Cinema of Confinement

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Excess in Confinement in *Room* and *Green Room*

Visually, shooting such a large proportion of a film inside a single, small room might seem like a problem—after all, don’t films rely on scale, movement, shifting locations and so on? . . . In general, the tone of the film *Room*—across the entire story—should be low-key and natural; shifts in emphasis, moments of suspense, pathos, horror, catharsis have to achieve without the viewers’ attention being drawn to the mechanics.

—Lenny Abrahamson, director of *Room*

I designed a cluster-fuck of eight people stuck in a room against an army of Nazi skinheads.

—Jeremy Saulnier, director of *Green Room*

The above quotations refer to two highly acclaimed movies of 2015 that focus on characters trapped in a room. A drama/thriller, *Room* tells the story of Joy (Brie Larson) and her five-year-old son Jack (Jacob Tremblay), who are held prisoner for seven years in a shed converted into a room. *Green Room* is a crime/horror/thriller about a hardcore punk rock band called The Ain’t Rights who discover a dead body in the backstage room called the “green room,” located in an Oregon club run by Nazi skinheads. In both films, escape is the primary objective. In *Room*, Joy must outwit her captor Old Nick (Sean Bridgers) in order to save herself and Jack. In *Green Room*, The Ain’t Rights must battle Nazi skinheads outside the door of the green room, or die. Although *Room* and *Green Room* are representative of confinement cinema, they differ in their stylistic approaches to building and sustaining suspense and narrative tension over a long duration of time.

This chapter examines how the gaze operates in both films as a mode of shock and attraction. In *Room*, the gaze emerges as an unknowable
force that threatens the boundary between reality and the real. After Jack and Joy defeat Old Nick, Jack struggles to adapt to life outside of the room. I argue that in order for Jack to fully transition into “outer reality,” he must surrender his fantasy of life inside the room. *Green Room* demonstrates the distorting presence of the gaze as a knowable force by showing viewers too much satisfaction, as demonstrative in Saulnier’s quote above.1 Yet the film’s visualization of the excess of the gaze reveals a tension pertaining to neo-Nazism and the American hardcore scene. I argue that the excess of the gaze provides insights into what Robert T. Wood terms a “subcultural schism,” factions within a subculture. Lastly, what ties these films together is that the captives both utilize a fictional scenario to overcome their captors.

Inner Reality: *Misery* and *Room*

Abrahamson’s quotation comes from a letter he wrote to author Emma Donoghue trying to convince her why he was the right director to adapt her novel to the screen. Abrahamson’s letter expresses the challenge of stylizing the first half of the film, almost all of which takes place entirely in one room, while staying true to the novel’s integrity. He states, “Any film version of ‘Room,’ which imposes an over-energized camera style, or any other self-conscious visual device, in the mistaken belief that the physical constraint of location needs to be somehow compensated for, will fail because it will lose the taste of reality on which the power of the novel depends.”2 Indeed, constraint is key in capturing the horror of Joy’s situation. But we should not think that Abrahamson’s aesthetic choice makes for a boring or dull experience in watching the first half of *Room*. The challenge of a limited-location film is to prevent what can be best described as a filmed stage play. This is not to suggest that movies based on plays are not pleasurable to watch. Rather, my question is: how do filmmakers articulate cinematic space and build narrative tension within a confined location without falling into the fixed-tableau space of early cinema? If *Room* is filmed in a low-key manner, then why is this section of the story—which takes up almost the first half of the movie—so unsettling? How does Abrahamson render cinematic space that both narratively engages the viewer and visually reflects Joy’s dire situation?

My claim is that *Room*’s single-room suspense derives from Abrahamson’s engagement with excess. Consider again Abrahamson’s concern regarding stylizing camerawork as a means of compensating for *Room*’s limited location. Certainly, frantic camerawork and fast editing consti-
tute excess within the confined space. But this is not what Abrahamson aesthetically and emotionally envisions. How does he achieve suspense and narrative tension within the confined space of a single room if he is relying upon traditional photography and natural shifts? Wouldn’t this potentially bore the viewer? Certainly, the first half of Room does not lack narrative suspense.

Abrahamson’s choice to not utilize hyper-stylized camera work demonstrates how the unknowability of the gaze operates in Room. Room’s narrative suspense derives from Abrahamson allowing the gaze to emerge with disquieting results, where the realms of fantasy and desire collide. This raises a question: how does Abrahamson create a peaceful and spirited fantasy space when Joy is held prisoner? Wouldn’t this simply be a film of desire and lack? Abrahamson creates a fantasy space through the eyes of Jack. Fantasy operates in the room through Jack’s perspective, such as the different scenarios he comes up with and the parts of the room that have their own magic, particularly the skylight. For Joy and the viewers, the skylight window connotes freedom and safety. But for Jack the skylight is outer space, a limit to the world. The skylight for Jack is the boundary between reality and the real; it is his protective screen that keeps him safe within the room. But when Old Nick enters the room, it is a tense moment for both Joy and the viewer. Joy instructs Jack to hide in the closet because she knows that Nick is going to rape her. As such, Jack does not fully realize that Old Nick is a threat to his fantasy of the room.

Old Nick’s first appearance in the room is seen through Jack’s eyes, framed through the shutters of the closet, and we are unable to get a good look at him. The captor or villain in captive films is often introduced as a mysterious figure. For example, in Rob Reiner’s Misery, Annie Wilkes (Kathy Bates) is first shown in fragments as she rescues her favorite writer, Paul Sheldon (James Caan), after his car slides off the road during a blizzard in Silver Springs, Colorado. We never see Annie’s face, just fragments of her body, in order to create a mystery about her character as she pulls Paul out of his crashed Mustang. In Room, the partial reveal of Old Nick closely coincides with the distorting presence of the gaze. Through Jack’s perspective, we are unable to make out who Old Nick is, demonstrating not only his uncertain status, but also our inability to master cinematic space. Not unlike the locker in which Ripley hides in the escape shuttle in Alien as explained in this book’s introduction, the closet for Jack is a space that protects him from Old Nick as the embodiment of the real. Old Nick’s first arrival reveals what is in the room more than the room itself. He is excess and disturbs the fantasy scenario that Jack paints for viewers. As such, Old Nick not only endangers his mother, but is a threat to Jack’s fantasy space within the room.
A trait often found in the cinema of confinement is character resourcefulness. These tactics often entail characters finding objects within the confined space, which are then turned into tools or weapons to escape their setting or to defeat their captor. Just as cinematic fantasy can visually manifest the excess of the gaze, the character held captive can create fantasy scenarios, enticing the captor’s desire and, thus, setting a trap for him in planning an escape. In *Room*, Joy tells Jack that she once used the toilet bowl cover to attack Old Nick. Such ingenuity is often the case in captive-confinement films. The first move of the character held captive is provoked by instinct rather than logic. In *Misery*, when Annie forces Paul to burn the only copy of his manuscript for his new novel, he realizes his life is in danger and he must escape the room or possibly die. He instinctively tries to flee the room, even though he cannot walk. When he reaches the bedroom door, he discovers it is locked from the outside. Worse, Paul cannot get back into the bed. In order to escape, Paul turns to logic and reasoning as he begins to hide painkillers in his bed, one of the many steps he plans in order to escape Annie’s house. In short, Paul has to trick Annie. To do this, Paul has to, using Joan Copjec’s expression, read Annie’s desire by sustaining her fantasy of him as her favorite writer. Annie, as the obsessive fan, treasures Paul and his *Misery* novels. In order for Paul to plan his escape, he has to keep up this appearance as the writer of *Misery*. Likewise, the only way for Joy and Jack to escape the room is to “trick Old Nick.” This involves Joy telling Jack the true story of the room. But learning there is a real world outside of the room is shocking for Jack, because it involves removing the fantasy screen that protects him from the exterior world. As Jack forcefully says to Joy, “I don’t believe in your stinky world.” Later in the film, Jack witnesses Old Nick and Joy fighting. In response, Old Nick turns off the electricity and heat in the room. Witnessing a dark dimension of Old Nick, Jack no longer trusts him. Old Nick is not only a threat to Jack’s mother, but also a danger to his fantasy space within the room. Here, Joy comes up with the plan for their escape. Jack will pretend to play dead as a result of Old Nick turning off the heat in the room. She will roll Jack in the room’s carpet with the hopes that Old Nick will bury him by driving his body far away from the room. Jack’s job is to unroll out of the carpet and flee Old Nick when the truck stops. Once Jack finds help, he must deliver Joy’s handwritten plea for help. Here, an ordinary object, a carpet to roll up Jack, loses its primary meaning, becoming a signifier of escape. The irony is that Joy and Jack trick Old Nick not by resorting to violence or force, but by using a fiction or fantasy scenario. The key to Joy and Jack’s escape is not to physically attack Old Nick, but to elicit his desire by creating a fiction within a fiction, a topic further
explored in chapter 7 on 10 Cloverfield Lane. Jack and Joy have to create a scenario that engages Old Nick’s desire, to catch him in a trap. In order for Old Nick to sustain his fantasy of keeping Joy captive, he must get rid of Jack’s body. Likewise for Annie in Misery, once she reads that Misery dies in Paul’s last novel, she burns his latest manuscript, a personal story based on Paul’s life. Annie forces Paul to write a new novel that resurrects Misery. Indeed, the return of Misery is the return of Annie’s fantasy. Paul has to sustain Annie’s fantasy while planning his escape. In other words, Paul has to keep the excess of the gaze at a distance in order to play a fiction within a fiction. Paul must perform Annie’s fantasy as her beloved romance writer. When Paul fails to sustain her fantasy, Annie becomes a violent force, as when she breaks his ankles in the gruesome “hobbler” scene. Paul’s survival depends on preventing Annie’s obscene underside from emerging. Indeed, Joy and Jack’s escape derives not from physically attacking Old Nick, but from playing on his desire. Joy knows that what threatens Old Nick is losing his fantasy of controlling and violating her at will. Removing Jack’s dead body wrapped in the carpet keeps Old Nick’s fantasy of Joy alive.

Outer Reality

In the first sequence outside the room, Old Nick drives to dispose of Jack. Abrahamson does not cut back to Joy waiting in the room. We only hear Joy’s voice telling Jack: “truck, wiggle out, run.” The narrative stays exclusively with Jack’s perspective as he rolls out of the carpet. He looks up and sees the sky, trying to perceptually process the outer world. Once the truck stops, Jack plops down on the truck’s flatbed, which alerts Old Nick. Jack escapes as Old Nick goes after him. Jack trips and falls. Old Nick bumps into a man walking his dog. Jack yells for help, holding Joy’s message. Old Nick yanks the message from Jack’s hand and tells the man to mind his own business. The man says that he is calling the police. Old Nick drops Jack on the ground and speeds off with Joy’s message. Jack remains on the ground with shock as he looks up at the sky, overwhelmed by the immensity of the outer world. He grabs a leaf from the ground and looks at it with wonder. Later, a police officer asks Jack questions. Her voice is processed with an unusual amount of reverb to underscore Jack’s distorted perspective in processing the world outside of the room, as if reality itself has been suspended. Jack has trouble answering the officer’s questions. But when the officer asks what his mother’s name is, he removes Joy’s tooth from his mouth and says: “A bit of mom.” Indeed,
Joy’s tooth is a reminder of the room so Jack can cope with the vastness of the outer world. Joy’s tooth demonstrates the paradox of the real. The tooth is a piece of the real that does not traumatize Jack, but comforts him. The real is non-sense and, at the same time, enables Jack to render this non-sense in order to cope with the outer world. On the one hand, the real reveals a fissure within the symbolic order. On the other hand, the real operates as an empty screen upon which to project our fantasies.3 The same can be said of the cinema screen itself. The screen presents the moving-image itself and what is absent or lacking in the moving-image. The screen does not function like a mirror by offering the viewer an image of plenitude that can only be undone by revealing the film’s processes of mediation. Rather, the screen operates as both plenitude and lack.4 It is the absence or lack that elicits our desire to see (what we do not know). At the same time, our desire to see sets a trap for our potential encounter with the gaze—our blind spot within the field of vision.

Once the police learn where Joy is held captive, Abrahamson stays with Jack in the police vehicle as he looks out the window. Out of the darkness, Joy appears, running in slow motion toward the police vehicle. The audio drops out as we only hear the piano of the score as Joy and Jack reunite. The uplifting score and slow-motion photography highlight the success of the plan. Yet we are left with uncertainty when Jack asks Joy if they can go back to bed in the room. In order for Joy to enact her plan of escape, she had to ensure that Jack no longer trusted Old Nick. But Jack’s belief in the room has not receded. Indeed, the escape and rescue sequence captures Jack’s experience of the outer world without its fantasy frame. As Matthew Flisfeder puts it, “When the [framework of] fantasy breaks down, ‘reality’ becomes too Real for the subject to bear.”5 The outer world is freedom for Joy. But for Jack, the world outside the room is the real. The moment Jack enters the outer world, the film’s visual and audio registers radically change in order to reflect the breakdown of the barrier between reality and the real. Rather than utilizing a hyper-stylized cinema to energize cinematic space, the suspense in the first half of Room operates by Abrahamson employing excess as a traumatic and unknowable force that unhinges cinematic space.

The last half of the film explores Jack’s transformation in the outer world. At the end of the film, at Jack’s request, they return to the shed to visit the room for one last time. Jack opens the door and is confused to see that the room is much smaller and different than when he was held captive. Here we have a complete reversal of the first half of the film: the room is now real—destroyed of its fantasy space. The shed is none other than a common thing—deprived of its luster for Jack. The shed has been transformed into what Žižek describes (paraphrasing Lacan) as “a gift of shit.”6 When Jack says goodbye to the objects that
made up his world for the first five years of his life in the shed, he is, in a sense, traversing the fantasy. By traversing the fantasy, Jack frees himself of the fantasy he had invested in the shed. For Jack, the shed is the real with which he now identifies.

The Gaze as a Knowable Force: Green Room

As explained in my introduction, an excessive style of cinema can be disarming, as when films show viewers too much. For example, overstylized and extremely violent films, such as Tony Scott’s *True Romance* (1993), Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers* (1994), and Park Chan-wook’s *Oldboy* (2003), render and tame the gaze. Here, the gaze loses some of its disturbing impact because it is made knowable within the field of vision, rather than as an unknowable and invading force that breaks down the barrier between reality and the real. These films allow us to see and experience excess by showing us too much satisfaction, such as Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory’s (Juliette Lewis) cartoonish violence in *Natural Born Killers*, or the long take of the hallway fight sequence in *Oldboy* where Oh Dae-su (Choi Min-sik) takes down a group of henchmen with a hammer.

At the same time, allowing us to see excess as a knowable force can reveal fantasy’s obscene underside at a political and social level. Ideology functions by not revealing its excessive dimension. The power of ideology is not to proclaim itself as ideology, but rather to appear natural and spontaneous, or what Antonio Gramsci terms “common sense.” Here, the excess of the gaze as a knowable presence within the field of vision can be deployed to uncover the workings of power and authority. This brings us to Jeremy Saulnier’s *Green Room*, a film that explores a dark and obscene underside of the American hardcore music scene: Nazi skinheads. The Ain’t Rights are a struggling hardcore band made up of members Pat (Anton Yelchin), Sam (Alia Shawkat), Tiger (Callum Turner), and Reece (Joe Cole). Like many hardcore and punk bands, The Ain’t Rights try to get by from gig to gig with little or no money. This struggle is clearly signaled at the start of the film when Sam and Pat siphon gas from other vehicles to fill their van in order to make it to their next gig. Early in the film, after one of their gigs is canceled, Tad (David W. Thompson), a local radio host in the Pacific Northwest, contacts his cousin Daniel (Mark Webber) and arranges a show for The Ain’t Rights in Portland. When The Ain’t Rights arrive, they shockingly discover that it is a club full of Nazi skinheads. Here they meet Gabe (Macon Blair), who is in charge of running the club. He tells them, “The owner doesn’t fuck around with the fire code.” Keeping the fire department (or any municipal department)
away from the club serves to shield the Nazi skinheads’ secret place from unwanted attention and thus allowing it to remain off the grid. Moreover, this admonition suggests that these Nazi skinheads are organized. The Ain’t Rights play their set, which includes a cover of the Dead Kennedys’ “Nazi Punks Fuck Off.” The performance of the song is both hilarious and frightening because it angers many of the Nazi skinheads. Indeed, covering the Dead Kennedys’ song demonstrates The Ain’t Right’s courage to resist the Nazi skinheads, in spite of being an unwelcome presence in the hardcore community. At the same time, their performance disrupts the Nazi skinheads’ fantasy space as a place of gathering. We are unsure if The Ain’t Rights will make it out of the club alive. Surprisingly, they are able to complete their set without any acts of violence, suggesting that the Nazi skinheads cannot afford to bring unwanted attention to the club. As we later learn, the club is also a place where they make heroin, which is the source of the group’s income.

After their set, The Ain’t Rights are paid by Gabe, and all appears well. But as they are about to leave, Sam realizes she left her phone in the green room. Pat enters the room to retrieve the phone and discovers a young woman named Emily (Taylor Tunes) dead on the floor with a knife in her head. In the room are Nazi skinheads, Werm (Brent Werzner), and Emily’s friend Amber (Imogen Poots). Emily was killed because she and her boyfriend, Daniel (who arranged the gig for The Ain’t Rights), were planning to escape the Nazis’ group. Pat calls 911 and contacts the police for help. Immediately, Big Justin, the club’s bouncer (Eric Edelstein), confiscates the phone and scolds Werm for not locking the door to the green room as instructed. Werm’s inability to follow Big Justin’s instructions illustrate that the Nazi skinheads must be organized in order to sustain their power while not attracting attention to their place of gathering.

Emily and Daniel’s plan of escape reveals an unwritten law of the Nazi skinhead club: when one becomes a member of this club, one is a member for life. Leaving the group threatens the power of the club. Saulnier exploits this unwritten law of the Nazi skinheads as a cinema of excess and extreme violence. This begins with The Ain’t Rights overpowering Big Justin, stealing his gun, and blockading the door. They hold Big Justin hostage as a means to bargain with the Nazi skinheads outside the door. Darcy (Patrick Stewart), the bar owner and head of the Nazi skinheads, is called in as a negotiator to “mop up” the mess. Darcy is frighteningly cunning and operates rationally as he puts forth a plan to cover up Emily’s death and dispose of The Ain’t Rights. Darcy pays two young Nazi skinheads to stab each other in order to take the blame for Pat’s 911 call. After the police arrest the two Nazi skinheads, Darcy gathers a group of Nazi skinheads to kill The Ain’t Rights. At the green room door, Darcy requests that the band surrender the gun, telling them that
the situation is under control. Both Darcy and the band go back and forth in terms of negotiations. Neither the band nor the viewer can see Darcy during the negotiations; we only hear his voice off-screen. Similar to Old Nick, who is first shown in fragments, Darcy’s disembodied off-screen voice demonstrates his power as well as his unreliability. Even though Pat is skeptical of Darcy’s terms, he and the other members of the band agree and slowly hand him the gun through a slight opening of the door. Amber warns them not to negotiate with Darcy. But The Ain’t Rights do not trust her, for they believe she is also a Nazi skinhead, which she outright denies. Amber is correct about Darcy’s motives. This is confirmed when the skinheads outside the door slice up Pat’s arm. The band re-barricades the door, knowing that Darcy does not want to negotiate but to kill them. After the attack on Pat, Big Justin attacks the band. Reece chokes him to death as the war with the Nazis skinheads begins.

Darcy’s violent attack on Pat is the moment when the film becomes what Todd McGowan terms a “cinema of fantasy,” where the excess of the gaze overwhelms the viewer with too much enjoyment. The Ain’t Rights must put a plan into effect in order to safely escape the room. Their plan, however, is fraught with problems because they are not organized. They do not think logically to overcome their captors. In their first attack, three members of the band instantly die, leaving Pat and Amber as the only survivors. Whereas Room allows the gaze to emerge with disturbing effects, Green Room exploits the excess of the gaze through hyper-stylization and an excess of violence. After the attack on Pat, Green Room presents the gaze as knowable, disturbing viewers with too much satisfaction. Even though, as Saulnier points out, “there are no gratuitous close-ups when there’s a death,” the film provides little respite in terms of its violence. Whereas Joy uses her skills to trick Old Nick in Room, The Ain’t Rights operate instinctually within the moment, grounding the film with explosive violence. As Saulnier explains, “The band members [The Ain’t Rights] are not idiots. They’re just real people. When you see a wrap-up of real life news stories or incidents where there are humans trapped in a pressure cooker environment or things go wrong where there’s chaos, people behave in very stupid ways.”

Space, Fiction, and Subcultural Schism

The chaotic articulation of cinematic space in Green Room reflects the film’s excess of the gaze. The ordering of space is not depicted as continuous and fluid, as we typically find in many Hollywood films. Rather, space is rendered excessive, making it difficult for viewers to master their
looking. This last point is key in terms of understanding the different ways in which space is articulated in the cinema of confinement in relation to the excess of the gaze. The deployment of excess is vital in energizing a film’s confined space. The fact that many filmmakers (particularly those from classical cinema) have articulated space as stable does not mean that space is inherently neutral. It is how the filmmaker depicts the image’s excess information. Tom Gunning makes this point in his analysis of narrative discourse in early cinema. As he explains, “Although a filmmaker can make images relatively abstract, they will still contain a plethora of information compared to a verbal description.” For Gunning, it is a matter of how the filmmaker renders the image from showing to telling through discourse. For example, the classical narrator mode of Hollywood typically subordinates space as a vestige for narrative meaning. David Bordwell points out that the principle of subordinating space for narrative thrust is most notable in the “bad” cut. The jump cut or imbalance of space edited between shots draws attention to space itself. From this perspective, space in the classical mode of narration strives toward neutralization of the excess of the image, as is often seen in the shot/reverse shot technique. Here, the cross-cutting between characters does not violate the established axis line between two characters talking. The editing between character A and character B functions through eyeline match edits. When character A glances at character B, the cut of the reverse shot must match what A sees. Bordwell explains that objective reality “of the action independent of the act of filming is analogous to that stable space of proscenium theatrical representation, in which the spectator is always positioned beyond the fourth wall.” The director must establish the 180-degree line, so that the edits between the two characters occur frontally. Certainly, recent films, particularly action films, often violate the 180-degree rule in attempting to depict space from a 360-degree perspective. Steven Shaviro goes so far as to claim that the new “stylistics” in the articulation of space in recent cinema is “post-continuity,” where big blockbuster films such as Transformers (Michael Bay, 2007) are preoccupied “with [how] immediate effects trump any concern for broader continuity—whether on the immediate shot-by-shot level, or on that of the overall narrative.” From this perspective, the violation of the 180-degree rule closely corresponds to the depiction of the gaze that overwhelms the viewer as a knowable force within the field of vision. This is one of the primary effects of the gaze in Green Room: space is rendered as excessive to reflect the frenzy and chaos of the band’s situation. In Room, the emergence of the gaze collapses the barrier between reality and the real for Jack. By contrast, Green Room exploits and renders the excess gaze by showing viewers too much information that coincides
with the film’s extreme violence, as well as The Ain’t Rights’ lack of organization to defeat their captors.

But this weakness does not eliminate the possibility of the captives becoming organized and vanquishing their captors. Here, Room and Green Room both use a fictional scenario in order to outwit and overcome their captors. Toward the end of Green Room, Amber and Pat sit in the green room trying to figure out how to escape. Pat tells Amber about a time when he played paintball and was teamed against ex-marines. The team that Pat was on was getting slaughtered by vets from the Iraq War. As Pat explains, “They knew real war and played real war.” They knew the tactics such as hand-signaling and flanking. Pat’s friend Rick got fed up and no longer cared about getting shot or losing the game. In the last match, Pat explains that Rick went to all-out war and wiped out the whole team until they were dead. Amber adds, “pretend dead.” Pat says, “We can’t play real war.” Amber responds, “Let’s pretend.” That is, let’s pretend to play real war. Here, Amber and Pat dress up the part of soldiers, painting their faces for an all-out attack on the Nazi skinheads. By enacting the scenario of soldiers ready for war, Amber and Pat are able to defeat the Nazi skinheads and escape the club. In Room, Joy plays on Old Nick’s desire in order to trick him. In Green Room, Amber and Pat’s performing a fiction within the fiction organizes them in order to overcome the Nazi skinheads. In both cases, survival depends on the captives using fictional scenarios to outwit their captors. Yet both films render the gaze differently in terms of excess and cinematic space.

The frantic style of Green Room has a social function in revealing an obscene underside of the American hardcore scene. The hardcore scene emerged out of the punk rock movement in the late 1970s, spawning bands such as Bad Brains, Minor Threat, Misfits, Agnostic Front, Cro-Mags, Circle Jerks, and Black Flag. Not unlike punk, hardcore is a reaction to the status quo and the hegemony of commercialized music. Yet hardcore’s dark underside is that the very same music that connects its members also attracts Nazi skinheads, a faction within the scene. This is notable when Werm asks The Ain’t Rights the name of the second-to-last song they played. Pat responds, “Toxic Evolution.” Werm says that the song was “fucking hard.” He shockingly adds that it was during their performance of “Toxic Evolution” that he killed Emily. Although Nazi skinheads share their love of hardcore music with members outside their group, they do not share the same values of racial harmony. Writing on the straight-edge hardcore community, Robert T. Wood explains, “Racist and non-racist factions of the American skinhead subculture . . . stylistically remained similar, yet each faction adopted different subcultural symbols. Racist skinheads marked their bodies, clothes, magazines
and subcultural spaces with distinctly Nazi symbols such as the swastika and the death’s head.” This is exactly what Amber recognizes before Pat is attacked during the negotiations with Darcy. Through the vent of the door of the green room, she sees that the bootlaces belonging to the people outside the door are red, which is a fashion symbol of the Nazi skinheads. Indeed, a song such as the Dead Kennedys’ “Nazi Punks Fuck Off” is meant to preserve the integrity and values of the hardcore community in supporting inclusivity and racial harmony within the scene. Perhaps more importantly, the Nazi skinheads demonstrate that a subculture is never totalized in their vision or manifesto. There is always an opening within a subculture that can create a faction. This fissure can lead to a tension within a subculture, or what Woods calls a “subcultural schism.” The schism within a subculture can result in new recruits forming their own group, as in the case of the Nazi skinheads within the hardcore scene. Emily and Daniel attempt to leave the group because they no longer share the Nazi skinheads’ values and nonracial harmony. As such, *Green Room* exposes this faction within the hardcore scene as “full frontal gore.” The film’s exploitation of excess demonstrates a disturbance that undercuts the functioning order of the hardcore subculture community. Here, the film’s depiction of the excess of the gaze as a distorting presence is akin to the “Nazi” schism within the American hardcore scene. Yet this schism is not an exterior force that invades the subculture, but rather emerges from *within* the subculture itself.

Both *Room* and *Green Room* show two articulations of the gaze at work within a confined setting. In the case of *Room*, the gaze is rendered unknowable by allowing excess to manifest through the collision of fantasy and desire. In *Green Room*, the excess of the gaze is made knowable by overwhelming viewers with too much satisfaction in order to demonstrate the Nazi skinheads as a dark dimension within the hardcore scene. Together, *Room* and *Green Room* exemplify the fact that films that take place within a limited location can be shocking, suspenseful, and engaging.