

Resisting Globalization: Australian Horror at *The Perimeter* of Perception

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Abstract

Although transformed by globalization, Australian colonialist prejudice resurfaces due to the continent's cultural affiliation with and geographical division from the Western world. Insurgent themes in horror such as the dangers of technology also contemplate a dystopian future augmented by transhumanism. Indeed, the persistence of the past surfaces in monstrous forms due to failing cultural integration between "White Australia," interior Aboriginality, and an Asia perceived as invasive. This essay asks how *The Perimeter* (2016), a tense, "creep-out" film set in the traditionally malevolent, Australian bushland, is constructed within these paradoxical trends. This paper examines theory through self-reflective practice and action research detailing a meta-discourse on globalization by utilizing Debbie Lisle's analysis of global politics and A.K. Baishya's commentary on transhumanism and the returning political repressed via the "optical unconscious." The paper asks how Australia is a unique ferment of conservative fears, which nevertheless remain globally relevant. How does a predominantly white-centric screen culture continue to manifest xenophobia as internal/external binary and obfuscate global responsibilities such as border control and respect for Indigenous culture?

Keywords: Asia, Australia, border control, cinema, film, geo-politics, globalization, horror, Stolen Generation, *The Perimeter*

Introduction

Draw a circle around race, national identity and humanity and the resultant contradictions form the postcolonial nightmare: concealed racial discrimination, border control paranoia, and undesirable transhumanism. Under globalization, these anxieties re-surface as extenuating horror when delineations between “interiority” and “exteriority” disintegrate. This division affects horror-sci-fi feature film *The Perimeter* (2016): a narrative created by screenwriter Stephen Mitchell with myself as director and script editor. Through examination of the film, this paper asks: how does colonialism underpin effective horror in Australian cinema? How has globalization influenced the current resurgence of horror while fermenting contemporary anxieties, shames and repressions unique to Australia, a country geographically situated in Asia, but culturally influenced by imperial Europe?

Through an analysis of the film, I observe how Australia, a nation deprived of its formative geographical and social isolation by post-internet globalization, encounters its own bloody colonial past and fear of its unknowable landscape.¹ I demonstrate how *The Perimeter*, replete with imagery of concentric circles depicting an inside/outside binary, combines “return of the repressed” paranoias such as retribution for white imperial crimes against the Indigenous with modern technological anxieties such as transhumanism and the horror of cultural invasion.² By examining *The Perimeter* from a practice-led, action-based and self-analytical perspective, this essay investigates the emergence of horror at the interface of colonial privilege and postcolonial guilt. In this way, as A.K. Baishya observes, colonialism underpinning the horror film means “images of death and destruction have all the more power to shock and terrify a population that has become otherwise jaded to more traditional horror.”³

As a film conveying a “feeling of unease, uncanniness and out-and-out horror,”⁴ *The Perimeter* represents a marketable form and deserves attention in its relationship to globalization. If the horror film depicts situations where, as Robin Wood defines, “normality is threatened by a monster” or, as Kim Newman suggests, a “sense of an irrational world lurking just beyond the boundaries of perception” is evinced,

then horror is more than just a genre.⁵ Horror implicates ideational content depicting unprocessed psychic material and the persistence of the past thinly disguised as self-contained plot. In defining the darker genres, British screenwriting theorist Stephen Cleary illustrates the function of liminality and crossing the “Taboo Line,” where thriller approaches the border between life and death, horror axiomatically crosses over it.⁶ For Cleary, horror functions as conservative ideological vehicle, which depends on a dominant emotional quality of fear and references Freudian castration anxiety and Kristevan abjection. However, Australian film theorist Angela Ndalianis suggests that the “ocular-centric model that dominated film theory in the 1970s and 80s,” such as Cleary espouses, actually concretized psychoanalytic and ideological agendas.⁷ Ndalianis argues that the contemporary, “semiotic space of the horror film has opened its porous border to incorporate and renegotiate real-life events.”⁸ In this way, as Steven Jay Schneider’s analysis of *Eraserhead* (1977) illustrates,⁹ modern horror analysis surpasses such models suggesting that a less “myopic focus” necessarily involves audience co-creation of the filmic text.¹⁰ Consequently, socio-political (rather than psychoanalytic) interpretations grew from the creative process of constructing *The Perimeter* as the imagery of globalism blossomed within the text.¹¹

In accordance with current analytical paradigms, Australian horror bears its own unique history: one implicitly influenced by colonialism. Mark David Ryan argues that Australian horror, particularly as a facet of the “Ozploitation” movement of the 1970s, has proved stable from the latter half of the twentieth century and witnessed a resurgence in the new millennium.¹² Ryan argues that the inhospitable landscape itself acts as a horror-inducing antagonist character within Australian creep-out films.¹³ However, Ryan’s analysis does not engage with the geo-politics of horror in the way that Baishya or Debbie Lisle do.¹⁴

In this essay, the “boundaries of perception” of Australia are observed through the construction of *The Perimeter* as filmic imagery representing some common preconceptions of Australia’s convict heritage;¹⁵ the colonization and crimes against the Australian Indigenous; Australia’s positioning within greater Asia; and the rejection of international

refugees as influencing the plots of horror films. I argue that action research into *The Perimeter* as horror/thriller text reveals what Jon Stratton refers to in the Australian feature *The Sapphires* (2012) as the “naturalization of neoliberal ideology” in which the popularity of such movies “minimizes the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians” and “plays down the racism of the assimilationist movement … and implies that the policy of taking children away from their families (the Stolen Generation) had positive results.”¹⁶ Sue Ballyn laments the same phenomenon: “Genocide went hand-in-hand with the policy of eugenics which in turn led to the forced removal of half-caste children from their families, bringing about an exile upon exile.”¹⁷ This essay therefore attempts to redress such oversights in the context of globalization and horror within *The Perimeter*.

In order to understand the political history relevant to the production of *The Perimeter*, I defer to Ulrich Beck’s definition of globalization as “the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks.”¹⁸ In terms of Australia’s international positioning within these networks, Ballyn claims globalization began under colonization with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788.¹⁹ Colonialist white privilege then bifurcated into landed, white gentry and sovereign-owned convict labor forces before dominating first nation Australians. Ballyn cites Bateson in pointing out that, where the African Indigenous were perceived as a potentially violent threat to colonizers, Australian Aboriginals were assumed to be non-pervasive and welcoming. The First Fleet’s arrival, which led to land theft, genocide and the “Stolen Generation” among Indigenous Australians, has been insensitively referred to as the “defining moment in the history of the Australian continent,” according to former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott in 2014.²⁰ Film production still reflects White Australia and generally adopts a neoliberal stance toward Indigenous problems and only begrudgingly acknowledges the atrocities perpetrated against Aboriginality. The “White Australia Policy,” which actively prevented darker races from immigrating to the continent after federation in 1901, also positioned Aboriginals and convicts as subservient to the interests

of the British Empire. On the outer periphery of the continent, perceived threats such as “terrorism, immigration and xenophobia” see the ailing racist, white Australia self-oriented at the center of contradictory horrors, which brings this discussion to the making of our horror-sci-fi-thriller *The Perimeter*.²¹

Methodology

This research involves a methodological interface between practice and theory. In 2014, writer Stephen Mitchell, with myself as script editor and consultant director, embarked upon a process of creating a horror-thriller-sci-fi screenplay with the intention to produce and market the resultant film theatrically and online. Interrogating the origins of genre, particularly horror and the thriller, became a necessary component of this practice. The “initiating idea” is indebted to German Expressionism in cinema; the literary tradition from Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and John Wyndham’s *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957)—filmed as *Village of the Damned* (1960; 1995)—and the embedded tropes of the horror genre.²² Further research involved attendance at seminars on genre-based screenwriting presented by screen expert Robert McKee.²³ In 2013, Mitchell and I also attended Stephen Cleary’s masterclass in genre filmmaking at SAE Institute, Melbourne.²⁴ In this workshop, we combined our industry-based knowledge to generate the story of two children and a deadly perimeter in the Australian mountains. Filmed dramatizations observed cinematic genre conventions before rudimentary visual editing and test audience screenings demonstrated the film’s efficacy as horror.

Subsequent research into the unique qualities of Australian “outback horror” as a sub-genre and the influence of the landscape on horror then implicated themes embedded in the text such as border-control paranoia,²⁵ a subject represented in local newspapers and online contemporaneously as “Operation Zero Tolerance.”²⁶ This Australian government initiative was designed to counter the efforts of “people smugglers” from neighbouring Asia. Every day, Australians were confronted with the global problems of “Boat People” from greater Asia

including Afghanistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Papua New Guinea, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Syria.²⁷ The Australian government's intolerance toward refugee migration continued, as border-control measures abnegated postcolonial and global responsibilities. The political discourse entrenched within *The Perimeter*'s horror text consequently emerged as meta-discourse on border control and perceived cultural invasion under globalized capitalism. At this juncture, Debbie Lisle's *Global Politics* emerged as a dominant secondary source. A. K. Baishya's commentary on posthumanism and transhumanism as discursive of postcolonial guilt toward slave culture within zombie films also proved influential.²⁸ Since the screenwriter gravitated to themes of transhumanism, we consulted Francesca Ferrando in defining this term: transhumanism transcends our understanding of what it means to be human, as biology and technology integrate to create human enhancement.²⁹ With its origins in the rational humanism of the Enlightenment, transhumanism involves the exploitation of super-longevity, "regenerative medicine ... mind-uploading and cryonics," such that diversity transcends the biological body.³⁰

The film commenced principal photography in April 2016, even as the screenplay continued to evolve. High-grade footage was shot, compiled, edited and color-graded with both teaser and trailer soon to be released online. Research continues to influence the creative process as discoveries are integrated back into the film and used to engage further potential audiences through globalized social media (see Notes below for blog and broadcast details).³¹

Evolving Binaries at the Caucasian Chalk Perimeter

As Mitchell and I acknowledge the legacy of empire within the text, it should be noted that *The Perimeter* does not dramatize the plight of the Australian Indigenous nations nor does it refer literally to border control and Asian "Boat People" in its narrative. However, as referent, the presence of both these phenomena can be seen within the film; and I argue that the plight of Aboriginality and perceived cultural invasion is connoted within *The Perimeter*.

A large component of the film's theme revolves around binary divisions. Contemporary philosopher Noël Carroll "attributes feelings of horror and uncanniness to apparent transgressions or violations of existing cultural (in some cases, conceptual) categories" and involves "mutually exclusive dyads," such as "me/not me, inside/outside ... living/dead," and human/machine.³² Several such binaries operate within *The Perimeter*: good/evil; dead/alive; dominance/subordination;³³ adult/child. However, my argument concentrates on the film's dominant binary: the division between inside and outside, evoked by Mitchell's original logline: "Nothing gets in. No-one gets out. Not even the screaming!" It is horror's noted capacity for liminality and the threat of annihilation, which best reflects contemporary Australian morality and, as Baishya notes, the impossibility of opposites. Secondarily, I consider how the human/non-human binary affects the former key polemic and how this subordinate pairing exploits transhumanism and other manifest fears. I aim to expose the white Australian ethos as resisting a vital imperative of globalization: humane political outlook implicated by the nation's interconnectedness with the globalized world.

Dramatizing this inner/outer binary, *The Perimeter* represents a paradoxical relationship between Australia's kleptocratic "interior" culture and its vigilant rejection of "exterior" cultures: an internally and externally xenophobic representation of cultures at opposite extremes of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.³⁴ I argue that colonial attitudes persist within this predominantly white, postcolonial culture, despite the influence of globalization. Indeed, even globalization harbours secondary fears, described by Debbie Lisle as "cosmopolitanism," where colonial attitudes lie dormant within postcolonial concessions.³⁵ In this way, human rights offences from within and without Australia's national borders (as exemplified by *The Perimeter*) resurface as excessively rancorous models of horror post-9/11, yet remain "aware and critical of the cultural context that gave birth" to them.³⁶ In order to investigate such concerns, the story of *The Perimeter* must be told:

In a remote Australian forest, nine-year-old Sarasi Faraday races through the darkness of her isolated family home. Somewhere

in the darkness she can hear the screams of her one-year-old sister Nayana and the vicious, snarling attack of their once loved family dog Tripi. With her mother killed by an invisible perimeter that has mysteriously imprisoned their home, Sarasi is trapped. She has no food, no power and no-one to help her. When the intensifying perimeter cuts off even sunlight, can she withstand the terrors of the dark and combat her starving dog to scavenge the corpses of birds who have flown unwittingly into the deadly field?³⁷

As the plot unfolds, Sarasi discovers herself ensnared by her father, Mikhail Faraday, a DNA-altering transhuman scientist, whom she must escape. In this context, the maelstrom of (apparently) white children trapped within a monstrous landscape belonging to another (Indigenous) culture is investigated.

The film's primary metaphor, its archaic, womb-like and impermeable perimeter, electrocutes intruders and attempted escapees alike; *The Perimeter*'s membrane remains porous, yet paradoxically intact. Initially, this device delineates innocent children (trapped "inside") from monstrous assailant (kept "outside") before reverting to the transhuman monstrous (located "inside" to exacerbate the protagonist's paranoia). Allegorically, however, the story describes a relationship of rightful Indigenous land ownership (inside) to British colonizers (outside "becoming" inside) to the contemporary perceived threat of the "Asian Invasion" (outside) and consequent border control as violation of human rights.³⁸ Australia's past as British penal colony exploitative of sub-proletarian labor forces (outside/inside) is also relevant. Consequently, as Ndalianis contends, horror films referencing these past and present anxieties open their "porous border to incorporate and renegotiate" real-life issues.³⁹ I argue that the border control metaphor in *The Perimeter* emerges from anxieties aggravated by globalization post-9/11 and exacts a paranoid, colonial dream logic operating at the "boundaries of perception" within the screenplay's rational organization. This implies a disquieted "White Australia" inherited from British colonialism, which acknowledges the nation's formative penal system, invisibilizes

Australian Indigenous culture (inside) and resists invasion by legitimate refugees (outside): forcing the genesis of both inner and outer fears beyond (postcolonial and cosmopolitan) perception.

By applying Debbie Lisle's Foucauldian argument from *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, I extend the methodological process of making *The Perimeter* by acknowledging obfuscated political and geographical realities. While Australian "common knowledge" proudly reappropriates its (whitewashed) convict heritage; "Austral-" still divides itself from an "-Asia" perceived as not belonging. Further, White Australia's resistance to Indigenous land ownership trades on debates residing in the past, which imply a culturally sanctioned "teleological ordering of history." Here, Lisle quotes Francis Fukuyama's statement that Western countries have reached "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution."⁴⁰ Fukuyama argues that by embracing liberal democracy, the West has emerged from the darkness of ideological struggle and embraced "the final form of human government."⁴¹ In this "teleological historical queue," European, Western culture elects itself first, which is ideologically problematic.⁴² As a result, in *The Perimeter*, where the non-human transmutes into the transhuman, this implies enforced border divisions. With the benefit of the above insights, *The Perimeter* forms the epicentre of this paper by considering: horror as a genre; a projection of the Indigenous and convict experience; an interiority and exteriority of border control; and a hypocritical rift in the political life of Australasia.

Globalization in Review

In order to investigate *The Perimeter*'s generation of effective horror, I first examine the film's potential referents of power, multi-faceted globalization, cosmopolitanism, dispossession, and the horrific imagery that ensues from such exploitations. In *Global Politics*, Debbie Lisle reflects upon "travel, power, difference, culture and representation" by politicizing travelogues, "revealing their connection to the "serious" business of world affairs ... and practice of global politics." Lisle opines that while reactionary travelogues espouse colonialism, others disguise

their intent behind hypocritical “cosmopolitanism.”⁴³ Both positions are burdened with the legacy and “logic of Empire” as evident in *The Perimeter*.⁴⁴ Lisle points out that cosmopolitanism “mimics the efforts of statesmen, diplomats, civil servants, journalists, researchers and scholars … searching for more equal and just ways of arranging our post-colonial world,” in response to the anxieties of late twentieth-century globalization—issues which present themselves within the discourse of *The Perimeter*. For Lisle, those same insecurities also resurface when the “simple logics of dominance/subordination are reproduced in a context of late twentieth-century globalization.”⁴⁵ According to Lisle, a “discourse of nostalgia” subsumes in a divided past where crimes against Indigenous cultures persist as a form of white, Western empire-craving.⁴⁶ As with filmic texts such as *The Perimeter*, this erases the division between past and future moments by locating truth in the past and lamenting its disappearance as indicated by David Lowenthal’s famous claim that “the past is a foreign country.”⁴⁷

Focusing this debate on the foreign/home logic of *The Perimeter* as postcolonial text, cinema researcher Emily S. Davis suggests that globalization is not a single phenomenon.⁴⁸ Utilizing Beck’s definition of multi-faceted globalization, Davis analyses screen texts to propose “the bodies of people of color as invisible within and yet central to the processes of global capitalism.”⁴⁹ Davis criticizes left-leaning scholarship in America for failing to “link an analysis of the consumption and potentially radical reworkings of cultural productions to economic forces.”⁵⁰ Similarly, sociologist Johanna Bockman chastises scholars for assuming that “the rest of the world is perceived as not yet global or just becoming global … modernity is connected to imperialist violence.”⁵¹ I argue these opinions are relevant to *The Perimeter*’s central inside/outside metaphor.

For these reasons, opines Bockman, globalization should be considered “additive” rather than stagnant. Bockman also notes that British and American sociology was based on the findings of imperial Germany, whose global connections involved colonial brutality until the end of World War One (a historical moment still haunting Australians today).⁵² Bockman cites Gurinder K. Bhambra in reconnecting

modernity with its imperial genesis, noting, “the historical connections generated by processes of colonialism, enslavement, dispossession and appropriation”; all of which are present in *The Perimeter*.⁵³ Further, Davis highlights the contemporary invisibilization of dark-skinned races and third world labour forces.

In an argument regarding posthumanism in sci-fi cinema, Baishya also utilizes Foucauldian research while drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s theories. As such, Baishya’s essay brings the globalization debate closer to the construction of *The Perimeter*. Baishya examines the condensation of past and present as contemporary anxiety, assuming the form of Benjamin’s “optical unconscious”: inherited global trauma manifest within visually representable present day fears, such as the central sci-fi nova within *The Perimeter*, represented by the invisible dome. For Baishya, the defining horrors of the twentieth century include “the fear of foreign otherness and monstrous invasion”; the explosion in technological innovation; the Holocaust; the African-American civil rights movement; and the piecemeal dismantling of Christian ideology—all of which represent themselves within *The Perimeter* as the Eurasian children, engulfed within an alien science, struggle against a dying, messianic assailant. Drawing upon such global traumas, suggests Baishya, current disquietude regarding “terrorism, immigration and xenophobia” manifests in forms dictated by the past, namely by adopting visual significations resonant with the dominant traumas mentioned above.⁵⁴ In accordance with Baishya, *The Perimeter*’s metaphor deepens: “within the boundaries of the political state there is a kind of double-telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life … a liminal state of being that is within the boundaries of the political state.”⁵⁵ Baishya opines that the motivating fears of contemporary Western life connote annihilation and fear of invasion by the political other, thus by the “deployment of horrific and spectacular imagery these films look at how the human body itself becomes the site of the political.”⁵⁶

These scholars represent a confluence of opinion relevant to horror and the global within *The Perimeter* and our reflective analysis upon it. Just as Lisle questions her postcolonial legitimacy by claiming

there is “something *wrong* with my own rite of passage as a smug Western backpacker,” so I question my role in surfacing “privileged” anxiety within *The Perimeter*.⁵⁷ While Robyn Davidson marvels that travel writing has not “collapse[d] under the weight of its paradoxes,” horror is perpetually at a point of collapse and therefore thrives on such illogicalities. In the case of *The Perimeter*, the story denies its own discursive meaning.⁵⁸ Thus, *The Perimeter’s* fear-based narrative, exacerbated by globalization, adopts allegorical forms and regurgitates colonial attitudes as sublimated postcolonial guilt.

The Horror of Globalization within The Perimeter

The Perimeter exemplifies Australia’s contradictory positioning within geo-politics. According to the Foucauldian “discourse of nostalgia,” Australia’s continued invisibilization of the Aboriginal population amounts to “empire craving,” manifesting a desire to return to a mythical “White Australia” located in the (now imaginary) past.⁵⁹ For *The Perimeter*, “locating truth in the past and lamenting its disappearance” includes the fear of indigeneity; the fear of horrific Antipodean landscapes; and the reinforcement of White Australia’s paradoxical place in the teleological queue (as both white invader and penal outpost of the British Empire). Indeed, as a dislocated Western nation claiming civility, Australia remains paradoxically wedded to its colonial prejudice. As such, *The Perimeter* represents an Australia on both sides of the teleological debate, relying on the past to justify its present removal from Asian geo-politics, while attempting to reverse history by aligning with the legacy of empire.

One aspect of this contradiction is the postcolonial tyranny of internal/external xenophobia. Indeed, fears regarding “Boat People” (outside) precipitate reactionary border control laws (as violation of human rights) and defame refugees as “queue jumpers.”⁶⁰ Such prejudice thrives on Fukuyama’s teleological queue as Australian fears are exacerbated by the (perceived) horrors of globalization. In *The Perimeter*, the images of incarceration and abuse at the hands of captors, such as Faraday’s act of infanticide and the perimeter itself, draw upon the

“optical unconscious.” Further, *The Perimeter*’s dream-within-a-dream-within-the-perimeter imagery references incarcerated refugee hunger strikes, Aboriginal “death in custody,” and the silencing of the politically disenfranchised.⁶¹ As Baishya proclaims, the human body “becomes the site of the political” and imbibes fear of invasion as parallel to bodily invasion, as exemplified in the human ingestion of wombat’s blood in *The Perimeter*.⁶²

Further, *The Perimeter* becomes exotic in terms of its location, while obfuscating the racist component of Orientalism. As filmmakers, our “cosmopolitanism” still proscribes imperial heritage in its creation of meaning.⁶³ In fashioning *The Perimeter*, as Lisle points out, we imitate the efforts of statesmen, diplomats, researchers and scholars by seeking impartial organization of the postcolonial world, yet still enacting the legacy of empire.⁶⁴ As such, we invest the familiar-uncanny with colonial meaning including the savagery of bushland and native fauna—British representations, British fears. The land of Australia is not simply terrifying terrain, as Ryan claims, but a culturally ingrained fear of our own past crimes. In this way, as Bhambra opines, modernity is connected to imperialist violence.⁶⁵ In the case of *The Perimeter*, this includes the characterization of Faraday, the white invasive/invading imperialist patriarch, entrapping the children within his perimeter. Further, the textural weaving of the film as British motherland patronizing her barefoot, Oriental children reeks of empire exploiting prime position in the teleological queue. The Anglo-Saxon skin color of Faraday announces: his “hyper whiteness,”⁶⁶ “projecting the political phantoms of the past”;⁶⁷ his incongruously suited attire; and his cold, aristocratic airs. Thus, Faraday connotes the European vampire film, “the myth of eternal life [which] naturalizes the power of whiteness,” and enacts a quality of British-ness, a detested stereotype in Australian film culture, which positions Australian viewers as convict victims of colonization.⁶⁸ Further, the placement of the white patriarch as the film’s centralizing evil dramatizes Geoff Bagshaw’s pejorative allusion to the white man civilising natives as “Dances-With-Wolves syndrome.”⁶⁹ Bagshaw’s simile gains significance when applied through Baishya’s list of defining horrors. In an Australasian context, I would add the following to

Baishya's inventory: both World War One and Two culminating in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings; originary British colonization and mass migration of convicts in the eighteenth century; and the "Stolen Generation," genocide and "death in custody" of the Aboriginal people in Australia.⁷⁰

In respect of Baishya's discussion, I argue that the anxiety is twofold in Australia: inward-turned guilt for the repression and genocide of Indigenous nations and outward-turned xenophobia in the face of the invading Asian other. The primary anxiety for white Australia is therefore a paradoxical enclosure created by its own transgressions. In that, *The Perimeter*, with its dual fears of entrapment and persecution from outside its borders, becomes an apt metaphor for contemporary globalization in the southern hemisphere. Indeed, to reiterate Baishya, a sense of "isolation and loneliness—the experience of not belonging to the world at all," fairly describes Australian life: an experience exacerbated, rather than relieved, by the rapid rise of communication and social media.⁷¹ In its "outer" guise, the ramifications of Nazi concentration camps around Germany's exterior during World War Two resonates within the contemporary Australian political failing of internment camps erected on Christmas Island, Manus Island, Papua New Guinea and Nauru. This constitutes Australia's contemporary "thanatopolitics" in Baishya's sense and draws on the "optical unconscious" just as the refugee cages in *Children of Men* (2006) reference Guantanamo Bay.⁷²

I also argue, like Ballyn, that in Australia the seeds of globalization germinated with the First Fleet's arrival in 1788. Thus, white Australian guilt implies that the nation we stole could be likewise stolen from us (defaulting Australian white hegemony to neo-imperialist politics). This accords with Baishya's depiction of a traumatic imagination as "a kind of double-telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life."⁷³ For example, in *The Perimeter*, the heroine Sarasi finds herself caught between her dead mother (inside) and the transhumans (both inside and outside) and dramatizes the schizophrenic liminality of Australia regarding its inner/outer paranoia. *The Perimeter* also exploits the imagery of invasion and persecution as well as more familiar tropes such as Frankensteinian scientists anticipating the "singularity."

The Perimeter also references Baishya's analysis by resuscitating imagery generated unconsciously by writer and director. In our film, the horror genre's unique ability to explode rather than resettle fears also "blast[s] open the continuum of history" in Benjamin's sense. Under globalization, as Baishya notes, fears associated with posthumanism and transhumanism reconnect to post-World War Two traumatic events via the "optical unconscious."⁷⁴ In referencing such imagery in the screenwriting process, Mitchell's fascination for sci-fi aligned with my own fetishization of horror revealing "anxieties about terrorism, immigration and xenophobia" previously obscured.⁷⁵ This occurred despite our left-leaning politics, which implicates our failure to link consumption of horror "product" to economic forces, despite our obvious intention to exploit the genre for distribution purposes.⁷⁶

Most confounding for us in the process of producing *The Perimeter* was the discovery that amidst the deliberate placement of popular anxieties in the filmic text, an unperceived ideological stance lay dormant: the fear of annihilation promulgated as "terror of the other." However, as with Ndalianis' observations, we confronted the limitations of constructing horror as psychoanalytic agent as this globalized geopolitic emerged.⁷⁷ If we trace the concentric circles of meaning within *The Perimeter* from inception to (unknowable) under-text, "automatic writing" to constructed meaning, and meaning constructing the writers themselves (in Barthes' sense),⁷⁸ we face the fact of our own erasure in the horror text. Just as Sarasi confronts obstacles as she descends through the concentric circles of the narrative, so the creators of *The Perimeter* descend through increasingly opaque layers of meaning, arguably the last of which is our betrayed ideological stance. Our methodology reveals this key to writing horror: insurmountable liminal fear, beyond our capacity for analysis of the "optical unconscious." Thus, in Baishya's estimation, "spectacular imagery" such as the mother's reanimated corpse, the expurgated/entrapped children, the transmutation of natural child into transhuman cyborg, the deadly concentric circles of *The Perimeter* (reinforced by imagery of spiders in orbicular webs, children and dogs in the center of spiral-designed rugs, and ripples on a pond's surface), demonstrates how "the human body itself becomes the site of

the political.”⁷⁹ Like the Australian Indigenous, Sarasi and her DNA-altered sister, Nayana, become body experiments under the phallocratic, white hegemony.

The Perimeter also brings to the surface comparatively more hostile fears in the wake of globalization. Beyond the Holocaust and Hiroshima, *The Perimeter* connotes guilt for crimes against the Australian Indigenous, which re-surface and submerge even within the execution of the film. The narrative’s main allegory condenses past and present within its own political disavowal: Sarasi trapped under the womb-dome; Sarasi vomiting wombat’s blood; and the father as oppressive scientist. Further, twentieth-century trauma becomes contemporary repression negatively associated with globalization. In this way, the “mass accessibility and proliferation” of televised imagery from all over the world manifests within *The Perimeter* in a second wave of socio-political commentary, one not necessarily noticed by its creators.

In this way, narrative device symbolizes our dependence on an abnegated ideology. The present reality of “terrorism, immigration and xenophobia,” border control, and offshore internment camps, are depicted in *The Perimeter* as “outside.” In Antonio Gramsci’s sense, the boundary is blurred as neoliberalist white culture engages with its own unattended guilt. Behind this—though initially unconscious to the writers of *The Perimeter*—lurks the British colonial referent. *The Perimeter* is caught between Britain’s exportation of convicts and white Australia’s atrocities against the Indigenous. The implications for the Australian Indigenous nations, with past traumas of small pox, sovereignty-sanctioned murder and “death in custody,” cannot be ignored. Further, the ‘illegal’ imprisonment relegated ‘outside’ Australia’s porous borders still references the national shame of genocide against the Indigenous nations ‘inside’ this colonized continent. Indeed, in *The Perimeter*, the “irrational world lurking just beyond the boundaries of perception” proves an all-too-imaginable, if forgotten, past in the politics of imperialism.

Baishya’s citation of Sontag—suggesting sci-fi films reference disaster rather than science—uncovers further layers of this Australian guilt, even as it adopts a globalized stance post-9/11. Indeed, there is no global

trauma on Baishya's list *not* present in *The Perimeter*; race, gender, border control, the Holocaust, and the H-bomb all manifest in the narrative as the membrane protects and isolates simultaneously. The children are racially marginalized, the starving dog Tripi anthropomorphizes the Aboriginal plight while manifesting ungrounded colonial fears of Indigenous 'savagery,' and the transhuman undesirables are incarcerated under the spherical perimeter reminiscent of a mushroom cloud. Further, as Baishya illustrates, at the innermost circle resides the fear of annihilation of the human race, exemplified by the protagonist's ineffective transhumanism. Sarasi is caught between dead mother and cyborg sister, caught between inside and outside or, as Caruth explains, "between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival."⁸⁰ Likewise, between the capricious postmodern film text and the abnegated horrors of the past, Australian conservatism condenses and invisibilizes the cause. Thus, by exploitation of contemporary Australian anxieties, *The Perimeter* finds entertainment through the political suffering, both internally and externally, of cultures deemed further back in the "teleological queue."

Conclusion

In *The Perimeter*, the allegorical representation of globalization as inside/outside binary perpetuates the false logics of empire. Despite our conscious politics, the filmic text reveals that "White Australia" still directs its gaze upon the interior Indigenous nations and outward to the "Asian Invasion." In turn, the globalized world looks to the retroactive and inward-facing white hegemony still operating in Australia. The memory of genocide in Australia, like Baishya's conception of slavery and third world degeneration, returns to haunt its white occupants, deliriously reinforced by the horror diegesis. In *The Perimeter*, the "irrational world lurking just beyond the boundaries of perception" proves an all-too-imaginable, if forgotten, legacy of empire.⁸¹ By incorporating themes of race and identity, by casting mixed-race actors and featuring the inhospitable Australian landscape, we concede to issues of Indigenous land ownership and reference the Australian

government's 2007 apology to the "Stolen Generation."⁸² While not wishing to undermine the agency of the Indigenous people, this research suggests that white Australian horror writers may still define Aboriginals as non-pervasive and welcoming natives requiring guidance as with Dances-With-Wolves syndrome.

This analysis highlights an oversight in the horror film's functionality as entertainment. In the construction of *The Perimeter*, our conscious efforts to manipulate the audience in the accustomed manner of the horror genre have become redundant under the influence of globalism. Our "boundaries of perception" must extend to the "optical unconscious" beyond the unrecognized ("Uncanny") and toward the under-recognized: complacency in contemporary global politics. For the writers of *The Perimeter* this means collapsing under the weight of our own paradoxes.⁸³ The protagonist, Sarasi, functions as floating signifier: she is an "innocent" white Australian isolated within a terrifying interior (Aboriginal land) and a paranoia located outside national borders (Asian refugees). Further, the choice of casting a white lead further invisibilizes Australian Indigenous culture because, although implied, Aborigines are simply not present in the film. In this way, the Australian ethos continues to resist the "vital imperative of globalization": to be a part of the contemporary and humane globalized world. As Baishya suggests, this also means the horror film becomes palatable under residing ideologies, which implies the "naturalization of neoliberal ideology" within the text.⁸⁴ Could there be a belated awakening in Australia as reactionary forms such as horror cinema are forced into newer conceptions under the influence of globalization? Here, the agency of the filmmaker bears a choice: concede to unconsciously reinforcing a digitally and racially divided world or alter the audience's reading of the material with concession to its globalized discourse. Even so, taking the latter path confirms our unacknowledged cosmopolitanism as we contribute to a "criss-crossed and undermined globalization."⁸⁵ I suggest the horror filmmaker should dig deeper through the detritus of history as referenced in the "optical unconscious." I encourage further analysis of horror movies in Australasian culture to interrogate the presence of hypocritical cosmopolitanism within their narratives and alter the matrices of

globalization for the benefit of the geo-political region.

Notes

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² Mark David Ryan, “‘Creep-out’ versus ‘Gross-out’: Horror Movies at the Australian Box Office,” *Metro Magazine* 180, Autumn 2014, 30-33.

³ Anirban Kapil Baishya, “Trauma, Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction and the Post-Human,” *Wide Screen* 3, no. 1 (2011): 1-25.

⁴ Steven Jay Schneider, “The Essential Evil in/of Eraserhead (or, Lynch to the Contrary),” in *The Cinema of David Lynch: American Dreams, Nightmare Visions*, ed. Erica Sheen and Annette Davison (London: Wallflower Press, 2011), 7.

⁵ Kim Newman, *Nightmare Movies: Horror on Screen since the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 145.

⁶ Stephen Cleary, “An Intense Short History of the Horror Film” (presentation, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, Victoria, July 18, 2010).

⁷ Angela Ndalianis, *The Horror Sensorium: Media and the Senses* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012), 4.

⁸ Angela Ndalianis, “Genre, Culture and the Semiosphere: New Horror Cinema and Post-9/11,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2015): 2.

⁹ Schneider, “The Essential Evil,” 10.

¹⁰ Ndalianis, *The Horror Sensorium*, 4.

¹¹ Ian Dixon, “Deviance Under the Dome: Horror/Science-Fiction Hybridity as Uncanny in feature film *The Perimeter*,” *Deletion: The Open Access Online Forum in Science Fiction Studies*, May 4, 2015, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.deletionscifi.org/episodes/episode-9/deviance-under-the-dome-horrorscience-fiction-hybridity-as-uncanny-in-feature-film-the-perimeter/>.

¹² Mark David Ryan, “Film, Cinema, Screen,” *Media International Australia: Incorporating Culture and Policy* 136, no. 1 (2010): 88.

¹³ Mark David Ryan, “Whither Culture? Australian Horror Films and the Limitations of Cultural Policy,” *Media International Australia: Incorporating Culture and Policy* 133 (2009): 43-55; Ryan, “‘Creep-out’ versus ‘Gross-out,’” 30.

¹⁴ See Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Newman, *Nightmare Movies*, 145.

¹⁶ Jon Stratton, “The Sapphires were not the Australian Supremes: Neoliberalism,

History and Pleasure" in *The Sapphires*," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 29, no. 1 (2015): 17, 28.

¹⁷ Sue Ballyn, "The British Invasion of Australia. Convicts: Exile and Dislocation," *Lives in Migration: Rupture and Continuity* 16, no. 2 (2011): 18.

¹⁸ Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 11.

¹⁹ Ballyn, "The British Invasion of Australia," 16-29.

²⁰ Stratton, "The Sapphires," 17, 29.

²¹ Baishya, "Trauma," 1.

²² Robert Marchand, "The Mike Leigh Method" (presentation, Australian Film Television & Radio School, Melbourne, Victoria, June, 2006); Inga Karetnikova, *How Scripts are Made* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990).

²³ Robert McKee, "Story Seminar" (presentation, SAE Institute, Melbourne, Victoria, June 20-27, 2001); Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁴ Stephen Cleary, "Low-Budget Filmmaking" (presentation, SAE Institute, Melbourne, Victoria, November 13-14, 2013).

²⁵ Ryan, "Monster Factory," 117.

²⁶ Martin McKenzie-Murray. "This is Not Our Australia," *The Saturday Paper* (Melbourne, BC), Apr. 30 – May 6, 2016.

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²⁸ Baishya, "Trauma," 1-25.

²⁹ Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," *Existenz* 8, no. 2 (2013): 26-32.

³⁰ Francesca Ferrando, "The Body" in Post- and Transhumanism," *Body, Gender and Sex*, 2 September 2016, accessed April 5, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/16131394/_THE_BODY_IN_POST_-AND_TRANSHUMANISM_-_Full_Text.

³¹ See Ian Dixon, "The Perimeter," *Facebook: The Perimeter Public Group*, 21 September 2014, https://www.facebook.com/groups/728170450597630/?ref=br_tf; Ian Dixon and Stephen Mitchell, "The Perimeter," *Blogger*, 30 November 2014, <http://theperimeterfilm.blogspot.com.au/2014/11/low-budget-is-not-high-budget-on.html>.

³² Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 32; Schneider, 10.

³³ Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 5.

³⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1994).

³⁵ Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 5.

³⁶ Ndalianis, "Genre," 1.

³⁷ Stephen Mitchell, "The Perimeter," *Facebook: The Perimeter Public Group*, 21 September 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/728170450597630/?ref=eyJzaWQiO>

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³⁸ Craig Lundy, *History and Becoming: Deleuze's Philosophy of Creativity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 2.

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⁴⁰ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* Summer, no. 16, (1989): 1-18; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

⁴¹ Quoted in Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 233.

⁴² Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 26, 60.

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.

⁴⁴ Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ Emily S. Davis, "The Intimacies of Globalization: Bodies and Borders On-Screen," *Camera Obscura* 21,no. 2 (2006): 34.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 36-37.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁵¹ Joanna Bockman, "A Variety of Globalizations," *The Sociologist*, January 2016, 11-12.

⁵² Ibid., 11; Original italics.

⁵³ Gurinder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3.

⁵⁴ Baishya, "Trauma," 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁷ Lisle, *The Global Politics*, xi.

⁵⁸ Robyn Davidson, *Journeys: An Anthology* (London: Picador, 2002), 6.

⁵⁹ Stratton, "The Sapphires," 23.

⁶⁰ The AIM Network, "The Facts about 'Boat People.'"

⁶¹ See McKenzie-Murray, "This is Not Our Australia."

⁶² Baishya, "Trauma," 1.

⁶³ Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 5.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Bockman, "A Variety of Globalizations," 11.

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⁶⁹ Quoted in Lisle, *The Global Politics*, 64.

⁷⁰ Paul Grabosky, *Wayward Governance: Illegality and its Control in the Public Sector* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 1989), 79-92.

⁷¹ Baishya, “Trauma,” 19.

⁷² Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999); Baishya, “Trauma,” 20-21.

⁷³ Baishya, “Trauma,” 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁶ Davis, “The Intimacies of Globalization,” 35.

⁷⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in *Art and Literature: Jensen’s Gradiva, Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works*, ed. Albert Dickson (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1990), 121-54; Sigmund Freud, “Totem and Taboo,” in *The Origins of Religion*, ed. Albert Dickinson, trans. James Strachey (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1986).

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⁸¹ Newman, *Nightmare Movies*, 145.

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⁸³ Davidson, *Journeys*, 6.

⁸⁴ Stratton, “The Sapphires,” 17.

⁸⁵ Beck, *What is Globalization?*, 11.