor, the chainsaw still held high above his head, steadily he begins to lower the chainsaw toward the subject's face, the shot cuts to frame the subject from the shoulders up, positioned sideways, with the chainsaw entering the shot in front of him. The chainsaw is held in front of him, hovering inactively from 1:03:35 to 1:03:44. The shot moves in to an extreme close up of his face and the edge of the blade, as the relentless buzzing and the music move toward crescendo. It is at this point that the scene reaches its pinnacle. Despite the fact that there has been almost no bloodshed by this point, the scene as been visually constructed to avoid any contact with flesh or reminders of the relevance of the body to the overall scene. The scene cuts back to the captor, still holding the chainsaw aloft, but having withdrawn. When the shot cuts back to the subject, he is sputtering. As he vomits and chokes behind the gag, the scene begins to descend towards violence. However, this violence does impose upon the body from outside, but instead the effect of the events in the room cause the body to manifest a kind of internal violence, which the audience is given access to through the vomit. The body of the victim becomes compromised, and the element of gore manifests, not through the direct influence of the tool on the body or even the captor on the body, but by way of the bodies' internal response. The shot again, frames the subject from the shoulders up. The moment is characterized by light greenish fluid emerging in spurts from behind the black ball. His head jerks back and forth, while the sound of the
ineffective chainsaw reminds the viewer of the desired visual path to this kind of bodily suffering.

Once the scene cuts to his feet, the reminder is clear: pain is occurring, but it is not really being inflicted. The pain in the scene is generated from the subject, rather than from the captor hurting the subject directly. The passage of pain takes an indirect route between the two. In realizing the potential of losing his purchase to a death not of his own design, the captor places the chainsaw, while it continues to run on the ground in order to remove the gag. At this point, the gag is removed and a projectile of sickly green vomit shoots from the subject's mouth and is shot hitting the ground in a luminous, slimy puddle. Similarly, the ball gag, projected forth, hits the concrete. From this moment, this scene becomes a catalog of the floor. Elements are finally oriented visually in the space of the chamber and seen as a part of a system, but not one which operates linearly, but instead works more along the lines of the vomit. The unexpected spray and spurt are characteristic of the kind of non-directed violence to follow. As the subject gasps for breath, the shot-reverse-shot resumes. However, in this instant, the captor is not reestablished a inflictor of pain and instead occupies a role of almost pain-seeking - as he curiously puts his gloved fingers in the path of his victim's frantic, snapping jaw. Followed by an extreme close-up of the chainsaw, it’s buzzing again takes precedence over the score, and it reenters. The work of the chainsaw, audibly and visually becomes the aesthetic hallmark of destruction.

Finally, for the first time in the film there is a moment of significant, bodily trauma and bloodshed when the chainsaw is used to chop through part of the subject's hand. In this shot the true chaos of the destructive gore scene is articulated. The hand is shot close up, it is unclear whether the injury was intentional. However, what becomes the driving focus of the shot is the
expulsion of vital, red blood from the damaged appendage. In just the same manner as the gag and the vomit, the two, bloody severed digits are shot as they are flung to the ground. The camera focuses on the fingers and the dirty floor a moment, as one of them barely twitches. The shot then cuts back to the subject who is now screaming in agony as the chainsaw continues to sing over the score. The shot then focuses on an out of focus view of the chamber, no bodies are visible, until the subject raises his hand before him. While the scene, to this point, has incorporated a wide array of destruction from a multitude of angles, it is at this moment that the viewer is offered a bloody and physical injury, held up like a sacrifice in the frame. The fingers have not so much between chopped off, so much as the slice goes through the upper portion of the palm, severing part of the palm, and with it the ring and little finger. As a result, the view presented is of the hand, covered in blood, with the sliced portion facing the camera. The three remaining digits flail about as the hand rotates to allow the viewer to see the mass of severed muscle and bone. The internal view of the flesh demonstrates the first clear marker of the body being fully compromised from the outside, but without intention or linear structure. The injury to the hand is accidental, and it becomes more important to dwell on that injury for about 3 full seconds, rather than consider the moment of the characters surrounding the hand. When the subject's face becomes visible in the frame again, the destroyed hand always accompanies it.

As the captor advances on him, with the chainsaw at the ready, the shot moves to the floor where the disembodied fingers are, as his boot hits the gooey mess, he slips. The scene then becomes deeply visually fragmented. The shot is at ground level and allows us to see the character fall, and then cuts to a view of his upper right thigh as the blade of the chainsaw severs through his limb by accident. Briefly the shot cuts to his face, obscured by goggles and a medical
mask, but screaming, and then back to the chainsaw and the leg. The camera is positioned above and slightly to the right of the knee on the leg being severed and thus allows for a view of the emergent stump. In the 4 seconds that the severing of the leg occurs there are two shots of the character's face, which are both brief as the time is invested in the view of the internal structures of the limb and most importantly the spurs of blood from the femoral artery showering the now severed portion. Once the leg is completely severed, the shot pulls back to allow a view of the stump twitching and the leg's two matched parts. This portion of the scene focuses entirely on the vision of the severed limb, just as the shot of the fingers did. Again, this injury is non-linear, in that it occurs outside of the expected structure of the horror movie. The most violence injury of the scene is not inflicted on one character by the other, but on the antagonist by mistake. In this it presents a kind of destruction outside of the conventional method and is more associated with the chaos of damaged flesh than the cause of that damage.

The shot then moves to the chainsaw, now idly buzzing along the floor, and the back to the subject as he struggles to free himself from the chair. The shots that follow are a fast-paced collection, moving between the subject's struggle to get loose, the captor's attempt to drag himself back to the chainsaw, with interspersed shots of the gun laying on the workbench and the chainsaw on the ground. All these shots are marked by the inclusion of blood, on the floor, the bodies of the victims and most importantly amongst the severed limbs. This eventually reaches a fever pitch when the subject reaches the gun and shoots the captor in the back of the head. This is shot from the front, allowing for a dramatic spray from behind the figure. When the subject shoots his captor the whole initial structure of the scene is undone visually because it becomes an re-articulation of the earlier shots of the gun that never reached fulfillment. Finally, the camera
pulls back to a long shot from a high angle, allowing a full view of the room. There is a dirty broken mirror on one wall, a low, industrial light on the adjacent wall. The workbench is toppled over, as is the chair. The focus of the image created is the two bodies, both effectively destroyed in a dark red mass of blood all over the floor. The space is at last emphasized, but only in the descent into a visual chaos dependent on total destruction rather than a close visual interrogation of the processes of suffering. The shot of the room lasts from 1:05:16 to 1:05:25, allowing a comprehensive view of the state of the space.

Conclusions:

Through the exploration of these examples of New Extreme Gore and their particularities attempt to reconcile the disparate elements of extreme visual violence as a kind of aesthetic project. The violence, both psychological and physical, in these films are often identified as gratuitous. However, this is a clear visual statement being articulated through relationship between the bodies in these scenes, the mise en scene, as well as with the sound, editing and cinematography of the scenes. In Scarry’s “Bodies in Pain” she draws attention to the relationship between language and pain, “Torture inflicts bodily pain that is itself language-destroying” (Scarry 19) these scenes work towards creating a visual language which attempts to articulate the inexpressible. Regardless of narrative motivation, the scenes of extreme violence in these examples all work to create a visual conversation. Regardless of the value judgments associated with scenes of extreme violence and bodily gore, these are films whose construction is careful.

What becomes aesthetically interesting about these scenes are how they make use of consistent visual effects and similar characteristics to move along or against conventional
perceptions of the display of bodies and pain in the context of horror. While New Extreme Gore is a sub-genre of horror, part of what defines it is the manner in which the visual elements operate within the visual tropes in the greater genre. The New Extreme Gore film's obsession with the processes of suffering, particularly in the scenes of torture and of abjection creates a space where the film demands the audience be occupied by sights and sounds that are generally considered unpleasant. As a result of this the positioning of the camera and the work of the shot become tremendously important in the creation of scenes that are even consumable. Furthermore, the expression of the body as a site of suffering in film, one where the minute actions of damage and injury can create a visual dynamic transcendent of the narrative. The implications of the visual elements of gore can be connected to the affective response to the scenes of bodily violence.

One of the aesthetic elements of the New Extreme Gore film, which should not be ignored, is the aesthetic value of the visual effects that comprise in the intense visual material of these scenes. Due to the artificial nature of the wounds on screen, each bruise, scab, stab and puddle of blood is selected and added to the material of the scene, either digitally or through make-up effects. There is a distinct style and look to these films. It is one which is simultaneously dependent on the apparatus of the film and the work of the camera, while also moving away from traditional notions of film, particularly those tethered to narrative. Similarly, New Extreme Gore asks the viewer to participate in a kind of hyper-real hyper-formalism, one which asserts the importance of the body and its realistic depiction while also maintaining a highly stylized visual experience. It is this style which serves as the motivating function of the scene, rather than violence as an explicating element of narrative. In a sense, the skill with which
the gash is constructed, applied, lit and shot is more important than personality of the character or even the fact that the character is being tortured.
CHAPTER III: THE EROTICS OF NEW EXTREME GORE

The screaming goes on, as he flails wildly. Again you hear the scalpel, and Josh screams on and on. You then hear the clink of the restrains being opened as the man rises up from behind the chair in the background. He remains bent over and presumably undoes Josh's handcuffs. The shot is off his hands the cuffs are removed. The man stands, and walks way from the Josh. A shot from over Josh's shoulder, sees the man walk toward the door he entered through. He pauses, and smiles, "you are free to go." He then opens the door and moved out of the shot briefly. You again see Josh from the chest up, his body hunched over, breathing frantically. The man leaves the room, smiling and whistling to himself. The shot returns to Josh as the whistling fades, his breath rattles out of his chest as the non-diagetic sound returns. The soundtrack intensifies as Josh attempts to stand.

The shot cuts quickly to his foot, you see the slice through his Achilles' tendon stretch open, exposing lacerated muscle as he screams in pain and falls forward, catching himself on his bloodied hands. He hits the ground, and in a close up of his head and chest on the floor, the dust rises around him from his impact, string of spit and vomit hanging from his face. His eyes are full of tears as he looks desperately up toward the door. The music speeds up as he begins to pull himself on his stomach toward the door. We see a point of view shot of the door as he approaches it. This shot-reverse-shot moves back and forth between Josh and his goal as he is desperately pulling himself along. His eyes full of resolve, again, you see the door, moving ever closer as he proceeds. As he gets closer, the shot cuts to a side view. He is covered in blood and sweat, pulling himself along the dirty floor.
Introduction:

This chapter intends to read New Extreme Gore films, through the dynamic between living and dying laid out in Georges Bataille's "Tears of Eros" and "Eroticism". This emerges from a reading of Bataille's founding definition, "eroticism is assenting to life even in death" (Bataille, "Eroticism" ii). The violence and particularly torture, both sexual and otherwise displayed in these films focuses on a continued progress of life even until the point of death. In fact, the death is the undoing of the scene and the moment where pleasure ceases to be possible, both inside and outside the narrative. When Bataille considers the relationship between death and eroticism he comes to the point regarding the nature of the erotic, "In essence, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation" ("Eroticism” 16). It is this connection, the marriage between eroticism and the inherently violent that allows representations of death and violence to carry a continuous erotic charge. In addition to “Eroticism”, Bataille’s work “Tears of Eros” which emerged from “Eroticism” he explores the nature of the erotic, the sacred and death in terms of the visual representations of these elements. It is at this point, where Bataille becomes particularly useful in thinking about film as a form of eroticism, death and suffering in representation. In thinking Bataille’s theories on the nature of the erotic and death through the particularities of the cinematographic elements of the film and how they reconfigures the visual implications of torture, I intend to reimagine the New Extreme Gore film as a space continuously erotic, regardless of narrative and dependent upon aesthetics. In doing so intends to complicate the relationship between the eroticism of death with dynamics surrounding pornography and violent sex in Linda William's "Hard Core", particularly in terms of her exploration of the 1975 film, Snuff and the boundaries between the real and artificial, how that effects firstly the genre of
the film, and where films which appear to contain "real" violence may be considered
pornography as opposed to horror, or at least walk a fine line. Finally, this chapter seeks to
consider, the role of the familiar system of film economics as a mediating space in the
determination of where media falls in terms of hardcore pornography and horror, in relation to
the viewer's ability to discern the real.

While images of gore and representations of violence are inherently problematic, both
socially and visually, they complicate further when an element of sexuality comes into play. The
issue of whether there is a relationship between extreme violence and sex can be boiled down to
the aesthetic connections between gore films and hardcore pornography. Complicating this is the
emergent relationship between the visualizations of violence and the erotic and the interactions
between them that Bataille explores in “Tears of Eros”. The moment where Bataille see’s the
images of the Dionysian cults which appear on the pottery of the period as a space where the
sexuality of the images meets with the tragic resulting in eroticism, “Tragic, moreover, above all,
and eroticism ended up bringing it into a domain of tragic horror” (“Tears of Eros” 66). It is this
moment, where the erotic and the tragic become merged into a space that can visually manifest
as horror that the New Extreme Gore film functions. Bataille goes on to explore the inherently
violent potentials of the erotic, a space that that though sexual is possessed of “depths, far
beyond its ethereal forms, [and] are infernal” (“Tears of Eros” 69). As the negotiation of the state
of the erotic and the violent as the moment of the dissolution of subjectivity, there appears logic
for the experience of such visualizations of suffering as a rationalization of the dynamics
between death and the erotic. The reason why, at this stage, cite hardcore pornography, rather
than the genre as a whole is because just as New Extreme Gore operates as a small, sub genre of
horror as a whole, hardcore, particularly kink and fetish pornography operates in the same way. However, more so than the formal, tonal and aesthetic commonalities between these two visual productions is the way New Extreme Gore manifests as an erotic form. As far as Bataille is concerned the association between the two states, violence (gore) and erotica are perpetually intertwined, the rationalizations of the erotic, often as the sacred becomes the space where the subject becomes fractured by the unity of the disparities of the violent erotic. The commonplace term, "torture porn" or "gorn" has emerged in the US as a catch-all for the American, explicitly violent, gore film. What the term implies socially is that films such as these operate like porn, but instead of making use of sex as a tantalizing and arousing element, they use violence, torture and bloodshed. While there is undeniable similarity between the visual images on screen, the aesthetic content of the hardcore, particularly BDSM porn film and the gore film, could be the similar, both in style and the treatment of the body (until the point of death) pornography is tied to the articulation of the "real", ideally actual sex and actual violence, and in turn, horror is the scene of the artificial.

This designation of pornography and horror as opposing sides of realism emerges from “Hard Core” in which Linda Williams negotiates, firstly pornography as a space of critical engagement and secondly as one which is able to operate opposite horror as constructions of violence and eroticism. Williams describes the figures in the violent sex scene of the porn film as “the human “monsters””. In her description of the dynamics of sex and violence “the human “monsters” of such films rarely rape, they more often kill; but killing functions as a form of rape” (Williams 191). What Williams achieves is moment of merge comparable with Bataille’s perception of the erotic and violent.
If the visual representation of violence and gore in the film is the motivating factor, both for production and consumption, then the presence and formation of those scenes of violence become the governing visual order of the film. It is a visual order that creates a space of constant conflict. It is a conflict borne out of the merging of elements, and one, which is represented through the complex visualizations of the body and violence done to the body in New Extreme Gore. The work of the New Extreme Gore film’s narrative is to move the viewer from one scene of visual gore, torture or violence to the next, with this narrative’s content being fundamentally inconsequential. Similarly, the narrative, if it can be described as such in violent, hardcore pornography functions to move from one sexual scene to the next. While the sex scene in non-pornographic film works as an element of the narrative, a piece which contributes to the development of character and narrative, the scene in the gore film and in the porn film are the object the narrative is moving towards. What is most significant, beyond the stylistic similarities between the genres is the way in which the body on screen in the New Extreme Gore film operates. I argue that regardless of the presence of sex on screen, the form and location within, or rather outside the economic structure of the Hollywood horror film allows the New Extreme Gore film to consistently operate as an erotic text. The eroticism of these films is rooted in their aesthetic treatment of the body as a center point for the visual interest of the scene. Furthermore, the body and the shattering of that body, physically and metaphysically becomes the driving force behind the film. The notion that whenever bodies are figured on screen they function in terms of visual pleasure and thus generate a kind of latent eroticism allows the body to move fluidly from the horrific to the erotic.
In an effort to consider the variety of ways in which eroticism manifests in New Extreme Gore as a facility of the aesthetic construction of theses films, I am examining the Saw franchise in terms of the use of editing and form as an indication of a formal eroticism, even in the absence of sex. Also, to examining the scenes of particularly graphic and blended sex and violence which occurs in Gaspar Noé's New French Extremist film, Irreversible and its negotiation of the complexities of scenes constructed around sex, specifically rape, and the line between the designation of sex on screen and the pleasure of cinema. Finally, to explore the aesthetic space that emerges from the collapsing of sex, violence and gore into a continuous visual articulation in Srdan Spasojevic's A Serbian Film.

**Saw and the Pornographic Form: situations where you are quite literally fucked:**

One of the most readily identifiable differences between the French New Extremist productions, the New Gore films in the US and A Serbian Film is the presence or absence of actual sex on screen. At an astonishing worldwide total of $870.4m the Saw films constitute the highest grossing horror franchise in history. While the films are often criticized from their graphic violent content, they are not sexually explicit. However, I would argue that the construction of the Saw films in terms of editing and cinematography align these films closely with pornography. The distinctive element which comes into play is less concerned with what is occurring around bodies on screen, but how those things are shot, and edited together. Each of the Saw films operates similarly to pornography in the move towards the development of a “frenzy of the visible” as Williams describes it, a space where pornography becomes, through Williams reading of Foucault, “a “transfer point” of knowledge, power, and pleasure” (Williams 36). The films manifest this transfer through the carefully constructed articulation which comes
through the stylistic elements of the film. Whether the aesthetic similarities of the *Saw* films renders them a *kind* of pornography. Linda Williams draws the distinction between pornography and the pornographic, in an example of the "non-explicit sexual violence of Brian de Palma's *Dressed to Kill*" (Williams 29). While the violence of the *Saw* series is artificial, it is also the very edge of the MPAA NC-17 rating, which implies a considerable degree of visual realism. While the fact of the artificial in the horror movie, and particularly those concerned with the dissection of bodies, is important, because the violence, regardless of its realism or medical accuracy is not real, these film renderings of bodies are affective. Similarly to the faked orgasm in the porn film, the faked torture or death scene on screen can be just as enjoyable to the audience.

First and foremost the narrative construction of the *Saw* series allows for each film to be fractured in compact scenic sections. The narrative of the *Saw* films is constructed around a series of traps and characters with partially interwoven plot lines. The result of this is that they are able to move through the narrative without having to be located in the same space. This allows the films to adopt a structured logic of episodes or vignettes, particularly in terms of the action with occurs in each episode and location. Each section of the films either moves toward a trap scene, or is actually a trap scene. The episodic style of pornography is similar, in that the purpose of the film is to move from focused episodic sex scene to the next. The perfunctory goal of the porn film is the visual display of sex and sexual activity, the goal of the torture film is assure that the audience experiences the violence they desire in the most convenient form.

The *Saw* films are organized along comparable episodic lines on the level of the entire film's structure, however, on the sub-structural level of the scene the cinematography of the films
and particularly the way in which the camera frames and the body serves a similar end. The body in the porn film becomes the site of action, the body is figured in the same way in each trap scene. Allowing the machinery to work on the body the way sex, or sexual apparatus works on the body in the sex scene. While each of the seven films has their individually exemplary moments, the scene I’ve chosen to use an example that locates the body through editing and cinematography as an object, and a site of action. What is interesting about the orientation of the body in this sense is that in the porn film the “action” occurs on, or even in the body, similarly, in Saw the action is placed on the flesh of the subject and usually as the trap operates, within the body. Just as it does in the porn film, the body in the Saw film becomes a space where the film orients itself in order to allow the viewer to experience visual pleasure through the visual articulation of violence. The film operates under the assumption that the audience is perpetually seeking of the completion of violence, the full compromise of the body and makes extensive use of the cinematic apparatus to achieve a visual articulation of this goal. In her comparison of the porn film and the Slasher horror film, Williams draws attention to the work of the films on the body within, it “priess open the fleshy secrets of normally hidden things. As Clover notes, the genre’s obsession with maiming and dismemberment exposes “in extraordinarily credible detail” the “opened body” (Williams 191). It is this obsession with the exposure of the “extraordinarily credible detail” of the body that marks the body in the New Extreme Gore film. I would argue that the New Extreme Gore film takes the eviscerating bodily activity of the Slasher horror to its logical conclusion: one of a full, panoramic view of bodily destruction, erotically charged through the stylistic elements of film. Of all the Saw films, the one which is most clearly a pornography of violence is Saw III (2006).
The scene I've chosen to examine in particular is The Rack, which occurs from 1:21:48 - 1:28:24. The trap is such that a man is screwed into a rack, through his hands, feet and head. Once the timer is activated in turn the gears begin to turn twisting each limb, and eventually his neck to the point of breaking. In order to stop the trap a second figure has to get to a key, and in doing so trigger a shotgun. The question posed is "are you willing to take a bullet for the man who killed your son, does do unto others as you would have them do unto you apply here?" and while the nature of the trap and the circumstance by which it occurs is important, what is more relevant is the manner in which this slow and excruciating torture process is filmed as if it is a kind of process toward eventual relief, that moment being death in Saw III as opposed to the orgasm in the porn film. In the overall narrative of Saw the traps are linked to a moral logic that attempts to address misgivings of the characters involved. What this would typically serve to do is provide the characters with a moral logic, one that assures the viewer is able to understand and accept their rationale. However, due to the actual treatment of the body in the trap, the attempt at morality falls away, as the machine is the governing figure in the scene. When the audience's perception of a moral killer is replaced with automation, all that remains is the infernal logic of the machine, one that operates outside of morality and always toward completion of its goal, destroying the body in question on its way.

While there is a relationship between the two figures on screen throughout the film, the more important element is the treatment of the body in the shot and the emphasis placed on that body as a site where action, and visually compelling action can take place. In the opening shots of the scene, the entire body of the subject is visible. The scene is set in a chamber of a warehouse, evoking the industrial, mechanical nature of the trap. The body is lit from above, and
as a set of fluorescent lights come on it becomes apparent that he is not fully dressed. The fact that the body in the scene is partially naked serves a dual aesthetic purpose: firstly, in order to properly see the damage inflicted on the body it needs to be bare, and secondly, in order to create realistic visual body effects and have those be effective the body should be bare. What this does is create a visual parallel between the body as site of torture and the body as living, manipulatable entity. Being able see skin as it breaks, sweats, or as the subject cries, or gasps for breath allows the viewer to experience suffering in terms of a full bodily experience. The camera zooms in to a medium close up of the subject's upper torso and head. From this view it becomes apparent the degree to which the body on screen is subject to the view of the camera.

At the moment where the trap is explained (by way of a tape recorder hanging around the subject's neck) the camera movements assure the viewer of the subject's intense physical connectivity. As the voice on the tape says, "the rack", the film speeds up and from 01:23:19 - 01:23:24 the color balance shifts slightly, a brighter, more yellow tone as it quickly examines the hands and feet of the subject in the rack. Even before the process of twisting, the images are dominated by the fusing notion, the assembling of subject and machine - there are trickles of blood emerging around the puncture points where the device is screwed through the feet and hands. As the scene proceeds, prior to the activation of the device, the shots linger between the face of the subject in the trap, tears now streaming down his cheeks, screaming in terror, and the second figure’s face, presumably as transfixed as the viewer on the bodily spectacle before him. In a sense the second figure’s inability to act to save the man's life becomes linked more to the aesthetic spectacle of destruction than any narrative construction.
At 01:24:07 the machine activates, at the moment of activation the camera is set on the clock timing the moments of the trap. However, directly preceding this is an extreme close up of the subject's face, wrought with fear and pain. As the machine begins to work on the body of the subject the shots move between the space and the other characters in the room as figures who are perpetually implicated in the action of the shot and in depth focus on the body in the machine. *Saw III* spares no expense in allowing the viewer to hear and see the body breaking, and perhaps most viscerally, to hear the bones snapping. The shots are fast paced and frenetic as they move around the room and only settle when they reach the exposed flesh and ensuing exposed bone and blood. In a sense the scene works toward fracturing the body in order for the viewer to experience that up close visual contact with the violated body. Just as the scene is constructed in the porn film, the scene becomes increasingly frenzied as the pain and intensity of the torture increase. In considering the filming and structure of this scene in terms of a pornography of violence, it works towards a frenzied point of release. The machine is set to work on the body and the camera is chiefly concerned with the machinations of that mission, one which eventually launches the treatment of the body from a space of horror to one of transcendent eroticism. That moment begins at the point where the subject has endured the twisting destruction of body his legs and arms and the mechanism begins to twist his neck. Naturally, the process of twisting a neck results in much faster damage than legs or arms and the final moment so the scene are in slow motion and in an extreme close-up as the machine clicks ominously and the subject's head is fully rotated. The viscera of the wounds as well as the intimate contact between the two figures in the space act as a concessionary moment, the climax of violence resulting in grisly death.

*Irreversible* and Sexual Violence:
"In 1970, an earlier Presidential Commission on Pornography had concluded that, unlike explicit depictions of violence, pornography has no measurable adverse social effects" (Williams 16). The concept that pornography is cited as a genre form, even as early as 1970, while "depictions of violence" which undoubtedly includes depictions as violence as those included in New Extreme Gore films presents an interesting question regarding the intersections between violence and sexual pornography and more importantly the spaces where the lines between the two blur. During the process of selecting films to focus on as exemplars of the kind of violence and gore that I was interested in, my initial decision to include, Gaspar Noé's 2002 film, *Irreversible* was met with trepidation. In part due to the earliness of the film, and its effectively predating any unified sentiments regarding New French Extremism or New Gore. However, the film is undeniably a hyper-violent, gore film despite its unusual manner of dealing with the temporality of the narrative and the limited number of gore events in the content of the film. Two scenes are of particular interest in terms of thinking about the formal and aesthetic connections between New French Extremism and the erotica. Firstly, the beating and death which occurs in a night club, from 00:22:44 to 00:24:03 as a very clear stylistic example of the way in which bodies are figured in the New Extreme Gore film, but also how the attachment of a sexuality renders the scene more affectively complicated in terms of viewing practice. I have chosen to focus on the scene in which a young woman is raped in an underpass for this section (00:43:28 - 00:54:07). The rape scene is an interesting aesthetic moment that both lingers close to the

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8 The scene involves the killing of one man by another with a fire extinguisher. Effects which are startlingly realistic and rendered in terms of the visual and the audio to create a moment of pause in the darkness of the film to give way to the clear, and images unnecessary in terms of narrative but instead to intense visual effect.
stylistic elements of gonzo pornography as well as undoing notions of the body as a site of perpetual eroticism.

The rape scene is particularly interesting in terms of the orientation of the camera. Throughout the majority of the scene, the camera is completely stationary. The scene is almost entirely one shot, as if the camera is set near ground level filming the events in the frame. It is only once the act is finished that the shot shifts and the camera angle changes. During the act the camera functions in the manner of a voyeuristic viewer, perpetually focused on the events on the screen and unable to look away. It is precisely this compulsion that complicates the notion of the body as the always erotic. Despite the provocative and indeed, sexy appearance of the scenes establishment and the misé en scene, it is something that could proceed in two very different directions, the overall aesthetic mode of Irreversible prevents the bodies on screen from manifesting in terms of sex, but instead, re-imagines the sex on screen in the same vein as torture. “Perversions “implanted” in cinematic discourse itself, the sadistic, masochistic, voyeuristic, and fetishizing structures that operate throughout the whole of cinema to deny the female subjectivity” (Williams 189) work in terms of the New Extreme Gore film to allow the female body to act as a transfer point, where subjectivity is fractured by the presence of Bataillesque eroticism and death. Instead of the aesthetics of gore manifesting in terms of an erotic power, the eroticism of sexuality, and particularly of the female body on screen, is re-figured as a moment of the collapse of eroticism into tortuousness.

The section of the narrative begins with a young woman walking down into the underpass. The shot is filmed as if the camera is effectively following her; we see her upper back, shoulders and head. The costuming in the scene is particularly important, as it is what
allows the character's body to act as the visual focal point for the first part of the scene. She is wearing a white, satin halter neck dress, and has her hair in a thick ponytail, which swings back and forth while she walks. The movement of the camera and the location and movement of the body on screen create a sense of sexuality surrounding the character. As she walks down into the underpass the lighting changes vastly. The walls of the underpass are dark red and periodically lit from above. The darkness and color gives the space a harsh visual tone. As she moves through the tunnels, her body, specifically bare back and shoulders remain the focal point of the shot. In the main tunnel under the street the light moves down the walls and over the ceiling of the space. The ground is gray concrete, and littered with bits of trash. At 00:42:44, the woman’s body appears as just a silhouette against the bright colors, as a pair of figures enter the other end of the tunnel and walk towards her. As they move into the light, we see them from behind the young woman, and presumably, as she sees them, they the two people are a taller woman in a provocatively short red dress and a shorter dark-haired man. As she is about to walk past them, the man pushes the woman against the wall and they have an altercation. As this is going on, the young woman remains in the tunnel, seemingly unsure of whether to intervene or to attempt to get away from the incident. However, the man realizes she has seen their fight and accosts her. He frantically pursues her over a brief space in the tunnel, the camera, at this point, follows the action. The moments are unstable, as if the camera is handheld and is simply following the woman’s movements on the screen. Even, in this already troubling part of the scene, her body maintains the location of being the center focus of the shot. The camera moves with a kind of obsession, and it is this closeness and figuring of her female body that affords the scene an ambiguous sexuality, one where she is visually and thus, sexually compelling, but also already
figured as a victim. Despite the fact that the action on screen is unpleasant and she is clearly
distressed, the camera moves on her body the same way it did before.

At 00:43:28, the tone of the scene shifts once the man pulls a knife and begins to threaten
her with it. It is also in this segment that the emphasis on her body and the now misplaced
eroticism of her appearance is articulated within the film’s narrative as the male figure begins to
treat her sexually, as well as orienting the eroticism of her body as the focal point of the section,
as the camera follows the movement of his hands on her body. The shot is of the two figures
from the waist up. She is pinned against the wall by the man; the distance of the tunnel is visible
behind him. The space around them is primarily dark and punctuated with blocks of color. The
camera remains still throughout the duration of the section against the wall. Once the content of
the film takes a noticeable turn, as the man begins to make increasingly explicit comments, while
touching and kissing the woman. While her behavior, becomes increasingly panicked, as she
cries and begs to be let go, the camera and now the opposing figure operate regardless of her
state. The implication of this is a moment where the eroticism of the scene becomes peculiarly
mingled with the cruelty and harshness of it.

At 00:44:45 there is camera movement. The shot follows the movement of the two bodies
as the man lowers her down to the ground. It is important to note that all of this action occurs
during on continuous take. There is no interruption. The result of this is a scene that does not
perpetually remind us of its artificiality. Similarly important is the soundtrack throughout the
scene. There is no score; instead the soundtrack consists of the dialog between the characters, the
woman’s cries, the sounds of their bodies moving in the space, and the sound of traffic above the
underpass. The only non-diagetic sound in the scene is the film's perpetual infrasound
soundtrack. The unobtrusive soundtrack in addition to the single take, low movement of the camera both draws attention to the images on screen, and the nature of the film, while simultaneously leaving the action onscreen strangely unmediated.

In the section that begins at 00:45:51, the shot is from ground level. She is pinned to the ground on her stomach, while the man is on top of her. Their heads are towards the camera, but at no point during the incident does either character look at the camera. The camera operates as a silent extension of the viewer. The question arises however whether the camera orients the viewer as shocked onlooker, unable to act, or rather as voyeur. This sex scene in *Irreversible* is an incredible 8 minutes in length. The entirety of the actual act is shot from a static camera position and it is only once the woman is attempting to pull back from the man that the camera moves. Again, despite the horrifying events on screen, the camera remains tethered to her body.

In the section following the event, she is curled up on the ground; she is in the center of the shot, her cardigan and handbag on the ground in the foreground. The man moves to stand over her. They are framed by the end of the hallway, with the lines of the walls creating depth of field, which allows the camera to remain in its original mode. At 00:52:58, the man kicks her in the face, uncurling her body and proceeds to kick her, as the camera remains still. The transition between physical threat, rape, and physical assault move the scene in and out of the space of torture, the entire scene is torturous to watch, and as a result the audience is perpetually made away of the articulation of the body in anguish. However, whether that anguish is framed as a manifestation of violence that happens to include rape is complicated by the isolated nature of

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Infrasound is a low frequency sound layered into the film. One of the supposed effects of infrasound in humans is pressure in the ears, discomfort, and unease. Effectively, it operates beneath the soundtrack as a way of adding a further unsettling element. It was used in *Irreversible* and also *Paranormal Activity* (2010) (Wikipedia, Infrasound).
the scene in a film which disorganizes its narrative. Parts of the man's body get cut by the border
of the frame, while the woman’s body remains fully framed by the red walls and the shot the
entire duration of the scene. There is never a point where the audience is unable to see her whole
body in the shot, and the majority of her skin, due to how disheveled she is. Eventually at,
00:53:42, the camera moves, as the man flips her over, the camera rushes forward over the pair
and reorients itself, in an extreme close up facing them looking down the tunnel in the other
direction. In this shot, both bodies are visible, but not clearly. They appear as a dark smudge
against the lit, red passage. Interestingly, in the most visceral and violent moment of the scene,
her body appears to be forgotten. Her face is only visible as the man pulls her head up, and
bashed her face viciously against the concrete. During this the camera does not focus on his face
at all. However, once he has finished, the camera moves up to frame him from below. At
00:53:48, her body is no longer in the shot for the first time in 13 minutes. It is at this moment
that the scene transforms from the potentially erotic violence being enacted on her body, to a
scene of torture, undoing the construction of her body.

*A Serbian Film:*

*A Serbian Film* released serves as an intriguing space where the potentiality of
pornography clashes with the aesthetic elements of the New Extreme Gore film. The film itself
deals with the production of a pornographic film, the last project of a talented porn actor
attempting achieve financial security for his wife and son. The film, though released in 2009 has
not found US distribution and remains tentatively on the international festival circuit, where it
receives mixed reviews. The film features a series of particularly unusual and exceptional scenes of sexual violence. All the scenes of gore in the film center around overtly sexual themes.

Aesthetically, the construction, setting and cinematography of these scenes is not a stylistic departure from other New Extreme Gore films. What makes the scenes of gore in A Serbian Film unusual is the inclusion of simultaneous gore, torture, death and sex. The film negotiates a meta-film narrative of an avant-garde porn film, which marries the relationship between sex and death in terms of the execution of not only real sex but real violence. There is no indication in the appearance of A Serbian Film that it is anything other than a slickly produced film with a clear agenda regarding notions of violence, realism and film's social and narrative potential. It does occupy a tenuous space outside the normative horror industry and thus has implications of the realism, or rather the artificiality of the violent sex on screen.

In Linda William's discussion of the 1976 film, Snuff she enters into an analysis of the effect of the production of the film. Snuff, like A Serbian Film was produced outside the US and features unfamiliar actors. In Snuff the film implies at the end that the majority of the violence has been fake, and then performs what is apparently the real violence of the film. The appearance is that once the scene cuts, there is unplanned "behind the scenes" violence. The effect of this is a moment where the films visual composition allows it to transcend the experience of traditional horror in the minds of the viewer. The violence in A Serbian Film operates similarly. When a film has a major distribution company behind it, there is a level of

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1 As of March 2011, A Serbian Film did receive US distribution. A highly edited version will appear in limited theatres across the US and an unedited version will be made available for download online.

2 While the entirety of Snuff is reminiscent of a violent porn film, after the narrative has concluded, the camera pulls back showing the set of the film and the crew. In this newly established space a final “murder” occurs, bringing into question the possibility that the violence of the narrative is artificial and the violence that appears after the narrative is possibly authentic.
assurance for the viewer. The viewer is assured that the violence in the film is artificial, regardless of its realism, because of the knowledge of how the film industry works. The simple thought, that a company like Lionsgate wouldn't distribute a film, which was a thinly veiled pornography or snuff film allows the violence of the film to move to truly remarkable levels without it negatively affecting the audience. The reason for this is that the viewer intuitively knows the amount of money tied into the production and distribution of horror films, and that when that much money is involved things are somehow "made safe". However, A Serbian Film does not have US distribution and as a result can only be viewed in unedited entirety in screening copies online. The result of streaming a film, without any economic context allows the content, both narrative and aesthetic to work differently. There is something difficult to define, though utterly unsettling about a film that sits outside the economic apparatus of the horror industry. What emerges is a set of aesthetic images that can only be discerned as artificial, as horror and not horrifying pornography based on the viewer's ability to discern whether the scene is real, from the visual effects.

The scene from the film I've chosen to examine in this context, occurs relatively early in the film. It acts as a remarkably graphic sex scene and death scene. The effect of the scene is one which is framed (in the internal narrative) as a scene of violent pornography and in literally framed by the camera as an erotic scene. However, as it proceeds into bloody violence the framing is maintained, as is the location of the scene in the film. The scene revolves around the main male character who has been involuntarily administered veterinary drugs having sex with a woman chained to a bed. During the course of the action, and in the frenzy he begins to viciously slap her, and then punch her. Eventually, at the height of frenzy a member of the crew
slips a machete into his hand and he is further goaded into striking the woman. The result is his repeated hacking at the back of her neck, while engaged in intercourse and continuing to do so once she has been completely decapitated. The scene is organized as a shoot for one of the scenes of the unusual porn film. It is also important to note that because of the format of the film it does not have consistent timestamps. As a result of this, this scene is not organized by time in the way my others are.

The scene occurs in the expected stark, industrial environment. The relationship between the body and these spaces creates a sense of visual displacement. Firstly, due to the minimal environment, there is no question of distraction; the action on the body is the most important thing. As the scene begins, there are flashes of the final state of the space. The quickly and flashing images of what hasn't yet occurred in the film's narrative create a sense of forbidding and actually undo some of the shock of the scenes that eventually transpire. Perhaps the most unusual and surprising effect of this entry point is its clear orientation of the film as being self-aware. Rather than attempting to create a sense of realism the film firmly establishes the need for visual viscera as the aesthetic priority. The scene begins with a dissolve, a naked woman being shackled on her stomach by her wrists to a bare metal framed bed. As soon as the male figure is undressed by the film's crew and let go, he is on the bed behind her, and penetrates her from behind and begins thrusting violently. At the goading of the film crew surrounding the bed, all of whom are off camera, he begins to slap her as he is penetrating her. As this is occurring the shots are occupied with her thighs and lower back.

The opening shots of the scene move between a shot of the blood splattered metal bed, the male figure’s eyes and back to a painting of The Last Supper covered in blood. These are
interspersed with very quick flashes of what appears to be a gouged human eye. This occurs as he is walking down a dark corridor toward the film set. Each flashing image is punctuated by bursts of heavy soundtrack. The color tone in the “real” time elements of the scene are blue grey, while the inserted shots are a warmer, sepia tone. As he enters the room, there is a pan shot of the camera crew and the film’s director. The nature of the scene is in the establishment of the porn being shot as a conscious meta-narrative. The audience is make aware of the filmic elements of *A Serbian Film* as well as the disjunction between the artificial creation of the scene on screen for the director and crew in comparison with the man (and presumably the woman’s experience).

The film creates a dynamic system between levels of reality, based on the character and audience perceptions of film boundaries. The entry into the room is shot both from his perspective as well as the inclusion of a hazed tone over the dialogue. It is as if the audience is listening to the scene through him. In this unusual moment of tethering the audience to the character there develops a sense of awareness of him as connected to the audience.

The shot of the woman being shackled to the bed is initially shot from beneath the bed, allowing the viewer to see her feet and lower body as she’s moved onto the bed. The shots appear to be from within the film inside the film. Her body becomes the centre point of the scene. Visually, her pale skin is in clear opposition to the blue/gray background, creating a visual canvas for the cascade of blood that follows. She becomes articulated in terms of the white bed, a visual continuation of the space. The woman becomes an objectified and construction spatial occupant. Her body retains a lot of the camera’s gaze, creating an erotic dialogue which emerges from the orientation of her as a sexualized female character. Very specific attention is paid by the camera to the clicking cuffs around her ankles and wrists. In this moment, the visual technique of
the scene does not seem like a horror movie, instead it errs into the territory of the bondage porn film. The final shot of her before the intercourse begins is of her body and face, she appears to have a cut on her lower lip and bruise on her cheekbone. Following this, the camera re-tethers to his gaze as he moves toward her body.

The scene then cuts to the actual occurrence of sex. The scene is at first shot from the end of the bed, through the bars of the headboard. This shot is from the same angle as the pan shot that the viewer sees as the woman is brought into the room. During the actual sex, the angles moves distinctly from shots that can be associated with the porn film and shots which are reminiscent of the New Extreme Gore film. The two visual constructs become interwoven. The expression on the woman’s face is neither agonized nor pleasured. However, the angle and style of shooting focuses on her experience. The following shot is angled upward, looking at the man’s expression as he is penetrating her. The shots move between these angles, shots of her from the side, focusing on her face, on the pair from behind his body. However, these are interwoven with shots of the earpiece in his ear, allowing the director to communicate with him.

In a shot from behind, presumably within the porn film, the man begins to slap the woman. As this is occurring she looks over her shoulder at him. The majority of shots in this section of the scene focus on his face. Again, we see her head through the bars of the bed, now looking increasingly agonized. The scene is then punctuated by a shot of the bed from behind the camera crew. The shot is framed by the dark silhouettes of the tripods and lighting apparatus. In this shot, it becomes completely apparent that the scene is professionally lit. The darkness is in contrast to the lit blue wall and white bed. As the action occurs in this brief shot it disassociates from being a horror film, and fully takes on its erotic potential. The sex in the scene thus far is
violent, rough and ambiguous, however it is neither hardcore, nor gory. The scene then reverts to the model of seeing the scene through the man’s perspective. The shot is of the back of the woman’s head and her back. She jerks around wildly as he punches into her back, leaving bright red welts on her skin. Though, by this point the scene is firmly launched into the space of extremely violent sex, the shot is from his perspective, a view that previously in the scene indicates the construction of *A Serbian Film* as meta-narrative, however, in this shot the angle implicates the action in terms of the point of view pornographic scene.

Once the action has reached a state of complete frenzy there is a shot of the two bodies, from the side, connected. A hand appears from off camera and gives the man a large, dark bladed machete. He continues to have sex with the woman briefly, before as the inner ear dialogue demands, “Hit her! Strike her!” the shot shifts to an above angle medium close up, where his hand, holding the machete is raised above his head and she looks up over her shoulder in panic. The camera then zooms to a an extreme close up of each of their eyes in succession, before focusing on her head and upper body framed by the bed, as he brings the machete down on the back of her neck, continuing to penetrate her. At the moment of impact, a spurt of dark red blood emerges, and a splatter is seen (the same splatter from the original sequence of images) across the painting. The shot then returns to her head, as a complete break down of the film’s eroticism takes place. Once the actual death of the woman is visualized on screen the sexuality of the scene falls into second place after the violence. The visual impact of the penetration of her neck with the machete and the spurting of the resulting wound overcome the erotic positioning of the intercourse that has occurred. In this instance the action of violence becomes the sex act. She is filmed as if she were at the point of orgasm, as the films only on-screen actual penetration occurs
of the blade into her neck repeatedly. The scene becomes increasingly bloody as it sprays up over the man, again, in the visual simulation of the moment of orgasm. Finally, as the final chop is made, decapitating the woman, the shot focuses on the bloody mass of her severed neck and hair, then on her lower body, as the man continues to have sex with her body and finally the shot moves to focus on her, still handcuffed, now bloody hand dangling off the side of the bed. The shot lingers on the bloody hand, before returning to her neck, which continues to spurt blood. Finally the sex scene concludes as he is pulled of her body, still thrusting by members of the camera crew. The final shot is of a drain in the floor, and dark red blood oozing toward the drain. The role of the erotic and the violent in the New Extreme Gore film is a space of perpetual re-imagination, of both what constitutes violent content and what constitutes erotic potential. A Serbian Film is an example of this continuous merging performed on and in the bodies on screen.
CONCLUSION

Just as he is about to reach the door you see the man's boot appear between him and his goal. The boots appear on either side of his head as the young man begins to cry hopelessly again. The man steps over his back, grabs the young man's hair and pulls him back, there is a shot of his destroyed and mutilated feet being pulled over the ground leaving a trail of blood behind him. In the scenes final shot, you see the pair reflected in the broken mirror. The man holds him up but his hair, now holding the scalpel to his throat. He begins to desperately plead for his life. While begging for mercy, he chokes out, "I'll pay you...I have money, I'll pay you, I'll do anything." The man smiles maniacally, and then he angrily responds, "Pay me? No one is paying me, I am paying them!" And finally and gleefully he pulls the young man's hair back and slits his throat in the mirror, as the screen cuts to black you hear his final, anguished, gurgling screams.

The final seconds before the inevitable death in the scene of torture in any New Extreme Gore films offers a moment of visual and affective realization, one where the audience is able to access the full impact of the devastation wrought on screen. A devastation whose visual presence creates the backbone of the New Extreme Gore film, it is a scene of destruction concerned not with the events leading up to suffering or the events that will follow it but instead, concerned with the moments as the body is pulled away, undone both as subject, and identity.

The body is pleasurably re-imagined as a space, a space where the precise and delicate business of pain is skillfully writ on the real or artificial flesh, with body effects and digital technology. This is the kind of articulation of the body that results in the audience accessing the film's aesthetic project as a means of pleasure. The images on the screen are not in service of
narrative, but instead are whole and complete, beyond narrative. As the body becomes a site in
the aesthetic material of the film it also becomes a space for the articulation of the underlying
erotic nature of bodies and visibility.

One of the most significant goals of this project has been to consider the visualization of
the body as a site of suffering and the realism of that suffering as a motivation for the visual
project of these films. The aesthetics function in terms of realizing the visuals as a pleasurable
construct that functions beyond narrative. Then considering these elements as part of an
underlining erotic aesthetic that emerges from the treatment of bodies on screen, in terms of the
cinematography, editing, style and visual effects of these films. The effort to consider the
aesthetics of cinema as a legitimate space for consideration, one that is able to produce not only a
pleasurable film experience, but also one which allows the audience access to a profoundly
nuanced experience and rationalization of sexuality and in this case, also pain. To attempt to
consider the carefully constructed visual elements, the gaping wound, bruised flesh, and
eviscerated body as deliberately managed elements of a scene, all working toward the goal of
creating a filmic object which is characterized not by its narrative but by the experiential, the
visceral and the aesthetic.

A chief desire of this project is to reconsider the way film studies operates in terms of
narrative and economics. While New Extreme Gore works as a particularly pertinent exemplar of
the necessity of thinking about economics as deeply connected to the means of production, as
well as the modes of reception, the pleasure of the films are dependent upon their careful
aesthetics. The films move beyond the purpose of narrative as the defining structure of cinema,
the pleasure of New Extreme Gore is not in narrative, rather it is in the visual. Those visuals are
built from the building blocks of the artificial body and its aesthetic location.

As a result of this, the work is structured accordingly. The study of film is appropriately obsessed with the visual, however, when the visual components of a film are as trying and intense as those of New Extreme Gore the mere presence of them runs the risk of occupying so much of the onlooker that critical engagement falls apart. However, this is an indication of the success of the film image. These are visualizations so compelling that the audience is quite actually struck dumb. A moment where the inability of language to articulate pain matches the viewer’s inability to linguistically engage beyond the emotive response. I wanted to attempt to tackle issues of the visualizations that characterize these words and their profoundly aesthetic nature while consciously avoiding the visual. While describing a scene without the aid of a clip or a screen shot is unusual, it does force the reader to engage with the visuals beyond their affective capacity. In order to achieve this, the majority of the thesis is arranged around notions of thick description, in the style of Clifford Geertz in “The Interpretations of Cultures” (Geertz 1). Treating the scene of violence in the New Extreme Gore film as if it were the site of culture and thus accessing it through dense descriptive language.

In addition to this, in order to attempt to access the emotive and experiential component of New Extreme Gore, and the notion of cinema through language that is essential to the understanding of aesthetic cinema, a continuous scene punctuates the thesis. The scene is the first major torture scene from Hostel. While the scene is not analyzed, it is included to convey a sense of the experience, not of the film, but of the scene of torture. This is one of the key projects of the sub-genre, to create a tapestry and images that are going to cause a kind of aesthetic undoing. As a result of this I’ve made a purposeful effort to rely on description both of analyzed scenes
and thick descriptions.

The question of what is pleasurable about the New Extreme Gore film is one I've grappled with since the beginning of this project. I have not considered this thesis as making a case for New Extreme Gore, instead veering away from their cultural context as much as their narrative and chiefly concerning this work with the often-neglected aesthetic project. From this stance, I have considered the aesthetic as an element of a great deal of "low culture" cinema that is ignored and regarded as gratuitous. When the development of the New Extreme Gore's scenes of trauma are an ideal example of the aesthetic work of film taking precedence over the conventional aspects of horror and of cinema at large. In order to maintain the move against film study being oriented in terms of narrative cinema, the methods of this project have attempted to concern themselves with the minutiae of the construction and visual experience of the New Extreme Gore film. In the hope of expressing a sense of the visual without depending on the presence of visuals the thesis attempts to render the detail-driven, aesthetic components of the film.

Furthermore, to move away from ignoring the economic apparatus of film and to consider it as a fundamental element of the construction of the films aesthetic component, as well as being essential in considering the production of the New Extreme Gore film, as well as its reception. This is particularly relevant to the horror genre as a whole because the success of the films are often dependent on their ability to offer up the generic pleasures of violence on screen and on screen violence is dependent on the articulation of accurate and often highly realistic visual effects. The majority of the New Extreme Gore film's budget is expended on visual effects, and the aesthetic thrust of the films is profoundly connected with the audience's ability to see the
body being destroyed, undergoing a transformative process on screen. The elements of New Extreme Gore, which remove it from the realm of traditional cinema and traditional horror and locate them in a space chiefly concerned with the visualizations of both the hyper realistic and the hyper formal. It is a kind of cinema which asks the viewer to suspend not only the desire for conventional realism and identification, but for character and even narrative and instead to indulge in the pleasure of the frenzy which comes from the relationship between pain and the body and more so the ability of cinema in its current technological state to access and render those images in stunning detail on screen.

Due to the fundamental role of visual effects in the New Extreme Gore film, the role of economics cannot be ignored. It is simultaneously a sub-genre while it defies the traditional financial expectations of the horror film as well as capitalizing on complex and difficult to pin down experiences of cinematic pleasure. What can be determined is that the pleasure that arises from the New Extreme Gore film is tethered to the viewers’ conception of the images on screen as artificial, regardless of realism. In the case of Snuff, which Linda Williams explores at length in "Hard Core" and more recently in the case of A Serbian Film, we see a moment of breakage between the viewer’s sense of the real, and thus the acceptable. Due to the understandings that audiences have about the standards, which are born out of economic process in terms of the film industry, a film, regardless of it's realism, aesthetic or narrative content is rendered safe by the economic apparatus of film distribution. In this it becomes apparent that a film, such as A Serbian Film which, in its early months of release

However, asserting that there is a beauty in the traumatic content of these films is in itself problematic. I argue that the sheer achievement of hyper-realistic renderings of bodies are alone
worthy of attention and furthermore the manner in which these elements are framed and become
innately connected to the visual work of the camera establish New Extreme Gore as a very
specifically motivated and powerfully visual kind of cinema. There is a significant pleasure that
emerges from those aesthetics. A pleasure that is as rooted in generic pleasure as it is in the
experience of looking at scenes, which have simply been constructed, with the greatest of care
and precision. As Williams refers to the "frenzy of the visible" in terms of sex on screen, even
the artificial body being destroyed on screen provides a scene of visual pleasure. From the
beginning, even before the viewing of the film, the audience is promised a level of destruction;
one that will result in the maiming and death of characters, the fulfillment of this wish is a
functional part of the pleasure. In a sense the New Extreme Gore film is deeply concerned with
the fulfillment of the promise, and thus moves the viewer through scenes of torture with little
time (or money) expended on unnecessary elements and instead focuses its expenditure on the
visual effects that launch the New Extreme Gore film away from simplistic violence and
implication and instead emphasize the fact that the destruction of the body and the audience's
ability to see that destruction is vastly important. The realization that the body and the damage
incurred by that body is the most important element of the film the form is perpetually concerned
with getting the audience to that pleasurable final dispatch. While I maintain that death is not the
central construct of the New Extreme Gore, and that the films are chiefly concerned with the
process of the body being destroyed and how toute is enacted on the body, the completion of
inevitable death serves as a space of climax for the visual organization of the films. New
Extreme Gore moves toward aesthetically undoing elements of the narrative and instead
visualizes the body as a space of deconstruction and through this allows the audience an
opportunity for an unusual and pleasurable kind of looking.

A major challenge faced by films that incorporate scenes of intense pain is the question of whether or not pain can be articulated. Scarry points to the work of pain on language, "As physical pain is monolithically consistent in its assault on language, so the verbal strategies for overcoming that assault are very small in number" (Scarry 13) and further to the work of "patient, physician, Amnesty worker, lawyer and artist" (Scarry 13) as spaces in society which consistently account for linguistic representations of pain. This operates as a moment of attempted articulation of the endlessly sticky, indescribable nature of pain. What New Extreme Gore does is provide a visual tableau of pain that unseats it from language and reorients in terms of the most effortless form: the visual. In order to allow the destruction of the body to find voice, the voice of film, here the narrative is undone and replaced with a kind of new visual language. In film this visual language allows these films to articulate the complexities of the body on the brink of immense suffering, of death and in turn in relation to the viewer of pleasure. There is no appropriate linguistic way to express this manner of destruction, however the expression of it in visual terms enters into a space of pleasure wrought from the power of the visual.

If I were to expand upon this line of thought, the question of how language becomes a governing logic in film emerges. As the New Extreme Gore film develops an aesthetic language, one that seeks to express the inexpressible nature of suffering and pain, it develops a space where the translinguistic elements, such as pain and, indeed, sex become intertwined. Further research would move toward the exploration of this collapse of language at the intersection of sex (and the moment of orgasm), torture and pain. At its core, the processes of exploring how and when
language is no longer functional and spaces where visualizations and articulations of these elements emerge, and in the case of film are tied to constructions of pleasure. Furthermore, to explore what the impact of digital media is on the economic construction on violent media, both artificial and actual. The visual image creates a space where suffering and trauma, both on a large scale and small scale level are rationalized thus creating a kind of aesthetic catharsis which has the potential to operate outside the traditional boundaries of genre. Though, perpetually moving explorations of horror and its various manifestations away from conventional theories of catharsis and relief through narrative, it becomes possible to rethink the genre in terms of its visual effects, aesthetics, style, cinematography and now with digital media, distribution.
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