
No Safe Space: Economic Anxiety and Post-Recession Spaces in Horror Films

By Joni Hayward

Choice is freedom. Though the complexity of neoliberal ideology has much more baggage and background than this short phrase, one might still be able to communicate the crux of neoliberal life in these three words. What then, occurs when choice is taken away? The lack of freedom, or the lack of choice, is perhaps the ultimate neoliberal nightmare: the worst-case scenario in a culture obsessed with individual control. How does one have the freedom to choose in the first place? One must have the financial freedom to do as she pleases. Two recent films demonstrate the horror of not having a choice, or the horror of being forced due to economic instability, and both films demonstrate this horror primarily through the character's movement through space. *It Follows* (2015 David Robert Mitchell) and *Don't Breathe* (2016 Fede Alvarez) both demonstrate this principle, but by opposite means—in *It Follows* the characters, victims of a nameless curse, experience forced and constant movement. In *Don't Breathe* the young protagonist attempts to steal money from an elderly man's home to escape her financial straits, resulting in her entrapment inside his home. In both films, the protagonists suffer due to economic circumstances. The economic undertone is subtler in *It Follows*, but the films together demonstrate the beginning of a trend: horror films that increasingly address neoliberal fears in the aftermath of the 2008 economic recession. Though some academics and politicians declared the “death of neoliberalism” [1] after the recession, David Harvey promises otherwise, claiming that neoliberalism has been “a very successful project”. [2] Throughout this analysis of the ways in which these two horror films fittingly reflect middle-class horror at the idea of failing neoliberalism, I use Harvey's definition of neoliberalism that emphasizes privatization, accumulation by dispossession, and the association of freedom with power as a consumer.

Though economic anxiety in both films is articulated substantially through the character's relationships with space and mobility, I will also analyze the ways in which the specific spaces of homes, or domestic space, is navigated in the films. Another important trait uniting these films, despite their varying styles and approaches to character movement (or lack thereof), is their shared setting in Detroit, Michigan. I argue that in a neoliberal society, anxiety emerges in places that are inefficient in ways that “functioning” places of consumer capitalism work. These places feel entropic and dispersed, their chaos prevents the smooth flow of capital through them, and therefore they evoke anxiety for the neoliberal

subject. Detroit and its surrounding areas have received attention as a recessionary “ground zero”, a city that has experienced some of the worst effects of the economic downturn.[3] I include in this article an analysis of the significance of this specific geographical setting and its visual importance in the creation of anxiety. Finally, both films engage with visibility and invisibility, or the importance of what we see as an audience and what the characters can see in the films. Inevitably questions are raised about race and the invisibility of people of color in both films that take place in a city that has historically been and continues to be a site of significant racial inequality.

These films are simultaneously part of the tradition of making monsters of societal problems in horror films, whether those monsters are supernatural or otherwise, while paving the way for a shift in the horror genre. This shift centers on the decay of the post-recession city and its outlying suburban spaces as a symbol of cultural anxiety surrounding the destabilization of capitalist ideals. This paper continues the emerging practice of analyzing post-recession films as a way of interpreting the cultural importance of this recent economic catastrophe. Scholarly literature reveals that the horror genre has become a potent site for the articulation of economic anxieties in recent years. *Drag Me to Hell* (2009 Sam Raimi) for example focuses explicitly on a “domestic approach to recessionary horrors...and the financial fears of the ‘average’ white, middle-class American family”[4]. Most the films being analyzed by scholars in relation to the 2008 recession are indeed part of the horror genre which has long been the genre of choice for expressions of culturally significant fears. The connection between the rhetoric of economic crisis as a “force of nature” also has a precedent in a recent analysis of Eco-Catastrophe films, such as *Take Shelter* (2011 Jeff Nichols) whose “latent eco-anxiety then itself serves as a cover story of sorts for its depiction of recessionary woes”[5]. Though Boyle relates the language of economic crisis to the “once-in-a-lifetime credit tsunami”[6], he also refers to economist Joseph Schumpeter’s description of capitalism as “a perennial gale of creative destruction”. [7] The metaphorical language used to describe economic crises and the inability, or perhaps unwillingness to form straightforward explanations of these events has significance in *It Follows* which will be explored. Addressing the fears and anxieties present in domestic spaces in post-recession America are films such as *Paranormal Activity* (2007 Oren Peli) and *Paranormal Activity II* (2010 Todd Williams) which, “are tales of the recession, not only because they stress our blithe disregard for steady, inevitable advance of a monster, but also because they track the gradual collapse of consumer capitalist dreams”. [8] Similar themes emerge in both *It Follows* and *Don’t Breathe*, placing them squarely within the emerging practice of analyzing films specifically in relation to the economic recession of 2008.

Movement Through Space

After a scene in *It Follows* in which nineteen-year-old Jay has sex in the back seat of a car, she lays casually across the seat of the vehicle and soliloquizes as her date, twenty-one-year-old Hugh, goes around to the back of the car. She says,

“It’s funny. I used to daydream about being old enough to go on dates; drive around with friends in their cars. I had this image of myself; holding hands with a really cute guy, listening to the radio, driving along some pretty road, up north maybe; when the trees start to change colors. It was never about going anywhere really. Just having some sort of freedom I guess. Now that we’re old enough, where the hell do we go?”

As Jay finishes her speech, Hugh enters the back seat, affectionately embracing her before reaching around and knocking her unconscious with a cloth soaked in chloroform. So begins the unveiling of the curse: a person, who can take the form of anyone, friend, family, or stranger, in order to get close to you. The curse is passed on through sex, and no one knows how it began. In this scene, it is Hugh’s intention to pass the curse to Jay, therefore furthering himself from its effects. However, if the curse kills Jay, it will come after Hugh, and then the person who gave it to him, and so on. This film can be read as a profound commentary on the anxiety of millennials in post-recession America. The curse in *It Follows* is representative of the curse of economic collapse that may presumably follow younger generations indefinitely into their futures. The passing along of the curse mimics the inevitability of participation in an already corrupt system: characters have the ultimatum to be a part of the problem, or die. This timely concept is subtly explored in the film by means of movement and space. Jay shifts from a normal, middle class life to feeling terrorized by the need to keep on the move—the opposite of the freedom of movement she dreams of in her speech in Hugh’s car. This forced movement evokes an undercurrent reflective of economic anxiety in the film.

Don’t Breathe, on the other hand, depicts the spatial representation of economic anxiety in a drastically different way. The protagonist, a young woman named Rocky, similar in age to Jay, also must engage in corruption to try and escape her circumstances. The anxiety in *Don’t Breathe* is less mysterious, and more concrete than the curse in *It Follows*. Rocky is clearly affected by her financial situation from the start—she and her two friends, Alex and Money, are thieves, and choose to break into the home of an army veteran to steal the cash he supposedly keeps in his house. The man has the money from a legal settlement after the death of his daughter. It becomes clear that this money has not helped to alleviate the old man’s suffering or speed his mourning process.

In the middle of the film viewers discover that he has kidnapped the women who killed his daughter in a car accident and is holding her prisoner in his basement. In this way, the film is straightforward about the idea that relying on capital as a means of freedom or happiness is insufficient, and that it can in fact lead to deeper corruption than the legal punishment the old man claims he would have preferred. He explains to Rocky that he believes the woman should have gone to jail, but laments that “rich girls don’t go to jail”. In lieu of state-sanctioned imprisonment, he perversely takes the matter of this perceived injustice into his own hands.

Early in the film Rocky believes that if she gets the money she needs she can be happy—but why has she resorted to stealing? In the film, there are several indicators of the depressed economy, such as the joblessness of the young people that lead to their delinquency, and the spaces of decay, such as the neighborhood where the old man lives, filled with foreclosed homes. Like *It Follows*, the setting of urban decay effectively represents the presence of economic recession. Though Jay and Rocky seem to be in opposite positions, one forced to constantly be on the move, and the other trapped inside a house, their situations are symptoms of the same economic problems, and representative of the same economic anxiety.

Domestic Spaces & Generational Tension

Domestic spaces are a site of contestation in both films because of economic downturn, which results in anxiety surrounding homes. Domestic space “ought” to be safe and comforting, but it becomes a contested space during times of economic instability. In *It Follows*, after Hugh drops Jay off at her home and disappears, she learns that Hugh is not his real name—he is actually Jeff. As it turns out, twenty-one-year-old Jeff is living at home with his parents. Though the film is anachronistic, both Jay and Hugh, and potentially the rest of the young adults, can be read as boomerang kids: young adults who choose or are forced to live with or move back in with their parents due to financial hardship. This aligns well with the nature of the curse following the young people forever, as “the negative impact of graduating into a recession never fully disappears”.^[9] Though there are admittedly other factors involved in an adult child living with his or her parents, the 2008 economic recession caused a noticeable spike in this trend.^[10] It is likely that even if they do make it out of their parents’ houses, the curse of financial hardship, like the curse in the film, will slowly follow them forever.

In *Don’t Breathe* Rocky’s home life is notably worse than Jay’s is at the beginning of the film. She lives in a rundown home where she clearly feels unsafe. Though we are not told Rocky’s age, she is perhaps also a boomerang kid, unable to support herself outside of her mother’s home,

even though her motivation to get away from that home is strong. Early in the film, a short scene in Rocky's home conveys the economic desperation of her family. Rocky, her young sister Diddy, and her mother all live in a small trailer. Her mother harasses her about how she makes her money, accusing her of engaging in sex work. This ninety-second scene is enough to highlight the strength of Rocky's desire to get away from her unsatisfying home life. The home of the old man she and her companions break into is in a rundown neighborhood with many boarded up houses. This depiction of a post-recession suburb as a place where horrifying events occur feeds into neoliberal fears about economic downturn and the real places affected by them. It is likely that when the old man first arrived in this neighborhood, that it was a thriving suburb of middle class people. However, the housing crisis and economic recession have turned it into a space of anxiety-inducing decay.

The old man distrusts the bank to keep his money safe, so he keeps it in this isolated domestic space. In this way, the film calls attention to the instability of neoliberalism, which focuses on the importance of deregulation, or free market capitalism, as well as privatization of public goods such as utilities, welfare, and public institutions like universities.^[11] The privatization of public goods has not benefitted people aside from the owners of these now private companies or corporations. The housing crisis that aided in setting off the 2008 recession is an example of this because in a capitalist economic system, "...there lies a deeper process that entails the springing of 'the debt trap' as a primary means of accumulation by dispossession...debt crises in individual counties, uncommon during the 1960's, became very frequent during the 1980's and 1990's, culminating in the financial crash of 2008".^[12] No doubt the old man doesn't trust a bank to keep his \$300,000 settlement safe after a bank crisis, and after what he views as a failure on behalf of the court system to convict the young woman who killed his daughter in a car accident. And yet the old man's distrust is conveyed as pathological in the film—he is a sadist and a murderer. Though he does not trust a bank with his money, he believes in the stronghold of his own home because of its familiarity, despite the precariousness of the housing market made visible by the entire street of foreclosed homes surrounding his. Despite the generational gap, the young people in the film distrust the system as well, albeit perhaps for different reasons. Were it not for this mistrust, perhaps they would not have turned to criminal activity to make money in the first place.

Urban Space & Decay

The economic anxiety reflected in the film highlights the disillusionment and fear of the generation for whom the 2008 recession could very well have the highest burden: young adults. The movement and entrapment of

the characters throughout the film, particularly Jay and Rocky, show the ways in which the curse of a broken economy makes spaces typically deemed safe seem dangerous and unsettling. The setting of the film amidst the actual urban decay of Detroit is highly important for a study of the effect of place as it reflects economic anxiety in the films.

Director David Robert Mitchell takes advantage of the setting in Detroit and the surrounding area for *It Follows*, which results in scenes of urban decay as well as anachronism, both of which add to the potential for a symptomatic reading of post-recession economic anxiety. The anachronism of the film creates the sense that perhaps it is set in the past or present— but perhaps it is set in the future, and further in the future than we realize. This is because of the potential for ongoing economic problems for those who came of age during a recession. None of the characters have new or up to date cars or electronics, perhaps because they can't afford them. In this way, the horror in the film is created by showing the potential *worsening* of economic conditions: "What art-horror often shows us is that it is being in the world itself in any of all of its manifestations that has become uncanny and monstrous".^[13] For the characters in both films, being in the world itself includes being within a capitalist system, which can be thought of as a monster itself. Though this monstrous system functions invisibly, the films make it visible. Place in the films is anything but inert scenery. The decay of the space of the houses and the city itself are problematic within a neoliberal ideology that only wants to acknowledge progress forward, without a recognition of the regression, decay and death that capitalism causes. The imminent decay of the domestic and urban environment show the material effects of economic downturn, and show that "Nothing need be as it is; anything could break apart at any moment".^[14] This way of thinking is in direct opposition to the notions put forth by neoliberal ideologies that refuse to acknowledge the possibility for decline as a potential outcome of a capitalist system.

In these films, the characters move in and out of these spaces of decay. In *It Follows* the landscape is introduced to the viewer mostly through panning shots of the broken-down houses and buildings from the window of a moving vehicle. This movement implies that these aren't places in which one can or should stay, and they reflect the ways in which an ideological bubble—not just a housing bubble— popped after the recession of 2008. In a post-recession landscape of decay and uncertainty, forced from the safety of their homes, Jay and her friends are "dispersed beings"^[15] along with the cityscape in a way that evokes anxiety. The space itself has entered a state of entropy, a state of lessened control and therefore lessened potential for economic productivity because of its decline. This spatial breakdown results in the embodiment of dispersion. In other words, Jay and her friends are

dispersed beings because they now lack security, and “both security and the self have been understood in terms of spatial relations.”[\[16\]](#) Their relationship to space fundamentally changes once they are cursed. In *Don't Breathe* there are several aerial shots of the foreclosed neighborhoods in which the film takes place. This gives the impression that this master shot, this powerful view from an elevated position, is aware of the problems these neighborhoods face. This view from above, perhaps representative of the gaze of capitalistic systems of power, does nothing to intervene. The old man's relationship with his house as a safe space par excellence conveys his personal fight against becoming a dispersed being, “Without [the house], man would be a dispersed being...it is body and soul”.[\[17\]](#) The man is ultimately less concerned about Rocky making off with his settlement money in the end than he is about the security of his home.

Fear, Anxiety & Intentional Obscurity

One of the major questions in *It Follows* is never answered: Where did the curse come from? How was it created? Significantly, it doesn't have a name, nor does it earn one. This signifies an important distinction between fear and anxiety—fear springs from something that can be named, and potentially known and explained, and anxiety is created from the uncanny, something that cannot be named or pinned down.[\[18\]](#) Economic anxiety is partially due to the intentional obfuscation of how and why downturns happen—when people are unsure about how and why something bad occurs, the level of anxiety about it increases because of this obscurity. In this way, the curse is much like a financial crisis—uncanny because it seems impossible based on neoliberal ideals, yet it occurs nonetheless. Though there is most certainly a point of origin for the curse—logically, someone had to be the first carrier of it—this information is not provided to the characters or the audience. This lack of information, the “unease of indeterminateness”[\[19\]](#) gives the curse its power. The curse can appear as anyone, friend, family, or stranger, just as economic strife can take numerous disparate forms for those faced with its effects, and it can seem unclear why the crisis is happening.

Economic crises, however, far from being the “perfect storm”[\[20\]](#) of uncontrollable factors occurring simultaneously as they are often represented in the media, are the result of calculated but careless policy decisions at the corporate and government levels. Perhaps the true horror, then, is knowing that these decisions are being made behind closed doors, without citizens' best interests in mind, and with intentional obscurity to more easily displace blame. If, in a capitalist system, those in power have so much control, how does the average person escape the ills of the economy from which she cannot extricate herself? It is here, at the intersection of the curse and the impossibility of escape, where anxiety

and horror mix to create a subtle but scathing economic critique in *It Follows*. In *Don't Breathe*, the old man the group plans to rob is blind. Throughout the film, he remains blind to the corruption he engages in, believing he is carrying out what he views as justice, and he ultimately gets away with it. The way in which the events occur in the house as we, the audience, see them, and the way in which they are then represented by the media at the end of the film, convey an important factor about what people see—which is that people see what powerful institutions want them to see, especially when it comes to complex situations like economic crisis. This often includes the twisting of facts and intentional obfuscation.

The final few minutes of *Don't Breathe* are important as a final evaluation of the cultural critiques the film makes. As Rocky makes her way through the bus station with Diddy, finally on their way out of Detroit, stolen money in tow, she sees a news story on TV about the old man. The media is framing the old man as a victim of two young criminals—Alex and Money—abusing him. His veteran status is mentioned, the rhetoric of the “bullied hero” is used by the news caster, and most importantly, he is not dead. It appears to the audience that Rocky’s blows to the old man before she finally escapes his house are deadly; however, he is revived when the police arrive. Both the representation of the story on the news, depicting him as a victim when viewers know better, as well as his survival, are symbolic of the perpetuation of a corrupt system, even with Rocky’s temporary reprieve in her attempt to leave. Rocky is visibly horrified by the news story, even though she has the \$300,000 she stole so she could move. Her palpable anxiety at the knowledge that this man is still alive, and that he is being protected by the law and painted as not only an innocent victim but as a hero, is representative of an awareness of a corrupt system, yet never being able to “truly” escape—a situation which creates ongoing anxiety. The final shot of the scene shows Rocky and Diddy walking away, their backs to the camera—as if they are being watched. The final shot in *It Follows* shows Jay hand in hand with a young man, Paul, with whom she now shares the burden of the curse. A mysterious figure walks after them in the background, out of focus. Though they are not panicking in this moment, that blurry figure causes the viewer a sense of dread—for Rocky, there is no true escape from her entrapment, and for Jay, there is no place of safety or respite where she will not be followed by the curse.

Visibility & Invisibility

The concept of sight plays an important role in both films worth expanding on further. After their sexual encounter, Hugh makes sure that Jay sees the curse following her so that she believes that it exists. In this way, he attempts to reveal to her the inevitable instability of the structure

in which everyone is trapped. Without seeing the curse follow her, Jay would be unlikely to believe him about its existence. In order to show Jay the curse, Hugh partially immobilizes her. After knocking her unconscious, he ties her to a wheel chair. This scene opens in an abandoned parking garage, where Jay is simultaneously mobile and immobile—she is tied to the wheel chair, but the wheel chair itself can move. This is symbolic of the type of movement allowed in a neoliberal society; only certain types of movement are allowed, and the movement itself is an illusion of freedom. Freedom within a neoliberal ideology ties directly to consumer capitalism. If one is free to spend and make money, one is considered free. During an economic downturn, this freedom disappears for many people for whom it was not previously a concern, and instead of mobility by free will, one might become forced to mobilize, or on the other hand, forced to stay in place. The wheel chair scene captures this idea, while introducing to Jay and the viewer to what the curse looks like and how it behaves.

In *Don't Breathe*, one of the significant details of the story is the old man's blindness. The trio thinks that he will be easier to steal from because of this but they are proven very wrong. The old man's blindness is indicative of his ignorance of the economic system of which he is a part; but his blindness does not hinder him. In fact, it strengthens him. Within his blindness, he is depicted as a non-threat. Though the fact of the old man's blindness is open to myriad interpretations, his blindness and the power he retains in spite of it can be interpreted as a complex symbol regarding who "sees" and does not "see" the various facets of an economic crisis such as the 2008 recession. Neoliberal ideology strives to persuade that the world is flat; in other words, anyone is capable of horizontal movement that might allow them to make money, if they so desire, and if people are not able to obtain class mobility on their own, it is a fault of theirs as opposed to the fault of the capitalist system.[\[21\]](#) Governments that support free-market capitalism support this ideology, therefore turning a blind eye, as it were, to people who suffer within this system. Instead of addressing this suffering, "The idea is put about that problems arise only because of lack of competitive strength or because of personal, cultural, and political failings".[\[22\]](#) Privatization, though originally lauded as a tool to stimulate weak economies[\[23\]](#) has proven a successful method of "accumulation by dispossession".[\[24\]](#) In other words, citizens are forced to pay for services originally provided through the government. Thus, corporations and private shareholders gain more wealth, as lower classes lose wealth, and the gap continues to widen.[\[25\]](#) The depiction of the old man as a victim at the end of the film resonates with the way that corporations are depicted by the American mass media. Corporate entities tend to be depicted as helping the economy, creating jobs, and fueling free-market capitalism that "evens the playing field". When corporations are accused of unfair practices, they are depicted as

victims of harassment and slander. However, by inferring that these “blind” entities are adept and know exactly what they are doing, and that they do not exist to help, the film can be read as symptomatic of these complex relationships of ignorance and wishful thinking about corporate altruism and government protection from corrupt economic practices.

Though I argue for the specificity of both films settings in post-recession Detroit, the history of the city and its tense racial history also raises questions of visibility in these films. Notably, there are no people of color in either film. In this way, both films reflect the phenomenon of white flight from the inner city and the legacy of fear this created among those suburbanites who are perhaps depicted in both films. One of the biggest indicators of the curse in *It Follows* aligning with not only economic decline, but its association with racial tensions and anxieties is the progression of the spaces from which Jay is forced— and those that she and her group of friends are forced into—because Jay is being followed. Near the end of the film, Yara, Jay’s friend says, “When I was a little girl, my parents wouldn’t allow me to go south of eight-mile... and I didn’t even know what that meant until I got a little older. And I started realizing that’s where the city started and the suburbs ended.” As the group of friends was growing up, they were not allowed into the city proper, because it was a space coded as dangerous for them by their parents—likely the children of those who left the cities themselves. Issues of urban poverty have historically been largely under-addressed in mass media. Similar to the way in which the prison system in the United States claims to be “officially colorblind”[\[26\]](#), free market capitalism is the ultimate perpetrator of a similar blindness of both color and class. In urban areas such as Detroit however, race and class are always already enmeshed. Jay’s situation in *It Follows* is more representative of post-recession focus on the negative effects on mostly white, middle class people and their increasingly precarious economic stability, the same group of people that media focused on during the recession. *Don’t Breathe* perhaps resonates more closely with the invisibility of the urban poor—those who have been systematically oppressed by widening economic disparities for decades. Rocky becomes trapped. She has the desire for mobility, but she struggles greatly to attain it. Her struggle is highlighted and glorified in the film; the struggle to attain economic mobility for people of color living in the same area Rocky supposedly lives in are not only not glorified, but not represented at all.

The lack of racial representation in both films may be read as a continued failing on behalf of mainstream cinema to represent racial diversity on-screen, especially regarding stories of racial inequality. In *Don’t Breathe* the character Money, Rocky’s boyfriend at the beginning of the film, embodies a problematic appropriation of black racial identity. His death early in the film due to his aggression during the break-in is a troubling

moment because of its racialized depiction of violence. Though neither film contains people of color, these issues haunt the periphery of both films. Jay and her friends are forced into the supposed dangerous racialized space of the inner city because of the curse following her, though the only danger they encounter there is that of the economic curse following them—the same “curse” that impoverished inner-city dwellers have experienced for decades due to not only economic disparity and lack of adequate public services, but ongoing and entrenched racism.^[27] Rocky and those in her group of friends breaking the law to try to escape their circumstances are depicted as the underdog heroes of their story. Rocky escapes with her life, and with the money she sought, though her companions were not so fortunate. The old man does not report that she had been in his house—he only tells the police about her two companions. Rocky’s whiteness inevitably plays into this narrative. The old man may indeed be “colorblind” because he cannot see anyone, but the audience can. Rocky’s whiteness causes us to question who is not seen onscreen in *Don’t Breathe*, those whose stories remain untold in the wake of a recession whose news coverage paid strict attention to the white families affected by the economic downturn, while hiding from media view the deepening despair of those already in poverty.

Conclusion

Given the time during which *It Follows* and *Don’t Breathe* were released, 2015 and 2016, in addition to their setting in suburban and urban Detroit, it is reasonable to read for these sociocultural conditions as part of the subtext of the films. The distrust of the government to properly fix or even help after the recession of 2008 is expressed through the anxiety with which cursed characters such as Jay, or fearful characters such as Rocky must now live their lives. The forced movement of the characters in *It Follows* through a landscape of decaying cities and their suburbs creates the perpetual anxiety experienced by a young generation grappling with the failure of consumer capitalism and neoliberalism and left with no way out; with no sense of peace or hopefulness for the future. Likewise, the entrapment within a house in an isolated neighborhood from which everyone has fled or was evicted due to foreclosure in *Don’t Breathe* mimics the feelings of hopelessness that Rocky feels due to her financial instability, and the ongoing injustice and misunderstanding of the economic straights she experiences by the media, as depicted in the crucial final scene of the film. Within the focus on the anxiety surrounding economic downtown in the films, there remains much to be said about the ways in which gender plays a crucial role in both films, considering that the protagonist of each film is a young female who inevitably experiences space and movement through space differently than male characters. Sexuality and conservative values are also a potential site of ongoing analysis in *It Follows* especially, considering that

the curse is passed on through sex; notably casual, premarital sex, which results in unending problems for those cursed characters. Though I analyze issues of race and invisibility in the films, this issue in the films could also evoke further significant scholarship. While the address of economic themes in both films is not necessarily meant as an evaluation of the quality of the films, I have aimed to analyze and compare an important emerging trend: post-2008 recession economic anxiety in two recent horror films geared toward young audiences—the very youth who are likely to be affected by these problems far into their futures.

Notes

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[3] “How Detroit, the Motor City, turned into a ghost town” Paul Harris, accessed March 5, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment>.

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[5] Kirk Boyle, “The Imagination of Economic Disaster: Eco-Catastrophe Films of the Great Recession,” *The Great Recession in Fiction, Film and Television: Twenty-first-century Bust Culture* (2013): 19.

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[12] Harvey, "The Flat World," 70.

[13] Paul Santilli, "Culture, Evil, and Horror," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 66.1 (2007): 180

[14] Santilli, "Culture, Evil," 182

[15] Samira Kawash, "Safe House?: Body, Building, and the Question of Security," *Cultural Critique* 45 (2000): 202.

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[17] Kawash, "Safe House?" 202.

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[19] McAfee, "Abject Strangers," 122.

[20] "How the 'Perfect Storm' became the Perfect Cop-Out," Charles Homans, accessed May 7, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/magazine/how-the-perfect-storm-became-the-perfect-cop-out.html>

[21] Harvey, "The Flat World," 67.

[22] Harvey, "The Flat World," 67.

[23] Harvey, "The Flat World," 56.

[24] Harvey, "The Flat World," 68.

[25] Harvey, "The Flat World," 61.

[26] Michelle Alexander, "The New Jim Crow" in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New, 2010): 183.

[27] Patrick Sharkey, "Introduction" to *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 2013): 15.

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Filmography

Don't Breathe. Dir. Fede Alvarez 2016

Drag Me to Hell Dir. Sam Raimi 2009

It Follows. Dir. David Robert Mitchell 2015

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Paranormal Activity II Dir. Todd Williams 2010

Take Shelter Dir. Jeff Nichols 2011