"As it ever was. As it ever was.":

Between the Cyclical and the Apocalyptic

in *The Cabin in the Woods*

Noah Simon Jampol

> "History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake. […] Stephen jerked his thumb towards the window, saying: — That is God. […] A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders."
>
> — James Joyce, *Ulysses*

> "A tournament, a tournament, a tournament of lies. Offer me solutions, offer me alternatives and I decline. It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine …"
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> — R.E.M., "It's the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)"

Jean-François Lyotard argues in his 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* that the postmodern condition may be defined as "incredulity toward metanarratives"—metanarrative being Lyotard's term for those large-scale overarching theories (such as that of the "epic") which drive and legitimize institutional practice (xxiv).[1] In part a development of scientific progress since the close of the 1950s, Lyotard

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posits that these stories have been rendered increasingly useless: "The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great danger, its great voyages, its great goal" (xxiv). Lyotard labels those endeavors that still justify or legitimize their practice through grand narratives as 'modern.' The question then is: how does one respond to the loss of these narratives, which characterized human thought and underscored, directed, justified, and predicted human behavior and our sense of the world around us until just as recently as the end of the 19th century? Lyotard proposes two potential avenues: one, the modernist response, with "nostalgia of the whole and the one" in any attempt to present the ineffable; and two, the postmodernist response which reacts to the absence of the grand narrative not with nostalgic longing, but instead with an aim to "impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable." (82, 81). The modern response longs for the lost metanarrative, whereas the postmodern affirms the loss and welcomes a new resultant narrative space: a proliferation of localized micronarratives, or "little narratives" (*petits récits*) (60).

The Cabin in the Woods (2012; henceforth *TCitW*) meditates on the dangers of repetition and the cyclical—be they historical models or patterns of behavior. Gerry Canavan cites co-writer Joss Whedon's own commentary on the film regarding the brutality and banality of the horror remake cycle (specifically, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1974). Whedon asks: "Why do we keep doing it? Why do we keep returning to it?" (qtd. in Canavan para. 6). These are good questions for filmmakers working within the genre to consider. But they are also fine questions for the film viewer. As we watch *TCitW*, we can observe and document its appendix of horrors, knowing where they have appeared before and where they are likely to proliferate again, and we ask ourselves questions similar to Whedon's. Why do we keep watching it? Why do we viewers keep returning to it? This film is an attempt to answer that question, which is the same as the tension that so concerned Lyotard—how do we navigate the loss of the grand narrative with our modern and postmodern responses? As consumers of the horror genre, we are stuck in a cycle of perpetual pain and destruction, remake to remake to rehash to redux. The tension within this cycle—simultaneously eternal and destructive, cyclical and apocalyptic—is at the heart of *TCitW*. The film does the honest business of asking the question—why do we keep retuning—while failing

to answer it. Instead Goddard and Whedon seemingly reply: here we go again, this is what we do, this is what it looks like, and it hurts, and it does not really ever end—a true horror in the truest sense of the word made manifest by the hybrid copresence of cyclical and apocalyptic modes.

Generic Hybridity

TCitW is, on one level, a movie about five college students whose trip to the titular cabin takes a turn for the worst when they accidentally awaken a "zombie redneck torture family" (*TCitW*, 0:33:27-29.) However, the film's first scene features two technicians idly chatting about quotidian personal details within a seemingly vast and cutting-edge underground facility. The audience knows right away that these realms are linked, and is eventually let in on the fact that the technicians and the facility are just one aspect of a massive global institution aimed at ensuring the teenagers' demise to whet the metaphysical appetite of "giant evil gods" (1:29:05-07.) The characters, whom the viewer follows to the woods (and eventually, into the underground facility itself as all Hell literally breaks loose), are the intended sacrificial lambs for the US arm of this operation and, as such, are explicitly labeled as (and manipulated into) representing five character archetypes at large: a Whore (Jules), a Virgin (Dana), a Scholar (Holden), an Athlete (Curt), and a Fool (Marty).

TCitW meditates on the demise of grand organizing narratives of genre. The film plays with the viewer's nostalgia and encyclopedic knowledge of horror tropes, yet it is all for naught. When the end comes it is total, loss affirming. Given the opportunity to sacrifice one of themselves to save the entirety of humanity, the survivors turn their noses up, saying it is "time to give someone else a chance" (1:28:51-53.) And yet, there is no new narrative space created; instead, we are reintroduced to an incredibly old narrative space, which has been seen before and will be seen again. *TCitW* is neither a modern nor a postmodern response; it is not a needless hybrid of the two. Rather, the film advances a dark and cynical cosmological view, a product of textual hybridity, but one that is a piece apart from the well-trod lands of generic metafictions. The result of this hybrid is an unending cycle of pain and destruction in perpetuity.

The film's hybrid nature is at the crux of most mainstream reviews it received upon its release (see Lipsett). The film was lauded by Christopher Orr at *The Atlantic*, who called it a "delightful demolition of the horror genre, a tale that subverts not only its own terrors, but those of pretty much every scary movie you have ever seen" and "a "Rosetta Stone for the horror genre." Similarly glowing praise comes from Peter Travers (in *Rolling Stone*) who rightly identifies the film as a shot across the bow in the direction of those who had sullied the good and bloody name of horror in favor of the production of so-called "torture porn."[2] But extending Orr's reading of the film as codex for the horror genre, Travers also observes that *TCitW* is a very funny film—generically hybrid in this respect.[3] Travers claims that this hybrid mode, leveraging both humor and generic self-awareness, is the key to the film's success.

In their introduction to the special double issue of *Slayage*, Kristopher Woofter and Jasie Stokes note that the film challenged fans and critics alike due to this hybridity, as it simultaneously deployed and critiqued the tropes of the horror genre. This confoundment and complexity in mind, A. O. Scott for *The New York Times* contrasted *TCitW* with *Scream*. Scott sees in the two a "playful pseudosophistication" of the horror genre in the face of what has otherwise become (or always been) a simultaneously brutal and banal genre. Scott seemingly understands *TCitW* to have a distinctly hybrid nature, noting that "[t]wo distinct kinds of movie are being yoked, by violence, together, and the performers inhabit their familiar roles with unusual wit." However, whereas *Scream* manages to succeed in the mind of Scott (despite the film's pseudosophistication), *TCitW*, in Scott's words, "does not quite work." He surmises:

> The lesson of the "Scream" movies—a lesson their characters reliably failed to learn—was that a grasp of the semiotics of cinematic horror will not necessarily save you from a crazed killer. At its best, that series proved that it was possible to be spoofy and scary at the same time, to activate the cognitive and sensory circuits that produce both laughter and fear. "The Cabin in the Woods" bungles that relatively straightforward trick, partly because it wants to do a lot more than provide a dose of shrieks and giggles. There

> is a scholarly, nerdy, completist sensibility at work here that is impressive until it becomes exhausting. Not content to toss off just any horror movie, Mr. Goddard and Mr. Whedon have taken it upon themselves to make every horror movie. I, and they, mean this literally, but to say more would be to reveal too much and spoil the fun. Which, come to think of it, is exactly what the movie does in the end.

Scott correctly identifies the unique filmic hybrid content of *TCitW* as something beyond a successful horror-comedy, a film that anthropomorphically "wants to do a lot more." However, this "more" is not merely generic film-geek cataloguing, but rather the very fun that Goddard and Whedon perhaps do spoil at the end.[4] Too much is revealed to both characters and viewers, shifting perceived notions of the film's hybrid genre and subsequently instigating a cognitive dissonance of genre, upending watcherly expectations of this post-Poe, post-Hitchcock, post-*Scream* entry. In his 2014 essay "Watchers in the Woods," Woofter calls out the film's "thematic parallels between genre decline and apocalyptic excess," citing specifically the problematic extent to which the film's self-awareness and genre critique reinforce the preconceived (and outdated) notion of passive horror viewership (271).

Gerry Canavan observes that *TCitW* is a hybrid insofar as it is a serious horror movie and a movie that takes horror seriously. The upstairs/downstairs plot lends a seriousness to the film and hence genre, upending the negative stereotypes associated with mass culture horror, placing (per Canavan) the film in the category of "Arthouse Horror." Similarly, Woofter identifies the film's hybrid nature as a sort of working through of the influence of reality television on the viewer expectations of the horror genre. Working within this definitionally hybrid genre, Goddard and Whedon simultaneously explore and implicate the very tropes and types that encumber horror. This inquiry is a process and product of hybridity, of the strangeness of an Arthouse Horror film genre and the entries therein.

Echoing Peter Travers' *Entertainment Tonight* review, Stephanie Graves places the success of the film—a blend of comedy and horror that yields parody—within the lineage of postmodern horror, as it engages in

the hybrid practice of simultaneously critiquing and utilizing the stuff of horror. As such, Graves identifies *TCitW* as part of the "wider parodic postmodern horror tradition rather than any imagined 'reinvention' thereof" (138). On the contrary, Jerry Metz posits that *TCitW* fails as a hybrid of "effective horror" and "trenchant critique"—a would-be recipe for a potentially potent inquiry, but Metz labels Goddard and Whedon's outcome as ultimately merely "concerned with genre anxiety, not the human condition" (para. 5, 6). *TCitW* in this sense fails to accomplish anything of political, ethical, spiritual or even generic consequence despite its hybridity and the promises therein.

These considerations of specific hybridities—the collision of genres—do not end with the collision of comedy and horror, or of trope deployment and critique. *TCitW* is in effect also an apocalyptic film, or presents as such until it is something else altogether, something far more horrific. As much as it is a multifaceted hybrid that works within each of the above-mentioned frameworks, *TCitW* is also a narrative hybrid of modernist and postmodernist responses to the age of postmodernity and the end of the grand narrative. *TCitW* is deeply concerned with self-awareness and the power of the grand narrative. The film's explicit exploration of the narrative structures and tropes inherent to the kids-in-a-cabin horror movie (and by extension, the genre at large) takes the form of a reflexive grand narrative. As such, the film is a meditation on metanarrative (in both senses of the word) in many ways—a film undeniably about horror movies and their structure. But *TCitW* accomplishes more than implicating a gestalt sense of contemporary horror.

The End of the Grand Narratives

TCitW upends the grand narratives of not only the horror film, but that of the armchair horror geek (represented by the technicians and their manipulation of the characters or sacrifices in the world above). These characters take the form of archetypes or perhaps more accurately, archetypes-*manqués*. As Marty rightly notes: "we are not who we are" (0:37:53-55). We quickly learn that neither the Virgin, Whore, Athlete,

Scholar nor Fool naturally match the homogenous definition of their type, subsequently bucking the hegemony of these externally ascribed typologies. Curt, the Athlete, is a sociology major. Dana, the Virgin, strongly implies she is no such thing. As the situation careens closer to total apocalypse, Dana and Marty release the underground facility's entire stable of monsters—every bad guy from every nightmare or horror movie ever made gets their day.[5] Each of these monsters represents the narratives of the horror stories they come from—and these *petit récits* confront the grand narrative of the technicians quite literally (physically, even), uncontained by discourse or physical restraint, leading to profound destruction. Modernism responds to the destruction of grand narratives with nostalgia, as the technicians rely on archetype: analog whiteboards, bet-placing, notions of sacrifice, and virtue of the virgin.

The grand narrative of globalization is also implicated by the film. Akin to the world-destroying power of pandemic or natural disaster and the global inability to address such large-scale threats, so fail the stations in *TCitW*. And the stations fall: the German, the Burmese, the Swedish, the Argentinian, the Spanish, the Japanese, and ultimately, the American. The global cooperation that functions as a fail-safe for the ritual (and thus sustains life on earth as we know it) does not hold, instead turning on those who are so deeply invested in it as both institution and institutional grand narrative. Simultaneously upended notions of American exceptionalism underscore the confidence of the ultimately impotent American effort. L. Andrew Cooper argues that: "the cabin, the complex beneath it, the horror genre, and the many facets of American culture for which these elements might stand all come together in one last plea to sustain American exceptionalism and avert the apocalypse" (para. 15).[6] Given the film's conclusion, Cooper posits that the revolutionary or defamiliarizing power of the film is such that it upends an ostensibly largely American viewership's notion of an eternally exceptional and omnipotent America—it offers a world in which America is equal to all global peers as peers.

Just as the film's hybrid nature extends beyond humor and horror, its structure ultimately breaks some of the most fundamental grand narratives of horror (if not film altogether). *TCitW* is not just a film about horror films—or even a film about horror films with several very good,

very well-timed laughs. Woofter notes that watcherly expectations of horror are disrupted within the film, as "there are potentially three logical configurations of viewership in the film's diegesis"—the engineers, the gods, and the victims themselves (278). Yet Goddard and Whedon go a step further in challenging the grand narratives through which a viewer can interpret a horror film, by interpenetrating apocalyptic and cyclical modes of seeing history. In doing so, the film confronts the grand narratives of both horror and ritualized sacrifice (and the legitimizing power that they wield) as well as its own status in the cinematic universe.

Apocalypse(s)

Apocalyptic cinema is the cinema of destruction—but not just. Rather, as outlined by Samuel Weber in his foreword to Peter Szendy's *Apocalypse-Cinema*, it is a genre of definitional revelation, of revealing that which has always been there. Whatever waits on the other side of the veil has always been there, we just were unaware; in the apocalyptic mode, this secret is revealed. Further, the apocalyptic is the prophetic: it speaks to what will come next. This transition, Weber argues, is usually made manifest via a large-scale destruction of the world and not all of its inhabitants with the goal of creating a better, redeemed, and sin-free world.

Importantly, Weber extends the John of Patmos-derived definition of the apocalyptic as global to the apocalyptic as local via Derrida, whom Lyotard quotes on global apocalypse: "the annihilation of humanity as a whole; this catastrophe takes place with each individual death. There is no common measure able to persuade me that a personal mourning is less grave than a nuclear war" (403). This equation of the global and the local, of humanity-wide and individually experienced destruction, can be read as a postmodern reading of the apocalyptic mode. The grand narrative of Revelations gone, Derrida turns to the individually experienced, the micronarrative (which is of no use to a consensus-seeking power structure) and finds truth there. He conceptualizes a vision of the end of the world as it occurs simultaneously with the loss of one life and the loss of all life. It is this reading of the apocalypse as a localizable occurrence,

as one for which tension exists between the grand narrative of the end and the mourning of a friend that will be borne out, in part, at the end (if not the end *après-tout*) of *TCitW*.

To this end, the film fits a working definition of apocalyptic cinema. There is a fundamental revelation within the film as both Marty and then Dana come to see that they are in fact puppets, that their puppeteers have been manipulating their narrative in the service of satisfying a ritual meant to appease the Ancient Ones. This knowledge that the two receive is a revelation of that which was always there. Further, the film satisfies the criterion that an apocalyptic work contains a prophetic element—a sense of what is to come. The end of the film, dénouement-less, offers a vision of what horrors may come.

These apocalyptic tropes and genre can also be found within Whedon's perhaps best-known work, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003).[7] Importantly, Goddard wrote several scripts for this beloved show, all of which are from Season 7, the series' most apocalyptic season.[8] *Buffy* and *TCitW* share a sort of geography of the apocalypse—*TCitW*'s technicians' base is situated on top of ritual grounds, on a vector through which the ancient ones may return. This is akin to the Hellmouth, which resides below Sunnydale High School and is itself a liminal space—between the dark and mystical below and the rational and banal above. Unlike the Hellmouth (with its only other alluded-to location in Cleveland, Ohio), the space below the technicians' lab is ostensibly one of many, though the last one standing after Kyoto goes pear-shaped (as will Sunnydale at the end of *Buffy*'s seventh season). As such, *TCitW* offers a more global sense of threat. Though the potential for total destruction remains in both works—the right evil the wrong way is enough to do in the entire Buffyverse—*TCitW*'s dénouement, in a particularly modern twist, additionally implicates expectations of safety stemming from globalized institutions.

Throughout *Buffy*, the end of the world is always nigh. Near misses abound.[9] However, the apocalyptic dynamic of Buffy generally adheres to a model which, like that of Patmos, is one of judgment: one in which good and evil are judged—and, ultimately, evil punished. With the destruction of the maleficent Hellmouth (and, unfortunately, all of Sunnydale along with it), evil is dispatched, and those who survive the apocalyptic episode offer a new hope.

The destruction that marks the end of *TCitW* (and which A. O. Scott found particularly off-putting) is categorically different from what is seen in *Buffy* insofar as the destruction in *TCitW* is much more complete—the human world, both above and below, ceases to exist, willed by Marty, the protagonist. Apart from Willow in Season 6, all *Buffy* near-misses are manifest desires of Big Bads. Marty, with whom the audience is meant to identify, issues doom in *TCitW*. This relocation of agency from the column of bad guys to good guys makes his choice a compelling act—one of judgment and one of rebellion. He, like Derrida, rejects the macro-apocalyptic in favor of the micro, justifying his role in the global apocalypse with the individual lives taken from Jules, Holden, and Curt. For Marty, these individual deaths are equatable with global apocalypse, and so he acts (or to be more precise, fails to act—by refusing to take his own life and thus angering the old gods into destroying the world.) The audience, still empathizing with Marty, by extension also wills for the end of the world and we all get what we want—to an extent.

The destruction at the end of *TCitW* is, importantly, something other than total. The world of all humans is destroyed by the emergence of the Ancient Ones at dawn upon the failure of the ritual designed to maintain their (hopefully) eternal slumber; yet, a world follows. The end of the film—the final shot of which is the hand of one of the Ancient Ones reaching up out of the earth and through the titular cabin before crushing and blacking out the viewer's perspective—is one in which something lives.[10]

As such, *TCitW*'s apocalypse is not a total ablation of all life, as, for instance, envisioned by Lars von Trier in the climax to *Melancholia* (2011). Canavan names both Michael Haneke as well as Lars von Trier as fellow travelers within the Arthouse Horror hybrid genre—each of which is up to the same business of investigating and implicating the more base entries and elements of the horror genre by making a very particular sort of horror movie. In *Melancholia*, the planetary collision between the planet Melancholia and Earth (known to the viewer from the outset of the film via prolepsis and providing the work's climax) is the end of everything. As Szendy notes, in part what is striking about von Trier's film is the extent to which the end of the film is the end of the world: the darkness that follows the end of that film and its world-ending impact lasts for several

seconds. This is significantly more time than that which passes between the crushing hand of the God and the cut to the title card at the end of *TCitW*. The emptiness that follows in von Trier's film states that this is The End. In *TCitW*, despite the similarities between these final images, no such darkness (and therefore a less complete destruction) is registered. Metz argues that "nothing indicates that the gods will not re-impose their sacrificial demands on whatever life-form they encounter next, *ad infinitum*." He is quite right—and herein lies the true horror of the film and its conclusion.

Cyclical History

Giambattista Vico posits in his 1725 work *The New Science* (*Scienza Nuova*) that history can be as viewed as a cycle of civilizations, rather than as a linear historical trajectory. This cycle, which comprises the ages of the divine, the heroic, and the human, repeats itself. Vico identifies a "barbarism of reflection" which occurs at the culmination of the human era, and pushes that age over the edge, bringing civilization back to the top of the cycle again (1106). Vico defines the conditions of this so-called barbarism of reflection: "such peoples, like so many beasts, have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private interests" (1106). This "barbarism" can be found in Marty's visage and actions: it is his Derridean view of the apocalypse that sets his decision to end the world in opposition to dying to preserve the current universal order. It is through his direct barbarism—allowing Dana to be attacked, resisting the attack of The Director, and thereby allowing the ritual and its necessary order to fail—that Marty instigates the end of man and the rebirth of the divine, largely in protest of the necessity of the murder of his friends.

On the surface, the Viconian cycles can be applied to *TCitW* quite neatly. The absolute and real presence of the Ancient Ones beneath has facilitated the creation of a society organized along the lines of Vico's ages, with those attempting to keep order (i.e., the technicians) building, enforcing, and perpetuating those institutions and systems based on an understood and accepted divine order to the world. This system benefits

most of humanity, who are entirely unaware as to what it takes each year to keep the wheels on the proverbial Rambler.

However, Vico argues that the destruction that comes at the end of the age of men initiates a new age to be enjoyed by the "survivors": "Thus providence brings back among them the piety, faith, and truth which are the natural foundations of justice as well as the graces and beauties of the eternal order of God" (378). Yet, as the divine rise within *TCitW*, no humans—not Marty and Dana, nor any of the multitude above or underground—will be there for the restart of civilization's cycle or flourish under the divine "graces and beauties" (as emphasized by the giant god-hand blotting out the camera's perspective and subsequently the point-of-view of the film's viewer.) What we are presented with instead is a postmodern iteration of the end of man and the return to the age of the gods.

Narratologically, the film itself begs viewing and reviewing and is explicitly designed for replay value. In an interview with SlashFilm, Goddard states:

> Truth is, I don't like movies that are only good once, I tend to dismiss them. I like movies that get better the more you watch them. No one has to watch this movie more goddamn times than me, and I get bored very easily. So I, or we, tried to enhance that aspect. And not on just a detail level, but on a story level. We were very conscious of the question "what does it all mean?" It's important that it becomes "what does it mean?" rather than "what happens?" (qtd. in Fischer)

The film is a text which features a splendidly apocalyptic ending and is yet designed to be watched and rewatched. Viewers ideally then (per the intentions of Goddard) find themselves locked in a corresponding cycle to the cycle of destruction of the film's universe.

Cynical Cosmology

TCitW's apocalyptic nature exists alongside its Viconian backbone, and the collision of these modes is precisely what makes the film an existential terror—apocalyptic and cyclical may seem to be modes inherently opposed to one another, but they are necessarily copresent in the film. It is thus that the film answers Whedon's aforementioned questions—"Why do we keep doing it? Why do we keep returning to it?"—with a shrug.[11]

Postmodernism responds to the loss of the grand narrative by at once acknowledging the loss and also making room for a multiplicity of new approaches and narratives in its wake. Marty's reaction (and, hence, the totality of Whedon and Goddard's text) incorporates both the apocalyptic and Viconian modes, interpenetrating via a kind of negative capability and yielding, in the words of Woofter and Stokes, "a bleak and bitter" vision (para. 3). This postmodernism does not provide a purely cyclical or apocalyptic resolution to the narrative or theory of history. Rather, the hybrid dynamic of the film is one that ultimately may approach the perpetual horror of Nietzschean eternal recurrence, a vision of human life as eternally recurring and, once understood in a moment of anagnorisis, requiring an individual to choose how they will meet their fate(s), with either sorrow or joy at the recognition of the infinite repetitions that have been and are yet to be.[12] Marty's recognition of eternal recurrence and his acceptance therein may well underpin his final and apocalyptic gesture—a gesture, which if to be understood via Nietzsche is one which Marty might stand behind, willing to accept its eternal return. The historical theory that provides the substructure to *TCitW* is hence a potentially devastating model: suffering, pain, loss, each in perpetuity—a vision as horrific as it is perhaps useful should *The Cabin in the Woods 2* ever be greenlit We can rest assured that not even the end of the world can end this cycle.

Notes

[1] For an argument that states have also done this with the epic to legitimize the proliferation of the sciences, see Lyotard 28.

[2] In his 2013 book *Torture Porn: Popular Horror after* Saw, Steve Jones explores the problems films in this genre face due, in part, to the genre's label reflecting watchers' expectations and reactions, rather than any real inherent commonalities among so-called "torture porn" films themselves.

[3] This harmonious marriage of genres was arguably blessed by Poe and Hitchcock within their respective media, long before Craven or Whedon and Goddard put forth their interplays of cinematic genres. See Perry for a full treatment of the two generic modes and tones within the works of these masters.

[4] A complimentary argument is advanced by A. P. Nelson, who posits that *Cabin*'s success can be understood as a function of its sub-generic and metatextual compatibility to *Scream*. Nelson compares *Cabin* to the lesser known (though lauded), non-Whedonian *Trick 'r Treat* (2007), arguing that *Cabin* is a 'loving hate letter' to the horror genre, but nevertheless a "product of unique circumstances and was ultimately limited in its appeal relative to the mainstream found-footage horror."

[5] In a sense, the hermetic grand narrative of correspondence (*Kybalion* principle 2 of 7; "as above, so below; as below, so above") is also implicated within the world of the film. As the archetypes above succeed (which is to say, live), their victory is a failure below. Upon releasing the Buckners and their subsequent destruction, Marty observes that there are no stars in the sky outside the cabin: "We are abandoned" (0:46:04-06). The culmination of the dissolution of this relationship is seen in its ultimate restoration via the final destruction which marks the film's end. In this destruction, all difference and incongruous correspondence is leveled, made same via the emergence of The Ancient Ones. That which was below all along is now also above.

[6] Woofter reinforces this idea, placing *TCitW* amidst a "critical framework [that] meditates on the failure of new recording technologies to hand over the power of representing history from institutional forces and 'official' grand narratives of history to a more localized individual with agency" (276).

[7] For an exhaustive consideration and taxonomy of narrative eschatology in Buffy, see Lavery.

[8] Goddard is credited with "Selfless", "Never Leave Me" (7.5), "Lies My Parents Told Me" (7.17, with David Fury) and "Dirty Girls" (7.18).

[9] The Big Bad Master at the end of Season 1; Angel with the sword through him and the stone statue and Willow's well-intended, if late-to-the-party soul manifest; Willow, this time on the wrong side of history in Season 6; and the closest thing to an outright apocalypse in the series finale, "Chosen" (7.22).

[10] The fact that something lives recalls the apocalypse of Goddard's *Cloverfield* (2008) in which, despite the death of all the main characters, their story lives on in the form of found footage. By very virtue of the fact that the footage is found, the viewer knows that something (though what specifically remains unclear) survives.

[11] Canavan notes: metacommentary is "the structuring principle of the film on the level of form" […] "finally asking us (at its deepest level of metacommentary) just what exactly these sorts of terrible narratives are for in the first place" (para. 5).

[12] Woofter and Stokes link *TCitW* to Whedon's *Dollhouse* series, specifically the technologically-valanced post-9/11 apocalyptic visions of both *Dollhouse* season finales, "Epitaph One" (1.13) and "Epitaph Two" (2.13), respectively. They also identify the use of digital or virtual narrative frames in both Goddard's *Cloverfield* and *TCitW* which play on a post-9/11 fear of representing or capturing "true" or "real" horror. However, *TCitW* also taps into another post-9/11 fear—the fear associated with "waiting for the other shoe to drop" as poignantly captured in the first panels of Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, which is something more akin to terror in perpetuity.

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