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## BECOMING *HOST*

### Zooming in on the pandemic horror film

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On 23 March 2020, the United Kingdom entered lockdown under increased public health measures with the global spread of the novel coronavirus. By 30 July, British filmmaker Rob Savage had a feature film written, shot, edited, and released on the digital streaming platform Shudder. Within just 12 weeks, Savage, together with his actors and crew (mostly his friends), worked in physical isolation under stay-at-home orders, using Zoom video calls and DIY ingenuity to make a startlingly modern horror movie even as filming for major studio projects remained on hiatus and big summer movie releases were postponed. Savage noted in an interview: “We knew we wanted to get it made before the day-to-day reality [of the pandemic] changed. We wanted it to be something that we could shoot and release within lockdown, or as close as we could get.”<sup>1</sup> Besides garnering a certain notoriety for being a new film when practically no new movies were coming out, *Host*'s lockdown release date was central to its very conceit: *Host* documents six friends who attempt to stave off the boredom of quarantine by participating in a séance over Zoom. When a malevolent spirit joins the call, it travels between their various locations through the internet, successively killing off each of the friends while those left on the call remain hostage at home and hostage to their screens—forced to bear witness to death on a call that is also their only connection to each other.

The appeal of such a film may not be obvious, especially during a global pandemic when anxieties surrounding social isolation, our compulsory dependence on at-home technologies of surveillance, bans on being physically present at the death of a loved one, and the rampant uncertainties over who or what to believe (from political messaging to public health measures to conspiracy theories) have become part of our everyday. That *Host* preys on all of these fears—directly or metaphorically—may seem like the very reason to turn it off. However, the link between cultural crisis and a turn to horror movies is nothing new. Film scholars

have long noted historical parallels between film-watchers' interest in horror and their lived conditions of social upheaval.<sup>2</sup> The simultaneous identification with and distancing from a horror movie's protagonists can be cathartic for viewers: we are able to process troubling, negative, even taboo emotions through the clash of identifications with or against the characters on our screens.<sup>3</sup> The extreme scenarios of a horror movie often serve as an emotional valve for fear, a vicarious outlet for that which we struggle to face in our daily lives, or for social anxieties that remain incompletely repressed in a specific culture.

Before *Host*'s release, the 2020 consumer demand for a horror movie that spoke to the COVID-19 pandemic was also evident in the unexpected revival of the near-decade-old viral outbreak film *Contagion* (2011), an American thriller inspired by the 2002–04 SARS outbreak, directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Marion Cotillard, Matt Damon, and Jude Law. From January through April 2020, *Contagion* jumped to one of the most downloaded, streamed, and torrented movies.<sup>4</sup> At the same time as the social media Zeitgeist saw many viewers devouring Netflix shockumentary *Tiger King* (2020) and its TikTok meme derivatives, a subset of at-home audiences embraced horror as a needed outlet while adjusting to pandemic life. Upon its release, *Host* was positioned to tap into this trend, but with the added allure of showcasing original and timely “pandemic” content. For some, films such as *Host* and *Contagion* were the perfect antidote to the panicked uncertainty of early pandemic days—not in spite of their themes hitting so close to home, but because of this very proximity. *Contagion*'s appeal lay in its allowing audiences to voyeuristically play out an extreme form of present circumstances (a sudden pathogenic outbreak, a breakdown in social infrastructure) while nonetheless maintaining a sense of personal security.

Against this background, this essay argues that *Host* owes much of its originality to its use of the familiar Zoom format. Homing in on the film's unbroken point of view, the essay argues that *Host* crosses the threshold into the Freudian “uncanny,” and that the film further entrenches its uncanniness by using the malevolent visitation from the dead as an obvious metaphor for viral visitations that unsettle any homeliness at home. *Host*'s demonic haunting may well represent the haunting return of the pandemic dead who have not yet been properly mourned, with many having passed in institutionalized loneliness or isolation (hospitals, shelters, prisons, nursing homes) due to strict public health protocols, while some have surely perished as a result of systemic violence, negligence, or public indifference. Ultimately, the film reframes the inassimilable horror of daily pandemic death as the lonely everyday of our contemporary on-screen reality, undermining a viewer's sense of personal security and the distancing conceits of “mere” fiction.

### Computer screen films and the uncanny during the pandemic

*Host* sits at the intersection of several film subgenres. Savage's narrative of a viral haunting owes debts to David Cronenberg's cult classic *Videodrome* (1983) and to Japanese horror (J-horror) cinema at the turn of the millennium for providing

some of the preeminent examples for the trope of media as vectors for viral transmissions (i.e., the VHS, the internet, and the video call as sites of pathogenic transfer). Sadako, the iconic villain of *Ring* (*Ringu*, 1998), spreads her “ring virus” through a video tape, a haunting manifestation of her curse that causes viewers to die seven days after watching it. The only way to prevent one’s own horrible death is to get someone else to view the VHS within the seven days, exchanging the life of another for one’s own by passing the viral curse on to them. The millennium also introduced the J-horror classic *Pulse* (*Kairo*, 2001), which set the standard for an internet virus as corporeal threat. Another ghost movie, its allegorical meditation on Japan’s youth suicide epidemic thrums with the loneliness of an existence behind a computer screen. *Pulse* eerily presages *Host* in its exemplification of fears that rising public accessibility and the widespread use of the internet causes social relations to disintegrate, coming nearly two decades before *Host*’s mobilization of correlative cultural anxieties surrounding the effects of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Host* is also part of a burgeoning subgenre known as computer screen films, which situate computer or phone screens as the audience’s primary point of view. Horror films in the niche computer screen genre include the Skype-based supernatural flick *Unfriended* (2014) and its narratively unrelated sequel, *Unfriended: Dark Web* (2018); and *Spree* (2020), about a wannabe-influencer rideshare driver on a murder spree to gain followers. Notable non-horror examples include the child-abduction mystery *Searching* (2018) and, for television, the BBC pandemic sitcom *Staged* (2020–21), which, like *Host*, used the conceit of the audience witnessing Zoom calls, albeit without employing the Zoom interface to frame its scenes. *Host*’s use of an in-screen point of view also sees it fall into the category of found footage horror, a subgenre owing its popularity to *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) but with origins in *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), an exploitation movie whose verisimilitude led to its director being tried for murder under the popular belief that it was a genuine snuff film.

Significantly, the *Unfriended* movies don’t strictly qualify as “found footage”—or, what Barry Keith Grant terms *verité horror*, wherein “the camera exists within the diegesis, often with much of the story unfolding in real time, as if it were there recording actual not fictional events, as in the documentary tradition of cinema *verité*.”<sup>5</sup> *Unfriended* and *Dark Web* both end by breaking with their screen-within-a-screen point of view to pull out into the space of an in-movie reality beyond the desktop. Essentially, the camera reinstates a fourth wall between the action and the audience. In fact, none of the computer screen film examples above act as *Host* does, whether by breaking the suspension of disbelief in the desktop point of view or through explicit editing choices (i.e., the paratactical editing of multiple screens in *Spree*, or *Searching*’s time jumps and unrealistic zoom-ins). Through its niche straddling of subgenres, *Host* asserts itself as a film entirely its own. Beginning with the quiet click of a cursor on a desktop we no longer control, *Host* takes over the screen of its viewers, transporting us straight into the Zoom interface of Haley (Haley Bishop), the initial “host” of the fatal call.

Keeping its action within the frame of the desktop application, pulling focus by switching between grid and speaker views, and excluding any non-diegetic sound, *Host* maintains the realistic integrity of the computer screen—holding its viewers hostage to the verisimilitude of a real-time Zoom call in which we have become passive participants. The screen-within-a-screen format positions *Host* as a film that uncannily suffuses horror into our homes, staging the virulent anxieties underlying quotidian scenes of lockdown life with a supernatural edge.

In his 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” Sigmund Freud defines the experience of “the uncanny” as belonging “to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread.”<sup>6</sup> He cites common linguistic usage from other languages, including English—“*ghastly*, (of a house): haunted”—and Greek—*xenos*, “foreign, alien.”<sup>7</sup> The uncanny effect, Freud writes, “often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred.”<sup>8</sup> When this boundary becomes porous, the result is a psychotic break with reality, arguably something we have witnessed throughout the pandemic with the fateful embrace of conspiracy theories, the denial of scientific evidence, and the rise of narcissistic fantasies of immunity and omnipotence. The inescapable irruption of death into life—and of fantasy into reality—marks both the pandemic present and *Host*’s cinematographic conceits. Much like *Host*, Freud’s “The Uncanny” is also a text that was produced in the anxiety-ridden context of a deadly global pandemic. The Spanish Flu of 1918–20 claimed some fifty million lives, and since the virus was undetectable under a microscope, doctors were unable to discern the cause of infections and therefore powerless to treat or prevent them. Victims often succumbed within days or sometimes hours of their first symptoms: their lungs filled with liquid, the lack of oxygen turning their skin from blue to black before death came. During the second, particularly pathogenic wave in late 1918, there were widespread public fears that the disease was plague. It is difficult not to read “The Uncanny” in the dark light of these fears following on the heels of the Great War, which ravaged Europe and helped to propagate the virus. Like *Host*, Freud’s text is also a rumination on a time of death, and on the recrudescence of “primitive” yet perduring mass anxieties. In watching *Host*, viewers cannot quite escape the sense that they too are being watched; a “primitive” animism is transmitted in and by our agentic devices.

Freud rightly points out that many things that would strike us as uncanny in real life do not have the same effect when presented diegetically. That is, with fictional narratives, viewers are happy to suspend their disbelief, much as we do when we watch *Host* and concede the fictional existence of a haunted demon realm. These are familiar tropes of the horror genre and viewers are adept at interpreting this content. However, *Host* becomes uncanny less by its plot or storyline than by its cinematographic form, which both metaphorizes and mobilizes our morbid pandemic anxieties. The moment the film opens, the viewer is interpellated as someone joining a Zoom call. The film does not break this point of view, and while the viewer is never quite positioned as the Zoom “host,” we are also never quite certain whose Zoom screen we are seeing; the shifting perspective destabilizes our claim on reality. It soon becomes unclear who is

“hosting” *Host*’s Zoom call. Although the film begins with Haley initiating the call, and we later see her changing her sound settings (*Host* 24:41–24:50),<sup>9</sup> the viewer’s screen cycles rapidly at times between grid and speaker views; Teddy is readmitted from the waiting room while Haley is away from her laptop (44:35); and connections are consecutively dropped when the characters in question have all been killed off (51:09–51:21). By the end, it seems that “something demonic” (33:52) has usurped the role of “host,” remaining present after every character is dead and Zoom’s forty-minute time limit has elapsed. We, the audience, linger at the close of the call to continue witnessing as *something* scrolls through a list of Zoom participants naming the cast and crew, then exits the application (54:38–55:38). On the one hand, this metadiegetic move simply riffs on the Zoom form; on the other hand, the return of the static crackle that serves throughout the film to highlight supernatural interference is heard over these credits, implying that *our* computers are infected, and we ourselves are the final hostages to this malicious host.

The Zoom interface, the pandemic lockdown, and the public health protocols observed by the characters convey the new “normal,” which occasions their séance among socially distanced friends conducted over a “safe” digital platform. The online staging of social interactions is all terribly familiar, verging on the boring and banal. And yet, the familiar Zoom screen together with the social compartments and technologies meant to preserve life become uncanny and are refashioned in the film as an imminent threat *to* life. Sociality and the conditions of resilience themselves become suspect. While the characters scrupulously respect public health protocols—those color-coded threat levels and ever-shifting rules that we ourselves adopt with wavering confidence over their efficacy against an “invisible enemy”—the friends are nevertheless violently killed by an invisible enemy who exploits the very technology that was supposed to keep them safe. Neither quite one nor the other, indeed, both fictional *and* real, the uncanny is the disquieting space of the in-between, where no epistemic certainty can be decided.<sup>10</sup> The characters “assume” the risks of the séance much as we assume the risks of viral transmission, and they, like us, remain unable to foresee or adjust for all possible outcomes. “And while the film was produced when ambivalence and anxiety were at fever pitch in the early days of pandemic death counts—and prior to the release of vaccines—*Host* continues to resonate: for vaccines are merely one more technology meant to protect us, even as many are freshly anxious that they might have unknown and unintended consequences in our bodies, realized in emergent viral mutations (Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma...), reports of rare blood clots, and side effects that include death.

The ambivalent alternation between what is *heimlich* and *unheimlich* has long been taken up in the domain of applied deconstruction.<sup>11</sup> *Heimlich* and *unheimlich* map in provocative ways onto the ambivalence of the “host” relation, whether as viral host, Zoom host, or host to hauntings. And yet, Jacques Derrida rejects Freud’s psychoanalytic understanding of the uncanny as the return of the repressed; for him, the host-relation is not simply a psychic ambivalence, but a

social and political relation within the horizons of vulnerability and death. In a decidedly positive vein, Derrida cites ancient rites of hospitality from Mexico, where women were expected to cry at the arrival of the guest—an act of welcoming akin to mourning—because they “regarded the newcomers as revenants, as the ghosts of the dead coming back, and so they were to be greeted as revenants, with tears of mourning.”<sup>12</sup> There can be no doubt that while *Host*’s malevolent spirit is invited—or conjured, possibly even manmade—much like the virus, the demonic spirit is not welcomed: it is angry, returning to claim its pound of flesh, and perhaps to avenge a death that is the result of an injustice, a crime, or that remains ungrrieved. Indeed, *Host* remains silent on the wider sociological conditions of transmission and death, and on our complicity in these conditions. In the context of pandemic death, one calls to mind the hundreds of departed souls of those whose bodies remain, unclaimed, in freezer trucks in the maritime terminal of South Brooklyn. These unmourned dead await “transport” to Hart Island, America’s largest mass grave, where they will lie together with the disposed bodies of those who died of another (still ongoing) pandemic—HIV/AIDS.<sup>13</sup> They, too, are “hosts”—sacrifices—although this particular usage is now archaic, a remnant found only in the Christian depiction of Christ as the “heavenly host” and in reference to the Eucharist. Pandemic death is not just viral; it is socioeconomic, it is racialized and sacrificial, even as we are exhorted (ceaselessly) to return to “normal” and to assert our “freedom” and “resilience” in an ardent, patriotic embrace of capitalism as a world-ecology of power, production, and reproduction. At the far reaches of one’s conscience, perhaps, *Host* surfaces this reality—as fantasy and as material remnant—of unatonable loss. But what are the conditions of a collective conscience, an ethics of responsibility beyond the projection of blame?

## Deconstructing the host and xenophobic mediations

In early usage, a “host” meant a guest, a stranger, a foreigner, or an enemy: one who is received, sometimes inhospitably, with hostility, or even as hostage. In modern usage, however, the inverse is more common: the host is one who receives or convenes, the correlative to the guest. And yet these two senses, or two *intensionalities*, we might call them, while in tension, are nevertheless conjoined. To be received and to receive: each grants the other, where neither is an originary disposition. When we “host” the Other, when we invite and welcome, we become hostage to our guest, who in effect “hosts” us in the ambivalent and yet co-constitutive relation of hospitality. As Freud points out, there is an etymological kinship between home (*Heim, heimlich*) and haunting (*unheimlich*). As noted above, the spirit—at first a guest—becomes the ultimate host of *Host*’s Zoom call. Derrida writes:

So it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting host, who becomes the hostage—and who really always has been. And the guest,

the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host. The guest becomes the host's host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*). These substitutions make everyone into everyone else's hostage.<sup>14</sup>

In both Savage's and Derrida's formulations, then, hospitality hangs on a reciprocity that entangles all participants (willing or unwilling) and makes interrelational demands that outstrip our interfaces and infrastructures.

Critically, the invitation and "hospitality" extended by the friends represents a false openness to the Other. The six friends do not respect what Derrida calls the unwritten "law" of the host-relation. While the participants in the séance await an answer to their invitation, Jemma (Jemma Moore), non-believing and impatient (21:51–21:59), pretends to have been contacted by the ghost of a dead friend. She disrespects the spirits, which creates what the friends' hired medium, Seylan, calls "an open invitation" that any spirit (benign or "demonic") can now use to manifest itself: "by inventing a person that doesn't exist we've basically summoned a false spirit. If you made this person up, you basically created—imagine like you created a mask, so now, anything can come through and wear that mask. We don't know what it might be" (33:09–33:59). We, equal participants on this fatal call, are kept in the dark about the identity of this malevolent spirit, but we see its manifestation through the reiteration of the invitation that first called it into presence. Jemma describes "Jack," the fake dead friend that she invokes, as "A kid from school. He was really nice to me one time I cracked my head open—and he like, picked me up. He hanged himself" (20:45–21:07). The picking up, the cracked head, the hanging; these become tropes, or memes, haunting the friends and their loved ones to the point of their own deaths. For example, Emma is pulled into the air; Radina is grabbed and her head is cracked open; Caroline's face is forced to literally keyboard smash; and Teddy's girlfriend Jinny is strangled until her neck snaps (41:05–42:44, 46:14–46:22).

In interviews, Savage identifies the lore behind the "false spirit" as based on a tulpa (from the Tibetan *sprul pa*, meaning "emanation" or "manifestation"), a theosophical concept that has gained new life in the internet subculture of "tulpamancers," who claim to will into being sentient and autonomous entities through the sheer power of the mind.<sup>15</sup> The memeified tulpa is meant to be a kind of "imaginary friend" made manifest, whereas Savage's invocation is hardly so friendly. He explains that a tulpa is "like a demon that's summoned by group think .... So the idea is that as Jemma, when they're in this hyper connected state, she tells them this story of Jack, she places this image of the hanged boy in all of their heads. That allows this thing to manifest."<sup>16</sup> The uncanniness of the Jack-mask lies in its recirculation, its repetition as a signifier severed from any reference to a signified. As Derrida remarks, "symbolized" and "symbolizer" are caught in a "process of interminable substitution."<sup>17</sup> "Jack" is Jemma's invented reality; however, "he," once manifest, is not under her control. The tulpa, in a sense, is a meme, a social media virus, that becomes real and propagates by

preying on the lives of its hosts. By concentrating its horror in the false Jack-spirit, *Host* exemplifies a fear of the mask as an agent of depersonalization: a shield that strips away one's identity and shrouds viral transmission in an absolute unknowability.

This uncanny incursion into the home—*our* homes—by an unknowable, hostile Other mobilizes deep fears of the *xenos*, the foreign and the foreigner. If the horror at the heart of *Host* is that of home invasion by an unwelcome guest, then this sinister intrusion acts as a metaphor for the cultural anxieties manifest in the memetic, alt-right inroads of xenophobia in the western world. Social psychologist Agnieszka Golec de Zavala, for example, has called Brexit's "Vote Leave" campaign "a new, acceptable way to express xenophobia" in the UK.<sup>18</sup> Anti-Asian sentiment has also exploded during the global pandemic due to the irrational accusation that because SARS-CoV-2 originated in Wuhan, China, all people of Asian heritage are to blame for the pandemic or are themselves carriers of the virus. The normalization of xenophobic hate speech—from Donald Trump's egregious quips about the "Wuhan Virus" and the "Kung Flu" to anti-vaxxer/white supremacist rhetorics and riots—emerges in virulent vectors of racism propagated across our digital media platforms. Social media activists have sought to counter this racist animus with campaigns including the #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus/#IAmNotAVirus hashtag launched by Franco-Asians back in January 2020 and the #HateIsAVirus nonprofit started by Asian-American content creators.<sup>19</sup> There is thus a discomfiting prescience in the British-made *Host*'s only racialized character, Jemma, who is of Chinese descent (12:28–12:30), seeming to be responsible for unleashing a demon and causing mass death.

The organizing "host" of the Zoom séance, Haley, the only character with an American accent, blames Jemma explicitly for disrespecting the spirits and inviting the mayhem that ensues (43:08–43:13). Echoes of pandemic geopolitics aside, since Jemma's invented story creates the Jack-mask, we may be prone to agree. But for her part, Jemma places the blame for the deaths of their friends on Haley—presumably because the séance was Haley's idea and she had previously participated in Seylan's séances (10:03–10:07). Yet, for the attentive viewer, Jemma's claim warrants further analysis: the film supplies evidence that Haley is already haunted from her prior contact with the spirit realm. For instance, the static hum that marks the presence of the demonic spirit can be heard when Haley is alone on Zoom, before the arrival of Jemma or anyone else—except us—on the call (1:55–2:12). Discussing this aspect of sound design, Savage states that "there's no definitive answer" on whether the spirit was already present in Haley's flat;<sup>20</sup> indeed, he remains equivocal on the question of Jemma's or Haley's culpability.<sup>21</sup> This undecidability calls on us to ask how *Host*'s fixation on decisive, individual "blame" might double as a mask for the characters' complicity in a network that positions each of them, variously, as viral vectors and "hosts."

Jemma and Haley's mutual blame of each other effectively silences any question of the six friends' collective responsibility for disrespecting the spirits—and, in fact, the first ostensible act of disrespect is perpetrated by Teddy, when his

girlfriend interrupts the friends' attempt to contact the spirit realm and he abandons the call (14:59–15:24). Should blame be solely directed at Teddy, then? Or is this not the point? After all, the conditions of *Host's* demonic possession include the collective Zoom call, the digital platform, the internet, and not least, a global pandemic whose virus is only transmissible by virtue of our shared vulnerabilities and social interdependence. In emphasizing the act of questioning who is to blame, we can see how culpability retrenches a neoliberal social paradigm that simultaneously disclaims social responsibility and places guilt solely on the individual—much like the rhetoric that figures the use of disposable straws and other single-use plastics as a personal moral failure, obfuscating any critique of the capitalist conditions that drive our climate crisis, for example. This is not to deny the importance of accountability, whether personal, collective, or national, but to unmask how the “blame game” individuates: it isolates and creates fictitious borders between the self and the Other. The pandemic slogan “We are all in this together” rings hollow here, and we didn't need global vaccine inequity to recognize this.

It is perhaps no wonder, then, when death irrupts into life as one entangled dimension of *Host's* horror—a horror that attends the excesses of compliance or recalcitrance, of manipulation and fear, wrought in our pandemic everydayness and transmitted by personal devices that frame us even as they inform us of alarming death counts, infections, hospitalizations, and the looming collapse of healthcare infrastructures. For it is in these technologies of social control—whether beneficent or maleficent in their intent—that we find ourselves, uncannily and unintentionally, unhomely, at home.

## Notes

- 1 Quoted in Rob Munday, “From Prank Video to Feature Film in Three Months: The Story of Rob Savage's ‘Host,’” *Short of the Week*, 31 July 2020.
- 2 For example, see Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 2004 [1990]); W. Scott Poole, *Wasteland: The Great War and the Origins of Modern Horror* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2019).
- 3 See John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*, 2nd edition (New York: NYU Press, 2019), 72–77; Jonathan Lear, “Catharsis,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, ed. Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 192–217.
- 4 Julia Alexander, “Contagion Shows the Lengths People Go to Watch a Movie They Can't Stream,” *The Verge*, 7 March 2020; Tom Brueggemann, “‘Contagion’ Still Tops Classic Streaming Titles, Along with ‘Harry Potter’ and ‘Fifty Shades,’” *IndieWire*, 1 April 2020.
- 5 Barry Keith Grant, “Digital Anxiety and the New Verité Horror and SF Film,” *Science Fiction Film and Television* 6, no. 2 (2013): 153.
- 6 Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003 [1919]), 123.
- 7 Freud, *The Uncanny*, 125.
- 8 Freud, *The Uncanny*, 150.
- 9 Rob Savage, dir., *Host* (Vertigo Releasing, 2020), 24:41–24:50. Subsequent parenthetical citations refer to scenes from the film.

- 10 See Hélène Cixous, "Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The 'Uncanny')," *New Literary History* 7, no. 3 (1976): 525–48 and 619–45.
- 11 See Morten Bartnæs, "Freud's 'The Uncanny' and Deconstructive Criticism: Intellectual Uncertainty and Delicacy of Perception," *Psychoanalysis and History* 12, no. 1 (2010): 29–53.
- 12 Jacques Derrida, "A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (2007): 453.
- 13 See Sharon Otterman, "Why 530 Bodies Sit in a Brooklyn Warehouse," *New York Times*, 26 December 2020.
- 14 Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 123, 125.
- 15 Ben Joffe, "Paranormalizing the Popular Through the Tibetan Tulpa: Or What the Next Dalai Lama, the X Files and Affect Theory (might) Have in Common," *Savage Minds*, 13 February 2016.
- 16 Perri Nemiroff, "'Host' Director Breaks Down the Mythology You May Have Missed & That Ending Shot," *Collider*, 14 August 2020; also see WhatCulture Horror, "How Host Director Rob Savage Made 2020's Best Horror Movie," YouTube, 14 August 2020, 24:23–24:47.
- 17 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone, 1981), 268n67.
- 18 Qtd. in Josh Gabbatiss, "Brexit Strongly Linked to Xenophobia, Scientists Conclude," *Independent*, 27 November 2017.
- 19 "Coronavirus: French Asians Hit Back at Racism with 'I'm Not a Virus,'" BBC, 29 January 2020; Catie Edmondson, "Asian-American Lawmakers Call Out Racist Language: 'I Am Not a Virus,'" *New York Times*, 18 March 2021; "#HATEISAVIRUS," *HateIsAVirus*, accessed 20 June 2021.
- 20 WhatCulture Horror, "How Savage Made 2020's Best Horror Movie," 22:54–23:35.
- 21 Nemiroff, "'Host' Director Breaks Down the Mythology."