# Inviting the demon in: investigating hospitality and domestic anxiety in home invasion films

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**Abstract**

This research investigates the concept hospitality, as outlined by Jacques Derrida, in three home invasion films set in California. The depiction of a domestic space under crisis posits these films as ideal case studies for revealing the workings of hospitality and ultimately, the frailty of the relationship between the host and his home. Using Actor-network theory to map out the various relationships and agencies at work, my thesis exposes how that relationship is informed and made possible by the influence of an array of forces, both internal and external to the domestic space. When analyzed together, the films ultimately display the symptoms of dysfunctional urban spaces, hinting at California's history of ethnic and class segregation, the effects of which can be observed to this day.

**Résumé**

Ce projet de recherche a pour objectif d'examiner le concept de l'hospitalité, comme le traite Jacques Derrida, en appliquant ses notions à trois films localisés en Californie. Ces films font partie du sous-genre cinématographique de l'horreur dénommé *home invasion*, un genre de films qui se spécialisent dans la représentation de la violation du domicile de ses protagonistes. Par conséquence, ils se prêtent convenablement à l'étude des lois de l'hospitalité car ils révèlent la fragilité de la relation existant entre l'hôte et son domicile, une relation qui, par sa familiarité, est souvent délaissée. En utilisant la théorie de l'acteur-réseau (ou *Actor-Network Theory*) comme méthode principale, ma thèse démontre les différents intermédiaires, ou ensemble de forces externes et internes, qui constituent et permettent cette relation d'exister. En analysant ces films côte à côte, il est aussi possible de remarquer les symptômes d'un espace urbain dysfonctionnel. Ces indices nous emmènent à retracer l'histoire de l'état Californien, une histoire lourde en ségrégation ethnique et sociale dont les séquelles se font toujours ressentir aujourd'hui.

**Table of Content**

## Introduction

The concept of hospitality is one that has become progressively difficult to dissect in our world, as the outside forces of government, state and technology have forced the original relationship between the home and its host into mutation. In Jacques Derrida's words, "current technological developments are re-structuring space in such a way that what constitutes a space of controlled and circumscribed property is just what opens intrusion" (59). As such, the house is no longer the sole, uncontested property of its owner but has turned into a place open to infiltration by various agencies; consequently, the notion of an absolute power of hospitality belonging to the host is now almost obsolete. Derrida further emphasizes the altogether "impossibility of home" (65) when physical spaces are, and must be, regulated by a "machine" of government and corporate control facilitated by the advance of technology. Their intrusions upon the domestic space occurs in numerous forms and through different mechanisms, rendering them difficult to detect and dissect.

The open attack or intrusion by a foreign 'other,' which we see depicted in home invasion films, well exemplifies the reversal of power: in Derrida's words, "this other becomes a hostile subject and I risk becoming their hostage" (53). The reversal from host to hostage is central to the home invasion film; as a subgenre of horror, its popularity suggests that the on-screen violation of the domestic space remains attractive to audiences. These films present appropriate case studies for investigating the notion of hospitality; almost all reveal the fragility of that power, which can tip unpredictably in favor of the outsider at any given time. While the opposition of host against intruder is, on the surface, a two-party conflict over a highly localized space, it is in reality a much more complex dynamic informed by forces that stand both within and outside the home. Therefore, when the house−and consequently the host−is under attack, and

the physical space must be protected and relied upon for safety, these omnipresent forces and their influences are particularly felt. My thesis aims to dissect the phenomenon of home invasion as portrayed on screen, with its repercussions and significance to both characters and audience, in three films set in Southern California: *Lady in a Cage* (1964), *Paranormal Activity* (2009) and *Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones* (2014). These films expose the audience to different facets of Californian society through their individual setting: a mansion in Los Angeles, a suburban home in San Diego and an apartment complex in Oxnard respectively. Their choice of domestic space highlights the economic status of the residents, which, as I will attempt to demonstrate, has a significant bearing on the parameters under which the invasion takes place. Together, the films paint a dismal picture of California over the past fifty years; existing tensions between different social classes and ethnic groups surface, challenging the seemingly idyllic image we get in other narratives such as *Father of the Bride* (1991) or *L.A Story* (1991). Despite their different spatial and temporal contexts, the outside forces operating on these various domestic spaces are comparable and result from California's long-lasting preoccupations with real estate and urban segregation.

A suitable method for the development of my argument, which necessitates one to abandon preconceived notions about the home, power and hospitality, is that of Actor-Network Theory. According to Bruno Latour, the social is "a very particular movement of re-association and reassembling" (7) and the home, despite being a microcosm, is not exempt from this process. Since "other agencies over which we have no control make us do things" (46), the tracing of associations, which produces networks and identifies the actors at play, enables us to describe a formation, action or event faithfully. When the home ceases to be a place of abode, turning instead into a hostile space at the intrusion of a foreign body, a mapping of all the agencies

mobilized—whether human or non-human, such as the technological advances Derrida invokes—may reveal that the house was never a safe space to begin with. In order to reveal the concealed dynamics at work, my analysis will unfold in four sections.

The first step consists in situating the films in their specific historical contexts, as they inform the actor-network reading I will be conducting. The diversity of the Californian landscape results from different forms of spatial segregations based on social class and ethnicity. These divisions resulted from racial, ethnic and class tensions that hark back to the state's inception. All three films emerge after or during periods of critical political and economic turmoil— the Cold War, the global financial crisis of 2007-2009 and the ongoing tension vis-à-vis illegal immigrants in the United States — and echo traces of residual anxiety in their stories. The outlining of the principal historical events framing each film lays the groundwork for the eventual Actor-Network reading I propose by revealing the overarching and yet hystericized actors and networks at play.

The first two sections of my research will explore the relationship between the house and the host, which as I will argue, has much to do with the economic status of the resident, and investigate the neighborhoods in which they are located. If the home is a retreat from the rest of the world, then it seemingly implies minimal contact with other agencies, whether they are threatening or not. However, as the films demonstrate, this sense of security is ultimately a false one: the home betrays its occupants and forces them to recognize their space as a network. In *Lady in a Cage*, Mrs. Hilyard is twice deceived by her house. First, a power cut forces her into inaction, suspending her between the ground and the first floor in a home elevator. Her attempt to ring the alarm bell then attracts an undesirable intruder, the first of many. In *Paranormal Activity*, the recently purchased safe suburban house, with its benign neighborhood, does not

protect Katie and Micah from the demonic entity; walls are porous and inefficient in the face of this adversarial force. Similarly, this demon also encroaches upon Jesse's apartment in *The Marked Ones* and eventually takes over his body. However, it is the building itself that proves to be the container of the original threat: Anna, who has been the downstairs neighbour all his life, is the witch who cursed Jesse at birth. The films' main victims—Mrs. Hilyard, Katie and Jesse—all lack distinct wage-labor; without employment, they have less incentive and occasion to leave the domestic space as opposed to their employed counterparts. Financially, they are not the providers nor major contributors to the mortgage or rent. As Michel Serres explains, "we parasite each other and live amidst parasites" (10). While he acknowledges that parasitism can be malign, Serres essentially opposes the pejorative connotation of the word by insisting that it is a natural and inevitable mode of existence. In other words, our dependence on various individuals, institutions, systems and the natural world also presupposes the inverse: they act and rely upon us too and in doing so, ensure their viability. The protagonists in the films are able to overcome financial obstacles tied to their current condition by relying on another party. Mrs. Hilyard's inheritance of her husband's fortune grants her the ownership of a large mansion. Katie, who is still a student with no clear occupation, lives with Micah in their new home and depends on his hospitality. Similarly, Jesse's unemployment requires him to remain in his father's apartment. Parasitism, as Serres defines, then prompts various questions about hospitality: Who is the host, the owner or the dweller? Who should feel threatened and why? How do the acts of owning a house mortgage-free, paying a mortgage or renting an apartment influence the outcome, when outside forces assail? As I will attempt to demonstrate, these three conditions (the fourth being an unauthorized entry and occupation) expose the implicit infiltration of various institutions into the home such as the bank and the welfare system. Furthermore, by situating the films in their

respective urban context, it is possible to expand the ANT map to include other actors and networks, thus further clarifying the dynamics behind the home invasions.

The second part of my analysis will focus on the role of inanimate objects and non-human actors, omnipresent and yet important players in home invasion films. As Latour specifies: "To be accounted for, objects have to enter into accounts" (79). In all three films, technological objects figure differently, appearing first as solutions to an existing problem and tools for the host to reaffirm his primacy. The characters' faith in their objects becomes another way of negotiating their rapport with a space that is increasingly alienating while simultaneously allowing them to compensate for the limitations of their bodies. However, while technology "renders social ties physically traceable" (119), its relationship to human actors is as ambivalent as the one they share with the home. The elevator in *Lady in a Cage* changes from a convenient apparatus to a trap and the phone line gets ripped out. In both *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones* the characters rely excessively on the camera as a device for surveillance and policing the home. However, instead of repelling the demon the act of recording triggers more manifestations of its power until it completely takes over the house and neutralizes its occupants. Jesse's compulsive documenting of his uneventful life leads him to seek and trigger the entity, ultimately causing their demise. Technological devices also allow the outside in. Radio, telephones, television and cameras all facilitate different forms of intrusion and "the home itself is just as much of a ruckus as the city outside" (Lewis and Cho 76). These objects are the conduit of various parasites including, in the case of first-person camera films used in the *Paranormal Activity* franchise. Technology catalyzes the invasion; like the demon, it has no concern for walls and barriers. Its usefulness and capacity for transcendence comes with the risk of interference, where undesirable agents may slip in unnoticed.

Whereas the traditional home invasion story involves human actors, the United States' legal definition (the "unauthorized and forceful entry into a dwelling") can also be extended to other, non-human entities such as a demon. This "invisible agency" is integral to the mapping of an actor-network account in all three films. The figure of the demon, the ultimate parasite, mobilizes action, creates the disturbance and finally, violates the body. The three films eventually draw a distinct correlation: an unsafe home results in an unsafe body. The successful infiltration of one space eventually leads to the defilement of the other. The bodies of Mrs. Hilyard, Katie and Jesse are all subject to physical violence and non-consensual intrusion: the films depict it as the final, frightening stage of the home invasion. Another set of boundaries arises: the human body turns into a space to be conquered and the victim must struggle to retain agency over that most intimate domain. However, this spectacle of bodily harm exists for another intruder: the voyeuristic audience positioned with the camera. All three films invite the viewer into the process of intrusion. Even though he exists in extra-filmic space, to state that he "makes no difference, produces no transformation, leaves no trace and enters no account" would be false. This is especially true in the case of found footage films, like *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones*, which rely heavily on the first-person camera to convey the illusion of witnessing real events, while positioning us at the level of the actor himself. In doing so, they defy and redefine boundaries and challenge how we understand them. While *Lady in a Cage* follows a more traditional filmmaking approach, it is nonetheless attracted to Mrs. Hilyard's body, with several lingering voyeuristic shots of her décolletage. Despite the absence of a literal demon, the film reveals how the demonic operates in different forms and can take the shape of the camera and electricity. Interpreting the demon in all three films then becomes a question of identifying the traces, means of entrance and the consequences engendered by invisible agencies.

**Historical Context**

The fragmentation of the Californian space has been the result of an extended–and still ongoing–process of separation informed by years of racial and class tensions. Since all three films emerge after or during periods of critical and political turmoil, a knowledge of their historical contexts becomes essential to understanding the dynamics of fragmentation; it will also identify some of the key actors and networks that have precipitated and still participate in the process. Furthermore, it will reveal the continuity between the older work, *Lady in a Cage*, and the *Paranormal* films—a continuity that is notably expressed in space and the characters' relationship to it.

In his analysis of films released in that critical period, Michael Rogin asserts that "the cold war introduces the third moment in American demonology" by substituting the previous "sources of anxiety" of racial conflict and "the immigrant working class" with the Soviet Union (1). This substitution partly defused previous class and ethnic conflicts by redirecting the collective attention to a common national enemy. The binaries produced by demonology create the main subversive forces that "threaten the family, property, and personal and national identity" (2). By instating the house as the main arena over which these forces operate, *Lady in a Cage* presents itself as an appropriate case study for examining the "cold war discourse" (2). One contemporary review of the film accuses its writer-producer Luther Davis for wanting "to blame everybody for everything" (Hodgens 61), thus creating a disjointed, unintentionally humorous narrative. Considering its release in 1964, which positions it in the midst of the Cold War, this observation accurately points to a breakdown of previously stable assumptions about power, class and the family. While contemporary films such as Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* or Sidney Lumet's *Fail-Safe* more overtly

articulated anxieties about nuclear crisis by depicting dangerous political decisions about the bomb, *Lady in a Cage* distances itself from that kind of narrative. Although the film only obliquely alludes to the ongoing political turmoil, it certainly displays its symptoms through the many matters it attempts to tackle. Mrs. Hilyard's loss of control over her home appears to be framed in circumstantial terms–mainly the result of a power outage–but as the story unfolds, the demons of communism, racial and class difference slowly creep in; whether or not they represent the real threat is another question. *Lady in a Cage* may implicitly adhere to an anti-communist agenda but its highly localized setting prompts questions about American society and the stories it has created about itself: while the communist enemy threatens from afar, Mrs. Hilyard must come to terms with the immediate failures from within the country.

Set in Los Angeles, the film inevitably echoes the ethnic and class conflicts that have shaped the city's growth and development, of which Mike Davis offers a detailed historical and topographical analysis in *City of Quartz*. In one of his key observations, he identifies "homeowners" to be "potent agents of metropolitan fragmentation" (165). The latter, realizing their strength in number and uniting for a common cause, formed homeowner's associations (or HAs), the first of which appeared "on the *political* scene in the 1920s as instruments of white mobilization against attempts by Blacks to buy homes outside the ghetto" (161). With time, HAs continued their attempts to ensure "social and racial homogeneity" (161), working well into the 1950s and the early 1960s, after which their attentions began to shift towards more environmental concerns. Yet, the injury had already been inflicted on the physical configuration of Los Angeles and its surrounding suburbs: having occasioned the segregation of "non-white, non-homeowning populations" (164), they crystallized physical separations on the urban landscape that remain relevant to this day. Davis exposes the primacy of the white homeowner in

Los Angeles' history, his ability to control his space but also the space of others through political influence which has in turn molded the very physical space of the city. *Lady in a Cage*, in its premise, well illustrates that concept. The casting of Olivia de Havilland, a relatively well-known figure in cinema at the time, strategically reemphasizes the prominence of the white homeowner; by then in her late forties—a respectable age—and dressed elegantly, her strong presence on screen further stresses a legitimate right to control her domestic territory. However, the movie also criticizes her for abusing of that right: Mrs. Hilyard not only considers the house to be her property but also exerts a suffocating pressure on its other resident, her son. The conflation of motherhood and home ownership becomes a recipe for disaster, very characteristic of the "simultaneous glorification and fear of maternal influence within the family" that Rogin detects in Cold War films.

The phenomenon is deeply entrenched in American Cold War culture; coined as momism, Philip Wiley first introduced the term in *Generation of Vipers* (1942), describing it as a thwarted and pathological idealization of mothers and motherhood by the American people. Wylie's fervent attack on mothers culminates in the following statement: "Our society is too much an institution built to appease the rapacity of loving mothers". Positing them as threats, Wylie's vision emblematizes paranoia vis-à-vis the fluctuating positions of women in society, as wars and economic crises hit the country. Indeed, these events have only complicated and challenged the mother's relationship to the domestic space. Rogin further states: "Momism is the demonic version of domestic ideology. It uncovers the buried anxieties over boundary invasion, loss of autonomy, and maternal power generated by domesticity" (6). The post-World War and Depression discourses stressed the importance of restoring mothers to the house, where they can fulfill the familial

duties necessary to rectifying the damages inflicted on the family unit. As Rogin observes, this narrative bestows the mother with a form of power inherently attached to the domestic space. The initial nostalgia for mothers at home eventually degenerates into an extreme form of control: rather than assume a subservient position, they assert their influence and prevalence in the family through surveillance, manipulation and control. Rogin cites examples such as *My Son John* (1952) and *Pickup on South Street* (1953) as films featuring mothers' whose attachment to their sons is corrupted and borders on the erotic. Something similar takes place in *Lady in a Cage*. Mrs. Hilyard's own dominant position in her space is exacerbated by widowhood, which grants her complete influence in two different spheres. The first is familial: being the only parental figure left to her son, it redistributes the weight of supervision and nurturing solely on her shoulders but also posits him as a pseudo husband figure. The second is spatial since in inheriting her late husband's house she becomes the true owner of that domestic space. In his suicide note, her son writes the following: "Every time I try to leave you, you add a room or dress up the house, or charm me." His words explicitly reveal the dual power she possesses and how the two (house and offspring) are implicitly connected. *Lady in a Cage* then strips her of that power, first by alluding to her son's suicide and secondly, by caging her in her elevator while various invaders defile her house.

Originating from the streets, the three hoodlums who cause the most damage—Randall, Sade and Essie—are located at the other end of the spectrum and embody the dangers of marginal and parentless existence. Mrs. Hilyard proceeds to call them "the bits of offal produced by the welfare state" and "what so much of her tax dollars goes for the care and feeding of," thus revealing anxieties over class conflict and segregation, but also alluding to a failure of the system. Her tax dollars should buy the separation of the social classes; paying for their care

simultaneously relieves one from the burden of interacting with them, because the state itself should be in charge of it. Since its inception in the 1930s, the welfare system has continuously been challenged and reformed. The launch of the War on Poverty in 1964 coincides with the release of *Lady in a Cage*; an ambitious project, it notably aimed to take drastic measures in reducing unemployment, rendering education more accessible and providing special grants to those in need. In alluding to the welfare state, the film introduces yet another network that we must account for. By outwardly demonizing the three hoodlums, exposing Mrs. Hilyard's controlling personality and her class privilege and creating figures of sympathy in both George the homeless man and Elaine the prostitute, *Lady in a Cage* amplifies a mixture of anxieties, all of which hark back to the triad of property, the state and family.

The *Paranormal Activity* franchise is also heavily preoccupied with the concept of the home; much like in *Lady in a Cage*, the notion of ownership is also present in its narratives. Yet, it takes on a very different form in the series' first installment. Released in 2009, the first film opens with a young couple, Katie and Micah, entering their recently purchased house in the San Diego suburbs. Located on 13236 Bavarian Drive, the property used in the movie sold for a large sum of $760,000 in February of 2015. Considering Katie and Micah's young age (the former being a student without a clear source of revenue) their purchase of such a property raises questions, especially when considering the economic climate of the time. Since the movie follows the bursting of the housing bubble and subprime mortgage crisis that began in 2006, the couple seems to have benefitted from a most advantageous set of conditions for becoming homeowners. Deemed the worst housing crash in history, many have attributed it to "mortgage delinquencies" and "defaults in the oxymoronically named 'subprime' sector" (Kelly 7). These delinquencies were linked to homeowners, particularly those who had taken subprime

mortgages—or loans with higher interest rates offered to borrowers with a low credit score—to pay for houses they could not afford. As Leslie Hahner, Scott Varda and Nathan Wilson outline in their introduction to "Paranormal Activity and the Horror of Abject Consumption," these individuals, spurred by a consumeristic impulse, found themselves unable to cover their payment and were forced to default on their mortgages, catalyzing the economic crash (363). These problematic behaviors reflect the United States' "privilege to consume much more than it produces" (Grant 143) both on the local level of home ownership and on the international economic scene. Once again, the connection between home and the nation, much like in *Lady in a Cage*, emerges in these narratives.

Following Davis' critical look at homeowners in Los Angeles, Katie and Micah's house, situated in the San Diego suburban community of Rancho Penasquitos, where the median house value is currently at $663,500, also posits them as objects of criticism. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's work, Hahner argues that the *Paranormal* films "position consumption as abject, as that which both attracts and disgusts the audience" (364). It is highly probable that they acquired the house at the expense of an ex-homeowner, victim of the many foreclosures, which had reached "records highs in 2008-2009" (Choi 4). Inhabiting a large space they do not necessarily need and buying an expensive camera to deal with demonic manifestations, they both display excessive and inappropriate consumption for the time. As Laura Choi outlines in her analysis of the housing market, in 2010 California "continued to top the nation with the total number of foreclosures" (5) while the rate of unemployment still remained high. In fact, the onset of the housing crisis in California (estimated to have begun around 2006) was quickly followed by a labor market crisis in 2008 (Rogers and Winkler 16). By the time of *Paranormal Activity*'s

release, the realities of unemployment would only have magnified the impact of Katie and Micah's reckless spending, while emphasizing the systems that profit from their behavior.

Unemployment undeniably haunts the franchise. From Katie's ambiguous financial position, the series shifts to Jesse and Hector, two unemployed Latino youth living in an inner city apartment complex in Oxnard, CA. *The Marked Ones*' director Christopher Landon explains the change as an attempt to take the audience to a "world that felt a little more urban". This stylistic difference also entails a difference in the casting choice: from the conventional white suburban families of the previous films, the fifth installment presents another facet of Californian society, opting for a predominantly Latino cast. *The Marked Ones* explores the world of gangbangers and middle to lower class individuals, diving deep into the space of the segregated. Echoing Davis' analysis, Ignacio Lopez-Calvo's research on *Latino Los Angeles in Film and Fiction* exposes the difference accompanying the change of space: "If suburbs are developed for the pursuit of safety, order and homogeneity, the inner city embodies the opposite characteristics: it is a barely livable space (37). Landon plays into this concept by explaining one of the radical changes he included in the fifth film:

> Yeah, the gun thing was pretty funny. I remember when I wrote that, the studio had a bit of a knee-jerk reaction to it because they weren't sure we should include it. My point to them was that this was a totally different world we were dealing with; this wasn't white suburbia anymore. And I knew if I put it in there, there would be that payoff for the audience when the gangbangers show up and pull their guns out on the witches. (Landon)

The inclusion of guns, a novel addition to the franchise previously absent in every other installment, not only serves the instrumental purpose of surprising the audience but also highlights the grim reality of the inner city. While Oxnard is a coastal town, the film never leaves

the confines of the neighborhood; in doing so, it highlights how Southern California replicates patterns of segregation in the older cities in the eastern side of the country. Gang violence runs alongside the theme of unemployment, lurking behind Jesse and Hector's idle explorations of the city and offering itself as an alternative solution to the witches' power. As head of the 805 gang— the area code covering the counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura— the inclusion of Arturo's character serves the double function of establishing the 'barely livable' quality of the neighborhood while at the same time performing the duties of a pseudo vigilante figure.

Arturo's presence in the narrative also reflects concerns with crime and immigration. In *God's Gangs*, Edward Orozco Flores notes (after a brief investigation of responses to Latino crime on an online forum) that the predominant sentiment appeared to be that "illegal immigration is the root of most gang problems here in CA" (32). Indeed, the media's portrayal of a "Latino threat" goes hand-in-hand with anti-immigration feeling. Furthermore, this "illegal alien population" as Jack Martin, Director of Special Projects Federation for American Immigration Reform terms it, occasions an annual fiscal burden of about $25.3 billion (1). Half of this amount covers the cost of education for the offspring of illegal immigrants, while another significant portion of it goes into "supplemental English language instruction" for the newly arrived, law enforcement cost for alien convicts, government services, public assistance and health care costs (1). This fiscal burden becomes another form of threat, not as immediate as the crime committed on the streets, but just as significant to the average resident of the state. Moreover, this menace appears to be primarily a Californian condition, which owes much to its geographical position near countries of interest. As the overall population of illegal immigrants increased by 220, 000 in 2012, Martin remarks, "that increase for California is proportionately

higher than a similar increase estimated for the country" (2). Following these statistics, it is no surprise that the question of illegal immigration featured predominantly in the latest U.S presidential elections. In the rhetoric of the nativist populist candidate, absurd ideas like the construction of 'border wall' splitting the United States from Mexico to prevent illegal entrance play on the same ancestral spatial anxieties outlined by Davis.

Although *The Marked Ones* precedes the elections by two years, it nonetheless speaks to immigration anxiety from both the audience and immigrant's perspectives. The film does not immediately offer itself as a social commentary, utilizing instead its unconventional setting and characters to sustain audience interest after having produced four previous installments in the same formula. However, it represents an appropriate case study for exploring the parameters of inner city existence by implicitly highlighting the issues outlined above. Characters like Jesse, Hector and Oscar all represent the dismal reality of unemployment in the Latino community; despite their youth and recent graduation from college, they have nothing else to do but roam the streets. *The Marked Ones* also articulates, although almost subliminally, its characters' awareness of their marginality by having Hector wear a shirt with the statement "I just look illegal" printed on it. Its deep dive into an unfamiliar urban space reveals the existence of an alternate community, where gangsters replace the police force and traditional healers the health system. These substitutions indicate a possible wariness of state institutions, which may be a by-product of ethnic segregation.

The levels of marginalization also go beyond the dichotomy between the inner city apartment and the suburban house: the film itself was released as a spin-off to the rest of the franchise, which emphasizes the separation of its characters from the dominant narrative established by the previous *Paranormal* films. However, despite the many differences between

*The Marked Ones* and *Paranormal Activity*, characters from both films must ultimately deal with the invasion of their private space and attacks against their own bodies. The franchise, which is categorized under found footage horror, has not necessarily been associated with the home invasion genre due to its non-human, demonic antagonist. Nevertheless, its excessive focus on the domestic space makes the connection undeniable, especially when acknowledging the significance of the real estate market to the Californian identity. The found footage genre, most famously inaugurated in horror by *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), usually exploits the camera's documentary potential for investigating outside spaces such as the forest or, as in *Cloverfield* (2008), the city. By restricting it to the home, the *Paranormal* films effectively reassert the importance of documenting the inside of the house too. In doing so, they imply the vulnerability of that space and its owner. Allowing the alleged host to participate in the surveillance system by having him hold and control the camera, the films provide a different insight into home invasion and hospitality.

**Methodology**

As outlined above, all three films arise from critical periods of economic, social and political crises. However, they rarely make explicit reference to the major events and actors that frame their narrative. Furthermore, as Davis aptly demonstrates, the present physical layout and economic conditions dictating the urban lives of Californian residents owes much to earlier processes of segregation integral to the inception and development of the state. In order to investigate hospitality as a concept and form of power, one needs to expose the networks, actors and the dynamics of relations at work while simultaneously displaying how they correspond to each other. For this reason, Bruno Latour's approach to the social as something that "is glued together by many types of connectors" (5) provides a good starting point for an analysis of the

parameters governing the home invasion in each film. In *Reassembling the Social*, Latour emphasizes the importance of looking at the social as something that "is visible only by the traces it leaves (under trials) when a new association is being produced between elements which themselves are in no way 'social'" (8). Resisting the conventional understanding of the social as something that is fixed or an "unproblematic property" (8), he advocates for an alternate perspective. Society is a "collective" made up of "links between unstable and shifting frames of reference" (24). In order to investigate phenomena deemed social, Latour insists on the importance of tracing the various associations between agencies that compose the event. Since "ANT prefers to use an infra-language" (30), one must first grasp its fundamental principles.

First, Latour states that the fixed concept of groups should instead be conceived as group formations, which would describe certain social situations in a more accurate approach. Indeed, "group formations leave many more traces in their wake than already established connections, which by definition, might remain mute and invisible" (31). A group is always a thing in motion, "constantly kept up by some group-making effort" (34) and depends on continuous actions of assembling and re-assembling for its existence. Without these actions, the group ceases to exist. Furthermore, groups require a "recruiting officer" (32) or mobilizing agent and depend on "a list of anti-groups" (32) to reinforce their own identity. This is particularly significant to analyzing the question of hospitality, when much of it depends on defining the foreigner, "the absolute, unknown anonymous other" (25), the welcomed guests and the parasites.

Another advantage to conducting an actor-network reading is that it acknowledges that objects also bear an influence on events. In order to identify these so-called agents, Latour explains:

> To be accounted for, objects have to enter into accounts. If no trace is produced, they offer no information to the observer and will have no visible effect on other agents. They remain silent and are no longer actors: they remain literally unaccountable. (Latour 79)

The threats to the host's control over his private domain are not limited to human intruders but can take different forms. Infiltration occurs through phone lines, computers, satellite images as well as physical openings. Since any space considered a home presupposes "an opening, a door and windows . . . a passage to the outside world" (Derrida 59), it is by definition susceptible to unwanted invasions. A home invasion implicates the physical configuration, the architecture and the various objects that constitute the household, which can work either in favor of the host or against him. The trace producing non-human category of actors can also extend to immaterial things such as electricity or demonic manifestations—both are central to the films I analyze.

To solve the "confusion between body politic and society" (166), which can complicate the reading of any event or phenomena, Latour advises against following the "dotted line" leading to some "total, and always pre-existing entity" (166). This would impair the possibilities for interpretation by causing one to overlook substantial interactions or associations (such as the the impact of non-human actors) that constitute a situation. However, while "Context" threateningly hovers above, a strictly microcosmic or local analysis also comes with its weaknesses. Without acknowledging the systems that inform local events or interactions, their analysis remains lacking. The solution then lies in considering "at once the actor and the network in which it is embedded" (169) instead of separating the two. Latour calls it the flattening of the social: by shuttling between the macroscopic and microscopic, thus transforming the sociologist's work into an investigation of connections between places, we can derive a more holistic understanding of the social. He further explains, "the macro is neither 'above' nor

'below' the interactions, but added to them as another of their connections, feeding them and feeding off of them" (177). Since the home is the most localized space, the methodology he describes would enable a thorough exploration of the actors or networks that act upon it. Eventually, this will generate a better understanding of hospitality and answer the following questions: How does it function as a form of power? Who can claim that power? What does it mean to be a host? Who is the guest, foreigner, or parasite in a specific scenario?

Since I have outlined important aspects of the historical contexts of each film, it is then possible to come up with an initial ANT reading that maps the various, overarching agencies and their connections to the actors at play. These initial maps represent the first step in Latour's method: by outlining the Context and the manifest actors first, these figures lay the groundwork for the eventual tracing of associations at the microscopic, less apparent level.

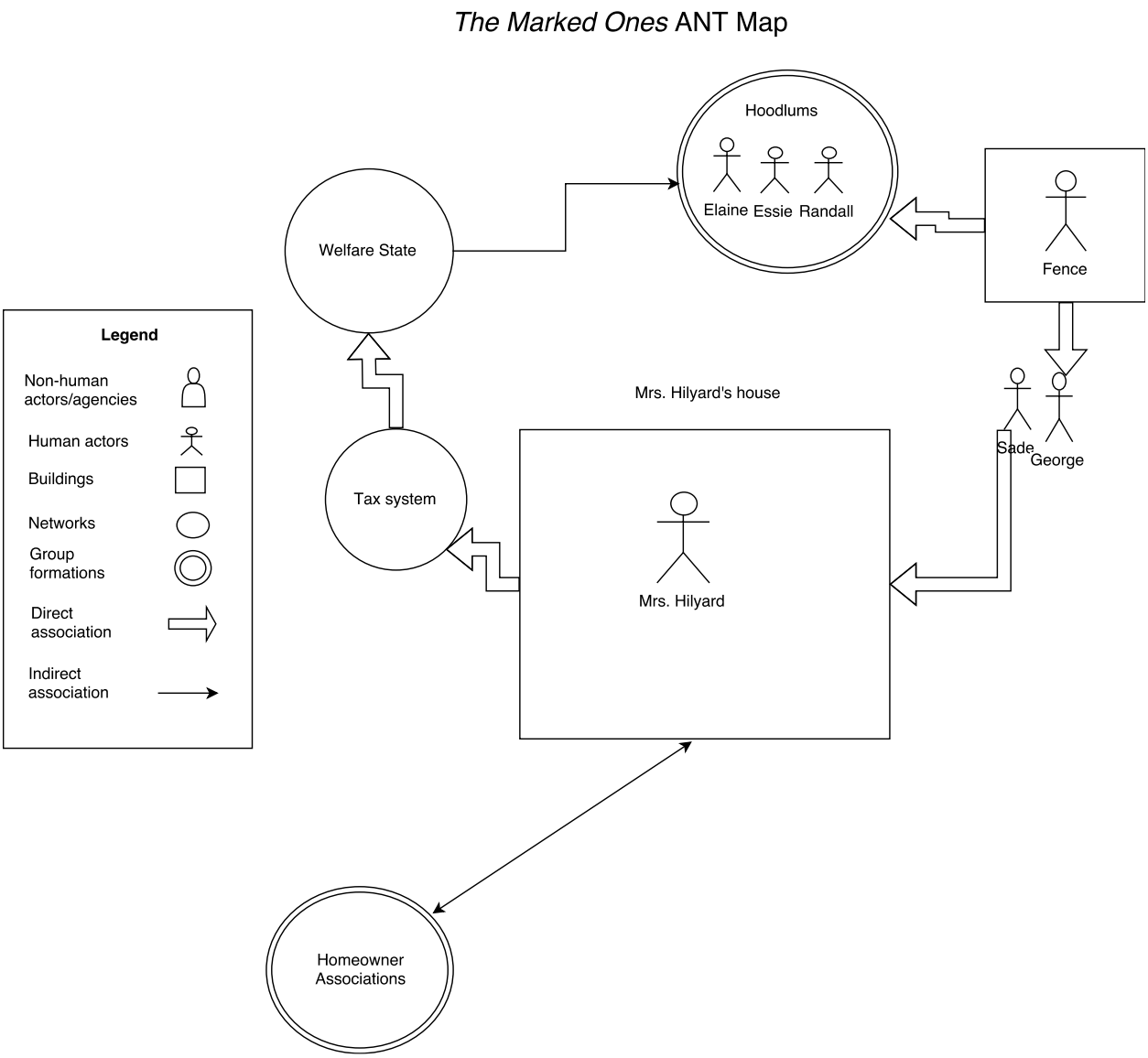


Fig.1: ANT Map of *Lady in a Cage*

The above figure provides a tentative map of *Lady in a Cage* that takes into consideration the various contextual factors at play. Here, the size of each item is significant to understanding the difference between a strictly macroscopic view and the final merging of the local and contextual. Firstly, there are direct and indirect associations, which are represented by two different types of arrows. The direct associations, which are wider arrows, are explicitly acknowledged in the film: when Mrs. Hilyard identifies Randall as an offspring of the welfare

state, whom she pays for with her tax dollars, she produces that association. The indirect associations are inexplicit ones that remain possible to infer. The homeowner associations that Davis speaks of, an appropriate example of a group formation, very much inform the position of Mrs. Hilyard's house vis-à-vis her now deteriorating neighborhood. Furthermore, the size of the various actors also acknowledges their positions in the narrative. *Lady in a Cage* positions Mrs. Hilyard at its center; as the protagonist, we must feel sympathy for her. Therefore, her disproportionate size in the above figure speaks to her primacy as a host.

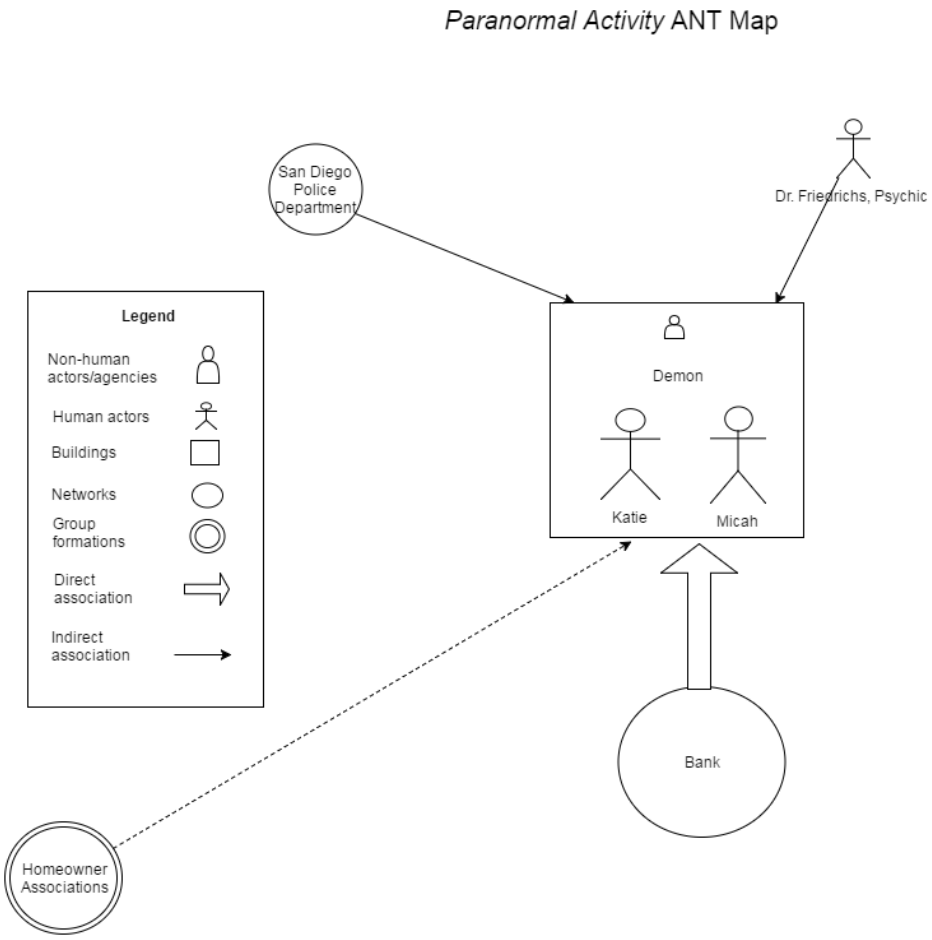


Fig. 2: ANT Map of *Paranormal Activity*

The *Paranormal Activity* map is even more simplistic as the film rarely steps out of the domestic space. It is possible to detect a recurring element between the two maps—the

Homeowner Associations. Katie and Micah's location in the suburban community of Rancho Penasquitos owes much to the earlier segregating impulse of that particular group formation. This also becomes a signifier of safety and protection, guaranteed by the neighborhood's good reputation. However, as we will see later on, the film challenges these preconceptions. Both Katie and Micah also figure as bigger than the demon icon, again establishing their alleged dominance over that space. After establishing the context of the subprime mortgage crisis that precedes the release of the film, the bank must appear as a direct association with the house and its residents. This seemingly direct relationship will be the object of further investigation when we get to the question of parasitism and the host.

*The Marked Ones* ANT Map

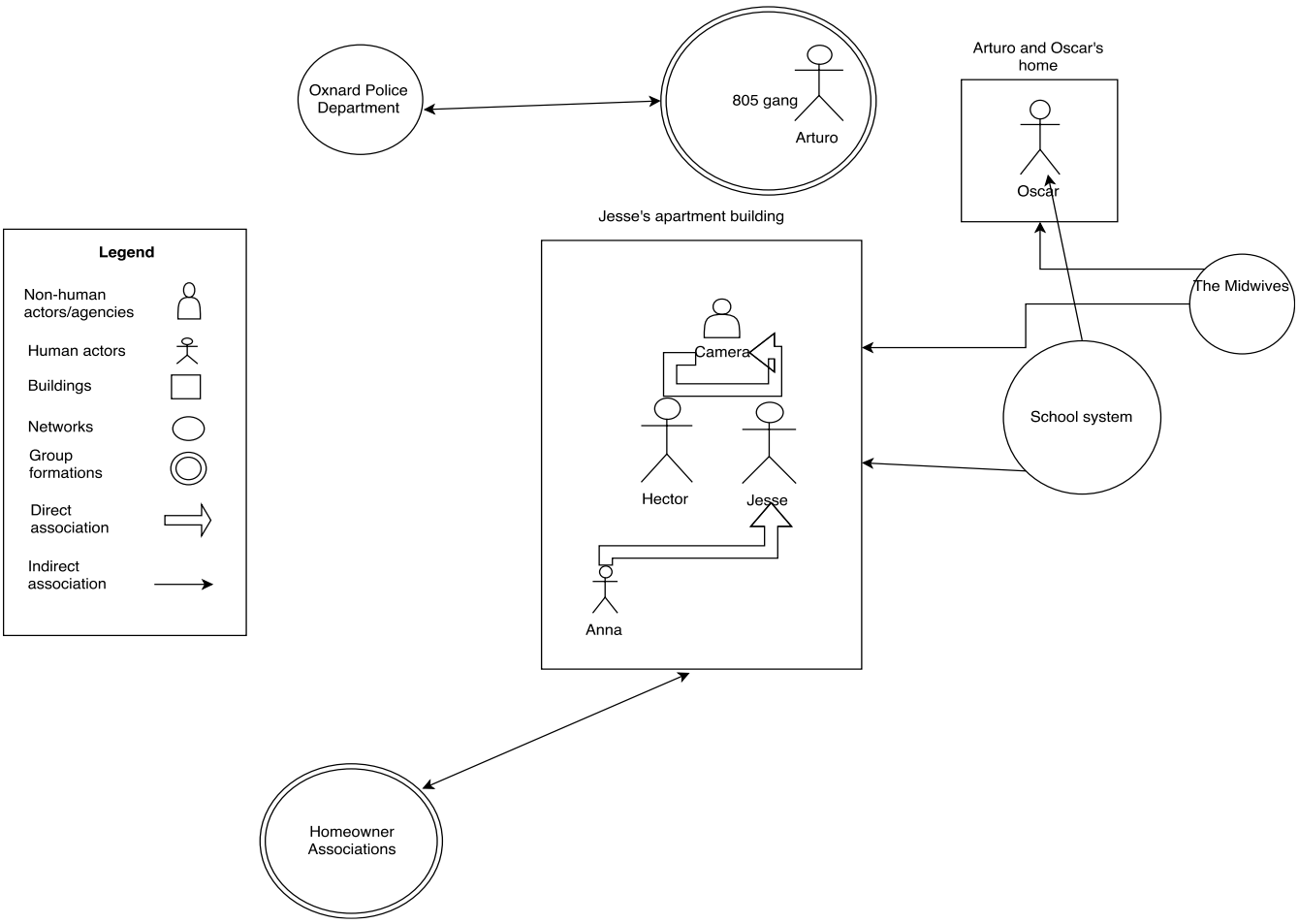

Fig.3: ANT Map of *The Marked Ones*

*The Marked Ones*' inner city setting generates a more complex ANT map. The principal difference is the apartment building, which as I will argue later, redefines the politics of invasion. Housing Jesse and his family, Hector, the deceiving Ana and the other neighbors, the building forces one to reconsider how hospitality functions when individuals live in a communal space. As the film takes the viewer outside the boundaries of the apartment, the inner city unfolds, revealing the presence of anti-groups like Arturo's gang. While they are part of the film's attempt to sensationalize the inner city, the gang members further emphasize the microcosmic nature of that particular urban space.

## Identifying the host

Derrida makes a distinction between the host, the foreigner and the "absolute, unknown, anonymous other" (25), who possesses none of the qualities by which one would recognize a foreigner, such as a family name or foreign citizenship status. Under the conditions of absolute hospitality, even this other can and should benefit from the rights of hospitality. Yet, hospitality as we know in its common form, heavily relies on the possibility to recognize and categorize the foreigner. The process of inviting someone into one's space is a contract, in which the host must consent while being allegedly aware of the character or status of the individual he allows inside. This process also demands spatial awareness and necessitates "a rigorous delimitation of thresholds and frontiers" by which we can distinguish "between the familial and the non-familial, between the foreign and non-foreign, the citizen and the non-citizen, but first of all between the private and the public" (47). These dual categories presuppose two different spaces in which each group or concept exists and are also vital to the practice of hospitality.

When investigating the notion of hospitality using an Actor-Network approach, one must identify the principal actors at work, or the alleged hosts, and the space that falls under their jurisdiction. From there, we can draw a profile of their socio-economic status, which, as I will demonstrate, bears a significant influence on their relationship to their home. The questions of remunerated labour, rent and mortgage payment seem to determine to an extent the characters' vulnerability to outside attacks. Profiling each protagonist reveals their status as principal host to be unstable. They do not necessarily hold or have a claim to the power of hospitality and that power may in fact be diffused among other characters in various degrees, creating an order of possible hosts. This is naturally in accordance with Derrida's argument for the corruption of that power by outside forces; for that reason, the characters' relationship to these external agencies such as the bank, government or the marketplace exposes their position in that order.

The question of labour obliquely figures in these home invasion scenarios: excepting for Micah in *Paranormal Activity 1*, who is not the target of possession, the victims in all three films appear to be unemployed, with no sign of imminent change in their current situation. Unemployment engenders one significant effect in an Actor-Network reading: it signifies the absence of an entire network and eliminates a series of traces, all of which, if present and active, could potentially prevent an attack. Employment holds a spatial and temporal quality; in most cases, it requires one to leave the home for another space, where one's labour is required. In doing so, the worker adopts a schedule that dictates the amount of time he spends in the domestic space. The spatial and temporal dimensions of employment are also accompanied by a social one. Various relationships and interactions inevitably emerge between the worker and his employer, his supervisor and fellow employees. These relationships regulate labour; when the worker fails to show up for his shift, his absence draws attention and he will most likely be

contacted to justify it. These points may be evident but their importance in the case of unemployment disappears under the weight of the worker's everyday routine. It is only once the primary form of employment or occupation (and we include here other types of time-consuming activity such as going to school) is lost that their effects are fully felt.

In his article "Wageless Life," Michael Denning states that "you don't need a job to be a proletarian: wageless life, not wage labour, is the starting point in understanding the free market" and that is because "capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with the imperative to earn a living" (80). Here, he uses the word 'living' as a synonym for subsisting or surviving under capitalism, which can only be done through wage labour. However, the phrase 'earn a living' also seems to imply that labour is a necessary prerequisite for life, that someone who does not partake in it—even those who do not need to work for a living or who are financially dependent on another individual—is not fully living. This individual exists in "the space of exclusion" that is wageless life; he is the "*un*employed, the *in*formal" (80). Whereas Denning is mainly concerned with "the inhabitants of the planet of slums" (79), those who are most drastically affected by unemployment and for whom the acquisition of labour is made arduous by socioeconomic factors, the space of exclusion is nonetheless a vast domain taking many different forms. From the slum dweller to the dependant living with parents, the unemployed frequents different spaces, uses his time differently and is inhibited from accessing certain domains of society. More importantly, as is the case in all three films, the lack of employment coerces the individual back into the domestic space and corrupts his relationship to it.

**The Case of the *Lady in a Cage***

The three films I analyze feature protagonists scattered on diverse positions in the wageless spectrum; to them, unemployment does not appear to be an immediate concern, is a

voluntary choice or enforced by the economic climate. Let us first begin with Mrs. Hilyard in *Lady in a Cage*, who exemplifies the latter position. The film does not reveal much in terms of the financial situation of the eponymous lady but it is possible to form a few conjectures. Firstly, the large house she occupies and its lavish décor all indicate relative wealth. Furthermore, the installation of a private elevator to simplify her movements around the house during her convalescence also emphasizes that she is in a financial position to afford such an expense for a temporary condition. Her attempt to negotiate with Randall also exposes her wealth: "We'll go downtown together Tuesday morning when the bank's open and I'll make arrangements." She offers the sum of ten thousand dollars in exchange for her life, which is the equivalent of a little over $78 000 in our time. Mrs. Hilyard also appears to have assumed full control and access to the finances of the house; she is the owner by proxy now that the husband is deceased.

Widowhood and inheritance rights also significantly play into the concept of hospitality since they generate a reconfiguration of ownership: if the owner is the primary host by default, widowhood confers the lady of the house with the power associated with retaining property[1]. Inheritance laws allow the widow or surviving spouse to receive and own the property of the deceased spouse but only if it falls under the category of community property, or property shared by both spouses[2]. Back in the 1960s, this default procedure would also have been reinforced by

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1 Richard W. Power considers the question of inheritance in the case of a deceased spouse, focusing on "how the surviving spouse's rights should be integrated with those of the children" (262). His study "The Law and the Surviving Spouse" was published in 1964 and coincides with the film's release, indicating that legal matters concerning inheritance and widowhood were relevant at the time.

2 Thomas Featherston specifies that community property, which has no definition in the Constitution must be determined by the rule of "implied exclusion," which states that "if an asset does not fall within the constitutional definition of separate property, it must be community property" (2). In Mrs. Hilyard's case, the deceased husband's property—including separate property acquired before the marriage, or during the marriage through gifts,

the cultural perception of widowhood. In "Fraud on the Widow's Share" (1960) Thomas Macdonald articulates the contemporary legal sensitivity towards widows: "Most American states are committed to the view that a widow who has been economically dependent on her husband is entitled to a share of his estate" (vii). His words reveal that economic dependence, not widowhood per se, supports this point of view: property inheritance then presents itself as an earned right, a reward or compensation for the wife's years under dependency. However, this consensus is problematic and the notion of a surviving spouse's priority over the children in inheritance matters must be challenged on the basis that the children's "blood tie has a relatively more fixed, static quality when compared to the marital relationship" (Power 269). In reinserting the children into the equation, Power seeks to emphasize the loopholes in this conventional procedure which may occasion injustices towards the offspring[3]. Although *Lady in a Cage* does not present any scenario of unfair treatment, it nonetheless displays another facet of this problematic running alongside the discourse of Momism. Although we cannot ascertain the family dynamic prior to the death of her husband, the loss combined with the acquisition of property and her disability could have understandingly developed an excessive sense of control and protectiveness all directed toward her son Malcolm. As mentioned earlier, anytime Malcolm expresses a desire to get away, she responds by changing the rooms in the house. On the surface, the space of the house is the arena over which the mother-son relationship gets negotiated, necessitating his complete removal for her to realize her faults. However, the relationship also

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inheritance or separate funds—would less likely have been the object of scrutiny or legal battle. The default rule would then prevail, leaving Mrs. Hilyard with most of the property.

3 As Power indicates, Widows may re-marry, thus transferring the estate to a third party and potentially compromising the children's claim to it. There is also the risk of mishandling the estate and finances, resulting in total or partial loss of assets.

hides an underlying conflict between host and dependent. If we establish Mrs. Hilyard as the de facto host, following the logic of inheritance, then Malcolm's presence in the house puts him in an ambiguous position. For one, although not officially disclosed in the film, he may very well have inherited a share of the father's property or have access to or control over the finances. The other most likely scenario involves the rule of community property prevailing, thus relinquishing everything to the mother; her control over domestic and financial matters supports that case. Nevertheless, in both cases, one party—the parent—abuses of the rights conferred by ownership, displaying excessive controlling and protective behaviors over the other inhabitant of the house.

As the sole child of the union, Malcolm is next in line in the inheritance sequence positing him as a would-be owner. If ownership also bestows the status of primary host, his uncertain position vis-à-vis the estate—a position which is, as Power states, exacerbated by the priority of blood tie over the marriage bond—informs the dynamics of hospitality. In other words, is or should Malcolm be the legitimate owner? According to Power's observations, the answer to this question may not be evident due to the culture itself:

> On a popular level American exaltation of self-reliance and emphasis on freedom of opportunity, class mobility and the self-made man may have perhaps tarnished the image of the man who owes his status largely to inherited wealth with its aura of ease, unearned leisure and even decadence. To suggest that the child should not be subject to disinheritance may evoke an image of a dissolute and disrespectful son, slothful and unenterprising, secure in the knowledge that he cannot be disinherited save for grave misconduct toward his parent. (Power 265)

Power's words reflect the gendered expectations when it comes to property inheritance: it is seen as a legitimate right for the economically dependent widow while the son must earn ownership

through independent hard work and venture. Mrs. Hilyard's household is then under crisis: Malcolm's attempts to establish his independence are thwarted at every turn, forcing him in the infantile position of a dependent child. His bedroom contains an inordinate amount of pictures of himself, no doubt planted by his mother during one of her redecorating bouts. Before Malcolm leaves, Mrs. Hilyard also forces him to drink a glass of orange juice. In that particular moment, the camera lingers on his exasperated expression, which he hides from her. The dynamic between the two resembles a re-enactment of a morning ritual between a mother and a young child. Taking place in a domestic space physically marked by pictures of him—all of them recent, none featuring him as a child—this unhealthy rapport between matriarch and male progeny recalls the uncomfortable, incestuous portrayal of motherly love in other contemporary Cold War films. However, Mrs. Hilyard's overprotective behaviors can also be perceived as part of a response mechanism for dealing with the grief of losing a husband. When the natural domestic ecosystem in 1960s American household featured at its center the "man of the house", Mrs. Hilyard's efforts to keep Malcolm inside reflect an autonomous response to a destabilizing shift in her mode of existence. The transition from a state of dependence to economic independence with the implied authority it bestows—an authority also informed by the too commonly revered status of parents and elders— is not a smooth one: it can degenerate into excess and as *Lady in a Cage* displays, delusion.

The signs of Mrs. Hilyard's delusion recur throughout the film, noticeable in her words and behaviors. In fact, she exhibits all the symptoms of the agoraphobic as Gillian Brown details in "The Empire of Agoraphobia." She addresses the "American iconography of stillness featuring invalidism, woman and home (and conflations of these) as predominant figures of restfulness" (171). Brown views immobility as a condition that sustains itself: the longer the

period of invalidity, the more likely the affected individual—generally the woman—is to remain in that state of stasis. Eventually, it also generates anxiety vis-à-vis the outside world. Consequently, the domestic becomes a space of refuge, where "the protection of walls and enclosures" (172) it affords is revered by the agoraphobic. Brown states: "The antagonism between self and world manifest in agoraphobia reflects and replays the opposition between home and market that is upheld by domestic ideology" (174). Although she primarily focuses her analysis on two 19th century texts, *Lady in a Cage* reflects the same anxiety inducing divide between the domestic and the marketplace. Previously an economically dependent spouse and now a wealthy widow, Mrs. Hilyard has never had an incentive to get acquainted with the realities of labor. Her disability further strengthens her attachment to and dependence on the domestic space. Unlike the outside world, her house with its private elevator offers relative comfort. Satisfying both a practical impulse and aesthetic one, it is adapted to her condition and decorated according to her taste. The consequences of her disability and confinement nonetheless surface throughout the film. They specifically become apparent in the way she handles her portable radio. Upon realizing that "the electricity in the neighborhood is off," she turns on the device and hears a male voice reporting a crime: "Here in the city, the decapitated body of a woman has been found in a cistern." Her reaction to the story is telling: Mrs. Hilyard swiftly turns off the device and puts it away, an unsettled expression visible on her face. While the news report is cut short and represents a fleeting moment in the film, it echoes Mrs. Hilyard's anxiety vis-à-vis the surrounding urban space: the city as a hostile zone for women, a space that swallows their bodies into its very infrastructural units—we include here the agoraphobic, invalid woman relegated to her home—inevitably becomes undesirable to a lady like Mrs. Hilyard. As Brown indicates, "the space and scope of streets, the appurtenances and avenues of

traffic" trigger the agoraphobic's retraction into her safe space (174). As conduits of undesirable individuals, relentless movement and possible threats—portrayed in the film by the dichotomous shots of the busy, indifferent traffic in front of the house and the relatively deserted backstreet from where the initial act of intrusion occurs—these avenues must be blocked in order to prevent the possible corruption of the home. Therefore, Mrs. Hilyard does not simply avoid the streets but displays reluctance in allowing the outside in; she delays the ringing of the alarm bell for as long as she can before finally giving in.

Her hopes initially rely on the action of a typical city-dweller: "Dear workman, wherever you are, please hurry and fix everything." This archetypal workman, represented in the film by a black man, appears twice in the movie. He comes back to the house to pick up his hat while the bell rings, but he either does not hear it or chooses to ignore it. In his typicality, the workman is also an indicator of labor's regulating authority; most likely, he has no time to linger once his work is done and must move to another location, as dictated by his schedule or itinerary. The workman's lack of response actually reflects an impossibility to respond, forced on him by the impulse to carry his living. On the other hand, the intruders—the first being George, the homeless man—are all exempt from the constraints imposed by conventional employment. As they haphazardly roam the streets, their idleness allows them to hear the alarm and ultimately invade the house. Yet, Mrs. Hilyard herself admits to having shown similar indifference to signs of distress in the past: "How many times I've passed bells ringing and just walked on? Well, I never will again. At least not for several days." In these sentences, she exhibits the mindset of a city dweller: he is constantly moving and consequently distracted, with no time to linger on miscellaneous occurrences. Mrs. Hilyard, like the workman, was once a prime example of the

indifferent bystander but her disability and precarious situation combined with the onset of agoraphobia have instilled in her the value of altruism.

**Paranormal (In)activity**

The case for agoraphobia is not so prevalent in the first *Paranormal* film but the dichotomy between home and marketplace nonetheless prevails. The relevance of Katie and Micah's economic status is highlighted during their first interview with Dr. Friedrichs. The psychic articulates a similar profiling approach to the one I adopt in investigating hospitality. Applying it to the hauntings, he reveals that factors such as financial status, education and relationship status inform the strange events. Their first exchange is telling of the dynamic within the household, shedding light on their subsequent responses to the haunting:

> DR. FRIEDRICHS: I'd like to spend time getting to know you, getting a bit more information than what we shared over the phone. Getting to know both of you, what's your life like, what's your relationship like . . .
>
> MICAH: It's good.
>
> DR. FRIEDRICHS: Straight to the point there. How long have the two of you being together?
>
> MICAH: Three years.
>
> DR. FRIEDRICHS: Three years?
>
> MICAH: We're engaged to be engaged after she graduates.
>
> DR. FRIEDRICHS: And your jobs? Both your jobs?

KATIE: I'm a student. I'm an English major, hoping to be a teacher soon. I don't know where yet. Micah is a day trader.

The scene reveals a very defensive Micah, whose response to the initial question about their relationship is swift and curt, indicative of potential possessive behavior. In fact, prior to the psychic's arrival, Micah's disapproval (and it is important to note that Katie is the one who requested his services) is apparent. He plays spooky music to "make him feel at home" and drops occasional remarks meant to denigrate him. Micah's various comments ("Is the psychic gonna give me some stock tips while he's here?" and "So you'd think a psychic would be on time") betray his insecurity and anticipate his eventual helplessness towards the ultimate, unwelcome intruder that is the demon. Nonetheless, Dr. Friedrichs represents an immediate challenge to Micah's attempts to understand the strange manifestations occurring in his house. By inviting the psychic's help, Katie implicitly points out Micah's ineptness, thus temporarily destabilizing his position in the household.

The conversation with Dr. Friedrichs further entrenches the importance of employment in determining the dynamics that may be enabling the hauntings, but also reveals a potential explanation for Micah's possessive behaviors. In Katie and Micah, we have two opposed figures. Katie has no immediate form of employment and no explicit source of revenue, although it is expected that the situation would change after graduation. This positions Katie on the provisionally unemployed part of the unemployment spectrum we proposed earlier. On the other hand, Micah's job as a day trader renders him deeply entrenched in the market. The OED defines day trading as "share dealing in which individuals buy and sell shares over the Internet over a period of a single day's trading." A quick route to financial gain, day trading emphasizes, if not revers, the investor who succeeds by staying "constantly abreast of the latest developments"

(Jordan and Dilz 86)[4]. The day trader understands the market; he must be familiar with its intricacies and fluctuations in order to end each day with profit.

Micah's financial affairs remain ambiguous in the film. While Hahner et al deduce that the San Diego house "is significantly more affluent than a graduate student (Katie) and a day trader (Micah) could seemingly afford" (367), it is also possible to assume that the abject consumption the latter displays (in the house and the "giant ass camera") is enabled if not motivated by a relatively high income. The couple's youth, Katie's unemployment and the recent acquisition of the house may indeed betray signs of recklessness, impending financial precarity or debt but there are other strong indicators of Micah's ability to sustain their somewhat lavish lifestyle. First, one of the film's first scenes is a simple shot of Micah filming himself in front of the mirror, holding the big camera. Its expensive price is then confirmed in the next scene, which has Katie ask him about the price. Micah replies, "Well, about half as much as I made today." According to IMDB's page on "The Technical Specifications" of *Paranormal Activity* (2007), the camera used by Micah is a Sony HDR-FX1. Its manufacturer suggested retail price is listed as $3,699.99 on a review on the CNET website published in 2004. Had Micah purchased the camera at this suggested price, his salary for that specific day would have been twice that amount with added taxes, resulting in an approximate gain of over $8,000 for that workday. In the case that he acquired it second-hand through independent retailers, its price would still display a relative level of wealth. Today, the Sony HDR-FX1's second-hand prices range between starting auction bids of $200 to a $1,949 set price. We can assume that back in 2007, these prices may have been arguably higher since they would have closely followed the camera's official launch

4 In "The Profitability of Day Trading" Jordan, Douglas J. and J. David Diltz indicate that the profession "experienced dramatic growth in popularity since the middle to late 90s," a growth fueled largely by the perception that day trading is a relatively easy way to earn a great deal of money with minimum initial capital" (86).

in 2004. Nevertheless, these numbers would place Micah's earnings that day between $400 dollars and $4,000 if not more.

While these approximates cannot yield a clear idea of his yearly salary—as a mostly independent practice, day trading is a risky venture, where the income depends on the discipline and productivity of the individual while also obeying the market's sometimes unpredictable shifts—the evidence of his spending suggest that he is relatively successful in his profession. It is apparent in the purchase of the camera and electronics, which he buys chiefly for the purpose of solving the hauntings Katie allegedly experiences instead of considering other, less costly alternatives. Micah states: "I think we're gonna have a very interesting time, capturing whatever paranormal phenomena is occurring or not occurring." His words and the apparent excitement in which he expresses them suggest two things. First, he is not completely convinced by Katie's claim that she has been followed by the entity since she was "eight years old," believing instead that it could be "one of those neighbors, one of those kids who's obsessed with" her. Secondly, despite doubting the credibility of the manifestations, his proposed solution involves spending a significant amount of money on electronics in order to lead his own private investigation. The whole project is an indulgent, entertaining venture necessitating the investment of time and money. As the film suggests, Micah can certainly afford the pursuit.

Katie is a very mild version of the agoraphobic: not entirely cut out from the outside due to her graduate studies, she nonetheless has minimal ties to the marketplace. We know the events of the film take place during a school semester, as Katie complains about Micah disrupting her studying. It is difficult to deduce just how much time Katie and Micah spend inside the house respectively, considering the format of the film. Since Micah chiefly controls the camera and the demonic manifestations occur in Katie's presence, the audience only gets a collection of footage

pieced together where both are inevitably inside the house. An unlikely significant contributor to the financial matters of the household, Katie resides in an unfixed, transitional state both in terms of employment and her relationship. Micah's reply to Dr. Friedrichs inquiry implies that instability: "We are engaged to be engaged after she graduates." Graduation signals the prospect of employment which would in turn cement her commitment to Micah. The couple's engagement cannot take place while she is in a precarious position of complete dependency. Employment and income, the possibility to contribute to and sustain the household are the prerequisites for establishing the long-term viability of the relationship. In her study "Women's College Decision: How Much Does Marriage Matter?" published in 2011, Suqin Ge conceives a model that identifies the "marriage benefit" to attending college:

> Women who attend and graduate from college enjoy three types of gains in the marriage market. First, attending college can increase the arrival rate of marriage proposals. Second, women prefer having spouses with education levels similar to their own, which provides them with an incentive to go to college if the majority of potential spouses have college degrees. Third, there may exist a monetary transfer from the husband to the wife within the marriage: women in college have more chances to meet and marry men with higher education and therefore higher earning potential, providing another incentive to attend college. (774)

Ge's model takes into consideration cohorts from the early 1980s but as she determines, it "does well in predicting college enrollment behavior in the early 2000s," suggesting that the same factors remain relevant nowadays. Ge's study is informed by previous research, which all stress the interconnectedness of education, employment and marriage. Katie and Micah's deferral of their engagement well exemplifies the motivating factors outlined by Ge. Little is

known of the early stages of their relationship three years prior to the film's events: where they first met, whether they were both at school or not, what social or familial background they emerge from—all important elements as Ge insists—are not specified. Day trading does not necessitate college-level education and can be practiced independently but it does not exclude the possibility of Micah having earned a college degree. In any case, the evident correlation between education and income levels sheds light on the motivations behind Katie's enrollment in graduate studies. If Micah's day trading job earns him a high salary, she must somehow eventually be able to reduce the disparity in their respective income and become a significant contributor to the household.

Understanding the dynamics of Katie and Micah's relationship, much as Dr. Friedrichs attempts to do, helps to determine how hospitality works and to identify hosts. Unlike Mrs. Hilyard, who comes into ownership of the house after her husband's death, Katie's claim to the house is ambiguous, if not nonexistent. Their state of cohabitation, with the eventual goal to marry, is also informed by the benefits (or disadvantages) associated with forsaking the independence afforded by living alone. Governmental policies such "the income tax code, Social Security spousal and survivor benefits" (Burstein 393) all play significant roles in the decision to cohabit or marry and determine the success or stability of the relationship. Here, the relevance of Mrs. Hilyard's case once more resonates, illustrating how property implicitly factors into marriage. While the word "house" is pronounced seventeen times throughout *Paranormal Activity*, it is important to pay attention to how Katie mentions it as opposed to Micah's very telling exclamation following the demon's relentless attacks. Katie uses "this house" or "the house" when speaking of their home, indicating no particular sign of ownership or claim to the space. On the other hand, Micah's furious cry at the demon reveals something quite different:

“Nobody comes in my house, fucks with my girlfriend, gets away with it. Here.” He later further confirms his status as the owner by saying, “This is my house, you’re my girlfriend. I’m gonna fucking solve this problem.” These exclamations occur at two separate moments in the film but they are formulated the same way, pairing the girlfriend and the house together. The conflation of Katie with the physical space posits the former as another object to be owned and protected. This is also evident in his behavior towards Katie and his constant unwillingness to heed her pleas to leave the demon alone. However, the tolerance she exhibits towards his methods despite their adverse effects also signals that she is conscious of her illegitimate right to exert control over what takes place inside the house. As the receiving party, Katie’s situation within the home obeys the rule of exchange outlined by Burstein:

> A stable union must benefit both parties, because well-being can always be transferred to the less well-off party through reallocation of material resources within the union. In the economic model, a partner who wishes to continue a union could persuade the other member to remain by offering to take on more of the household tasks, working and earning more, giving the other partner more control of household income, and so on. (395)

Katie’s compensating gestures consist in relinquishing control over two areas, the first begetting the other. The demonic affliction, which has been plaguing her since childhood, is now under Micah’s jurisdiction. This then entails a loss of control over the very space she occupies; Micah’s camera invades and intrudes upon it, all in the name of his amateur investigation. Even the bedroom’s symbolic privacy is constantly denied to her.

Katie provides yet another ground for Micah’s dominance over the handling of the demonic manifestations. He reserves the right to pursue it by stating, “I understand where you're

coming from, just remember you didn't exactly warn me about this stuff before we moved in together. So I think I have a little bit of say in what we do." Katie's failure to disclose that particular information represents a deliberate breach of trust ("But what was I supposed to say? On our first date, 'There's a demon that has been foll…'") as it may have compromised the cohabitation scheme. When Micah says, "when we decided to live together, that might've been a good thing to bring up," he stresses that such information would have been a determining factor. As a figurative proxy for the demon—her presence in the house automatically signifies the demon's, since the latter has been following her everywhere since childhood—and the dependent party, Katie cannot assume the position of the owner, the ultimate host. In *Hostipitality* Derrida initially describes the basis of the relationship between host and guest as follows: "hospitality is certainly, necessarily, a right, a duty, an obligation, the *greeting* of the foreign other as a friend but on the condition that the host . . . maintains his own authority *in his own home*, that he looks after himself and sees to and considers all that concerns him" (4). After outlining the dynamics of Katie and Micah's relationship, the added infiltration of a third unwelcomed guest corrupts the formula and as we will see later on, illustrates Derrida's position on the "impossibility" of hospitality (5). As the demon's attacks become more and more vicious, Micah attempts to reaffirm his host status by consistently disregarding Katie's demands to leave the entity alone and further enforcing his rules. Katie, who is the demon's conduit, represents a deceiving guest whose very presence in the house violates the primary condition of hospitality. Her right to any form of authority over the space inside the home (and over her own body, as we will see later on) is overridden by Micah's desperate attempts to re-establish his primacy.

**The Marked (Hosts)**

Identifying potential host(s) in *The Marked Ones* proves to be a more complex task than in the two previous cases. Due to the nature of the space under attack—an inner city apartment—and the multitude of characters, the division between hosts and guests is not as defined. *The Marked Ones* begins with a high school graduation ceremony introducing the audience to Jesse, the protagonist, and his family, which comprises his sister, father and grandmother. We learn later on that Jesse's mother died during childbirth, explaining her absence from the narrative. Unlike in *Lady in a Cage* and *Paranormal Activity*, which feature a domestic space occupied by two individuals only, Jesse and his family all reside in the same apartment, thus diffusing the power of hospitality among a multitude of hosts. Since Jesse is the film's main protagonist, he may be mistaken as a host because he is the primary victim of the demon's attacks. However, after delving further into the household, it is possible to discern an order of hosts.

If ownership represents the surer, most conventional route to acquiring host status, how does hospitality function in a rented space? Before even thinking of the various infiltrations by external agencies, the simple question of ownership (or lack thereof) already defines one's relationship to the home. *The Marked Ones* removes the owner from the scenario: the receiver of the rent is an absent figure but he nonetheless needs to be accounted for. Since the whole apartment complex falls under his jurisdiction, he stands above the tenants and decides who can rent and occupy his space. Jesse's family lives under the conditional approval of that invisible host, who takes the larger claim of the power of hospitality for that specific space. What is left of it is then distributed unevenly among the other family members. This then forces us to reconsider who the next person in line is, that is the next candidate who can contend for that power. The father, Cesar Arista—whose first name connotes authority—appears to be the obvious answer

despite the fact that he remains largely absent from the narrative. A blue collar worker, Cesar's absence is dictated by his work schedule: we see him in early morning scenes before leaving for work or late at night, when he returns. He remains oblivious to the events taking place in his home, never once noticing the signs of demonic invasion. Whereas this could indicate a possible failure in governing his own space, and by extension the people who live with him, his ignorance is rather a symptom of his overriding authority. As father and provider, he is a respected figure within the family. Nothing should disrupt his stay in the apartment, especially when he appears to enjoy a relatively small amount of time at home. Both Jesse and his grandmother Irma, the dependent figures in the film, are aware of the importance of maintaining the appearance of a peaceful household. They repeatedly fail to inform Cesar of the demon's growing power over the house and Jesse, even when Cesar notices the signs: "Do you hear yourself? You're just rambling on. You don't sleep, you don't eat. I hear you get up at night. Mijo, I'm worried about you." Despite sharing the same space—Jesse's bedroom is separated from his father's by a mere curtain—Cesar is inhibited from investigating further by his work schedule. He is the epitome of a tired working man, whose relationship with his family suffers directly from the obligation to provide and maintain their living.

Cesar's employment ultimately removes him from threat, leading to his becoming one of the only survivors of the household—the other one being the sister Evette. In doing so, it also diminishes his potential as a host. He is not a proxy for the owner by virtue of renting the space. Rather, he provides the conditions for which other members of the household can claim and offer hospitality. By remaining largely estranged from the "delimitation of thresholds or frontiers. . .between the familial and non-familial" (47) that Derrida outlines, unable to recognize the signs of threat despite his proximity to his afflicted son, Cesar never gets recognized as a

host. Therefore, he is not the demon's concern. In the home invasion scenario, the shift from host to hostage requires a clear identification of the two parties. That is, for the assailant or invader to destabilize the host, he must first be conscious of who that person is. This process of recognition unfolds in spatial terms: if a member of one party is absent, he becomes excluded from the dynamics of that struggle, for he can neither be displaced from nor defend his home. Before any demonic manifestation occurs, he senses that his son may be heading towards an undesirable path. His prescribed solution enforces labor. When Jesse shows him the camera he bought at the pawnshop, Cesar visibly disapproves, advising him instead to "look for a job." Having completed his education, the next logical step demands that Jesse join the workforce. The purchase of the camera with money received as a graduation reward is immediately coded as a frivolous, useless expense, a distraction from the more rewarding prospect of finding a job. The pressure to find employment constantly hovers above Jesse, but his more immediate experiments with the camera distract him from that objective.

Yet, it is important to note that Jesse's idleness is not entirely a matter of choice. *The Marked Ones* heavily plays into the "marginalization of Latino youth" in its representation of inner city conditions and the "spectalurization of gang life," and the film speaks to existing social and economic determinants affecting migrant communities (Lopez-Calvo 86). In her study on *"*Ethnic Enclave Residence, Employment, and Commuting of Latino Workers," Cathy Yang Liu argues that the "ethnic neighborhood context plays a large role in immigrants' job acquisition and economic achievement" (601) providing a network already in place to guide the struggling individual. Liu also notes that there is a "potential advantage of residence in suburban areas on the employment prospects of Latino immigrants" but that it has been denied to them by "housing market and mortgage lending" discrimination (622). She also emphasizes that the inner city is

displaying a “continuous loss of jobs to suburban areas” (622) therefore compromising its initial community potential for helping the unemployed. Jesse’s conversation with his friend Hector exemplifies the ambivalent quality of that potential:

HECTOR: They’re hiring at my job, if you want to apply.

JESSE: I’m not gonna flip signs like you.

HECTOR: Why not, man? It takes skill, man! I’ve been practicing this whole time.

JESSE: Skill.

HECTOR: I’ve been getting better.

Having had previous footage of Hector looking foolish while flipping signs, the audience can easily conceive of Jesse’s distaste at the prospect. While the community represented by Hector can offer opportunities, they are meagre ones and reflect the unavailability of proper, dignified employment in the inner city areas causing Jesse to opt for unemployment instead. Unable to financially contribute to the household, he nonetheless haunts its confines and surroundings with a growing desire to record and create stimulating content. As I argued in Katie’s case, the combination of financial dependence and the affinity with the demonic entity denies one the right to occupy host status. If neither Cesar or Jesse can assume that position, who then is the host in the Arista household?

Despite Jesse being the protagonist, the film wants us to consider Irma as the legitimate if not only candidate. In Irma we find a mixture of Mrs. Hilyard and Katie, combining motherhood and the state of dependency into one person. An integral part of the Arista home, Irma acts as a proxy for Jesse’s deceased mother, performing all the duties tied to housework. In

"Understanding Living Arrangements of Latino Families" Susan Blank and Ramon S. Torrecilha challenge "the inaccurate public perceptions" that immigrants live in large households because they prefer larger families" (15). Instead, their findings determine that "extended family living arrangements represent a resource generating strategy for caring for young children and older adults" (16). Irma's position within the Arista household well exemplifies that double duty: she ensures that the living space is functional for both her son and grandchildren, performing the emotional labor of a mother and the physical duties of a domestic worker. The film wants us to recognize Irma's centrality to the family by continuously featuring her relationship to Jesse in more lighthearted scenes of banter between the two. She then acquires the kind of parental function that Cesar cannot aspire to. Yet, Irma's influence extends beyond her relationship to the family. More than the others, she swiftly recognizes the signs of danger and organizes preventive measures to control them. When they witness Ana's disturbing ritual Hector remarks, "Dude, no but maybe your grandma's right, dude. Maybe that bitch is a bruja." Irma's prior knowledge of Ana's witchcraft is confirmed later on when Jesse and his friends find more incriminating evidence. The most telling scene of her intuitive intervention occurs not long after Ana's death. Sensing the threat, while having had no significant knowledge of Jesse's reckless behavior, Irma tries "protecting the house" by dousing the furniture with vinegar, burning some herbs and dispersing the fumes around the place. This, as Evette remarks, is supposed to repel bad spirits. Irma's intervention cements her affinity with the house and she remains the last standing protector of the space. For that reason, she is the most fitting host and must therefore count among the demon's victims.

**Parasitism, Hosts, Hostages and Absolute Hospitality**

While the important actors have been identified, the question of hospitality is no less difficult to resolve. First, we must understand the crucial distinction between hospitality and its other form, absolute hospitality. In its practical use, Derrida defines the difference as such:

> For if I practice hospitality "out of duty" (and not only in conforming with duty), this hospitality of paying up is no longer an absolute hospitality, it is no longer graciously offered beyond debt and economy, offered to the other, a hospitality invented for the singularity of the new arrival of the unexpected visitor. (83)

Absolute hospitality asks no question, requests no payment, imposes and arises from no condition. Derrida uses this extreme form as a reference point for highlighting that the most common uses and understandings of hospitality always depend upon conditions and delimitations between spaces and individuals, even when they are not readily apparent. "Out of duty" hospitality abounds in all three films. Mrs. Hilyard's inheritance of the house suggests an earned spousal right and she expects Malcolm to play into the family fantasy she actively tries to instate. Katie and Micah's cohabitation arises from a mutual understanding of their respective positions in life and projected plans, while entailing the subjugation of the former. Cesar's household is a haven for the unemployed Jesse and the old Irma but their dependence also comes at a price. All three films offer significantly different but not uncommon scenarios: after all, cohabitation or extended families are the reality for many individuals. A closer look into each scenario reveals that the concept of hospitality, with its parameters and conditions, always informs the dynamics within an occupied space.

However, when living together is an almost unavoidable condition of life, the dichotomous host-guest relationship falls short when dissecting the household. As we have

established earlier, host status is a precarious position and does not necessarily obey conventional strictures such as ownership, mortgage or rent payment, inheritance etc. Similarly, guests can also play host or assume the title when necessary. These two positions—host and guest—are always fluctuating depending on situational circumstances. While we established that certain characters are more entitled to host status in their respective scenarios, the two positions eventually become obsolete as the true facets of hospitality reveal themselves. Since outside agencies such as banks, government policies or the marketplace ultimately dictate who can occupy a specific space, who is excluded and who can exert authority over that space, the hosts and guests we defined earlier are in reality embedded in a web shifting at every change of conditions.

Derrida provides another ground for dissecting this relationship by asking, "how can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite?" In the word parasite, he introduces a third category of actor or status. The parasite is a guest who does not "benefit of the right to hospitality… who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine liable to expulsion or arrest" (59). The parasites in all three films would at first look be the invaders, the hoodlums and the demonic presence. Yet, parasitism as Michel Serres theorizes "is the atomic form of our relations" (8), a condition of existence in the world. The separate categories of hosts, guests and parasites disappear when every relationship is by default parasitic. In other words, we are all parasites. Serres' point is highly compatible with an Actor-Network reading, advocating for an approach similar to the tracing of associations: "Stations and paths together form a system. Points and lines, beings and relations. . .There are always interceptors who work very hard to divert what is carried along these paths. Parasitism is the name often given to these numerous and diverse activities" (11). If every host is a parasite, it follows that every rightful guest is a parasite too and so on until a

chain gets formed. Identifying the chain of parasitism is crucial in fully understand the dynamics of hospitality.

The case of a threatened, destabilized host in the face of outside intrusion—as each of the three films display—is not a simple struggle between two parties but rather a shift in parasitic order. Serres admits that "it might be dangerous not to decide who is the host and who is the guest" (15) but this should only provide ground for the next step, which is determining the order of parasitism. He summarizes the relationship as follows: "In a parasitic chain, the last to come tries to supplant his predecessor. A given parasite seeks to eject the parasite on the level immediately superior to his own" (4). This chain, as Serres demonstrates, can be illustrated using labeled arrows. Keeping in mind that noise itself is "the ultimate parasite" that "temporarily stops the system, makes it oscillate," (14) as proves true in each case study, here are tentative parasitic chains for each film.

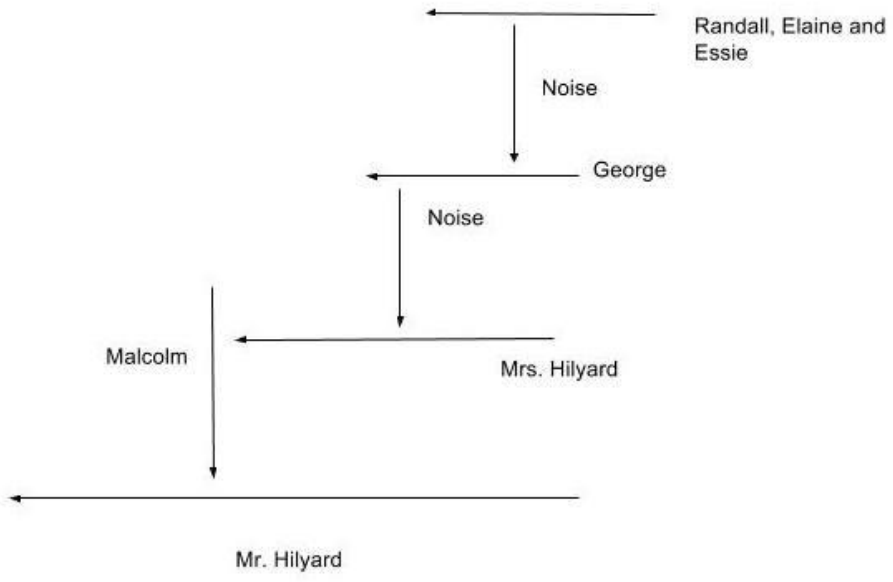


Fig.1. *Lady in a Cage* Parasitic Chain

Here, the order of parasites illustrate the chain of displacement, with the three hoodlums coming last but displacing every other parasite in the scenario. As we can see, both Mrs. Hilyard and Malcolm are evidently counted in the chain, for they are parasitizing from the late Mr. Hilyard himself, whose house and finances continue to maintain the two. Mrs. Hilyard displaces Malcom as a result of her controlling behaviour over the inherited space. The noise accompanies each infiltration: before Mrs. Hilyard sees the invader, she always hears them first.

The chain in *Paranormal Activity* is considerably shorter since there are fewer actors.

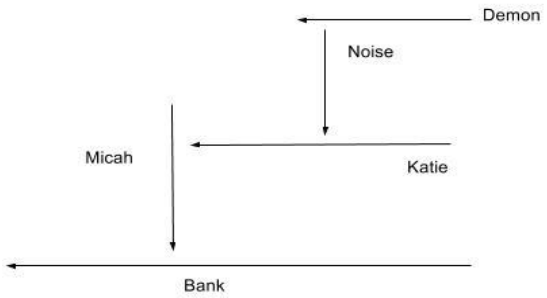


Fig. 2. *Paranormal Activity* Parasitic Chain

The order of parasites features the demon at the highest position since he disrupts the whole system, displaces Katie first by targeting her and finally, neutralizes the host himself. It is important to note that Micah himself is parasitizing the bank. Unlike Mrs. Hilyard's case, who has had the benefit of inheriting ownership without strings attached, Micah is most likely tied to a mortgage payment. While he appears to have a high enough income to afford it—as well as the

other, more lavish expenses displayed in the film—he nonetheless requires the bank to facilitate the acquisition of his own space.

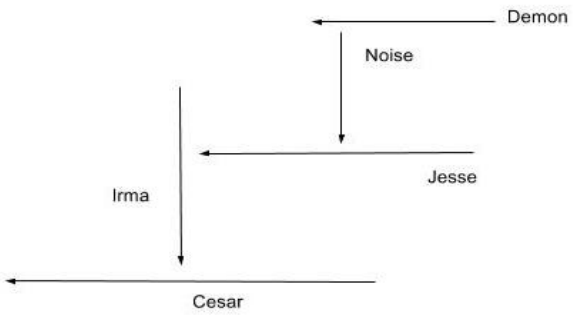


Fig.3 *The Marked Ones* Parasitic Chain

In *The Marked Ones*, the chain is similar to the previous one with some minor changes. Instead of featuring the owner of the apartment building at its endpoint, I find Cesar to be more fitting for that position. Since he himself does not get displaced (he appears immune to the demon and impervious to signs of its presence) Cesar is where the chain stops.

**Working the Noise Away**

Each of the three figures are fundamental chain reactions, where host and guests but also hidden agencies such as the bank (and as we will see later, there are many more networks and actors at work) are part of a dynamic occurrence. The act of intrusion forces a shift in the whole chain, revealing new levels of parasitism, new actors, networks, associations or agencies that inhibit or facilitate our hosts and intruders. One thing Serres does acknowledge is the primacy of noise itself above everything else, which "has a value of destruction and a value of construction"

and “must be included and excluded” (67) at the same time. Noise introduces the parasite but is also intrinsically parasitic. In each film, noise is a sign of the intrusion, a preamble to more upsetting events. Before the characters see or acknowledge the intruder, they are already perturbed by the sounds of its possible presence. Noise also brings us back to employment, as Serres explains: “What is work? Undoubtedly, it is a struggle against noise” (86). When “he who works has a relation to life” (87) what happens to the one who has no occupation? Serres does not necessarily speak of remunerated labour, but his words nonetheless resonate with the cases of our victims. Recalling Denning’s terms, noise inhabits if not invades the “space of exclusion” that is wageless life. It is not only the precursor of threat but the threat itself. The one who has no work has no means of fending off its threatening power. Mrs. Hilyard, Katie, Jesse and Irma are all unemployed and, not coincidentally, they are all vulnerable to intrusive noise. In the cases of Mrs. Hilyard and Jesse, the noise is inadvertently invited in—the former through ringing the alarm bell and the latter through attempting an occult ritual. Both display destructive, noisy behaviours attributable to their idleness. Work also enables one to move in the parasitic chain or form a new one elsewhere. It makes host status a possibility by reducing or removing dependency. Without work, our actors are forced into a prolonged, corrupt relationship to the domestic, which as I will demonstrate, reveals itself through indices located in their very space.

**Neighborhoods and Threat: Streets, Networks and Anti-Groups**

Latour specifies that “action is always dislocated” (46), highlighting the importance of investigating the origin of a phenomenon by moving away from the individual actor and retracing all agencies that inform an event. As demonstrated earlier, our actors’ conditions well reflect that often, “it’s never clear who and what is acting when we act” (46). Their lack of occupation engenders the absence of networks and the resulting connections associated with

employment. This plays a significant part in their predicament. However, the "spaces of exclusion" our victims occupy are not only defined by the absence of networks: they reveal the presence of other networks and groups, or as Latour identifies, "anti-groups" (56). Indeed, an ANT reading implies that "accounts of agency will constantly add new entities while withdrawing others as illegitimate" (56). Anti-groups are agencies "opposed to other competing agencies" (52) and in their very opposition, they are just as central to events as their counterparts. As we will uncover, the anti-groups in the films resist the conventional networks established by various governmental institutions; they do so by mimicking and corrupting the parameters under which the latter operate.

The presence (or absence in the case of *Paranormal Activity*) of anti-groups in each film is also tied to the characters' specific location within the urban landscape. In *Thirdspace*, Edward Soja points out that "hegemonic power …actively produces and reproduces difference as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division" (87). Certainly, the "dichotomously spatialized and enclosed" "'we' and 'they'" (87) are aligned with our investigation of anti-groups; if legitimate groups or networks designate official spaces of operation, then their counterparts must also delineate their own areas of control. Yet, to reduce the existence and creations of groups to the actions of an all-encompassing power would provide an incomplete picture of the dynamics behind their inception and resulting influence. While urban segregation is one of the tools through which hegemonic power "universalizes and contains difference" (Soja 87), it constitutes only one of the many traces left behind in a particular ANT map. ANT proposes that "if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups" (Latour 34), therefore highlighting the perpetual labour that goes into generating and maintaining them. Anti-group formation does not begin and end in the actions of a higher

authority nor is it a fixed process: it is always subject to reconfiguration, influenced by all kinds of outside forces while generating new parameters for existence.

While we have identified some of the networks at work in each scenario (the welfare system, the law, the banks and government, each one indicative of hegemonic power), the films also provide a ground-level perspective on group formation and alternate networks. Latour defines this viewpoint as the following:

> Oligoptica are just those sites since they do exactly the opposite of panoptica: they see much *too little* to feed the megalomania of the inspector or the paranoia of the inspected, but what they see, they *see it well*. (181)

Each film represents an oligopticon, a site or "landmark" which may not immediately betray the influence of the larger agencies mentioned earlier but can certainly shed light on critical dynamics that may otherwise have been overlooked. Oligoptica reveal the complexity of phenomena and expose hidden steps between an action from above and its corresponding reaction below. Furthermore, because they are highly localized, they also demand consideration of physical space as integral to events, which is especially essential when analyzing home invasion cases. The three oligoptica we consider all differ from each other in their respective scope. Despite its focus on Mrs. Hilyard's plight, *Lady in a Cage* spends a significant amount of time investigating the surrounding neighborhood. *The Marked Ones* has its characters constantly roam their inner city environment, neglecting the apartment. Finally, *Paranormal Activity* rarely, if ever, ventures outside the house, prompting questions about the nature of its ideal suburban location. Neighborhoods, as both spaces and communities (and as we will see, networks) affect the domestic space, hosting the threats and challenging its perceived safety. As physical spaces,

they hint at our actors' location within the urban landscape, reveal the distance that separates the neighbors, the quality of their living accommodations and consequently, their socioeconomic positions. Each neighborhood we deal with has its unique physical configuration, which bears an influence on the way individuals relate to each other by determining the degree of exposure to other neighbors and the level of privacy they enjoy. Consequently, the rules and protocols for successful coexistence as well as the dynamics between people vary accordingly.

**Behind the house: the fence or the alternate marketplace**

"We made us cities and towns and thought we had beat the jungle back, not knowing we had built the jungle in," Mrs. Hilyard exclaims in one of her many poetic utterances. While this statement betrays her agoraphobia it also conveys the impossibility of fully controlling physical space. Including herself in the statement, she indicates that the unruliness of these urban spaces is symptomatic of a collective failure. Its signs are evident at the microscopic level: her inability to control her home is directly aligned with the surrounding chaos in the city. This is evident in the film's opening sequence, which presents a dismal exploration of the surrounding neighborhood in a series of unsettling shots interspersed with images of the house. The viewer sees the following: a young black girl massaging the leg of an unconscious homeless man with her roller-skate, a couple being openly intimate in a car, a garbage bin exploding, cars stopping abruptly in front of the camera, drivers honking furiously, a dead dog on the street in front of Mrs. Hilyard's home. These images immediately establish the menacing quality of the city which, much like the water cistern containing the dead body of a woman announced in the radio news, gets expressed in its physical constituents. Objects as harmless as garbage bins are now the containers of threat. Furthermore, the city's influence is evident in the actions of its human

actors; anticipating the intimate couple, the brief shot of the young black girl is loaded with erotic undertones depicting a corrupt childhood.

By opening with the girl, *Lady in a Cage* introduces the first of its black figurants who occupy the streets, the other notable ones being the other black boy playing in the neighborhood and the worker. Their peripheral presence serves to replicate difference as Soha suggests: *Lady in a Cage* paints a picture of the streets as a space belonging to the homeless, the unemployed lower class but also to racial minorities. This difference is notably expressed in the high volume of cars in the film. All individuals that do not belong to the categories mentioned earlier—that is the homeless, racial minorities or the unemployed—are found driving cars, transiting by the house towards their vacation at the beach. Cars figure prominently in the opening sequence but also in the film's final moments. In that mass of vacationers, we find those who not only can afford the vehicles but also a trip to the beach. They safely navigate the city in their automobiles, impervious to the unpleasant realities of the streets while contributing to their chaos with their impatient honking and their dangerous and abrupt manoeuvers . The physical separation afforded by their cars is in direct contrast with our street dwellers whose lives seem to be tied to the neighbourhood, and whom therefore inevitably form anti-groups and alternate networks in their space of existence. The traffic is then advantageous to our home invaders, providing optimal conditions for their attacks by clearing the streets of potential witnesses or interfering individuals.

First, let us take a closer look at Mrs. Hilyard's neighborhood. Located in the Pico-Union district, her residence benefits from the proximity of major roads, a notable one being Venice boulevard, which connects the beach to downtown Los Angeles. This explains the traffic in the film. However, with major roads and boulevards and the nearness of the downtown area come

the risk of unwanted visitors. From its inception in the 1880s to Mrs. Hilyard's time, the district observed a change "from a suburban retreat at the city's edge to an increasingly diverse, urban neighborhood at its center," (Los Angeles Conservacy 1) partly resulting from the influx of Latino residents. The evidence and impact of this transformation is clear in the film, which presents a neighborhood under physical and demographic transition. In his review for the *The New York Times*, A.H Weiler describes Mrs. Hilyard's house as an "elegant Victorian setting" which contributes to the film's failure to properly comment on "the destructive, chaotic state of our culture" ("Aimless Brutality"). When most of the film's action is concentrated inside the house the setting, as Weiler suggests, takes away from the disruptive changes in the surroundings. However, it is also possible to argue that the house's very appearance reinforces what Mrs. Hilyard perceives to be the calamity of change. Both the elegant lady and the house seem to resist—although in vain—the evolution of society, wishing instead to maintain a nostalgic fantasy of olden times for as long as possible.

The home invasion is then a brutal reminder of what Mrs. Hilyard refuses to acknowledge. No amount of money paid to the welfare services, no pretentious décor or affected behavior can protect her from the realities of a reconfiguring society. Our five invaders are the evidence of that change. George's homelessness and his presence already hints at how porous and accessible the neighborhood is. When he fetches Sade, who is a prostitute, he provides hints of the district's new configuration. Her one-room apartment appears to be located nearby, thus indicating that grand houses like Mrs. Hilyard's are closer to buildings accommodating the underclass than we may imagine. It also suggests that George and Sade are familiar with the area. Along with the three hoodlums, they all access Mrs. Hilyard's house from the same entrance at the back. Evidently, this is a strategic choice as it prevents them from alerting anyone

or being caught. The concept of back and front are significant in the movie because they play into the dichotomization of space. While the front street carries the well-off vacationers away, the backstreet is part of a system of routes for other kinds of people. When Randall and his crew leave the fence to find the house, they follow George down a network of back alleys and lanes where traffic is inexistent. These roads connect the fence—an illicit store that buys and sells stolen goods—to Mrs. Hilyard's home and every other house in the neighborhood. The fence therefore constitutes a peripheral threat, with its own organization. As an alternate network, it presents a market system for individuals who are unable to enter legitimate marketplaces.

Gillian Brown explains "that what is most terrifying about the market is its ubiquity, its inescapability" (184) adding that "with each new retrenchment of barriers, the market advances nearer" (184). Mrs. Hilyard's case well exemplifies Brown's point. Since home and market will always be interconnected, it is up to the homeowners to regulate and keep a balance between the two. Mrs. Hilyard, as an agoraphobic widow, is both too inexperienced and unwilling to take part in this process. Consequently, the relationship between home and market takes another dimension in *Lady in a Cage*. First, one must understand what is at the root of that relationship as Brown explains:

> The story of a threatened domesticity sells a reinforced domesticity. In order that the domestic remain a principle of stability, domestic consumerism requires the remapping of domestic boundaries, their extension into commercial spaces. (182)

In order to fulfill domestic fantasies of safety and control, women needed to be institutionalized as consumers. Consistent trips to the market wards off the threat, or at least provides the illusion that it does; the purchase of furniture, clothing, appliances and decorations allows one form of control over the domestic space and the domestic experience, which may eventually dissolve into

a delusion of complete control. Since Mrs. Hilyard enforces a corrupt domesticity through excessive control and dependence over her space—her disability also prevents her from leaving the house, consequently generating an inability to consume—we witness a different manifestation of the market. The fence is its corrupt form, where stolen goods are bought and sold and where the supply of merchandise generally results from robbery or other criminal acts.

The fence does the opposite of the legitimate market. Instead of dressing up the domestic, its operation strips it of the very objects that constitute and define it. Of all the items in the house, George chooses to bring a toaster to the fence. This decision partly underlines his homelessness; he detects value in the appliance for its association with domesticity. The toaster exits its rightful place to find itself in the fence among other displaced objects. The backstreet leading to the fence also shows evidence of maimed houses, with toilet bowls hanging above ground and a wooden dresser abandoned on the side. The fence's warehouse itself contains a multitude of artifacts from fancy dishes to chandeliers, trophies, yard fences, ladders, all arranged methodically about the space. The scene of George's transaction also reveals the fence to be an organized system, with a specialist who evaluates the objects and clients who contribute to its operation by providing the merchandise. It is a network for and powered by anti-groups like Randall and his accomplices. It is also the source of all subsequent invasions. We first meet Randall's group in the store, where they decide to follow George back to Mrs. Hilyard's house. From then on, the list of intruders only expands in a domino effect. George enlists Sade's help by describing the potential for profit, who later phones the fence, prompting the owner to visit the house too. By the end of *Lady in a Cage*, Mrs. Hilyard's home has received an array of intruders, their common denominator being the fencing operation itself.

**When the neighborhood watches**

Although set in the city of Oxnard, *The Marked Ones*' actual filming location is situated in central Los Angeles, more precisely around West Adams Boulevard. This positions Jesse's apartment complex at a mere distance of four miles from Mrs. Hilyard's house. Choosing the city of Oxnard as the film's official location serves the story's purpose, as it indicates that the demonic manifestations are not tied to a specific family but spreading out. Anyone, from a suburban couple to an inner city Latino family, can be a victim. However, as *The Marked Ones* displays, the inner city and apartment complex entail different rules for existence by redefining the way individuals relate to their space. Whereas Mrs. Hilyard's house appears to be stuck at the boundary between inner city and suburbia, Jesse's apartment is in the midst of the former. When we get the first shot of the apartment complex, Jesse comments: "That's my mansion right there. Top to the left, that's my friend's apartment Hector." The shot highlights the appearance of the building, which can pass for a mansion from a street view: the duplexes replicate the look of houses, with well-kept hedges, symmetrical arrangement and gated stairs. His home deviates from traditional images of inner city buildings, indicating potential traces of gentrification. Jesse's statement also reveals that the building also houses his best friend, who is an important character. Their proximity constantly shows throughout the film; Hector is almost a part of the family, entering and leaving the apartment at any time, even waking up Jesse in the morning. His relationship with Irma, which is familiar and informal, also establishes that his place within the household is unquestioned. Hector's familiarity is inevitably a by-product of his nearness. All apartments are linked together by a system of stairs and passages, facilitating movements and interactions between neighbors. Since human spatiality is simultaneously "physical, mental and social" (Soja 65), *The Marked Ones* provides even more evidence of a sort of microcosm arising

from the structure of the complex. All apartments are arranged in a rectangular shape, leaving space for a courtyard in the middle. This favors communal spirit by making the courtyard a place where meetings between neighbors are inevitable. It is also a space for socializing and celebrating, as Jesse's graduation party clearly indicates: neighbors form an integral part of the guests, which further reinforces how familiar they are with each other.

This default communality is not without its dangers. Having lived most of his life in the apartment complex, Jesse considers the other neighbors to be naturalized members of this small community. However, the familiarity we feel towards neighbors has its flipside, which Nancy Rosenblum aptly describes in *Neighbors: The Democracy of Everyday Life in America*:

> The unique power neighbors hold over our lives is explained in one word: they affect us where we live, at *home*. We have no exit. And at home, we are uniquely vulnerable because of the stakes, the depth and intensity of the interests we have in quotidian private life, and our expectation of control over our personal affairs behind the door. (2)

Rosenblum's statement once more highlights the concern with space. The neighbor shapes the concept of home first by his proximity: he is the neighbor because he is close to home, or else the title would not stand. He possesses that association with home another stranger does not have, sharing "both location and personal knowledge" (24). However, in this association he must also always stand outside the home so that the division can be maintained. What is *my* home is not *his* home, and vice-versa. *The Marked Ones* considers the neighbor from the perspective of individuals living in apartments. Boundaries that separate Jesse from his neighbors are less substantial: they share the courtyard but also walls, entrances and staircases, they can peer at each other through windows, hear conversations and as we will see later on, even spy on their neighbors through the vent system. The home, with its sacred privacy, spills out onto the

communal space, becoming accessible to others and redefining the boundaries of the hospitable space. The host finds undesirable guests in his surroundings, for not all neighbors, by virtue of their mere proximity, can and should earn access to one's home. This compromised privacy is a mode of existence that binds them together but in order for it to succeed, they must also perform the nonexistent physical separations by, as Rosenblum coins, "minding [their] own business" (210). She further states that "minding our own business owes to our separateness and our need for privacy and control over our lives at home" (210). A failure to respect the protocol, as *The Marked Ones* displays, may generate regrettable consequences.

While the demon is the main intruder, the first home invasion in the film comes from Jesse himself. After hearing strange noises originating from the apartment below, he and Hector decide to investigate further. Since only a floor separates them from Ana's apartment, they figure out that the vent system would allow them access to her home with the help of a camera extension cord. Space once more proves to be a key factor in the scene; their proximity allows them to hear the mysterious sounds but also to investigate them. They are then privy to an occult ritual featuring a naked Ana marking the belly of another unknown naked woman. The women's nakedness further heightens the private nature of the scene, turning Hector and Jesse's intrusion into a more substantial violation. They did not merely intrude on a private space but witnessed the two women at their most exposed state. The scene also confirms the general opinion of Ana's character: "You know how everybody around the neighborhood is saying she's like a witch, a bruja." His words reveal the interconnectedness of the neighbors—synecdochic for the "neighborhood"—as they establish reputations together, even targeting recluses like Ana. Perhaps, Ana's failure to conform to a neighborhood's standard of behavior warrants acts like Jesse's, creating this desire to confirm what is being said about her. And Jesse only pushes

further with more invasive behaviors. He commits a direct offence by asking a child to knock at her door and scream “bruja” while he records it on camera. Ana then comes out and speaks Spanish, which Jesse translates as the following: “She says we don’t know what’s gonna happen to me.”

Whether or not Ana’s private activities are condemnable is another question. While retaining a right to privacy, Ana nonetheless represents a bad, deceptive neighbor, whose questionable behaviors incriminate her. Unlike Hector, whose relationships with the Arista family (particularly with Irma, the leading host) has earned him a right to their hospitality, Ana would not likely gain an invitation. Her character illustrates that “bad neighbors, the worse, often elect us” (Rosenblum 24). On the surface, she appears to be the resident eccentric who, as long as she is left alone, remains relatively harmless. However, Jesse soon discovers the real nature of Ana’s relations with his family. During one of his many illicit visits to the apartment following her death, he finds an important piece of evidence in her hidden basement: a photograph featuring his mother with Ana and Oscar, who is the first victim of possession in the film. We then learn that Jesse’s mother was one of the many women who were manipulated into giving up their first-born son to the witches. The photograph itself confirms suspicions Jesse has had about Ana: “I mean, I heard stuff from people saying that, like, Ana, like, she was doing all this weird witch stuff, like, rituals on pregnant women and stuff. How did Mom die? Having me, right? So what if Ana did something to Mom?” His obvious distress betrays the significance of Ana’s attack: she has committed a symbolic intrusion by targeting the mother, marking her womb and determining Jesse’s fate before his birth. By attacking the mother, a central member of the household, she perverts the Arista family and inserts herself within it, all the while living

below them. Ana represents a silent threat whose familiar position in the neighborhood has enabled her to continue her activities all these years, unnoticed and unrestrained.

If the threat is lurking in the neighborhood, then so is its apparent solution. At least, this is what *The Marked Ones* first suggests. While we know that demonic possession is irreversible, our characters nonetheless persist in their attempts to help Jesse. Their efforts eventually lead them to Arturo. Described as a "serious gangster," Arturo is Oscar's brother and the "main head of 805," the number signifying the area code that notably comprises Ventura county, where Oxnard is situated. While he initially occupies a peripheral position in the film, his influence on the characters nonetheless remains considerable. For example, when Jesse, Hector and Marisol deliberate on whether or not they should show the footage of Oscar escaping Ana's apartment to the police, they eventually decide against it because of Arturo. They deny the police an important piece of evidence in a murder case so that they do not disrupt his activities or implicate him in any way. Jesse justifies this refusal by stating that he is not "messing with that gang stuff" therefore establishing that gangs take precedence over the police. He expresses a default allegiance by virtue of his physical location, which Andrew V. Papachristos points out, emphasizing that "the modern street gang serves as an example par excellence of how geography and social networks converge to influence behavior" (418). Jesse, Hector and Marisol's unanimous decision to avoid alerting the authorities is a strong evidence of Arturo's pervading influence.

Part of Arturo's power results from his mobility, which Papachristos identifies as an important component of gang authority. Gang members need to know, control and supervise their geographical space; they must oversee it and be seen in it to establish their jurisdiction. The film illustrates this principle by inserting Arturo in random locations: we briefly meet him at the

graduation with Oscar and unexpectedly bump into him in Ana's apartment during Hector and Jesse's exploration. He can penetrate Jesse's apartment building with ease, further reinforcing the extent of his reach. The film further confirms his authority by shifting him from a peripheral position to give him a significant role in the fight against witches. In doing so, it demonstrates how "gangs simultaneously serve as neighborhood protectors and perpetrators" (Papachristos 419). While Jesse, Hector and Marisol are uncovering Ana's mysterious activities, Arturo is also conducting a parallel, more in-depth investigation. His potential as a protector gets fully realized when Jesse's unconscious body is taken by the witches in a staged hit-and-run. Once again, instead of alerting the police, Hector and Marisol directly head to Arturo's house, who agrees to help them. However, the mission proves to be a failure. Part of the problem may be rooted in geographical displacement as they trace down Jesse's whereabouts to be in the city of Moorpark, twenty miles away from Oxnard. This would take Arturo and his accomplice outside of their area of jurisdiction into a space that is inherently alien to them. Moorpark greatly differs from Oxnard, being significantly less populated with a lower poverty rate and an urban environment tempered by its many parks. When they reach the house, which is the witches' headquarters, its isolated location clashes with the previous inner city scenes. The old house belonged to Lois who is the grandmother of Katie from *Paranormal Activity*. The return to the ancestral house, the place of origin of the witches' evil, symbolizes the impossibility of our marginalized characters prevailing in an environment so unlike their surroundings. Arturo's power only functions within the limits of his neighborhood. In the more bourgeois location of Moorpark, he confronts an enemy he does not recognize and therefore, cannot defeat.

**Gated communities: neutralized neighborhoods**

Katie and Micah's case greatly differs from the other two films as *Paranormal Activity* never ventures very far from the house. The very rare glimpses we get of the surroundings reveal an organized neighborhood, with similar houses lined neatly next to each other. These rare shots are aligned with typical suburban imagery and provide an idea of the kind of space we are dealing with. Rancho Peñasquitos is on the surface what Mrs. Hilyard would have wished for, as it is mostly disconnected from the less appealing side of the large city of San Diego. A review of the district describes it as a "car-dependent neighborhood" and further states that "almost all errands require a car in Rancho Peñasquitos" (Walk Score). We have already established how cars represent an insulated way to travel the city, minimalizing the risk of direct contact with dodgier neighborhoods. Whereas Mrs. Hilyard's neighborhood may suffer (following her logic) from too much accessibility, Rancho Peñasquitos is set up differently. With "minimal public transportation and about one bus line passing through it" (Walk Score), owning a car is not only advantageous but necessary. The assumption is that residents like Katie and Micah can certainly afford a vehicle if they are able to buy a house in the community. This restricted accessibility is a key factor behind the suburban community charm. The visions of homelessness or desolate urban scenes we get in *Lady in a Cage* are replaced by a sense of order and security. Undesirable others, people who might disrupt the idyllic experience of the suburban neighborhood, are least likely to gravitate to Rancho Peñasquitos; if they cannot infiltrate, they cannot form anti-groups or maintain networks within that space.

*Paranormal Activity*'s "minimalism" (Breznican 9) renders the task of identifying networks at work a little more complicated. With a modest budget, the production naturally limited itself to one location while using a minimal number of actors; this diminishes the

potential for a more expansive Actor-Network map. While its location is in itself an inhibitor of alternate networks—the likes of street gangs or fences—the neighborhood nonetheless remains a concern. Micah quickly betrays Rancho Peñasquitos' seemingly ideal image by assuming the strange noises may originate from outside, rather than inside the house: "If it's one of those neighbors, one of those kids who's obsessed with you and is trying to peep through a window or something at night, that will take care of them." This is the only time the neighborhood explicitly figures in the dialogue but the statement reveals much about the characters. That Micah's first hypothesis on the demonic manifestation implicates the neighbors suggests his hostile, defensive position vis-à-vis his surroundings. Yet, his words also indicate that his suspicions are not without foundation: in "those kids," Micah seems to be referencing some prior negative experience with his neighbors, hinting at voyeurism. Of course, the real issue is not their presence on his property but their possible obsession with his girlfriend. Micah's statement may easily be overlooked but it explains much of his possessive behaviors towards Katie.

Micah's claim over the domestic space, as we have established in the previous chapter, also extends to his girlfriend. In his unwillingness to interact with the outside world, he appears significantly attached to the house, which is where we first meet him. The film's opening scene features him filming the inside of the house, lingering on the living room and the stairs before heading to the entrance to welcome Katie as she returns home. These prolonged shots parallel his treatment of Katie, which is even more intrusive. These expressions of Micah's obsession with his girlfriend explain his territorial approach. Since one needs to adopt a "home-centric perspective" from the "vantage point" (Rosenblum 25) of one's home in order to identify and recognize neighbors, Micah's position appears to be too home-centric, bordering on excess. He diligently watches and replays the footage of their nights, runs to investigate every noise, even

discovers new corners in the house such as the ceiling. His fixation on the house can also be seen in the suspiciously low number of visitors they get. Besides Dr. Fredrichs, whose male presence was an obvious source of annoyance for Micah, the only other person to visit the house is Katie's friend, Amber. Combined with his wariness of the neighbors, the absence of visitors signals Micah's desire to keep Katie to himself. His attempts to control and police his domestic space all translate into desperate efforts to reinstate his claim over Katie. The demon, an entity completely alien to his surroundings, then represents an invincible invader, a most unfamiliar force. With each attempt Micah makes to counter him, the demon grows stronger, a reminder that even houses in safe communities are not immune to attacks.

**The dream of domesticity: good houses, good neighborhoods and hospitality**

From Jesse calling his apartment complex "mansion," to Elaine's re-enactments of domestic rituals in Mrs. Hilyard's rooms, the desire for domesticity features strongly in all three films. The house itself becomes the emblem of that fantasy and has acquired an especially distinct status in the American psyche. This is because, as John Archer explains, the "twentieth-century American dream house has been recognized for a considerable part of its history as a highly specialized instrument for realizing many aspects of bourgeois identity" (xv). Katie and Micah's purchase of the San Diego house well exemplifies this pursuit of the middle class experience, setting up the acquisition as a prerequisite to other steps such as graduation or marriage. Out of all the three domestic spaces investigated, their home is the ideal example of the dream house Archer speaks of. Spacious and seemingly secure, the movie itself participates in its idealization by having Micah compulsively document its confines with his camera. Its suburban location would even appeal to Mrs. Hilyard, who has to deal with the horrors of an inescapable urban force, slowly encroaching on her neighborhood. The house's potential for acquiring a

"bourgeois identity" enables an exclusive—and ideal—form of domesticity, the best kind. Even the street dwellers in *Lady in a Cage* recognize and yearn for the experience. Mrs. Hilyard's offer of "ten thousand dollars in cash" greatly appeals to Elaine, who pleads to Randall: "Well, we could uh, sit around and have kids or something. Go away and have kids, what the hell!" Her plea also aligns with her behaviour in the house: using the bath, raiding the wardrobe, Elaine is less concerned about stealing objects than she is about enjoying the space. The money offer then represents an opportunity to enact her own domesticity by leaving the city's desolate space, quitting their unstable lifestyle and settling down. Elaine's understands that parenthood necessitates the stability of a domicile, which the three hoodlums evidently lack. Since they act as parasites of Mrs. Hilyard's belongings, her demand that they "go away" signifies her hope to change their location in the parasitic chain.

While Jesse and Hector are significantly younger and more comfortable than Randall and his accomplice, the concern with domesticity nonetheless remains relevant in *The Marked Ones.* It is no accident that the film's final scene takes the two boys back to Katie and Micah's San Diego house. The inadequacy of Jesse's domestic space is constantly felt throughout the film. Only a curtain separates his room from his father's, which Jesse jokingly points out "is what you call ghetto". He is always careful not to make noises so that he does not bother his grandma, even using Ana's apartment to fool around with a girl. Whereas the action in the previous films in the *Paranormal* franchise remains mostly concentrated inside suburban houses, Jesse shares his time between the apartment and the neighborhood, manifestly escaping the former's constriction. Unemployed and idle, he readily adopts the streets, the dream of the "mansion" rescinding further as his search for suitable employment proves fruitless. The return to Katie and Micah's house at the end of the movie further emphasizes the impossibility of occupying that

kind of space. In the film's final sequence taking place in Lois' house, Hector's attempts to escape a now fully possessed Jesse by opening a wooden door with occult symbols engraved on it. The door as it turns out, is one of the time portals leading to the "destinos profanos" or "unholy places" outlined in Ana's journal. Hector emerges in Katie and Micah's basement, a scene that ties together *The Marked Ones*' ending with *Paranormal Activity*'s. He too becomes a home invader, explaining Katie's screams in *Paranomal Activity*'s final scene, the cause of which the audience is not privy to. When Hector penetrates the house, its uncannily normal surroundings lure him into a false sense of security; he believes he may have escaped the horror from the witches. The final scene is significant in two aspects. First, it denies him the suburban home, with all its promises of safety. Since the suburban neighborhood must retain its "homogeneity" (Archer 301), Hector's demise is a reminder of the overarching processes of "segregation by race, as well as by factors like social and economic class" (300) that have prevented people like him from entering communities like Rancho Peñasquitos. On the other hand, the final scene simultaneously challenges the suburban house's sacred image as the portal lives up to its name. Hector has indeed found an "unholy place" in Katie and Micah's home, a domestic space destroyed from within, its helpless host at the mercy of an invisible demon.

The segregation of the urban space, the separate house that shares no walls with others, the quasi-inexistence of public transport lines, the extension of the territory in the backyard and front yard should all work in favor of the host. They feed the host's fantasy and ego since there is "no hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one's home" (Derrida 55). Micah's entitled behaviours and his continuous attempts to re-establish control express the sovereign impulse that comes with ownership. The neighborhoods in each film speak of the mechanisms of "filtering, choosing, and [by] excluding and doing violence" (55) that

hospitality, in the wider context of the city, requires. However, while networks such as the inner city neighborhood, the black market or street gangs may all represent threats to the domestic space, their absence does not necessarily entail its safety. The "habitable house" has an "opening, a door and windows…a passage to the outside world" (Derrida 59). Hospitality is the required by-product of this physical configuration, providing the rules for managing the spaces we own and conceive of as home. It renders necessary the distinction between desirable and undesirable guests or intruders, between inside and outside (spaces over which we do have control as opposed to those we have no jurisdiction in) and enables the recognition of others' claim over a particular place. Because hospitality is a major component of domesticity—being a host grants the power of inviting people in, of hosting, which is one of many domestic rituals—it will always hold the potential to ruin it. Reading *Paranormal Activity* in conjunction with *The Marked Ones* (which ascribes Jesse's possession to Ana's actions) and *Lady in a Cage* (with its human invaders) allows one to better grasp Derrida's argument. Despite the absence of neighborhood gangs or black markets and the seemingly ideal neighborhood in Ranchos Peñasquitos, Katie and Micah are still subjected to attack. However, behind the demon's invasion is Micah's own application of hospitality, which has betrayed him; by cohabiting with Katie and offering the house to be her home too, Micah has invited the demon in. In *Hostipitality*, Derrida elaborates on the risk of hospitality when he states that "the one inviting becomes almost the hostage of the one invited, of the guest [*hôte*], the hostage of the one he receives (9). As mentioned earlier, Katie's withholding of her history with the entity perverts the host-guest relationship, but also illustrates that the principles of hospitality can be misleading, impelling us to allow the wrong people in despite our better judgment. As the host and boyfriend, Micah feels bound to defend

and protect Katie. In doing so, he gradually turns into the hostage, culminating in his death at the hands of a possessed Katie, his guest.

The home undoubtedly suffers the first blows of the intruder but they are only preambles to the real attack, which culminates in an invasion of the host's body. In order to fully take control of the home, one must neutralize its owner, stripping him completely of his capacity to act over his space. The body is yet another site of struggle in which the dynamics of hospitality are found operating. This is especially evident in *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones* where demonic possession demands a host, and uses, in principle, the same language of hospitality we find in Derrida's texts. Similarly, *Lady in a Cage* posits Mrs. Hilyard's body to be the final target of attack. Randall does not simply content himself with robbing the house—he must gain access to her body and torment her. The attack on bodies—Mrs. Hilyard's by Randall, Katie and Jesse's by the demon—are not isolated events but mobilize various agencies. They reveal much about the politics of the body and their connection with forces beyond the actor's control. Furthermore, each film offers the violation of its actors as a spectacle for the audience's consumption. The first-person camera in *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones* reconfigure the experience of watching, rendering it more intrusive by aligning the viewer with the protagonists. On the other hand, *Lady in a Cage*'s camera work—although aligned with traditional filmmaking techniques—constantly returns to Mrs. Hilyard's body. Spectating then becomes an invasive act, which requires one to question the boundaries between films and audience.

**Possessed Bodies and Bodies Possessing**

The language of demonic possession is similar to that of hospitality. The house, like the body, must be possessed in order to be inhabitable. It must have an owner, a tenant, someone to

claim and use the space. Hence, abandoned houses are unwelcoming, even hostile to the majority because they offer no domesticity. They suffer from the absence of human stimuli—actions that activate the domestic space, such as cleaning, cooking or decorating—and only bear leftover signs of prior domestic life. A demonic agency acts by disrupting the forces that animate and maintain the domestic space—sometimes, as we will see in *Lady in a Cage*, it can be the force itself. Naturally, the ultimate aim of this intruding force is to occasion "an involuntary cession of control to a possessing demon - the invasive agent" (Clifton 379), to neutralize the human agent for complete authority. It does so by turning the space against its inhabitants, perverting their relationship to objects, which they constantly reach for in order to regain control. Since, as Henri Lefebvre states, "space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances to be covered" (143), the subject adapts to its environment but also facilitates his evolution through space by acting on it. The loss of the ability to move and control, to obey space and in turn to shape it, is one facet of the "threat to humanness" (Clifton 377) which ultimately results in "a loss of both face and voice" (377). Each film depicts the loss of humanness alongside the character's gradual defamiliarization with the domestic space, which features in the actor's relationship with his various objects. Latour offers, "the more science and technology extend, the more they render social ties physically traceable" (119). Technology is integral to the home; electricity, phone lines and cameras all constitute the domestic space and render it traceable, securing its confines and enabling other people to access it. Therefore, neutralizing the host necessarily begins in denying him the possibility to use the objects he assumes to be under his possession.

**Phone lines and the electrical demon**

*Lady in a Cage* is not remotely associated with demons but the rhetoric of possession and its associated images are present in different forms. In his study of the iconography of demonic possession in classical paintings, James Clifton identifies recurring motifs in the portrayal of possessed bodies. He reveals that "deviations from the gravitational verticality signals a loss of control" (382) and are widely common in afflicted subjects. Clifton further notes "feet kicking off the ground" (382), "le ventre en haut" (383) or belly facing upward and "contorted position" (383) as hints of disempowerment. While Mrs. Hilyard is not a victim of demonic possession, unlike Jesse or Katie, the film nonetheless utilizes these signifiers in one of its popular posters. In it, Mrs. Hilyard's faceless body (her face is concealed by the unnatural darkness of the elevator's confines) dangerously hangs above the ground. Her legs are at different angles, her back is arched to the side, one of the arms is hidden by the darkness. The poster is only a frozen moment; in the film, Mrs. Hilyard performs many other acrobatics in her attempts to escape, contorting and stretching her body in unnatural positions. The poster also portrays "a loss of both face and voice" by having her head completely disappear into the elevator.

Referred to as a "cage" in the film's title, the elevator is Mrs. Hilyard's main obstacle to her escape, turning from an object facilitating her movements around the house to an immobilizing agent. A closer analysis of film's events reveals how Mrs. Hilyard's neutralization as a host, her loss of control over her body and what is left of her autonomy, begins and is reflected in the many objects that constitute her domestic space. The origin of the elevator's immobilization is the loss of electric current, which the movie makes a point of illustrating. The specific scene sees the workman disrupt the power cables with the placement of his ladder. Then, Malcolm accidentally hits the ladder with his car, sealing Mrs. Hilyard's fate. The film proceeds

to an extended shot of the cables, indicating the movement of electricity and its means of infiltration. This moment is closely followed by a shot of the air conditioner, which slowly dies out as the electricity forsakes the house. The close attention that the film pays to cables, ventilation systems and electrical appliances communicates the vitality of electricity. Electricity here is an animating force; it ensures the proper functioning of the domestic space, regulates its temperature and allows its owner to move around it. It takes on a demonic quality in the way it possesses the house and its various appliances but unlike a demon, it is meant to be under the control of a human agent. A demon, on the other hand, functions like a corrupt version of that force, one beyond the control of the homeowner. As *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones* demonstrate, the demon moves objects around, opens doors, turns the lights on and off and ultimately takes control of the body. In one of her reflections, Mrs. Hilyard endows electricity with the same traitorous quality: “I have worshipped thee, false god. For thou art false electricity. . . Kilowatt is his name. But Lo, one day our god Kilowatt left us. Could we then go back to the gods of our childhood? To reindeer? Santa Claus?" When electricity dis-possesses the house, which treacherously slips beyond her control, it occasions a regression of the human subject—as the allusion to childhood gods suggests. Its absence is what ultimately forces her into a helpless position of dependency, much like a child.

Despite being restricted in her movements, Mrs. Hilyard sees an opportunity in the telephone set located at a painfully close distance below her. The telephone, as a device connecting the inside to the outside, is significant in two ways. First, as Derrida specifies, the “‘home,’ in principle inviolable, is also constituted, and in a more and more essential interior way, by [the] phone line” (51). Since almost every home is ascribed one (or many) phone numbers, the telephone both identifies and provides the means of accessing the space and its

owner. The telephone is also an essential device for the agoraphobic, as Gillian Brown notes, "expanding and contracting safety sites" and redefining "domestic borders" (184). The invalid woman Brown invokes in her analysis can negotiate her relationship to the outside world, perceived as dangerous and threatening, without fully compromising her safety. Activities such as "telephoning and correspondence" (184) enable the individual to access the outside from the safety of the domestic space. In *Lady in a Cage*, the telephone becomes a means of escape from an unsafe, ultimately hostile home rather than an instrument for safely navigating the world. It becomes increasingly clear to Mrs. Hilyard that her chances of escaping depend on her accessing the telephone, which would carry her voice (and cry for help) to the outside despite her immobilized state. In an authoritative and desperate "Call me up!" she wills it to ring to no avail. The scene, however, emblematizes how little control she has over her own space. And much like electricity, the telephone proves to be treacherous too. Phone lines are also part of "technological developments [that] are re-structuring space in such a way" that "opens it to intrusion" (Derrida 59). While Derrida's argument mainly alludes to forms of governmental interventions such as telephone tapping, *Lady in a Cage* demonstrates another, more immediate way in which telephones can betray the homeowner. The telephone rings while George breaks in the house, concealing the noises from Mrs. Hilyard. The severed phone line is also a characteristic feature of home invasion films, preventing and delaying assistance to the victim. Mrs. Hilyard's case is no exception: as she screams in hopes of alerting the interlocutor on the phone (now off the hook, thanks to her efforts), Sade tears off the phone jack in an act that symbolically silences her voice.

The question of humanity, of what constitutes a human being, is an important one in the film, starting with the allusions to the Cold War but now trickling down to the more immediate

home invasion. Voiceless and immobilized, Mrs. Hilyard's vulnerable position only worsens into an eventual loss of humanness, which accompanies the denial of her rights as a host. First, the weak and unconvincing "This is my house" directed at the telephone emphasizes her slipping authority. Even more telling is her address to George, as he climbs the stairs: "Hello, my name is Hilyard. I am Mrs. Hilyard. What is your name?" This change of tactic—from authoritative statements to an almost subservient plea—signals a reversal in the host-guest scenario. Now at the mercy of the "wrong, illegitimate, clandestine" (59) guests, she has to negotiate for help. Shortly after the statement, Mrs. Hilyard invokes the term "animal" when speaking of Randall's crew: "Oh, even animals would have more simple compassion than you!" The animal rhetoric, however, is turned against her. Despite her claim that she is "a human being, a thinking feeling creature," defining humanity by using abstract concepts of cognition and empathy, Randall is quick to remind her that without full control of her body and space, she is as good as a caged animal. He denies her humanity by setting it up as a spectacle to be watched: "Elaine? Come and watch the human being being sick in a cage." Now an abject creature with disheveled hair, dirty face and torn clothes—the complete opposite of her elegant appearance when we first meet her—Mrs. Hilyard looks no better than her animal guests. This further corrodes her credibility as host and owner by eliminating the visual signifiers that discern her from street dwellers.

As "horror movies rub our noses in camerawork" (Clover 10), depending on it to achieve their affect, it is important to consider how the camera relates to Mrs. Hilyard's body. Documenting her plight, it is at times aligned with her point of view while at others, commits its own intrusive acts on her body. This ambivalent play of the camera destabilizes the experience of spectatorship first by allowing the viewer to take on Mrs. Hilyard's perspective, thus communicating the difficulty of her position. We follow her gaze as she takes on her

surroundings from her new location, in between two floors. The specific shot, which lingers on the balustrade, is particularly eerie and illustrates the peculiarity of looking at one's home from an unfamiliar and unnatural angle. This is further complemented by shots of her vertiginous position as she examines the floor beneath, realizing the impossibility of simply jumping down. Having instilled in the viewer the precarity of her condition, the film then proceeds to turn the camera on its protagonist, now documenting her body. In that sense, the film very much illustrates how "the bodies of women have tended to function . . . as both the *moved* and the *moving*" (Williams 4) in the horror genre. Mrs. Hilyard's body, while certainly *moved* by the unfortunate circumstances of the power outage and Randall's attacks, is also confusingly *moving*. The close-up shots of her décolletage in which she wipes the sweat off and unties her silk robe from around her neck are good examples of the nature of the directorial gaze, which eroticizes her body while it is in a state of discomfort. Part of the confusion originates in the body in question. Having transitioned from femme fatale in *Dark Mirror* (1946) to a "rather naïve but competent nurse" (Kalisch et al 62) in *Not as a Stranger* (1955), Olivia de Havilland, no longer in the prime of youth but very much still in possession of the elegant looks for which she is known, now takes on the role of mother. The camerawork transgresses in its portrayal of the middle-aged disabled persona, which normally inspires reverence and sympathy, by also framing her as an object of desire. This corrupts the viewing experience: our readiness to sympathize with a suffering older woman is compromised as we are forced to adopt the intrusive gaze of the camera. The viewer involuntarily commits yet another form of invasion, aligning him with the other offenders.

Randall's treatment of Mrs. Hilyard implicitly highlights the nature of spectating, which is inherently invasive. The audience does not "benefit of the *right* of hospitality" (Derrida 59)

any more than the hoodlums. Yet, unlike the other invaders, the viewer occupies a unique position, which can be understood by returning to Michel Serres' understanding of parasitism:

> The observer is perhaps the inobservable. He must, at least, be last on the chain of observables. If he is supplanted, he becomes observed. Thus he is in a position of a parasite. Not only because he takes the observation that he doesn't return, but also because he plays the last position . . . The parasite is the most silent of beings, and that is the paradox, since parasite also means noise. (237)

We illicitly enter the house, spy on domestic scenes between mother and son, consistently allow our gaze to be directed to the former's body and take in the violent scenes in our quest for entertainment. However, we do so from the vantage point of the observer, entering and leaving relatively unscathed. Since film always presupposes a viewer, by parasitizing Mrs. Hilyard's story, we also bestow upon it the meaning of its existence.

**Homemade Surveillance**

The found footage film operates under the conceit that the subject, instead of an invisible director, is documenting the events. This mode of mediation reconfigures the way we observe and receive the story by seemingly blurring the distinction between the actors and the viewer. As we will see, this entails a different kind of spectatorship, one that is destabilizing as it is more intrusive and less defined by the traditional tropes of cinema. The camera's explicit presence is at the center of the conflict but its role extends beyond the mere function of recording phenomena. *Paranormal Activity* (and *The Marked Ones*) demonstrates that the camera acts too, and in doing so can prove to be treacherous: while Micah sees it as a potential instrument for reasserting control, it does the opposite by inducing the demonic manifestations. His excessive reliance on

the technological apparatus—a costly camera, purchased with his day trader earnings—betrays much about his attitude towards both the house and his girlfriend.

The film's opening scene already establishes the bizarre dynamic tying Micah, the camera, Katie and the demonic presence together. Katie's initial response to the camera is positive although perplexed, calling it "big and impressive" and playing into Micah's fetishizing approach to the object. We soon understand that he considers the camera to be essentially his, using it as an extension of his own body to mediate his relationship with his girlfriend. When Katie enters through the front door, he requests that she kisses the camera to which she replies "I'll kiss you, not the camera." He then requests Katie to "keep going up the stairs" so he can capture it for his own viewing pleasure. This behavior already alerts the audience to the politics of control within the house. Micah owns and manipulates the camera while Katie is forced to submit to and perform for its/his gaze, prompting her to exclaim "You're supposed to be in love with me, not the machine." Up to this point, the demon has not yet manifested itself but the film has already established Micah's obsession with filming. He officially justifies the camera's purchase by stating that "when any weird shit happens, [they] will be in a good position to catch it." For most of their nights, the camera functions as home surveillance, statically positioned in front of their bed while they are asleep. Strategically set up, it allows Micah to extend his control by watching his house and girlfriend even while he is physically unavailable. The act of recording commits the house and Katie to footage, which ultimately is his to possess. The more he records, the more he wants to record, accumulating footage in an almost greedy quest for evidence. As Leslie Hahner notes, "he is enthralled with his expensive camera and the monies that he earns from his quintessentially capitalist profession" (367), tying the nature of his work with his filming behavior together.

Eventually, excessive filming betrays Micah by catalyzing the demon. As Katie remarks, "that kind of stuff didn't happen to [her] before the camera," signaling him to stop his recording spree and leave the entity alone. While Micah equates capturing the demon on camera with neutralizing its actions, his filming seems to encourage its malevolence with each night delivering more overt manifestations. Knowing it is being watched, the demon performs accordingly, taunting Micah and reminding him of his weakness. The camera's presence coaxes the hauntings, implicitly inviting the demon in; Micah inadvertently allows the demon inside by persistently expecting and recording the proof of its presence. The entity remains content with only making noises and moving objects around, leaving Katie relatively unharmed until Micah breaks his promise to her by purchasing a Ouija board. This particular object deserves some attention, especially since Dr. Friedrichs' clear warning invokes the language of hospitality: "And if you do pick up a board and try to play games with it, the entity will sense that you're trying to communicate with it, and that's opening the door, inviting it in." As the alleged host, Micah's use of the board provides the entity with the "right to [his] hospitality" (Derrida 59), turning it from parasite to a legitimate guest. Not only does he summon the demon, but he also records it on camera, combining the two objects that have facilitated and occasioned its access to the house. In doing so, Micah fails in his duty as the host, endangering Katie (who is a welcomed guest) in his attempts to antagonize his rival, for the real struggle appears to be rooted in control and possession of the woman's body. Katie is the one who actually understands how to protect herself and the house and her method advocates for relinquishing control rather than enforcing it; excessive control and obsession with the domestic space therefore appear to be the real affliction. Noticing the pattern of the demon's activity, she continuously advises Micah to stop recording and leave it alone. By the end of the film, Katie—now completely possessed by the demon—

physically defeats the controlling and possessive host that Micah embodies. *Paranormal Activity*'s original ending—which was then replaced with two alternate ones for its theatrical and home releases—further confirms her symbolic escape. In it, Katie throws Micah's body towards the camera, knocking it off its tripod, taking them down together in a symbolic release from their joint control. She then proceeds to walk to the camera, sinisterly smiling at it in a final parody of a performance, before her face contorts into a demonic appearance. The screen then turns to black, signaling the cessation of the recording and her release from the obligation to perform and be subjected to the camera's gaze. However, the film posits Katie's escape from Micah's treatment as a sort of transaction from one controlling agent to another, denying her any true form of autonomy.

This final scene brings back the question of the spectator by breaching the fourth wall, as a possessed Katie turns her gaze onto us and ultimately denies us any further access to the house. In her chapter on found footage films, which prominently features *Paranormal Activity,* Caetlin Benson-Allott explains the affect of the genre to be rooted in its production of "an identity crisis for its spectator" (186). She further explains that "because of the ways in which we experience their suffering, we become possessed by the demons that used to haunt them" (186). The found footage film horrifies through "the spectator's primary identification with the vulnerable camera and her secondary identification with the diegetic cinematographer" (192), thus creating an immersive viewing experience. However, while Benson-Allott's argument certainly stands, I would like to expand on this problematic by considering it from the perspective of hospitality and thresholds. Found footage films, in "reconfiguring relations of public and private" (Tryon 41) also shatter our preconceived notions on these two realms being inherently separate. Our identification with the camera involves us in the surveillance process: while Micah and Katie

sleep, we watch attentively and listen for any sign of the demon too. Therefore, as Hahner et al propose, “the camera and by extension the audience become positioned as analogous to the demon itself visually prowling the space”. Vicariously experiencing the characters’ horror, we willingly desire to be “possessed by the textual construction that is the cinematic subject, the subject for whom the film exists” (Benson-Allott 206). This subject in *Paranormal Activity*—a film combining home invasion and found footage into one—is asked to participate in fighting the invader by also invading the space. However, unlike the demon, we produce no noise or trace of our presence; for the majority of the film, we are Serres’ unobservable observer, the ultimate parasitic guest, more demonic than the demon itself. While we are certainly frightened by the events in the film, as long as we retain the position of ultimate observer we can exit the cinematic space and leave its troubling events behind. Oren Peli’s original ending, however, challenges the relatively safe position the spectator occupies by having him, in Serres’ words, “become[s] observed” and thus “supplanted” (237). When a demonic Katie turns to the camera, she displaces the spectator by acknowledging him, breaching the threshold between the diegetic space and what exists outside of it, and subjugating him to the position of the observed. She reminds us that “watching the wrong thing” and intruding on the wrong spaces “can be deadly” (Benson-Allott 192). No longer the safe, ultimate observer, the spectator leaves the film now conscious that even his extra-diegetic space is open to intrusion.

**The possessed body and the inner city**

*The Marked Ones*' final scene, where Hector breaks into Micah and Katie's house, ignores Peli's original ending for *Paranormal Activity*, alluding to the alternate one instead in which an off-screen Katie screams and lures Micah downstairs. Since the camera remains in its static position, the alternate ending denies the viewer any explicit information on Micah's fate. By returning to the original locus of paranormal activity of the franchise—Katie and Micah's San Diego house—*The Marked Ones* delivers the necessary footage of the event from Hector's point of view. And the resemblance between Peli's intended ending and *The Marked Ones*' reconstruction of events is in fact noteworthy. Hector walks towards a catatonic Katie standing in the darkness, pointing the camera at her. When Katie turns, a frightening expression on her face, she screams for Micah but attacks him as soon as he gets to the kitchen. In the commotion, Hector tries to return to the door, the portal that mysteriously led him into this house, but he happens upon Jesse's demonic form. He loses control of the camera; there is a lasting silence before Katie is seen picking it up and turning it off with her finger. Since it is Katie—and not Jesse, the legitimate owner of the camera—who stops the recording, the final scene reveals much about the difference in the way demonic possession functions and is portrayed in each film. This difference, evidenced in the way each character relates to and interacts with the camera, partly has much to do with the socioeconomic conditions they find themselves in.

Jesse and Katie have very different perceptions and responses to the demon. Whereas Katie benefits from prior knowledge of the hauntings—since they have been following her since her youth—Jesse naively welcomes the signs of its influence. As established in the previous chapters, our two actors come from significantly different environments: Jesse's inner city

apartment lacks the space and comfort that Katie's house in Ranchos Peñasquitos possesses. Space, in revealing the social class of characters, is also the arena over which they identify and negotiate their subjectivity. Soja explains how urban segregation affects the individual in the following statement:

> Those who are territorially subjugated by the workings of hegemonic power have two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it, or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned "otherness". These choices are inherently spatial responses, individual and collective reactions to the ordered workings of power in perceived, conceived and lived spaces (87).

As Jesse tours the inner city, bound to it by his unemployment and idleness, he displays an array of "spatial responses" (87), the first one being his decision to document his life and surroundings. Equipped with his camera, Jesse explicitly resists the conventional route expected and endorsed by his father, which would have him settle for employment he does not care for. His case reflects a common problematic found in other narratives about Latino youth, which is "their struggle against a double enemy: social marginalization and their parents' old-fashioned way" (Lopez-Calvo 106). Instead, he navigates the inner city at times turning the camera on himself, recording his basketball exploits in the neighborhood court. While the demon first announces itself by disrupting the apartment, its transition from the home to the body is much more immediate than in *Paranormal Activity*. This also echoes how the apartment complex, as a setting, is a relatively more porous and exposed space than the suburban house, thus more vulnerable to invasion. Furthermore, unlike Katie, who resisted and advised against her boyfriend's attempts to record, Jesse's documentation of his new physical powers reproduces Micah's mistakes. It opens a channel, implicitly inviting the possession. And with each new

newfound power, Jesse's filming increases. The similarity between Jesse and Micah also posits masculinity to be an underlying factor behind these invasions, inducing behaviors that are counterproductive and harmful under the desire to assert one's dominance or influence. While they differ in ethnicity and social class, both men are nonetheless tied together by this desire to express their masculinity at the expense of own safety or that of their loved ones.

The demon's possession tactics adapt to its subject. In *Paranormal Activity*, the entity spends a considerable amount of time haunting the physical space, destroying the safety and comfort that the house represents. On the other hand, there is less at stake for Jesse in the cramped apartment; unlike Irma, he spends most of his time outside and does not contribute to the rent like his father. Therefore, the demon manipulates its way into an eventual complete possession by endowing Jesse with physical powers; they, in turn, significantly change the way he relates to his surroundings. He goes from being intimidated by street gangsters to punching the two thugs who attack him with such force that they are propelled meters away from his body. He then proceeds to test his new gift on camera, filming himself as he levitates above the ground and performs dangerous skateboarding moves. His body's new strength also unlocks the inner city to him, leading to new kinds of "spatial responses." Jesse infiltrates a neighborhood party, unfazed by the threatening men guarding the entrance. He confidently approaches two girls and convinces them to come back home with him. However, these new powers constitute the demon's strategic preservation of his body, which must remain unharmed if it is to be a vessel. Jesse, betraying his desire to transcend the stasis that plagues his immediate situation, welcomes the new changes because he "felt like maybe [he] was special or something."

Jesse and his camera never make it out of the inner city together. When the film relocates to Moorpark, he is no longer his normal self and the camera is now in Hector's hands.

Throughout the infection process, the time of possession of the filming apparatus gradually slips away from Jesse, displacing him from his status as the protagonist. Since the spectator identifies "with the diegetic camera and cameraperson" (Benson-Allott 192), and demons do not record film but are recorded instead, the film understands that there must always be a human actor behind the camera. With the complete loss of his agency, evident in his distorted features, Jesse also loses the instrument that allowed him to affirm himself as a subject. Yet, the film then reveals that he may never have had complete agency in the first place when Ali explains the witches' plan: "The Midwives will mark an unborn male in utero. And then they wait for the baby to mature until he's ready to be possessed." Jesse's prescribed fate, as well as Oscar's—the valedictorian classmate who also counts among the coven's elected victims—prompts questions about the film's representation of Latino youth. Neither Jesse nor Oscar plays into "the spectacularization of gang life" (Lopez-Calvo 86)—Arturo being the character who fulfills that purpose—having both graduated from high school at the onset of the film. With "the national drop-out rate for Latino students is substantially higher than for others" (Ross et al 69) and perceived neighborhood risk[5] hindering their chances of academic success, *The Marked Ones'* opening graduation scene paints a more positive portrait of the young Latino men. Jesse does not find the employment opportunities he desires in the inner city and we may blame that environment for his idleness and subsequent reckless behavior. However, what ultimately brings him and Oscar down is not the inner city, with its gangsters and lack of options. The locus of evil

[5] In the study "Neighborhood, Parenting, and Adolescent Factors and Academic Achievement in Latino Adolescents from Immigrant Families," Henry et al adopt an ecological approach in order to understand the factors behind academic performance in Latino youth. Their study reveals that neighborhood safety plays a significant role in determining academic success. Since "adolescents' perceptions of their ecosystems" (588) also shape their attitude to school, "negative social mirroring" can lead to "diminished academic achievement" (580).

is situated in Moorpark, far away from Oxnard's culturally diverse urban space. Here the segregating works of hegemonic power Soja alludes to appear in this spatial relation between the two cities. Economically more powerful and topographically different from Oxnard, Moorpark houses the coven responsible for Jesse and Oscar's demise. The witches stand analogous to governmental agencies that dictate the locations, rights and opportunities afforded to certain people, acting through insidious and complex networks. The witches act on Jesse from a distance, ultimately taking away his right to control his own body. By the end of the film, not a single one of the Latino youth (with the addition of Arturo and his acolyte) survives Moorpark.

**Conclusion**

The ANT perspective adopted throughout the research aimed to trace associations and expose the way they manifest themselves when the home is under attack, demanding that we reconsider our relationship to even the most familiar of spaces. However, Latour warns that an ANT reading must necessarily be expansive, as the social is not a stable, fixed concept but an infinite ensemble of interactions, actors, networks and traces that are always shifting and readapting. One of the challenges of this method was to accept that certain networks or associations will inevitably have to be omitted or overlooked for concision. While flattening the social provides an incredibly detailed perspective on a phenomenon by retracing the array of connections between agencies working at the macrocosmic level and the actors or events occurring at a more local level, such a reading necessitates one to filter an prioritize. At times, this can leave the impression that the "description remains in need of an explanation" (Latour 139), that a multitude of other networks, actors and associations are waiting to be discovered and explored. This certainly confirms Latour's point on the social being unfixed at any given time; the potential for expanding and further investigating remains a constant. However, for now, let

us attempt to flatten, that is to bring together, what has been uncovered by our ANT readings so far.

Upon finding herself trapped in her house, Mrs. Hilyard makes an interesting observation: "The world must have ended. Someone on one side or the other must have pushed the button, dropped the bomb." Her words connect her current trouble to the larger context of the Cold War; in other words, she believes it to be related to the impending chaos at large, that the loss of electricity, the lack of available help can only be explained by some action from one state or the other. Latour's method inevitably leads us back to what he calls, the "Big Picture" (187), or "panoramas" (187). While they are faulty representations, for they "design a picture which has no gap in it, giving the spectator the powerful impression of being fully immersed" (188), he nonetheless deems them necessary as "they provide the only occasion to see the 'whole story' as a whole" (189). Indeed, if we back away from the locality of the home invasion, expanding beyond the various networks previously identified, the panorama leaves room for additional connections to be visible. The principles of hospitality, at the microscopic level of the domestic space, also apply to a larger, macroscopic view of scenarios. They are, at their basis, practiced by establishing "sovereignty" which "can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence" (Derrida 55). While all the hosts in the films display this behavior, they are also replicating and enacting other more general forms of segregation found in the urban space hosting them. As discussed earlier, the urban landscape— always reconfiguring through processes of dividing and ascribing spaces to certain people while gentrifying some for others— yet again demonstrates the workings of hospitality. They are especially evident in *The Marked Ones*, which immerses the viewer in an inner city setting. Whereas *Lady in a Cage* dances around the deterioration of middle-class city neighborhoods (implied in the film's

opening scene and the five invaders) and *Paranormal Activity* is seemingly secure in its suburban setting, *The Marked Ones* unfolds at the locus of the perceived threat. Housing immigrants and gangsters, the inner city reveals the workings of hospitality at the macroscopic level.

Immigration is the transnational equivalent of the guest-host relationship we identified in each film. As Derrida explains, "it is in the name of unconditional hospitality. . . that we must try to determine the best conditions, that is to say some particular legislative limits, and especially a particular application of the laws" (6-7). The difference between a good and bad immigrant (which is a difference between a good and bad guest, according to the legal perspective at least) resides in the manner of entrance: the good immigrant applies to the right authorities for access and waits to be admitted while the other ignores the protocols established by the laws. His manner of entry is illegal and therefore he is himself illegal. Evidently, immigration is much more intricate than a local case of home invasion, where determining the offending party is a relatively simple task. The larger questions of land occupation, of refugee and human rights, of the global crises shifting peoples from one place to another while the responsible parties operate from remote corners, render the legality of human movement a lot more difficult to determine. Since "states are becoming internationally organized systems," there is now a resulting "blurring between international borders and urban/local borders" (Graham 89). What happens near the borders trickles down to the city, then to its neighborhoods and finally, to its domestic units. Since California is one of the states where immigration is a more immediate concern[6] due to the Mexico-United States border, *The Marked Ones* provides evidence of this

[6] According to Branton et al, "coverage of immigration issues is related to proximity to the border" (299). Their study also determines that the focus on immigration in media outlets situated close to the border also display a "disproportional amount of the negative attributes of these issues" (299) thus contributing to the polarizing views on the topic.

blurring of borders in its physical space. The inner city, as a segregated milieu, produces its own kind of hospitality. However, from the suburban perspective that favours "safety, order and homogeneity" it represents a "barely livable space" (Lopez-Calvo 37). Here, the principles of exclusion and inclusion work in interesting ways. While the inner city has been adopted by and relegated to the lower class and immigrant populations (the homeowner associations echoing the border discourse on illegal immigration) this very process of segregation alienates the one who enforces it. The more he insists on keeping the other at bay, the more he deprives himself of access to certain spaces, thus turning himself into an unwelcome intruder.

On the other hand, the inner city is relatively hospitable space for its immigrant population, providing it with a support network, easing the transition from one country to the other. While *The Marked Ones* does not romanticize its setting, since Jesse and Hector are not exactly always safe in the streets, it nonetheless reveals it to be its own community. Irma's trip to the local botánica—a store selling traditional or alternative medicine and items of religious culture—is further evidence of the adaptive potential and transformation of urban spaces. The botánica represents a health care alternative to those who do not have the right or the means to seek conventional health services, or simply to people who prefer unconventional healing methods. Today, "one can find *botánicas* in just about any neighborhood in the United States with a Latino population" (545), which highlights how integral they are to the communities. Along with gangsters like Arturo, who constitute an alternate police form by protecting their neighborhoods, the botánica is the local health care system, imported from elsewhere. An Actor-Network reading thus reveals the inner city to be an intricate and unstable collection of different actors and networks, which are always shifting and adapting. While it appears hostile to outsiders, Jesse's evolution around the neighborhood suggests that he has the right to its various

spaces. His presence everywhere— he breaks into an old church, attends a neighborhood party, climbs on rooftops and is generally always roaming one corner or the other—reflects his familiarity with the space. However, this affinity with the inner city may also hinder any attempt to leave its confines. Despite the fact that he and Hector may "just look illegal" (as Hector's shirt reads) they may nonetheless be stigmatized as "illegals" by virtue of their appearance, location within the urban landscape and their social class. The predominance of anti-immigration discourses in the United States traps Jesse and his friends, and countless of other immigrants, on the wrong side of the guest-invader binary despite their legitimate right and claim to their citizenship or occupation of the space. Thus, while they fulfill the legal conditions that grant them hospitality, their guesthood can always be contested or questioned or rather asserted, since the point is that a citizen is not a guest and should not need this kind of hospitality.

"What is an entity that plays the main part without doing anything? What sort of absence/presence is this?" Latour asks. These two questions provide a starting point from which we can conceive of the demon. When we retract from the oligopticon to consider the panorama, the demonic traces and actions morph into something else, larger and inescapable, taking on new meanings. The link between all victims in the film, except for Micah, is their unemployment, which leads to a tentative answer. Since "capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with the imperative" (Denning 80) to work, their voluntary or involuntary non-participation in the workforce resists that coercion. However, this impetus to work and earn money, to join the market in one way or another, amass wealth, own "mansions" as Jesse jokes, possess space and objects, exposes how "action is dislocated" (46). Yes, "other agencies over which we have no control make us do things" (46) but they are part of a system too. To better understand the demonic quality of capitalism, we must once again return to Serres' parasites, which he locates

as such: “The position of the parasite is to be between. That is why it must be said to be a being or a relation” (236). Capitalism as a system animates the various agencies at work: it is the relation between them while it produces their relation to each other and to human actors. Because they are unemployed, our actors’ predicament enables one to detect the traces that agencies produce from a different perspective. If Jesse had been employed, he may not have spent his time roaming the streets of Oxnard, thus providing the viewer with insight into the conditions of inner city and apartment living. Similarly, Mrs. Hilyard’s disability leads to her confronting the very people she assumed would be kept away from her once respectable neighborhood. We are able to witness what wageless life is, which Denning affirms “is not a macroeconomic failure of aggregate demand” but “the main mode of existence in a separate, autonomous economy” (85). Both *Lady in a Cage* and *The Marked Ones* provide evidence for this alternate, parallel world where black markets and gang life prevail, restructuring the social in new networks and connections. *Paranormal Activity*, on the other hand, portrays “consumption as a source of abjection” (Hahner et al 374), setting up Katie and Micah’s San Diego house as an extravagant, materialistic purchase. In doing so, the film frightens by “demonizing characters’ consumer drive, as they stylistically seduce the same appetite in viewers” (Hahner et al 374). Considering that the film’s release coincides with the nationwide subprime mortgage crisis, it implicitly exposes the desire to attain an ideal domesticity— constituted in the spacious suburban house with the expensive car—as the underlying cause of the event. Individuals who aspired to be homeowners despite lacking the funds, had recourse to subprime lending in order to acquire a house. Bypassing a down payment, they set themselves into debt and at the mercy of the banks, contributing to the U.S recession that lasted until 2009. Once again, this illustrates how the micro and macro interact with each other, and how capitalism as a system mediates these interactions.

Hospitality, even in its unconditional form, also obeys the system, which establishes the laws and conditions under which we become host or guests. As a subgenre of horror, home invasion films derive their affect from appealing to our own understanding of the home. Freud's essay "The Uncanny" proves useful to read in conjunction with Derrida's reflections on hospitality. He defines the uncanny as that which is both familiar and unfamiliar at once, which he derives from the German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* translating as homely and unhomely. The domestic space is at the starting point of his analysis, thus lending itself nicely to our conception of it. In fiction, the uncanny can only function by featuring the mundane:

> The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life; and everything that would have an uncanny effect in reality has it in his story. (18)

The *Paranormal* franchise nicely applies those principles; by" admitting superior spiritual entities such as daemonic influences or departed spirits" (17) into the innocuous setting of the domestic space. In doing so, it slowly denatures it, taking away from its perceived safety and comfort. And part of these attributes are indeed associated with hosting: as owner or resident, the host manages his space and comes to see it as a retreat from the outside world. When an infiltration occurs, it disturbs the peace by disavowing the host, who understands himself to be the one who filters arrivals, allowing and rejecting newcomers. The loss of this power so closely related to the home, a power naturalized in all of us, is horrifying; it prompts the host to reacquaint himself with his space and in doing so, take cognizance of the fact that it may always have been unfamiliar in its familiarity, that it will always hold the potential to be unfamiliar. *Lady in a Cage* also reflects the same concern, with shots of Mrs. Hilyard new perspective on her

own space, which are uncanny because they are unnatural to her. The film also alludes to another more widespread demonic threat, as a panic-stricken female voice announces on the radio: "Have we an anti-Satan missile? While we have been conquering polio and space, what have we done about the devil?" This occurs as a fleeting moment in the film's fractured opening sequence but it alludes to a danger from within, a sinister and overlooked threat. The words anticipate Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), a film that perhaps confirms the fear behind the statement with its portrayal of Satanists lurking in the guise of seemingly inoffensive neighbours. The woman's paranoid plea, which will come to characterize the widespread Satanic panic of the eighties, urges one to question our familiar notions, be it the way we perceive our home, the neighbors or the country.

All three films feature a dismal ending, which places them under the "paranoid" horror discourse identified by Andrew Tudor. Paranoid films, he explains, "presuppose a totally unreliable world" featuring "internal threats" and "ineffective expertise" (459). As opposed to their counterparts, the "secure" narratives, they do not resolve the mayhem in the ending, leaving room for more questions and threats. *Paranormal Activity* and *The Marked Ones* well exemplify the points he outlines. Both films locate the threat to be from within the familiar space of the house and the neighborhood, constantly demonstrate the human actors' failure to resolve the conflict and finally, end with the demon prevailing. While *Lady in a Cage* may appear a more secure narrative, a closer look at its last scene suggests otherwise. Mrs. Hilyard, having now become the animal after her violent confrontation with Randall, leans against the wall of her house, laughing in the midst of her tears as she notices the return of electricity in the air conditioner sticking outside the window. The camera focuses on her face, the words "The end" framing it, while an unsettling music plays in the background. The film then cuts to a shot of the

vacationers re-joining their cars and driving away from the scene. The unfeeling apathetic world, represented by the car drivers and the passengers, and the undetermined fate of her son Malcolm leave Mrs. Hilyard in a very disheartening position. The world as she knew it seems to have vanished, leaving her to acquaint herself with all the hostilities of modernity.

Perhaps, one last connection left to be explored is the police's position vis-à-vis the events in each film, which further exposes the symptoms of a Californian urbanity under crisis. A strong evidence of the degeneration of these cities is in the depiction of a helpless, if not quasi-absent police force, common to all three films. Davis outlines, "cities like Los Angeles" display "an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single comprehensive security effort" (224). The logic of the urban design would have security reproduced in its very physical space by segregating groups to certain areas and thus, designating others to be safe and desirable. However, each film demonstrates the failure of that built environment, which, in having hindered "urban reform and social integration" (Davis 224), has also had the effect of compromising the city as a whole. Regardless of where our actors stand within the Californian urban landscape—be it Mrs. Hilyard's once prestigious neighborhood in Los Angeles, Rancho Peñasquitos' ideal suburban community or Jesse's inner city neighborhood in Oxnard—the films expose the impossibility of guaranteed safety not only in the home invasions but also in the insignificant police presence. *Lady in a Cage* sees the police appear at the very end, only alerted by the interrupted traffic. The policemen are portrayed as automatons, one of them joining the crowd in its curious scrutiny of Mrs. Hilyard's distressed body while another mechanically covers her with a blanket, offering no word or sign of comfort. Indifferent like the traffic, they further the image of the city as an apathetic and cruel place. On the other hand, *Paranormal Activity* opens with the following sentence: "Paramount Pictures would like to

thank the families of Micah Sloat and Katie Featherston and the San Diego Police Department." The juxtaposition of the protagonists' name with the police may suggest that the latter plays an important role in the film's events but it is in fact the opposite. Much like in *Lady in a Cage*, the police officers only appear at the end, proving to be too late and inept in the face of the demon. When we reach *The Marked Ones*, the police are lurking in the periphery, never fully allowed in the story; the characters repeatedly refuse to reach out to the authorities, Jesse even exclaiming "Why would we talk to the cops?" after catching Oscar's escape on tape. Betrayed from the inside by demons—both literal and figurative—and treacherous guests, the home also sees itself stripped of the protection afforded by law enforcement officers against external threats roaming the streets. The films' treatment of the police shed light on the reality of the Californian condition, which is also aligned with a more nationwide failure of law enforcement, manifest in the escalation of police brutality.

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