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Haunting the Hetero-Home:
Narrative Spectacle and Cultural Fantasies in *American Horror Story* and *Homeland*

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Amanda Kathryn McCollom
B.A., Georgetown University, 2011

Advisor: Michele Schreiber, Ph.D.

An abstract of
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James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

Premiering within the same week in October of 2011, *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* tap into the cultural fantasies of heteronormativity that circulate within the American public consciousness. Drawing from a plethora or real-world events, these shows can be considered narrative spectacles for the ways in which they allow for a critical distance from the diegesis. This critical distance can be used to examine the ways in which the cultural fantasies that support institutions of heteronormativity (marriage, family, government, school) are constructed to seem natural, desirable and achievable to the average citizen. In complicating various characters' relationship to these cultural ideals, I argue that these shows both reinforce and subvert the dominant hold of these fantasies, which allows for an examination of the viability of and investment in social intuitions. Both shows explore these privileged norms through trauma, the invasion of the private sphere and the complicated nature of heterosexual romance. In investigating the relationship between narrative spectacle and cultural fantasies, it is my aim to complicate the reader's understanding of how heteronormative culture constructs one's identity and position within contemporary American society.

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Introduction

In October of 2011, two television shows premiered, which at first glance have little to do with one another, yet both struck a chord with the anxieties and desires circulating in the public consciousness. While *American Horror Story* (2011–) deals with a supernatural house and calls upon recent events such as the recession, school shootings and the debate over marriage equality and *Homeland* (2011–) grounds its narrative in a post-9/11 and Bush administration counter-terrorism perspective, both shows relate to and resonate with powerful aspects of the contemporary American experience. These shows find commonalities in their representations of the individual's attachment to the institutions of marriage, family and government; the characters on these shows navigate the relationship between a desire for the sustainability of these institutions and the anxiety of their inevitable failure to live up to the fantasies privileged and naturalized through heteronormativity and its associated security.

I am interested in these show's relationship to cultural fantasies that construct one's lived experience, fantasies that seem to suggest that an attachment to and investment in our social institutions and their ideals will lead to love, intimacy and a stable and uncomplicated life. While it is certainly not an original sentiment to be disillusioned with the promises of the institutionalized American Dream, real-life events continue to disrupt and destabilize our investment in these institutions. *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* do not disavow these fantasies and institutions; rather, the narrative complexity of the current television landscape allows a space for these shows to complicate the viewer's relationship to and understanding of them. I ultimately argue that

these shows both reinforce and subvert cultural fantasies of heteronormativity and do so through spectacular and intricately constructed narratives. Furthermore, they call attention to power these ideals hold on our own lived experiences, despite the fact that they are social constructions. The narrative spectacles of these shows allow for a critical distance to examine the viability of the institutions that these fantasies support.

Synopsis and Industry Context

Ryan Murphy and Brad Fulchuk, a duo known for creating and producing the successful series *Nip/Tuck* (2003–2010) and *Glee* (2009–), created *American Horror Story*. The first season follows the Harmon family, who move across the country to Los Angeles and unknowingly purchase a house haunted by the many ghosts of its former inhabitants. The family consists of Vivien, played by Connie Britton, a thoughtful and strong woman trying to regain a sense of control of her body and role as a wife after she miscarried, and Ben, played by Dylan McDermott, a psychiatrist who desperately wants his marriage and family to return to a sense of stability after both were shaken by his affair with a student. The Harmon's daughter, Violet, a moody teenage girl suffering from depression and self-mutilation, falls in love with Tate, later revealed to be a ghost, who murdered fifteen students in his high school. Tate's mother, Constance Langdon, played by Jessica Lange, lives next to the Harmons and has her own complicated history to the House, in which she used to live. The various ghosts include Moira, Constance's housekeeper from the '80s who appears as a hypersexual seductress to men and a matronly older woman to other women; Chad and Patrick, the gay couple who renovated

the house in the attempt to flip it in 2010; Hayden, Ben's former student and lover; and Nora and Charles Montgomery, the original owners of the house who died in 1926.

While the Harmons' arrival in the home initiates the narrative, Vivien's subsequent pregnancy with twins fuels Constance, Nora, Hayden and Chad and Patrick to vie for her unborn children. Upon learning that her sexual encounter with a man in a black latex suit was not her with husband, Vivien learns that she is pregnant with children fathered by different men. The show is structured by frequent flashbacks to past experiences within the House and, thus, much of the viewing experience is centered around unraveling its complicated history, while also following the present narrative of the Harmons' struggle to remain together and alive.

American Horror Story premiered on October 5, 2011, on FX, the cable channel home to other shows such as *Nip/Tuck*, *The Shield* (2002–2008), *Sons of Anarchy* (2008–) and *Justified* (2010–). Beginning in the early 2000's, FX branded itself as a channel with original programming similar in style and content to those on premium service channels. FX's original content reflects the recent emergence of an era of "quality television" that draws the viewer into an active spectatorship with complex narratives, graphic content and high production values. *American Horror Story* is noteworthy as a departure from FX's typical show, which often highly features masculine characters and integrates masculine genres. *American Horror Story* takes the excessive and heightened visual style of many of the previous shows on FX, but applies it consciously to the horror, gothic and melodrama genres while integrating past national traumas and socio-political issues. Besides *Damages* (2007–), a legal thriller featuring Glenn Close and Rose Byrne as the leads, *American Horror Story* stands out as a feminine show due to its multitude of

complex female characters and its hybridity of multiple genres associated with women. It is also significant to mention that *American Horror Story* is an anthology series, although this was not revealed until the end of its first season. Thus, the show is considered a mini-series and nominated as such for awards, and each season deals with a particular set of issues in a specific place and time in American history. This kind of anthology is notably different from past episodic anthology programs and points to the ways in which the medium of television is developing.

Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, who previously worked together on the show *24*, developed *Homeland*, which is based on the Israeli series *Hatufim*. The narrative centers on Carrie Mathison, played by Claire Danes, a C.I.A officer in the counter-terrorism department who must hide her bipolar disorder and the medication required to stabilize her moods. The show constructs Carrie as a highly intelligent and intuitive woman, able to find hidden patterns and connections and willing to disobey the rules and regulations of the agency in order to prevent another domestic terrorist attack. When Sergeant Nicholas Brody (played by Damian Lewis), who is missing and presumed dead for the last eight years, is found during a raid on an Al-Qaeda compound, Carrie immediately suspects him as the turned American POW she learned of from an imprisoned C.I.A informant in Iraq. Thus begins the investigation into Brody, which includes unsanctioned surveillance on his home and eventually results in an affair between the two. The show also follows Brody and his family, his wife Jessica and two children, Dana and Chris, and their process of adjusting to Brody’s reintegration into American civilian life.

Homeland premiered on October 2, 2011, just three days before the premiere of *American Horror Story*, on Showtime, a premium cable channel similar to HBO. Showtime is known for the shows like *Dexter* (2006–2013)*, Weeds* (2005–2012)*, Nurse Jackie* (2009–) and *Queer as Folk* (2000–2005). While HBO was first to popularize its original programming, Showtime has garnered both critical and popular acclaim for its hour-long dramas and half-hour comedies. Similar to HBO, Showtime markets itself as "quality television" that transcends that which can be found on basic cable (although this has been contested by channels such as AMC and FX). By requiring a subscription fee, Showtime aims to appeal to individuals and families with disposable income. The channel features a mixture of different kinds of programs, from the nuanced understanding of a psychopathic serial killer in *Dexter* to the numerous female-driven comedies that focus on issues such as suburban drug-dealing in *Weeds*, Dissociative Identity Disorder in the *United States of Tara* (2009-2011) and terminal cancer in *The Big C* (2010-2013). *Homeland* marks Showtime's first hour-long thriller-drama with a female lead, and while supported by a ensemble cast, Claire Danes has been lauded as the driving force of the show.

It is also significant to mention that both *American Horror Story* and *Homeland's* premieres broke viewing records for each respective network. The pilot episode of *American Horror Story* garnered 3.2 million viewers while *Homeland* received a combined total of 2.8 million after On Demand and online viewings were taken into account (Seidman "American Horror Story"; Seidman "Homeland"). Both shows were also nominated for numerous awards for their first seasons, with *American Horror Story*'s Jessica Lange winning an Emmy for Best Supporting Actress in a Miniseries and

Homeland winning Emmys for Best Drama, Claire Danes for Best Actress in a Drama and Damian Lewis for Best Actor in a Drama.

Both shows draw upon a plethora of recent national events, many of which are traumatic in nature. The events and issues integrated into the narratives include: 9/11, the War on Terrorism, the death of Osama Bin Laden, the presidential election of Barak Obama, school shootings (Columbine, Virginia Tech), the burst of the housing bubble, 2008 financial crisis & 2008-2012 global recession, LGBTQ rights and the marriage equality debate. The shows rely on the viewer to have an awareness of these current events and use them as a means to embrace a style and form of narrative spectacle.

Femininity, Spectacle and Television

Within academia, television has long been thought of as a lesser medium than film. While film demands the spectator's full attention in the space of the movie theater, television is rooted in the domestic and private space of the home, with the potential to offer a constant and distracting flow of images and sound. Television has been culturally coded as feminine, an association that carries with it negative connotations:

> The metaphors of "ooze", "flow" and "saturation"; the accounts of television's "menu-driven" nature and of its distracted, dreaming viewer; the descriptions of the suffocating closeness, the subject/object confusion, the excessive availability and the empathy which it induces: all serve to identify television with an irrational, passive and consuming femininity (Purvis and Thornham 14).

These negative feminine associations connect not only to the construct of the medium itself and its placement in the home, but to the kinds of programming (sitcoms, procedurals, variety shows) that proliferated in television's early decades and still maintain a place within the contemporary landscape. In the past, television was noted

largely for its episodic nature, which both introduced and resolved a conflict in each episode. Episodic television does not require that viewers actively pay attention, as usually the plot of one episode does not carry over to the next. On the other end of the spectrum, soap operas employed more complex narratives, but were designed in such a way that the housewife, rooted in her domestic space with her television, could maintain her housework as well as a distracted gaze that allowed her keep up with the various, intertwining story lines.

The rise of complex narratives and quality television, cited by Jason Mittell as beginning in the 1990s and continuing through to the present, has worked to elevate the cultural status of television both within the academy and with viewers at large. Mittell describes narrative complexity as "not necessarily a complete merger of episodic and serial forms but a shifting balance. Rejecting the need for plot closure within every episode that typifies conventional episodic form, narrative complexity foregrounds ongoing stories across a range of genres," (Mittell 36). He cites shows such as *The X-Files* (1993–2002), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), *Arrested Development* (2003–2013) and *Lost* (2004–2010) as all employing a blend of episodic and serial narratives. *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* lie more on the serial side of the spectrum and given their twisted and suspenseful narratives, it is necessary to watch the episodes sequentially. However, these shows probably could not exist as they do, without the complex and quality shows that paved the way before them.

Mittell's concept of narrative complexity is closely related to the rise of quality television, a concept that works to privilege premium cable services and certain basic cable channels such as FX and AMC. The shows on these networks maintain visual and

narrative qualities served to attract "the very upscale demographic willing to pay extra for more specialized and highbrow fare," (Feuer 147). Many of the shows that have been raised up as exemplary quality programs in the twenty-first century can be considered masculine in their visual and narrative qualities. Shows such as *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), *The Wire* (2002–2008), *Mad Men* (2007–) and *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013) are upheld as critical successes, and their cinematic visual quality, their in-depth focus on male protagonists and their demand for active spectatorship mark them as different than the television of earlier times and more in line with classical narrative cinema and European art cinema. *American Horror Story* and *Homeland*, with their excess, melodrama and highly emotional female protagonists, surely fit within the realm of quality television, but perhaps do not hold the same privileged cultural status as the previously mentioned shows. These shows are more of a spectacle, on all levels, and rely on an ability to incite a visceral reaction within the viewer, due to blending of various genres (melodrama, horror, thriller, pornography), intricate and suspenseful narratives and striking visuals and special effects.

In his work, "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television," Jason Mittell describes the concept of "narrative spectacle" as the following:

> These moments [that] push the operational aesthetic to the foreground, calling attention to the constructed nature of the narration and asking us to marvel at how the writers pulled it off; often these instances forgo realism in exchange for a formally aware baroque quality in which we watch the process of narration as a machine rather than engaging in its diegesis.

American Horror Story and *Homeland* both employ heightened moments of narrative spectacle, but the entirety of both shows' first seasons can be considered narrative spectacles as well. Mittell asserts that entire shows can be narrative spectacles through

"their ongoing stories or inherent structure" (36). *American Horror Story* practices narrative spectacle through its very structure as an anthology series; after the first season, the viewer knew to expect a complex yet resolved narrative arc over twelve episodes that would weave together seemingly unconnected and outlandish elements. For example, the second season takes place in an insane asylum in the 1960s and deals with Nazis, aliens, the Catholic Church and a serial killer. While each season changes in setting and time period, the consistent use of the same actors, who play completely different characters in each season, works to establish broader thematic connections for the show and allows the viewer to marvel at the show's construction. *Homeland* functions as a narrative spectacle through its ongoing storytelling and much of the pleasure in viewing comes through the unexpected twists that force the viewer to question their understanding of the characters and their allegiances.

Mittell's "narrative spectacle" bears connection to Mary Ann Doane's article "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator." In it, she discusses the notion of viewing one's femininity as a performance, a spectacle, which creates a critical distance for the woman looking upon herself. Masquerade is the intentional production of excessive femininity, which "constitutes an acknowledgement that it is femininity itself which is constructed as a mask– as a decorative layer which conceals a non-identity" (79). Narrative spectacle and masquerade can be read through the excess that forces a distance between the viewer and her proximity to the object. In the case of television, narrative spectacle distances the viewer from the diegesis so that pleasure is derived from both the story world and an awareness of the narratives' intentional and careful construction. The excess and artificiality of masquerade is similar in that it requires a

distance that allows for an awareness of the constructed nature of gender performances, which allows for a female pleasure not solely reliant on the traditional structures of narrative cinema that support a male spectatorship. Masquerade works in relation to *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* in that Vivien and Carrie both perform moments of heightened, excessive femininity. Yet the structure of the shows allows for a more nuanced exploration of their gendered performances.

This kind of excess fueled by spectacle can also be examined through the ways in which it incites a physical reaction in the spectator's body. *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* blend Linda William's body genres to varying degrees. In her article, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess" Williams draws connections between melodrama, horror and pornography, genres which tend to be devalued for their sensationalist qualities, and the various bodily reactions of the spectator. By engaging with these genres, these two shows further their connection to spectacle, excess and femininity. In connecting these shows to the theoretical frameworks of feminist film theorists such as Doane and Williams, we can see how excess functions on the levels of the narrative, the performances and the spectator's body. The shows also embrace excess through their heightened portrayal of certain character's relationships to the cultural fantasies that privilege heteronormativity, which similarly calls attention to social construction.

Cultural Fantasies of Heteronormativity

The distance afforded through a critical understanding of the constructed spectacle of the narrative offers a potential awareness of the constructed nature of our own lives and the institutions that guide them. The way that these shows operate calls to mind Lauren

Berlant's understanding of desire, which "describes a state of attachment to something or someone that is generated by the gap between an object's specificity and the needs and promises projected on it." In the case of *American Horror Story* and *Homeland*, desire circulates through the domestic space between various individuals, creating attachments to the idealized notion —the fantasy—that that love and intimacy will thrive and sustain through the institutions of marriage and family. Anxiety is produced through the inevitable contradictions that occur in the constructed naturalization of love and intimacy with marriage and family; it resides in the space that desire generates, between the object and the needs and promises projected onto it. Whereas desire can be seen as the hope and optimism that that which is unrealized and lacking in one's life is indeed possible, anxiety thrives on the fears and doubts of the complicated relationship between desire and reality.

Furthermore, not all desire is considered equal and legitimate within the context of our modern society. Berlant writes:

> Heterosexual desire takes place in heteronormative culture – that is, a site where heterosexuality is presumed not only to be a kind of sexuality, but the right and proper kind… the context in which it takes place not only supports it morally and organizes state, medical, educational and commodity resources around it, but considers it the generic (the default, the natural) form of sexuality itself (Berlant 20-21).

In understanding that the heterosexual couple is the privileged referent of our sexual culture, heterosexual desire can be understood as regulated as well. Fantasy can be seen as the embodiment of desire, and as such, the fantasy of the heterosexual romance plot and its position within the institutions of family and marriage is that which is upheld, naturalized and constructed as achievable and desirable to the average person. There is security wrapped up in the privilege of heteronormativity and it runs through one's

performance as a gendered and sexual being, but also through the institutions that comprise our society. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner speak to the heart of my project in their essay "Sex in Public":

> Ideologies and institutions of intimacy are increasingly offered as a vision of the good life for the destabilized and struggling citizenry of the United States, the only (fantasy) zone in which the future might be thought and willed, the only (imaginary) place where good citizens might be produced away from the confusing and unsettling distractions and contradictions of capitalism and politics (Berlant and Warner 553).

As Americans, we have been taught to invest in the ability for social institutions, such as marriage, family, the government, schools, the church, to structure out lives and ensure the possibility of achieving the ideal American life. It is at once terrifying and unimaginable to envision our society without these institutions guiding public consciousness and discourse, but how are we expected to live once we come to terms with the fact that these aspirations might just be a mere fantasy? *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* connect to the core of the anxieties and desires surrounding the belief that love, marriage, family and a home will ensure security and stability. Both shows imagine in a fantastical sense, through a mixture of horror, thriller and melodrama genres, narratives that offer both a sense of failure in these institutions as well as the continued fantasy of their sustainability.

For *American Horror Story*, the viability of the nuclear family is called into question through the continual invasion of private spaces and bodies. The experience of a family trying to heal its past issues is thrown into disarray as it moves into the murder house, a home haunted by the ghosts of past violent crimes. The simultaneous anxiety and desire exhibited in multiple aspects of the show allow the spectator to experience the thrill and catharsis of watching this dysfunctional family's chaotic and anxiety-inducing

experience while still remaining invested in the public fantasy of and desire for the privileges associated with the hetero-family. Despite its morbid conclusion, the narrative still works to offer a promise and hope that the nuclear family can remain together and exude the values of ideal Americans.

Homeland focuses its investment in the fantasy of national security and counter-terrorism. Yet despite its more global focus, anxieties and desires relating to the home and the private sphere are still very much present. Both of the main characters embody contemporary American anxieties and desires, Carrie through her sexual desire for Brody and conviction that he was turned by his captors, and Brody through his role as both an American patriot and a Muslim terrorist. In a similar vein to *American Horror Story*, *Homeland* offers an experience in which the viewer can vicariously experience the shortcomings of these institutions while still investing in the promises they offer.

In an effort to examine the relationship between these cultural fantasies and the narrative spectacles of these two shows, this thesis is divided into two conceptual parts. This framework allows for a discussion of how both shows function to reinforce and subvert the expectations for American life, while also allowing for a understanding of the progression of both narratives. Part one, “Space, Fear and Sexuality”, explores the intrusion of domestic spaces, through the ghosts in *American Horror Story* and the unsanctioned surveillance in *Homeland*, which works to heighten fear, particularly in relation to female sexuality in these spaces. The *American Horror Story* section of this part is divided into three sections: “The House and The Body”, “Rubber Man” and “The Hypersexual Seductress”. “The House and the Body” examines the space of the house as a reflection of the anxieties surrounding the recent recession and a lack of autonomy over

the female body and one's private space. "Rubber Man" looks at how the object of a BDSM Rubber Man suit opens up a space to examine how non-normative sexualities and fear function in relation to the public consciousness and the fantasies for heteronormativity. Lee Edelman's work in *No Futur*e serves as the theoretical lens for this discussion. "The Hypersexual Seductress" considers how the gender performances of two overtly sexual ghosts connect to traditional objectifications of women in classical cinema

The *Homeland* section of "Space, Fear and Sexuality" is divided into three sections that mirror those of the American Horror Story section: "Suburban Surveillance", "False Fidelity" and "The Heteronormative Terrorist". "Suburban Surveillance" introduces both the spaces of Carrie's home and the Brodys' suburban house. Carrie's intrusion into the Brody home allows for an examination of both the Brodys' performance of marriage and Carrie's own sexuality as a single woman. "False Fidelity" looks at Carrie and Brody's performances of false fidelity, which are exemplified by Carrie's wearing of a wedding ring as a means for promiscuous sexual relations and Brody's chilling manipulation of a C.I.A lie detector test. "The Heteronormative Terrorist" examines Aileen Morgan, a white, female, American terrorist motivated by her love for her Saudi-Arabian male partner; Aileen calls attention to the ways in which Homeland constructs heterosexual love as a universal and defining aspiration.

The second part, "Time and Trauma" is structured as an examination of two characters and their own experiences of trauma as well as how the characters' romantic relationships with each other speak to the fantasies of heteronormativity. The *American*

Horror Story section looks at the trauma of Tate high school mass murder and Violet's suicide and delayed discovery of her death, which is wrapped up into her romantic relationship with Tate. While the young couple engages in the fantasy of eternal love, "Romeo and Juliet, Post Mortem" considers the ways in which that fantasy is not sustainable. In the *Homeland* section, I look at Brody's trauma as a prisoner of war and the specific trauma that incites his turn against the American government, as well as Carrie's trauma of failing to prevent both 9/11 and the explosions in Washington D.C. that sets off a manic episode that leads to her dismissal from the CIA. While Tate and Violet's individual traumas are closely related to their relationship of heterosexual romance, Carrie and Brody's short-lived romance allows for an examination of the fantasies of love that directly contradict Carrie's conviction that Brody is a terrorist and Brody's need to maintain his performance as the returned war hero.

Finally, I analyze how the finale episodes of each show functions to reinforce and subvert the construction of the idealized nuclear family. While these shows do not provide an alternative means of living, as narrative spectacle denies verisimilitude, in complicating the desire for and sustainability of the institutions of heteronormativity, they ultimately work to destabilize the optimism that adherence to hegemonic cultural norms will result in a better life.

Part One: Space, Fear, and Sexuality

American Horror Story

The House and the Body

The narrative structure of *American Horror Story*, which relies heavily on flashback sequences, allows the viewer to experience the gothic supernatural House in an array of temporalities, beginning in 1922 with the first owners, Dr. Charles and Mrs. Nora Montgomery. While the décor changes throughout the years, the original architecture, including the stained glass windows and the Tiffany lighting fixtures made to match Nora's eyes, remain and are constructed as a selling point by realtor Marcy to increase the allure for potential buyers such as the Harmons.

The house itself is grand in both stature and style, which is emphasized by the deep canted angle shot from Violet's point of view upon her first visit. Even the sweeping interior shots throughout the season capture only parts of the house; its labyrinthine layout allows for new rooms and layers to be continually discovered and denies the spectator a stable sense of orientation within the space. The basement, the first part of the house depicted in the pilot, localizes and magnifies the evil forces within the House; it is where some of the show's most dastardly acts occur: Charles Montgomery's reconstruction of his murdered infant with animal parts and the heart of an abortion patient, the dismemberment of Elizabeth Smart to become the Black Dahlia, the death of the red-headed twins in 1978, and the final haunting of the season by the Harmons themselves. The basement is a space where the artifacts of the House's horrors collect—as evidenced by the opening credits, which features jars of embalmed body parts, infant's

clothing and sinister medical tools— and it often serves as a space for the spirits of the house to congregate without the intruding presence of the living.

Looking at the house as a physical space where certain sentiments, including anxiety, desire, fear and fantasy, may be heightened, offers an entrance into understanding how public attachments to social institutions and financial security are circulating within the space. The collapse of the housing bubble in 2007 sparked the greatest recession in American history, second only to the Great Depression of the 1930s. With many American unable to pay their mortgage and facing foreclosure, the collapse shook the economic stability and morale of the American public consciousness. *American Horror Story* intentionally plays with and heightens the anxiety surrounding the inability to sell one's home, make mortgage payments and find a new sustainable way of living. While the ghosts of the House are bound within its walls, the living are trapped by their economic circumstances. Chad and Patrick, the owners prior to the Harmons, bought the House with the intention of flipping it for a profit. Although the house's malevolent energy hyperbolically amplifies certain undesirable aspects of individuals identities (Chad morphs into a perfectionist homemaker and Patrick becomes the philandering unfaithful husband) the couple's relationship issues and failed dreams are rooted in their inability to leave the House and go their separate ways because of their economic situation.

Similarly, the Harmons desire to get a fresh start and leave the trauma of Vivien's miscarriage and Ben's cheating fuels their quick decision to purchase the house. Unaware of the House's history and believing the most recent deaths are the sole reason for the low price, the Harmons are willing to risk the associated trauma of death for the convenience,

luxury and character of a renovated Gothic-style mansion in a reputable neighborhood of Los Angeles. By the end of the second episode, after a home invasion intended to recreate a series of infamous murders in the House from the 1960s, Vivien declares she wants to move and sell the House. But, similar to Chad and Patrick, all of the Harmons' funds are tied up in the home, leaving their only options to stay until they sell or rent a studio apartment.

This idea of being trapped in a domestic space that is usually associated with comfort and safety harkens back to the gothic tradition in literature, film and television. Tosha Taylor writes in her article on *American Horror Story*, "In Gothic fiction, the haunted house is made frightening not simply because sinister forces are present, but because of *where* they are present. The home is expected to be a place of safety, a physical divider between the dangers and influences of the outside world and the virtues of those living within its walls" (Taylor 140). The domestic sphere is most associated with the female, and *American Horror Story* offers connections between femininity, the body and the House in relation to fear and anxiety surrounding the invasion of the private and reproduction.

The House must be understood not only as a space of historical and present trauma, but a space, perhaps even a character, that is alive with its own energy, which is aided and embodied by the ghosts who lurk within. An examination of the space and certain apparitions can exemplify how fear and sexuality work inextricably together to both heighten and disturb the investment in the fantasy of heteronormativity and security. Billie Jean Howard, a medium employed by Constance and Violet to rid the baby-seeking spirits, best encapsulates the force and power of the house, when she says the following:

> It's a force, just like any other. Pure physics. Real and powerful. Created by events, events that unleash psychic energy into the environment, where its absorbed…Negative energy feeds on trauma and pain. It draws those things to it. The force here in this house is larger than the many individual traumas. And it has a need. It wants to break free. It wants to move in our world. It's using those trapped between this world and the next as conduits.

This idea of the House having its own need to expand beyond its physical walls can been seen through the multiple ghosts vying for Vivien's babies. The House plays on and heightens the anxieties and desires of those unable to have their own children. But even beyond those multiple desires, the House can be understood as having a need to recreate, through Tate's impregnation of Vivien, a physical being that can live and further evil in the real world. Billie Jean tells Constance that a being created by both spirit and human would result in the anti-Christ, ushering in the End of Times. The House is able to manipulate the more damaged souls within its walls as well as Vivien's body to ensure that such a being will thrive in utero and eventually take its place among the world.

In the pilot episode, Vivien is introduced in stirrups as a doctor examines her and inquires about her sexual health. The medical space, particularly that of a gynecologist's office, can provoke a specific anxiety and desire relating to a woman's reproductive health. Her doctor tries to push a new hormonal drug on her, telling her it will make her feel and look ten years younger. He tells her, "A body is like a house; you can fix the tiles in the kitchen, but if the foundation is decaying, you're wasting your time." The doctor's patronizing remarks speak not only to Vivien and her relationship to her body, but to the male anxieties that seek to project their own fears of the unknown or other as represented by women. In *The Desire to Desire*, Doane writes about medical discourse in 1940's Woman's films:

> The doctor is given extraordinary powers of vision which have the potential to go beyond the barrier usually posed by an exterior surface…the female body is located no so much as spectacle but as an element in the discourse of medicine, a manuscript to be read for the symptoms which betray her story, her identity (Doane 43).

While by its very structure, television allows for more exploration of and depth in its female characters that does not mean that the gendered structure of classical Hollywood films has not carried over into contemporary television at all. Particularly as it is the viewer's first exposure to Vivien, this scene demonstrates just how much women are still constructed in relation to heteronormativity and the expected desire for conventional beauty and motherhood.

Vivien firmly tells the doctor, "I am not a house," but as the show progresses and Vivien's body is disturbed by the forces of and within the House, the metaphor becomes more and more apt. Just as the home is fantasized as a space of privacy and personal domain, the body ideally is as well; but the desired security of personal boundaries is rarely stable in the horror genre. Vivien's body is literally violated by a figure wearing a black rubber suit, and her home is not secure either. Beginning with the pilot episode, characters seem to enter at their own will, from neighbor Constance and her daughter Addie to the various ghosts who lurk within the walls. In a different regard though, just as the female body can have the ability to nurture and protect new life, the House goes to great lengths to keep Vivien within its walls; she experiences severe pain and blood loss when she ventures out, and despite her best abilities to resist re-entering the space before she gives birth, she is pulled back in when she goes into labor, just outside, impatiently waiting to escape its grasp forever.

Finally, the body as house metaphor can be examined through the lens of fantasies of heteronormativity and security as they relate to Vivien's investment in her marriage and role as mother. Just as the body and house require intervention on a foundational level, the fantasies that guide our attachments to the social institutions of marriage and family require a similar examination so as to better understand how they are internalized, naturalized and privileged in our society. In disturbing the stability of the home and the body, *American Horror Story* complicates Vivien's desire for a sustainable marriage and family, the foundation on which her identity is built.

Rubber Man

Our first introduction to Rubber Man arrives in the aftermath of post-coital bliss; Ben and Vivien have reaffirmed their investment in their marriage through physical intimacy after a year of distance, distrust and depression. This is significant to the scene that follows because Vivien has let her guard down and seems ready to embrace both intimacy and adventurousness with her husband. When a rubber-clad figure abruptly appears in the doorway, Vivien naturally assumes it is her husband. Thus the rubber suit is not immediately understood as horrific; "You really want to go for round two? I can be kinky," she says to the figure. The camera then immediately cuts to a close-up of a hand turning the stovetop knob on. The gas ignites. All of the burners are on. As if in a trance, Ben drifts his hands over the lit gas stove. Clearly it is not Ben upstairs having sex with his wife, but an unknown, presumably nefarious other.

Rubber Man leans over the camera, as if Vivien is lying down on the bed. The following few seconds intermittently cut between a close-up of Vivien, a close up of Ben (in a daze and blurry, but as if he is on top of her) and both close ups and a medium-long

shot of Rubber Man having sex with Vivien. These shots are interspersed with more abstract close-ups: of Vivien's eye, her hand gripping Rubber Man's shoulder and glimpses of the grotesquely brutal mural Vivien discovered as she stripped away the wallpaper downstairs. While Vivien may have consented at first, it becomes clear she is not enjoying this experience, as her moans of pleasure turn to cries of discomfort and her face contorts into an expression of shock and unease. Tears form in the corner of her eye. Meanwhile, downstairs Constance stops Ben from hurting himself, telling him that now is not his time. Upon shuffling back to bed, Ben and Vivien exchange emotionless, drained "I love you's", foreshadowing that their momentary rekindling will be short-lived, even though they will continue to go through the motions and remain invested in the possibility of a better and more fulfilling marriage.

Rubber Man's suit is an entire body suit made of black shiny latex, with small openings for the eyes, a detachable covering for the mouth and presumably openings for sexual penetration. The person who dons the suit remains entirely concealed. This type of outfit is most often associated with fetish and BDSM culture. Later on in the season, in the episode "Rubber Man" in a flashback, we see the origins of the rubber suit within the house. One of the previous owners, Chad, bought it for the purposes of reigniting passion in his fading relationship with his partner, Patrick. The storeowner from whom he bought it tells Chad that the purpose is "to dehumanize the submissive, to turn him into a rubber sex toy" ("Rubber Man"). BDSM and fetish practices and subcultures connote that which is deviant, taboo and strange. Tosha Taylor writes, "While even small adult stores in the United States carry generic items with sadomasochistic connotations (like riding crops),

BDSM practices themselves have not yet gained public approval" (Taylor 146). This lack of public approval lends to a misunderstanding of the reality of BDSM practices.

Within the context of this horror show, the rubber suit is appropriated to inspire fear and anxiety, particularly around the unknown of non-normative sexuality and lifestyles. Same-sex couples, particularly in a domestic setting, can also incite a certain public fear and anxiety surrounding the sanctity of marriage and family. Chad and Patrick represent two extreme stereotypes of the gay male: Chad epitomizes the effeminate, design-conscious gay male stereotype whereas Patrick embodies a more promiscuous sexuality, seeking pleasure via online BDSM chat rooms. While there is no direct link between homosexuality and BDSM, both fall on the outside of hegemonic heteronormativity. While the picture-perfect nuclear family may no longer thrive in reality, the fantasy of such is still widespread and situated as part of American culture. To place the object of the Rubber Man's suit, which is already associated as non-normative, deviant and even immoral, within the space of the house and the show as a whole works to not only heighten the sensations of fear in the viewer but also certain anxieties and desires already circulating around issues of equal rights.

The original purpose of the suit was for Chad to exchange his typical dominance and try out being submissive for Patrick. While there was a lack of communication in understanding what Patrick truly desired, his attempt thoroughly fails as Patrick laughs at him and tells him to take it off so he can finish clipping his toenails and watch *The Rachel Zoe Project* on Bravo. In consensual, communicative BDSM relationships, there is fluidity within the role-playing; one is not bound to their role as submissive or dominant. The dual nature of anxiety and desire is rife in this scene; Chad desperately

wants to reignite Patrick's sexual desire for him, but when his attempts fail, he is left in a state of anxiety and humiliation. Patrick is disillusioned with the fantasy of an ideal domestic relationship and a perfect home, and he is forced to go through the motions until they can sell the house.

The identity of Rubber Man is not learned until Episode Eight, fittingly titled "Rubber Man." While an ominous and mysterious tone pervades in the pilot episode Rubber Man scenes, the suit becomes even more villainous when the viewer learns that Tate (a heterosexual male and ghost) co-opts it for the purpose of murder and rape. His first act of co-option is to turn the object of the Rubber Man suit against Chad and Patrick. After drowning Chad in his barrel for bobbing apples and effectively turning the fantasy of homemaking against him, Rubber Man violently throws Patrick across the dining room table and proceeds to stab and sodomize him with a fire poker. The suit itself is meant to minimize the human qualities of the wearer and highlight the openings for sexual penetration. Tate inverts its original purpose by enacting sexual penetration as a means of violation and invasion.

The episode "Rubber Man" not only reveals the back-story of the suit, but also offers an understanding into Tate's motivations for killing Chad and Patrick and raping Vivien. Based on varying levels of denial, the ghosts in the house maintain different understandings of their statuses as ghosts and their memories of life. Nora is a figure trenched in denial; she floats throughout the house, wailing about the whereabouts of her baby and the changed aspects of her house. Nora is able to act as a mother figure to Tate when he is younger, which Tate takes to heart and, once a ghost himself, becomes determined to fulfill her desire for her baby. Her real-life baby, Thaddeus, resides in the

basement as a deformed figure, reconstructed by his father with the heart of one of his abortion-seeking clients, feeding on the blood of humans and vermin to sustain itself. This creature offers little fulfillment or solace for Nora; she is trapped in her fantasies for a young healthy baby whom she can nurture and mother.

While Nora, as a figure of motherhood, fuels an overwhelming desire for a new child in the house, we can also look at her as a figure representing the privileged attachment to reproduction and motherhood. Nora's inability to acknowledge the reality of her situation and constant need and desire for her baby preclude her from a future and the possibility of moving on. In his book *No Future*, Lee Edelman sheds light on the entanglement of politics, reproduction, futurity and fantasy that occupy each individual. While most may remain explicitly unaware of the socially rewarded mandate that reproduction determines the future, Edelman focuses on those who identify as queer, particularly gay men, whose inability to procreate precludes them from a future and the fantasy of being invested in reproduction as a means of fulfillment and guarantee.

That is not to say that LGBTQ couples are unable to have families of their own, but Edelman sees the appropriation of such heteronormative aspirations as merely fueling the larger issue at hand: that in our current society, the symbolic image of the Child shapes the logic of the political. To claim a position of resistance within the sphere of reproductive futurism only reinforces its hold, thus continuing to privilege heteronormativity. Edelman advocates embracing the "ascription of negativity to queer…to refuse the insistence of hope itself as affirmation, which is always affirmation of an order whose refusal will register as unthinkable, irresponsible, inhumane" (4).

While *American Horror Story* and specifically its gay male characters do not necessarily embrace queer negativity, through the Rubber Man suit and its associated acts, the show offers a visual and narrative demonstration of that which is "unthinkable, irresponsible, inhumane." The viewer implicitly agrees to accept that the house is a space that transcends the natural bounds of reality, as we know them, and by pushing representations that do exist in our own social reality (women, reproduction, homosexuality, BDSM) to their limits of abjection, the show offers the potential for a myriad of readings. The nuance of understanding the show beyond its ability to thrill and entertain comes through a fluidity in which the show reinforces and subverts certain public fantasies, particularly those invested in privileging reproduction and heterosexual relations.

While such subversion and reinforcement will be discussed as it relates to the narrative conclusion of the season, Edelman's understanding of fantasy as driving the experience understood as reality is apt to how fantasy works in the show. He writes:

> Politics may function as the framework within which we experience social reality, but only insofar as it compels us to experience that reality in the form of a fantasy: the fantasy, precisely, of form as such, of an order, an organization, that assures the stability of our identities as subject and the coherence of the Imaginary totalizations through which those identities appear to us in recognizable form.

Edelman's position may seem extreme but it is necessary because the structure of our lived experiences is so informed by the political, which necessitates an investment and faith in the fantasy of order and future. Edelman's relationship to *American Horror Story* is particularly apt when considered within the context of the recent LGBTQ equality debates that have occupied a prominent space in popular consciousness and discourse.

In 2011, the United States and many of its individual states were embattled in tense political debates surrounding the push for and fight against marriage equality; through this, one can see how the political shapes a necessity for the investment in the fantasy of marriage and family. *American Horror Story* consciously calls upon those debates and pushes them, through the means of horror and melodrama, into directions that call into question the fantasies themselves. Tate kills Chad and Patrick after Patrick extinguishes the hope of having a child, thus effectively terminating their (hope for a) future. Once Tate realizes their lack in fulfilling Nora's desire for a baby, he eliminates them from the social world and casts them into the space of the house, where one's lack of future is forever and continuously played out. To see this "no future" embodied by all of the ethereal spirits, many of whom are avidly invested and vying for Vivien's children, calls into question the efficacy of these fantasies. If Nora, Chad and Patrick had not been so entrenched in their identities and relation to reproduction and parenthood, would they be trapped in the house now? While Edelman's proposals may seem extreme, they are necessary in order to destabilize the privilege of heteronormativity. The ghosts who can claim somewhat of a future in their afterlife existence are able to do so only by distancing themselves from the fantasies grounded in the political social reality to create an alternative unthinkable for our current lives. In doing so, the show does not take an active stance in promoting the reinforcement or subversion of these fantasies of reproduction and sexuality, but rather represents how complicated they are in relation to public anxieties and desires.

The Hypersexual Seductress

While the show grapples with integrating non-normative representations of sexuality with elements of horror, perhaps as a means of pushing boundaries, certain representations of femininity recall longstanding views within classic cinema, where the woman and her gaze threaten the narrative closure offered by the male protagonist. Two characters in *American Horror Story*, Hayden and Moira, embody the threatening characteristic of femininity through their roles as hypersexual seductresses. Hayden seems to relish in her ability to use her sexuality to incite fear and anxiety in both Ben and Vivien. Moira, on the other hand, is trapped and unable to control that men see her as an overtly sexual vixen, whereas women see her as a homely, comforting older woman.

From the outset, Hayden is depicted as manipulative and destructive toward Ben; she explicitly discusses her desire to be with him and chooses not to go through with her abortion at the last minute and instead travel to Los Angeles and demand he take part in her life. Once she becomes a ghost in the house, she turns her disruptive anger toward Vivien, often provoking her into a state of fear and anxiety by acting as an unseen poltergeist. In a formally complex scene, Hayden hatches a plan to steal Vivien's baby with Nora, but also provides an awareness of her place within the house. She says:

> We linger here with the living. No rest for them, no rest for us. It's this place. It has a hold on us. But that's not all. There's a power in it. A power we can use. We can make ourselves unknown. And when we really need it, we can make ourselves known. And I have such a need. Sometimes I vibrate with such rage, it terrifies me. I act out. If we're supposed to fix our issues, we never can. It doesn't stick ("Rubber Man").

Hayden is bluntly aware that she was killed, is buried in the backyard, and forced to remain in this house with both the living and the dead. Throughout her conversation with Nora, the scene transitions into a monologue with various cuts to Hayden's different

experiences as a ghost. When she speaks of “making ourselves unknown,” the camera cuts to Ben’s office, where a book falls from the shelf on its own accord. Upon replacing the book, Hayden appears behind Ben, as she speaks to Nora about her need to make herself known. Her terrible rage translates to violent sex with Constance’s ex-husband, Hugo that culminates in her stabbing him. A moment later, Hugo breezily asks Hayden if she wants anything from the kitchen. Hayden may know her issues, but she cannot change or grow or mature; she will be forever stuck as an insolent girl, spurned by her lover in favor of his wife, doomed to repeat her actions eternally.

Hayden’s relationship to fantasies of heteronormativity is best encapsulated in her initial haunting of the House in Episode Five, “Halloween Part 2.” Unaware that Hayden is actually in the House, Vivien, fed up with Hayden’s cryptic and threatening messages, calls her on the phone. Before Hayden can speak, Vivien tells her:

> Here’s the thing Hayden. I know you might find this hard to believe, but I was your age once and not that long ago. And I wasn’t such a saint either. I fell in love with a married man. And I lived and breathed the fantasy that we were going to be together forever, soul mates and lovers, and everyone was going to be happy and everybody lived forever. And that didn’t happen Hayden, because it never happens that way, it never does, because what he’s looking for has nothing to do with, its got nothing to do with anybody, there’s something missing in him.

Vivien chooses to try to connect with Hayden, to show her that she understands what she is going through, and in doing so, Vivien reveals some of her own complicated romantic history and the fantasies in which she invested: specifically, that an affair with a married man could lead to a stable and sustainable relationship. Vivien is also able to articulate two important aspects of heteronormative romantic relationships, the first being that individuals sometimes use relationships as a means to fill what is lacking in themselves, although rarely does this solve the original lack. Secondly, the figure of the woman has

been traditionally used as an object on which to project male anxieties. While this sentiment was evidenced earlier through Vivien's doctor's need to "fix" her and erase her enigma, this objectification of woman reflects a male need to control the female so as to limit her threat of power as represented by her sexuality.

Hayden reacts to Vivien's attempt at connection by responding in graphic detail about her sexual relations with Ben as a means to incite Vivien. However, her first actual appearance within the House is with Ben, in which she similarly explicitly attempts to seduce him. "I'm aching for you. My tongue is swollen and my lips are raw," she tells him, before vomiting up blood. While all of the ghosts exhibit their death wounds in some way, Hayden is still decaying from the inside, even as a ghost. Her decaying body becomes abject, particularly in light of the fact that she is straddling the boundaries of life and death, of human and other. Hayden grows indignant at Ben's refusal to listen and be seduced: "You thought I was gone, so you just thought you could throw me away like I didn't matter! Like I never even existed? Is that what you think of women, Ben? Like they're just disposable nothings that you can sit on top of as you casually drink iced tea?" Her outrage reflects a self-awareness of her status as woman and mistress and while the viewer never sees a more thoughtful and nurturing Hayden, it seems that she is conscious that she is putting on a performance. While the anxieties, desires and fantasies that fuel her performance are surely complicated, the show denies her the character development that would demonstrate such depth, and thus Hayden is left only to heighten her performance as hypersexual seductress and call attention to the fact that it is nothing but a performance.

While Hayden is a rather one-sided character, Moira, quite literally, has multiple sides to her identity performance. She convinces Vivien to keep her on as housekeeper through her knowledge of natural remedies to maintain the house. In the pilot episode, Vivien is established as a health-conscious, organic-loving, upper-middle-class mother and is hanging her sheet outside to dry when Moira first approaches her. Moira's appearance aids in convincing Vivien that she is qualified and knowledgeable in the best "natural" methods of taking care of the old house.

Moira appears as an older woman, with one working eye, the other being gray and cloudy; she wears a sensible and traditional maid outfit. In her article, "When the Woman Looks," Linda Williams discusses how in classical narrative cinema, "to see is to desire" (561). While Williams is referring to a specific time period and medium, her thoughts on blindness are apt for the discussion of Moira. She writes, "Blindness in this context signifies a perfect absence of desire, allowing the look of the male protagonist to regard the woman at the requisite safe distance necessary to the voyeur's pleasure, with no danger that she will return that look and in so doing express desires of her own" (561-562). Moira met her demise, in fact, because she was a threatening sexual figure, whom Constance believed to be seducing her husband. In fact, Moira tried to rebuff Hugo Langdon's sexual advances, but Constance did not wait to hear her side of the story before she shot her in the eye, literally removing her ability to look and therefore desire.

While she was a young woman when she died, Moira appears as an aged ghost, the only one to do so. What is particularly interesting in the context of Linda Williams' work is how Moira appears only to women as an elderly, disfigured woman, absent of desire and free of sexual threat. In a dispute between Moira, Ben and Vivien in which

Moira may lose her position, she tells the married couple: “I’m not naive to the ways of men. Their need to objectify, conquer. They see what they want to see. Women, however, see into the soul of a person.” While it is unclear how much agency Moira has over her oscillating appearances, she is tuned in to the powerful gaze of men and, through the power of the house, she appears as the epitome of sexual threat to the men who chose to see her as such, or rather cannot see beyond her surface.

In classical narrative cinema, the woman who employs her own active gaze is narratively punished, so as to eliminate her potential threat and secure the order of patriarchal authority bestowed to the male protagonist. While Constance attempted to narratively eliminate Moira in 1984, the house prevents narrative closure by bringing back the dead in their ethereal forms. Thus men fetishize Moira’s appearance in an attempt to cope with her potential power and threat. In the pilot episode, Ben, just out of the shower, walks in on Moira, lying on the couch, masturbating and seductively gazing at Ben. Unable to deal with his conflicting desires and anxieties towards fidelity, Ben masturbates in his bedroom before breaking down in heaving sobs. The show establishes Ben as an unfaithful husband before the opening credits even roll, and thus the hyper-sexuality evoked by the young Moira threatens Ben’s power and authority as patriarch within the house.

Whether Moira is trapped in this representation or consciously toying with men due to her past sexual experiences, her representation as a hypersexual seductress calls attention to ways in which film and television objectify and sexualize women. The show seems to be aware of such history and even if Moira is not consciously playing with traditional understandings of women, the show is. While Moira may be trapped in the

house and her representations, she is presented as a well-rounded character. She is not merely a maternal and wise older woman, nor a hypersexual vixen; rather, these are just parts of the whole, parts of her complex and fluid identity performance. However, by juxtaposing Moira with Hayden, the show ultimately does reinforce that it is only the maternal, elderly figure that is capable of redemption. The hypersexual vixen, whether it be Hayden or Moira's younger side, has no place in the family, for it is the vixen who threatens the fantasies of normalcy and security associated with marriage and family.

II. *Homeland*

Suburban Surveillance

Homeland constructs Carrie's private space of a single heterosexual woman and the Brodys' home, a space grounded in the ideals of middle-class suburbia. In these spaces, female sexuality functions in each in relation to the fantasies of heteronormativity and security. The pilot episode immerses the viewer in Carrie's world as a C.I.A officer working in the Middle East. She disobeys the C.I.A's instructions and manages to find her way into an Iraqi prison, where her C.I.A asset is about to be executed. In the next sequence, the viewer is transported ten months later to Carrie's life in Washington, D.C., where she is forced to work the desk after disobeying David Estes', the CIA Director of Counter-Terrorism.

The pilot episode's depiction of Carrie's space allows for an examination of her sexuality. The camera lingers in Carrie's space, and in particular, it tracks, zooms and holds on various shots of Carrie's living room bulletin board, a dense visual display of the network of terrorists, with Abu Nazir at the top. Rushing through the front door,

Carrie brings the same frenetic energy that we witnessed in the show's opening scene in which she desperately tries to get information from the soon-to-be-executed prisoner. This time though, it is clear Carrie has not spent the night at home; she throws off her black heels, slides off her sequined top and allows herself only to wipe in between her legs and brush her teeth before departing for work. All of these visual cues suggest Carrie is a sexually active woman. The rushed nature of her preparations for work suggests that she did not plan to spend the night away from home; perhaps she met someone and had a one-night encounter. As the viewer comes to learn throughout the episode, she is so devoted to her work that she is close to only a few people and her sexual intimacy comes through brief, impersonal affairs.

In the next scene, Carrie learns that Sergeant Nicholas Brody has been discovered as a prisoner of war in an Al-Qaeda compound. Brody's rescue and Carrie's subsequent suspicion that he is the turned American POW her asset in prison mentioned serves as the narrative impetus for the show. The viewer is first introduced to the Brody's wife, Jessica, in mid-coital bliss with her love Mike, who happens to be Brody's best friend. The show establishes Jessica as a sexual and satisfied woman, but a phone call from her presumed to be dead husband has her frantically and nervously rushing home to her children. The frame transitions to a medium-long shot that captures her Subaru Outback, a vehicle connoting middle-class suburbia, pulling into the driveway that leads to her modest ranch house.

As Jessica bursts inside, her son, entranced in his combat video game, is taken aback by her sudden arrival. Jessica, frantic to tell her children the news of their father, ignores Chris' pleas to not go into his sister Dana's bedroom. Pulling Chris by the arm,

the two walk down a hallway, revealing an open concept kitchen and den behind them. Much to her mother's dismay, Dana is smoking out of a bong with a neighborhood friend in her bedroom. Despite her joyous news, Jessica cannot help but revert to her role as disciplinarian and the show works to establish a dynamic with mother and teenage daughter at odds.

The Brody house seems solidly middle class; the space is constructed to seem familiar to the heteronormative population, comfortable and appealing but perhaps a bit dated with its wood-paneled walls. The hallway limits the viewer's scope of the home, suggesting, in contrast to the open concept main living area, that one can find privacy only in the compartmentalized spaces of the bedrooms. Dana's room is constructed and decorated as a sanctuary for a teenage girl, with its string lights and collaged bulletin boards. An American flag hangs near the door and, as seen more clearly in later scenes, a yellow ribbon is tied around a tree in the front yard, symbolizing the family's status as a military family and their hope that their husband and father will return home some day. Despite the differences in Carrie and the Brodys' private spaces, both Carrie and Jessica are first depicted entering said spaces after a sexual encounter, which highlights the women's removal from the institution of marriage.

After the Brodys leave, Carrie and her team infiltrate the seemingly private space to set up unsanctioned surveillance cameras. Frantic to have the surveillance running by the time the Brodys return home, Carrie impatiently watches the news coverage of Sergeant Brody's homecoming. The cameras connect just as the Brodys enter the house. A close-up of the of the monitor reveals that the surveillance of the house is compartmentalized into six boxes, each overseeing a specific room of the house: the

entryway, the kitchen, the den, the living room, the master bedroom, and a second bedroom. While this visual is specific to the show, it relies on the viewer's familiarity with the visual rhetoric of surveillance that was popularized in the post-9/11 age. *Homeland* follows a tradition of other shows, such as *24* (2001–2010), *Threat Matrix* (2003–2004), *The Grid* (2004), and *Sleeper Cell* (2005–2006), which at the height of post-9/11 anxiety, portrayed government agencies' increased use of surveillance as a necessary and just act. Stacy Takacs writes of the:

> Central anxiety of these sorts of programs, which is that the terrorists will not be recognized in time, that they will "pass by" unnoticed and infiltrate the community of "we". Suspense is created precisely by staging such instances of passage, and the object lesson in almost every case, is to justify the need for more extensive, detailed and intimate forms of surveillance in order to clarify where the boundaries of community begin and end, who can be folded into the "circle of we" and who cannot (75).

While Takacs is referring to programs that aired in the more immediate aftermath of 9/11, her arguments speak to the core of *Homeland's* overarching conflict. Carrie seems aligned with the object lesson of needing the surveillance to clarify Brody's allegiance, which justifies her insistence that the agency must have "eyes and ears" on Brody from the moment he arrives home. She sees nothing wrong with illegally spying on this returned soldier as long as there is the chance to solidify the communities of "us" and "them" and where Brody fits in.

Homeland, however, resides in a slightly different historical moment than other programs that aired in the more immediate aftermath of 9/11. While the memory of 9/11 remains in the public consciousness, the passage of time, as well as the transition to the Obama administration and the death of Osama Bin Laden just four months before *Homeland*'s premiere, has softened the public opinion on use of such extreme actions that

threaten American's civil liberties. *Homeland* exemplifies this shift in public perception of the War on Terror when Saul, Carrie's mentor and confidante, denies her help in acquiring a surveillance package on Brody because she lacks substantial evidence. He is unwilling to go over Estes' head and he needs more from Carrie before he will condone action. However, due to the diminished support for military action in the Middle East, Carrie is aware that Estes would rather use Brody as a "poster boy" to garner public support for situations in which the U.S. is already involved. Throughout much of its first season, *Homeland* remains ambiguous on whether Brody is now a terrorist, but Carrie rarely waivers on her intuitive suspicions. Thus the show not only creates suspense through Brody's unexplained actions upon returning home and his potential "passing" as a patriot, but through the doubt of whether Carrie is correct in her suspicions.

Homeland's ability to reflect the contemporary popular disillusion with the War on Terror allows for a more nuanced take on the use of surveillance than that of the shows that premiered shortly after 9/11. It spends more time on the complexities and contradiction within the government and the military and individuals (such as Carrie and Brody) who work within these systems. Rather than experiencing the whir of technology and devices working with the professionals tasked to keep our country safe as in previous shows focused on counter-terrorism, most of Carrie's surveillance is limited to her watching the one screen, alone in her living room. This depiction of surveillance can make viewers uneasy; *Homeland* disturbs the authority of previously endorsed practices through Carrie's unsanctioned actions. The fact that Carrie is a single woman also can create anxiety within the viewer. Whereas a show like 23 establishes its male protagonist as legitimate through the support of the government, Carrie **stands out as a woman who**

is willing to take similar risks but must do so on her own volition. Throughout the viewing experience, the viewer is forced to question whether Carrie's intuitions are correct or her identity as a woman living with bipolar disorder is pushing her into these situations.

While many individuals maintain an attachment to the authority of the U.S. government and its ability to maintain and uphold the ideals of American life, one's sense of privacy is fundamental to those ideals and also in direct contrast to the government's popularized actions pertaining to national security. *Homeland* roots its surveillance in the domestic sphere and in doing so, the show invites us to question our own relationship to the fantasy of privacy. While individuals have become accustomed to being watched in public, whether it is through surveillance cameras or just through the presence of others, the idea of someone watching us in our homes, governmentally sanctioned or not, is chilling and disturbing and taps into the anxiety surrounding the binary of us and them. *Homeland* targets the seemingly innocuous space of domesticity; even if the notion of privacy is a fantasy, an illusion, the act of invading such a space serves to create a sense of anxiety in the viewer.

One of the ways in which *Homeland* calls upon this anxiety of one's private space being invaded is in the scene that depicts oscillating points of view as Carrie watches Brody and Jessica's first sexual encounter. Jessica attempts to set the stage for a loving reunion between the married couple, but after years apart, the two are awkward and unfamiliar with each other. This uneasiness is amplified by the fact that Carrie is observing the two, and the moments that display Carrie watching the couple make the viewer a complicit voyeur with Carrie.

After Jessica is taken aback by Brody's torture scars, he tries to comfort her and initiate intimacy between the two. The point of view shifts to the surveillance camera, so that the viewer sees what Carries sees: the grainy, black and white footage of Jessica and Brody. A medium-long shot shows Carrie with the monitors in front of her as she sits on her couch, alone, watching them. Back in the bedroom, Jessica and Brody continue to kiss until Brody abruptly picks Jessica up and spins her around, placing her on the bed with him on top. He pulls down his pants just enough so that he can enter her, which he does quickly and roughly. Carrie uncomfortably takes off the headphones and looks away as the camera closes in on her. The surveillance camera captures Brody roughly thrusting into his wife. Her hands are spread wide, trying to grip the covers and the bedframe. Brody shouts as he ejaculates into her. His scars are very visible. Only Jessica's head can be seen as Brody lies on top of her. She is uncomfortable, violated and afraid. Her eyes race back and forth, trying to process what has just happened, as Brody grunts and pulls away from her. He breathes heavily, still on top of her. She looks at him but then closes her eyes and turns her head away, struggling to hold in her sobs. The camera shifts to a shot of Carrie watching, with a sympathetic gaze toward them both.

This scene is constructed to make the viewer uncomfortable through the depiction of this unfulfilling encounter between husband and wife as well as the fact that Carrie, a single heterosexual woman, is watching them without their consent. Placed firmly in the domestic space of the Master bedroom, Brody takes hold of Jessica, unable to connect with her emotionally but driven to fulfill the physical act. Jessica's discomfort is evident, but it is intertwined with the desire to embrace her husband's homecoming and the anxiety that she betrayed him by moving on and forming a new romantic relationship.

Carrie's gaze and the surveillance monitor create another layer that calls attention to the failed performance of a blissful domestic reunion. As we saw in an earlier scene, Carrie wears a wedding ring, an object I discuss in the following section, which points to her own false performance of matrimony. While the fantasies of marriage and family may have played an important role for Brody and Jessica during their time apart, those fantasies do not guarantee an uncomplicated return to these institutions. The fact that all three character are invested in a performance of heteronormative sexuality, but have difficulty in realizing the intimacy and support associated with marriage, points to the difficulty of constructing a reality to match one's idealized fantasies.

False Fidelity

Homeland explores the performance of false fidelity through both Carrie and Brody. While the infidelity involves an act or state of being that betrays the commitment of monogamous relationships, false fidelity is the performance of that commitment despite facts that directly contradict such monogamy. The two concepts certainly overlap, and in both Carrie and Brody, the act of infidelity plays into the performance of false fidelity. Carrie's false fidelity can be examined through the wedding ring she wears when trying to seduce men, despite the fact that she is a single woman. Brody performs false fidelity when he successfully lies about being faithful to his wife during a C.I.A lie detector test, despite the fact that he and Carrie had sex the night before.

Carrie's wedding ring is first portrayed in the introductory scene of her apartment, as mentioned in the previous section. Before rushing out the door to work, she remembers she is wearing the wedding ring and drops it into a dish. The camera lingers on the ring

for a beat, and while the viewer had only these few moments to read Carrie, the rushed nature of her early morning preparations and her removal of the ring seem incongruent. Carrie's need to make sure she does not go to work with this wedding ring speaks to her need to keep her various aspects of her identity separate from one another. Her work with the C.I.A takes precedence over all other parts of her life; thus, she is forced to manage her bipolar disorder silently, as well as make sure her sexual and romantic life does not contradict her professional performance.

Towards the end of the pilot, Carrie, frustrated, anxious and upset after crossing a line with her mentor, Saul dons the wedding ring once again and drinks alone at a bar until approached by a handsome gentleman. When the man inquires about her ring, asking if she's married, Carrie tells him, no, that she wears it to "weed out the ones looking for a relationship," and that, "[she] finds it easy to not screw it up with people [she] doesn't know." Although Carrie is engaging in flirtatious banter with this stranger, her words speak to her identity and her sexuality. Carrie is confident in her capability to do her job, but that confidence does not carry over to her personal life. Regardless of whether Carrie desires a monogamous heterosexual relationship or not, her refusal to seek one out speaks to her insecurity that she will screw it up with anyone she allows to get close to her. It is noteworthy that *Homeland* focuses on a female protagonist; her actions would perhaps not cast a cloud of judgment if she was a man, yet the scene leading up to her arrival at the bar cast Carrie as a woman who deals with her fears and self-doubt by engaging in promiscuous activity.

After Saul discovers that Carrie set up unsanctioned surveillance on Brody, he confronts her and informs her of the legal troubles she has ahead. In response, Carrie

desperately pleads with him and defends her actions by putting the responsibility of 9/11 on her own shoulders. With limp hair, wide eyes and a baggy blazer, Carrie leans into Saul and suggestively begs him to “tell [her] what [she] can do to make this right.” Saul immediately recognizes her aim and responds in disgust that she would cross the space and distance in which their relationship thrives, a space that marks them as mentor/mentee, and move into a space where their bodies might exist together as sexual beings. Saul is hurt that she would try to use her sexuality as a means of getting ahead, for he knows that she is more than capable of succeeding, if only she would stay in line with the government’s regulations.

In broaching the physical space between the two, Carrie also invites the association with fear and her sexuality; it is a different fear than if Saul had gone along with her actions, but it is a fear that forces her to look at herself in a light that she is not proud of. For Carrie, her job is her life, there is no separation, and so her identity becomes bound up in her mission to prevent future terrorist attacks. But while she may be willing to go out of the bounds of what is considered acceptable behavior for a CIA officer, her attempt to use her sexuality to achieve what she desires, in this case her job and the ability to observe Brody, and Saul’s blunt rejection, leaves her wounded and vulnerable.

The scene in which she is alone after Saul’s rejection is Carrie’s most exposed moment of the episode. She tries to calm herself by listening to jazz music before pacing back and forth in her closet, trying on multiple shirts before she goes out. Her face crumbles as she grasps her knees and holds herself. Carrie is a woman who on the outside may appear to be together and successful, but must still deal with the repercussions of

privileging job and national security over the securities associated with intimacy. She risks her life to ensure that the American public can still invest in the idealized norms and institutions, but as a result, she is left to tend with her racing thoughts and speculations and her anxieties and fears keeping the various aspects of her identity contained and separate. Even though Carrie does not appear to aspire to the conventions of a heteronormative life, she nonetheless feels the absence of that privileged form of intimacy associated with a marriage and family.

Carrie's lack of personal relationships is particularly heightened as she begins to watch the Brody family via surveillance cameras, alone in her living room. By Episode Four, "Semper I," Carrie's FISA warrant is about to expire. Saul secured the warrant by blackmailing a judge after Carrie connected Brody's tapping fingers during his televised appearances as potential communications to Al-Qaeda. The episode opens with Carrie eating her breakfast, watching the Brody family prepare for their day. As she watches Brody towel off from the shower, she appears seemingly self-conscious about her invasion of his most personal space. It quickly becomes evident that Carrie has grown familiar with Brody's morning routine; she dictates the order of his dressing, telling him where his tie is when he can't find it and smiling to herself when she is proven correct as his wife tells him it's in the bathroom.

Yet after a month of constant surveillance, Carrie has failed to accrue evidence that suggests Abu Nazir turned Brody against America. She is forced to dismantle the surveillance equipment and later tells Saul, "I can't help but feel like I'm missing something." "You're missing him," he tells her, "When you're around someone all the time, its like that. You know that as well as anybody. He's in your rearview now, Carrie.

In losing her technological eyes and ears on Brody, Carrie resorts to staking out his suburban house and following him to a veterans support group meeting. She makes contact by pretending to bump into him and he instantly recognizes her from his debriefing. Claiming she shouldn't be there, she quickly walks out and Brody follows her outside; the two connect immediately over the troubles of trying to interact with those that have not been at war in the Middle East. Still insisting that she leave, Carrie seems quite pleased at the flirtatious banter and instant rapport, as she smiles to herself getting into her car.

The next episode, "Blind Spot," puts Carrie and Brody together again; this time, Brody has been contacted by the C.I.A to confirm the identity of a captured terrorist, a man who was responsible for much of Brody's torture during his capture. When the terrorist is slipped a razor blade and kills himself, Carrie immediately suspects Brody, who was given face time with the prisoner that resulted in a fistfight between the two. Carrie insists everyone who made contact be administered a lie detector test; she is confident that this will be the key to trapping Brody in his lies. However, in Episode Six, "The Good Soldier", the night before the test, Brody gets into an altercation with his best friend Mike in front of his family and veteran friends and calls Carrie while at a bar. She joins him and the two click again; for the first time in six episodes, both Carrie and Brody seem at ease, open and eager for personal connection. After an indeterminate amount of time, the two stumble out of the bar, clearly intoxicated and uninhibited. Carrie tells Brody that his torturer is dead, the reason for the lie detector test, thus providing Brody with time to prepare his version of the truth.

In the next moment, the two kiss, hungrily embracing each other, before slipping in the backseat of Carrie's car. Brody quickly enters Carrie, roughly thrusting as she bends her arms back to support herself. The encounter is brief, but seemingly satisfying to the two, at least moreso than Brody's previous encounters with Jessica. Shot in medium-close shots, the scene is intimate, if not quite romantic, as the two maintain intense eye contact the whole time.

The next morning, Brody arrives at the C.I.A for his lie detector test. Once the administrator begins the questions, Brody goes out of focus, with only the screen, which Carrie watches, in focus. He establishes his baseline with simple questions, such as his name and his occupation, before the harder questions, such as if he has killed anyone before, continue to assert that he is telling the truth. He answers no when asked if he slipped the prisoner the razor blade, and the line, reading his heart rate, stays flat. Carrie instructs the question to be asked again and Brody continues to answer no, without raising red flags on the test. Still convinced he is lying, Carrie instructs the administrator to ask if he has ever been unfaithful to his wife. The monitor Carrie watches depicts Brody slowly turning his head to look directly into the camera and, essentially. Carrie, before answering no. The lie detecting line remains flat and Carrie understands that Brody is able to manipulate his results. Of course, she cannot tell Saul how she knows he's lying and is unable to sway his decision that Brody is no longer a suspect of any ill intent against the United States.

Brody's performance of false fidelity speaks more to his dual identity of patriot and terrorist than to his relationship with his wife. It is crucial for Brody to maintain a public image of returned hero and devoted family man so as to refute suspicions of his

true intents. While Brody's flashbacks have revealed that he is not telling the whole story of his capture, this scene marks the first time in the diegesis, where Brody actively and successfully deceives a C.I.A investigation. Both Carrie and Brody ultimately perform a false fidelity as a means to secure their professional lives. They both stand as characters who are affected by the fantasies of a heteronormative lifestyle but do not actively invest in them, although this certainly does not allow them to create their own version of heterosexual romance, due to the conflicting anxieties and desires circulating in both. However, they are interested in maintaining control over these internal contradictory elements in terms of their public performances, so as to prevent negative perception and action against them.

The Heteronormative Terrorist

In one of the sub-story lines that furthers the narrative of the CIA's search for Abu Nazir, *Homeland* employs the trope of the unexpected terrorist, or rather the heteronormative terrorist. To be invisible or go unnoticed in this world, particularly when it comes to concerns about national security and politics within the United States, means to be white, straight, and middle class. Such identity markers, including the male gender, are privileged and rewarded and that ideal is disseminated through the hegemonic order so that these identity markers are naturalized as the norm. While throughout its history, the United States has incited anxiety in its people through the threat of difference in the enemy, after 9/11, that threat became localized in the Muslim terrorists and consequently those who fit within certain similar categories of race, national identity, religion and dress. In *Homeland*, Abu Nazir represents the biggest threat to the United States as he

heads a vast network aimed at disrupting the status quo of daily life in the United States. While Nazir is not quite a one-dimensional character in that he acts as a nurturer to Brody by offering him the comforts of food, a home and a surrogate son, he is largely an elusive figure, usually seen only through Brody's flashbacks. Yet Nazir's threat is pervasive because of those who work on the ground level to put his plan in effect.

While 9/11 spurred the War on Terrorism and a focused attention on the Middle East, the C.I.A is tasked not only with investigating and pursuing those who seek to destroy the ideals of the nation, but also maintaining the mission to protect the homeland and prevent violent acts from within. In her book, *Terrorism TV*, Stacy Takacs writes of the pathologization of terrorism as serving dual purposes in that linking terrorism to that which is inherently "irrational" and "psychotic" justifies "tough" interrogation tactics as necessary and just (46). She writes, "On the other hand, the pathologization of terrorism also disciplines the domestic public by defining normative standards of citizenship that is extremely limited in range" (46). By pathologizing the terrorists as innately wrong or evil, the effect is to pathologize Americans as the polar opposite, as good and just; it assumes that by being American, one ultimately aligns oneself with the government-produced aims and beliefs of the nation, which for many is not the case.

The effect of singling out the Muslim terrorist as the ultimate enemy of the state produced a need to expand the identity markers associated with such persons. In the case of *Homeland*, there are many individuals who work for Abu Nazir who do not fit the traditional stereotype of the Middle Eastern, radically religious male. While much of the mystery and suspense of the season concerns Brody's loyalties to both the state and Abu Nazir, in this section, I will examine the storyline of Aileen Morgan and Raqim Faisel, a

couple working for Nazir, as an example of the shifting boundaries that work to identify and discipline bodies, particularly within certain spaces. While the white, American, female terrorists is not an original character type, in *Homeland* it connects to the core anxieties and desires that relate to public fantasies of heteronormativity by calling into question who can claim a right to those public fantasies.

In *Homeland*, the viewer follows Carrie and her partner Danny as they track the various email connections to Abu Nazir. Upon checking out Raqim Faisel, they find nothing suspicious; he is an Arab man, a professor at a local university. However the ending of the previous episode, with Raqim and Aileen buying a house by the airport with the cash traded from a stolen necklace linked to Nazir, causes a red flag for the viewer. On the narrative level of knowledge, Carrie remains ignorant of the Raqim's connection to Nazir when someone tips off Aileen that the C.I.A is following Raqim. Aileen waves an American flag out of the window, as Raqim is about to pull into the driveway, signaling to him to keep driving. Carrie checks Raqim off the list, but the viewer holds more information than the show's protagonist, knowing that Raqim and his blonde wife are up to something, possibly related to the airport that they live so close to.

The object of the American flag serves to aid the terrorist mission, but it also speaks to the anxiety surrounding the inability to use superficial identity markers to identify threats to national security. Takacs discusses television program's representations of terrorists who appear "normal" and unsuspicious; "Specifically [these representations] embody anxieties about the dismantling of once meaningful boundaries and distinctions between people(s) and the worry that there will be no way to tell the difference between 'ordinary' individuals and 'suspicious' subjects," (73-74). The twist

of the storyline is that Aileen is in fact the terrorist who has convinced Raqim to partake in Nazir's plan. By placing these characters in a traditional suburban environment and by reversing the viewer's expectations, *Homeland* suggests that these boundaries are already blurred. Not only is the domestic space unsafe, but the ultimate villain is a girl who fell in love with a boy from the other side of the fence.

Aileen grew up in a Western, white, gated compound in Saudi Arabia. Aileen's privileged background is not an atypical approach to the heteronormative terrorist in television. Takacs addresses how shows such as *Sleeper Cell, 24, Threat Matrix* and *The Grid* employ the trope of the "passing terrorist" who can infiltrate and carry out the mission unnoticed. She points out *Sleeper Cell* for rooting some of its terrorists in the "consumer decadence and moral relativism" of the West, thus linking these people's turn to terrorism as a search for "meaning" and "purpose" through the Holy War (76). While Aileen does not embrace her family's wealth and the stark contrast of her upbringing and her surroundings outside the compound surely aided in her alignment with the terrorists, *Homeland* emphasizes Aileen's love for Raqim rather than her allegiance to the terrorists as her driving motivation.

While *Homeland* introduces a number of minor characters and sub-story lines, particularly in relation to the CIA's mission to track Abu Nazir, the case of Aileen and Raqim is noteworthy when considered within the context of this thesis. In Episode Five, "The Good Soldier" Aileen and Raqim go on the run after being tipped off that the C.I.A is onto them and flee to an abandoned farmhouse in rural Ohio, as instructed by their overseers. Told that they will be safe there, Aileen and Raqim begin to investigate the structure tucked off of the road, next to a cornfield. From the outside, the house recalls

the sturdy and unassuming qualities of Midwestern culture. Once again, by sending Raqim and Aileen to this idealized domestic space, the terrorists use traditional objects and spaces of American life in an effort to infiltrate the homeland undetected. The inconspicuous nature of this domestic space exudes heteronormativity and security, but as Aileen goes to look inside the windows, she realizes this space is a trap, intended to extinguish the couple's liability to the terrorist cause. Looking into the house, Aileen sees an eerily unremarkable living room with a wire connected to the main door, which Raqim is about to open. Realizing the terrorists plan to eliminate them, Aileen grabs Raqim and the two rush away from the farmhouse in their car. As they come bounding onto the main road, the point of view of the shot is from another vehicle; presumably an associate of the terrorist group whose task it is to make sure the couple does not survive. Not only are the typical middle-class domestic spaces used to deceive the CIA, but they are used to lure even their own into a false sense of security.

In the next episode, "The Weekend," Aileen is caught by the F.B.I as she tries to cross the border into Mexico, and Saul, distraught by his wife's insistence that she return[to India by herself, possibly for good, decides to personally drive Aileen back to Washington D.C. in the hopes that he can get her to talk. With Raqim shot down the previous night (and episode) in a motel room by the terrorists, Aileen, heartbroken and resigned to her fate, sits silently and sullenly throughout the twenty-some hour drive. Saul stops at a small, three-sided, wooden structure, dilapidated and worn with age, that looks as if no one has used it for many years; the rural setting recalls Aileen and Raqim's previous ill-fated visit to the farmhouse in Ohio.

In this space, Saul opens up to Aileen; he tells her of his experience being the only Jewish family in rural Indiana; they lived three hours away from the nearest synagogue, so his family would practice in this structure. His childhood was dictated by the religious beliefs of his parents, who refused to allow Saul to partake in the traditional and idealized pastimes of childhood, such as baseball and the Christmas pageant, because of their association with Christianity. This monologue serves to bridge a connection between Saul and Aileen, for they both were immensely affected by their parents' identity markers and by their status as outsiders in an otherwise largely homogenized community.

Saul distances Aileen's crimes from her political or religious beliefs and speaks to her emotions, in an effort to get her to comply and open up. He tells her:

> I don't know what happened to you, Aileen. I don't know how you went from one more angry teenage girl to joining the fucking jihadists. And if your issues are truly geopolitical then, I can't help you. I think you wound up here because you fell in love with a boy. And he's gone now.

It is not until they are back in the car and Aileen inquires what will happen to Raqim's body that she finally breaks and provides information to Saul. Her breaking point comes when she learns Raqim will not get the Muslim burial he wanted, but rather will be buried in a potter's field if his body remains unclaimed. The finality of that knowledge forces her to acknowledge that the power of her love for Raqim will not help her current situation. It is significant how *Homeland* constructs and privileges Aileen's romantic relationship with Raqim as the driving force for her terrorist actions. In doing so, the show calls attention to how popular culture at large privileges heterosexual romance and its related institutions of marriage and family.

However, emphasizing the value of Aileen and Raqim's love also reinforces the hold of the fantasy that romance and intimacy will erase previous problems or contradictions and offers a simpler but better life. Lauren Berlant writes, "To the degree that a love story pits lyrical feelings about intimacy against the narrative traumas engendered in ordinary or public life, it participates in the genre of romance: the love plot provides a seemingly non-ideological resolution to the fractures and contradictions of history," (Berlant 92). Aileen's love for Raqim is supposed to offer clarity towards her motivations, when really it only complicates the viewer's previous understanding of her character. The show intentionally constructs Aileen as the driving force of the couple's involvement with the terrorists; Raqim doubts their ability to elude the C.I.A and wants them to turn themselves in to the authorities. Furthermore, Aileen doesn't give up once Raqim is murdered and continues with her escape plan to Mexico. She is a heteronormative terrorist not just because she uses her identity markers to pass unnoticed and infiltrate the homeland, but because ultimately the show constructs her as a woman who invests in the fantasy of love and intimacy, despite the fact that her political beliefs do not align with those of the U.S. government.

Part Two: Time and Trauma

I. *American Horror Story*

Tate

The cold open in Episode Six, "Piggy Piggy," marks one of the most disturbing and graphic depictions of a school shooting in the post-Columbine age. The episode begins in 1994, sixteen years prior to the 2011 dominant narrative arc of the season. For six minutes, the viewer is forced to watch the horrific scene in which Tate kills five students in his school library before returning home to be gunned down by a SWAT team.

The scene in the library begins with exposition shots of each of the victims, the cheerleader and the jock flirting, the nerd typing away at a computer, and the Goth girl reading and pacing by the stacks. These characters are consciously constructed as high school archetypes; when the students haunt Violet and Tate in the two episodes prior to this one, Violet deems them the "Dead Breakfast Club." The sound of rapid-fire gunshots and screams signals a crises in the school, but the students do not act until another student, dressed in a punk style, runs into the library and informs them, "somebody is shooting up the school." His hands are red with someone else's blood. When the sound of the gunshots grows louder, signaling the shooter is approaching, the group scrambles to hide under the tables, behind the librarians counter and among the book stacks. The gunman tries unsuccessfully to enter the barricaded doors, and for a moment the group thinks it is safe, until it hears footsteps approaching an unguarded door. The teacher runs to grab the handle before the shooter can enter; another false moment of safety is interrupted when the teacher is shot down through the door.

The shooter enters the library, although the camera angle and position only reveal his gun and military boots. The Goth girl tries to remain unseen as she slips through the rows of books, but the shooter's familiar, eerie and nonchalant whistling indicates that he is approaching. The camera abruptly cuts to the students as a loud gunshot explodes, marking her death. Next the loud footsteps approach the punk kid and he pleads, "No, no, please no," as the long barrel of the shotgun reaches toward him and another loud sound signals another death. The nerd tries to call 911 on the library's phone but fails to get through before he too is shot dead. Only the jock and the cheerleader remain, crouched under a table, but the jock decides to put an end to the shooter. As he approaches the shooter, he bravely says, "That's enough. Get out of here," before he is shot and propelled onto the table next to the one under which the cheerleader hides. She cries out, clasping her hand to her mouth as urine begins to pool around her pristinely white tennis shoes. Another bird's-eye point of view shows the shooter lift the bolted table, revealing the girl, crouching, crying and pleading for her life. The camera pans up from the girl's perspective, revealing the identity of the shooter as Tate Langdon. Breathing heavily and with unsympathetic eyes, Tate brings the gun up to aim at the girl, who screams out "Why?" and he pulls the trigger as the screen cuts to black.

Because of the way this scene plays out in real time, it is important to convey details as a way of providing an understanding of this trauma. It lacks the usual tropes of a sped-up or slowed-down temporality often used to convey trauma in other shows. With no non-diegetic sound or score to heighten the suspense or fear, this scene uses silence and the diegetic sounds of panic, fear and gunshots to completely immerse the spectator in the experience of this school shooting. While the episodes leading up to this have

suggested a dark past for Tate, these narrative clues do not prepare the viewer for the jarring depiction of violence that assaults her own sense of security. While almost all of the episodes begin with a flashback depicting a violent murder in the House, Tate's public slaughtering in another institution (the school) that is expected to be safe, is particularly affecting for the viewer. The horror and trauma is largely contained in the House throughout the season, but Tate's evil act reinforces just how unstable the boundaries of the House are.

The ghosts of the murdered school kids haunted Tate and Violet during the previous two episodes, yet the scene is constructed in a way to conceal the shooters identity until the very end. While scenes of the SWAT team entering the House, where the Langdons lived at the time, bookmark this flashback opening, the show intentionally heightens the suspense and slowly builds to revealing Tate as the shooter. The reveal is a moment of fraught understanding for the viewer; while this scene is arguably the most explicit and traumatic within the entire season, the puzzle of Tate's life and reprehensible acts is finally complete. Yet the viewer is left with a visceral sense of unease and dread going into the opening credits. In choosing to open a mid-season episode in this way, the show's creators intentionally play with and subvert the viewer's expectations of the rhythm of narrative television, jarring her into an active spectatorship akin to that of the way in which television portrays and conveys real-life national traumas.

Tate is forced to deal with the consequences of his actions, despite his lack of knowledge of them, on Halloween. *American Horror Story* treats Halloween as an event of much significance and spans a two-episode narrative arc. It is the one-day of the year when the ghosts can walk among the living, and for the residents of the House, it

provides a much-needed reprieve from the suffocating walls of their daily existence. In Episode Five, "Halloween Part 2" Tate and Violet sneak off to the beach, where Tate muses about his own experiences in high school. Looking out onto the dark ocean, he says,

> I used to come here, when the world closed in and got so small I couldn't breathe. I'd look out onto the ocean, and I'd think, 'Yo douche-bag, high school counts for jack shit.' I…hated high school. So I'd come here and look out at this vast, limitless expanse. Then its like, that's your life man. You can do anything, be anything. Screw high school, that's just a blip in your timeline. Don't get stuck there.

For the first time, or an oblivious viewer, Tate's sentimental recollection of his troubled youth seems to inspire hope, or at the very least, perspective. While the weight of adolescence can feel incredibly close and impossible to see past, Tate touches on a sentiment that is not uncommon in our culture: while high school may be painful and awkward, there is a future beyond it. However, once the viewer is aware that Tate is a ghost who committed unspeakable acts, his words take on an ironic distance in relation to the narrative. At this point, the viewer is not expected to know that Tate committed mass murder, but both the narrative and visual cues, such as his ability to enter the house at will and the flash cut of his bloodied body behind Ben, suggest that he is one of the many ghosts who inhabit the space of the House. In light of his actions, it seems that Tate lacked the clarity he speaks of in this scene. He did get stuck in his high school identity and it was not just a blip in his timeline; rather, who he was at age seventeen becomes his only future, but it is a future of eternal oblivion and stagnation. Because he killed so many and died for those murders, he will never be able to move forward, and his inability to come to terms with his past self prevents his ability to move beyond the realm of the living.

Tate's ignorance is exemplified when the ghosts of his murdered victims confront him on the beach with Violet. It seems that this Halloween is the first time Tate has left the confines and safety of the House; he finally has a reason to do so, as he wants to experience the world with Violet. The dead students want to enact revenge on Tate for taking their lives. While Tate may not know what he did, these ghosts are fully aware of the futurity that Tate robbed them of and they have been stewing for revenge for seventeen years. The group is incredulous at Tate's seemingly heteronormative teenage romance with Violet; they did not get to experience the highs and lows of romance nor the stability of family and friendship. In a later scene in the episode, in which the group confronts Violet on her front porch, Chloe, the cheerleader, informs her, "I'm an only child. After what happened, my parents split up, sold the house and moved away. No forwarding address. So I don't have a home." These students, with their individual hopes and dreams, encapsulate more broadly the failure to attain ones expectations for life, which are expectations fueled by the fantasies of heteronormativity.

As the episode progress and Tate continues to assert his oblivion, the group begins to just want an explanation for his acts, or at the very least an acknowledgement. Chloe tells him, "I should be thirty-four years old, married, with children," but Tate can only respond bewilderedly, "I'm sorry. I don't know you." In dying young and becoming eternally preserved in her teenage body, Chloe cannot help but idealize the fantasies of heteronormativity that she was robbed of achieving. While the students lack a future because of their deaths, this scene points to Edelman's broader point that those who do not conform and aspire to the mandate of heteronormativity, particularly reproduction, also have no future.

The temporal structure of these two episodes, “Halloween Part 2” and “Piggy Piggy,” works to destabilize the viewer’s sense of orientation and understanding of Tate’s timeline. By showing the confrontation between Tate and the murder victims before the depiction of the actual trauma, the viewer remains just as confused as Tate during the confrontation. This confusion plays up the potential sympathy the viewer may feel for Tate, and as a whole, the narrative works to complicate one’s understanding of Tate in light of the horrific acts he commits.

Violet

With the opening scene of “Piggy Piggy” depicts the trauma of the school shooting, as discussed in the previous section, the rest of the episode focuses on Violet’s discovery of Tate’s past. Overwhelmed by this news, Violet overdose on sleeping pills and Tate attempts to save her. This is the last we see of Violet’s suicide attempt and its repercussions in this episode. The episode does not return to Violet’s narrative until the last scene of the episode, in which Tate tearfully confesses his love for Violet, telling her that he cares about her feelings more than his own and that he’s aware of her recent distance and thus willing to leave her alone if that is what she desires. Overwhelmed with feelings of being in love and being loved romantically for the first time, Violet gives into the fantasy of her and Tate’s romance, which is bound up with the desperate hope that Tate’s evil actions of the past will not define or determine the young couple’s future. It is almost easier for Violet to embrace Tate’s love, for to reject him would force her to come into contact with the trauma that led to her overdose. The episode ends as they lay next to

each other in bed, exhausted from the emotions, the pain and trauma both have endured at such a young age.

Violet's narrative arc remains stagnant until Episode Ten, "Smoldering Children." She continues to isolate herself in her bedroom and other private spaces such as the attic, and the young couple seems to aimlessly and lethargically fill their days with each other. When Violet informs Tate that she is going to go back to school, he becomes desperate to keep her home, and tries to convince her to form a suicide pact so that the two can be together forever. He tells her he wants her to be "happy and free," but the life he outlines for her is suffocating and mundane: "We can play with Beauregard, we can play games, watch videos. We can be together forever." While Tate believes that if Violet is free from the pressures of society, the two will be able to maintain a happy existence together for eternity, Violet sees beyond the engulfing emotions of young love and recognizes the threat Tate poses to her existence and development. After her lack of movement over the last three episodes, it is as if time has already collapsed into eternity for her and the fantasy of her love and relationship with Tate is not enough to extinguish her yearnings for life.

Yet when she tries to flee, she is unable to leave the grounds of the House. As she races down the stairs, the camera spins 360 degrees around her, which works to heighten the terror and confusion Violet feels. She screams for help outside the gates to a couple walking by with their dog, but only the dog acknowledges her with a ferocious bark. As soon as she opens the gates and runs out onto the street, she suddenly finds herself back in the kitchen, having entered through the back door. The camera continues to circle around her, amplifying Violet's fear of being trapped in the House. She continually exits

the front door, only to re-enter through the back and it quickly becomes apparent that like the other ghosts, she cannot leave the grounds. Throughout this scene, the non-diegetic score builds suspense by mimicking the creaks of the house and a frantic heartbeat. She pleads to Tate that she doesn't want to die, and as the score builds to a crescendo, he informs her "It's too late for that," before the scene cuts to black, signaling a commercial break.

While a commercial break typically signals a shift in focus to another narrative arc, in this case, the viewer is gratified with the pleasure of the learning about Violet's death. Throughout the season, Tate oscillates between performances of evil incarnate and a nurturing, devoted partner, and as the scene unfolds after the commercial break, he tries to be a strong and soothing presence for Violet. He leads her to the crawl space and the camera pans down, revealing Violet's dead, stiff body rotting beneath the house. Violet emits a feral wail as the boundaries between life and death, public and private, self and other collapse into themselves. She is forced to face her own abjection, which the camera highlights through a close-up of her frozen, pained expression with her eyes rolled back into her head and her wide-open mouth full of flies and maggots. In that moment, the ghost of Violet realizes she died when she overdosed on the sleeping pills and the force of the traumatic memory of her death breaks through the diegesis in the form of sepia-toned flashback.

The narrative revelation of Violet's death, four episodes after it occurred, highlights the concept of narrative special effect and its function in serialized television. The winding and temporally diverse narrative of *American Horror Story* can be seen as a narrative spectacle in its entirety; the creators of the show seem to revel in the ability to

weave an intricate and multi-layered narrative that requires to the viewer to actively engage in order to find the pleasure in all of the pieces coming together to form a cohesive whole. The reveal of Violet's death causes the viewer to pause and reflect on the three prior episodes in which, during the first viewing, the viewer is unaware that Violet died. Certain scenes take on new significance in light of this new knowledge, particularly the one in Episode Seven, "Open House," when Violet tells her parents she is not going to kill herself, so they can return to their "policy of benign neglect" without worry. Mittell speaks of the distinctive pleasure acquired in "marveling at the narrational bravado on display by violating storytelling conventions in a spectacular fashion" (36). As television continues to assert itself as a medium with quality content, shows must continue to push the conventions of storytelling, and as narrative spectacles become normalized, the boundaries continue to expand.

The narrative spectacle of Violet's death allows for an appreciation of the constructed nature of the narrative itself, which can lend itself toward an awareness that the fantasies of heteronormativity that circulate within Violet's identity are constructed as well. Upon inquiring how it will be in the future, Tate responds, "Just like this. Like it's always been. It's you and me. Together for always." It is no longer undying love keeping the young couple together, but rather the eternal state of time for the undead. Romantic relationships create a space for an attachment to the alluring and all-encompassing fantasy of a sustainable and enduring love. Through death, Violet has realized that fantasy as her new existence and must face coming to terms with the fact that that her relationship with Tate may not be able to provide her with all that she desires, desires that go beyond her first love. While Violet lacks the knowledge of Tate's full actions, which include the murders of Chad

and Patrick and the rape of her mother, her hesitation to let go of all of the other hopes and fantasies she once held for her live and embrace this heterosexual romantic relationship as intrinsic to her new identity is evident through her physical distance from Tate in the bedroom.

Romeo and Juliet, Post-Mortem

To die in the Murder House ensures an eternal existence within its walls. While our society continues to evolve and change, the ghosts must rely on the new inhabitants to inform them of the current state of affairs. Each new human occupant of the House brings with her a specific set of anxieties and desires that relate to her contemporary American experience and in doing so, the ghosts are unable to maintain permanence, both in their position within the House dynamic and in their individual identities, despite their stasis within the House. Such is the case with Tate and Violet.

Violet's displays her frustration with Tate's lack of understanding of Internet culture when she informs him that it's not U-Tube with a U, but rather YouTube. Tate died seventeen years prior to Violet's arrival in the House and Violet is keen of the rapid rate in which technology is changing our society. She reflects, "One of these days, this computer will be obsolete. People will have microchips implanted in their brains or something. We won't be able to watch YouTube or anything. We'll be like all the others here, prisoners in a windowless cell." Violet is keenly aware of her loss, a loss that reflects not only her specific life goals but also a broader sense of her inability to engage with the swiftly moving currents of society.

Tate has already spent seventeen years isolated and alone; in this light his desire to help Nora reclaim her sense of motherhood through a new child makes sense, as Nora's role as temporary surrogate mother fills a lack Tate felt in life too. While this does not justify his act of raping Vivien in the Rubber Man suit, Tate's motives are certainly more complex than pure evil; he desires the security and fulfillment that the fantasies of heteronormativity are built on. Violet continues to vocalize her doubts and fears with, "Nobody here is happy, Tate," to which he responds, "Well, yeah, but they're not like us. They're lonely. We have each other." Lauren Berlant speaks to the complex relationship between fantasy and reality that is wrapped up in our notions of and expectations for love: "The story that love is invulnerable to the instabilities of narrative or history, and is a beautifully shaped web of lyrical mutuality, is at the ideological core of modern heterosexuality" (91-92). The fantasy that love will stand strong against the complex and fluid nature of narrative and history, as well as naturally embody a dynamic of a profound and expressive understanding of the other, may be at the heart of heteronormativity, but it is crucial to maintain an awareness that heteronormativity is a construction. It is constructed to feel natural and individual, but it actually lacks the intrinsically inherent basis we seek for it. On one hand, the House, a space of collapsed time and heightened desires and anxieties, could be the ideal place for love and the privileged heterosexual union to remain "invulnerable to the instabilities of narrative or history," but as seen through Violet and Tate, even though the ghosts of the House endure eternally, they are not immune to the broader history of the American experience nor the House's own charged history.

Tate is clearly invested in the idea that his relationship with Violet and the love they feel for each other will transcend and erase his immoral acts of the past. He may not

be able to remember the trauma of his mass murder, but as a ghost, he has aided in the buildup of trauma within the House, traumas that personally affect Violet and her own desires for sustainability. When Chad informs Violet of Tate's murders as a ghost as well as that he raped and impregnated her mother, which ultimately led to her death, the love she feels for Tate is not enough to allow for forgiveness and acceptance. Unable to allow the seductive and warm feelings of love to color her understanding of Tate any longer, she finally confronts him. She forces him to admit he knew he was dead all along, an awareness that remained ambiguous to the viewer until Episode Ten, thus calling into question his motives for seeking psychiatric help from her father. The knowledge of Tate's treachery forces Violet to question the foundations of her love with Tate; it also complicates the sought-out transparency that Berlant discusses in her work on desire and love. She writes, "Love plots are marked by a longing for love to have the power to make the loved one transparent, and therefore a safe site on which to place one's own desire without fear of its usual unsettling effects" (90). Love entails vulnerability; it opens up a delicate space wrought with the anxiety over potential hurt and rejection. While the longing for transparency between lovers is a powerful force, it is not sustainable for Violet once she realizes she did not know and is not willing to know all of the aspects of Tate's identity, aspects that negate him as a safe site for Violet's desires.

Violet tells Tate, "I used to think you were like me…[that] you were attracted to the darkness, but, Tate, you are the darkness." Violet's attraction to the darkness resulted in her feeling isolated and different from the other teenagers around her and her immediate connection with Tate offered the potential to fill the lack created by her isolation. Yet the distance between her attraction to the darkness and Tate's enactment of

that darkness is too wide for the desire and fantasy of love to close in. Despite his desperate and heartbroken attempt to convince her that she is his light, that she has changed him for the better, Violet calmly and determinedly tells Tate that she can't and won't forgive him.

This scene is intimately shot with close-ups that depict Tate's raw emotions and Violet's masking calmness. The non-diegetic score is sparse, allowing the viewer to feel the full impact of the dialogue. After Violet rejects Tate, the score becomes more prominent, shifting to a tone of heightened dread, as Violet begins to scream for Tate to go away. As they begin a shouting match, the shots oscillate between the two as the camera begins slowly pull away from each, as if to create the feeling of the new and growing distance between them.

Violet gets her wish in the end; one of her few means of agency as a ghost is that she can banish another spirit at will. The narrative conclusion of the season focuses on the reunion of the nuclear family and the restoration of order within the House, which is discussed in the final part of this work. Tate is depicted only briefly, looking longingly through a window while the family celebrates Christmas.

II. *Homeland*

Brody

Homeland focuses much of its narrative on conveying the complexities of Brody's trauma from his experience as prisoner of War. Much of Brody's trauma is depicted through flashbacks, but three in particular speak to Brody's relationship between time

and trauma. The first two flashbacks examine how Brody's trauma resurfaces through memory and has an immobilizing and isolating effect on his daily life. The third flashback provides an understanding of Brody's turn against the United States government.

In the pilot episode, the spectator experiences Brody's first "flashback" during his C.I.A briefing when Carrie pushes the question of whether he had any contact with Abu Nazir. Brody denies any contact and offers no explanation to why they kept him alive for so many years, after his usefulness in extracting information about the United States expired after a few days. Carrie asks him again, imploring him to examine the photographs of Nazir. The camera zooms in slowly on Brody, while oscillating between this close-up and the picture of Nazir at his hands. The shot suddenly cuts to a hazy image of a naked Brody, hanging by a rope from the ceiling. His body crashes down and a medium close-up shows Brody's bruised and bloody face. A man bends down to feed Brody water from a golden bowl; barely able to open his eyes, Brody looks up at the man. A close-up of Abu Nazir's face looking down at Brody fills the screen and the single light bulb behind his head creates an angelic, halo effect, heightening the reveal that this notorious terrorist is offering a kindness and relief to Brody.

This flashback functions as a way for the show to inform the viewer of Brody and Nazir's connection, a fact that remains unknown on the narrative level. This memory resurfaces because of Carrie's prodding for a connection between Brody and Nazir. It is also a way for the show to portray the trauma, both psychological and physical, that Brody endured for so long, and to deepen the mystery of Brody's allegiance by setting him up as a man who is not telling the entire story of his capture.

Homeland depicts Brody's trauma more explicitly in the second episode, "Grace." As the family begins to resume their normal lives, Brody is left paralyzed with flashbacks and hallucinations he has no control over. For narrative purposes, the show does not let Brody dwell on his trauma for more than an episode; if he is to go forth with his mission, he must put on a smile for the media waiting outside his house and play the part of the patriotic hero. The trauma in "Grace" is shown often through flashes and glimpses, as Brody is overwhelmed in his house alone. The temporality of re-experiencing his trauma is that of lost time, he spends the entire day crouched in the corner of his bedroom, all while Carrie impatiently watches through the surveillance cameras.

Episode Nine, "Crossfire," depicts a different kind of trauma for Brody and the viewer learns of the events leading up to his turn against the United States. The depiction of memory and trauma functions complete the viewer's understanding of Brody's turn against his country, rather than portray the nature of trauma itself, through dreams and dissociative flashbacks. "Crossfire" spends much of the episode on a flashback narrative, going back three years to when Nazir brought Brody out of isolation. After being offered a warm bath and a shave, Brody is commissioned to teach Nazir's son, Issa, the English language. In being denied not only the modern conveniences of running water and a warm bed, but also the emotional connection that comes through intimate human relationships for so long, Brody becomes extremely attached to Issa and acts as a paternal figure for the boy. This flashback narrative captures the passage of time by weaving in the present time narrative of Carrie's task of befriending the imam in whose mosque the F.B.I killed two members. The occurrences in the present time work to mark time shifts within the flashback narrative. While at first Issa is hesitant of Brody, they become close

over time; various shots depict the two praying, playing soccer together and Issa learning English from Brody.

The pinnacle of this relationship occurs when Issa finds Brody alone in a room, crouched down, breathing heavy, eyes shut tight with panic, and offers him a drawing of himself and Brody with a soccer ball. Issa's presence alone immediately eases Brody, but the hand-drawn picture captures the emotional attachment and investment the two have placed onto the other. Issa represents the only nurturing connection Brody can maintain in the compound and it is noteworthy how, after being devoid of the attachments and institutions that heteronormativity and security run through for so long, the most peace and vitality Brody can find, given his circumstances, is through his relationship with this young boy.

For viewers who have been eager to understand the complicated nature of Brody's capture, turn and re-integration into American society, the answer arrives in the form of explicit trauma. Issa's progress is marked by his singing of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and the pride Brody feels about the boy's progress is evident through his slow calm coaching voice and his wide smile upon Issa's completion of the song. Moments later, after Issa leaves for school, a violent explosion breaks through the windows in the room where Brody is reading.

Outside, the air is gray and thick with smoke while the ground has been instantly demolished into black, charred rubble. Brody frantically runs through the wreckage, stopping other children to ask about Issa and unearthing wounded children for his surrogate son. The non-diegetic music takes on a tense, horrific tone with its prominent eerie high-pitched ring that mimics the aftermath of an explosion. The diegetic screams

and cries of the wounded are equally noticeable and serve to heighten the experience of trauma in the viewer. The camera sits low to the ground, disorienting the viewer who can only follow Brody's feet as he searches. Eventually he finds Issa's body and upon realizing the boy is dead, Brody leans and kisses his face, whispering his name before shouting it out into the destruction.

Issa's death bears a significant loss for Abu Nazir, and while Nazir has notably treated Brody with kindness and respect, this event bridges a connection between the two men. When the U.S. government denies responsibility for the drone attack and pins the pictures of the eighty-two dead children on terrorist propaganda, Brody can no longer claim allegiance to his country. Brody never wavered in his commitment to the military and the government during his initial interrogation and torture, but in destroying the one thing he could invest himself in as a prisoner and then denying responsibility for such atrocious acts, Brody only needs to see the evidence of the Vice-president's betrayal to desire action and justice.

Thus, Brody's trauma and turn against America is much more complicated than the extensive torture and isolation he endured for five years; it is intertwined with his need for human connection and love. The trauma of his torture and isolation deprived him all of his former attachments, thus creating an intense and vulnerable need for them. Once he was integrated into the compound life through his role as Issa's teacher, that void began to fill with his love for Issa. The loss of Issa is all the more heightened because of what Brody had lost and endured before this, and the extreme devastation of that trauma compels him to enact revenge on the Vice President. Upon returning home, the security and comfort of Brody's marriage and family are not enough to negate the

injustice he feels toward Issa's death and his need to make those responsible pay. Yet his attachments to these American institutions are compelling nonetheless, and much of this season focuses on Brody's grappling with the contradictory and disillusioning reality of his lived experience not matching the fantasies he once held toward his marriage, family and government.

Carrie

From the pilot episode, *Homeland* makes it clear to the viewer that Carrie has internalized her failure to prevent 9/11 as a personal failure. This blurring of personal and professional boundaries enables Carrie to bypass the CIA's protocol and act as she sees fit, which is all for the greater purpose of preventing another domestic attack. While 9/11 served as a trauma not just for those who were in the vicinity of the attacks, but for anyone who watched the constant weeks-long news coverage, Carrie is set apart as a woman not only traumatized by the events but as one who blames herself for its occurrence. In her heated argument with Saul about her unsanctioned surveillance of the Brody home, Carrie indignantly retorts back to Saul, "Everyone's not me," when he suggests that "everyone missed something that day."

Carrie's heightened sense of self-importance as well her ability to create patterns from seemingly unconnected evidence bears significance to the fact that the show constructs her as a person living with bipolar disorder. Virgil, her trusted confidante and surveillance expert, is alarmed when his brother finds a mysterious pill in Carrie's aspirin bottle and decides to confront her. Carrie reveals that she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when she was twenty-two, after writing a forty-five page manifesto that she

believed would reinvent music. She hides this part of her self from the world because the C.I.A. would deem her a liability if they knew. It is through this lens that the viewer comes to know Carrie's family; her father, who also has bipolar disorder and lives with her psychiatrist sister, who manages Carrie's medicine and allows her to bypass the medical system and its recordkeeping.

Carrie's most significant trauma arrives in Episode Ten, "Representative Brody," in which a failed plan to capture terrorist threat Tom Walker results in an suicide bombing of Farragut Square in Washington, D.C. While Carrie intuitively realizes something is amiss moments before the explosion, she fails to prevent this domestic attack enacted to eliminate the liability of the Saudi diplomat, Al-Zahrani. The explosion itself seems to occur in fast-motion; in a medium-long shot, the force propels Carrie from one end of the screen to the other. In the immediate aftermath, though, time seems to slow down as if to reflect the disorienting and traumatic nature of this event. The camera hovers above Carrie sprawled on the ground as she attempts to lift herself; jump cuts serve to further heighten the sense of disorientation that Carrie is feeling, for the spectator. A loud diegetic ringing sound, presumably the only thing Carrie can hear, dominates the soundscape. A survey of the wreckage shows a man on fire and another missing his leg, which further heightens the sense of carnage and destruction.

This trauma is most significant in that it sets off a manic episode for Carrie. The following episode, "The Vest," finds Carrie a few days after the incident, days in which she has been without the medication that keeps her mood levels stable. Saul arrives to pick up Carrie to find her frantically searching for a green pen; she speaks with a cryptic urgency, her words sliding together and her body movements frantic and wild. She tells

Saul, "We have to code it, collide it, collapse it, contain it. Okay, the important thing now is the green pen," and later on, "Nazir's movements in green after a fallow yellow always creeping towards purple are methodical, meaningful, momentous and monstrous."

Saul can't make sense of Carrie's behavior and words; he knows something is wrong and realizes how little he knows about the woman beyond her intense passion for her work. While Carrie normally can utilize the benefits of her ability for intuitive connections, the trauma of the explosion takes away her control and incites a collapse of the boundaries that carefully contain and separate her private and professional identities. There is a brief moment, after Saul tells her he can't follow her racing thoughts and the doctor asks if she has a doctor they should contact, when Carrie's face crumples with the realization that her disorder has broken through her carefully constructed containers.

Carrie's mania continues to fuel her focus on color-coding Nazir's movements as a means to determine what sparked his plan to attack America. Despite her nonsensical train of thought, Carrie's intuitions are spot on as she becomes aware that a tragedy must have placed Nazir into a period of mourning and silence and that his plan for revenge must be intricate and involve multiple players. Her mania works to collapse her notion of time, she insists that there is little time left, that the attack is imminent, but is helpless to sustain her work once her bipolar medication and the forced sedatives begin to take effect. As she falls asleep, Saul apologizes for not following through on his own instincts that something had damaged her during her last visit to Iraq and asking if she was really all right. As difficult as it is for both of them, Saul and Carrie are both forced to work towards accepting this part of Carrie's identity. The next morning, she tells Saul that her disorder surfaced in college and that it is not his fault, it is just a part of her. While her

trauma and mania has negative consequences on her life, the forced collapse of her boundaries between her personal and professional life opens up a space for Carrie to begin coming to terms with her disorder, instead of just pushing it away.

Saul validates Carrie's intuitive color-coding of Nazir's movements when he is able to put the pieces together in a visually-charged network of documents on the large bulletin board in Carrie's living room. Using Carrie's framework, Saul is able to uncover the redacted files that expose the Vice President's bombing of the compound that killed eighty-two children. However, powerful realities prevent him from exposing the government's faults; to make his discovery public and disillusion the population toward the current administration would put all of his field officers abroad in danger, as the damage to the perception of the American government could aid in growing support for the country's enemies.

Whereas Brody's trauma pushes him to turn against America and the government he once placed his faith in, Carrie's trauma heightens her patriotism in an extreme way that forces her to lose the things she values most: her job and her ability to make a difference in protecting the American homeland. Saul's validation of Carrie's understanding of Nazir's plan is not enough to save her when Brody turns against her and informs David Estes of their sexual involvement and her subsequent harassment. Expecting to see Brody at her door, Carrie is stunned when Estes lets himself in and orders his men to strip down the classified documents that comprise Carrie's visual chart. She tries to physically stop the men, before shouting at Estes, "This chart is very important! It is very meaningful! I am about to solve this fucking thing!" But Estes just blankly stares back at her before ordering the men to continue. Carrie rushes to her board

in an attempt to save it as jazz music begins to play; the swift camera movements and Carrie's continued shouts of "You don't know what you're doing!" over the non-diegetic music create a sense of Carrie's hopelessness for the viewer.

While the loss of her job and security clearance do not stop Carrie's attempt to save the day in the finale, the events in the penultimate episode, "The Vest," work to heighten and collapse the boundaries she tried so hard throughout the season to keep contained. While her trauma of surviving the explosion and her subsequent manic episode push her closer to understanding Nazir's plan, the effects work to destabilize her sense of self; as her mania ends, the subsequent depressive stage forces her to question the validity of her methods and her future role as a defender of the country.

Double Agents of Love

In many ways, Carrie and Brody's relationship in the first season culminates in Episode Seven, "The Weekend." After sleeping together in Carrie's car the night before, and then witnessing Brody successfully manipulate a C.I.A lie-detector test, Carrie and Brody take off in Brody's car, momentarily leaving behind their obligations and attachments. After an afternoon of drinking, the two find themselves at Carrie's family's cabin. While she had let down her defenses in allowing herself to feel the attraction and connection to Brody, she is sure to make sure her gun is loaded and accessible before rejoining him outside. As the couple drunkenly flirts, the camera sways heavily and unsteadily, at times zooming in quickly, as if to embody their heady feelings of intoxication and lust. The next day, Carrie and Brody spend the day together, sitting by the lake, hiking, talking and cooking dinner together. Without alcohol to lower their inhibitions, they are nervous

around each other, like awkward teenagers, but their excitement is also evident as they begin to truly open up to one another. This is by far the most relaxed each character has acted thus far, and removed from the contradictions of their daily lives, it seems like Carrie and Brody have the potential to build a meaningful and fulfilling relationship.

That night, Brody takes off his shirt, laying bare his tortured and scarred body, something he was incapable of comfortably doing with Jessica. Carrie and Brody have both experienced the tremendous carnage and trauma of war, and this allows them to act in a way that they can't with others; their different traumas provide a base level of acceptance and understanding that cannot be appreciated by those who have not experienced similar suffering. Carrie gently kisses Brody's scars and the two embrace, this time exploring each other's bodies without rush. While their quick car tryst was passionate and intense, their lovemaking in the cabin speaks to their growing emotional attachment. Until now, Brody has been rough and fast with his movements during sex, but that night in the cabin, he pauses, telling Carrie, "I just want to live here, for a second." Once again, Lauren Berlant's work on heterosexual romantic relationships can be considered in relation to this moment; she writes:

> That a man would come to a woman and understand her without aggressive probing; that he would be critical of masculinity without being ashamed of it or himself; that he would be capable of both hardness and softness and that this would provide a context for the woman to experience herself as freely as he does- is the structural stuff of popular romance (91).

The intensity of Carrie and Brody's exchange of gazes speaks to this desire for transparency and understanding. In the presence of Carrie, Brody seems the most at ease or rather, the least conflicted yet about his dual performances as patriot and terrorist. In turn, Brody's desire for Carrie allows Carrie to embrace her own feelings safely. When

he pauses, she asks him if he wants to stop, prepared to defer to his wants, but his desire to experience this moment fully with her, allows her to put aside the complicated reality of her desire for him and her conviction that he is a terrorist. She allows herself to be vulnerable for that moment, to allow him to see her, as she is, wide-eyed and afraid of attachments but desperate to explore her connection with him.

One of the issues Berlant raises in her work is how popular romance is structured and disseminated to be desirable and achievable to the average individual. *Homeland* complicates our understanding of heterosexuality not only by depicting the complicated realities of domestic life, but also by showing that this moment, magical and hopeful as it is, is temporary. *Homeland* depicts this to the extreme just as the tenuous fantasies of what Carrie's life could be like with Brody begin to shape and take form. The next morning after waking up, Carrie tells Brody, "I know we have oatmeal, maybe frozen OJ, but no Yorkshire Gold out here in the sticks." "How do you know the tea I drink?" Brody responds. Realizing she's been caught, Carrie stumbles for a response: "I don't know, maybe you had it at Langley." The moment that Carrie allows herself to be comfortable and envision the potential for "love's promise to structure both conventional life and the magical life of intimate mutuality," as Berlant writes, is the moment she reveals that she knows too much about Brody and that her initial interactions with him are founded on deceit (92).

When she returns from chopping wood, Brody confronts her, having already made the connection that since Carrie is a spy, she could have been spying on him. She doesn't deny his suspicions and instead reverts back to the identity she knows and is comfortable with. She tells him, "It was my job. It is my job. I'm working. I'm always

working." Brody demands to know the basis for her suspicions and in that instant, their dynamic shifts from new hopeful lovers to mutual threats. When he reveals the gun Carrie loaded to ensure her safety, Carrie succumbs and tells her of her informant's intelligence that Nazir had turned an American POW who would return to carry out an attack. Brody assumes that the C.I.A is backing Carrie's investigation; with his back turned, she hesitates for a moment before telling him, "I think you're working for Al-Qaeda." As she delivers these words, her posture straightens and her expression grows determined, ready to claim and defend her position.

The two continue to solidify their new performances, Brody as the innocent and wronged patriot and Carrie as the conspiracy-driven intelligence officer. Tensions continue to rise as Brody allows Carrie to question him, so as to prove his innocence, denying any wrong-doing and admitting to converting to Islam and accepting Nazir's kindness after being isolated and tortured for so many years. "The Weekend" culminates when Carrie receives a call from Saul informing her that Tom Walker, Brody's partner, is actually the turned terrorist, and for the moment, both Carrie and the viewer are forced to question their understanding of both Carrie and Brody.

In the following episodes, Brody is tapped by the Vice President to run for an open seat in Congress, but Jessica is resistant to putting her family in the media spotlight. After coming forward about her past relationship with Mike, she reveals that she knows about Brody and Carrie. It seems that Brody never intended to disclose his infidelity to his wife, and his motivation to ensure Carrie's silence is based more on his need to maintain his public image, rather than work on his relationship with Jessica. It is clear though that Carrie believes in the possibility of rekindling her relationship with Brody;

she turns on her jazz music, sets out a bottle of wine and two glasses and puts on red lipstick to prepare for his arrival. His brief visit is disappointing, leaving Carrie alone to deal with her conflicting aspects of her identify and her need to keep them contained and separate.

In the penultimate episode, Carrie turns to Brody for insight on the tragedy that would have sparked Nazir's mourning and subsequent plan for revenge. Brody, realizing Carrie is very close to potentially linking him to Nazir's terrorist plot after all, uses the authority of his persona to inform Estes of Carrie's misconduct and their personal relationship. This comes as the ultimate betrayal for Carrie, for while she can accept that she can't be with Brody, his disavowal of their connection pushes her futher into a downward spiral.

Conclusion

The final episodes of *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* provide a way to examine how these narratives both reinforce and subvert cultural fantasies of heteronormativity. These fantasies fuel the optimism that an investment in the social institutions, upon which heteronormative culture thrives, will provide a better way of life. The ideals that these fantasies privilege are constructed to seem natural, desirable and achievable to the average citizen, when in fact they further a hegemonic agenda that benefits few. While they may seem to provide a path to the good life, they in fact prevent a position in which one can examine other possibilities and avenues to achieve her desires. The narratives of these two shows offer complicated relationships between these cultural fantasies and reality. In doing so, they are able to acknowledge the powerful hold of these aspirations without totally conforming to them.

While much of this thesis has examined the desire and anxiety surrounding heterosexual romance and love, the season finales can best be understood through the desire to sustain the family unit. The family can be seen as an extension of heterosexual romance, which is ideally expected to result in marriage and procreation. While the Harmon and the Brody families conclude as intact and somewhat stable units, characters are forced to compromise other desires that reach outside the boundaries of the family. It is also important to take into account the show's different structures; as an anthology, *American Horror Story* resolves its narrative entirely, whereas *Homeland* sets itself up for a second season. In examining the shows' finales in this conclusion, it is my aim to aim to put these shows in dialogue with one another in a final effort to examine the

relationship between narrative spectacle and cultural fantasies as depicted in the contemporary television landscape.

Undying Fantasies

The final episode of American Horror Story's first season depicts the Harmon family reunited in death and invested in establishing an ideal family dynamic. Vivien does not want future owner's of the house to experience the same tortured fate as her family. After conspiring with the other benevolent spirits in the house, the Harmons recreate their own traumatic scenes of terror for the greater good of scaring this new family into leaving. After running the new husband and wife into the basement, Ben and Vivien put on a macabre performance, cathartically kill each other only to rise again and warn the living couple that they must leave immediately.

Ben's dons the rubber suit to terrify the new appropriation of the rubber suit furthers the complexity surrounding the object of the rubber suit and its relation to fantasies of normalcy and security. Taylor writes of how this haunting scene acts to normalize BDSM:

> 'Afterbirth,' however, places the suit in the Harmons' custody, and implicitly argues for the normalcy of BDSM practices when, as the new family flees the Murder House, Ben appears with Vivien and Violet, now wearing his typical middle-class attire. The heterosexual nuclear family is also a family that engages in BDSM play from time to time. (147)

By expanding the notions of what society considers acceptable and normal when defining marriage and family, the show works to subvert certain political and religious notions that marriage must be comprised of a heterosexual man and women and they must procreate to have a family. To see the Harmons embrace and integrate the object that threatened

their marriage and violated Vivien's body for the greater good of saving the lives of new homeowners supports the fact that marriage and family are socially constructed institutions and therefore have the ability to evolve and grow to fit social needs.

But just as the finale episode opens up a space to reconfigure notions of marriage and family and the associated comforts of heteronormativity, it inevitably reinforces such fantasies through the re-establishment of the nuclear family. Vivien, Ben and Violet seem to adjust quite well to their afterlife. The most stereotypical perfect family scene arrives as a Christmas celebration; the family of four now, after Vivien discovers her first born of the two was alive briefly and had been hidden away by an overwhelmed Nora, smiles and laughs as they decorate a picturesque tree. Moira has been welcomed into the family as well, as godmother to Vivien's eternal infant, and she appears now consistently as her older self. In a sense, her oscillation between the femme fatale and the nurturer-redeemer, archetypes of the film noir genre, becomes fixed and permanent in the nurturer-redeemer, which is the only way she can be welcomed into the family, now that she represents no threat. Tate and Hayden however, are banished to the outside, forced to look in on the merrily lit group as they seethe in the dark. Thus the hypersexual seductress can be a redeemable figure, but only if she can adapt to the molds of the nuclear family, and retain an appearance of a non-threatening female.

While the scene firmly establishes that the Harmon family now lives on, happily ever after, the perverse nature of their circumstances prevents a full reinforcement of traditional values and institutions. This family could only survive in death and perhaps they can only maintain this sense of well being because there is little room for growth and development beyond the acceptance of their circumstances. Thus the family has achieved

an ideal performance of heteronormativity, but their lives are so far removed from the reality and lived experience of American families, that the Harmons are not replicable in real life. The family is put through hell and is ultimately rewarded with heaven, but this alternative means of achieving normalcy and security is not sustainable to the viewer.

Conflicting Desires

The finale episode of the first season of Homeland opens with a black and white video recording of Brody. His plan is to blow up the Vice President and other important members of the government and his video message is a means to set the record straight about his intentions and actions. In the video, he says:

> People will say I was broken, that I was brainwashed. People will say I was turned into a terrorist, taught to hate my country. I love my country. What I am is a marine like my father and his father before him. And as a marine, I swore an oath to defend the united states of American against enemies both foreign and domestic. My action this day is against such domestic enemies, the Vice President and members of his national security team who I know to be liars and war criminals, responsible for atrocities they were never held accountable for. This is about justice for 82 children whose deaths were never acknowledged and whose murder is a stain on the soul of this nation

It is significant that Brody identifies himself as a Marine, and therefore an American who loves his country. He does not frame himself as having joined Al-Qaeda, but rather feels responsible as an American to act against the domestic enemies responsible for killing and covering up the deaths of eight-two children. In asserting his love for his country, Brody speaks to his conflicting desires; he wants revenge for Issa’s death and to call attention to the hypocrisy of the current administration, but he also wants to ensure his family’s well being and re-invest in the fantasy of the American ideals.

The terrorist plan is put into motion when a sniper attack forces Brody, the Vice President and other important government officials into lockdown; the chaos of the scene allows Brody to pass through the metal detectors without the discovery of the suicide vest he plans to detonate to kill the Vice President. When he pushes the trigger though, the device fails to explode, leaving Brody panicked and unsure of his next move. After fixing the vest in the bathroom, Brody once again prepares himself for death, but he is interrupted by a phone call from his daughter.

Dana has been the only family member to note Brody's suspicious activity, such as hiding a secret package (the suicide vest) and practicing Islam in the garage. Her anxiety about her father is further heightened after Carrie visits the family's home and insists her father is a terrorist about to act and that Dana must stop him. Carrie fails to fails to intervene before she is arrested, but her paranoia compels Dana to call and demand that her father promises to come home. At first Brody evades a direct response, only able to tell her in a high-pitched voice that rings false, "sure, yeah, I'm coming home." Dana further insists that he must promise he will return, that she needs him; we can tell she has gotten through to him finally, when he tells her calmly, in a deep voice, "I'm coming home Dana, I promise." And so Brody makes a choice; he chooses the family he has right now, a family who couldn't survive the loss of its patriarch after already losing him once. By choosing his American family, he must let go of Issa and accept that the American public will remain ignorant to the injustices committed by those in charge. Although Brody only intended to kill the men directly responsible for the death of eight-two children, the trauma and public spectacle of such an act would have further disillusioned and damaged the public's ability to invest in the fantasy of the

American dream and the country's ruling institutions. In choosing his family over traumatic justice, Brody reinforces the internalized need to replicate and aspire to the idealized structure of the nuclear family. His choice further limits the possibilities and alternatives of family for those who fall outside the bounds of heteronormativity.

However, the serial nature of Homeland requires that the finale establish narrative threats that can carry onto into the next season. Brody's death would have ended his narrative arc and his rejection of Nazir would leave little room for mystery and suspense in the following season. Brody successfully convinces Nazir that he can more effective as an elected official in the government and will be able to make change from within the system. In attaining Nazir's continued support, Brody remains a duplicitous character who must balance his conflicting desires surrounding the fantasy of American life. He continued commitment to Nazir resists a complete return to order and in this way, Homeland is able to subvert the authority and sustainability of the institutions that structure the fantasy that privileges heteronormativity as a means to a better life.

Horror in the Home(land)

By looking at *American Horror Story* and *Homeland* together, it has been my aim to establish how American contemporary television can reflect the discrepancy between the fantasies that structure optimism for a better life but require an adherence to heteronormativity and the realities of life that prevent one from achieving the ideals of these fantasies. Despite their differences, both shows disturb the security and stability associated with heterosexual love, marriage, family and the private space of the home. By utilizing the medium of television, they are able to create narratives that complicate

the hegemonic ideal that a heteronormativity guarantees a life of intimacy and stability. While these narratives, which revel in spectacle and affect, do not offer viable alternative means to intimacy and stability, they do support a spectatorial position of critical distance, which aids in destabilizing the powerful hold of heteronormativity in American society.

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