Roaming Across Cinematic Space:
The Cell Phone in Narrative Film

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis stems from the increasing ubiquity of cell phones in the cinema. It attempts to register the changes that have occurred in cinema in the wake of cellular telephone technology by considering the narrative, stylistic and symbolic significance of the technology in different cinematic environments. This project focuses on the stalker film, the contemporary Japanese horror film, and the network narrative film through the examples of Wes Craven's *Scream* Trilogy (1996, 1997, 2000), Takashi Miike's *Chakushin ari* (2003), and Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000) respectively. Drawing on Avital Ronell's theory of telephonic subjectivity and Tom Gunning's work on the fixed telephone's affinity to film, it is argued that the cell phone's dimensions of mobility, mutability, ubiquity and constant touch have given rise to a new stage in telephonic logic. The case studies in this thesis reveal through close readings, how film exploits this new logic, seizing on the emergent modalities of networked subjectivity and hyperconnected spatial relations to make film more dynamic and socially relevant. Finally it is argued that an examination of this exploitation makes legible the cell phone's social and psychological implications in quotidian life.

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I. Introduction

Your voice across the line gives me a strange sensation.

-Blondie, "Hanging on the Telephone"

'Cause I like cars more than telephones

Your voice in my ear makes me feel so alone

-Arcade Fire, "Cars and Telephones"

Telephones are funny things...

-Sergeant Martin, *Sorry, Wrong Number* (Anatole Litvak, 1948)

The telephone "has preceded its technical installation," Avital Ronell suggests in her philosophical treatise *The Telephone Book* (3). The notion of the telephonic existed well before it appeared in a discrete, material form she argues, because the human subject is constructed telephonically. This is not such an implausible statement when we consider that the human body is a kind of telephone itself; its ear and mouth are but prototypes of the apparatus' characteristic receiver and transmitter. By extension, the human brain is also a kind of telephone for it is continuously caught up in a feedback loop not unlike that of the telephone's call/answer mechanism. Of course, according to Paul Levinson, "all human technology begins with the human brain—not only because the brain invents technology and directs its use, but because the biological brain is a template, a model for all technological media" (2006: 9). But for Ronell, the relationship between human beings and technology—particularly that of the telephone—extends well beyond biology.

The telephonic is deeply ingrained in the processes of the mind. In fact Ronell states that there is no fundamental distance "between the technical, natural, human, or existential worlds, no purity or absolute exteriority of one of these to the other" (16). The intimacy between the human and the technological is so great that thinking about technology is in fact, thinking itself. Ronell considers telephonic logic to therefore also mean the logic of human thought—not just conscious, but unconscious as well.

In fact Ronell goes so far as to suggest that the telephone coordinates with the modalities of the unconscious. Taking cues from Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, she insists that human beings are always grappling to negotiate a balance between two opposing forces such as the irreparable rift between the Self and the Other. She maintains that the desire to recuperate the loss created by this separation is inherently telephonic (20).

Telephonic logic implies, for Ronell that "contact with the Other has been disrupted; but it also means that the break is never absolute. Being on the telephone will come to mean, therefore, that contact is never constant nor is the break clean" (20). But in the wake of the cellular telephone, a noticeable shift has occurred in the logic of the telephone. Rather than an unstable connection between the Self and the Other, the connection is now constant—or rather, understood to be constant. The telephone has always primarily figured, as Tom Gunning suggests, as "a titanic game of *fort/da*"—an oscillating "system of connections and separations, of distances and proximities, or appearances and disappearances" (1999:226). But the cellular telephone by contrast has refigured the logic of the telephone to mean perpetual contact. People can connect anywhere at anytime because the cell phone promises a connectivity that knows no

boundaries. Further, without visible landlines, these connections are invisible, their destinations imperceptible. While the fixed telephone comes with its own book—a ledger which "registers all the names of history" and "binds the living and the dead in an unarticulated thematics of destination" (Ronell 5), the cell phone has no such manual. Both the origin and destination of the cell phone call are mutable and untraceable. While Ronell's work is a helpful point of departure, to understand the implications of the cell phone we must look beyond *The Telephone Book*, and avert our senses to the cinema instead.

As Michael MacDonald points out, "any decisive thinking of the question concerning technology must occur in a realm that is at once akin to the essence of technology yet fundamentally different from it" (MacDonald 136). This is why the cinema has always been an ideal site to examine technology and its relations. Gunning certainly found it useful in his inquiry into the fixed telephone, illustrating that though the cinema and the telephone are distinct technologies, they have a unique affinity to one another. In his article, "Heard Over the Phone: *The Lonely Villa* and the de Lorde Tradition of the Terrors of Technology," Gunning illustrates that it was the telephone that both inspired and enabled the cinema to represent simultaneous events occurring in disparate spaces, an ability that ultimately led to the development of more complex plotting, and composite narrative spaces. The cinema meanwhile provided a dream world for the telephone, a place where telephonic desires and anxieties could be articulated and addressed, all the while indulging the spectator's desire to see what the telephone itself could never visualize—the other side of the conversation.

In this thesis I attempt a project similar to Gunning's: to gauge the relationship between narrative film and the cell phone and the way film exploits the hyperconnectivity produced and fostered by this new stage in telephonic logic. I will analyze particularly the ways in which the cellular phone is narratively, formally and symbolically implicated in fiction film. At present, the cell phone is nearly ubiquitous in film. One need only look to some of the cinematic offerings in the last ten years to recognize this. *Cellular (*David R. Ellis, 2004) is the most obvious example since it explicitly and strongly relies on the device: an unsuspecting young man (Chris Evans) receives a call on his cell phone from a woman being held captive (Kim Basinger) at an unknown location. She has managed to forge a connection with him, at random, through the makeshift telephone she has prepared using a broken landline. He attempts to sustain this feeble connection throughout the course of the film, and must overcome a series of cell phone-specific hurdles—including a drained battery and signal loss—in order to save her.

Other salient examples include *The Matrix* (Wachowski brothers, 1999) where telephonic technologies are integral to the navigation of the film's dual spaces of the physical world and the virtual world. The landline is tethered to the 'real' world of Zion, while the cell phone is wirelessly connected to the matrix itself. Therefore, the film's characters only use the cell phone while navigating within the weightless, simulacrum of the hyperreal. Another recent illustration is *The Departed* (Martin Scorsese, 2006), where the cell phone services the film's complex parallel plotting. It is the device that allows the film to alternate between the secret lives of the two main characters and their relations with Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson), all the while facilitating instantaneous and fast-paced plot development. In *Blood Diamond* (Edward Zwick, 2006), Danny (Leo

Dicaprio), wounded and dying on the side of a hill in Africa, calls Maddy (Jennifer Connelly) while she is at an outdoor café on another continent. Their connection is brief, but instantaneous and intimate. Though he has no idea where she is, through the cell phone he is able to reach her, relay his dying wishes and impart important information, which becomes integral to the film's closure. Meanwhile, in *The Last Kiss* (Tony Goldwyn, 2006), it is the simple act of turning off his cell phone that leads to Michael's (Zach Braff) girlfriend's discovery of his affair.

Of course, the cell phone also takes on other uses besides plot development and action facilitation. In *Grindhouse*: *Death Proof* (Quentin Tarantino, 2007), Jungle Julia (Sydney Poitier) receives numerous mysterious text messages on her cell phone. These messages are never contextualized. Rather, the cell phone merely becomes part of Tarantino's euphoric interlacing of temporal trajectories. Tarantino promotes a tone of timelessness by pairing 1960s and 1970s pop cultural allusions with the anachronistic placement of the cell phone. In *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003) by contrast, Sarah's (Laura Linney) tumultuous relationship with her brother—as well as her own nervous and social ineptitude—are conveyed succinctly by the repeated intrusion of her brother's calls on her cell phone. These calls interfere significantly with her personal life, but her compulsive answering of these calls also serves to illustrate her willingness to be meek and self-sacrificing. These are all Hollywood-inspired examples, but the cell phone's influence certainly extends beyond that. From Hsiao-hsien Hou's *Zui hao de shi guang* (*Three Times*, 2005) in Taiwan and Byeong-ki Ahn's *Pon* (*Phone*, 2002) in South Korea to Jean Pierre and Luc Dardenne's *L'Enfant* (*The Child*, 2005) in Belgium, the cell phone has also disseminated throughout the cinema of the world.

The cell phone's implications in film are vast and varied. Due to the daunting nature of such a project, I will limit my scope to three case studies: Wes Craven's *Scream* Trilogy (1996, 1997 and 2000), Takashi Miike's *Chakushin ari* (*One Missed Call*, 2003) and Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000). These films are not meant to be examples of typical cell phone use in film—if anything they are atypical. I have selected these films for their potential to illuminate the cellular phone's greater implications in the construction of subjectivity and spatial relations. The *Scream* trilogy and *Timecode* engage the cell phone less obviously than *Chakushin ari* since they are not *about* cell phones per se. Rather the *Scream* films follow the exploits of a masked serial killer, and *Timecode* recounts a real-time cross-section of the daily operations of a Hollywood production company. I will attempt to restore the visibility of the cell phone's functioning within the *Scream* Trilogy and *Timecode* in order to highlight the cell phone's importance to the very existence and intelligibility of these films. *Chakushin ari* by contrast, is explicitly about cell phones. Since it involves a fatal and supernatural curse that travels through the cell phone network, the film makes the cell phone excessively visible. But though it may appear to be veiled in an anti-technological rhetoric, I aim to show how it in effect engages with the cell phone in a more unique and nuanced way than it initially appears.

But before I begin my analyses, I would like to draw on a particular scene from David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), because it offers one of the more evocative portrayals of the cellular telephone in recent cinematic history. It provides an effective introduction to some of the core cinematic cell phone tropes that re-appear throughout the case studies I have conducted. The sequence opens with Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) at a party, drinking alone at the bar. As he stands and surveys the noisy, crowded living room,

he sees the Mystery Man (Robert Blake) slip in behind a group of guests. He is a sinister figure in a gloomy garb, with raven hair and deeply set charcoal eyes that stand out against his ashen complexion. He moves purposefully towards Fred, a knowing smile playing on his pursed, plum-colored lips. As the Mystery Man gets closer, the camera zooms in to a close-up of him, just as the blaring music and the cacophonous chatter of the partygoers fade into near silence, perforated ever so slightly by a subtle drone. Contained within a series of shot/reverse shot close-ups, the Mystery Man proceeds to tell Fred that they have met before, at Fred's house. Fred however, dismissively denies it. But The Mystery Man insists, saying, "As a matter of fact, I'm there right now." On cue, he reaches into his pocket and takes out a cellular phone.

In a close-up we see him flip open the device, pull up the antenna, and offer it to a disbelieving Fred. "Call me... Dial your number... Go ahead" he tells Fred, encouragingly. Fred dials his home number and the Mystery Man's voice answers, "I told you I was here." Distressed and confused, Fred turns to the Mystery Man beside him, and demands, "How'd you do that?" The Mystery Man replies, "Ask me," as he gestures towards the phone. "How did you get inside my house?" Fred commands into the phone. The Mystery Man's telephonically transmitted voice explains, "You invited me. It is not my custom to go where I am not wanted"—to which Fred implores, "Who are you?" In response, both the Mystery Man standing beside him, and the one who is audible over the phone, laugh maniacally. The Mystery Man then takes the phone back, turns and walks away. The camera zooms back out into a medium shot as the music and noise of people talking slowly returns to their original volume, leaving Fred stunned and speechless, staring off in the Mystery Man's wake.

The cell phone's powers of mobility, portability, ubiquity, accessibility and constant touch are fantastically exaggerated here. An ostensibly mundane event is given a macabre dimension. The mobile and portable qualities of the cell phone allow the Mystery Man to conceal the device and then reveal it at an opportune moment. This allows Fred to make an instantaneous phone call while standing in the middle of a crowded room. But Fred is calling the Mystery Man, who, as is revealed by the cell phone, is in two places at once: he is at the party and yet also at Fred's house. More than an authorial affectation, Lynch's amplification of the deforming particularities of the cellular telephone event are highly suggestive of the way this technology has reconfigured accepted dimensions of communication, space-time, and identity.

The Mystery Man and the cell phone are conflated here: not only because they are introduced to the film at the same time, but also because they share an affinity to one another. Both enact a kind of spatial reorganization, destabilizing the thresholds between the public and the private. For example, the Mystery Man forges a private space within a public space by introducing the cell phone. He turns the very social space of the party into an intimate encounter. This is formally illustrated through the sudden use of close-ups and the sound distortion that accompanies both the Mystery Man's introduction to the *mise-en-scène* and that of the cellular phone.

An offset of this spatial reorganization is the confusion surrounding location. The Mystery Man's exact location is a source of anxiety: is he at the party? Or is he at Fred's? While the fixed telephone has always been anchored to a particular place, the cell phone's originating referent is now the body. Both the body and the cell phone are mobile, which makes location and space mutable: as users move through space, their

location changes, instantaneously and imperceptibly. This confusion surrounding location and its instability is conveyed by the image of the Mystery Man, coupled with the sound of his voice emanating from the cell phone.

Fred is able to see the Mystery Man at the same time he is talking to him on the phone-a possibility enabled by the mobility of the cell phone. Unmoored from the anchor of the fixed telephone line, participants in a cell phone conversation can talk while they are in view of one another. His doubled presence is uncanny. It literally signals the return of the repressed body of the telephone conversation. While the fixed telephone has always forced the separation of body and voice, the cell phone has reinstated the body's visibility, implying that the telephonic need not always signify distance.

Both the Mystery Man and the cell phone are ubiquitous and promote the experience of being always connected. Fred is in touch with the Mystery Man while he is at once at the party and also not—simultaneously. His ubiquity is conveyed sonically by his voice heard over the phone. Because it remains out of the frame, yet also exists within it, his voice breaches the boundaries of perceived cinematic space, intimating that he is present *everywhere*.

Being able to see the Mystery Man as well as hear his voice on the cell phone, suggests that he exists as two entities simultaneously. He is fragmented and circulating throughout the space of the film. This speaks to the way the cell phone has turned the singular self into multiple selves. As a consequence of being always connected, the individual has become networked, a site of multiple, intersecting channels of communications, fielding numerous connections from anywhere at the same time.

Of course the cell phone "recursively adopts and reconfigures habits, expectations, and cultural forms from the telegraph and the telephone," and therefore, my discussion of the cell phone must necessarily return to the fixed telephone and its cinematic implications (Goggin 23). This will provide a fruitful basis for comparison as well as elucidating the intricate relation between the fixed telephone and the cell phone that continues to exist.

The relationship between the telephone and the cinema is a symbiotic one. Their structural affinities have proved to be a fruitful coupling that has generated complex narratives and stylistic formal strategies that have in turn yielded the cinema as we know it today. The two have an analogous history: "born in the late nineteenth century, each achieved a certain kind of stability in the first half of the twentieth century, and each has now entered a period of mutation and complex interconnection with other technologies" (Schantz 25). Both the telephone and film have developed alongside one another in such a mutually beneficial way that it would be impossible to conceive of one without the other.

Because it allows "the spirit of a person expressed in his own voice to carry its message directly without transporting his body," the telephone makes bodies disappear (Boettinger 205). Marshall McLuhan insists that the telephone demands complete participation—for unlike reading the printed page, "we cannot visualize while telephoning" (267). Therefore, it is film that visualizes the telephone for us. As Ned Schantz suggests, film gives the telephone its eyes, transporting "our vision to the other end of the line" (23-4). In addition, despite being essentially a sound medium, the telephone was a staple in film well before the introduction of synchronous sound. Though

"unable diegetically to absorb sound proper" film was nevertheless embedded with "visual cues to corroborate the gist of conversation and their alerting telephone signals" (Olsson 157). After all, Gunning presupposes in "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear" that "motion pictures began as an image of sound" (14). Meanwhile, "Parallel cutting portrays a telephone conversation, visually conveying an aural experience" (Gunning 1999: 226). While the telephone made images audible, film made the telephone visual.

The fixed telephone is a powerful narrative tool because it "marks off our distance from others, even as it seems to bridge that distance. It ties human relationships and intimacy to an intervening mechanism. It holds truth and identity hostage to mystery and a constant potential for deception" (Telotte 57). The telephone therefore creates tension as well as continuity. It acts as an intermediary between characters, relaying important information that propels the plot as well as character development. It facilitates the creation of multiple narrative spaces, and promotes temporal coherence by linking distant places simultaneously in time. As such the telephone has long been integral to the very construction of narrative. It is "the vehicle for the incorporation of multiple positions from which to narrate—the somewhat wobbly vehicle that in its inherent vulnerability to interception, delay and, misunderstanding or disguise, dependably delivers the conditions of instability that make narrative possible" (Shantz 23). In fact, early film relied so heavily on the telephone as a narrative device that by 1916, filmgoers were apparently "fed up with watching telephone conversations on the screen" (Olsson 157).

The incorporation of the telephone into the plots of early film was a means of naturalizing "film's power to move through space and time" (Gunning: 1999: 219). One

such telephone film is *The Lonely Villa*, which also gained prominence for its technical achievements, namely that it is the "*locus classicus* of parallel editing" (Gunning 1999: 220). This is no coincidence: as Gunning illustrates, not only was the telephone linked up in the development of more complex film narrative constructions, as a narrative device of alternation it was also vital to the development and popularization of parallel editing which became essential to the classical paradigm.

Gunning maintains that the unique spatio-temporal relations of the telephone conversation created the need to represent simultaneity across different places. While the split screen was often used to represent telephone conversations, after 1908 parallel editing was the most frequent device used to portray telephonic communication (1999: 219). In conducting an inquiry into D.W. Griffith's *The Lonely Villa* (1909) however, Gunning discovers that the film existed in various incarnations. He sets out to trace the fable's genealogy. By comparing and contrasting each version's deviating features, he not only identifies their formal nuances but their narrative and thematic ones as well, and how they relate to particular technological anxieties of the historical moment.

Each version of *The Lonely Villa* involves the invasion of the bourgeois home after the departure of the patriarch, the consequent victimization of his family and "the technological link via the telephone that propels the climax into action" (Gunning 1999: 220). However, earlier scenarios like those in Edwin Porter's *Heard Over the Phone* (1908), *Terrrible angoisse* (1907) and André de Lorde's one-act play *Au telephone* (1901) all involve the father unable to get back to the home in time, forced instead to listen to the murder of his family. These versions torment the patriarch with "distance and impotence," dramatizing a particular suffering made possible only through the

telephone's "illusory annihilation of space and time" (Gunning 1999: 222-3). Though only descriptive summaries of the films are available, the rarity of parallel editing before *The Lonely Villa* compels Gunning to assume that the motif of paralysis in these renditions is also reflected in the form as well.

Griffith's *The Lonely Villa* and Pathé's *The Physician of the Castle* by contrast, involve a last minute rescue where the characters are able to master space and time. Gunning is quick to point out that the film's use of parallel editing matches this conquering of space-time, cutting back and forth between spaces easily, much the way the characters are able to do so. But interestingly, *The Lonely Villa* adds another plot twist to the cutting of the telephone line: the breakdown of the patriarch's automobile and his revolver as well. So even though order is restored in the end, the film nevertheless exploits the anxiety surrounding the crisis of technological interruption—not unlike the panic induced by the technological separation of the characters in the earlier versions.

Gunning ascertains that a look back at these early experiences of technology generates "an uncanny sense of *déjà vu*" because we still confront technology with "the same ambivalence of optimism and anxiety" (1999: 217). As J. P. Telotte adds, the telephone always "holds a double potential which reveals a paradoxical play of desire and frustration in our culture" (50). But the dimensions of that ambivalence have certainly changed to reflect the new desires and anxieties brought forth by the new technology of the cell phone.

In chapter one I will discuss the *Scream* trilogy, framing it as an example of the way the cell phone has influenced the genre film, because *Scream* and its sequels are the first stalker films to exploit the cellular phone. Produced on a $14 million budget, the first

Scream generated a whopping $103 million at the U.S. box office—a success that the horror genre had not enjoyed since William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* in 1973 (Schneider 73). The trilogy also "spearheaded the media industry's interest in the teen market, and reshaped the teen movie for a new generation of paying moviegoers" (Wee 2006: 50). Without a doubt, the *Scream* films have had a tremendous social and economic impact. While many critics have traced the trilogy's achievements back to its self-reflexive candor and its allusive, intertextual referencing, I argue that the *Scream* films owe their novelty to the cellular phone. It was the cell phone that helped the franchise revitalize the worn-out and exhausted subgenre that had been dwindling in popularity since its hey-day in the late seventies and early eighties.

The *Scream* films I argue have been revised specifically to accommodate the new potentialities of cellular telephony. Because the stalker film has had a longstanding rapport with the fixed telephone, the *Scream* films provide an ideal basis for comparison that will highlight the changes that have occurred within the subgenre as a result of the introduction of the cell phone. In order to appreciate the influence of the cell phone on this subgenre of film then, it is necessary to examine the subgenre as a whole, its recurring conventions as well as the diverging representations of the telephone it presents. In mapping the stalker film and its interplay with evolving telephone technologies we can identify the influence of the cellular phone on narrative and style, and to a larger extent, its symbolic function within social discourse.

The spatial logic of the telephone shares an affinity with the subgenre's slippage between proximity and distance. I will draw on Vera Dika's theory that the stalker film is constructed like a game. This game is based on guessing not only the killer's identity, but

also where he is and when he will strike next. The telephone is pivotal in the construction of this game. The stalker film deals with these concerns stylistically by jettisoning explicit information about the killer and his whereabouts in favor of more ambiguous intimations of his presence. For example the killer is often masked, or obscured by trees, and his presence is more often than not hinted at through a musical *idée fixe* or unattributed point of view shots. The goal of the stalker film is to dynamize the film's space with the possibility of his presence.

As Charles Spiteri points out, the telephone in the stalker film oscillates between being a weapon for isolation and one for subjugation. The killer either takes away the telephone or exploits the telephone for "the unsettling sense of intrusion it creates" (Rathgeb 36). While the cell phone also serves as a tool for isolation and entrapment in the *Scream* films, the scenarios they present are determined by the mechanism of being *always* connected—not cut off, or subjected to intermittent telephonic intrusions. With the cell phone, the killer can now torment his victims in new ways: he is mobile and his location and identity are both mutable. He presents a serious threat to his victims because of their reliance on the fixed telephone, isolating them not by cutting the line but by using his mobility to circumscribe the space around them. Able to move anywhere at any time, the killer now has an ideal tool for stalking his victims in new and interesting ways.

Mobility is rendered in the *Scream* trilogy's formal strategies as well, mainly through the use of the steadicam. While the steadicam is not a new device by any means, its deployment here is innovative insofar as it pairs it with telephonic scenarios. In earlier stalker films, the fixed line necessarily demanded that a filmed phone conversation used a static camera. Now with innovations in cordless technology and the cell phone, the

conversation is mobile. The mobile camera in the stalker film has usually signaled a shift to the killer's field of vision. Deployed here, it not only renders the phone conversation more visually interesting, and develops the perceived depth of the space, it also infects the frame with the killer's ubiquitous presence. This makes it feel as though the killer is always close; something the stalker film has always played upon but with the cell phone has become more plausible.

Because horror films often serve as fruitful social allegories, the *Scream* films can be read as fables of technology that examine the psychological impact enacted by the introduction of the cell phone. And because horror subgenres, and stalker films particularly, require a certain level of tropic replication, they prove to be valuable sites where the cell phone's influences are explicitly legible.

In chapter two I will continue my discussion of the cell phone in the horror film, but this time I will shift my focus to the contemporary Japanese ghost story film—reductively termed 'J-horror' in the West—through the example of *Chakushin ari*. *Chakushin ari* is the first film in the J-horror subgenre to focus specifically on the cell phone, and it also features the cell phone in a very conspicuous way. It depicts the cell phone's constant connectivity as a *fait accompli*—Asia after all hosts 709 million of the world's cell phone subscribers, (Goggin 1), making it an accelerated version of cell phone environment only hinted at in the *Scream* films.

I will begin by outlining the characteristics of the J-horror subgenre, and its antecedents in order to examine the way the subgenre has developed over time to incorporate more and more the features of the late modern, industrialized condition. After all, J-horror is often read as "a recurring cinematic nightmare, reflecting in microcosm

the anxious tension between tradition and modernity that looms large in the nation's sensibility" (Goldberg 371). Since it is already committed to an engagement with technology, J-horror is a convenient place to see the cell phone's influence, or *keitai* as it is referred to in Japan.

I will then set up the particularities of *keitai* with specific emphasis on the device's integration of "i-mode"-- for *keitai*'s critical role in Japanese culture is indebted to this version of the mobile Internet. While many non-Japanese cell phones have Internet capabilities, the Internet protocol used in Western countries is much more primitive than the one developed by the Japanese. It uses the rudimentary data format WML that offers a much more simplified Internet with limited web browsing. I-mode by contrast is much more advanced. It uses a data format based on HTML making it comparable to the PC – based Internet. The innovation of i-mode has had tremendous socio-economic impact on Japan, not the least of which is contributing to the growing ubiquity of *keitai*. And thanks to i-mode, *keitai*'s ubiquitous presence also carries with it the added spatial dimension of the Internet, a dimension that has hybridized physical spaces with digital spaces. As Mizuko Ito remarks, contemporary, urban Japan is characterized by "the virtual seamlessly integrated with everyday settings and identities" (9). I hope to illustrate how *Chakushin ari* dramatizes this integration by articulating *keitai*'s digital presence in distinctly supernatural terms.

I will demonstrate through significant sequences, the way the film exploits the conceptual affinities between digital and supernatural presence. Takashi Miike conflates the ubiquitous digital presence carried by *keitai* with the ethereal presence of vengeful ghosts not only theoretically and narratively, but stylistically as well. For example, Miike

relies on the steadicam and handheld camerawork to suggest ghostly point of views, nuancing the camera movement with an excessive use of pans, as well as a wide variety of disorienting angles that intimate the physically unstable presence of a ghost within the film's mise-en-scène.

Chakushin ari's imagining of the "seamless integration" of the digital and the supernatural into spaces and identities is further suggested in the film's sound. Miike employs acousmatic sounds, where by diegetic sounds are heard but their sources remain unseen. This renders the character's voices for example, ghost-like: they shift between the spaces of the frame and the spaces beyond it so that they cannot be located. *Keitai* users are out of bounds, and their choreographed movement across public and private spaces is associated with the limitless trajectory of ubiquitous ghosts. This fuses with the film's overall suggestion that the digital is not only integrated into spaces, but also into identities as well. In incorporating *keitai* and the digital, characters become hybridized.

The transformation of the self that is instigated by the *keitai* curse is distinctly viral in nature. It is contagious and always replicating itself. The viral motif is also incorporated into the film's narrative structure: absorbing the logics of accretion and accumulation, *Chakushin ari* relates, piecemeal, a series of events, as opposed to developing them into a conventional, centralized narrative. The viral motif, and the anxiety that surrounds it, also proves to be a useful articulation of the maternal. The onus of the film's suffering and chaos—the underlying source of the virus—is ultimately traced back to a monstrous mother. *Chakushin ari* also therefore exploits the gender anxieties that have been inspired by the restructuring of identity in general, in the wake of the total technological integration of *keitai*.

I will close my discussion of the cell phone in film in chapter three with *Timecode*. While the films I discuss all engage with the mounting hyperconnectivity of the subject and the space it inhabits, *Timecode* is one of the more in-depth realizations of this in cinema. It manages to integrate this newly forged concept of hyperconnectivity into every aspect of its aesthetic. The film is a network narrative that follows the interconnected lives of a number of different characters in real-time. *Timecode* was shot on four digital cameras running simultaneously in one continuous take. The footage is presented side by side in four synchronized quadrants. I argue that its unique aesthetic relies heavily on the cell phone, and I attempt to illustrate how *Timecode* incorporates the cell phone in a very comprehensive way. The cell phone works against the separations within the frame, creating a continuity of space-time and action. It also works interdependently with the film's mobile camera and the real-time continuous take to foster the motif of hyperconnectivity. I claim that the cell phone is absolutely integral to the film's narrative intelligibility and to its formal elements, in order to make a case for the cell phone's role in the grander context of the contemporary media landscape.

I will discuss how multiple screens allow us to see actions, settings and characters from multiple perspectives. This variety gives us a more relational and thorough understanding of the film's space. This in turn enables the film to set up where the characters are located within the space and with regards to each other. And, while they may not share the space of the *frame*, the dispersed characters nevertheless share the same *screen* space with one another. This allows the spectator to feel constantly connected—visually—to the characters, and to get an uninterrupted perspective of their

interactions and relationships. Meanwhile, the mobile cameras help capture the characters movements and navigations across that space.

I will also examine the way the film engages with the surveillant apparatus. It is implicated explicitly in the narrative with the introduction of an audio surveillance device one character uses to spy on another. The sound emanating from this becomes an important part of the film's soundscape and as such integral to the intelligibility of the frames. Furthermore, the uninterrupted gaze of the camera, and the excess of information it relays also mimic—albeit less explicitly—the aesthetics of surveillance. The architecture of the frame after all shares an obvious affinity with the multi-frame display of CCTV security monitors. *Timecode* illustrates that the cell phone's implication of constant touch is not unlike that which exists between surveillance technologies and their subjects. Thus, the film highlights the similarity between the mechanism of hyperconnectivity of the cell phone and that of the surveillance apparatus,

The excess of visual and audible details within the film mimics the hypermediated, informational overflow of the contemporary urban landscape. And, just as the cell phone is an integral part of *Timecode*'s aesthetic, the cell phone is likewise an integral part of the postmodern mediascape. Confronting such an information overload however, yields a fragmented perspective for the human sensorium is only capable of processing so much data at one time. Much like the current participant in technology, *Timecode*'s spectator is only able to grasp the information offered in pieces. *Timecode* therefore captures this fragmented experience of the world as a result of media over-saturation.

While the film dramatizes the sensorial pleasures associated with such excess, it is not without commentary on the ultimate alienation that stems from such hypermediation. This is conveyed thematically in the film's violent and tragic ending. I will illustrate that *Timecode* manifests Jay David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's concept of remediation: for the film embodies both the logic of immediacy, and hypermediacy. Using the mobile, handheld camera and the feature length long take, it attempts to capture authentic human experience in a totalizing way. Yet, the film also consciously and simultaneously undermines this drive for immediacy by excessively emphasizing the way this experience is mediated, and illustrating that while hyperconnectivity is technically and stylistically fruitful, it is ultimately nightmarish for human lives and relationships.

If we think of some of the characteristics of the cell phone: ubiquity, constant touch, accessibility, instantaneity, simultaneity and mobility we can see how these are embodied by the film's aesthetic. The cell phone's intermedial relationship to the other technologies in *Timecode*, and its affinity to the contemporary technologies of the digital camera, the desktop computer, the Internet and the surveillance apparatus, make the cell phone fully legible as a synecdoche of the postmodern mediascape, just as the telephone before it was a synecdoche of technological modernity (Ronell 20; Gunning 2004: 30).

The aim of this project is: to illustrate the way the *Scream* Trilogy, *Chakushin ari* and *Timecode* all represent "human experience within a web of interlocking technologies" (Gunning 2004: 20); and to locate the cell phone's position within these technological relations. The fixed telephone has figured largely in the creation, experience, and understanding of modernity. But the cell phone is quickly becoming pivotal in the same ways to postmodernity: our encounter with it, awareness of it and

comprehension of it. Cinema is a place where we see the relations between technologies and in turn our relations to them. Therefore cinema is an ideal place to see our involvement with the cell phone—this little device with grandiose implications.

II. Murderous, Mobile, Mutable:

The Stalker Game, the Cell Phone and the *Scream* Trilogy

Casey: Is this some kind of joke?
Anonymous caller: More of a game really

-Scream

Communication, a telephonic invasion... I'm planning my escape...

-No Doubt, "Spiderwebs"

In the opening sequence of *Scream*, Casey (Drew Barrymore) dawdles flirtatiously with an anonymous, smooth-talking caller, until he asks to know her name. "Why do you want to know my name?" she inquires, coyly. The camera follows her in a medium shot, as she toys with the VHS tapes on top of the television without the slightest indication of alarm. "Because," the caller continues, "I want to know who I'm looking at." Suddenly, Casey stops fidgeting and looks up from the television and off-screen—just as the camera zooms into a dramatic close-up of her face. Still clutching the cordless phone to her ear, she asks quietly, "What did you say?" her expression now stony and apprehensive. Without a doubt this predicament evokes the proverbial: "The calls...they're coming from inside the house!" that has become such a wellspring for the popular culture imaginary: from the urban legend "The Baby-sitter and The Man Upstairs," to the films *Black Christmas* (Bob Clark, 1976) and *When a Stranger Calls* (Fred Walton, 1979) (Brunvand 53). However, it was the anxiety over the existence of a secret, secondary landline that provided the basis for the original technological parable. Here, it is the advent of the cell phone that strikes the fearful chord. Deceived by the

implied distance of a landline phone call, Casey finds herself trapped under the homicidal gaze of a proximal but delocalized stalker. This new-fangled stalker is not only nearby but also unmoored from the trappings of a landline. Whether hidden inside or outside Casey's house, he is nevertheless murderous and mobile. He is capable of watching Casey's every move while talking to her simultaneously, all the while moving dangerously closer.

The stalker film has long engaged with the contingencies of the telephone: from Michael Myers (Tony Moran) choking Annie (Nancy Kyes) to death with a telephone cord in *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978) to Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer) cutting Camp Crystal Lake's only phone line in *Friday the 13th* (Sean Cunningham, 1980), to Stanley Herbert (John De Santi) telephonically stalking his victims before raping and murdering them in *Eyes of a Stranger* (Ken Wiederhorn, 1981). In the contemporary stalker film these contingencies have been revised. The cellular phone has now replaced the fixed telephone as the cathexis of fear, a shift that has subsequently reconfigured the subgenre's central preoccupations—both formal and thematic. I will use Wes Craven's *Scream* Trilogy (1996, 1997 and 2000) as an example of the ways in which the cellular phone has created new narrative, aesthetic and thematic possibilities for the stalker formula. Finally, in examining the way the cell phone figures in the *Scream* trilogy I hope to illuminate the way our own understandings of space, time and identity have been reshaped in the wake of this burgeoning technology.

Because it is such a highly contested subgenre in terms of its characterization, I will begin by outlining the qualities of the stalker film. The most striking aspect of the stalker film is its formal construction, which is deliberately structured as a 'game' that

plays with audience expectation. The stalker's gaming quality, because it engages so much with the unseen, has allowed for a fruitful relationship with the telephone, a technology that necessarily means communicating by voice alone. I will briefly explore some of the ways earlier stalker films engage with fixed telephony in order to create a basis for comparison that will highlight the cell phone's influence. Finally, I will examine the extent of its impact in key sequences of the *Scream* trilogy.

The stalker film was born in North America in the early 1970s. For the next decade, it became one of the most successful horror subgenres to grace the big screen (Clover 23). There is some contention as to the film that inaugurated the stalker subgenre: Steven Jay Schneider suggests that *Black Christmas* is likely the first of the brood. Meanwhile Carol Clover traces the first stalker back to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper 1974), and yet Vera Dika insists it all began with John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978). This controversy is symptomatic of the confusion surrounding the subgenre's name and also its very characterization.

From 'stalker', 'splatter', 'shocker', 'slasher', to 'teenie-kill' and 'violence against women' pictures, the subgenre still bears multiple designations. For the purpose of this discussion I will use the term 'stalker,' coined by Dika because it recognizes more than any other term, the specific structural dynamics of the subgenre. What typifies these films is not simply, as Clover suggests, "the immensely generative story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived" (21). Nor is it the low-budgets and high body counts, as Robin Wood claims (63). Ultimately, violence as a determining characteristic proves much too vague. Dika argues by contrast that what truly

distinguishes these films is their unique *form*. She keenly observes that not only are "the narrative elements of these films closely repeated from film to film, but so are their formal and visual elements: "shot structures remain intact, as are framings, compositions, situations, and even the explicit content of the image" (1987: 87). The most prominent formal feature of the stalker film, she argues, is an off-screen killer whose presence is either identified by his distinctive point-of-view shots or inferred by the introduction of a change in the musical score.

This withholding of the killer's identity and his location is integral to the stalker film. The killer "may be hidden by the frameline or behind trees, curtains, doorways, or may even be in physical disguise" (Dika 1990: 55). Since the killer cannot be overtly identified, visual and audible clues are used to stand in for his presence. As Schneider explains, the killer's presence is often indicated by

> a sinister and foreboding musical *idée fixe* [...]; subjective or 'point-of-view' camerawork, often used to track the killer's visual field; and a sequence of partially obstructed shots not followed (as is standard in other genres) by a complimentary reverse shot, thereby leaving the audience in some doubt as to their owner. (75)

Dika adds that these shots are used to "fragment the visual field and to make the killer's exact position within the film's space undefinable" (1990: 53). And, as Reynold Humphries appends, what renders the most accomplished stalker films so frightening, "is not the nature of the murders but the fact of not knowing who is committing them nor where – or how – he or she will strike next" (145).

While many film genres depend on suspense, suspense is the stalker film's *raison d'etre*. The stalker game's central questions are not so much "Will he win?" but rather, "Where is the Killer?" and "When will he strike?" (Dika 1990: 22). In order to provoke

these questions, the stalker relies heavily on the unseen and the repetition of visual and aural clues. That so much of the stalker's resonance relies on audience expectation and understanding of identity, as well as diegetic space and time, explains why the subgenre so readily exploits the telephone. In separating the voice from the body, the distinct auditory nature of the telephone conceals the visual cues needed for identification. Also, the unique structure and space-time relationship of the telephone conversation interrelates with the game structure of the stalker film in order to involve the audience in their pursuit of the killer's identity and more importantly, his whereabouts.

As Charles Spiteri remarks in "Isolation and Subjugation: The Telephone in the Slasher Film," stalker films that involve telephonic scenarios feature the killer using the telephone as either a weapon for isolation or subjugation. In order to isolate his victims, the killer cuts the landline, thus taking away the character's link to the outside world. But as Spiteri suggests,

> this use of the telephone is only one part of the story or one edge of the sword, the other edge being the notion that even when the telephone is still operative one remains vulnerable; in fact it is the telephone that makes us vulnerable. This is because the telephone becomes a weapon for subjugation; it is not merely an instrument for isolation but, along with the knife, a weapon for the killer. (no pag.)

To subjugate his victims, the killer begins with a psychological assault: taunting his victims over the phone so that calls often prelude a vicious attack. And as Spiteri neglects to include, albeit less common, the killer also uses the telephone to force victims into aural complicity by making them witness acts of violence while they remain powerless on the other end of the line.

In order to trap his victims, the killer in the stalker film exploits his victims' dependence on the telephone. By cutting the line, he severs the umbilical cord that

connects them to the outside world and the safety and civilization that it represents. The telephone in *Halloween* for example, is what bonds Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis), Annie and Lynda (P.J. Soles) together. Early on in the film we are introduced to their relationship in a medium tracking shot of trio as they walk home from school. They never all share the frame thereafter. They are physically—and stylistically—separated and forced to communicate by telephone only. However, the telephone proves to be insufficient to overcome their separation. At one point in the film Lynda leaves the phone off the hook in order to make out with her boyfriend, undisturbed. Later, when Laurie overhears Lynda choking to death on the phone, Laurie mistakes her for Annie playing a trick. Laurie calls Annie but is unable to reach her or Lynda since both of her friends are now dead. Finally, in a moment of crisis Laurie, after being chased by the murderous Michael, reaches frantically for the telephone to call for help—only to realize that he has cut the phone line. She is clearly distraught since the telephone symbolizes her only possibility for rescue. She is trapped and it is only a matter of time before Michael penetrates the house and attempts to kill her. To emphasize this, the next shot is one from Laurie's point of view of the open living room window, and a slow downward pan revealing curtains billowing in the breeze. Here, the breakdown of the telephone line is visually associated with the breakdown of the barriers of the home.

Similar plot tropes occur in *Friday the 13th*, *My Bloody Valentine* (George Mihalke, 1981), and *Silent Night, Deadly Night* (Charles E. Sellier Jr., 1984) to name only a few. In all of these films, the "moment where the telephone breaks down is usually one that seals the fate of the character or at least sees them at their most helpless" (Spiteri no pag.). Of course, as Gunning asserts, the horror of the cut telephone line is but an

"aspect of modern technology: its inscription of its own interruption as the sign of catastrophe" (1999: 226). The fixed telephone is particularly vulnerable to interruption since it is connected to a network by a series of visible wires that can be easily cut or tampered with.

Spiteri remarks that, despite being used as an instrument for isolation in certain cases, more commonly, "modern horror films represent the telephone as a weapon for subjugation" (no pag.). This repurposing of the telephone from a beneficial medium to something threatening is not new. While the telephone's visible wires are vulnerable to interference, they also act as penetrating forces. For this reason, the telephone has long been associated with home invasion dramas and the incursion of personal spaces. As Allison Whitney argues, "Considerable social anxieties accompanied the introduction of the telephone into private homes, resulting in a correspondence between the drama of home invasion and the very presence of the technology" (127). Gunning frames early films such as the Pathé brothers' *The Physician of the Castle* (1908) and D.W. Griffith's T*he Lonely Villa* (1909) as allegories of this susceptibility by implicating the telephone in various dramatizations of domestic assaults by thieves. An aura of anxiety still surrounds the telephone, though the emphasis has shifted from the line itself onto the penetrative imposition of the telephone call.

While the fixed telephone's wires make its penetration legible, the telephone call's "penetrative power is more insidious than other weapons because the material of the telephone contact is invisible, nearly impossible to detect, and, in some cases not tangible enough to warrant police action" (Whitney 129). In the stalker film, the actual invasion of the home is usually the last stage of a much more psychological invasion that

begins with a harassing phone call. The most notable example of this is *When a Stranger Calls* (the original and the 2006 remake), although *Black Christmas* (both the 1976 and 2006 versions), and *Eyes of a Stranger* also feature killers who telephonically torment their victims before breaking-in and murdering them. However, the killer is often associated with the telephone calls, even if they do not originate with him. In *Halloween* for example, during a sequence towards the beginning of the film we see Laurie, as she is about to shut the window. The film cuts to a close-up profile shot of Laurie, revealing a startled expression. The film cuts to a high angle long shot from Laurie's point of view of the masked Michael Myers standing between the blowing white sheets hanging on clotheslines in the back yard. The sequence is underscored by the musical *idée fixe* used throughout the film to announce Michael's presence. The film then cuts back to a reaction shot of Laurie and then back to her point of view shot, only to reveal that Michael is no longer standing there. Back to a reaction shot, Laurie, perturbed, promptly slams her window shut. The camera pans to the right just as Laurie backs away from the window. The film cuts back to the empty back yard—but the overwhelming musical score serves to illustrate that though Michael is no longer visible, he is nonetheless, still *there*. The film cuts back to a medium long shot of Laurie continuing to back away from the window, her eyes still fixed to the view of the back yard. The camera proceeds to slowly zoom out into a long shot, bringing the telephone into the frame's foreground. At that moment the telephone rings. Laurie looks at the phone, and the film cuts to a close up of Laurie's face as she stares at the ringing device. She hesitates, and the piercing sound of the telephone ringing coupled with the menacing musical score, conveys this intrusion as something eerie. That Laurie is framed in a low-angle shot as she answers the

phone only further bolsters the disorienting unnaturalness of the intrusion. But the only sounds coming from the other end of the line are wet chewing sounds. Laurie slams the receiver down in panic and continues to stare down at the telephone, obviously disturbed. However, moments later Laurie discovers that all along it was just Annie, who was unable to speak because she was in the middle of eating when she called. More than a minor misdirection, this sequence draws a parallel between Michael's uninvited presence and that of the telephone. Numerous other sequences follow where Michael and the telephone are figured as analogous, because they are both ultimately trespassers: looming, faceless 'others' intruding and disrupting day-to-day life (Spiteri no pag.).

The telephone is an ideal tool for the incursion of psychological space because, as the homicidal caller (Kiefer Sutherland) from *Phone Booth* (Joel Schumacher, 2002) explains, "A ringing telephone has to be answered." After all, it is this authoritative ring of the telephone that enables him to successfully force Stu (Colin Farrell) into a phone booth, trapping him at gunpoint for the entire film. Paul Levinson echoes this, claiming that what is so unearthly about the telephone is that it seems to ring "of its own volition, not ours, and in effect pages us, programs us, literally calls on us and call us forth, rather than vice versa" (46). Whatever the psychological compulsion underlying the act of answering the telephone, for Avital Ronell it nevertheless symbolizes acquiescence. According to her, picking up the phone means:

> you're saying yes, almost automatically, suddenly, sometimes irreversibly. Your picking up means the call has come through. It means more: you're its beneficiary, rising to meet its demand, to pay a debt. You don't know who's calling or what you are going to be called upon to do, and still, you are lending your ear, giving something up, receiving an order. It is a question of answerability. (2)

The very act of picking up the phone is then a powerfully symbolic act, inflected by the relations of dominance established by the phone call's very mode of production. Answering a phone call symbolizes the receiver's capitulation to the caller. The stalker film engages with the telephone's preeminence and the receiver/caller power dynamic, exposing the horrifying vulnerability inherent in this answerability and availability.

In the original 1976 version of *Black Christmas*, a sorority repeatedly receives a series of prank calls. In typical fashion, shots of the young women talking into the telephone are never crosscut with a reverse shot of the caller on the other end. "Not only does the lack of visual information disguise identity, but, often more important, it disguises physical location" (Whitney 129). Because of the telephone's fixity, spatial logic would demand that the killer be anchored to another, distant location. Of course, unbeknownst to the young women, the stalker is calling from an unused telephone line in the attic. The audience is made aware of this by the killer's point-of-view shots as he moves from the attic around the rest of the house, covertly murdering unsuspecting girls. This challenges the associated 'safe distance' implied by land line telephones, creating "suspense by playing against viewers' assumptions about communication technology, assumptions based on both their personal experience of using the telephone and their experience of its narrative function in other films" (Whitney 129). The audience's prior knowledge of the killer's strategic advantage creates suspense by allowing the audience to play the film's game. By the end of the film, the killer is still at large because the characters fail to determine his location, never for a moment suspecting that a phone call could be made so close by. While invocations in early film depict the invasiveness of the primary telephone line, the stalker films of the 1970s and early 1980s project anxiety

onto the addition of the secondary phone line—an adjunct capable of yielding terrible consequences because it is concealed by the primary landline. The contingency of the second phone line renders the home doubly vulnerable, and becomes a means of deceiving the home's inhabitants and entrapping them.

The telephone traps characters and contributes to the atmosphere of inertia that pervades *Black Christmas*. As a thriller based around a series of fixed telephone events, the film's characters are likewise conspicuously immobile, literally confined within the sorority house. The formal treatment of one of the film's first obscene phone calls is illustrative of this motif of entrapment. In a medium tracking shot, Jessica (Olivia Hussey) walks towards the ringing phone. With her back to the camera, she answers, calling 'hello'" repeatedly into the receiver. She holds the handset to her chest and turns to face the camera. The film cuts to a deep-focus medium eye-level shot of Jessica calling out to her housemates, "Hey quiet! It's him again...'the Moaner'" and returns to the handset. Suddenly, the sorority girls come rushing through the doorway in the background at the left side of the frame, and also from the top of the stairs at the right of the frame. The girls crowd around Jessica as she holds the handset out so they can all hear. The film cuts to an extreme close-up of the phone's receiver in selective focus. The film then cuts to a medium shot of Clare (Lynne Griffin) biting her lip, clearly frightened, then back to a close-up of Jessica. As she glances off-frame, the film cuts to a close-up of Barbie (Margot Kidder), then Phyllis (Andrea Martin), and back to a medium two-shot of both Barbie and Jessica leaning into the handset. The film cuts to a close-up of Clare and Phyllis then to Barbie and Jessica, and back to Clare and Phyllis as Phyllis chastises them to be quiet. Cutting back to an extreme close-up of the receiver, the sound of the killer's

voice dominates the soundtrack as the girls stand, speechless. The camera pans up to an extreme close-up of Jessica and then over to Barbie, until it circles around the group, conveying an extreme close-up of each girl staring in the direction of the phone, mesmerized by the caller's strange and eerie, schizophrenic voice. This moment underscores the girls' inertia. Captivated and affixed to the telephone, they are held in the caller's grasp. Their hypnotic state illustrates the way they have resigned their personal agency to the telephone. Instead of hanging up they stand, immobile and transfixed--until of course Barbie finally grabs the phone and threatens him. This moment in the film sums up quite perfectly the immobility that seizes the characters throughout the film. They are one by one ensnared by the killer within the byzantine sorority house, murdered quietly while their bodies are hidden in the countless nooks and crannies of the building. This atmosphere of entrapment never dissipates, and continues well up to the end of the film when Jessica is 'rescued' by the police and medicated by the paramedics. The killer remains hidden in the attic and is never discovered. While the police congregate outside, they inadvertently leave a sleeping Jessica alone in the house with the murderer. Her fate is sealed; she is literally immobilized and presumably doomed to never leave the house.

While the killer can exploit telephone contingencies to obscure his proximity, he can also use them to emphasize his distance. This is nowhere more apparent than when a killer forces a listener on the other end of the telephone line to witness horrible acts of violence. This is not a common trope deployed by the stalker film, however, but has precedence in early telephone scenario-based films. One of the most pertinent examples is in *Halloween*, when Laurie overhears her friend Lynda being strangled to death on the other end of the line. Having received a prank phone call from her friend Annie earlier in

the film, Laurie is convinced that it is simply another joke. Shots of Laurie sheepishly listening and chiding her friend are crosscut with images of Lynda struggling for life. The audience's prior knowledge sets up the suspenseful expectation that Laurie will realize what is going on and try to help. As Lynda drops to the floor, Michael puts the receiver up to his ear, breathing heavily into the mouthpiece. However, Laurie remains unaware of what has just transpired, while the audience is left to contemplate the implications of the telephone's grave failure. Once serving as a vital link between friends in *Halloween*, the telephone, now overtaken by the killer, serves as a tool for miscommunication and disorientation, ultimately hindering Lynda's hope of being rescued.

Scream, *Scream 2*, and *Scream 3* engage with these familiar telephonic-horror scenarios. And they are able to revise them by incorporating the cell phone, while successfully maintaining the formal conventions of the stalker formula. Because of its postmodern spin, many scholars give the *Scream* trilogy a whole new classification. For Peter Hutchings the *Scream* franchise marked the beginning of the "postmodern slasher" (211). He claims that while the later incarnations of *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* all embrace a certain level of self-reflexive humour, the *Scream* films are more postmodern because their characters exhibit an ironic "knowingness about genre conventions" (207 and 212). But this is problematic since it ignores stalker films like Fred Walton's *April Fool's Day* (1986), and Armand Mastroianni's *He Knows You're Alone* (1980) that also exhibit this genre 'knowingness' and self-consciousness long before *Scream*. After all, Dika claims that the stalker subgenre from its very inception was a product of a postmodern impulse, arguing that the stalker "is in fact

derived from a conscious remake of *Psycho*, or at least from a significant 'appropriation' of some of its most salient elements" (1990: 18-19).

Meanwhile, the *Scream* trilogy's brazen straddling of parody and homage inspired Schneider to announce the arrival of the 'neo-stalker.' But the validity of this categorization is also questionable. For one, Kevin Williamson penned every film that Schneider lumps into this category– the *Scream* trilogy, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Jim Gillespie, 1997) and *Halloween H20* (Steve Miner, 1998). Therefore the tongue-in-cheek attitude he identifies as a defining characteristic of this new subgenre may be little more than an authorial affectation. This seems likely, considering later stalker films like *Valentine* (Jamie Blanks 2001) and recent forays into the subgenre such as the remakes *When a Stranger Calls* (2006) and *Black Christmas* (2006) do not exhibit this unique coupling of horror-comedy. The distinguishing feature of the *Scream* trilogy then, is not that it announced the birth of a new kind of stalker film, but rather that it staged a moment of *transformation* in the stalker film.

Instead of being a rigid and exhaustively repetitive subgenre, the stalker proves to be very responsive to change. As Dika suggests, the stalker is constantly undergoing a process whereby "a number of highly potent fragments have been assembled and then collapsed to construct a very exploitable, yet semantically dense visual surface and formal dynamic" (1990: 21). This means that the stalker is still able to incorporate new forms into its structure as long as it includes its essential narrative and formal elements. This is what makes the stalker film such an interesting subject of study: though it does rely on a certain level of tropic replication, it nevertheless manages to assimilate change into its structure and style, its narrative and its themes. The *Scream* trilogy's canny

integration of changing telephone technologies illustrates that this moment of transformation owes much to the advent of the cellular phone.

Scream's theatrical release in December 1996 coincided with the unveiling of the Motorola StarTAC, the world's first wearable phone – that is, a phone that could be carried in a pocket, or a purse. Though cell phones were breaking into the U.S. consumer market prior to this, they were mainly designed for corporate users, producing phones that though portable, were also larger, heavier and not very discrete (Oehmke SM74). As such, previous filmic representations "often played on images of the mobile telephone as a form of conspicuous consumption available only to the wealthy" (Ling 35). Some examples include wealthy financier Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) shouting at Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) on his brick-sized cell phone from the beach in *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987), or smarmy executive Michael Grates (Ben Stiller) almost crashing his convertible while driving and talking on his cell phone in *Reality Bites* (Ben Stiller, 1994). The StarTAC by contrast, was small, discrete, and promoted as a new fashion accessory for the masses. As Dan Williams, a designer for Motorola, reveals, "We wanted a phone that would be visible enough to express something about you. It started as a couture product" (qtd. in Oehmke SM74). Therefore in *Scream*, the cell phone is understood as a relatively new phenomenon, and treated with suspicion and unease.

As a new player in the media landscape, the cell phone has not *replaced* the fixed telephone in the *Scream* trilogy. Instead it interacts with the pre-existing technology of the fixed telephone. In fact, much of the telephonic scenarios in the *Scream* films involve this particular cell phone - landline dynamic, whereby the cell phone is an instrument of the killer while the victim's outmoded landline can scarcely compete. Few characters

have cell phones, but even those that do are often manipulated by it, illustrating that they are still adapting to this new technological tool. The killer on the other hand, brandishes the cell phone with ease, enabling him to ambush his unsuspecting victims who are unfortunately either anchored to their fixed telephone lines or disoriented by their new portable phones. In essence, the cell phone trumps the landline and its users, in an attempt to prove by example the sheer obsolescence of fixed telephone technology.

The *Scream* trilogy recounts the exploits of a masked knife-wielding murderer who stalks and kills the friends and acquaintances of Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell), or those connected to her in some way. The first *Scream* is set in the small Californian suburb of Woodsboro, one year after the rape and murder of Sidney's mother, Maureen Prescott. The second *Scream* installment takes place on the modestly sized campus of the fictional Windsor College, immediately following the release of the fictional film *Stab*, based on the occurrences in the original *Scream*. The third installment, *Scream 3* takes place in Los Angeles during the production of the fictional film *Stab 3*, based of course on the events in the previous films. All three films differ in setting and plot, but share the same core characters: namely Sidney, reporter Gale Weathers (Courtney Cox-Arquette), Dwight 'Dewey' Riley (David Arquette), Randy Meeks (Jamie Kennedy) and Cotton Weary (Liev Schrieber). While the killers have varied over the trilogy, from Billy and Stu in the first installment and Mrs. Loomis (Laurie Metcalf) and Mickey (Timothy Olyphant) in the second to Roman[1] (Scott Foley) in the final film, they all share the same persona of 'Ghostface.'

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[1] At the end of *Scream 3*, Roman actually reveals that he had been the mastermind behind all the killings from both *Scream* and *Scream 2* so arguably all of the films share the same killer.

The *Scream* films are consistent with typical stalker fare in that they withhold the killer's identity through the use of the generic 'Ghostface' costume, and also the killer's location—relying on "point-of-view camerawork, and its association of the killer's attacks with distinctive and discordant music" in order to denote his presence (Schneider 78). Further, characters being telephonically harassed in their homes frequently preface the killer's attacks. But unlike previous stalker films, the killer in the *Scream* films deploys the cell phone as his primary weapon of choice. The *Scream* trilogy reconfigures the central preoccupations of the stalker's 'game,' using the cell phone to give the subgenre's fundamental questions, "Where is the killer?" and "Who is the killer?" a fresh new spin.

The cellular phone lends the killer in the stalker film the unprecedented advantage of mobility. Mobility means the killer is no longer fixed to a particular location granting him greater access to his victims, and greater anonymity. The cell phone imbues the killer with a liberty that his predecessors always sought, but never fully enjoyed: he can seem to be everywhere because his location can never be fully determined. At one point in *Scream 2*, Dewey comforts Sidney: "They're gonna take you somewhere safe," and Sidney sarcastically replies, "where's that?" implying that there is no safe place. The killer is always watching and alerts his victims with his presence using the mobile phone. With this device, he becomes seemingly everywhere at once, and possibly always moving closer. Of course, as I will discuss later, the cell phone also allows multiple killers to masquerade as one, literally giving the killer the ability to be in two places at once.

Narratively, with the newly acquired freedom of movement afforded to the killer by the cell phone, he can now torment his victims in novel and crafty ways. This mobility

is also integrated into the film's formal structure as well. With the cell phone the filmic phone conversation is now more mobile. The *Scream* trilogy takes advantage of this with the repeated use of camera movement and the steadicam, giving the camera a more intimate involvement with its subjects, and conflating with the film's overall suggestions of voyeurism. The use of the steadicam in the stalker film is not something new—*Halloween* made good use of the 'panaglide' (Panavision's version of the steadicam) back in 1978. In using the panaglide, Carpenter hoped to promote the feeling of Michael's continuous presence. Carpenter explains:

> I've always thought that in some way the hand-held shot or the dolly shot doesn't really indicate point of view. And the whole movie is a point-of-view film. It's all seen through various eyes. So I just think [the panaglide is] responsible for a lot of it. (qtd. in Rockoff 59)

Carpenter used this device not only to convey Michael's point of view and those of other characters, but also to create an un-attributed omniscient perspective, one that tracks the movements of the characters in general. For example, returning to the scene where the girls are walking home from school, we can see that the panaglide continues to follow them well after Michael has driven past them in his car. The panaglide repeatedly tilts to the left and to the right, as if to mimic the perspective of someone creeping along behind them. Logistically, this point of view cannot belong to Michael, yet because it suggests an anonymous voyeur, the sequence is nonetheless steeped in his presence. The telephone scenarios in *Halloween*—because they revolve around the fixed telephone—necessarily contrast the fluidity conveyed by this traveling camera. With the cell phone this voyeuristic aesthetic can also be applied to the telephonic events, making the suggestions of voyeurism all the more powerful. The camera movement in turn not only extends the perceived depth of the narrative space, but also inflects that space with an

unseen, ubiquitous presence. While the stalker films of the 1970s and 1980s managed to insinuate that the killer is present or nearby, with the cellular phone this is now more plausible.

Stalker films take place in a number of different settings, from summer camps and high schools to suburbs and cities. But they remain consistent in that each location is isolated. And, "this isolation functions to separate the characters from society at large and negates the possibility of a rescue" (Rockoff 11). Even "with their impersonal antiseptic nature, vast urban sprawls can sometimes appear more isolated than a campsite or abandoned mansion" (Rockoff 12). Regardless, in typical stalker films, as Dika notes, "the entire action will take place in a single setting" (1990: 58). The *Scream* films may take place in a general setting: Woodsboro, College, or Hollywood—but the settings of the various murders and confrontations with the killer vary. Of course, all of this is owed to the fact that there are multiple killers and furthermore that the killers are mobile and quite able to move easily from one location to the next undetected. The *Scream* films offer a challenge to Clover's "Terrible Place" which she claims is an important identifying feature of the stalker film. Often a house or a tunnel, this "Terrible Place"

> may at first seem a safe haven, but the same walls that promise to keep the killer out quickly become, once the killer penetrates them, the walls that hold the victim in. A phenomenally popular moment [...] is the scene in which the victim locks herself in (a house, room, closet, car) and waits with pounding heart as the killer slashes, hacks, or drills his way in. (198)

As the *Scream* films will attest, the days of hiding in confined, protective spaces are gone. The victim may find herself or himself in there momentarily, whether it is Casey in her own home in *Scream*, or Sidney and Hallie (Elise Neal) in the safety-locked police car in *Scream 2*, this entrapment is more than likely circumvented by movement. Victims

in the *Scream* films tend to die in open or exterior spaces that are frequently populated to varying degrees.

Of course, as Allison Whitney suggests, mobility also "comes to be loaded with anxieties about the mutability of identity [...] These fears are enhanced by the cell phone's close connection to the body and its user, rather than the fixed location of the landline" (129). The portability of the cellular phone means that the killer's identity is no longer discerned through a traced call, rather it is discerned by his moving body. This explains why in the original *Scream*, Sidney suspects Billy (Skeet Ulrich) is the killer when he leans forward to embrace her and a cell phone falls out of his pocket. The camera cuts to a close up of the cell phone as the sound of it hitting the floor is amplified menacingly. She looks at him fearfully, backs away and then begins to run. Billy's possession of the cell phone is equated with his guilt. The police make the same conclusion when they bring him in for questioning. "What are you doing with a cellular telephone, son?" they ask him, skeptically, while Billy defensively replies, "Everybody's got one Sheriff." The Sheriff proceeds to implicate him in Sidney's assault as well as the murder of Casey and her boyfriend the evening earlier. Here, the cellular phone literally becomes a murder weapon: a tool with only fatal potential. This also illustrates the relationship between cell phone and user, and the body as the new referent of the origin of a phone call.

But the interchangeability of the cell phone and its user makes this identifying link unstable, unreliable and undetectable. *Scream* and *Scream 2* further allegorize this fluidity of identity by the fact that they each have not one, but two killers (although this is not revealed until the films' final acts). In the original *Scream*, the murderers, Sidney's

boyfriend Billy and her classmate Stu (Matthew Lillard), orchestrate the killings as a means of punishing Sidney for her mother's indiscretions. In *Scream 2* the villains, Mrs. Loomis and Mickey, attempt to avenge Billy's death in the first film. In both cases, two people create the illusion of being one person. They each wear identical costumes, use voice manipulators to make their voices sound the same, share the murder weapon and the same cell phone. While the concealment of identity is obviously not new, the identity confusion involving two killers seemingly masquerading in one body is original. And the disorder it creates owes much to the cell phone. By acting as one, the two killers can exploit their victims' expectations, and those of the audience. Accordingly, Billy is able to 'prove' his innocence to Sidney when he explains that he spent the night in jail, and therefore could not have been responsible for the threatening call she received while staying at Tatum's (Rose McGowan) house. Of course, Sidney, and the audience do not even entertain the idea that there may be more than one killer since there is no precedence for it in the stalker tradition. With two people, 'the killer' can be in two places at once, affording the killer a certain degree of omniscience and omnipresence. After all as Mickey so logically suggests in *Scream 2*, "Come on Sid, I gotta have a partner, I couldn't have possibly done this alone." Certainly the killer in the stalker film has always been more or less invested with this implied ubiquity. In *Eyes of a Stranger* for example just before the killer murders his second victim, we see her still at work while her co-workers have already gone home for the evening. The repeated ringing of her telephone rudely interrupts the quietness of the empty office. It is the killer of course, making threatening phone calls—presumably from a pay phone. Disturbed, she prepares to leave. Just as she enters the elevator however, the emergency telephone rings within. Though

logistically impossible, this sequence implies that the killer is omniscient, and ubiquitous. Further, in *Halloween*, as Dika iterates, the repeated use of the killer's point of view shots and the musical cues dynamize "a good portion of the film's space with the possibility of his presence" (1990: 53). Since individual identities of the *Scream* killers "have become mobilized, destabilized and homogenized via the cell phone," their identities become truly immaterial and ubiquitous (Whitney 132). The fulfillment of this promise of ubiquity is illustrated nowhere more succinctly than in the opening scene of *Scream 2* where Maureen (Jada Pinkett Smith) is murdered in a movie theatre during a screening of *Stab*, the *Scream* universe's fictional film franchise. The killer dressed in the Ghostface garb stabs Maureen, but no one notices because the entire theatre is full of fans sporting the same costume as well. The sheer number of Ghostfaces makes it impossible to discern who the real killer is or where he is, for his ubiquity has complicated such questions to the point that they are beyond comprehension.

Finally these scenarios operate also as allegories of the ways telephonic technologies function within society. Their traumatic and destructive nature is indicative of the negative potential embodied by mediated and mobile communication. For example, while entrapment in the earlier stalker films involved the failure of the landline, in *Scream* the killer traps victims by exploiting the telephone's defining attribute: its fixity. The killers use their mobility to circumscribe the space surrounding their landline-tethered victims. Further, the stakes of the harassing calls are increased by the killers' ability to torment the victim at a delocalized but proximal position. The cell phone wielding killers' ability to manipulate identity and location, as well as control the spaces of others, illustrates anxieties about the cell phone's colonization of public space. And

finally the powerless victims listening to the killer's carnage are not tormented so much by distance, as they are by the lack of discernible location.

I will return to the opening sequence of *Scream* since it is a good place to see the cell phone's contributions at play. This scene assembles the typical telephonic circumstances of the stalker film: the entrapment and harassment of the victim, and the killer taunting the helpless listener with acts of extreme violence. However, the introduction of the cell phone has modified this elemental pattern in terms of its narrative, its formal presentation and finally its symbolic function.

From the very beginning, it is clear that the telephone figures largely in *Scream* as a disruptive force. The telephone's shrill ringing is a lead-in to the opening shot: a close up of a landline telephone. A hand reaches down to pick up the receiver. The camera tilts up and zooms into a close-up of Casey answering, "Hello?" as she stands stationed at the phone, in a well lit, beige room. The caller on the other end is only audible: there is no complementary shot to reveal the person on the other end of the line. Again, the conventional spatial logic of the filmed phone conversation is thwarted. The camera remains static like Casey who is secured by the visible cord dangling out of the telephone handset she cradles. She breezily tells the caller he has the wrong number and hangs up. As she turns to leave, the phone rings again. She hesitates, then walks over and picks it up. After some flirtatious banter she lets the caller go, hangs up and leaves the frame. The camera does not follow her out, emphasizing the fixed phone's immobility.

The film cuts to a low-angle, nighttime exterior shot of a large tree. The camera tilts downward to reveal Casey's house, cozily nestled just underneath the arboreal canopy. This establishing shot situates Casey's home in a secluded area, protected by

mature trees and lush foliage. The dark exterior accentuates the bright interior of Casey's house, which is clearly visible through the many, curtain-less windows. The only sounds are those of crickets chirping nearby and the faint scratching noise of a swing in the foreground, as it gently rocks back and forth. But there is no wind blowing, implying that someone or something has been tampering with the swing. As a result, what initially appears to be an establishing shot is suspiciously now the point of view shot of someone outside looking in. Already the space is contaminated with an anonymous, looming presence.

Inside, a close-up reveals Casey making popcorn. The phone rings again, and the camera zooms out, opening up the frame. A steadicam follows Casey around the kitchen's island as she grabs the phone. This time the phone is cordless. It is worth mentioning here that the cordless phone is a hybrid of analog and digital technology: an intermediary between the landline and the cell phone. While cordless phones are mobile, they are nevertheless dependant on a proximity to a base station—which is ultimately anchored to the landline. The cordless phone promises freedom, but with invisible strings attached—a fact Casey will become painfully aware of towards the end of the scene. As Casey answers, the familiar voice emanating from the receiver and the lack of visual information as to the caller's identity, indicates it is the same caller. Casey is playful and clearly not alarmed by the caller's repeated intrusion. She reasonably presumes that telephones imply communication at a distance, and is therefore unfazed since she is sequestered away in the safety of her home. She readily engages with the caller now, and no longer affixed to the telephone as she was in the living room, moves freely about the house. This certainly diverges from the aforementioned scene from *Black Christmas*

where all the sorority girls gather in the hallway to listen in on the killer's phone call, running hurriedly into the static frame. Here Casey and the camera move in collusion. The steadicam glides along with Casey throughout the house, tracking her movements from behind as if some unseen force were watching her. The moving camera exploits her cordless conversation to create the spatial depth: her house has a large and circular layout with numerous uncovered windows and open or unlocked doors, most likely a result of the logic that without neighbours, there is no real need for privacy.

But the same windows that allow Casey the freedom to look out, also allow others to look in. This suspicion is confirmed when Casey and the audience simultaneously realize that he is watching her. He taunts her with this fact by calling her 'blondie.' Shocked out of her naiveté, Casey comprehends that there is very little distance between her and the caller. She peers out the window in a shot that is complemented by the killer's point-of-view. With a fully mobile phone the caller can hide anywhere, unlike Casey who is trapped in the house. With phone in hand, she re-circles through the hallway, preemptively locking the doors and windows. The camera follows her frantic motions in a long take, handheld steadicam shot. This contrasts the slow and exploratory camera movement of her initial tread around the house just moments before. Frightened, Casey hangs up the phone, but the killer calls back, and because of the telephones domineering ring, Casey continues to answer. The killer finally penetrates the house by jumping through the window, although he had already metaphorically crossed the boundaries of Casey's personal space. Still, he is not revealed: he is only identified as a black-cloaked figure darting across the frame.

But while the cordless phone permits Casey more freedom of movement than a fixed phone, her mobility is limited—it is no match for the mobile ubiquity of the killer who seemingly surrounds her. Casey leaves her house in an attempt to escape her stalker, who is still inside. Phone still in hand, Casey flees, only to be apprehended from behind. The killer has the power to move effortlessly between interior and exterior, private and public spaces. But Casey is not afforded the same luxury. The killer stabs her in the chest while the two are still connected telephonically (he on a cellular, she on a cordless). As Whitney points out, it is literally a conversation between the two technologies whereby "the cell phone's mobility and public presence serves to overdetermine the land line's identification with the private sphere [...] penetrating the home's protective boundaries" (Whitney 131). Because Casey is fixed to a landline, her location is always perceptible to the killer. However, Casey is also symbolically punished for her failure to appreciate the dangerous proximity that the mobile phone can imply. And her naiveté in this new age of mobile communication is her undoing.

Casey's parents are further tormented by this same fatal proximity when they pick up the phone to call the police once they return home to find their house in shambles. They realize that the phone is still engaged, and instead of a dial tone, they hear their daughter, choking to death on her own blood on the other end of the line. They both know she is in trouble but are unable to help her because her specific location is unknown. The anxiety deepens because she cannot be that far: she is obviously still within the base station's limited range. Her parents are taunted by their daughter's proximity and the lack of a traceable or identifiable locality that mobile technologies engender. Again, this scenario harkens back to earlier telephone scenarios in film such as

Pathé's *Terrible angoisse* (1907) and the previously mentioned *Heard Over the Phone* (1908), both loosely based on an André De Lorde play called *Au telephone* (1901) whereby a businessman is forced to listen to the murder of his wife and children over the telephone while he is too far away to intervene. Such stories are for Gunning allegories of "a specifically modern agony, [the] demonstration of the suffering made possible through the illusory 'annihilation of space and time'" (1999: 173). Of course here instead, the parental authority figures are devastated not by distance, but rather by the confusion surrounding location. This is a particular postmodern agony, one that is overwhelmingly characterized by disorientation in the face of lapsed boundaries.

Depicted as relatively new in *Scream*, by *Scream 2* the cell phone is regarded as an everyday object. In *Scream 2* the cell phone can colonize any space at all, even the most public of spaces. Furthermore, a cell phone conversation in a public place, "typically establishes an 'inside space' ('we who are conversing') vs. an 'outside space' constituted by those within earshot but prevented from participating" (Gergen 238). And as Whitney suggests, in "interrupting public conversation, the killer in *Scream 2* manages to trap Randy in the "inside space" of private conversation" (134). Though cell phones wielded in *Scream 2* are no longer limited to the killer, those characters who now have cell phones, demonstrate a level of discomfort with these devices, as if they are ill at ease with the technology and how it functions.

Outside in an open and very populated quadrangle, Randy gets a call on his cell phone from the killer while standing with Dewey and Gale. The killer reveals that he is watching the three of them. The trio look around, knowing the killer is nearby but not sure *exactly* where. Dewey tells Gale to look for someone with a cell phone. They run off

and proceed to indiscriminately grab a cell phone from anyone around who is talking on one.[2] Everyone with a cell phone is a suspect: merely possessing a cellular phone is incriminating. While a similar assumption was made in *Scream*, it has been complicated in *Scream 2* by the sheer volume of cell phone users. This scene highlights the popularity and ubiquity of the mobile phone, which of course only serves to broaden the killer's overall threat. Now masked by the omnipresence of the cellular phone, he is able to remain as invisible as the unseen hexagonal shapes that make up the infrastructure of the cellular network.

Meanwhile, the camera cuts to a variety of different shots: from a bird's-eye view of the park to a moving point of view shot of Randy talking on the cell phone. These camera sequences and the characters' choreography are privileged by the wireless capabilities of the cell phone and would have been totally inconceivable without them. Randy walks around the open field, knowing he is being watched but nevertheless assumes that surrounded by people in a conspicuous and very public space, he is safe. However, as he confidently yells into the phone at the killer, the killer jumps out of a parked van, grabs Randy, pulls him into the vehicle, and stabs him incessantly. Randy is symbolically punished for his inability to fully understand the proximal potential that the cell phone signifies. But first and foremost this sequence illustrates the categorical imperative of cell phone communication: the forced interjection of private space into public space. The cell phone makes secret and private conversations into public spectacle. Just as Randy is in a sense penetrated by the killer, so too does the cell phone penetrate the public sphere. The violence inscribed on Randy is a metaphor for the way in which

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[2] This is also a strong indication of the confusion and lack of understanding towards the cell phone's social etiquette.

the cell phone breaches the threshold between private and public, ultimately leading to the emergence of a newly defined social sphere where the boundaries between public and private are re-imagined.

As an aside, this sequence is very obviously steeped in the rhetoric of homophobia and emasculation. The killer mocks Randy with his failure to become "the leading man." Randy in turn belittles the killer for trying to copy his predecessors, Billy and Stu, taunting, "Stu was a pussy-ass wet rag. And Billy Loomis [...] what a rat-lookin' homo-repressed mama's boy. Why not set your goals higher? You wanna be one of the big boys?" This tirade is of course interrupted and Randy is vanquished by the killer, who metaphorically 'proves' his masculine dominance by feminizing Randy, "not unlike the female victims who found themselves trapped in houses" in earlier stalker films (Whitney 134). This sequence prompts Whitney to observe that, "attacks on women in the *Scream* films involve conversations between cell phones and land lines, [while] telephone-based murders of male characters involve cell phones exclusively" (134). According to her, since women are traditionally associated with the private sphere, the cell phone wielding killer takes advantage of this by subduing female victims by trapping them within the home, and 'penetrating' them with his knife. This is clearly illustrated in the first sequence in *Scream* with Casey, and later with Sydney, as well with Cici (Sarah Michelle Gellar) at the sorority house in *Scream 2*. While this reading certainly carries significance, Whitney fails to include other examples from the *Scream* films that do not necessarily conform to her reading. For example, at one point in *Scream 3* the killer's second victim, Sarah Darling (Jenny McCarthy) arrives at Sunrise Studios for a meeting with Roman. And it is while waiting in Roman's office that she receives a phone call

from the killer. Though the call comes through from a landline there is nothing domestic about this particular space since it is a workplace and constitutes part of the public sphere. A moment later, Sarah pulls out her cell phone and attempts to call the security office for help. Of course, the killer, hidden close by, overhears the audible Sunrise Studios answering service through the receiver. He grabs her and kills her. The cell phone's ineffectiveness and also Sarah's inability to operate the device to its maximum potential aligns her with Randy. Without a doubt, the *Scream* films, much like the stalker films that came before them, play with normative gender roles and sexual identity. In the original *Scream*, for example, Sidney becomes more powerful after she loses her virginity to Billy. In the twist at the end of *Scream 2*, the killer is revealed to be a woman. And significantly in *Scream 3*, the killer mimics both male and female voices by using a voice manipulator—imitating an array of identities from Cotton Weary to Maureen Prescott. The *Scream* films' play on gender roles, both feminine and masculine equally.

This use of the voice manipulator further destabilizes the telephonic boundaries not only between bodies and voices, but between male and female, and masculine and feminine as well. While the other *Scream* films furnish the killer with a voice manipulator, this device was always used to homogenize the killers' identities. In *Scream 3* the voice manipulator is able to mimic the voices of other characters so that Cotton's girlfriend Christine (Kelly Rutherford) for example, is tricked into thinking the intruder in their apartment is merely Cotton dressed up in the 'Ghostface' costume. Towards the end of the film, Gale, trapped next to the killer's unconscious body in the basement, calls Dewey from her cell phone to his as he moves around upstairs. He answers, and the exchange proceeds as follows:

Dewey: Who is this?
Gale: Gale.
Dewey: Where are you?
Gale: I'm in the basement. I'm trapped!
Dewey: Where?
Gale: There's a door in the kitchen...hurry
Dewey: Wait. How do I know this is you Gale and not the killer?
Gale: Dewey, open the fucking door. It's me
Dewey: Well don't you think that's what the killer would say?

Dewey's inability to recognize Gale's identity over the phone stems from the overwhelming sense of paranoia about the mutability of identity in the aftermath of the cell phone, and of the digital age in general. That the cell phone is yoked to the voice mimicking apparatus indicates that the cell phone shares digital technology's capacity to distort the unique qualities of human identity.

Niall Lucy claims that for the past thirty years, the telephone has been invisible, and that in time the 'postmodern' phone will too recede into obscurity (52). Yet, the telephone's lasting importance to our daily lives will ensure that it continues to carry a considerable affective charge, one "that allows it to erupt out of quotidian dormancy into dramatic significance" (Schantz 26). While cell phones and digital technology have become commonplace, they have clearly not replaced analog telephones. *Scream 3*'s return to the 'cut phone line' motif of yore is a reminder of this. In a close-up, Cotton Weary sits in his car, stuck in traffic, talking with his agent on his car phone. He is interrupted by a call on his cell phone, and puts his car phone aside while he answers his cellular. Initially it appears to be merely an interested female fan. Flattered, with two phones in hand, Cotton lets his agent go and returns to his cell phone to continue the conversation. But Cotton's excitement is soon undercut when the caller, switching over to a male voice, reveals that he is in fact the killer. He tells Cotton that he is at Cotton's

house, inches and moments away from stabbing his girlfriend, Christine. The film cuts from a close-up of Cotton on his cell phone to the killer's moving point of view shot making his way towards Christine as she showers. The killer walks closer and closer to her, all the while with Cotton on the other end of the line. Cotton hangs up and repeatedly calls Christine in an attempt to warn her of the intruder. Unfortunately, he is unable to get through because the killer has cut the landline. This time, the victim is not frustratingly unable to call out for help, but rather unable to call in. As in the quadrangle scene from *Scream 2*, the killer has trapped his victim by forging an isolated, private space onto another in a strategy to fatally control his victim's movements.

The cell phone has certainly revised the analog telephone, and often directly interacts with it, but it has not succeeded in rendering it obsolete. Likewise, attitudes about telephonic communication are not necessarily chronologically inflected but are in fact far more nuanced. These fears of distance and proximity, of isolation and interconnectedness, location and origin are always in flux and do not necessarily occur in a teleological progression that the so-called 'evolution' from analog to digital, or fixed to mobile, imply. It may seem as though no matter how much the telephone mutates, it will always carry both negative and positive implications. It is, after all as Gunning suggests, but "a system of connections and separations, of distances and proximities, or appearances and disappearances" (1999: 226). However, the significance of those relations varies considerably between the fixed telephone and the cell phone. Since the arrival of the cell phone, the fixed telephone has come to mean inertia and entrapment in the stalker film. Meanwhile the cell phone has come to signify movement and manipulation, and thus mutability of both location and identity. This has stirred a

disorientation led by the concept of a disembodied and pervasive threat that supersedes all boundaries.

In his article, "Recurring Monsters: Why Freddy, Michael and Jason Keep Coming Back," Paul Budra explains that stalker films articulate a kind of "postmodern unease." This apprehension stems from "the perception that the world is increasingly one in which borders have collapsed, in which preconceptions, hierarchies, absolutes, and perhaps reason itself are being abandoned" (191). For Budra, the threat in this sort of horror "is not the lurker on the threshold, but the very absence of thresholds" (191). The stalker subgenre, and horror in general, has always more or less played on the violations of boundaries: it is consciously adversarial and stimulates spectatorial pleasure by threatening the order of society and its sanctioned parameters. As Tania Modleski argues, horror has always "engaged in an unprecedented assault on all that bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish—like the ideological apparatuses of the family and the school" (158). However, the prevailing threat in the age of the cell phone is that thresholds will no longer be transgressed, because the cell phone will have already irrevocably compromised them.

As the *Scream* trilogy illustrates, the cell phone has changed the stalker's central preoccupations: not only is the contemporary stalker film concerned with the killer's location, it is mesmerized by the killer's sheer *ubiquity*. More than earlier stalker films, the *Scream* trilogy is characterized by an overwhelming sense of helplessness in the face of a delocalized, immaterial but alarmingly omnipresent threat. The *Scream* films seamlessly integrate cell phone scenarios into the stalker game, making it more complex, dynamic and socially relevant. That the identities and locations of the killer are now more

mutable and indeterminate illustrates that the cell phone has 'upped the ante,' so to speak. Furthermore, the killers' ability to control the spaces of others, and render the landline telephone system obsolete highlights that it is not just the contingencies of the cell phone that are a source of apprehension, but rather the cell phone itself—this technological interloper that has reconfigured the way we communicate and the way we understand identity and of course, time and space.

III. *Ketai* and the Japanese Imaginary:
Ghostly Presence in *Chakushin ari*

Are you connected to yourself?

-*Suicide Club* (Sion Sono, 2002)

Devil's intercoms is what I used to call them…

-Stephen King, *Cell*

Out of the soggy detritus of Japan's 'Bubble' economy emerged a curious cinematic creature now commonly referred to as 'J-Horror.' J-horror has been lauded for single-handedly reviving Japanese horror cinema, both domestically and internationally (Goldberg 370). The film that inaugurated the subgenre, Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (*The Ring*) was met with startling commercial and critical success upon its release in 1998. While the J-horror spawns that followed, such as Hideo Nakata's *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (*Dark Water*, 2002) and Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-On: The Grudge* (2003) were received with similar acclaim, the response to Takashi Miike's *Chakushin ari* (*One Missed Call*) has been surprisingly standoffish.

In the simplest terms, *Chakushin ari* is the story of a curse that spreads through the *keitai* network. Victims receive a call announced by an eerie, unusual ringtone that they do not recognize. When they see that they have 'one missed call,' they check their messages. Oddly enough, the message is from their future selves, dated a couple of days later, and contains the details of their final moments just before death. Irrevocably time stamped, the victims are doomed to die at the exact date and time inscribed on this 'death

call.' When her friend Yoko (Anna Nagata) dies mysteriously after receiving the infamous call, Yumi (Kou Shibasaki) is forced to investigate. She learns from an acquaintance at Yoko's funeral that the perpetrator is a ghost of a woman "who died full of hate." "She gets you through your cell phone," her acquaintance reveals, "and then...she gets another number from the victim's phone and she calls them too. And then she hunts them down and kills them." Yoko's boyfriend Kenji (Atsushi Ida) dies next. By the time her good friend Natsumi (Kazue Fukiishi) gets the call, Yumi knows it is just a matter of time before she gets it as well. She enlists the help of a mortician named Hiroshi (Shinichi Tsutsumi), who also lost a loved one to the very same curse: his sister Ritsuko. Together they attempt to uncover the curse's insidious origins in a vain effort to put an end to it.

Ordinarily a critical darling, Miike garnered very little praise for his first mainstream, commercial effort. Not only has *Chakushin ari* been virtually ignored by critics, but it has also been derided by popular reviewers; namely for its "baroque excess" and glaring unoriginality (Stevens no pag.; Gleiberman no pag.). Tom Mes for *Midnight Eye* complains that *Chakushin ari* is nothing but

> an uninspired scare story that goes through the motions for most of its running time. [...] Miike does little with the material at hand. Though unambitious, the premise certainly allows room for an investigation in the omnipresence of mobile phones in our lives. Its potential for a critical look at the impact of technology is certainly no less than Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Pulse* [...] But the director fails to utilise the potential here, adding nothing to the illogical narrative, the element of the mobile phone never becoming more than a gimmick. (no pag.)

In order to rescue the film from the bottom of the J-horror heap, I will illustrate that the film is in fact much more inventive than it has been given credit for. This is

chiefly because it is the first contemporary Japanese horror film to feature the cell phone (*keitai*) as a principal preoccupation. Much like the American stalker film, J-horror is characterized by the compulsive repetition of certain narrative, aesthetic and thematic tropes. Rather than detract from its cultural value, the reiteration of these tropes only makes *Chakushin ari* that much more of a fruitful site for analysis. Just as the *Scream* trilogy initiates the cell phone into the generic environment of the stalker film, *Chakushin ari* introduces *keitai* into the contemporary Japanese horror film, forcing it to adapt to the particularities of *keitai* technology. Therefore *Chakushin ari* is an ideal site to examine how the unique dimensions of *keitai* nuance J-horror's tried-and-true conventions. *Keitai*'s ubiquity and its intimate relationship with the body service the portentousness of the curse's viral contagion. Furthermore, as an oceanic force within the film, *keitai* is also conflated with the maternal. Thus the film fuses anxieties about *keitai* with those about gender. A thorough examination of *Chakushin ari* then, enables us to gain a deeper appreciation for the way the cell phone, and technology in general, figures within contemporary Japanese identity and culture.

A clumsy Western appellation at best, the term 'J-horror' really only refers to "a very thin sliver of the Japanese horror genre that has been produced since the 1990s" (Rucka no pag.). The term was coined in the West as a response to the outbreak of Japanese horror films that were undergoing Hollywood reinvention beginning with Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002). The name has become synonymous with the *kaidan eiga* (ghost story films) that have appeared since *Ringu* in1998, and feature *onryô* (vengeful female ghosts). The most notable J-horror films are those of the *Ringu* cycle that appeared in viral-like succession: *Ringu*, Joji Lida's *Rasen* (*Spiral*, 1998), Hideo

Nakata's *Ringu 2* (*The Ring 2*, 1999), Norio Tsaruta's *Ringu 0: Bâsudei* (*The Ring 0: Birthday*, 2000), and those of Takashi Shimizu's *Ju-On* cycle: *Ju-On* (*The Curse*, 2000), *Ju-On 2* (*The Grudge 2*, 2000) *Ju-On: The Grudge*, *Ju-On: The Grudge 2* (2003). However Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Kaïro* (*Pulse*, 2001), and Hideo Nakata's *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (*Dark Water*, 2002) are also notable examples, as are both *Chakushin ari* and Renpei Tsukamoto's *Chakushin ari 2* (*One Missed Call* 2, 2005).

Of course, *kaidan eiga* is not a new phenomenon and nor is its phantom figurehead *onryô*. As one critic proclaims, the vengeful female ghost with pallid skin, long, stringy black hair, bony, beckoning hands, and piercing eyes, "represents the lifeblood of Japanese horror" (Macias 71). Examples of the monstrous feminine characters

> abound in classical Japanese theatre, and the demonic women in the Noh *kyojo-mono* or *shunen-mono* subcategories, or the *akuba* or *akujo* (evil women) or *dokufo* (poison ladies) in Kabuki are great icons of their respective forms. The monstrous women who permeate Noh and Kabuki are motivated through revenge or grief, or are, especially in the case of the supernatural female, inherently evil. (Hand 24)

The *onryô* became very popular during the Edo period (1600-1867) with Akinari Ueda's collection *Ugetsu monogatari* (*Tales of Moonlight and Rain*), which featured many stories of female ghosts (Jordan 26). Though as Ian Buruma observes, "old plays and folk tales are full of ghosts and spirits of betrayed wives tormenting husbands and rivals, usually ending in cruel and violent death" (6). In traditional Kabuki theatre, it is the living that usually carries out revenge, but after the growing popularity of *kizewamono* (domestic plays) after 1800, the avenging ghost became a stock character. An early example of this variety is Tsuruya Namboku IV's *Yotsuya Kaidan*, or *Ghost Story of Yotsuya* (1825) which involves the ghostly revenge of O-Iwa on her cruel husband and

his accomplices (Ernst 234). This play is still considered a seminal ghost story in Japan, and its ghost of the "wronged woman, hungry for revenge" has become "the archetypal image of Japanese horror cinema" (Tombs no pag.). It has been adapted into both film and television dramas numerous times, although its 1959 film version by Nobuo Nakagawa is considered its most definitive translation (Rucka no pag.). Other *kaidan eiga* include Masaki Kobayashi's *Kwaidan* (*Ghost Story*, 1964), Mizoguchi Kenji's *Ugetsu monogatari* (*Tales of Ugetsu*, 1953) and Kaneto Shindo's *Onibaba* (*Devil Woman*, 1964).

Owing to their strong ties to artistic stage productions as well as folkore and legend, earlier horror films are distinctly period films (*jidai-geki*) (Mes and Sharp 262). But this recent explosion of horror films featuring *onryô* represent a stark contrast to their antecedents. Firstly, these films are set exclusively in the present day and placed specifically within the urban, industrialized landscape of Tokyo. This is not the only way in which they diverge, for the figure of the vengeful female ghost has changed as well.

Earlier incarnations of *onryô* depict her as localized and mono-present: that is, she is tied to one place, and her wrath is also just as focused: she asserts her justice *only* onto those specifically responsible for her death. This keeps in line with the Gothic tradition, which suggests that, "a curse or a spirit is closely bound to particular places, such as a haunted mansion, or a place where the dead are buried" (Ozawa 6). But the *onryô* of J-horror is delocalized and ubiquitous. While her spectral origins may be traced back to a particular locale (for example, a water well in *Ringu*), she is no longer limited to that location. Instead she haunts many locations. Her rage is likewise much more generalized, cruelly infecting victims either though their own naivety (such as entering a haunted

house in *Ju-On*) or arbitrarily (such as through a cell phone network in *Chakushin ari*). This transformation in the *onryô*, from a ghost that is localized to one that is ubiquitous, reflects the changes that have occurred in communications technology. *Keitai* has offset the way individuals conceptualize communication—not only the exchanges that occur among human beings but also those that transpire between human beings and supernatural ones. J-horror's arresting iconography supports this notion.

In the contemporary form of the Japanese horror film, technology has become the genre's primary feature. Technology serves as a conduit for the *onryô*'s ubiquitous power in these films, enabling her to enact a viral rage onto the world as if she were a biological contagion. She is not only serviced by the presence of technology, but her existence is ultimately contingent upon that technology. Of course, the "interplay between tradition and modernity, cultural identity and change" has always more or less characterized Japanese culture in general (Dissanayake 18). And J-horror locates the heart of this interplay in Japan's technological landscape. The subgenre is so blatantly discursive about technology that Matt Hills terms it, "media horror," because such films survey "the potentially cataclysmic effect that technology and the desensitization of modern life can have on the populace of Japan" (167). J-horror is then, a fitting subgenre in which to explore the country's contentious relations to technology.

Japanese horror films have in the past, engaged "a myriad of complex political, social and ecological anxieties, including – but by no means limited to – apprehensions over the impact of western cultural and military imperialism, and the struggle to establish a coherent and distinctly Japanese national identity" (McRoy, "Introduction" 1). Likewise, Japanese horror films have been an "expedient means for covertly expressing

social and political criticism" and as such are "pregnant with social commentary" (Reider 278). As Bliss Cua Lim suggests, ghost narratives in general have often served as fruitful allegories (298). Since the act of haunting signals an interference and a dissolution of boundaries, its allegorical potential is certainly relevant here. As Jay McRoy suggests,

> careful analysis of the focus of the spirits' wrath, as well as the motivations behind their actions, provide valuable insights into the historical, political and economic logics informing current socio-cultural tensions between nostalgic imaginings of 'traditional Japanese' past and the equally illusory threat and / or promise of an over-emerging technological, global and postmodern Japan. ("Case Study" 176)

This tension between tradition and modernity is something many scholars associate with Japan. Marilyn Ivy for example, claims that Japan's collective imaginary is haunted by what she terms "the vanishing." The vanishing is a kind of historical erasure set in motion by capitalist modernity that is characterized by "the movement of something passing away, gone but not quite, suspended between presence and absence, located at a point that both is and is not here." (20).

Following both McRoy and Ivy's logics, the vengeful ghost at the heart of *Chakushin ari* should symbolize the return of an archaic, pre-technological self. This would suggest that despite the increasing secularization of the Japanese landscape, the country's imaginary has never quite "let go" of the old "hungry ghosts" of its past. Anderson certainly falls into this reasoning, when he wonders "how in a scientifically and economically advanced country like Japan, the beliefs in attaching spirits can flourish" (137). But the presence of the ghost in *Chakushin ari* is not an indication that Japan is clinging to a vanishing past. Rather, it is experiencing a tumultuous present—using the powerful metaphor of the *onryô* to work through the transformations that have occurred

in urban space and within the contemporary Japanese subject with the integration of *keitai*.

While the North American *cellular* phone highlights the new technological infrastructure of the apparatus, and the United Kingdom's *mobile* phone emphasizes the device's capacity for movement, Japanese *keitai* implies something else entirely. Initially coined *keitai denwa* to denote 'portable phone,' with the introduction of 'i-mode'—the mobile Internet—the *denwa* was later dropped and *keitai* became the established term (Ito 1). With the device's conceptual link to 'the telephone' eliminated, *keitai* now roughly denotes, "something you carry with you." It is understood as a tool that supports a "snug and intimate technosocial tethering," which allows for communications that carry a constant but weightless presence (Ito 1). From this designation alone it is clear that *keitai* is not only ubiquitous, but is significantly stitched into the fabric of Japanese life. In fact, asked what *keitai* means to them, many Japanese youth reply '"I could never live without my *ketiai*' or 'It's part of my body'"(Kato 114).

Not to be disregarded, the distinctiveness and overwhelming popularity of *keitai* in Japan owes much to 'i-mode'—the mobile Internet platform on which *keitai* is based. Launched in 1999 by NTT DoCoMo, i-mode was received with surprisingly high adoption rates, prompting much international attention on Japan as defining the future of 'the mobile revolution,' particularly since mobile phones that can access the Internet had been relatively rare in the English-speaking world (Miyate, Boase, Wellman and Ikeda 145; Ito 1). By September 2003, about 90% of Japan's mobile phones could connect to the Internet -- the highest percentage in the world (Miyata, Wellman and Boase 432). While the United States and Scandinavia were the original leaders in the adoption of the

mobile phone, they were pushed out of the competition by Japan's staggering adoption rates which went from a mere 2.13 million in 1994 to over 82 million by 2006 (Matsuda "Discourses" 19). These high adoption rates held a great deal of socio-economic significance for Japan.

While Japan during the 1980s was "an unstoppable force," the 1990s were by contrast characterized by the "multiple breakdown of political, economic and sociocultural orders" which inevitably induced a shift in the mood now that it was suddenly reflecting on the end of "the glorious age of Japanese economic success on the global stage" (Iles no pag.; Lida 424). Without a doubt, the collapse of the 'bubble economy' exerted "a negative effect on the collective self" (Iles no pag.). For this reason, Japan "looked toward IT as a key component of economic recovery" (Matsuda "Discourses" 33). *Keitai* and i-mode then, provided a much-needed economic and moral boost for a nation rife with social, political and economic instability. Thus *keitai* were construed as the "saviors of the Japanese economy" (Matsuda "Discourses" 32). I-mode transformed Japan into the international icon of cell phone use, which made it a distinctive entity in the transnational arena (Ito 2). Of course, technology is, and always has been, as Akio Morita attests, a survival mechanism for Japan both economically and culturally (226). For this reason Misa Matsuda sees this celebration of *keitai* as akin to "the technonationalist sentiment typical of the self-characterization of postwar Japan" ("Discourses" 34). But more than a promise of prosperity, *keitai* and its i-mode symbolized "an effort to salvage a national pride damaged by the economic downturn in the early 1990s" ("Discourses" 34).

Despite being celebrated for its economic viability, as well as its ability to liberate "users from the constraints of place and time, the mobile phone has equally been reviled as a technology that disrupts the integrity of places and face-to-face social encounters" (Ito and Okabe 257). Because *keitai* transgressed normative telephone etiquette that maintained that, "phone calls should be made when there are specific tasks to be dealt with," the device was often associated with bad manners and idle chatter (Matsuda "Discourses" 25). As McRoy suggests, after the nightmare of the atomic bomb, in Japan technological advances have come to "constitute both a destructive force and a potential solace [...] Technology, then, functions paradoxically" ("Cultural Transformation" 116).

Ambivalence towards technology, and to the cellular phone specifically is to a certain extent universal; however, the dimensions of that ambivalence are varied. While the *Scream* films depict the technology as a mutable, delocalized Other that threatens boundaries of space and identity, the cell phone still resides in the realm of the human world. *Chakushin ari* by contrast dramatizes the cell phone as something supernatural and thus much more invasive. The ghost tethered to *keitai* is able to achieve the ubiquity and omniscience that the killer in the *Scream* films could only aspire to. *Keitai* is similarly dramatized here as mutable and delocalized, but it is not 'Othered.' "Rather than something inherently disjunctive, *keitai* suggests a vision of the virtual seamlessly integrated with everyday settings and identities" (Ito "Introduction" 9).

With the development of i-mode, Japan has transformed *keitai* from a portable device for voice calls to one that permits mobile messaging, as well as e-mail and Internet browsing. Multiple channels of communication are always open; thus creating a constantly mediated social space that significantly alters definitions of co-presence, the

experience of urban life, and of being in the world. The emergence of mobile technological devices "has contributed to the possibility of being always connected to digital spaces. It has become possible to literally 'carry' the Internet wherever we go" (de Souza e Silva 19). *Keitai*'s "weightless presence" in every day life has spread to accommodate an increasingly expansive digital world that has colonized physical spaces. This melding of the physical and the virtual has not only hybridized space however, but the Japanese subject as well.

Keitai is not only important to the distinction of Japan within the global economy, but with the increasing development of networked individualism, it is also more and more involved in the process of subject formation. The contemporary Japanese subject's experience of space is one characterized by what Ito and Daisuke Okabe term "ambient virtual co-presence"—the continuous and simultaneous inhabitation of "both the 'real world' and this alternative space of connections" (257; Kato 105). The ubiquity of *keitai*

> is fostering a societal turn away from groups and toward people connected to each other as individuals rather than as members of households, communities, kinship groups, workgroups and organizations [...] These technologies enable individuals to have personalized communication with whoever, whenever and – with the advent of the mobile Internet – wherever they want" (Miyata, Wellman and Boase 429).

With this shift to the personalization, portability, and constant connection, "the person has become the primary unit of connectivity [...] Computer-supported communication is everywhere but is situated nowhere. *The person has become the portal*" (emphasis mine) (Miyata, Boase, Wellman, and Ikeda 161). Physical bodies are information gateways and the self has been transformed into selves, perpetually sending and receiving information through multiple channels.

Kato argues that the relationship between *keitai* and Japanese users is so intimate that "it is becoming increasingly difficult to produce stories about *keitai* and discuss *keitai* as a narrative object"(104). Likewise it is increasingly difficult to imagine Japanese spaces, and Japanese identity without invoking *keitai*. This can be interpreted as an offshoot of the more generalized representational crisis happening within the Japanese collective imaginary, which Lida claims is a result of the socio-economic, cultural and political shocks of late modernity that have come to pass in the 1990s (455). More so than other late-capitalist, consumer societies, in urban Japan "everyone lives to a degree in an artificial reality, such as the virtual family and the virtual society"(Lida 428). Increasingly, as Iles contemplates,

> communication takes place more often via email, cell phone, or text-message than through face-to-face interaction [...] identity becomes a purchasable, ultimately disposable commodity. In a world of artificial reality, identity itself becomes artificial, becomes doubtable, if not after all thoroughly suspicious. (no pag.).

Likewise, in *Chakushin ari*, *keitai* has transformed space and identity into something phantasmagorical. An understanding of why this has come to pass must begin by tracing—to borrow Ivy's phrase—"the poetics of phantasm" (20).

Because it depicts *keitai* as haunted, it may be tempting to read *Chakushin ari* as a demonization of the technology itself. But "Japanese history, religion, literature, and the landscape are all cluttered with vengeful spirits, both human and animal, both living and dead" (Anderson 113). This owes much to the culture's roots in Shinto, a system of rituals based on nature worship and folk beliefs, that maintains that spirits inhabit everything from inanimate objects to living things (Buruma 3). But though all things can be imbued with spirits, from benign to the vengeful, there is something uniquely

compelling about a haunted cell phone, more so than, for example, a haunted house (*Ju-On*), a haunted videotape (*Ringu*), or even a haunted PC-based Internet (*Kairo*). Haunted *keitai* has the potential to be particularly more frightening because of the device's mobility and spatial ubiquity, as well as the intimacy it shares with the body and the personal lives of its users. As "liminal, hybrid entities demanding the attention of those they encounter," *keitai* proves to be an ideal tool for the *onryô* of J-horror (McRoy "Case Study" 177).

Because *Chakushin ari*'s vengeful ghost channels its presence through *keitai*, it takes on the technology's unique dimensions. Therefore, just as *keitai* ubiquitously melds the physical with the digital, the restless ghost is likewise ubiquitous, fusing the physical with a supernatural dimension. In short, *keitai*'s digital presence is re-imagined in *Chakushin ari* as ghostly presence. Though digital presence is essentially imperceptible, as Sadie Plant reports, "even a silent mobile can make its presence felt as though it were an addition to a social group" because it forces an awareness of the *possibility* of an incoming call or message (30). Ghostly presence is similarly indiscernible, and when it is not seen, Miike ensures its presence is *felt* or at the very least suggested in *Chakushin ari* through particular formal strategies.

Keitai is a major preoccupation within the *mise-en-scène*. Either cradled in close-ups and extreme close-ups, or densely peppered throughout long shots, *keitai* is always a focal point whenever it is visibly present. In addition, Miike often zooms-in and zooms-out on characters as they are conversing on *keitai*; a technique that serves to illustrate the device's dramatic importance. The film depicts an urban landscape littered with *keitai*. As early as the film's title sequence the credits float over a cacophonous sound collage of

fragmented cell phone conversations, cell phones ringing and being dialed. These sounds are layered over pixilated CCTV video images of people using their cell phones. The film opens with a birds-eye-view exterior shot looking down at a densely populated Tokyo intersection, as hordes of pedestrians scurry past the frame clutching their cell phones. This exposition shot dissolves into an interior deep-focus close-up of four unattended cell phones, perched on a table. The window in the background of the frame reveals the same crowded Tokyo intersection as the opening shot. This visual coherence connects the two spaces, suggesting that every space, interior and exterior, is steeped in the presence of *keitai*.

However *keitai*—and the vengeful ghost tethered to it—also sustains a presence indirectly, even when it is not overtly visible. Miike For example, makes heavy use of the steadicam and handheld camera to present a series of unattributed point of view shots and voyeuristic pans. The fluid, flowing movement of the camera and the way it hovers around the characters—varying between the omniscient intimacy of close-ups, and the limited perspective of stalking-from-a-distance long shots—insinuate that it is the ghost's line of sight that we are privileging. Furthermore, the camerawork repeatedly oscillates between high and low angles, and to a lesser extent, canted angles. This alternation lends the film a consistently unstable optical perspective that echoes the unmoored hovering of a disembodied ghost. Though these stylistic techniques are used throughout the film, they are particularly prominent during *keitai* events where the ghost is presumably 'called forth,' acting as a disruptive, unsettling force within the space.

The sequence where Yoko receives the first 'death call' in the restaurant bathroom provides a pertinent illustration of some of Miike's more salient formal features

at play. The scene opens with a medium shot of two adjoining bathroom stalls. The overhead fluorescents are sparsely placed, unevenly lighting the room. Yoko and Yumi are overheard conversing about Yoko's deceased friend. Yumi is out of the frame while Yoko is concealed within it: her feet can be seen in the space between the floor and the door of the bathroom stall. The title card reads: April 16th, 9:44 PM. In the following shot, the film turns its emphasis to Yoko's cell phone, capturing the opalescent purple device in shallow focus at the foreground of the frame. Laid haphazardly on the ledge above the bathroom sink, it sits unassumingly next to a couple of bracelets and a soap dish, adorned with stickers and charms. Meanwhile, Yumi is just barely visible, washing her hands in the background.

The film cuts to a dramatic close up of the phone's display screen, revealing the date and time, which verifies the time displayed in the original title card. Yoko's voice is heard as she continues to explain how her friend died. "They said she died horribly," she reveals, while the film cuts to a medium shot of the dead girl frozen under a layer of ice, a terrified expression on her face. The film cuts back to an extreme close up of Yumi's hands as she continues to wash them under the running tap. Yoko continues, "She had a horrible look on her face too." The film cuts back to the dead girl, only this time it is a close up of her face, emphasizing her grotesque grimace. The unsettling image of this dead girl follows the shot of Yoko's cell phone, associating it with death and inscribing the pretty, ornamented phone with a meaning that is much more menacing.

When Yoko's phone begins to ring with the ominous tune of the cursed phone call, the film cuts to close up of the *keitai*, its screen rhythmically lighting up as it continues to ring. The camera slowly zooms in to an extreme-close up, emphasizing the

dramatic significance of the ringing cell phone. The film cuts to a steadicam shot. Beginning in the doorway of the bathroom, the camera floats forward, transitioning from a long shot of the bathroom into a medium long shot. Yumi tells Yoko, who is still changing in one of the stalls, that her phone is ringing. Yoko tells her she does not recognize the ringtone. She asks Yumi who is calling, and Yumi reveals that there is no name, just a number. Yoko leaves the stall, walks across the frame and grabs the phone. The steadicam continues to float into the bathroom, stopping now on Yumi and Yoko huddled around the ringing cell phone. The film cuts to an extreme close-up of the phone's display screen which now reads "One missed call."

The film then cuts to a disorienting low-angle medium shot of Yoko and Yumi looking at the phone. Yoko flips open the phone and checks the number. The camera slowly circles around the girls to a full 180 degrees. Just as Yoko says the call came from her own phone number, the camera cuts to an over the shoulder shot of Yoko looking at her phone, attempting to retrieve her voice mail. We see Yoko dialing the digits, as the camera cuts once again to an extreme close up of the phone's display screen. When Yoko brings the phone up to her ear, the camera cuts back to a low-angle shot, now capturing the two girls from behind. There is no sound, save for the automated voice announcing, "You have one missed call" coming from Yoko's phone. The automated voice announces that the message was left on April 18th at 11:04 PM, two days in the future. The camera does a slow pan from their reflection in the mirror back to a close-up of them. The deep focus shifts into a shallow focus on Yoko cradling her phone in anticipation of the recorded message.

The film cuts back to a point of view shot from the darkened hallway, looking in at the girls. The camera shifts unsteadily, once again suggesting that the camera presents the point of view of an unidentified emissary. The film quickly cuts back to a close-up of Yumi and Yoko clustered around the phone, listening intently. The recording of Yoko's voice says, "Oh no, it's going to start raining" as the camera slowly circles ninety degrees to the left. Then, a blood-curdling scream emanates from the phone. The girls jump, clearly startled. This is rendered more alarming by the simultaneous jump cut back to the unidentified point of view shot from the hallway once again. Another scream emits from the phone and the film cuts to black, underscored by the sound of the door shutting, as if pushed closed by the invisible interlocutor that was watching them.

We see the same camera strategy again two days later, when Yoko calls Yumi as she is walking home one evening. We see her walking away from the camera and onto a bridge, in an exterior long shot. The camera subtly tilts down into a high angle shot, suddenly making Yoko appear smaller and more vulnerable as she converses with Yumi. The film cuts to a couple of schoolgirls sitting near the railing watching Yoko walk by. The film then cuts back to a close-up tracking shot of Yoko's feet as she walks along the bridge. Cutting to a medium shot of the adjacent chain-link fence, the camera tilts once again, dropping to a high angle shot of the train tracks just below. The camera zooms in on the metal links in the fence, shifting its focus onto the links themselves as they quickly snap apart one after the other.

Then the film cuts back to a medium shot of Yumi listening intently to Yoko from her bedroom. Yumi looks off-frame just as the film cuts to the clock on her bedside table. Realizing that the time almost matches the time of Yoko's strange message two days

previous, Yumi warns Yoko. The film cuts to a close up of the chain link fence once again, as each link continues to break by an invisible force, while Yoko walks past the frame, out of focus. The film cuts now to a high-angle extreme close-up of Yoko's hand clutching her *keitai* to her ear and then to a low-angle close-up of Yoko looking up at the sky and saying "Oh no, it's going to start raining." In a reverse shot of Yumi in profile, we see she is still listening intently to Yoko. A look of realization reveals that Yumi recognizes this line.

The film cuts to a flashback to the bathroom scene: back to the voyeuristic steadicam shot watching the girls from outside the bathroom and the sound of the *keitai* message featuring Yoko's line about the rain. The film cuts back to an extreme close-up of Yoko's eyes, now wide with fear. The film cuts to a low angle and wobbly handheld shot of Yoko from behind that shifts unsteadily in and out of focus. The camera gets closer and closer to Yoko before the shot is supplanted by a reverse shot of Yumi still listening to Yoko over her phone. The film cuts back to the low angle medium shot of Yoko from behind, still shifting continuously in and out of focus. Yoko slowly turns around. *Keitai* still in hand, she stares downward into the direction of the camera, and also the source of this handheld, low-angle point of view shot, only to start screaming hysterically. The camera ascends, tilting down into a high angle shot, while the film cuts back to a horrified Yumi bearing witness to Yoko's screams just as she is hurled off the bridge, fatally falling into an oncoming train below. The final image of Yoko is that of her severed arm, nestled amongst the rubble with her *keitai* still in hand.

Marilyn Ivy concludes from her research on Japanese ghost sightings, that in tales about ghosts,

> there is often a gap, a discrepancy between the aural and the visual. One hears a sound, looks to see, and no one is there. It is not just that one hears voices, but that one hears voices emanating from places where no one is supposed to be, and where on inspection no one is: voices without a visual source. Or if the apparition appears, it is wordless, only peripherally apprehended. Ghosts appear where no one should be, at times when no one is expected. (166)

Keitai and ghostly presence are analogous in this way. While ghosts create a dislocation between sight and sound, so too does *keitai*. Promoting constant connection to imperceptible digital spaces, and people who are visually absent but audibly present, *keitai* is structured in a similarly schizophrenic way. Miike's treatment of sound mimics this disjunctive sensory logic by presenting sounds without visually showing their source; using unusual sound bridges; limiting his use of the shot/reverse shot mechanism; and in some cases, perverting the traditional function of parallel editing, especially during phone conversations. Michel Chion refers to such sounds without origin as *acousmatic*, while the mechanism used to render a sound acousmatic is called, *acousmêtre* (71). He suggests that the telephonic is by nature acousmatic because it transmits sound without showing the source. *Keitai* is also by extension an acousmatic media. Of course, because of its mobile nature, it need not be acousmatic. Sound may be heard through *keitai*, but the source of that sound has the potential to reveal itself at any time, because *keitai* conversations do not have to happen at a distance.

While sound bridges often promote seamless continuity between the scenes in a film, in *Chakushin ari* sound bridges are so premature that they are noticeably disruptive. That is, the sound—usually dialogue— from the next scene retrogresses: it is heard well before the film visually cuts to the next scene. For example during Yoko's funeral, the film cuts to the upstairs of her house in a low, floor level long shot of a dimly lit doorway

at the end of a darkened hallway. We can hear an unidentified female voice confessing, "I heard she didn't die right away." The camera moves back into a pronounced low-angle medium long shot of Nastumi while she ascends the stairs, ascending into the frame at the same time. She stops at the top of the stairs and looks to the left, off-screen. The unidentified voice continues, "She lost an arm and a leg but was still conscious," while Natsumi backs up to make way for Hiroshi who enters the frame from the left. "She clung to the guard and begged for help," the voice reveals as the camera descends with Hiroshi, while he makes his way down the stairs. The camera stops at a low, floor level long shot the doorway at the end of the hallway once again. This time however, there is an anonymous human shape standing in the doorway. "No way" another female voice interjects, while another is heard saying, "I knew it...murdered..." The film cuts in closer to the figure, while the voice resumes, "just like the other girl." But just as the faceless figure begins to emerge from the doorway at the end of the hall, the film cuts to an exterior medium shot of Yumi, walking into the frame in profile, as she demands, "What do you mean, *murdered*?"

The film then cuts to a medium long two-shot of Yumi and Natsumi with their backs facing the camera, while they look towards the group of schoolgirls that stand in the background of the frame. "Please tell me!" Yumi pleads as she walks closer towards them. These are the girls who own the unidentified voices heard in the last scene. Their floating voiceovers generate a disjunction between sound and image, whereby the sound seemingly *anticipates* the image to come. As Chion argues, it is "fairly common in films to see evil, awe inspiring, or otherwise powerful characters introduced through sound before they are subsequently thrown out to the pasture of visibility, de-acousmaticized"

(72-3). Miike render the voices of all characters acousmatic indiscriminately, so that every character is portrayed as a powerful phantom-like entity on the verge of possessing the film's diegetic space.

This displacement of sound from image is further developed in Miike's limited use of the shot/reverse shot mechanism. He refuses to shift the camera's focus onto the speakers in a conversation. In the opening sequence in the restaurant for example, we hear the characters, but rather than show us who is saying what, the camera merely drifts around the crowded restaurant, eventually circling around the table where the main characters are sitting. The camerawork forces a delayed gratification by withholding the speakers of the dialogue. As such, the sound is

> neither inside nor outside the image. It is not inside, because the image of the voice's source—the body, the mouth—is not included. Not is it outside, since it is not clearly positioned off screen in an imaginary wing, like a Master of Ceremonies or a witness, and it is implicated in the action, constantly about to be part of it. (Chion 129)

These little touches may seem insignificant but they nevertheless contribute to the film's soundscape, which is layered with 'ghostly' voices that circulate, seemingly without bounds.

When Miike does deploy the shot/reverse shot technique however, it is often a perversion of its intended use—such as in the sequence where Yumi calls Nastumi to talk her out of participating in the televised exorcism. Though the two are audibly engaged in a phone conversation (Yumi refers to Natsumi by name), the parallel editing reveals something else entirely. Shots of Yumi talking on her *keitai* are crosscut with shots of the television producer, who is having a completely unrelated conversation with someone else on his *keitai*.

The scene opens with an exterior nighttime shot. The handheld camera pans around the outside of the parked car. We can hear Yumi speaking before we see her. She exclaims, "Hey Natsumi!" When the film cuts we expect to see Natsumi, but instead we see the television producer in a handheld medium shot, walking down a hallway towards the camera saying "Hey! Long time no see." The film cuts back to the handheld, panning exterior shot of Yumi in the car on her cell phone, Hiroshi sitting beside her. "Do you know anyone named Marie Mizunuma?" she asks. The film cuts back to a handheld medium shot of the producer while the camera follows him into one of the dressing rooms. "O.K." he says into the phone, then gestures to one of the staff members standing by, and passes him a sheet of paper, saying, "Here, check this over." The film cuts back to a handheld shot of Yumi, this time, from inside the car. "If not don't worry... I don't think you should go on TV." The film immediately cuts back to a handheld medium shot of the producer who continues, "Bring him in earlier, then. And check the set. He always complains." Cutting back to the handheld exterior shot of Yumi in the car, we hear her say, "Do you really believe in that medium?" The next cut returns to the handheld medium shot of the producer. "No way, not now. Will you take the blame?" he says into his cell phone. The take continues as the camera follows the producer leaving the dressing room and further down the hallway. As the camera follows him into another room, we can finally see Natsumi. The producer disengages his cell phone. Natsumi is now foregrounded in the frame, anchored to a landline. We can finally hear her side of the conversation with Yumi. "What can you do for me?" she says. The film cuts back to an exterior medium close-up of Yumi in the car. "Natsumi!" she exclaims. The film cuts back to Natsumi on the phone, while the producer tells her to change. She tells Yumi she

has to go and abruptly hangs up the phone. As the film cuts back to a close-up of Yumi, she says "don't hang up on me! ...Natsumi?" Realizing her friend has disconnected, Yumi hangs up the phone.

There is an obvious disconnect in this sequence between what is seen and what is heard. The conversation ends up being totally incoherent: the two sides of the conversation do not add up. It perverts the conventions of the filmed phone conversation. Usually a means of stimulating either a creative tension or highlighting a similarity between two disparate events, parallel editing, as it is employed here, only upsets continuity and creates an irrational confusion, nuancing the sequence with the disruptive power of *keitai* and the ghost astir within it.

Another example of perverted parallel editing is during the sequence where Yumi calls Hiroshi from a phone booth. We can hear both sides of their conversation but shots of Yumi are followed by shots of a room where Hiroshi is visibly absent. At the end of the conversation he finally emerges from behind the wall. We see Yumi in a medium exterior shot, inside the booth. "It's me," she says. This shot is followed by an interior, stationary long shot of Nanako's foster care centre. The frame consists of a small room where two young children are working at their desks, while a doorway in the background of the frame opens into another room where children can be seen also quietly working. "I want you to go home," Hiroshi says. His voice emanates from somewhere out of the frame. There is no visual indication of where he is. We can hear Yumi confess to Hiroshi over the phone: "I can't bear to do nothing." The film cuts back to a handheld shot of Yumi in the phone booth. "The old hospital is still there. I'm going to see it." "Wait, I'll go" Hiroshi exclaims as the camera returns to the interior long shot of the foster care

centre just as Hiroshi finally steps out from behind the wall and out of the doorway. He picks up a pencil from the adjacent desk and demands the address. The film cuts back to Yumi in the phone booth then back to Hiroshi scribbling down the information. "Got it. Go home" Back in the phone booth, Yumi objects, "But..." The film cuts back to Hiroshi, as he stammers "I'll—I'll be with you when the time comes" before he exits to the left of the frame. "Will you be ok?" we go back to only hearing him while he remains hidden from the frame. "See you later" he says, and disengages the phone. He re-enters from frame left and thanks the foster care attendant and leaves. While this telephonic exchange between he and Yumi services the plot, the bizarre withholding of the visual information of Hiroshi's side of the conversation has no narrative value. Instead it is another strong example of the way Miike invokes the logic of the *keitai* conversation, splintering sound from image to emphasize the peculiar way *keitai* alters spatial orientation, and the way the characters are rendered ghost-like since *keitai* forces them to become liminal entities, oscillating in and out of view. Chion states,

> fiction films tend to grant three powers and one gift to the acousmêtre, to the voice that speaks over the image but is also forever on the verge of appearing in it. First, the acousmêtre has the power of seeing all, second, the power of omniscience, and third, the omnipotence to act on the situation. Let us add that in many cases there is also a gift of ubiquity—the acousmêtre seems to be able to be anywhere he or she wishes. (29-30)

Miike's deployment of the acousmatic is very closely tied to the all seeing, all knowing, all powerful and finally the ever presence of *keitai* technology, and its supernatural expression within *Chakushin ari*.

With that in mind, *keitai* acts as a disjunctive force on the contemporary subject. The film literalizes this mechanism in the curse itself: though ultimately activated by the vengeful ghost, the foreboding 'death call' nevertheless originates from the victims

themselves. It is as if they have been interminably split into two parts. Their present selves receive a message from their future selves bearing the news of their inevitable obliteration. It observably embodies Freud's concept of the double—a characteristic of the uncanny. This doubling is formally hinted at early on in the film while Yumi and Yoko are in the restaurant bathroom. Just as the eerie ringtone begins to play on Yoko's *keitai*, we see Yumi in an over the shoulder shot, revealing the back of her body as well as the front, as it is reflected in the mirror. This doubling of Yumi symbolizes *keitai's* dislocating effect. The image foreshadows the fragmentation brought about by the curse—when Yumi, and her friends, all receive messages from their doppelgangers, their future selves. This disjunction is further conveyed when Yumi looks off frame, in the direction of the phone. The film cuts to a medium reaction shot of Yumi looking at the phone. We can see her in the left half of the frame and her mirror reflection in the right, while Yoko's *keitai* sits slightly out of focus in the foreground in the centre of the frame. Yumi is the focal point here: not only her reaction but also the fact that she is doubled, split in two.

Since *keitai* brings the message of death, it is inextricably linked to the concept of expiration. The whole film is in effect a 'race against the clock.' This countdown to impending doom begins of course with the initial time stamp on each of the characters' messages. This deadline is underscored by the repeated interjection of title cards bearing dates and times, as well as the images of clocks that are scattered throughout the film—the most striking of which is the giant digital countdown clock during Natsumi's 'exorcism' at the television studio. In this way, *Chakushin ari* is an apocalyptic film, though not in the same sense as something like Ishirô Honda's *Gojira* (*Godzilla*, 1954),

Shirô Moritani's *Nippon chinbotsu* (*Tidal Wave*, 1973) or Katsuhiro Ôtomo's *Akira* (1988) or even Kinji Fukasaku's *Batoru rowaiaru* (*Battle Royale*, 2000). Civilization is not about to collapse, but rather, it is on the cusp of transformation. This threat presenting itself as a viral contagion that infects its hosts is in the midst of altering the dimensions of the self so that is irreparably changed. However, the traces of this alteration are subtle and alarmingly imperceptible

The curse travels much like a virus. It uses the cellular infrastructure of *keitai* to reproduce itself. It infects victims at random and there is no 'cure' as such; rather the curse must simply run its course. Technology has often been equated with viral contamination, particularly in science fiction:

> Like a viral infection, technology develops into an autonomous, invasive force that expands and fulfills its dangerous potential by flourishing in the societal medium of corporate, military, and religious sustenance. Voracious in its urge to possess and engulf, technology is a parasite that frequently undermines human integrity – invisibly infiltrating, manipulating, seizing control, and mutating its human host to support its own survival and evolution. Like a virus, technology metamorphoses itself as result of unintended and uncontrollable consequences, progressively transforming the human world in the wake of its own changing structure. (Dinello 247)

In *Chakushin ari* the technology of *keitai* has become one such "an autonomous and invasive force." But while it thrives in a social environment, it does not prosper in "corporate, military, and religious sustenance" as it does in Daniel Dinello's science fiction. Driven by a personal vendetta and subjugating victims on an individual and very private basis, the ghost's spiritual 'virus' burgeons within the *personal* sphere.

The curse contaminates its victims through their cell phones, disseminating itself through the contacts they have stored in their internal address books. Early in the film, Kenji invites everyone to his friend's cabin by the lake the following weekend. In order

to organize the trip, he requests everyone's *keitai* numbers. He writes his number on a piece of paper and passes it around the table. Each character programs Kenji's number into their phone, calling him so that he can then store their numbers into his *keitai* address book as well. The camera pans over them in a high angle shot, rendering the characters small and vulnerable as they digitally input one another's numbers into their phones. This image is accompanied by the frenzied and dissonant sounds of cell phones ringing and being dialed. This seemingly mundane social ritual becomes, in hindsight, the film's most significant scene: for it is this inputting of numbers that ultimately leads to the dissemination of the curse.

Because of its close relationship to the individual, *keitai* has become an extension of the self. It mediates all the personal communications that form the basis of identification. The logistical and ultimately emotional dependence on mobile phones, "suggests that there is some sort of synthesis between the user and their mobile such that neither can function without the other" (Vincent 101). This is certainly how characters in the film treat their *keitai*—for they have all modified the look of their phones as a way of personalizing them and making them unique to them only. The ways these cell phones are ornamented in the film—decorated with charms and beads and stickers—hints at the personalized nature of these devices. "Just like other fashion items, the mobile phone has become an aesthetic object that people adopt and modify according to their sense of self and group affiliation. Like other fashion items, they use the device to project a sense of identity and self into public arenas" (Katz and Sugiyama 77). For example, Yumi instantly recognizes Yoko's phone when Hiroshi pulls it out from his pocket. Further, when he produces his sister Ritsuko's phone, the film immediately cuts to a flashback of

her, suggesting there is an irrevocable connection between her and the phone. *Keitai* is always linked to its user, embodying her characteristics. But of course, much like Freud's proverbial "god with artificial limbs," humankind's technologies are merely "auxiliary organs" and as such they have not, and cannot become seamlessly integrated (2002: 29). Meanwhile, in an attempt to avoid the wrath of the curse, Yumi brings Natsumi to cancel her *keitai* account. She throws her phone away to be recycled and its content deleted. But like a phantom limb it is always a part of her: she cannot sever it from herself. And, just because she throws it away does not mean it is gone. She realizes this with horror when her *keitai* inexplicably reappears while she is at the television studio undergoing the failed exorcism.

Keitai fulfills what Baudrillard terms "the ecstasy of communication," that is, the "too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his [sic] own body, to protect him [sic] anymore" (132-3). *Keitai*'s closeness to the body, to identity, to personal relations and communications has in turn fused with them. The notion of its "unclean promiscuity" certainly echoes the binaristic framework of pollution and purity that lies at the root of the Shinto belief system. Things considered pollutants are generally transgressive in nature, that is, they breach boundaries. Such contaminants include disease, injuries, death, and "antisocial acts such as murder or adultery" (Wargo 505). Spiritual 'pollution' must be contained; it must be purified lest it taint everything it comes into contact with. What is more, "certain offenses, even if committed by individuals, could produce enough pollutants to defile and bring wrath on

the entire community" (Wargo 507). In a similar fashion, the ghost in *Chakushin ari* pollutes her environment, infecting people at random.

The curse's viral *modus operandi* emulates the viral flow of information. In an age of total media saturation, individuals are constantly bombarded with an uninterrupted stream of technologically mediated information. This is certainly how information disseminates in *Chakushin ari*—as the viral circulation of the curse's 'legend' so aptly illustrates. Another example however, is when Natsumi receives the death call, only to arrive at university the following morning to discover that everyone has heard the news of her impending doom. As her friends gather around her hoping to delete their respective phone numbers from her *keitai*, it is obvious that in this universe, information disseminates quickly and indiscriminately. Further, only moments later, Natsumi is confronted by a swarm of reporters, photographers and television producers with video cameras. Moreover, the curse's viral nature and the particular manner in which information travels in the Information age anticipate in unison, the film's larger organizational logic. For the film's structure is also fashioned much like a virus.

Structured around the logic of accretion, the narrative of *Chakushin ari* does not develop or progress so much as it accumulates. Information is constantly collected; events do not quite add up, so much as they are added to. Yumi and Hiroshi's investigation is the driving force behind the narrative, though the process is piecemeal at best. Through a series of episodes stitched together, the duo begin with the mysterious phone number found in the call histories of both Ritsuko's and Yoko's phones, dialed just moments before their deaths. After interviewing the staff at a nearby hospital, Hiroshi and Yumi learn that the number is tied to a condemned hospital set to be demolished.

During their visit, the familiar sound of an asthmatic child breathing from her inhaler triggers an expression of recognition on Yumi's face. The film then cuts to the hospital morgue where Yumi and Hiroshi are asking a quirky mortician about the hospital's deceased asthmatic patients. The mortician searches through his files, lingering unnecessarily on multiple gruesome photos from his case files. The logic of this non sequitur is never explained. However, it nevertheless leads them to the key figure of Mimiko Mizunuma, the deceased child who died of an asthma attack as a result of her mother's negligence. Later in the car, while flipping through his sister Ritsuko's medical journals, Hiroshi fortuitously discovers that Ritsuko used to treat both Mimiko and her sister Nanako while she worked as a nurse. As a result of this discovery, the next day they are able to return to the hospital to interview some of Ritsuko's colleagues. These nurses hypothesize that the children's mother, in a desperate attempt for attention, repeatedly abused Nanako and brought her to the hospital. Information is gleaned through the characters' aimless, illogical drifting rather than causal logic.

The film's editing reflects this accumulation of information since it often jettisons the continuity engendered by conventional storytelling in favour of the gathering of information itself, regardless of the discontinuity it creates in time as well as action. For example, while Natsumi is whisked off to the television studio, Yumi and Hiroshi make their first trip to the hospital. Yumi calls Natsumi at the television studio later that evening, just as Natsumi is getting ready to go on the air. After this conversation however, the film cuts to Hiroshi and Yumi the following day. They are at the hospital again, interviewing a nurse. Daylight pours in from outside, while the two are dressed in different outfits—implying of course that an entire day has passed. At that moment

however, the film cuts back to Natsumi at the television studio, with her entourage of producers—all dressed in exactly the same way as the previous day—as if only a few hours have lapsed. Whether intentional or not, this particular discrepancy problematizes the film's temporal intelligibility, creating a feeling of disorientation.

This investigation and the uncovering of new information, seems to hint that the truth behind the curse's existence will be inevitably revealed. Yumi and Hiroshi's perseverance to solve the mystery amidst the curse's rising death toll indicates that for them, the avowal of the ghost's identity will somehow enable them to contain the curse, and put an end to its polluting animosity. As Tom Iles points out, typically in horror films,

> once the 'reality' of the threat is known, it is no longer part of the interstitial, boundary-crossing realm of terror that is so dangerous to the status quo. Once the identity of the thing is known, it joins the categories of the world, becoming analysable and 'treatable', its destabilising power neutralized. (no pag.)

This certainly proves true for western horror film like the *Scream* trilogy: the moment when the killers' identities have been revealed is followed promptly by their containment. They become suddenly knowable and consequently less threatening. But in *Chakushin ari* this investigation proves to be all for naught since the disclosure of the specter's identity leads to no such knowledge or understanding, and no such containment. Her "origins, intentions, and abilities remain a mystery even when her 'identity' is known, and so too remains a mystery the method whereby her threat can be overcome" (Iles no pag.).

While there has always been a singular vengeful ghost at the heart of these films—Sadako in *Ringu*, Kayako in *Ju-On*, or Mitsuko in *Honogurai mizu no soko kara*—*Chakushin ari* has multiple ghosts. In the film's opening scene, one of the dinner

guests recounts the story of a friend of his who lives in an apartment where the last tenant committed suicide. He discovers that his apartment is haunted with this man's ghost when he sees a white, bony arm on his shoulder. Just as he relates this story, one white, bony arm appears on Yumi's shoulder, hanging for a moment before it gently retreats. Just as it disappears, Yumi looks over her shoulder but sees nothing. Later at Yumi's funeral, an unidentified female ghost stands in the doorway at the end of the upstairs hallway. When Natsumi receives her 'death call' the message she receives is a visual one: a digital image of Natsumi, with the figure of the ghost of Marie Mizunuma emerging from the background. This is the same ghost that appears to Natsumi at the television studio just before she dies. Later, when Yumi and Hiroshi visit the Mizunuma's apartment, Yumi sees the ghost of Marie Mizunuma peering out of the top shelf of the bedroom closet. The ghost of Marie Mizunuma haunts Yumi at the condemned hospital as does Marie's re-animated corpse, oscillating in appearance between Marie and Yumi's own estranged and abusive mother. Meanwhile the ghost of Ritsuko appears to her brother Hiroshi. And finally the ghost of Mimiko appears to Yumi at the end of the film just before she takes possession of her. It is Mimiko that Hiroshi sees in the mirror instead of Yumi's reflection.

Yumi and Hiroshi are initially convinced that the ghost behind the curse is that of Marie Mizunuma. Most of the spectral sightings seem to confirm this. The fact that Yumi successfully evades her prophesized death after the confrontation with Marie's ghost, intimates that the curse has finally been lifted as a direct result of that confrontation. However, this assumption is undercut by Hiroshi's discovery hours later, that it was Mimiko who abused Nanako, and also that Mimiko was left to suffocate when her mother

discovered her secret. Mimiko is also a restless ghost, and she has not been satiated. The film never offers a satisfying explanation as to why Marie Mizunuma was also involved in the hauntings, or which ghost is ultimately behind the curse. It does not seem to matter much. The revelation of Mimiko's identity and even Marie's before that is of no consequence. No matter what the duo discovers, back at Yumi's apartment, the arms of the clock rotate counter clockwise to the time Yumi was set to die. Looking out through the peephole of her front door, Yumi sees Mimiko standing in the hallway, waiting to complete her curse.

While ghosts abound in *Chakushin ari* they are also noticeably female. Ruth Goldberg suggests that J-horror films are often misread as being 'about' monstrous children, when in fact they are ultimately about mothers (376). This certainly proves true for *Chakushin ari* where mothers are either absent or abusive. According to Goldberg, the mother in J-horror is

> depicted as freakish in her hysterical inability to protect her children and fulfill her natural role as martyred homemaker, all of which stems from her desire to have an independent identity. Her neglect, avoidance, and sublimated anger manifest in her children, turning them into monsters through the mechanism of projection. In this way [the films] clearly blame and punish the mothers for and through the horror which ensues. (376-7)

While Yumi and Mimiko both come from fractured families where men are also absent, the onus for the family's failure seems to lie upon the mother since there is very little attention paid to the missing fathers.

Women have long been associated with the family: "traditional attitudes firmly linking the female and the family are very deep-rooted, going back to at least the Tokugawa period in particular" (Henshall 124). In this vein, *Chakushin ari* is not so

much about Mimiko, but rather her neglectful mother. It is Marie Mizunuma's prolonged absence from the home that is in effect, the underlying cause of both Nanako's abuse and Mimiko's death. Marie works so often that she is unaware of what is happening at home. When she finally realizes the truth, her first instinct is to leave again—the action that is directly responsible for Mimiko's suffocation. Yumi's mother is also a failure as a parent. At the very beginning of the film we are introduced to Yumi's fear of peepholes; a phobia we later learn is related to her mother's abuse. In the end of the film, the two mothers are equated with each other as if they are part of the same monstrous entity.

So while Mimiko may appear to be the underlying vengeful ghost in *Chakushin ari*, much more attention is paid, both visually and narratively, to the grotesque figure of her mother. It is Marie's specter in the end that comes after Natsumi, and it is her specter that torments Yumi in the hospital. Significantly, Marie's ghost taunts Yumi with leaking jars of embalmed, aborted fetuses, flaunting her failure to comply with the self-sacrificing mother stereotype, but also emphasizing her uncanny womb as the originating site of the curse.

Furthermore, that *keitai* is associated with a neglectful mother and her demonic offspring should not be overlooked. As Desser explains, "A focus on women can reveal most of Japan's inner tensions and contradictions. The changing roles of women in Japanese society and the changing nature of their image in myth, religion, and ideology provide a good index of Japan's cultural agenda at a given moment" (108).

The ubiquity of the female ghost who haunts public and private spaces could easily be read as an ambivalent response to the increasing presence of women in the public domain, since in Japan, 'the percentage of married women who work outside the

home is actually higher than those who stayed home thirty years ago" (Napier 1998: 91). Women have often been associated with the outside and consequently with outsiders who are in turn equated with dangerous powers; paradoxically, of course, these outsiders were necessary and had to be incorporated as 'insiders', that is, as wives and mothers" (Martinez 7). What is more, because the haunting is clearly tied to technological mediation seemingly conflates women with technology. This convergence of the female and the technological breeds a kind of 'cyborg woman.' And while these aggressive women who wield their power through technological means is certainly "an impressive contrast to the stereotypical image of passive Japanese womanhood," in these films, this alliance is not looked upon favorably (Napier 1998: 104). Woman and machine seem to unite only to create a more threatening entity. After all, it is the maternal that provides the womb, the birthing site for this virus that continues to grow and reproduce.

"The image of a constantly changing female body is surely related to the transformation of the Japanese woman's social and political identity over the last few decades. Confronted with women grown more powerful and more independent, Japanese men have apparently suffered their own form of identity crisis" (Napier 2001: 359). Tomiko Yoda's observations echo this assumption: providing "the destabilization of Japanese masculine identity in the wake of the nation's economic downturn since the 1990s" as an explanation for the nation's increasing popularity of paternalism (866). *Chakushin ari* can be read in this way: as a symptom of a pervading identity crisis within the larger crisis of late modernity. And while women may be the purveyors of this distinct brand of vengeful justice, women and men are equally helpless victims in the wake of *keitai*'s technological determinism.

When the film ends, the malevolent force is still at-large. When Hiroshi discovers that Mimiko is in fact the ghost responsible for the curse, he fears for Yumi's safety and rushes to her apartment. When he arrives, all appears to be normal and he and Yumi embrace. But a close-up of Hiroshi's face reveals an expression of shock. The following image of blood droplets on the floor, and that of the butcher's knife submerged in his abdomen reveals that Yumi has stabbed him. He doubles over in pain only to look in the mirror behind Yumi, only to see the reflection of Mimiko staring back at him. He hears her say "I will take you to the hospital," before he loses consciousness. Yumi has clearly been possessed by Mimiko and is acting out her compulsion to hurt others and take care of them, in a twisted version of the maternal instinct.

In the last scene of the film, Hiroshi awakes in what looks to be a hospital room. Yumi is there, but as she crosses the room and stands beside Hiroshi's bed with her back to the camera, we can see that she is still holding a butcher's knife, hiding from Hiroshi's view. Yumi is still possessed by Mimiko, something that is rendered obvious when she leans over him and transfers a hard, red candy into his mouth, just as she did with Nanako and her many other victims. Hiroshi accepts the candy and Yumi, looking pleased, begins to laugh happily. Before the credits roll, the film cuts to an image of a blue sky scattered with wisps of clouds while a saccharine pop song begins to play. It may appear to be a happy ending, but looks are deceiving. Yumi appears like 'herself' but she is now in fact Mimiko. Mimiko has not only possessed Yumi, she has *become* Yumi—for this possession is never reversed in the course of the film. And Mimiko is elated to have found a willing victim in Hiroshi, so that she can continue to enact her compulsive cycle of abuse.

Yumi and Hiroshi survive only because they submit. They are both forced to assimilate the ghostly force: Yumi becomes Mimiko and Hiroshi becomes her victim. These roles have been forced upon them because they each received the 'death call' on their cell phones. This can be read on a more symbolic level as the forced incorporation of technology into identity, so that the characters of both genders are no longer 'themselves'—though it is significant that the film's lone male character is forced to submit to the murderous will of a technologically astute female ghost. Yumi and Hiroshi have thus turned "the threat to their identity into the source of their identity" (Lida 426).

The fruition of the ghost's will to power suggests that "the human being as it now exists is doomed; we are dead men [sic] walking. Survival, as always, will depend upon our abilities to adapt and evolve. We must be prepared to accept the 'monster', the 'other'; indeed, we must be prepared to become it" (Lewis 128). *Chakushin ari* illustrates that the systematic integration of *keitai*—into every aspect of human life—has been fully, irreversibly, achieved.

IV. Going 'Beyond the Paradigm of Collage':

The Cell Phone, Digital Cinema and *Timecode*

As Martin Gropius once said in the first Bauhaus exhibition: 'Art. Technology – a new unity.' We are in 1999 so it's time to say again: 'Art. Technology – a new, new unity.'

-Ana Pauls (Mia Maestro), *Timecode*

In "Art and the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin professes that, "the history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard" (237). *Timecode*'s cries of 'revolution' in the face of emergent digital technologies suggest that film has entered into one such critical epoch. As Michel Foucault prophesized as early as 1986:

> We are now in the epoch of simultaneity. We are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment I believe, when our experience of the world is less of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (22)

Mike Figgis' *Timecode* ostensibly embodies these aesthetic qualities, mimicking in part, the construct of "the desktop." Lev Manovich points out that this construct "presents the user with multiple icons all of which are simultaneously and continuously 'active' (since all of them can be clicked at any time), [and] follows the same logic of 'simultaneity' and the 'side-by-side" to which Foucault alluded to so many years ago (326). As the film's tagline flaunts, "Four cameras. One Take. No edits. Real Time," the film was shot on four synchronized handheld digital cameras in four feature-length long takes. The end result is

a celebratory spectacle of four contiguous frames running simultaneously without any cuts whatsoever. Connecting disparate people and places, both near and far, *Timecode* very literally embodies the leitmotifs of the postmodern era, as outlined by Foucault.

But despite its synchronized and ornate display, *Timecode* is not just a *bricolage* of moving images stitched together with sound. That is, the film's quadrants are not random, nor are they modular. As Xan Brooks remarks, "there is a strict methodology behind its madness" (37).[3] Each frame in Figgis' film is integral to the intelligibility of the whole. The film's significance then, lies not only in its use of multiple frames; it rests also in the spatial and temporal continuity across those frames.

While *Timecode*'s single-takes are the achievement of the unprecedented storage capacity of the digital camera, the synchronization of all four of these feature-length takes set in real time are truly the triumph of the cell phone. In fact, Figgis reveals in the DVD commentary that he armed all 27 actors in *Timecode* with a cell phone. Throughout the film it becomes quite commonplace to see major characters as well as the minor ones in the background, communicating on cell phones. Therefore, the cell phone is integral to the orchestration of the synchronization of the action, including the cameras, and contributes to the spectator's understanding that what is being presented in each frame is simultaneous. In the chaotic, mediated matrix that is *Timecode*, there is a pervading continuity thanks to the ordering force of the cell phone. It helps forge the film's narrative and formal intelligibility, facilitating the creation of a comprehensible end product that acts as an organic whole.

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[3] Brooks however locates the film's continuity in the music: "what sounds like free-form chaos in the opening bars soon swings into orbit around a central unifying structure" (37). While music does indeed undergird the film, the cell phone does as well—albeit in a much more dynamic way.

At the crux of *Timecode* is, to quote the film's resident *enfant terrible* Ana Pauls (Mia Maestro), "the urge—to go beyond the paradigm of collage." This line is taken from the film's most pivotal scene where Ana, an experimental filmmaker with lofty notions, pitches her film idea to group of financiers: "My film will be an unmade film" she announces, "not just mobile, a film with not one single cut but one continuous moment—[...] no editing, real time. The music of the film will be its pulsation [...] Imagine four cameras, [...] Each of these four cameras will follow a character and the characters are going to meet with each other, creating the plot of the story, creating the plot of the film." That her film bears a canny likeness to *Timecode* seems to suggest that Ana is Figgis' onscreen surrogate. But this is problematized by the fact that she is also an object of ridicule: in response to her proposal for example, executive producer Alex (Stellan Skarsgård) manages to exclaim between fits of laughter, "that's the most pretentious crap I've ever heard."

Ana's ostentatious rhetoric of vanguard experimentation is further undermined when compared to *Timecode*'s more modest application of the same revolutionary techniques she discusses. For example, while Ana entertains using one of Borges' plays as the source material for her film—"a tale where a young man meets an old man. They have a conversation and then they realize that they are the same person. It would be beautiful if these four characters are the same person, are exactly the same person in different stages of their lives"—Figgis' narrative has no such delusions of artistic grandeur. *Timecode* is an excerpt of the mundane and petty goings-on of a low-budget production studio that is bloated with an exaggerated tangle of soap operatic romances, all of which culminate in an outrageously violent and melodramatic ending. Thus, the

figure of Ana is important to our understanding that *Timecode* is not just a celebration of technology: rather it is an experiment that illustrates the utopian promise of digital technology, its quotidian banality and finally its dystopian potential.

Timecode is a network narrative set in real time that weaves together the interlinking lives of multiple characters involved in Red Mullet Productions, located on Sunset Boulevard. There is Emma (Saffron Burrows), the emotionally fragile wife of the alcoholic and drug-addled executive producer Alex, his aspiring-actress lover Rose (Salma Hayek), and Rose's wealthy and possessive girlfriend Lauren (Jeanne Tripplehorn). Some of the minor characters include struggling actress Cherine (Leslie Mann), director and recovering drug addict, Lester Moore (Richard Edson), producer and Alex's self-appointed guardian, Evan Wantz (Xander Berkley), the resident drug dealer/security guard (Danny Huston), and Quentin (Julian Sands), the visiting Swedish masseuse. The plot is necessarily bare—it is merely the skeleton that supports the intersecting personal relationships, which comprise the flesh of the film.

According to David Bordwell, the network narrative has been enjoying a revival in the years since the 1990s. This popularity, he hypothesizes, may owe something to the emergence of network theory in the 1980s and 1990s, whereby "scientists began to explore the nature of small worlds and the connectedness of apparently random phenomena, [such as] the organization of the Internet" (100). It is difficult to read Bordwell's comment without recalling Foucault's earlier proclamation about life being "a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). Foucault's observation prefigures the concept of the network society. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin

further elaborate, depicting the world as a series of nodes interconnecting within a complex web of relations, explaining that the logic,

> expressed in digital multimedia and networked environmentalism suggests a definition of self whose key quality is not so much 'being immersed' as 'being interrelated or connected.' The hypermediated self is a network of affiliations, which are constantly shifting. (232)

Timecode certainly engages with this idea of the 'hypermediated self.' The film uses the network narrative to illustrate the ways individual selves are networked: engaged in multiple connections simultaneously and hyperconnected at all times. The 'hypermediated self' cannot be conceived without taking into account its 'network of affiliations.' Likewise characters in *Timecode* cannot be imagined without taking into account their relations to other characters. The film is ultimately a network of affiliations not only in terms of content (characters, actions, spaces) for the concept of the network is embodied in its form as well. After all, media technologies "constitute networks or hybrids that can be expressed in physical, social, aesthetic, and economic terms" (Bolter and Grusin 19).

Character interaction—particularly across different frames—is by far the film's most arresting feature. Based and structured around Figgis' sheet music, the script for *Timecode* was largely improvised. The social encounters that organize the film are also loosely ad-libbed and therefore the synchronization of the frames becomes completely contingent on the mobility, portability and instantaneity of the cellular phone. The cell phone helps establish the nature of these inter-character relations and as such the device plays an integral part in coaxing the plot forward. Connecting characters and spaces, the cell phone works against the segmentation of the screen to maintain spatio-temporal

continuity. It anchors each frame in *time* by illustrating the simultaneity of events and of course linking spaces—ultimately working with the persistent gaze of the mobile, digital cameras to challenge both our perception and understanding of cinematic space. The cell phone acts as a kind of hyperlink, contributing to a rich cinematic topography with multiple points of inter-action. The conception of the cell phone as a hyperlink fits in well with *Timecode*'s aesthetic because it "echoes the cluttered screens of the Internet" (James no pag.). Because it evokes the graphical user interface of the Internet, it is also reminiscent of a hypertext.

And on a more conceptual level, it is also characterized by an interaction between the graphical user interface of the desktop computer and the technologies of surveillance. In this way, the film not only embodies the concept of the network, but also evokes the technological ecology of the postmodern landscape where the cell phone is both omnipresent and preeminent. As Scott Ruston and Jennifer Stein iterate:

> Even more than TV and Internet, the mobile phone is indicative of and part of our existence in a constantly mediated space, and the mobile phone offers us access to other spaces and times. Coupled with the near-ubiquity of the mobile phone, this capability of the phone as a conduit for multiple connections and perspectives in any given space position it as a catalyst or potential vehicle for simultaneously interactive and immersive media experience. (2)

The fixed telephone is no longer, as both Ronell and Gunning suggest, "the synecdoche of technology, and the larger whole of modernity itself" (20; 2004: 35). As a site of total media convergence, the cell phone is truly an emblem of contemporary technology, and likewise, the metaphorical stand-in for postmodernity itself. As Anna Everett suggests, "the most surprising development in our ascendant digital new mediascape is the phenomenal and unanticipated success of the reinvented telephone, as a

result of its convergence with cellular mobile technologies and wireless services" (93-4). And it is for this reason, that, "the social and technical system of the telephone had become absolutely pivotal by the close of the twentieth century" (Goggin 32-3). The cell phone is at once a telephone, a phone book, a gaming console, an apparatus for watching television and movies, for listening to music, for internet browsing and email, and text messaging. It is also a calendar, a camera for photos and videos, and a compass armed with a GPS.

Many critics have disparaged *Timecode* for being enamored with its own gimmicks. Touted as "a revolution in filmmaking,"[4] *Timecode* has inevitably attracted scrutiny. Gregory Solman for *Film Comment* concludes that, "the implicit claims of breakthrough experimentalism fall short of exciting" (71). While Xan Brooks for *Sight and Sound* asserts that though the film "bends the rules beautifully [...] it never quite breaks them" (37). Jonathan Rosenbaum for *Chicago Reader* dismisses the film's revolutionary stance by claiming it is merely the "dressing up of old content with new technology" (no pag.). Though highlighting *Timecode*'s low production costs, and the fact that it foregrounds digital technology in its script, John Belton also downplays the film's radical posturing. The problem with many of such responses to *Timecode* is the tendency to reduce the film to its most obvious qualities – the split-screen, the long take, the digital camera – and then compare them to other works that have also experimented with such mechanisms. This in fact misses the point entirely since *Timecode* is not so much about the elements themselves, but rather the *interaction* of these elements.

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[4] This quotation is attributed to *Newsweek* on the cover of the *Time Code* DVD.

For sure, the split-screen technique is by no means new: it was virtually ubiquitous in film until the mid 1910s – most popularly deployed in representations of telephone conversations (Olsson 157). Not only was it skillfully employed in *Napoléon* (Abel Gance, 1927), *Chelsea Girls* (Andy Warhol, 1966) and *Sisters* (Brian DePalma, 1973), but also in *Pillow Talk* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer, 1968), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968), *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970), *Buffalo 66* (1997), *The Laramie Project* (Moisés Kaufman, 2002), and *Conversations With Other Women* (Hans Canosa, 2005) as well, not to mention its popular revival in the television series "24" (2001 -). But *Timecode* diverges from the traditional use of the split-screen because Figgis marries it with the use of multiple, mobile handheld shots and a series of feature-length long takes that play concurrently.

Meanwhile both handheld, or at least mobile cameras, and long takes have been the favored devices of film movements from the Italian Neo-Realists, the French New Wave, to the Dogme 95 collective. But the *feature* length long take is a new concept – one that is absolutely contingent on the unique storage capacity of digital video. Of course this seems to be overlooked by many critics such as Solman and Belton, both of whom compare *Timecode* to *Rope* (1948), Alfred Hitchcock's attempt at 'continuous take' filmmaking. This is clearly inappropriate since *Rope* only *appears* to be shot in one continuous take when it is in fact a series of long takes seamlessly edited together. It was shot on film, and the technology of film, both then and now does not allow for one long take to equal the length of an entire feature film. What Figgis accomplishes is, as

Elkington suggests, "something considerably more complicated, a possibility made available to him only through the advent of digital technology" (226).

The concept of digital cinema, though a significant innovation, fails to attract attention for the simple fact that, as Belton remarks it is not discernibly different than film, "at least not for film audiences" (114). Solman echoes this by insisting that *Timecode*'s use of digital video is "incidental" because "it is the *structuring* of the story and not the medium that is the most important (71). What Solman fails to appreciate is that the medium—or rather the *media*—is actually responsible for the structure, and that they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, in order to develop a greater understanding of *Timecode*'s technical and social significance it is necessary to restore digital video's aesthetic visibility, most importantly by examining *Timecode* as a site where the technical and stylistic elements interact, shaping the form *into* the content. *Timecode*'s basic elements: synchronized split-screens, feature length long takes, and handheld shots are all integrated so much with each other, and yoked to digital cameras and cell phones, that they cannot be separated from the whole.

Timecode's title sequence opens with a series of iridescent Timecode numbers, and an array of flickering images of both analog and digital VU-meters. These "object-oriented shots with no 'story' content frame the action slickly when juxtaposed with narrative frames" (Solman 71). That is, they help situate the action of *Timecode* within a technological context early on.

One of the most prominent cell phone sequences in the film occurs near the beginning as Alex, late for work, approaches the Red Mullet office and calls Rose to confirm their next tryst. In the bottom left hand frame Alex takes out his cell phone and

begins to dial. He turns his back to the camera. He paces a little as the camera follows him in an over the shoulder shot. As the call goes through, the camera pulls back around to a close-up of Alex clutching his phone. Meanwhile, in the frame directly above it on the top left, the sound of a cell phone interrupts Rose and Lauren's argument in the limousine. The camera moves out from a close-up of Lauren to a below-the shoulder two-shot of the women, as Lauren fumbles through her purse to find her phone. The camera moves out to a medium two-shot, as Rose reaches into her purse to retrieve her phone. She answers it just as Lauren realizes that her phone is not ringing at all. The confusion as to the source of the call serves to emphasize the fact that cell phones in *Timecode*'s universe are ubiquitous.

Over Rose's phone, Alex's greeting is easy to hear: "Hey Rose, it's me Alex. Can you talk?" The audibility is reinforced of course by the image of Alex in the frame just below, speaking into his phone. The camera quickly zooms into a close up of Rose. Rose replies, "Hi Mary" clearly attempting to conceal the caller's identity from Lauren. Rose tells Alex that they have 'a bad connection,' a code phrase meaning that their rendezvous will go ahead. Alex chuckles into the phone, while in the frame directly above, the camera hovers on a close-up of Lauren who is suddenly demanding: "Let me speak to Mary! Let me speak to Mary!" as she grabs at Rose's phone. The camera shifts over to a close-up of Rose as she tells Alex that Lauren wishes to speak to him. Just as Lauren grabs the phone, Alex in the frame below, disconnects, closing his flip phone. "Mary, hello?" Lauren demands into the receiver just as Evan (Xander Berkeley) answers, "Hello?" over the fixed telephone in the bottom right frame, in the Red Mullet office. It appears as though Lauren and Evan are now linked telephonically, though they are not.

Despite that they are not in direct contact with one another, there is nonetheless a dialogue happening between the two frames, and the spectacle of the cell phone and simultaneous cell phone events, serves as a reminder of this relationship. Furthermore, narratively, this sequence establishes the illicit connection between Alex and Rose, and also confirms Lauren's possessive nature and her suspicions about Rose's infidelities which color the remainder of the film.

But by far the most striking sequence involving the cell phone occurs immediately after the second earthquake. Figgis asserts in the DVD commentary that it is at this moment "when the film really starts to work." And as I will argue, this cohesion is because of the cell phone. Immediately after the earthquake, Lauren emerges from the limousine in the top left frame and stands, emotionally shaken, outside the building. Lauren is in the adjacent right frame as well, pacing in the background, while in the foreground, the security guard comforts Red Mullet's secretary just outside the office doors. Meanwhile, in the lower left frame Rose is crouched down in the preview theatre, in one of the aisles between the seats. In the bottom right frame, the camera floats on a medium close-up of Alex and Emma sharing an intimate moment in Alex's office.

Back in the top left frame, Lauren paces outside, takes out her cell phone and calls Rose. In the bottom left frame, Rose picks up her cell phone and answers it. Lauren, in a medium shot, demands that Rose leave the building because it is not safe. In the bottom left frame Rose whispers that she has to do her audition and tries to persuade Lauren into going home. The camera frames Rose in a close-up. The theatre is dark with some available tungsten light in the background. The dim theatre and the close-up lend the scene an intimate atmosphere of secrecy that contrasts the bright and loosely framed

exterior shot of Lauren. On the top right frame, the security guard and secretary re-enter the building, just as a crowd of Red Mullet employees make their way across the frame in the direction of the preview theatre. The camera remains focused on the security guard as he keeps his surveillance post. At the bottom right, Alex sits at his desk, just after Emma has revealed she is leaving him. The camera frames him at a distance. He gets a call on his cell phone, and the audio focus shifts to this conversation, as does the camera since it zooms in for emphasis. The caller is Bunny (Kyle MacLachlan), who tells Alex he is early for their meeting and asks if they can meet now since he is just outside Red Mullet. Alex quickly declines, lying to Bunny that he is already in a meeting. At that moment, Rose, still hiding in one of the aisles in the bottom left frame hears the staff entering the theatre. She gets up and scurries behind the screen, the handheld camera following suit. She promptly tells Lauren she has to go and hangs up.

In the top left frame, Lauren opens limo door. The camera pans back into the limo, framing the view from the back window. The camera rests on none other than Bunny as he stands just behind Lauren's vehicle, talking on his cell phone with Alex who, as revealed in the bottom left frame, is still in his office. The camera lingers on him until Lauren sits into the car, blocking him out of the frame. The camera shifts its focus to Lauren. As Lauren lies back, the camera zooms out, revealing Bunny still talking to Alex on his cell phone in the background. In the bottom left frame Rose waits behind the screen, while in the top right frame, Cherine walks past the security guard on her way out of the building. The camera follows Cherine out the door and onto the street. She takes out her cell phone and calls her agent. Back in the bottom left frame, Rose listens to the crowd of film producers milling into the theatre and talking from behind the screen.

Meanwhile, though Bunny is unfocused in the background of the top left frame, his voice dominates the soundtrack. Figgis does this throughout the film: makes the sound of one quadrant govern over the others. Here the emphasis on Bunny serves to illustrate that there are multiple connections going on. In the bottom right frame Alex listens to Bunny, while silently crying. Cherine is framed in a close-up in deep focus in the top right frame, so that Bunny is clearly visible in the background of this frame as well.

When Bunny and Alex finally disconnect, Bunny is oblivious to Alex's emotional breakdown – a breakdown of which only the spectator is privy. In the bottom left frame Rose takes out her phone and calls Alex. In the adjacent frame, Alex is snorting cocaine just as his phone rings. He answers. In the top left frame Lauren, framed in a medium close-up listens intently to Rose's cell phone conversation over her headphones. The introduction of this form of audio surveillance adds another layer of film sound. While sound from any one quadrant always dominates the other three quadrants, Lauren's audio surveillance serves to amplify the dominant sound since it is heard in not one, but two quadrants at once. The same sounds of Rose heard through Lauren's headphones in the top left frame, are also heard emitting from Rose in the bottom left frame. Chion refers to such transmitted sounds as "on-the-air" sounds. These sounds he claims, "are not subject to the 'natural' mechanical laws of sound propagation" and thus "enjoy the freedom of crossing boundaries of cinematic space" (76). In the frame below, Rose whispers to Alex that she is in the preview theatre. But again Alex lies, telling Rose that he is in a meeting. He tells her that he will be there shortly, just as in the top right frame the camera zooms into an extreme close-up of Cherine's hand, clasped around her cell phone. Each character stays immobile, listening intently, all the while connected. In the bottom right

frame Alex begins to walk towards the theatre to meet Rose. Meanwhile in the top two frames, Lauren and Cherine listen respectively: Lauren to the 'bug' she has planted in Rose's purse, and Cherine to her agent. In the bottom frames Rose and Alex meet, still connected cell phonically, though now competing with the sounds from the movie being previewed on the screen that they are loitering behind. They embrace and kiss, shifting from the bottom left to the bottom right frames. The camera in the bottom left frame floats around to the front of the screen, just as it shows the reverse—the view from behind the screen—in the bottom right frame. The bottom left frame reveals a projected simulated sex scene, setting up a contrast to the 'real' sex scene going on behind this screen. At the same time, Lauren sits listening in the top left frame, not able to discern Rose's adulterous encounter due to the competing soundtrack of the film being previewed. Lauren is interrupted by Cherine, who as we see in the top right frame, is knocking on the limousine's window looking for a lighter for her cigarette. As Cherine looks in, in the opposite frame, Lauren composes herself. A contrast is set up here between what Cherine sees from outside the window looking in, versus what Lauren sees from inside looking out.

There are a number of things going on in this sequence: the spectacle of doubling that shows an image from two different perspectives, and the visual pleasure in seeing in one frame what is denied in another. But what is most striking is the way time and space are constructed. Of course as Tarja Laine remarks, in her study of cinema as the art of social space, "spatiality and temporality are inseparable"(136). Space and time are always interwoven: they provide the fabric of the world through which we move. We cannot move through space without also moving through time and vice versa. As Julie Talen

muses, "The single biggest question when the screen divides is: where is *now*?" (no pag.). The cell phone works with the split-screen aesthetic and the mobility of the handheld digital cameras to contextualize the images, spaces and characters of each frame in *time*. On the day of shooting, the four digital cameras were all engaged simultaneously and synchronized by ensuring they all shared a common Timecode, or electronic counter (Brooks 36). Therefore not only does the film's title invoke "the technical means employed to achieve the 'sync' of sound and image (and, in this case, of image and image as well); it also points to the fact that here time is the key, or code, to both the multi-tasking challenge posed by the four images and their coherence as a quartet" (Levin 593). Trevor Elkington further emphasizes this point – since each frame is connected by time, *Timecode* illustrates "the importance of temporal trajectories in the act of perception" (226). This temporal coherence is rendered intelligible to the spectator through the cell phone.

According to Stephen Heath, "suture," the mechanism of sewing two shots together, is integral to our understanding of film space. "In its movement, its framings, its cuts, its intermittences, the film ceaselessly poses an absence, a lack, which is ceaselessly recaptured for [...] the film" (Heath 403). *Timecode* jettisons the necessity for editing, thus restoring the missing frame: there is no need to create the illusion of a seamless transition within the film space, for the continuously rolling camera captures the film space in it entirety. Heath maintains that "film is not a static isolated object but a series of relations with the spectator it imagines, plays and sets as subject in its movements" (Heath 402-3). With multiple, synchronized moving cameras *Timecode* comes closer to fully capturing this "series of relations" that is so integral to the production of filmic

space, contributing to a unique and extensively developed and 'lived in' cinematic terrain.

Furthermore, the multiple handheld cameras also allow Figgis to follow multiple narrative trajectories through space at the one time without interruption. Elkington exclaims that *Timecode* "has managed to do in real time what *The Matrix* and *Fight Club* attempt to do through photogrammetry: show more sides of the object at a given moment than human perception could accommodate on its own (233). According to Elkington, the moving, handheld camera not only allows for a "deeply positioned, active spectator" but provides multiple perspectives by giving "the spectator multiple simultaneous views upon the same object located in time and space as cameras shoot certain events or actors form different angles at the same time" (225). For example, early in the film when the character of the Swedish masseuse is introduced, he is seen in two quadrants: in the bottom left we see him from behind as the camera shows us the perspective from the lobby from which he has just passed through; and in the bottom right frame we see him front on as he stands in a medium long shot talking to the office secretary. Seeing him from two different perspectives makes the space intelligible: we can see where he entered the space and where he is now in relation to where he was. This creates a more comprehensive perspective of space.

After all, for Michel de Certeau, stories are always spatial trajectories: "every story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (115)." For him:

> A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. (117)

Timecode, with the plurality of its moving cameras, tests the boundaries between places, thus creating a fuller-realization of perceived spatial depth that reconfigures the very notion of cinematic space. *Timecode* increases the stakes, presenting a hypermedial and cacophonous environment. While parallel editing, "forces the spectator to provide the mental 'pong' to the cut's 'ping' in a *fort-da* game with on- and off-screen spaces," *Timecode* evades this fragmentation, and in doing so, changes our very intelligibility of cinematic space (Olsson 184). More importantly, if, as Gunning suggests, this game of *fort-da* underscoring parallel editing conveys the "deeper strata of the experience modernity," then the multiple split-screen in this case, by contrast, illuminates the hidden depth of the experience of postmodernity ("Heard Over the Phone" 227). Parallel editing may imply simultaneity, but the split-screen is deployed here truly is simultaneity, and is at times overwhelming.

Figgis admits that he did worry at one point that the sheer excess of information may be too much for the spectator – but in the end concluded that, "a diet of channel-surfing and multi-media has made sophisticates of modern-day filmgoers, equipping them to process a bombardment thrown at them on various frequencies" (qtd. in Brooks 37). Likewise, the contemporary participant in technology must actively manage an overabundance of information on multiple screens every single day. There is so much information that much of it will not be retained. *Timecode* captures this fragmentation of our experience of the world and this over-saturation of media and information since it "requires an active, interpretive role on the part of the spectator simply to keep all of the action straight and interpret the various visual and audio cues" (Elkington 232 - 33).

After all, it was this experience of technology that inspired Figgis to make *Timecode* in the first place. During his commentary track on the DVD he reveals the idea for *Timecode*'s split-screen developed out of his experience making *Miss Julie* not only on two separate cameras, but also using the Avid. While shooting *Miss Julie* on two different cameras, to save time Figgis was forced to watch the results of the day's shooting on two adjacent screens simultaneously. Meanwhile, the Avid not only

> offers random viewing of digitized motion picture data [...] It also gives the editor the ability to produce—quickly and at little cost—multiple versions of any given sequence (or section) of a film, and provides several on-screen (analog) display possibilities for the digitized data, including simultaneous visual display of unedited and edited material (showing up either as still or motion images in the source and record monitors). (Lefebvre and Furstenau 75).

Talen affirms this when she declares that "the arrival of non-linear – that is, computer-based – editing systems like Avid, the low-priced Final Cut Pro and After Effects is perhaps the biggest reason why divided frames are back" (no pag.). Though it would be difficult to prove a causal link between the two, the aesthetic similarity between the Avid and *Timecode* is undeniable. But Figgis' recognition of the technological influence in the making of *Timecode*, as well as its intelligibility suggests quite appealingly that there is an undeniable conceptual link between *Timecode* and the contemporary mediascape, so much so that *Timecode* can be understood as an allegory of the postmodern spectator's experience of culture, media and technology.

To return now to Ana's sermon once more, she announces that, "technology has arrived. Digital video has arrived and is demanding new expressions, new sensations." This new technology has the potential to restore the 'reality' that has been obscured by the contrivance of montage, for, "montage has created a fake reality." She aims to

harness the potential of digital technology in order to articulate something more 'real' than film has ever allowed.

But though *Timecode* seeks to progress beyond mediation, at the same time it also self-consciously fetishizes mediation through a lurid fascination with media technologies and their environmental ubiquity. In this way *Timecode* embodies society's "contradictory imperatives for immediacy and hypermediacy" which constitute Bolter and Grusin's twin logics of remediation (5). 'New' medias respond to human beings' insatiable drive for immediacy, a logic that "dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented" (Bolter and Grusin 6). André Bazin terms this drive for immediacy: the myth of "total cinema" (22). For Bazin all filmmaking is a monomaniacal pursuit of this totalizing capture of 'reality'. Ostensibly from Ana's speech, digital technology, with its independence from montage, has the potential to record, with an unflinching eye, this much sought-after immediate and totalizing experience of the 'real'. Of course, all communications technologies are "initially perceived as trying to bridge space and time to such an extent that people [will] be able to communicate without obstacles and without misunderstanding" (de Vries 26-7). And yet with four mobile digital cameras running continuously for 97minutes, and a screen split into four synchronized frames, it is unseemly to suggest that *Timecode* aims for verisimilitude.

Timecode is a continuation of Gene Youngblood's project of "expanded cinema," set on exploring "image-making technologies that promise to extend man's [sic] communicative capacities beyond his most extravagant visions" (41). One of the first images in the film is a set of eyes painted on the building that faces Red Mullet

productions—where most of the action takes place. This image evoke's the film's *idée fixe*—that of looking and pushing the limits of what the human eyes can see, to go beyond our "communicative capacities." If the cinema gives the fixed telephone its eyes, enabling us "to transport our vision to the other end of the line," as Schantz suggests, then in the case of *Timecode*, the cinema also gives the cell phone its eyes, carrying our vision to other sides of a cell phone network (23 -24). With four mobile digital cameras, Figgis is able to capture multiple characters and actions in different spaces at the same time, from different perspectives. Because the cameras are mobile the filmmakers are capable of following the characters wherever they go, granting the spectator uninterrupted and intimate access to them. And because cell phones are also mobile, it allows the characters to extend the spaces they inhabit, as well as their relations with other characters. In any case, there is a plurality, a multiplication of possibilities of seeing and hearing.

In this way, Ana's aspirations—and by default *Timecode*'s own aspirations—echo those of Roman Kroitor—the man responsible for the legendary multi-screen *Labyrinthe* displayed for Expo '67 in Montréal. Of Multivision (the technology that made his presentation at the World's Fair possible) Kroiter prophesized that "new kinds of storytelling and new audience tastes will result [...] People are tired of the standard plot structure. New film experiences will result, in which there'll be a tight relationship between the movie and the architecture in which it's housed" (352, 354). *Timecode* emerges as one such film experience since the film's formal architecture—its feature length long takes, its mobility as well as its multi-screen display—is a direct result of new technological standards. These elements all exist in collusion and reinforce each other.

Timecode then, oscillates between technological transparency and opacity: on one hand it attempts to promote a more immediate experience of reality by highlighting content and downplaying the technological mediation, and particularly in its engagement with both visual and audio surveillance. On the other hand, it self-consciously emphasizes the sheer excess of technological information and the obvious mediation of what is being represented. It embodies, in Bolter and Grusin's terminology, the "the twin preoccupations of contemporary media: the transparent presentation of the real [immediacy] and the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves [hypermediacy]" (21). That is, though it "promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate or authentic experience, the promise of reform inevitably leads us to become aware of the new medium as a medium" (19). The interplay between these two logics enables *Timecode* to convey a particular *experience* of reality that is embedded within the context of the technological ecology of the twenty-first century.

The logic of immediacy attempts to erase all traces of mediation, placing the emphasis on the thing represented, and not the technology that mediates the representation. *Timecode* echoes this logic quite self-consciously in the script during Ana's rousing speech. But formally speaking, this logic is embodied in the film's use of the long take and 'real time.' Indeed reminiscent of the 'windows' of the graphical user interface of the desktop computer, the aesthetic also shares an affinity with surveillance. The surveillant topography of the film is undeniable. *Timecode* creates the effect of watching "from the vaguely voyeuristic catbird's seat of a security guard's throne" (Solman 71). Introducing the concepts of simultaneity, ubiquity, continuousness, and verisimilitude, *Timecode*, Thomas Levin suggests, is an example of the way cinematic

narration has "effectively become synonymous with surveillant enunciation" (582). That is, the film is exemplary of the process whereby surveillance shifts from a thematic concern to "surveillance as the very condition or *structure of narration itself*" (Levin 583). Surveillance has long been an aspect of the cinema, since its inception even. Louis Lumière's *La sortie des usines* (1895) is, after all as Levin argues, "the gaze of the boss/owner observing his workers as they leave the factory" (Levin 581). But *Timecode* is marked "by a theoretically significant shift from surveillance as *recorded observation* to surveillance as *real-time transmission*"(Levin 585).

Timecode is fascinated with real-time observations. The cinematic paradigm is voyeuristic by nature, but here spectatorial pleasure "is satisfied by a camera logic that is explicitly surveillant," rendering the spectatorial position "identical to that of the surveillance operator" (Levin 589-590). While Levin argues that this signals a complicity between the cinema and surveillance, I argue that this is merely an offset of the chronotope of the 21st century, a new technological ecosystem wrought by the emergence of a new digital ecology where technology is not only ubiquitous, but where 'real time' surveillance is also indexical. That is to say, the concern over the indexicality of the photographic image has been displaced by the interest in recorded observation's ability to refer to 'real' movements, actions and interactions. Actions seen in real-time become indexical—an indication that events and interactions refer to 'real' occurrences not simply images of those occurrences. Indeed the film is baptized as such early on with the interjection of the security guard's surveillance centre in the lower half of the screen as well as the introduction of Lauren's audio surveillance of Rose. The surveillance

aesthetic is then bound to the realist aesthetic, driven by the myth of 'total cinema' it attempts to show the social spaces of life in all of their mundane entirety.

John S. Turner remarks that "films that address the practice of surveillance or use surveillance technologies in their narratives do so as an opportunity to celebrate the spectacle elements invested in surveillance or to integrate the use of surveillance as a narratival device to promote suspense and, subsequently violence" (94). Furthermore, films about surveillance, he argues, are also often paranoia films. From *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) to *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1997), such films "query the collapse of the public/private (interior/exterior) distinction and point towards the pervasive, seemingly omnipotent, and often voyeuristic power of surveillance" (Turner 96).

This is indeed true for *Timecode* where intimate details about the characters are revealed through the surveillant apparatus of multiple pathologically attentive cameras and cell phones events. Lauren articulates her suspicions of Rose's infidelity by confession that, "I don't know what's been going on for the past few months. If you don't think I notice the phone calls..." illustrating the kind of surveillant repurposing of the device. The cell phone is part of the surveillance apparatus since it is mobile and dissolves the distance between public and private spaces. *Timecode* also has a small arsenal of digital cameras, CCTV surveillance cameras and monitors, and audio surveillance capabilities which all serve as an extension of the cell phone, amplifying the device's hyperconnective dimension. The narrative serves to reinforce this surveillant impulse by littering the film with mundane revelations of secrets: an adulterous affair between Rose and Alex, a glimpse into Emma's private session with her psychiatrist,

glimpses of characters' encounters in bathrooms and other private spaces, substance abuse, drug dealing, shoplifting, a mention of a herpes outbreak onset and the firing of an embezzling employee, an intrusive masseuse who repeatedly touches the characters and invades their personal space, and of course, Lauren's 'bugging' of Rose's purse. There is a major emphasis on the dissolution of the barriers between personal and public, on surveillance and the loss of privacy and personal space. This is largely intimated through the collaboration between the various media technologies that saturate the film's topography.

The most striking aspect of *Timecode* as Levin remarks, is the "temporal coherence of its conditions of production" (593). The redundancy in the film's tagline "Four cameras. *One Take. No Edits.* Real Time" (emphasis mine) highlights the importance placed on the film's temporal indexicality. Levin sees this as a growing trend where "the spatial indexicality that governed the earlier photographic condition has here been replaced by a temporal indexicality, an image whose truth is supposedly guaranteed by the fact that it is happening in so-called 'real-time' and thus – by virtue of the technical conditions of production—is supposedly not susceptible to post-production manipulation" (Levin 592). Real-time has presented the promise of verisimilitude.

For Bolter and Grusin,

> convergence is the mutual remediation of at least three important technologies—telephone, television, and computer—each of which is a hybrid of technical, social, and economic practice and each of which offers its own path to immediacy [...] As they come together, each of these technologies is trying to absorb the others and promote its own version of immediacy [...] Yet [...] in our heterogeneous culture, no one technology is likely to eliminate the others. (224-5)

Timecode is an allegory of this mutual remediation. Of course Bolter and Grusin were writing before the cell phone ascended to cultural mascot, but nevertheless, they illustrate that convergence is not the reduction of all media into one multi-functional medium, but that their relations are rather intermedial and interrelated.

"Generally speaking, one might claim that cinema is the art of social space, bringing before the spectators the intersubjectivity of life-spaces of the characters in the films" (Laine 130). This is certainly true of *Timecode*, which maps out social spaces through the unique collaboration between the mobile technologies of the digital camera and the cell phone: the camera captures multiple perspectives, spaces, characters and actions while the cell phone links them all together temporally, spatially and thematically. After all, the "new images" of post-classical film manifest themselves as a space to inhabit rather than to be scanned, scrutinized or looked at" (Elsaesser 43-4). *Timecode* creates an inhabited space that is also, thanks to the cell phone, a networked space. As Drew Hemment remarks, the cell phone could very well "be taken to stand for the connectedness of contemporary global societies today" (38). Or, furthermore, we might equate the 'constant touch' inherent in the cell phone with the unwavering connectedness between the digital cameras and their subjects in *Timecode*. The characters in the film all carry cell phones, much like the way the camera operators remain constantly connected to the characters—carrying them in their unwavering gaze.

Since their invention, moving pictures have "simultaneously participated in and provided representations of technological modernity's transformation of everyday life" (Whissel 2). Mike Figgis' *Timecode* is an active participant in the new technological ecology: culling the innovations in digital technologies to give the film a unique

structure, while also serving as an astute dramatization of the way the advent of these technologies has transformed our experience of life. This dramatization has revealed our deeply ambivalent relationship to technology. Though *Timecode* celebrates digital technology, it is also aware of the not so positive effects of the ubiquity of technology. The constantly mediated environment depicted in the film, ultimately undermines the characters by alienating them from themselves and each other with dire consequences.

Livid after discovering, through surveillance, that her lover is having an affair, Lauren walks into Red Mullet productions with a gun in her hand. She shoots Alex and walks out of the office and into the street. In the top left quadrant Rose stand outside the building, taking out her cell phone to call Lauren. In the bottom left, the camera tracks Lauren as she continues to walk away from the scene of her crime. Meanwhile, in the bottom right quadrant, Alex lies on the floor with his blood pooling around him. Floating over his injured body in a medium shot, the camera zooms out just as his cell phone rings. He requests the help of Ana in retrieving his phone from his pocket while Ana continues to film him. It is Emma, calling from the street, in the right quadrant directly above, to make amends. While Emma's face is gently framed in a close-up, in the bottom frame, Alex cannot be seen. Instead, we see Ana, in a medium shot looking down at Alex through the viewfinder in her digital camera. So mesmerized by the spectacle of a bleeding Alex mediated through her camera, she does not make any attempt to help him. Emma tells Alex she loves him, just as the camera zooms out yet again in the lower quadrant revealing the volume of blood seeping out of Alex. Truly exemplary of the notion of 'constant touch' –Alex is connected even as he is dying. However, as the life drains out of him, his 'permanent' disconnection from Emma seems imminent. The cell

phone's perpetual contact has its limits and this final scene emphasizes this. It also recalls Emma's dream—the one she recounts to her psychologist at the opening of the film:

> There was this tiny, tiny wound. Almost like a cut where the scab has been pulled off and it's seeping blood...but there was an awful lot of blood coming from this tiny little cut...And the tissues I was laying down weren't soaking it up...

Emma's helplessness in her dream can certainly be equated with her lack of awareness and inability to help Alex at this particular moment. On a more symbolic level however, this dream scenario is not unlike the cell phone's inadequate attempt to bridge the ever-increasing chasm between the Self and the Other. As Alex's impending death intimates, this rift cannot be overcome. Further, the allusion to Emma's dream content, a kind of closing by return, frames the film within the context of the unconscious processes of a dream state. *Timecode* is not necessarily a dream *per se*, but evocative of, to quote Gunning, "the dream world of technology" (227). Of course in *Timecode* this dream world ultimately descends into a nightmare.

The film's structure demonstrates the unities enabled by digital technology: yoking together the feature length long take, the multiple, mobile cameras and the split screen, *Timecode* makes perceptible how technologies interact with each other and how they interact with film. The cinema has always been a space where technologies interact, since, "no medium today, and certainly no single media event, seems to do its cultural work in isolation from other media" (Bolter and Grusin 15). But for all its unifying and connective potential, the ubiquity of digital technology and the cell phone has had the opposite effect on the film's characters. Lonely, self-destructive, deceitful, self-involved, alienated and ultimately unhappy, the hypermediated environment of *Timecode* has yielded a crowd of postmodern discontents. As such *Timecode*, in lieu of the cell phone,

offers a truly dynamic parable of both the creative and destructive potentialities inherent in the digital age.

V. Conclusion

In this study, I have tried to identify the influence and significance of the cell phone in three different cinematic environments—the stalker film, the contemporary Japanese horror film and finally the network narrative film through the examples of the *Scream* Trilogy, *Chakushin ari*, and *Timecode* respectively. My approach has been necessarily ecological: I have tried to draw attention to the interrelationships between the cell phone and the filmmaking apparatus, and how this relation has affected both content and form. I have sought to register the effects that have occurred as a result of the cell phone's introduction into a cinematic environment. I have attempted to build on Tom Gunning's thesis that the telephone is both a device and a signifying system—one that not only allows for communication between people and spaces, but between cinematic content and its technical and formal strategies as well.

The films in the case studies I have conducted exploit the unique dimensions of the cell phone to render their narratives, formal styles and thematic articulations more dynamic and socially relevant. The cell phone's mobility, ubiquity, mutability and hyperconnectivity have revised and refreshed telephonic film narratives, enabling connections where connections would not otherwise be possible. In incorporating such narrative strategies, the films I have analyzed reflect the networked subjectivity and hypermediated environments that the cellular phone has afforded—most predominantly since the early 1990s. In turn I have tried to elucidate how these modifications have inspired either the innovation of new formal techniques or novel combinations of standard stylistic practices in order to make those narratives intelligible and invest them

with symbolic power. And finally, I have made a concerted effort to highlight how these films in turn make visible the cell phone's formative relationships with other technologies, as well as its relations to contemporary human experience and thinking.

In chapter one I explored the way the stalker film has exploited the cell phone. I attempted to frame the *Scream* trilogy as an example of the way the subgenre has reworked its form and content in order to incorporate the potentialities of the cell phone—all the while maintaining the integrity of its identifying, generic conventions. In my analysis, I have tried to show that the cell phone has revised the central narrative concerns of the stalker film, stimulating the subgenre into finding ways of dynamizing its formal style in order to reflect, more accurately, its latest fixations on mobility, the mutability of location and identity, and the anxieties associated with being in constant touch.

In my analysis of the *Scream* films I briefly noted the way the fixed telephone and the cell phone are involved in a dialogue. They conflate the killer's victims with the fixed telephone, emphasizing simultaneously their immobility and the fixity and vulnerability of landline itself. The interaction between these two technologies in the *Scream* films is suggestive of the anxieties about the obsolescence of the fixed telephone. The films also play with the confusion surrounding the way the cell phone has reorganized the spatial and temporal dimensions of the telephonic event, and destabilized its link to identity in the process. The *Scream* films are allegories of the ways telephonic technologies interact with each other and the way in turn, we interact with them.

This conversation between the fixed telephone and the cell phone can be seen elsewhere, such as in *The Matrix* trilogy and *Phone Booth*. In the *Matrix* films the

landline is integral to the traveler's safe passage between the virtual world of the matrix and the physical world of Zion. The link is tangible, reliable and consistent. The cell phone by contrast represents a link that is much more volatile: it provides an unstable means of navigating through the simulated world of the matrix, a world that is synonymous with wireless disembodiment and the essence of not being 'real.' *The Matrix* films set up a face-off between analog and digital technologies using diverging telephonic technologies and their attributes. The landline and the cell phone are integral to the films' ability to imagine and articulate the dimensions of the war between these two modes of being.

Meanwhile, in *Phone Booth*, a cell phone wielding public relations executive is held hostage in a phone booth. The reemergence of the landline telephone into a spectacular consequence signals a return of the repressed: the landline reappears to restore its powers of fixity and immobility. As the suspenseful thriller illustrates, this restoration is decidedly unexpected and unwelcome in the age of mobile communications. Investigating films such as these that involve a direct discourse between the two technologies could illuminate further about the way they interact: the way they complement, supplement, modify and attempt replace one another.

In Chapter two I examined the way J-horror has seized on the possibilities engendered by the cell phone through *Chakushin ari*. I have attempted to situate the film within the context of J-horror as well as the technological, and the socio-economic specificities of Japanese *keitai*. The film's conflation of *keitai* with the intrusion of an incorporeal Other that must be assimilated shares a likeness with the ethereal and ubiquitous presence forged by *keitai*'s i-mode. I-mode invests *keitai* with a constant

presence in every day life, truly hybridizing physical spaces with digital ones—not unlike the way the vengeful spirits dynamize the film's space with their uninterrupted presence.

The meanings *keitai* is ascribed make it clear that it is an effigy of social transformation. For the schism that characterizes the beginning of the film—a restless ghost at odds with the physical world—is repaired at the end of the film by supplication; the full integration of the ghost into the physical world and the forced embodiment of a disembodied Other. There is no interminable rupture, just a new, hybridized space and more importantly, a hybridized Japanese subject. *Chakushin ari* dramatizes the way *keitai* has instituted the forced incorporation of digital presence into the physical world and into the intimate relationships of its users—changing the body into a mediated site that is always potentially connected to others.

Significantly, *Chakushin ari* is currently undergoing a Hollywood remake entitled *One Missed Call* (Eric Valette, 2008). Of course, the films in the J-Horror subgenre have frequently provided the source material for a number of Hollywoodian endeavors such as *The Ring*, *The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2004), *Dark Water* (Walter Salles, 2005), *The Ring 2* (Hideo Nakata, 2005), *The Grudge 2* (Takashi Shimizu, 2006) and *Pulse* (John Sazaro, 2006). Hollywood's appropriation of J-Horror certainly speaks the West's need to articulate technological mediation in a way that approximates the increasingly hypermediated environment, particularly with regards to the cell phone. *Pulse* for example, managed to do just that. Though focusing on the haunted PC-based Internet, the viral supernatural contagion in the film is deeply indebted to the cellular telephone and the cellular towers that carry its signals. The pending release of *One Missed Call* as well as the forthcoming zombie film *Cell* (Eli Roth, 2009)—a cinematic adaptation of Stephen

King's novel of the same name—are illustrative of the growing trend in popular Hollywood filmmaking to associate the cell phone with the supernatural and viral contagion, not unlike what we have seen in *Chakushin ari*. The transnational popularity of such films points to J-horror's canny ability to articulate anxieties surrounding the increasingly invasive media environment. The tropes of the supernatural and the viral are clearly useful metaphors for articulating invisible, constant technological presence. While these films give voice to underlying concerns about the uninterrupted technological presence in everyday life in an extremely nuanced and culturally specific way, the fears they address are becoming increasingly universal.

In chapter three I have investigated the way that the cell phone interacts with the network narrative and the trappings of digital cinema. I have illustrated that *Timecode* mirrors the overwhelming experience of proliferating digital technologies within the contemporary landscape—mimicking the postmodern participant's experience of technology. A study of the cell phone in *Timecode* illuminates the intermedial relations between the technology, the cinema and the larger media ecology of the twenty-first century. Therefore, *Timecode* can then be equated with the breaoder project of synthesizing and making sense of "technologized and/or globalized urban spaces" (Cameron 65). *Timecode* is an allegory of the new matrix of perception fashioned by the changing media landscape, a matrix that is embodied by the cell phone. The cell phone comes into its own as a synecdoche of postmodern technology, a symbol of the constantly mediated contemporary landscape—which in turn mediates us.

Timecode illustrates the way the cell phone is deeply integrated into all aspects of filmmaking: production, execution and reception. Due to the length and restricted focus

of this thesis I was not able to address other emerging film and cell phone related issues: such as the cell phone's involvement in film financing as well as film presentation. The cell phone is a major player in product placement for example. Nokia "paid handsomely to have a special model shown off in a James Bond film, and also in the first *The Matrix* film (which features the Nokia 8110). Additionally, Nokia has paid for product placements in the films *Charlie's Angels* and *Minority Report* and also TV shows such as *The X-Files* and *The Sopranos*" (Katz and Sugiyama 68). Nokia is not the only one: "Sony Ericsson was able to displace Nokia in a subsequent Bond film, *Die Another Day*, while Samsung was the mobile phone star in the sequel *Matrix Reloaded*" (Katz ad Sugiyama 68). The practice of watching movies on cell phones is another aspect of the cell phone's intersection with cinema for the device also acts as a mobile screenic device. These areas are important to the study of the cell phone, particularly its economic implications and could certainly benefit from future study.

From the violent, dramatic intrusion of the Other in the *Scream* trilogy, to its equally violent, yet quietly insidious incorporation in *Chakushin ari* and finally to its disaffecting—though climactically violent—mundane assimilation into everything in *Timecode,* all three case studies are noticeably somber and pessimistic about the increasing connectivity and omnipresence of the cellular phone. But this is to be expected if, as John Durham Peters suggests, "communication is a registry of modern longings." The idea of communication he claims, "evokes a utopia where nothing is misunderstood, hearts are open and expression is uninhibited"(2). Communication media, he explains, all stem from an "attempt to cover a human lack, to fill the gap between ourselves and the Gods" (219). Communication will always harbor such ambivalence and disappointment

so long as it is mediated. No matter how invisible or unobtrusive the mediation, its inadequacy in comparison to co-presence is still felt on an unconscious level as these cinematic renderings have attested. Of course, if communication technologies exist merely to approximate co-presence, they are inevitably doomed--for even when co-present, total communication is hindered by the physical distance fostered by the barriers of our bodies.

From their inception, in narrating the "pleasures and horrors of technology, the moving pictures [have] simultaneously participated in and provided representations of technological modernity's transformation of everyday life" (Whissel 2). Film is then, a ledger of technological relations. Gene Youngblood reiterates this, claiming that the goal of the filmmaker is not so much "the invention of new objects" as it is "the revelation of previously unrecognized relationships between existing phenomena" (346). This is what enables cinema to teach us "about technology not only through an examination of its own mechanics, modes of production and means of expression, but through its representation of, and interaction with, other technologies" (Gunning 2004: 19). Above all else, I have illustrated that the *Scream* trilogy, *Chakushin ari*, and *Timecode* have all engaged in, participated in, and provided representations of a landscape where the cell phone is invariably a social and technical system that is pivotal to our understanding of contemporary society. As Ronell has continuously reminded us, technology is thinking. Therefore any inquiry into technology is also part of the larger ontological, and epistemological project to make sense of the world and our place in it.

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