Menacing Environments

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The final image of the Icelandic slasher film *Reykjavík Whale Watching Massacre* (dir. Júlíus Kemp; sometimes titled *Harpoon: The Whale Watching Massacre*, 2009) is an aerial shot of the open sea—a wide expanse of blue punctuated by an infinitesimal orange dot drifting on its surface in the center of the frame. We know from the preceding scenes that the dot is, in fact, the life preserver keeping Annette (Pihla Viitala) afloat and alive after she has survived a horrific attack by a band of disgruntled, bloodthirsty whalers who have turned to hunting tourists after commercial whaling is banned in Iceland. Within the ecocritical discourse of the film, which centers on issues of environmental management and national autonomy, the shot figures Annette’s bobbing form as a visual metaphor for the nation of Iceland: an island isolated and adrift in a cold and inhospitable expanse of the North Atlantic.

Extracted from a global context, the drifting, desperate body of Annette clinging for life without any sign that she will be rescued by the wider world is an image of environmental precarity that accomplishes at least two important ecocritical tasks for the film. For one thing, the shot unsettles one of the central tropes of the slasher film and in the process contributes to a growing subgenre in contemporary Nordic ecohorror that Pietari Kääpä has called the *ecoslasher.* True to the conventions of the slasher film, *Reykjavík* sets up clear expectations that Annette is to be the “final girl” who we anticipate will be the sole survivor to escape her murderous attackers and emerge safe and sound in the end. This trope—first named and popularized by Carol J. Clover in her influential study of gender in modern horror cinema, *Men, Women, and Chain*
Saws—has become one of the most ubiquitous and widely recognized critical terms in both academic horror studies and genre film fan discourse. Rather than ending with Annette’s escape from the relentless and bloody assault—as when Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) is rescued from the masked, teenager-mutilating madman Michael Myers (Nick Castle) in Halloween (dir. John Carpenter, 1978)—Reykjavík ends with an image of ecological uncertainty and isolation, setting the precarious body of the film’s supposed final girl adrift in a hostile environment without offering much hope of her ultimate survival. Though the sadistic whalers have not succeeded in killing her, the film suggests, the environment may well finish the job—be it through thirst, hypothermia, or being devoured by a hungry orca. Contributing to a growing body of ecocritical horror films in Nordic cinema—including the Norwegian wilderness horror franchises Cold Prey (Fritt vilt, dir. Roar Uthaug, 2006; sequels released in 2008 and 2010) and Dead Snow (Død sna, dir. Tommy Wirkola, 2009; sequel released in 2014)—Reykjavík thus plays with the conventions of the slasher film to underscore the increasingly tenuous relationship between human societies and the natural world in the twenty-first century.

Besides contributing to Reykjafjörk’s ecocritical reimagining of the slasher film, the final image of Annette drifting island-like on the surface of the ocean also raises ecocritical questions about the relationship between nature and nation, resonating with debates the film sets in motion about Iceland’s uncertain position in an interconnected and globalized world. Coming at the end of a film that has pitted nationalist, pro-whaling Icelanders against international environmental activists and whaling regulation organizations and that has repeatedly questioned the apparent isolation of Iceland, the final shot clearly stands in as an image of Icelandic insularity. As Björn Nordfjörd writes, the status of Iceland as an island nation perched precariously at the meeting place of two continental plates in the North Atlantic—“too remote [from both North America and Europe] to belong culturally to either”—has been a major thematic concern of modern Icelandic cinema and remains a central pillar of Icelandic national identity.3 The cultural centrality of the island imaginary is perhaps especially prevalent in Iceland, a place many may consider the most “islandy” of all island nations, being more culturally marginal, more geographically isolated, physically smaller, less densely populated, and less geopolitically powerful than other contenders like Great Britain or Japan. As Nordfjörd notes, this intimate connection between Icelandic identity and the
acutely felt sense of island-bound isolation from the outer world runs counter to the material reality of Iceland’s actual enmeshment in a contemporary transnational context via tourism, immigration, and the entanglements of the global economy. In an age of globalization, Iceland is “not that different from various continental habitats,” and it would therefore “seem a mistake to make claims regarding unique island identities.”

To ignore the importance of this island imaginary in contemporary Icelandic culture, however, would be to turn a blind eye to the crucial role played by a sense of national self-determination in Icelandic identity. Indeed, in geographical terms, the pronounced role of environmental nationalism in an island nation like Iceland makes intuitive sense, according to Nordfjörd: “If nationalism, by definition, always lays claim to the exceptional nature of the nation in question, the natural boundaries of an island’s coastline would seem to make such claims all the more convincing (as compared to man-made borders on maps and arbitrarily, if strategically distributed, border controls).”

Being physically delimited by wide expanses of ocean, then, makes it particularly easy to naturalize the idea that Iceland is—globalism notwithstanding—an isolated and autonomous national community, and should therefore be free to determine its own destiny without the encumbrances of international intervention. As Reykjavik makes clear, emphasizing Iceland’s status as a geographically remote island is a rhetorical move that has fueled discourses of economic and environmental nationalism in recent years.

In ecological terms, imagining Iceland as a self-sufficient island society is a nationalist and anthropocentric fantasy that ignores the ways environmental currents cut across arbitrary and artificial national boundaries. The island imaginary, then, posits the collective body of the nation as an enclosed, self-sustaining system with rigid boundaries, disregarding the ecological necessity of transcorporeal interchange. This analysis of the role “islandness” plays in the Icelandic cultural imagination is a helpful starting point for examining Reykjavik through the lens of ecohorror—a media mode that this book argues is fixated on the frequently threatening interconnectedness of humans with more-than-human environments. Indeed, with its emphasis on material relationships of mutual dependence and symbiotic entanglement between organisms and their environments, ecology undermines the very notion of individual or national autonomy and isolation, instead directing our attention to the way the global biosphere is inextricably interconnected. As a film about exploring the
limits of environmental solitude in an age of globalization, *Reykjavik* overtly situates itself within this ecocritical discourse. Seen more particularly as an ecoslasher, *Reykjavik* demonstrates the impossibility of isolation through images of horrifyingly material and sensationaly transgressive interconnection.

Indeed, the viewer need only look to the film’s immediately preceding shots to see that Annette’s apparent isolation is misleading. Just before we get a close-up shot of Annette drifting on the surface of the sea, and then the aerial shot that ends the film, we see that the *actual* final girl of the film—counter to the expectations *Reykjavik* sets up—is Endo (Nae Yuuki), a Japanese tourist who had been aboard the same doomed whale watching excursion as Annette and has survived the vicious attack through her own cunning and her ruthless betrayal of the other passengers. Passing directly above Annette in a jumbo jet bound for her home country, Endo relaxes and enjoys a drink in her first-class seat as she disinterestedly glances at the front-page headline of the newspaper folded on her lap: “bloodbath on a whale watching ship.”

As the final shots of the film oscillate between the national scale of Annette’s drifting body as a visual metaphor for Iceland and the global scale of the Japan-bound jetliner flying above her, *Reykjavik* ends with a distillation of two opposing scales of environmental imagination that Ursula K. Heise has called a *sense of place* and a *sense of planet*. While some modern environmental movements have urged us to turn away from modern alienation and become immersed in and knowledgeable about the natural world in our immediate local surroundings—to cultivate a small-scale sense of place—others have appealed to images of global interconnectedness in order to encourage a scaled-up awareness of the ways environmental dynamics cross man-made boundaries and affect the whole planet. While a sense of place tends toward identification with hyperlocal environments and territories, a sense of planet transcends nation in a utopian global holism. As Heise has argued, both of these positions lead to problematic environmental ethics, either disregarding transnational and global dynamics in favor of fetishizing the local and reifying territorial boundaries and national identities, or disregarding individual communities and identities in favor of an abstracting, totalizing holism. For Heise, the solution is a fluid interchange between the local and global scales, maintaining an awareness of both small-scale and planetary dynamics of environmental change through a position she terms eco-cosmopolitanism. Heise’s
argument is useful here because it helps make sense of the conflicting images of national isolation and global interconnection in the film. In all its cultural specificity—its fixation on debates about whaling and resource management in Iceland—Reykjavík seems intent on establishing a “sense of place” that is particularly Icelandic. However, as a campy, self-aware satire that critiques the isolationist, nationalist, and xenophobic impulses implicit in the pro-whaling faction of the debate, Reykjavík ultimately argues against such a fetishistic cultivation of a sense of place, presenting us with de-idealized images of a globalized world that societies must learn to navigate.

Examining Reykjavík Whale Watching Massacre as a case study in the local and global environmental discourses evoked in contemporary ecohorror, this chapter underscores how such films can make use of the formal language of cinema to put the ecological and economic concerns of the nation into dialogue with transnational and global environmental discourses. By juxtaposing and oscillating between the micro-scale view of individual bodies and the macro-scale view of national communities enmeshed in the transnational environmental and economic flows of a globalized world, the film undermines nationalist environmental discourses and highlights the transnational entanglements even apparently isolated territories are caught up in. While I have argued in earlier chapters that films such as Lars von Trier’s Epidemic and Joachim Trier’s Thelma are fixated on questions of ecological embodiment—depicting the alternately unsettling and emancipatory transcorporeal enmeshment of individual bodies and their environments—Reykjavík widens its scope to the national and global scales, fixating on the way the collective body of the nation is imagined in contemporary environmental discourse. In Nordic ecohorror, such a transnational scope helps critique and unsettle nationalist notions of collectivity. In the case of contemporary debates about environmental sustainability and economic self-sufficiency in Iceland, the film shows how environmental nationalism has contributed to a false view of the nation as naturally insulated from the outside world. To invoke an image used in chapter 2, such a position imagines the territory of the nation as an enclosed and contained body. As the film shows, Iceland is never as isolated as it seems, given its dependence on the economic influx from global commerce and tourism, yet the island imaginary is uncannily persistent, haunting ecological and economic debates in Iceland to this day.
SCALING IN: SITUATING MASSACRE

The narrative setup of *Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre* juxtaposes the isolationist, eco-skeptical Icelandic whaling industry with the ostensibly pro-environmental discourses of tourists who have come from far and wide to experience the natural splendor of Iceland. We follow a diverse group of international ecotourists visiting Reykjavik, who come together aboard a boat as they embark on a whale watching excursion one afternoon. Functioning as stand-ins for the international community that Icelandic isolationists would prefer to stand apart from, the tourists embody broad cultural stereotypes and reflect a particularly dim view of humanity. In the group we meet an incorrigible drunk Frenchman named Jean-François (Aymen Hamdouchi); a conservative and homophobic young American woman named Marie-Anne (Marinda Hennessy); a womanizing Japanese tourist named Nobuyoshi (Carlos Takeshi), along with his wife, Yuko (Miwa Yanagizawa), and young female assistant, Endo; a first mate named Björn (Thor Kristjansson), who we soon learn is a sexual predator; a trio of middle-aged European women who ogle a Black American tourist named Leon (Terence Anderson), discussing his physique in racist and objectifying terms; and a jolly, bearded captain named Pétur, played—in an effective bit of stunt-casting—by the Reykjavik-born American actor Gunnar Hansen, most famous for playing Leatherface in the genre-defining film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (dir. Tobe Hooper, 1974).

Most importantly, we meet Annette, a young tourist who seems to possess all the characteristics of the conventional “final girl” of a slasher film: she is energetic, daring, physically resourceful, and—unlike many of the other travelers—not interested in partying or casual sex.

The trouble begins not long after the boat departs. Björn corners Annette in a private cabin and attempts to rape her, while above deck, an even more spectacular violation takes place. The drunk Jean-François, who has been climbing the rigging of the boat—loudly proclaiming in a broad French accent that he wants to “look at ze whales!”—falls from the mast. As he plummets toward the deck, he strikes a harpoon that is secured to the rigging, projecting the blade straight down into Captain Pétur’s chest and impaling him with it. As the captain lies bleeding to death on the deck, Björn is discovered in the midst of the attempted rape when the passengers seek out the first mate to step in and bring the boat safely back to harbor. Instead of filling in for his
fallen captain, Björn takes the opportunity to disable the boat’s ignition and escape aboard the lifeboat, leaving the captain to bleed to death and the rest of the passengers adrift on the doomed vessel.

After passengers send up emergency flares, a man aboard a small fishing boat pulls up to the whale watching vessel, whereupon the passengers begin cheering. The man reassures them in broken English that he will take the survivors to safety. Instead, he takes them to a decaying whaling ship owned by his family—a bloodthirsty group of whale hunters whose anger has been stoked by the intervention of international environmental groups calling for the end of the Icelandic whaling industry. The moratorium on whaling has, according to the disgruntled brothers and their mother—their de facto leader—left them destitute and robbed the Icelandic nation of a distinguished and traditional industry. After the rescued passengers board the troublingly dilapidated whaler, one of the murderous brothers—propelled by bloodlust when a passenger’s nose starts bleeding—suddenly runs up to the passenger and plants a hammer into her forehead in full view of the horrified tourists. Several others are dispatched in quick succession. Most spectacularly, the womanizing Japanese tourist, Nobuyoshi, is hunted down with a harpoon gun as he attempts to swim away from the ship, and his body is hauled back and tethered to the ship as if it were a whale carcass, while the surviving passengers scatter and seek out hiding places aboard the ship. True to form for a conventional slasher, the passengers are sought out one by one and murdered in spectacularly gruesome fashion. Their will to live is put to the test as they find novel and increasingly claustrophobic spaces to hide, using whatever weapons they can find or fashion to fight back against their attackers. By the end of the onslaught, several possible survivors have sought avenues of escape. Leon is left as the last survivor aboard the ship, but just as it seems he is about to be rescued by the Icelandic Coast Guard, he is mistaken as the aggressor and shot by the officers—an inclusion that seems a direct reference to George A. Romero’s Night of the Living Dead (1968), in which the surviving Black protagonist, Ben (Duane Jones), is shot and killed by police when he is mistaken for a zombie. Meanwhile, Annette and Marie-Anne have sought refuge on an inflatable lifeboat and are drifting on the sea in the midst of a rainstorm, when the boat is attacked by an orca and Marie-Anne is killed. In the end, our apparent “final girl” is left drifting on the open ocean, buoyed by her life vest, while Endo—a Japanese domestic servant who has escaped the attacks through her own cunning and subterfuge
of other passengers—has assumed the identity of her wealthy employer and is on her way back to Japan. The film ends, then, by situating island-bound isolationism as the unsustainable and ecologically vulnerable position, while associating survival with a kind of cunning internationalism.

Long before the film ends with the macro-scale view of global travel, Reykjavík scales down to the national context, situating the viewer within the long history of whale hunting in Iceland. Opening with a credit sequence that plays over archival footage of Icelandic whale hunting from the early twentieth century, the film familiarizes us with the national tradition, which has become fetishized by Icelandic whaling interests and demonized by international environmental and animal-rights activists. To begin the sequence, we see grainy images of waves crashing against the side of a boat as it glides through the water. A crew member ascends a rope ladder to assume his perch in the crow’s nest as he surveils the sea, looking for signs of whales. In a subsequent shot, the camera catches a glimpse of a whale as the creature comes up for air. In a medium close-up from behind, we see a crew member aiming a harpoon gun at the whale and firing away. The report from the gun violently shakes the camera and sends a blast of smoke into the air. As the harpoon strikes the massive creature, the gunner raises his arm in celebration. In the background, we see blasts of air emitted from the whale as it struggles against the ship it is now tethered to. A taut line of rope leading from the ship out into the water shows us the location of the struggle. Bright red clouds of mammalian blood bloom in the water. From here, the pursuit transitions to slaughter. We see a winch in close-up as it turns, hauling the massive body to the ship. Other crew members gather tools to aid in securing the whale to the craft. Rope lines are tossed out to bind the dying whale. The waters churn with blood as the whale struggles against its capture. One crew member wields a massive, handled blade reminiscent of a scythe to cut off one of the whale’s fins. In the next shot, we see that the carcass has been lashed to the side of the ship. Its struggle now finished, the deep ventral pleats that run along the whale’s throat have been stilled. In a subsequent shot, crew members are lined up along a dock as the carcass is hauled onto land. We see a close-up of the grooved throat of the beast—beached and lifeless, its throat hangs in inert sags. Crew members work to butcher the animal, and we see how they use their sharpened instruments to flay its skin and then deftly separate blubber from meat. The credit sequence concludes with two panning shots that survey the aftermath of the slaughter.
In one, the camera slowly sweeps across the skinned, deblubbered carcass, the whalers’ swift work having transformed the living creature into a massive slab of exposed muscle. The final image is a long shot overlooking a handful of men engaged in their individual tasks, while we see a pile of discarded skin, fat, and entrails, with the docks drenched in blood. The shots appear to be colorized and are accompanied by mournful string music, two choices that aesthetically frame the archival footage as an elegiac look at Iceland’s industrial past. Seeing a whale hunt through this nostalgic filter, the viewer understands whale hunting to be part of a bygone era, and the shots therefore depict a kind of labor that has virtually died out in modern Iceland. The grainy, desaturated archival images also serve to provide a historical backdrop of environmental violence and trauma that will haunt the present. The over-the-top homicidal brutality that will play out aboard the decommissioned whaling ship through the course of the film is, the opening sequence suggests, part of a historical continuum deeply rooted in Icelandic cultural history that first manifests itself as an ecocidal and unsustainable taste for whale meat.

Depicting a beginning-to-end visual narrative of a single whale hunt, the credit sequence is also an effective piece of processual filmmaking, to borrow the terms of Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky’s recent book *The Process Genre: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Labor*. In Skvirsky’s account, the “process genre” is a “sequentially ordered representation of someone making or doing something.” The capaciousness of this definition allows the genre to encompass many types of media, including instruction manuals, the chronophotographic motion studies by the likes of Marey and Muybridge, a number of subgenres of reality television, and a whole slew of documentary and fiction films that are fixated on the sequential completion of a task. More relevant processual intertexts may be found in George Franju’s documentary short about a French slaughterhouse, *Le sang des bêtes* (*The Blood of the Beasts*, 1949)—a film that scholars have connected to the visceral impulses of modern horror films—or, in a Nordic film context, the opening sequence of Aki Kaurismäki’s *Rikos ja rangaistus* (*Crime and Punishment*, 1983), which focuses on the process of butchering meat. Skvirsky notes that our current media landscape is “awash with examples of the process genre”—a ubiquity that signals a widespread interest in the changing forms of labor in the twenty-first century: “These are all attempts to grapple with a new reality of work as the status and meaning of labor in the twenty-first century and across the globe is changing. The new
landscape is defined by technological developments, advancing automation, and the dramatic growth of the immaterial labor sector.” The growing cultural currency of labor-oriented processual media, then, is at least partly motivated by a widespread desire to rematerialize work and labor in a digital and increasingly immaterial labor economy in the developed world.

In terms of process, the opening sequence of Reykjavik presents whale hunting as a predictable sequence of labor that is characterized by several distinct phases. First, there is the journey out to sea. Leaving the security of land, the whale hunters place themselves out in the feeding grounds of the massive marine mammals. However, by floating above them, surveilling their movements, and aiming their weapons at the creatures, they are clearly taking an anthropocentric and environmentally apathetic view that has become increasingly problematic in contemporary society. Upon arriving at the feeding grounds, the whale hunt begins the second phase of the process: pursuit. In this phase, the whale hunters use optical instruments to spot the whales and isolate them for an attack, while other crew members maneuver the craft into the right position, and still others man the harpoon guns and launch the offensive in earnest. Once the beast has been harpooned, the third phase of the hunt begins, which involves tethering the carcass to the side of the boat and taking it back to land. Finally, the fourth phase begins: the most gruesome and gory part of the process, when the carcass is cut into, flayed, and butchered so that the beast can be divided up and its meat consumed by an eager and hungry public. If Reykjavik takes the form of one of the most flesh-obsessed and transgressive subgenres of horror—namely the slasher—the opening sequence of the film provocatively places this horrific kind of fictional human slaughter within a historical context of horrific marine mammal slaughter. Icelandic society, the sequence suggests, has long been engaged in the business of opening up the bodies of living organisms, disemboweling them, and putting this exposed flesh on display and up for sale. Reykjavik will recapitulate this sequence in its main narrative, showing how the murderous whalers have simply substituted human flesh for whale flesh in the modern world, undertaking a familiar sequence of pursuit, capture, and slaughter as they hunt their human victims and reduce their bodies to meat. Since Reykjavik is centered on the labor involved in resource management, food production, and meat processing—and the way these brutal processes have been hidden away as industrial labor has become increasingly automated, marginalized, and dematerialized in the public
consciousness—beginning the film with an overtly processual sequence is a way of not only rematerializing human labor but also making visible the now hidden environmental violence that human industries engage in to provide food for the nation. What the processual filmmaking sequence that opens the film accomplishes, then, is to bring the long history of environmental violence in the Icelandic whaling industry to the surface.

Though whales have been hunted in the waters around Iceland since as early as the twelfth century, the history of modern ecocritical debates over whaling can be traced to the establishment of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1949. The IWC is a multilateral organization that traces its roots to the postwar whale conservation movement in the United States, where the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was held in 1946. The founding articles of the convention give some sense of the impetus behind these efforts at international conservation, citing several motivations for the convention, including the “interest of nations of the world in safeguarding for future generations the great natural resources represented by the whale stocks”; the desire to prevent overfishing of any species in any area; the recognition that maintaining healthy levels of whale stocks is in “the common interest”; and the desire to “establish a system of international regulation” for the “proper conservation of whale stocks.”

Though Iceland joined the IWC at its outset in 1949, decades of tension followed as the Icelandic whaling industry showed intransigence and inconsistency in adhering to IWC rules. In one emblematic dispute, Iceland simply refused to follow a rule adopted by the IWC in 1954 that banned all hunting of blue whales to allow the stock to rebound and repopulate the North Atlantic over the next several years. At the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, a ten-year global moratorium on whaling was passed unanimously, though the measure failed to pass in the IWC, with the Nordic whaling nations of Iceland and Norway joining Japan, South Africa, and Panama in voting no. After the IWC was expanded to include more antiwhaling nations over the next decade, the commercial whaling moratorium was finally passed in 1982. Meanwhile, international opposition to the Icelandic whaling industry was increasing, with tensions boiling over in a dramatic incident in 1979, when commercial Icelandic whaling ships fired harpoons over protestors aboard the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior, an act of aggression that was continued in the form of Icelandic naval ships monitoring and periodically seizing the Rainbow.
Warrior at gunpoint. After the IWC refused to allow Iceland’s request to hunt some 250 fin and minke whales in 1991, Iceland left the IWC, but found that in doing so, it could no longer export whale meat to IWC member countries. As a result, as well as a condition of rejoining the IWC, Iceland did not engage in research or commercial whaling for fourteen years, resuming research whaling in 2003 and commercial whaling in 2006. Since then, the United States and the UK have led diplomatic protests against the commercial whaling industry in Iceland, though within Iceland, the industry enjoys popular support. As this brief history of modern whaling regulation in Iceland bears out, commercial whaling is a particularly acute site of transnational conflict and negotiation of the imagined boundaries of national sovereignty.

Reykjavik first hints at the persistence of reactionary pro-whaling factions early on in the film. Just after the doomed tourists board the whale watching boat to leave on their excursion, the film cuts to a decidedly less picturesque setting: a dingy, rat-infested kitchen and dining cabin aboard a boat. There we meet the disgruntled family of whalers, who will soon begin their attack on the unwitting tourists, as they cook and eat a greasy meal of boiled sausages. In the background, a news break plays on a radio, announcing the extension of the IWC ban on commercial whaling in Iceland. As she dishes out the sausage to her sons, the aged mother complains, “These American animal huggers have turned our government into a bunch of whale-loving sissies, leaving us with nothing but debts and a useless whale boat that’s rotting away.” She bemoans the depths of their economic humiliation, as they have been reduced to “making souvenirs for the tourist shops in Reykjavik.” We see in subsequent scenes that these souvenirs are in fact carved wooden whale figurines that the brothers whittle from driftwood. Prevented from hunting and slaughtering whales by environmental regulation, they have taken to using their knives to carve kitschy keepsakes that commodify the gentle image of the whale for the growing ecotourism industry. Responding to the mother’s complaint, one of the brothers moans that “once Icelanders were Vikings, brave hunters of these dirty stupid sea monsters. Now, we are nothing but crybabies.” The other brother puts the argument in crasser terms: “You know what I call Greenpeace?” he asks rhetorically. “I call it green piss!”

More enterprising and economically flexible fishermen, we learn—such as Captain Pétur—have turned harpoons into plowshares by using their boats to take tourists out on whale watching excursions instead—a more environmen-
tally friendly and sustainable alternative to whale hunting. From the abject decrepitude of the below-deck mess hall on the disgruntled whalers’ boat, the film cuts to back to the whale watching tour, capturing the boat cutting majestically through a sun-drenched coastal seascape as Captain Pétur takes to the PA system to narrate the journey for his passengers: “Up until the whaling ban of the International Whaling Committee, Icelanders were among the three biggest whaling nations on earth, third behind Japan and Norway. Today things are very different. Today we are very proud to be number three on the list of the top ten whale watching countries in the world. And in fifty minutes, we will be in the feeding grounds of the lively and friendly minke whale.” Captain Pétur’s jovial commentary presents whale watching in an environmentally unproblematic light, breezily smoothing over the domestic debates and cultural resentments that have been stirred up by international intervention in Iceland’s domestic affairs. The postwhaling industrial transition to whale watching, according to Pétur’s tourist-friendly account, has been seamless—and has itself led to a new kind of international distinction for the island nation. This account is one of environmental absolution for a checkered past, as modern Iceland leaves behind its tradition of brutal extraction and slaughter of marine mammals. That this discursively decontextualized commentary ignores the actual conflicts and resentments bubbling to the surface in Iceland is hinted at by the subsequent shot, which cuts straight to the abject image of a seasick Japanese tourist vomiting overboard and on deck. Moreover, the rhetoric of nonviolence and environmental innocence is also belied by the subsequent scene of Björn’s attempted rape of Annette. As he corners her and begins his sexual assault, Björn taunts her by speculating that Annette “likes it rough.” Whale watching, then, is associated not only with an indirect kind of environmental violence—through the carbon emissions that are required for tourists to travel to Iceland and venture out into its waters on rusting old whaling boats—but also with a more directly predatory and sexualized kind of violence as well.

As an intervention into contemporary environmental discourse, then, Reykjavik provides a more complex and decidedly less savory counternarrative to Pétur’s cheerful tour commentary. Whaling has not been fully superseded in Iceland, and the apparently benign image of tourists admiring the majesty of nature by watching whales in the waters off Iceland is not as innocent as it seems. These debates about whaling, the film hints, are central to under-
standing Icelandic identity and the uncertain place of Iceland in the twenty-first-century world—particularly because it was filmed in the midst of the spectacular collapse of the Icelandic economy in 2008. In her study of the cultural politics of whaling in Iceland, Anne Brydon argues that that pro- and antiwhaling debates in Iceland are suffused with a “reactive nationalist identification with a self-image of rationality.” Pro-whaling and antiwhaling factions both make the claim that their positions are backed up by value-free scientific data and research, while challenging the “disinterestedness of their opponents’ science.” The self-image of rationality is particularly pronounced in the pro-whaling factions, however, who justify their own stance against the “alleged sentimentality and greed of international anti-whaling forces.”

To use the terms set forth by Bruno Latour, pro-whaling discourse tends to ground itself in matters of fact—fixating on the rational basis for annual hunting quotas and viewing the whale in statistical rather than sentimental terms—while antiwhaling environmentalist discourse often appeals more overtly to matters of concern in its activist stance toward the whaling industry. According to Anne Brydon, the history of this debate since the 1970s has seen a gradual weakening of the “national solidarity behind the pro-whaling position in Iceland as whale-watching tourism proved successful,” a shift that has “opened up the figure of the whale to multiple negotiations over its meaning.”

As a violent and bloody ecoslasher, *The Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre* enters into this discursive fray and aims its satirical barbs at all the discursive positions in the debate: the internationalist environmentalists, with their naïve sentimentality about the “gentle giants” of the sea, are lampooned along with the xenophobic, embittered, and sadistic pro-whaling fishermen in the film. The ecotourists who participate in the allegedly environmentally benign alternative industry of whale watching are similarly skewered—discursively and physically—as craven, selfish, and consumerist cultural outsiders who have come to Iceland not to commune with nature but instead to consume its natural resources and contribute to its natural degradation. Discursively, the film occupies a particularly pessimistic, even nihilistic position in the debate, framing all sides as equally driven by selfish, anthropocentric concerns, while not ostensibly advocating any position itself.
THE NORDIC ECOSLASHER

In many ways, Reykjavik hews closely to the genre conventions of the slasher that were established in the 1970s and 80s by films like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Halloween, and Friday the Thirteenth. These conventions have been most memorably elucidated in Carol Clover’s book Men, Women, and Chain Saws, where she isolates a number of key features of the post-Psycho (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) slasher film. The killer, writes Clover, is most often a man “propelled by psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress.”

Though the killers “may be recognizably human,” they are “only marginally so”—an inhumanity that is reinforced by the masks they usually wear, which hide both identity and expression, effectively figuring them as inhuman, monstrous foes. This monstrosity is reinforced by a quality of “virtual indestructability” as they survive self-defensive assaults from their victims that would neutralize a human foe. Clover also describes the setting of the slasher film, a paradigmatically “terrible place”—most often a confined space such as a house or tunnel—which is terrifying in its “Victorian decrepitude” and also because it is occupied by “terrible families—murderous, incestuous, cannibalistic.”

The “terrible place” seems at first to be a safe haven, but “the walls that promise to keep the killer out quickly become, once the killer penetrates them, the walls that hold the victim in.” This trap-like quality is reinforced by the conventional moment in slashers when the victim locks herself into a confined space such as a closet “and waits with pounding heart as the killer slashes, hacks, or drills his way in.” Since the “emotional terrain of the slasher film is pretechnological,” writes Clover, the preferred weapons of the killer are penetrative instruments like knives, axes, ice picks, needles, and pitchforks—typically phallic weapons that will violate the flesh of victims in spectacular, bloody fashion. As the name slasher suggests, these are films that evince “a fascination with flesh or meat itself as that which is hidden from view.” Clover describes this fixation on the spectacle of cutting into the human body not as a sadistic interest in exerting punishment, but rather as an epistemological fascination with bringing the invisible out into the open, as it is driven by the realization that “all that lies between the visible, knowable outside of the body and the secret insides is one thin membrane, protected only by a collective taboo against its violation.” As all of these elements suggest, one major distinction between the modern slasher film and historical antecedents such as Psycho is the direct, often over-the-top
rendition of physical violence: “What can be done is done, and slashers at the bottom of the [horror] category, do it most and worst.” Clover thus characterizes the new tone of slasher horror as one of shock—a sensation that emerges from the “rapid alternation between registers—between something like ‘real’ horror on one hand and a camp, self-parodying horror on the other.” It is a subgenre that revels in “intentionally outrageous excess.”

*Reykjavík* adheres to virtually all of these conventions, confining its victims to a terrible place—a dilapidated whaling boat inhabited by a terrible, implicitly incestuous family—and dispatching them serially in grotesquely excessive ways. The ostentatious violence of these deaths is punctured by the campy, self-consciously tasteless one-liners that are typically uttered after the kill. To give one typical example, after Marie-Anne uses a flare gun to shoot a flaming projectile into Siggi’s eye, the camera cuts to her in close-up delivery of her response: “I’d call this an emergency.” The deaths themselves revel in bloody excess and almost always capture the postimpact gore in a lingering shot that forces the viewer to dwell for several moments on the shocking aftermath of the kill. One of the brothers, for instance, isn’t just killed with a well-aimed bullet; he is subjected to a shotgun blast that pulverizes his head, leaving a gaping wound atop his shoulders that we see showering the deck with blood in a pulsing fountain of gore. Appropriately for the film’s ecological framing, the least spectacular death in *Reykjavík* is the one that is carried out by the orca in one of the film’s final scenes. After Marie-Anne aggressively aims a harpoon at the creature when it comes up to the surface—she is convinced that it is bent on killing her—she and the vessel get caught on the rope attached to harpoon, and the wounded beast pulls her underwater to her certain death. Rather than getting a shocking postfatality shot, we instead stay on the surface, the camera lingering on the traumatized Annette, who is bobbing on the surface of the water in her life preserver, now left alone to face the elements without Marie-Anne.

The most influential aspects of Clover’s theorization of the slasher concern the victims and potential victims of the killer. The series of victims dispatched by the killer throughout the film tend to be teenage “sexual transgressors of both sexes,” who are invariably “scheduled for early destruction.” The intimate connection between sexuality and victimhood is reinforced by the frequency of postcoital deaths in slasher films—a virtually ubiquitous trope that leads Clover to conclude that “killing those who seek or engage in un-
authorized sex amounts to a generic imperative of the slasher film.”

Even more crucial to the slasher film is the final girl, the lone figure who survives the killer’s onslaught. Her longevity in the film means that she will witness the horrifying deaths of her friends and peers and will stave off the killer long enough to either be rescued or kill the attacker herself. Invariably female, the paradigmatic final girl nevertheless is boyish in her self-presentation, her name, and her energetic, active physicality: “Although she is always smaller and weaker than the killer, she grapples with him energetically and convincingly.” As the lone survivor of the killer’s sensationally rendered serial murders, the ubiquity of the final girl figure also has the effect of tying the post-Psycho slasher film to a hero narrative.

In the last two decades, there have been a growing number of Nordic slasher films, most adhering quite closely to the slasher conventions Clover describes, with the notable exception of the puritanical sexual purity the films seem to advocate. As Gunnar Iversen writes, Norway has been a particularly prolific producer of slasher films, most of which take a decidedly un-Norwegian approach to the wilderness and rural landscapes. Films like Villmark (Dark Woods, dir. Pål Øie, 2003), Fritt vilt (Cold Prey, dir. Roar Uthaug, 2006), and Død sna (Dead Snow, dir. Tommy Wirkola, 2009) all feature groups of young city dwellers who go out into the wilderness to enjoy recreation in nature, only to be attacked and murdered one by one by sadistic backwoods killers. Instead of adopting the culturally orthodox view that wilderness settings and the Norwegian landscape are “uplifting, democratic, and open spaces,” contemporary Norwegian horror presents an image of the national landscape as “threatening, violent, or negative.” In Iversen’s view, this menacing version of the Norwegian countryside in contemporary horror allows the genre to critique the “Norwegian conception of nature”: “The new cycle of Norwegian horror films reinvents the Norwegian landscape, moving from pastoral to wilderness, and from sanctuary to a wild, uninhabitable space. Nature and landscape become a space without boundaries in which anything can happen—an amoral ground where danger, violence, and death loom large.” The notably un-Norwegian presentation of the natural environment Iversen describes here thus takes the form of a pessimistic and brutally de-idealized landscape. As Iversen writes, these films have largely stayed true to the conventions of the slasher that Clover identifies, though they have replaced the sexually virtuous final girl with a more mature and agential “final woman,” who survives not
“by becoming virtually masculine, or by being pure and virginal” but because of her “independence and sexual maturity.”

Pietari Kääpä has similarly described a backwoods fixation in contemporary Nordic horror, but he has adopted the term *ecoslasher* to describe a series of horror films that “evvoke key themes in ecocriticism” and “give rise to reinterpreted versions of national narratives.” As Kääpä writes, one of the ways *Reykjavík* departs from the Norwegian wilderness slashers is that it is centered on the “context-specific ecopolitics” of twenty-first-century Iceland. Most notably, the film problematizes both the contested commercial whaling industry in Iceland—a traditional but highly controversial practice internationally—as well as the growing ecotourism industry, which includes whale watching along with other environmentally suspect excursions. Although it presents de-idealized and menacing natural land- and seascapes similar to those in Norwegian horror films, *Reykjavík* departs even farther from the final girl convention by ending with an image of profound isolation and vulnerability: “In contrast to the final girl triumphing over nature or descending into a state of animalism, she ends up floating on the ocean as potential game.”

In her chapter on rural horror, Clover develops one more concept worth mentioning here: the prevalence of what she terms *urbanoia* in such films. Urbanoia describes the way city dwellers in horror films approach the rural countryside and its inhabitants with a mixture of fear, aversion, and guilt. The prototypical country dweller of rural American horror is the sadistic hillbilly, a figure who “live[s] beyond the reaches of social law” and therefore ignores the “civilized rules” of personal grooming and treats the (sub)urban outsiders who encroach on his territory with a cruelty born of class resentment. The confrontation between the urbanoiac city dweller and the terrifying, malign countryside through which he travels is represented as a class conflict between the bourgeois values and lifestyles of the (sub)urbanite and the lawlessness and abject cruelty of the hinterlands. Since the prosperity of the city has been gained at the expense of the shrinking wilderness and the disenfranchisement of the country folk, “the city approaches the country guilty in much the same way that the capitalist approaches the proletarian guilty (for plundering her labor) or the settler approaches the Indian guilty (for taking his land).” In his ecocritical reading of the American rural horror films of the 1970s, Carter Soles is even more pointed in his description of the environmental guilt response that drives urbanoia. The brutality of these “urbanoia films,” according
to Soles, is really “a horrifying reflection of our own ‘civilized’ cultural anxieties about our own rape of the natural world.” While urbanoia is a useful concept for understanding the city/country divide in American rural horror—and Reykjavík has certainly translated the “sadistic hillbilly” figure into a specifically Icelandic iteration of the disenfranchised and now bloodthirsty former whaler—I would argue that the role of urbanoia is less pronounced in Nordic ecohorror for a number of reasons. The most important of these reasons is that one of the central pillars of Nordic identity is having easy access to the wilderness—via the tradition of Everyman’s Rights—and therefore Nordic culture tends to approach the wilderness with exuberance and a longing for rejuvenation rather than guilt and fear. Rather than reading the xenophobia and sadism of the villains in Reykjavík through the lens of urbanoia, then, I would argue that the central confrontations in the film are not between the city and the countryside, but rather between the parochial attitudes of an isolated island nation and the transnational currents of global trade and culture that it is stubbornly resisting. As viewers, then, we are not meant to be preoccupied with guilt and fear of the countryside, but rather to be swayed by the film’s parodic depiction of the hopeless nostalgia, environmental violence, and abject xenophobia that undergird the nationalist ideology of eco-isolationism.

**SCALING OUT: TRANSCORPOREALITY AND TRANSNATIONALISM**

If discourses of environmental nationalism rely on an ecologically faulty illusion of national isolation—reinforced, in Iceland’s case, by its status as a geographically remote island nation—the ecoslasher subgenre provides a particularly potent vehicle for spectacularly undoing that illusion. With its abject carnality and its fixation on corporeal violations, the slasher film reduces human bodies to writhing, bleeding masses of meat, their insides now indistinguishable from their outsides. This brutal ontological reduction of the human subject to its violated flesh, the ecoslasher posits, has the potential to be a kind of ecocritical corrective to the reactionary illusions of corporeal enclosure and isolation from environmental connection. One manifestation of cultural ecophobia is an anthropocentric yearning for corporeal enclosure. This stance of corporeal enclosure is one that Stacy Alaimo’s notions of transcorporeality and insurgent exposure specifically seek to counteract. As an ecoslasher, Reykjavík presents
a particularly brutal version of transcorporeal interconnection—one in which society is bound together by shared practices of environmental violence. These violent forms of corporeal conflict are explicitly transcorporeal since they take the form of a transgressive and gory opening up of the human body to show how the flesh of living creatures is made to literally become one with its surroundings through acts of environmental violence.

With its nihilistic tendency to skewer all discursive positions and present all human actors as equally driven by greed and equally incapable of cooperation, Reykjavik implicates all of humankind in this collective violence. Just as Iceland’s past has been characterized by a bloodthirsty, rapaciously extractive impulse to mine the seas for all the warm-blooded meat they can provide, Iceland’s present is no less environmentally violent. Even disregarding the “terrible family,” everyday Icelandic society is nourished by the financial influx provided by carbon-intensive ecotourism—a point the film makes in its final shots by showing Endo jetting back to Japan directly over the picturesque seascape where Annette is floating as a lonely island. Environmentalists, similarly, have blood on their hands: in one scene, while Annette’s friend Hannah (Ragnhildur Steinunn Jónsdóttir) is having drinks with a group of concerned environmentalists who are bemoaning the ecological impacts of whale watching tourism, she gets a call from a desperate Annette, who tells her all about the attacks and begs her to call the coast guard. Hannah assumes that Annette is high on drugs and hangs up on her, leaving her and the other victims to face their attackers alone.

One tangible way Reykjavik makes human bodies one with their surroundings is by making the ontological reduction of humans to meat literal. This is a tried-and-true staple of the slasher film, of course, which has a long tradition of combining spectacular bodily violence with a sensational presentation of cannibalism. Cannibalism, Reykjavik posits, is a kind of logical extension of the whale-hungry traditional diet of Icelandic culture. There are hints early on that the killers are cannibals, as they eat sausages that are unsettlingly greasy and fleshy. The film reveals how those sausages are made as the film goes on, and it becomes clear that the killers have substituted human flesh for whale flesh in their diet, literally feasting on the carcasses of environmentalists when they are denied their whale meat.32

Just as the sadistic whalers are about to begin their pursuit of the stranded whale watching tourists, we see that their sublimated bloodlust—denied by the IWC’s whaling ban—has been satiated by murdering and dismembering
environmental activists. In one scene, one of the brothers retreats to a cabin aboard their whaler where a man is held captive, bound to a chair. As the brother comes into the room with his axe at the ready, the man screams, “No, you can’t do this! No, please! I’m a friend of nature!” As the attacker brings his weapon back in preparation for the blow, he delivers his one-liner—“You can tell it to my axe!”—whereupon he plants the blade in the environmentalist’s head. After we hear the telltale chop into flesh, we see Guignol-esque splatters of blood spray across the attackers’ clothes. Though we don’t see the dismemberment, the film shows us the product of the slaughter in a subsequent scene. When the whalers have seized upon the stranded whale watching boat and picked up the unwitting passengers, claiming all the while that they are taking the traumatized tourists to safety, the camera pans into an interior cabin to reveal the severed head of the environmentalist packed on ice—on display like fresh fish at a seaside market. The shot is not only a revelation of the horrifyingly cannibalistic enterprise the whalers have turned to; it is also a further sign that Reykjavik is concerned with presenting horror through a processual focus on labor and productivity. In this case, process can be used as a verb as well—showing us how the slasher effectively processes meat to create a consumable product in the end, which can either be consumed by the laborer himself or commodified and sold at market.

This ontological reduction of human victims to consumable sea creatures is reinforced throughout the film as the members of the “terrible family” attack and toy with their victims. When the mother—credited only as Mamma (Guðrún Gísladóttir)—has pinned one of her victims on the floor of an underdeck corridor at the end of a harpoon, she holds the tip of the blade up to the woman’s neck and repeatedly commands her to “sing! Sing like a whale!” When her son Tryggvi tells her to hurry up and finish the woman off, the mother replies that “an old woman is entitled to enjoy her catch.” Later, when the perverse Siggi has captured Annette, he binds her by the wrists to the ceiling of a cabin, suspending her in the air like a side of meat waiting to be butchered. As he strips her topless and gleefully rubs blood onto her chest, he calls her a “strong fish” in a tone of admiration. The conflation of human and animal flesh, then, is figured by the film as a brutal kind of reductionism. Although Reykjavik does eventually pit man against beast in one fleeting appearance of an orca, the film is far from the kind of “creature feature”—like Jaws (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1975)—that shows nature taking revenge on human society. Instead, the film uses debates about animal rights as well as Icelandic
dietary and industrial practices to show the ways in which human agents are implicated as bloodthirsty, animalistic organisms just like any others. Rather than ontologically elevating the animal—engaging in the kind of sentimental anthropomorphism and cultural admiration for particularly precarious animals such as various species of whale or the polar bear—Reykjavík’s ecocritical maneuver is to reduce the human being to the status of a beast, effectively leveling the playing field between human and nature.

A more grotesque conflation of environmental politics and human slaughter occurs after the whale watching tourists are brought aboard the slaughter ship. After the crazed brother Siggi has impulsively planted his hammer in the head of a woman in front of all the onlookers—a murder that the film figures as a kind of premature ejaculation by the overexcited Siggi—one Japanese tourist grabs a life vest and jumps from the boat, attempting to swim to safety. As he struggles to get away from the horrific boat, another brother, Tryggvi (Helgi Björnsson), realizes he has the means to stop the man’s escape: a harpoon gun. Tryggvi steadies his aim and pulls the trigger. The projectile is shown in a slow-motion tracking shot that follows its swirling trajectory toward the swimming tourist. The whaler’s aim turns out to be devastatingly true, and the harpoon plunges right through the man’s chest. The scene dwells on the ship’s machinery, which slowly comes into motion after the harpoon reaches its target: the winch begins turning, the rope line is pulled taut, and the tourist’s corpse is slowly hauled back to the ship. In a later shot, the film heightens its gory takedown of the sadistic whaling industry in a particularly dissonant landscape shot. In it, we see a calm sea in the foreground, which gives way to a dramatic backdrop of rocky volcanic mountains and the picturesque light of a setting sun. In its deep focus and panoramic view of the Icelandic coastal landscape, the image looks as if it could be taken from a postcard—except for the impaled body of the tourist that dangles from the deck of ship on the left side of the shot.

In one particularly gruesome scene, the mother impales a European and a Japanese woman on the same harpoon. As the dying women face each other, skewered on the same weapon, they are brought into fatal proximity—a figure of gory and painful intimacy as they cough blood onto each other’s faces. The dying Japanese tourist, however, had strapped a makeshift explosive device to herself, which she ignites as the women are bound together at the end of the murderous mother’s harpoon. As the device explodes, it engulfs all three women in a fireball, effectively reinforcing their corporeal intimacy in a violent death.
The impaled corpse of a Japanese ecotourist dangles at the end of a harpoon line from the ship in the foreground, while the camera captures a picturesque shot of the sun setting over the dramatic Icelandic coastline in the background. Frame grab from *Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre* (dir. Júlíus Kemp, 2009).

*Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre*’s apparent final girl, Annette, is left to float, isolated and adrift, at the end of the film, leaving the question of her eventual survival unresolved. Frame grab from *Reykjavik Whale Watching Massacre* (dir. Júlíus Kemp, 2009).
As Carol Clover has emphasized, the slasher revels in its status at the bottom of the horror barrel, freely combining grotesque and sensational violence with self-consciously tasteless and campy excess. Since it pits human against human in a bloody Darwinian struggle for survival against an implicitly inhuman—or marginally human—foe, the slasher tends to reinforce the dichotomy of human and nonhuman rather than challenging it. The advent of the ecoslasher in Nordic horror, as elaborated by Pietari Kääpä, seems to offer the possibility of a more environmentally aware and ecocritical variant of the slasher. And indeed, *Reykjavík* does bear out this assumption in certain ways, clearly situating its bloody narrative at the discursive and physical intersections between human and nonhuman. If we take Stephen A. Rust and Carter Soles’s helpful definition of ecohorror, “Horrific texts and tropes are used to promote ecological awareness, represent ecological crises, or blur human/non-human distinctions more broadly,” then *Reykjavík* more than qualifies for that label.\(^3^3\) The film not only “blur[s] human/non-human distinctions” with gleeful abandon; it also situates horror within an ecopolitical discursive context, effectively raising environmental problems for debate in a horror analogue to the social realism of contemporary Nordic noir. As Kääpä emphasizes in his reading of *Reykjavík*, however, the ecocritical dimensions of the film are constrained by its reassertion of a certain anthropocentric logic and its fixation on telling a national narrative. To Kääpä’s reservations I would add that the ecoslasher’s fixation on the transcorporeal mingling of human bodies and environments depends on violently opening up and murdering the bodies, thus positing the interface between insides and outsides as an exceptional state only effected through homicidal acts of corporeal violation.

To be too precious about the ecocritical seriousness of an ecoslasher, however, would be to disregard the self-referential and campy tone these films cultivate—a tone the devoted audiences of such “low” genres take great pleasure in. In this sense, it may be more useful to approach the ecopolitics of such sensationalistic genre films through the lens of pleasure, as Bridgitte Barclay and Christy Tidwell have suggested in their ecocritical approach to “creature features.” Citing Alaimo’s plea for the importance of pleasure in a time of climate crisis—“If we cannot laugh, we will not desire the revolution”—and Donna J. Haraway’s advocacy of “working and playing for a resurgent world,”
Barclay and Tidwell write that the hybrid and aesthetically “low” qualities of campy texts like creature features “offer an alternate route into” ecocritical issues. As “bad environmentalism,” in the terms of Nicole Seymour, messy and aesthetically unserious genres like the slasher “demonstrate that engagement with serious issues need not entail serious affect or sensibility.” Among other ways, Barclay and Tidwell suggest, the combination of nature and biological motifs with horror in such texts “acknowledges the seriousness of the underlying environmental issues they address and establishes community through intentional and unintentional camp,” often with an aesthetic messiness that “offers a great deal of space for both pleasure and critical analysis.” Though its unseriousness means that we might need to approach Reykjavík’s ecopolitics with a grain of salt—as Kääpä writes—the discursive space for pleasure and critique that it allows means that Reykjavík and ecoslashers like it can perform important cultural work and reach audiences with horror that more heightened aesthetic ambitions might never reach. Those who do seek out a film like Reykjavík expecting to see a comfortingly silly, gleefully gory, and unpretentious genre exercise are also consuming—in a tonally broadened and heightened form—a set of culturally specific environmental issues that are in fact at the heart of contemporary ecopolitical conflicts. In a radically distilled form, the final shots of the film offer a memorable encapsulation of the film’s ecocritical argument. Though the reactionary impulses of environmental nationalism posit the body politic and the national territory as an enclosed and insulated space, Annette’s isolated, drifting body, struggling for survival in the midst of an inhospitable sea, is far from an island. As the jumbo jet flying above her floating form reminds us, she is intimately, transcorporeally connected with a global environmental commons.