

The Rhetorical Interlude as Foreshadow and Strategy: *The 'Burbs* and Villains of the Cold War

BRENT YERGENSEN AND SCOTT HADEN CHURCH

On March 23, 1983, United States President Ronald Reagan spoke to the nation on the importance of being prepared for a potential war with Russia. This monumental speech, which represented an attempt to cool heated tensions during the Cold War between the US and the USSR (*e.g.*, Fischer; Kengor and Orlando; Mann; Matlock), included a plea for the audience to visualize lasting peace between the warring nations:

What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant US retaliation to deter a Soviet attack, that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reached our own soil or that of our allies? (“National Security: President Reagan’s Address,” 00:01:23-00:01:45).

Known as the Strategic Defense Initiative speech, Reagan delivered his address to the nation on television from the Oval Office six years before the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent end of the United States’ Cold War with Soviet Russia (Heller). In his address, Reagan emphasized the strength of Russia’s missile arsenal, reflecting a national feeling of dread and uncertainty regarding whether Russia would attack the United States which was heightened initially two decades earlier with the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (Munton and Welch). These ongoing fears, along with the United States’ wars against the spread of other communist regimes in Korea and Vietnam, fostered within American culture a mindset of suspicion, a readiness to strike, and a continued proliferation of weapons (Newton-Matza; Hermann 2).

American movies being made during this time also reflected the general feeling of anxiety among the American public. Horror films of the era, for example,

BRENT YERGENSEN (Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln) is Associate Professor of Communication, Media, and Culture at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. His research focuses on the intersections of religion, science, politics, and history with popular culture, especially film. Correspondence should be sent to brent.yergensen@byuh.edu

SCOTT HADEN CHURCH (Ph.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln) is an Associate Professor in the School of Communications at Brigham Young University. His research primarily uses critical, rhetorical, and aesthetic methods to examine popular culture and social media.

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featured scenes where innocent victims were killed by elusive, masked villains with deadly weapons and a thirst for blood; the *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Friday the 13th* film franchises are only a few notable examples. These films, in some ways, were cultural metaphors for fears of attacks from enemies from afar. However, other films of the era were incongruous with the fears and anxieties of the era fostered by slasher films. As the Cold War drew near to a close in the late 1980s, the horror-comedy film *The 'Burbs* mirrored the Reaganesque anxiety of the time (Heale), showcasing a suspicion from the American Midwestern protagonists toward the vaguely Eastern European characters who are presented as threatening villains. Given these historical resonances in the plot of this understudied film, this study examines how *The 'Burbs* frames these ostensibly villainous outsiders, as well as how it presents the American way of life.

This analysis is grounded in the rhetorical interlude (Yergensen), a theoretical orientation that examines the rhetorical speeches of characters in films. In particular, the rhetorical interlude focuses on the pivotal moment in a film when one of the characters delivers a didactic speech to another. Although the rhetorical interlude occurs as a diegetic moment wherein one character imparts wisdom and delivers important direction to another character to help them escape or overcome an on-screen quandary, these speeches frequently have an extradiegetic function as well; they can present a mouthpiece moment when a moral message between characters can also be a covert rhetorical device from the filmmakers to the audience. Given the function of the rhetorical interlude, to essentially present an overarching takeaway for the audience of the film, these cinematic moments should be explored by cultural critics as they reveal cultural attitudes through interjection and emphasis. Although *The 'Burbs* appears to be an irreverent satire of horror tropes, we argue that its pivotal speech near the conclusion of the film reveals a surreptitious commentary on the American culture of the 1980s. Months before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, *The 'Burbs* interlude utilizes a rhetorical style reminiscent of Reagan's call to use pre-emptive aggression against the enemy and to be wary of people from USSR regions.

In this study, we argue that *The 'Burbs* is an allegory for the tensions felt by the American people during the Cold War. Using the interpretive tool of the rhetorical interlude, our analysis reveals that the film offers an allegory for these anxieties, through its use of foreshadowing and its articulation of strategies for the American protagonists to defeat the Eastern European villains as a fictional synecdoche for the USSR. This reading of the film presents a contribution to popular culture

scholarship because it illustrates how Cold War anxieties permeated American entertainment in the 1980s, transcending horror tropes and crossing over into unconventional genres like horror-comedies.

In *The 'Burbs*, the rhetorical interlude is delivered by the supporting character Art Weingartner, and as a result the protagonist, Ray Peterson, is persuaded about the importance of being aware of evil that can be lurking next door. Art's interjecting speech is a rare serious moment amidst the comedic narrative. However, the film is not easily characterized as merely a comedy or a horror because its sometimes silly moments are offset by themes of serial killers, mystery, a frightening ambiance in the soundtrack, and ominous cinematography that focuses on dark scenery and suggests frightening violence. The film, as a rhetorical force that coalesces in the moment of the interlude, manifests the intersections of Cold War fears and monster lore of "traditions and superstitions that once circulated in Romanian folklore" (Groza 1) in Eastern Europe, a region which has long been associated with European contentions surrounding the USSR (Hilhor and Scurtu), which is a Cold War mythology that is also described by Eric Kurlander in his work *Hitler's Monsters*. Further, twentieth-century Cold War fears of nuclear attacks were manifest in protagonists running from Cold War Eastern European spies (Braithwaite), a theme which permeated post-Cold War popular culture (Pavitt). Eventual victory over horror film killers and spies, who in their numerous stories had not been defeated by protagonists for decades, is finally manifest in *The 'Burbs*.

The Cold War, Elusive Enemies, and the Call to Strike

Reagan's address to the nation was preceded by decades of antagonism between the United States and the USSR that included military-strength chest pounding from both superpowers. The United States government distrusted the Soviet government, partly due to the USSR's post-war socialist policies that disparaged religion (Froese; Peris 1), along with Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech in 1984 ("Evil Empire") which bolstered the presence of religion as part of Cold War conflict (Chadwick). These Cold War tensions also stemmed from the fear that Soviet ideologies would infiltrate American culture, spawning the 1950s Red Scare when celebrities and others were questioned before Congress about their potential socialist affiliations as Soviet spies (Doherty; Storrs).

The tensions from this drawn-out war of words between both countries bled into symbolic depictions in American popular culture in the 1980s. For example,

the United States' dream of victory is manifest in a depiction of the boxing match in the film *Rocky IV*, as American fighter Rocky Balboa defeats Russian champion Ivan Drago in Moscow. Similarly, *Red Dawn* depicts United States citizens defeating Soviet intrusions on American soil. Further, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel 1956) and its remake (Kaufman 1978) are both Cold War-era representations of fighting enemies where the body is a cinematic site of conflict amidst the Cold War (Tisdall). These manifestations of Cold War discourse in popular culture and the accompanying strategic approaches of pre-eminent strike in the horror genre parallel the then-fear of socialist invasion, and the elusive monsters in horror films were signifiers of an overarching American anxiety about covert socialists within the United States. As such, both threats are addressed in cinematic discourses of establishing fear and the need to hunt and dispose of threats.

Killers in 1980s Horror Films

The 'Burbs was released at the latter end of the Cold War when it appeared that the Soviets were losing due to revolutions against USSR control (Hough). Similarly to how Russia had been perceived as a military powerhouse for years, in American horror films the villain was framed as virtually invincible. Like the United States' perspective on Russia in the Cold War, horror villains at the time were notorious for always eluding capture or justice (Call). Even if they failed to kill the protagonist in the climax of a given film, the killers nonetheless remained in the shadows, still hidden at the film's end. As Maria Beville explains, "horror works as[...]a cultural agenda which celebrates homage and repetition" (80). Were the villain to be captured or killed, the horror film would be resolved, and the series would end. The relentless repetition of escape in these films echoed an apparent cultural fear that international tensions would never cease.

Further, in the 1970s and 1980s, the horror genre would typically portray the villain as a central character throughout the film. Being more often a subject for audience fascination than expendable for the hero to defeat, the villain would return again and again in sequels and remakes (Hendershot). For example, in *Halloween* (Carpenter 1978), serial killer Michael Myers' eye-view of teenage girls is a central element of the plot as he stalks and then kills them. He escapes in the end of the first film, and thereby remains elusive through the franchise's numerous sequels and remakes (Rosenthal 1981; Zombie 2007). This tradition of killer as immune to death and capture coincides with the *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*

franchises. The portrayal of the fleeing and victorious villain is also vividly demonstrated by the villain Leatherface dancing with a chainsaw in the last scene in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, similar to Jack Torrence's appearance in the old party picture in the end of *The Shining* implying that he can forever accompany other ghosts in haunting hotel guests.

Cultural anxieties regarding serial killers, the possibility of nuclear war, and Eastern European monster mythology all converge to create the antagonists of *The 'Burbs*, the Klopeks. Their appearances are comedically outdated, they speak with thick accents, and both the interior and exterior of their dark home resembles a medieval, Dracula-like castle. Werner displays a charismatic, flowing accent and grace as a respected medical doctor, but is still reserved in a dark way like Dracula. His brother Reuben is more of a stiff and inscrutable manifestation of European monsters, like Frankenstein. Both European monster-like characters are manifest in this late Cold War-era film. Indeed, the United States' fixation on Eastern European monsters, the *Dracula* (Stoker) and *Frankenstein* (Shelley) stories, imply a distrust of the Klopeks. This distrust is captured in military veteran Rumsfield's aggressive interrogation of Reuben when he asks about their last name, "Is that Slavic?" (00:57:41). Offended at being identified with assumptions from the aggressive Rumsfield who always dresses in American military attire, Reuben aggressively exclaims in response, "No!" (00:57:43) seeking to hide his background and identity despite his Slavic name and apparent accent.

The Rhetorical Interlude

When pivotal speeches are included in films, it can be useful for the critic to read them as rhetorical texts. Notwithstanding their apparent role to move the plot forward, these speeches or rhetorical interludes (Yergensen), function as oratorical structure and delivery just as speeches did in ancient Greece (Aristotle; Kennedy). In short, these cinematic speeches can be considered persuasive discourses.

Rhetorical interludes are ubiquitous in popular culture. Due to their didactic objective, they are perhaps most easily observed in children's entertainment. In *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, for example, the theme of each episode included a speech from the hero to the young viewers of lessons learned in the given adventure. In the show's first episode, He-Man describes the importance of playing by rules and avoiding "the quick way to try to get ahead of everybody else [...] The people who succeed are the ones who work for what they want. So don't be fooled

by those who say they have a sure thing” (Clark). Similarly, NBC has for decades aired campaigns (*The More You Know*) where its actors provide public service announcements, such as *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*’s Karyn Parsons’ appeal to girls to be aware of abuse (“1995 NBC *The More You Know*”).

The foundation of this proposed concept for studying rhetoric in popular film lies in the potential to understand and explore the under studied rhetorical device of interjection in contemporary culture (Ameka; Wilkins). Interjection gives rhetors an audience’s focus and heightens opportunity for impact, a topic that is “neglect[ed]” due to “the emotional aspects of language” (O’Connell et al. 418). These cinematic interjections summarize a narrative’s prescription of behavior and problem solving, yet they also allow narratives to serve as illustration of an interjection’s content. As interjections, these interludes can be understood as intentional in the film production process, allowing scholars to focus on both the production and narrative, and thereby observe films as cohesive rhetorical efforts. Grasping an interlude’s prescription can only be fully understood in the narrative that is told as encircling the interjection, which is probably an entire film’s story. This approach situates production decisions and narratives as central to the interlude’s potential. By understanding the craft of film production as a strategically guided suasive process, scholars have additional critical tools for interpreting these texts.

The Rhetorical Interlude in *The 'Burbs*

Just before the interlude in *The 'Burbs* takes place, the film uses the technique of foreshadowing as three of the major characters, Ray, Art, and teenage tagalong Ricky Butler, congregate outside to socialize. Although the plot takes place during the summer, the three men wear jackets, their clothing suggesting a sense of foreboding, reflective of the “Anxiety in the Cold War Hollywood Epic” (Murphey) that will pervade the neighborhood over the next few days. The light, slapstick-style music that usually accompanies the scenes shifts to an almost chilling score. The use of this literary technique in Art’s cautionary story invites viewers to connect with the film’s protagonists at a more intimate level, and to preemptively justify their coming actions. In this way, foreshadowing builds expectations about the unknown future (Siulan, et al.; Bolt, et al.). Without foreshadowing, viewers may experience feelings of vulnerability where “the verbal message of the characters[...]encode additional implications” that are ‘a sign which foreshadows

further events” (Chruściak 17). Therefore, foreshadowing addresses the concept of cinematic time in a way that eases the burdens of protagonists and audience, lessening the uncertainty that invariably accompanies the unexpected possibilities of the future. In other words, without foreshadowing, the future is a dark abyss subject to the apprehension of uncertainty. Offering this cautionary tale, Art’s telling the story awakens Ray’s long-dormant memory of the murders, and instills into him the determination to act against evil. The speech also foreshadows for the audience the carnage that is yet to come.

At the beginning of the scene while observing the green sky, Ricky rhymes, “Green sky in morning, neighbor take warning,” with Ray responding, “Green sky at night?” Ricky then quips with an unsure conclusion because he states his response in the form of a question, “Neighbor take flight?” (00:20:28-00:20:39). foretelling the coming peril that was thematic in late Cold War films (Smetak). As the tone of the film darkens in this scene with the introduction of ominous organ music, anticipation of “expectancy violations” is emerging “in the foreshadowing condition” (Boltz, et al. 593). Ricky turns and looks directly at Ray, also looking nearly directly at the audience. As Ricky tells the story of the movie *The Sentinel*, he also highlights the strange noises in the neighborhood that have emerged since the Klopeks moved, paralleling the plot of *The Sentinel*.

Beginning his speech, Art references how the circumstances he and his friends are in are similar to the events surrounding several murders long ago in the same town of Hinckley Hills, “You know, it was a night just like this that it happened[...]Hinckley Hills was a lot smaller. Safer too. Never had to lock your doors. Everybody knew everybody” (00:21:18-00:21:34). Relating this reference to the film’s location, the film’s opening shot is symbolic of the battle that will transpire within the story as a view of Earth that characterizes Universal Pictures’ usual vanity logo continues into a long zoom until the camera arrives at a Midwestern location in the United States where the film’s events happen; the location where American values are demonstrated in Midwestern settings of corn field farms and small, quiet communities, a region which Richard Nation describes as where people “resist the nationalizing and commercializing transformations[...]both economic and political” (1). Thus, the battle over the safety of the world is hypothetically displayed in the film as the opening shot starts with an aerial view of the earth that then spirals in to focus on a region of the United States that encapsulates America’s “pride,” the Midwest (Clayton, et al.). In this Midwestern location, the oratorical warning of a probable bleak outcome in the plot

is foreshadowed as Art tells the story of a man named Skip who murdered his family decades earlier in Hinckley Hills, a small community setting often represented in horror where places that seem the safest are the most rattled by killers (Holland-Toll).

As Art recounts Skip's unexpected killing of his family and leaving their bodies in the basement of their home to decompose, the Cold War's "dark obsessions of fathers [to] destroy both the lives of their offspring and the communities they live in" are exemplified (Covey 41). As Art continues the story, he walks closer toward the Klopeks' home, leading his audience as he explains how the people in the town did not know it was the smell of decomposing corpses that was pervading the community: "They start smelling this really vile stench over on Elm, and they figure it's coming from Skip's place." (00:22:10-00:22:16).

Art continues by citing the fault of the community of Hinckley Hills because of their trepidation against confronting evil, "And no one wants to say anything. I mean, what do you do, go knock on a guy's door, 'Hi, your house stinks!'"[...]So people are trying to ignore it[...]trying to pretend it isn't happening." (00:22:17-00:22:21). As a result, people began to hang pine-scented deodorizers on their porches, a manifestation of a community attempting to address and even deny the reality of a "criminal father," which Susanne Luhmann observes in Cold War films about foreign soldiers. With this focus, Art's seriousness intensifies:

Let me tell you what happened next. The state health inspector shows up. They go over. They talk to Skip. He says he has a sump pump problem [...] They leave [...] everything's okay, right? [...] Wrong! A couple hours later there's smoke pouring out of the windows of Skip's house [...] The fire department shows up [...] They find Skip's family's bodies dead, murdered, by Skip weeks earlier by an icepick. (00:22:39-00:23:02)

Similar to Art's use of narrative to tell the details of Skip's escalation into madness, in President Reagan's 1983 call for greater United States missile defense, Reagan spelled out the escalation of the Russian missile development by showing maps of hidden placings of missiles throughout the world. For Reagan, the sharing of this information with his national audience comes while images are displayed on screen which show the ever-growing size, speed, and accuracy of the Russian missiles. In a similar fashion, Art also details the use of weapons, such as icepicks and fire, to demonstrate the gravity of enemies' threats. Fear of the weaponry of enemies was instilled for decades before Art's interlude, and magnified six years before *The 'Burbs* release in Reagan's address.

While speaking, Art walks to the front of the Klopeks' home, and the camera shot situates the dark house to serve as the backdrop to Art's conclusion, working as an "in-cinema object[...]creat[ing] semiotic and physical parallels between theatrical space and[...]haunted houses" (Castle 34). Art is raised higher than the camera and leans near to Ricky's face, opens his eyes wide for emphasis, and expresses, "Yeah! The guy killed his whole family with an icepick [...] You know what that is that all of those people were smelling over on Elm, Ricky? [...] Skip's family's bodies, decomposing in the summer heat" (00:23:05-00:23:35). Recalling the events, Ray has a stark recollection of the tragedy from when he was a child, and quickly declares his similar memory to Art's while adding to the story in a somber voice in his display of "the epiphany/redemption trope" (Haldey 136) that later allows him to solve the Klopek murders, "I remember that [...] I remember they took down the soda fountain that fall" (00:23:43-00:23:52). Then, throughout the rest of the film, Ray prepares his neighborhood to act against the evil lurking in the house next door. So, the interlude's foreshadowing has a paradoxical function: it simultaneously empowers and frightens. As Art's interlude functions as foreshadowing to the ploy of Ray's pending confrontation with the Klopeks, the story of Skip foretells the probable events in relation to characters and their fate. Characters and audience both await the foreshadowed promises, hoping to be assured that success will come. The exigencies of characters are foreseen, and sometimes symbolically with the state of global affairs, such as presidential discourse about missile defense strategies. Foreshadowing tells the audience that the outcome is known by another character in the plot, one who can be trusted and whose orations are worth listening to and heeding.

In a similar narrative pattern used by Reagan, along with distrust of Eastern European countries in the 1980s, part of the significance of Art's use of foreshadowing is in the cinematography to align the audience with the characters for immediate reception of the speech. Emotional appeals and the use of fear can instill a need to act and to be pre-emptive in a time of worry about missile strikes, just as Reagan stressed the United States' needed to "prevent the greatest of tragedies [...] after years of neglect and mistakes," ("'Evil Empire' Speech by President Reagan") similar to the Hinckley Hills' community lack of ability to discern or intervene on Skip's murders.

As a rhetorical interlude is the pivotal moment for Ray becoming the protagonist who has the resolve and bravery to pursue and conquer in a fight with the film's antagonists, or "a turning point of behavior in the film" (Yergensen 23),

Ray's immediate transition to seriousness about a potential tragedy happening in their town emerges as his own memory of the Skip tragedy is awakened. Changing his behavior during the interlude, Ray ceases to have an annoyed look on his face. This transformation starts with the interlude when he confirms that Art's recollection of the murders decades earlier is accurate. The interlude piques Ray's interest, changes his perspective, and turns him into something new: a researcher for evidence and investigator of his neighborhood. Once a lazy cynic, Ray transforms into the neighborhood protector. Thus, the rhetorical interlude can be the turning point of protagonist character arc (Bell).

Ray as Action Hero

As Ray is awakened to the possibility of what sinister activities could be taking place in the house next door, he becomes determined to prove that the Klopeks are murderers because he "adopts the rhetorical interlude's principle" of action against evil (Yergensen 26). Just before the team's full investigation commences, Ray's determination to expose the Klopeks peaks when he speaks in a trance-like expression of focus, exhibiting the "States of trance" that offer "sensitivity to human experience" through character performance in film (Schauble 33). Moments following Art's interlude, Ray and Art spy on the Klopeks with the assistance of their military-trained and crafty neighbor Rumsfield. The battle with invaders on American soil is therefore escalating in this depiction of American interaction with USSR immigrants on American soil.

Upon initially meeting the Klopeks, Ray avoids eye-contact with them to attempt to investigate inside their home. His answers to their inquiries are brief. He is distant, filled with suspicion that he is in the presence of people like Skip from the soda fountain. These Eastern European men are manifestations of what Jeanne Tihen describes as standard Frankenstein monster elements in horror film, "the mad scientist, the strange laboratory, the unstoppable Monster, and a path of destruction[...]. Through these components, the story of Frankenstein reflects social anxieties" (66-67). Tihen's list of monster elements are displayed in the Klopeks' behavior as Werner Klopek works in the basement where strange noises emerge, and has a red substance that looks like blood on his hands when he is introduced in the film. Being aware that Ray feels awkward in their presence, Reuben Klopek stares intimidatingly at Ray and declares in an aggressive tone of frustration, "You are the one next door!" (00:54:23-00:54:26). Ray's subsequent investigations

demonstrate the strength of his commitment to proving that the Klopeks are serial killers.

After finding evidence in the Klopeks' home that could implicate them as the murderers of a missing elderly man who lives on the street, the investigator Ray calls a private meeting with Art and Rumsfield and declares, once again in a trance-like state, "I'm going over the fence and I'm not coming back until I find a dead body. Nobody knocks off an old man in my neighborhood and gets away with it" (01:08:11-01:08:24), or the "realist-observational narrative and the focus on individuals" in "trance films" (Schauble 33). They then go to work on their second investigation, cutting the power to the Klopeks' home, digging holes in the backyard looking for buried bodies, breaking into the home by shattering the glass window, and tearing up the bottom of the basement in search of evidence.

As the film moves toward its conclusion, Ray accidentally blows up the Klopeks' home in search for corpses when he unwittingly breaks their gas line. Feeling guilty and defeated because his search came up empty, he assumes he failed and that the Klopeks are innocent, reflective of the time's confusion during the Cold War, which Ronald Suny described as "Second-guessing Stalin" in Cold War confusion. Providing a twist in which the comedic nature of the film would provide the possibility for abandoning the noble fight on the part of the protagonists, the interlude's foreshadowing seems to have been, for a few moments, incorrect. Ray's temporary regret for his aggressive actions mirror the United States' ambivalence about enhancing its missile program in light of Reagan discovering a Russian missile arsenal (Mann).

The defeat of evil comes in the realization of the need to beat monsters at their own game and with their own weapons and strategies, and it is revealed that the Klopeks are indeed killers. In the interlude, Art speaks of murder with ice picks, deception, and the burning of evidence. Ray does some of these same things. He burns evidence, although accidentally as he blows up the Klopeks' house. He uses a pick to dig in the Klopeks' back yard as he searches for bodies, and, like Reuben's lie about the origins of their name and Werner's lie about the blood on his hand, Ray deceives his wife regarding his intentions to investigate. Ray uses the same strategies as Skip was described as using in the interlude, mirroring the United States new approach to strengthen its missile power after Reagan's 1983 call for greater missile defense (Munton). The Klopeks' murderous ways are exposed similarly to and coinciding with the fall of the USSR.

Conclusion

In being proactive against villains, evil's elusiveness ends as demonstrated in Art's final comments in the film as he is being interviewed by reporters after capturing the Klopeks, "I think the message to, uh, psychos, fanatics, murderers, nutcases all over the world is[...]do not mess with suburbanites[...]frankly, we're just not gonna take it anymore" (01:35:01-01:35:12). The villain is caught because of the assertive defensiveness of United States citizens. Similarly and also symbolic of the American's hero complex (Jewett and Lawrence), six years after his call for the United States to enhance its missile defense system and only months after the release of *The 'Burbs*, Ronald Reagan spoke in front of the Brandenburg Gate of the Berlin Wall and delivered his famous charge to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall!" ("Berlin Wall," (00:12:02-00:12:04). *The 'Burbs'* rhetorical interlude anticipates the defeat of Cold War-era forms of villains, ripe with assumptions that coincide with United States' common perspectives on Russia's USSR.

The pattern of villains eluding capture and justice is prescribed as ending with *The 'Burbs*. The Klopeks do not return again to kill in the way that Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, and Freddy Kruger did in sequels when the USSR was still flourishing. This is because "The late Cold War saw the advent of a new paradigm" where "humanity" was "saved through[...]actions" (Faithful 347), whereas before the 1980s when the Cold War was winding down and Russia was thriving, Cold War film was more nuanced, telling tales of espionage (Worland; Fedorov). But, *The 'Burbs'* actions and their effects become more explicit in the context of the fall of the Berlin wall.

Like Soviet Russia aging and dwindling at the time of Reagan's call for the Berlin Wall to come down, the horror genre villain at the end of the Cold War era also ages past their potency. Whereas espionage was the format of intelligence in earlier Cold War film (Smith), a Midwestern neighborhood of slapstick-prone buffoons defeat European enemies. As the film concludes with the camera panning back out from Hinckley Hills and back out to outer space to once again give an aerial view of the entire Earth, the United States has defeated the then-described global threat that it had struggled against for decades. With symbolism ever-present in Cold War film (McNaughton), such as just before the Berlin Wall came down, horror villains in the United States, and from Eastern Europe, are shown to be aged

and comically weak in a physical altercation, so much so that an everyday citizen from the suburbs, such as Ray Peterson, can subdue them.

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