

**“Shiver With Anticipation”
A Study of Suspense in The Horror Film Genre.**

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) Animation DL832. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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Abstract

Suspense is the core driving force behind any film. It is a greatly valued narrative tool utilised across multiple genres, but there is arguably no other cinematic genre that relies on the use of suspense more than the horror genre. The evocation of a palpable sense of fear within an audience is the ultimate goal of every horror filmmaker. However, the achievement of that goal is unquestionably tied to their ability to create suspense within the events of a film. This thesis discusses the concept of suspense within the context of the horror film genre with the aim of revealing how effective it can be in evoking the desired responses of fear, anxiety, and tension in audiences when employed successfully within a horror film narrative. In Chapter One, existing academic theories and definitions surrounding the concept of suspense will be analysed. Chapters Two and Three will demonstrate how suspense theory is put into practice by horror filmmakers in their work in order to generate genuine fear and tension in audiences through the careful crafting of visuals and sound. Cinematography and Sound Design are the crucial keys to success in creating horror suspense, therefore the text will explore the full scope of their importance in suspense building individually. Cinematography and Sound Design techniques will be analysed using examples from past and present horror films to highlight how successful they are in generating a palpable sense of suspense in practice.

Table of Contents

Introduction

pg. no. 11-12

Chapter 1: Theories, Definitions, and Paradoxes

.....
pg. no. 13-23

Chapter 2: Suspense and The Horror Film

.....
pg. no. 24-36

Chapter 3: The Sound of Suspense

.....
pg. no. 37-52

Conclusion

pg. no. 53-55

List of Works Cited

pg. no. 56-58

List of Figures

Fig.1: Film still, *Hunger*, Dir. Steve McQueen, (Pathé Distribution, 2008), p.13.

Fig.2: Film still, *V for Vendetta*, Dir. James McTeigue, (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2005), p.14.

Fig.3: Film still, *It*, Dir. Andrés Muschietti, (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2017), p.16.

Fig.4: Film still, *It*, Dir. Andrés Muschietti, (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2017), p.18.

Fig.5: Film still, *Hush*, Dir. Mike Flanagan, (Blumhouse Productions, 2016), p.20.

Fig.6: Film still, *Alien*, Dir. Ridley Scott, (20th Century Fox, 1979), p.22.

Fig.7: Film still, *Lights Out*, Dir. David F. Sandberg, (Sandberg Company, 2013), p.26.

Fig.8: Film still, *Lights Out*, Dir. David F. Sandberg, (Sandberg Company, 2013), p.26.

Fig.9: Film still, *Lights Out*, Dir. David F. Sandberg, (Sandberg Company, 2013), p.27.

Fig.10: Film still, *The Babadook*, Dir. Jennifer Kent, (Umbrella Entertainment, 2014), p.29.

Fig.11: Film still, *The Babadook*, Dir. Jennifer Kent, (Umbrella Entertainment, 2014), p.29.

Fig.12: Film still, *The Babadook*, Dir. Jennifer Kent, (Umbrella Entertainment, 2014), p.29.

Fig.13: Film still, *The Babadook*, Dir. Jennifer Kent, (Umbrella Entertainment, 2014), p.30.

Fig.14: Film still, *The Woman In Black*, Dir. James Watkins, (Momentum Pictures, 2012), p.31.

Fig.15: Film still, *Parasite*. Dir. Bong Joon-Ho, (CJ Entertainment, 2019), p.32.

Fig.16: Film still, *Parasite*. Dir. Bong Joon-Ho, (CJ Entertainment, 2019), p.33.

Fig.17: Film still, *Parasite*. Dir. Bong Joon-Ho, (CJ Entertainment, 2019), p.33.

Fig.18: Film still, *Parasite*. Dir. Bong Joon-Ho, (CJ Entertainment, 2019), p.33.

Fig.19: Film still, *Pyscho*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, (Paramount Pictures, 1960), p.34.

Fig.20: Film still, *Pyscho*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, (Paramount Pictures, 1960), p.35.

Fig.21: Film still, *The Woman In Black*. Dir. James Watkins, (Momentum Pictures, 2012), p.38.

Fig.22: Film still, *The Woman In Black*. Dir. James Watkins, (Momentum Pictures, 2012), p.39.

Fig.23: Film still, *The Woman In Black*. Dir. James Watkins, (Momentum Pictures, 2012), p.39.

Fig.24: Film still, *The Woman In Black*. Dir. James Watkins, (Momentum Pictures, 2012), p.40.

Fig.25: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.42.

Fig.26: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.42.

Fig.27: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.43.

Fig.28: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.43.

Fig.29: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.44.

Fig.30: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.45.

Fig.31: Film still, *The Invisible Man*. Dir. Leigh Whannel, (Universal Pictures, 2020), p.45.

Fig.32: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.47.

Fig.33: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.47.

Fig.34: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.47.

Fig.35: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.48.

Fig.36: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.48.

Fig.37: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.49.

Fig.38: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Krasinski, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.49.

Fig.39: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.50.

Fig.40: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.50.

Fig.41: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.51.

Fig.42: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.51.

Fig.43: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.51.

Fig.44: Film still, *A Quiet Place*. Dir. John Kransinki, (Paramount Pictures, 2018), p.52.

Introduction

Suspense is the core driving force behind a cinematic narrative. Any film can introduce a character and give them a problem to solve but suspense is the key to creating the necessary tension that keeps the audience engaged and interested in finding out how that character's problem will be resolved. According to author Maria Anastasova, in both film and literature a suspenseful moment could consist of "...a dangerous chase, the pursuing of goals that are hard to achieve, a cliff hanging moment, or any other situation which makes the viewer/reader eager to know what happens next while expecting a particular outcome" (Anastasova,2019). These types of suspenseful scenarios can be seen played out across a myriad of popular film genres. In Action, Adventure, Romance, and even Comedy, there are endless examples of films whose plotlines utilise suspense to their advantage in order to draw in their audience's attention and maintain their interest.

While suspense is a greatly valued narrative tool utilised across multiple genres, there is arguably no other cinematic genre that relies on the use of suspense more than the Horror genre. The ultimate goal of every horror filmmaker is to have their film elicit feelings of palpable fear in their audience. However, the achievement of that powerful sense of fear which they strive for is unquestionably tied to their ability to successfully generate suspense within the events of the film.

My aim for this thesis is to discuss the concept of suspense in the context of the horror film genre and to highlight how effective it can be in evoking the desired responses of fear, anxiety, and tension in audiences when employed successfully within a horror film narrative. The study of suspense not only in terms of the horror genre but across all genres of film is varied and complex. It is a subject which has received a vast and deep consideration from scholars of many disciplines seeking to further our understanding of the importance of suspense as a cinematic storytelling device. Therefore, in the interest of focusing my thesis topic, the scope of my writing will be limited to investigating the patterns of suspense building in horror films and

identifying particular methods by which it is most successfully achieved in such narratives.

The content of this thesis will be divided into three chapters. Chapter One will be concerned with discussing some of the existing academic theories and definitions surrounding the concept of cinematic suspense, as outlined in the texts of academics such as Andrew Ortony et al. among others. The discussion of these theories and definitions is essential as it will assist in establishing which specific methods are used to achieve suspense in film generally, as well as providing a framework of understanding for what cinematic suspense is and how exactly it can be utilised as a narrative tool.

In Chapters Two and Three, I will demonstrate how these tools and techniques for achieving suspense are put into practice by horror filmmakers in their work in order to evoke feelings of genuine fear and tension in their audiences. Most filmmakers could reasonably come up with a suspenseful premise for a horror film. However, it is the execution of that premise through the careful crafting of Visuals and Sound that can make or break the suspense of such a narrative for the viewer.

Cinematography and Sound Design are the crucial keys to success in building tension, anxiety, and thus, suspense in any horror film and so both areas will be given separate chapters to explore the full scope of their individual importance in the cultivating of horror suspense. Throughout Chapters Two and Three, reference will be made as needed to a selection of horror films which I believe successfully build a palpable sense of suspense within their narratives through the use of cinematography and sound design techniques. I plan to analyse the various cinematography and sound design techniques employed in these horror films, with the aim of showing how successful they are in generating suspense when put into practice.

Chapter One

Theories, Definitions, and Paradoxes



Figure 1: Still From Steve McQueen's 'Hunger' (2008)

Imagine that there are two characters sitting at a table having a conversation. Beneath this table, unbeknownst to the two, there is a bomb. For a short time, nothing happens, then suddenly BOOM! The bomb explodes. A spectator of this situation might be surprised at the sudden explosion, but excluding this surprise, it has been a relatively uneventful scene. The seated pair conversed at a table and nothing of great interest happened until the bomb went off.

Now, imagine this scene again. This time, before the original duo arrives, a third individual is seen placing the bomb beneath the table and setting it to explode at exactly 1pm before exiting the scene. Enter the original pair. They again take their seats at the table and begin the same conversation. A clock in the decor of the scene shows that it is fifteen minutes to 1pm. Suddenly, the previously inconsequential conversation between the two becomes completely captivating to the spectator. The clock shows precious time passing, and the spectator yearns to warn the unaware characters of the imminent danger. Yet, powerless to do so, they are left in nervous anticipation, wondering whether the pair will notice the bomb in time and escape, or be killed in the forthcoming explosion.

The ‘bomb under the table’ analogy is the well-known response given by legendary director Alfred Hitchcock in a 1970 American Film Institute interview when asked to explain the crucial role played by ‘suspense’ in creating a compelling film scene. Hitchcock, who is referred to by film fans and scholars alike as ‘the master of suspense’ calls it the “most powerful means of holding onto the viewer’s attention”.



Figure 2; Still From James McTeigue's 'V for Vendetta' (2005)

The term ‘suspense’ itself refers to a state of psychological uncertainty or excitement, usually accompanied by a degree of apprehension or anxiety, that one typically experiences when awaiting the unknown outcome of a precarious situation. In the context of both literary and cinematic narratives, suspense is regarded as a major plot device which is essential in both arousing and, most importantly, maintaining an audience’s interest in the progression of any narrative regardless of genre or medium. When utilised effectively, suspense creates anticipation within viewers regarding the outcome of the plot or the solution to a mystery, a puzzle, or another enigma established earlier in the film.

Although suspense is undoubtedly a crucial narrative tool, it is an elusive concept with often unclear mechanisms that many scholars struggle to make sense of. The emotional experience of suspense is one that many of us often encounter in our daily lives, making it a very attractive concept for directors to explore on the big screen. However, as stated by author Maria Anastasova, “...when it comes to conceptualising and theorising it things become complicated and many paradoxes appear on the surface” (Anastasova,2019).

The vast majority of texts on suspense approach the subject by one or the other of two perspectives; the author is either concerned with the emotional experience of the audience viewing a suspenseful film (termed ‘felt suspense’), or alternatively, they are concerned with how the film is constructed in order to evoke an emotional experience of suspense within the audience (termed ‘suspense structure’). Therefore, it stands to reason that in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of the function of suspense in film one must “...explore both the source and the mechanism of the emotional effect...” (Anastasova,2019). This means that it is essential to analyse suspense in relation to both how it effects the structure of a film and how it effects the audience emotionally in order to fully understand how it operates.

One of the most prominent theories of suspense, known as the Standard Account Theory, was first introduced in *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* (1998) by psychologists, Andrew Ortony, Gerald L. Clore, and Allan Collins. In their Standard Account Theory, they propose that, psychologically, suspense is comprised of three main elements: fear, hope, and the “cognitive state of uncertainty”. According to this theory, a person is most likely to experience suspense when confronted with a scenario in which they fear an unpleasant outcome and hope for a more favourable one, but remain uncertain as to which outcome will occur. Fear and hope under the Standard Account Theory are presented as “prospective emotions” which are likely to be felt more intensely depending on perceived desirability of a potential outcome in an unpredictable situation. If the potential outcome is perceived to be more desirable, then one’s feelings of hope will be amplified. However, if the outcome is more likely to be undesirable, and even potentially dangerous, then one is of course going to become more fearful.

Philosopher Aaron Smuts describes the phenomenon this way: “Given equal likelihood, I would be more afraid of being stabbed in the gut with a knife or beaten about the torso with a pillowcase of oranges than merely punched repeatedly... the more likely I believe an undesirable outcome to be, the more fearful I would be.” (Smuts, 2008).



Figure 3: Still From Andres Muschietti's 'It' (2017)

Furthermore, with these “prospective emotions” in consideration, Ortony, Clore, and Collins propose that the intensity of felt suspense relies on two key features; the level of uncertainty regarding the outcome of a scenario and the perceived magnitude of what is at stake. Under these conditions, one would feel suspense the most powerfully in situations where the outcome is extremely uncertain and the stakes are exceptionally high. The Standard Account Theory maintains that it is also possible to achieve suspense with varying levels of each of these two elements. As explained by Aaron Smuts, for example, “You can have suspense with low stakes if there is great uncertainty or with low uncertainty if there are high stakes...” (Smuts,2008). Ortony, Clore, and Collins conclude that without a combination of both uncertainty and stakes of some kind, there can be no suspense. It is for this reason that their Standard Account Theory of suspense is a source of much discourse in this field of study, as many scholars believe the idea that uncertainty must be established in order to achieve suspense is debatable.

In her book *The Suspense of Horror and the Horror of Suspense* (2019) Maria Anastasova states that while the Standard Account Theory has its merits as a starting point in the study of suspense as it “...advances some key notions that appear and reappear in other studies”, such as its descriptions of the involvement of emotions such as fear and hope in the suspense building process, it does have its “weak points”. This rings true especially when one considers the problem of the so-called Paradox of Suspense.

The narrative-based issue known as the Paradox of Suspense, as described by scholars such as Richard Gerrig, Aaron Smuts, and Dolf Zillmann, puts into question the importance of uncertainty in the building of cognitive suspense. Smuts in particular believes that the Standard Account Theory overemphasises the role of uncertainty in the building of suspense and questions its significance. In his article *The Desire-Frustration Theory of Suspense (2008)*, Smuts argues; “If uncertainty is integral to the creation of suspense, then how is it that some films can still be suspenseful on repeated viewings?”. This notion is a key element which contributes to the paradox. If uncertainty regarding the outcome of the plot of a film is absolutely required in order for a viewer to feel suspense, then it stands to reason they should not feel suspense upon repeated viewings of the same film because they already know what the outcome of the narrative is going to be. However, as Smuts points out, “Although we may not feel suspense as intensely as we did upon first viewing, it is undeniable that we do often feel some suspense upon repeated encounters with the same movie” (Smuts,2008).

There have been many proposed answers put forth by scholars which claim to solve the Paradox of Suspense. Psychologist Richard Gerrig attempted to explain the paradox in his article *The Resiliency of Suspense (1996)* through what he called the “expectation of uniqueness” or, as it is more commonly known, the Moment-by-Moment Forgetting Theory. Under this theory, Gerrig maintains the idea that uncertainty is a required element in the building of suspense and proposes that even when revisiting a narrative that we already know the outcome of, we can still experience uncertainty as we re-experience the development of the plot.

Gerrig proceeds to argue that this is possible because humans have not been equipped by evolution with the ability to recall known outcomes to repeated events because exactly repeated outcomes that exist in revisited narratives do not exist in nature. It is for this reason that Gerrig believes one can experience uncertainty on repeated encounters with a familiar narrative. He suggests that when one is engaged in the development of a narrative, one cannot simultaneously be aware of the outcome. Thus, the necessary uncertainty is preserved and suspense resurges as a result.



Figure 4: Still From Andres Muschietti's 'It' (2017)

Gerrig's Moment-by-Moment Forgetting Theory is interesting, however, it overlooks the common experience in which one revisits a familiar narrative only to pick up on new details that went unnoticed upon the first viewing. Such an activity requires one to possess the ability to recall information about the narrative which directly contradicts Gerrig's "anomalous suspense" theory. If, in fact, we all did suffer from "a systematic failure of memory processes to produce relevant knowledge as the narrative unfolds" as Gerrig suggests, then the above phenomenon in which we are able recall enough about a narrative to notice new information upon repeated viewings should not be possible, and yet, it very much is.

Philosopher Aaron Smuts is particularly critical of Gerrig's Moment-by-Moment Forgetting Theory and offers an alternative solution to the Paradox of Suspense in the form of what he calls the Desire-Frustration Theory where suspense is viewed as a response caused by the "frustration of a strong desire to affect the outcome of an imminent event" (Smuts,2008). Smuts claims that the Paradox of Suspense can be explained more clearly when one considers the following three statements:

1. Suspense requires uncertainty,
2. Knowledge of a story's outcome precludes uncertainty,
3. We feel suspense in response to some outcomes when we have knowledge of the outcome." (Smuts,2008).

Smuts claims that although each of these statements about suspense is certainly valid individually, collectively they are incompatible as each statement contradicts the other, thus revealing the paradox. The Desire-Frustration Theory avoids the problem of the paradox simply by removing the need for uncertainty as a necessary element in building suspense. According to Smuts, “Audiences feel suspense on subsequent viewings of a movie not because they cannot remember how a story will turn out, but because their desires have not been fulfilled this time around” (Smuts,2008).

Cinematic narratives are particularly effective in producing suspense under the Desire-Frustration Theory as viewers are completely powerless over the events which occur in them, unlike in real life where they have control over their own actions and can thus “actively work towards the satisfaction of a desire” (Smuts,2008). Furthermore, in order for a film to produce the most suspense under the Desire-Frustration Theory, the audience absolutely must care deeply about the outcome of its events. Additionally, the audience’s desire to see the events of the film turn out exactly as they want them to must be very powerful in order to achieve the greatest degree of suspense. A vague or complete lack of interest in the events will not have the same outcome. Only an intense desire to affect the outcome will result in suspense.

According to Smuts, the most effective method for cultivating this intense desire within viewers to exercise control and then, to simultaneously frustrate that desire, is to structure the narrative of a film in such a way that the audience receives information critical to the outcome of an imminent event before the characters do, thereby achieving suspense. In Smuts’ view, such a situation is the perfect formula for achieving suspense in a narrative context as “...the satisfaction of our desire to send a simple word of warning to any and every character” (Smuts,2008) is frustrated by our inability to alter the predetermined events of the narrative.



Figure 5: Still From Mike Flanagan's 'Hush' (2016)

Smuts is not alone in his assessment of the lesser role that uncertainty has to play in the building of suspense. In his article *Anatomy of Suspense* (1981) psychologist and suspense theoretician Dolf Zillmann, also argues against the need for uncertainty as a required condition for suspense. While Zillmann mentions uncertainty as a partial contributor to the experience of suspense, his thoughts on the matter align with Smuts' in that he does not view it as particularly necessary for suspense to be achieved, stating "maximal uncertainty associated with a feared outcome does not necessarily constitute the point of maximal suspense" (Zillmann,1981). Zillmann believes that fear and hope, the "prospective emotions" discussed earlier, are more closely connected to the experience of suspense than mere uncertainty. Additionally, Zillmann states that one feels suspense most intensely as a result of one or more of the following fears and/or hopes:

"1.the fear that a favoured outcome may not be forthcoming. 2. the fear that a deplorable outcome may be forthcoming. 3. The hope that a favoured outcome will be forthcoming. 4. The hope that a deplorable outcome will not be forthcoming. 5. Any possible combination of these hopes and fears." (Zillmann,1981).

Under these conditions, Zillmann claims that in order to produce the most intense levels of suspense within a narrative, the plot must include high stakes situations in which the audience is made to feel both fearful and hopeful regarding the potential outcome.

Perhaps the most important point that Zillmann makes in his article is that the protagonist of a narrative must be perceived as likeable by the audience in order to evoke a more powerful sense of suspense in response to the events of the story. In Zillmann's view, if we are presented with a protagonist we feel sympathetic towards, then we are far more likely to feel greater levels of suspense when we see that character endangered by the events of the narrative. We will naturally feel our inability to help them all the more intensely than we would if we felt indifferent towards them.

Theoretician Peter Vorderer agrees with Zillmann's sentiment that the audience must find the protagonist of narrative likeable in order to feel suspense most strongly. In his article *Towards a Psychological Theory of Suspense (1996)* Vorderer states that the audience, "...must feel sympathy for the protagonists; at least they must not dislike them.." otherwise they would not particularly care if the protagonist triumphs or is defeated and would therefore be unlikely to feel any suspense regarding the outcome of their story. Furthermore, in a situation where a sympathetic character encounters danger, Vorderer states that the potential for that character to be harmed must appear likely but not absolutely certain in order for the audience to feel the greatest suspense. His explanation for this is simply that suspense occurs and is felt most strongly when an unpleasant outcome appears more likely to occur than a pleasant one, such as when a villain or other evil threatens to triumph over the protagonist.



Figure 6: Still From Ridley Scott's 'Alien' (1979)

The texts put forth by the scholars above give an impression of the huge wealth of suspense theory available. While each scholar's approach of the subject is very much unique, their theories ultimately form a general collection of ideas regarding what suspense is and how it functions both in terms of its emotional effect and its function in the context of a film narrative. By way of conclusion, I wish to summarise this broad range of suspense theory in the following way:

1. Suspense is primarily an emotional experience which can be evoked in response to the combination of fears and hopes one might feel regarding the potential outcome of a narrative.
2. The exact outcome of the narrative is irrelevant to this experience as suspense arises only as a result of the events foregoing the outcome.
3. Uncertainty can be considered a factor in suspense building but is not absolutely necessary to achieve suspense.
4. The audience must care deeply about the outcome of the narrative. Only an intense desire to affect the outcome will result in the greatest level of suspense.
5. The most effective method for achieving narrative suspense is to structure the plot in such a way that the audience receives information critical to the outcome of an imminent event before the characters do.
6. The audience must find the protagonist(s) of a narrative likeable in order to feel suspense most strongly. Any indifference towards the protagonist(s) will result in the emotional effect being diminished.

In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how these key elements of suspense are put into practice by horror filmmakers in their work in order to create terrifying viewing experiences for their audiences.

Chapter Two

Suspense and The Horror Film

From writing and casting to acting and directing, there are hundreds of factors in horror filmmaking which each contribute to the development of a bone-chilling final product. However, above all else, Cinematography and Sound Design are the fundamental elements of filmmaking which when combined are instrumental in the creation and elevation of horror film suspense. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the discussion of Cinematography and its role in suspense building in horror films.

In a horror film context, suspense is presented as a promise of something awful to come and the audience may only watch on in terror as that promise may be fulfilled at any moment. A horror film's ability to generate this experience of suspense in its audience lies not only in the content of its narrative, but in how that narrative is executed on screen through the universal visual language of Cinematography.

In the most basic terms, Cinematography is the means by which a filmmaker communicates a story to the audience with the camera and it encompasses a multitude of different techniques. There are thousands of different ways that a single scene might be shot and each possibility could convey a different meaning. Therefore, when it comes to shooting a horror film scene, composing the shot correctly is an essential first step.

Before composing a shot, a director must consider what message they are trying to communicate to the audience and what reaction they wish to achieve in response. In a horror film, the primary emotional responses that a director wishes to evoke are that of fear, tension, and ultimately suspense. The challenge lies in knowing what to convey with the camera to evoke those desired emotional responses. In the opening line of his essay *Supernatural Horror In Literature* (1927), Author H.P Lovecraft wrote "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown". This quote suggests that the most powerful fear one can experience stems from the feeling of uncertainty which arises in the face of an unfamiliar situation rather than from the event itself.

As previously mentioned in my discussion of suspense theory, when faced with an unfamiliar situation, one will typically experience feelings of uncertainty and suspense as they consider the possible positive and negative outcomes of the unpredictable event. As explained by suspense theoretician Aaron Smuts, “..we might feel suspense when walking through a dangerous neighbourhood at night; we fear that we might be mugged, hope that we will be safe, and are uncertain what the outcome will be” (Smuts,2008). Thus, playing with the audience’s innate fear of the unknown becomes an extremely viable method for building suspense in a horror film.

One of the most popular ways that horror films manipulate the audience’s fear of the unknown to evoke suspense is through the exploitation of darkness and/or the fear of the dark. The use of darkness is so deeply entrenched in horror cinematography that the very idea of watching a horror film immediately brings to mind imagery related to darkness such as pitch black night skies and intense shadows. Darkness is petrifying to us because it removes all visual stimuli, leaving us alone with our imagination, and our imagination will often tell us that something is lurking in that darkness waiting to strike while we’re vulnerable. No doubt many of us can relate to the experience of sprinting up the stairs to the safety of our bedroom at night after turning off the last switch, imagining that someone or something is going to give chase in the darkness once the light has gone out.

The sight of a dimly lit, or even completely dark room in a horror film has the power to immediately put the viewer on edge. When the audience can’t see what is down that dark hallway, in that room beyond the open doorway, or indeed anything behind the character at all, they will instantly begin to feel tense and nervous. Whether consciously or unconsciously, their instincts will tell them that there is something there in the darkness to be feared. That instinctive fear is exactly what many horror films thrive on.

The 2013 short film version of David F. Sandberg’s supernatural horror *‘Lights Out’*, is a master class in how darkness can be used to evoke fear, uncertainty, and suspense in a horror film. The film plays on the very fears described above, with its female main character being stalked to her bedroom by a malevolent, long-haired entity that only manifests when she turns off the lights in her house. The concept is simple, but

extremely impactful. The audience is given no clue as to what the creature is or where it has come from. All they know is that it disappears when the lights are on and reappears when they are not. The terror that this premise conjures is further intensified when, while flicking the lights on and off to see the creature, the woman realises that it has begun to move toward her. Knowing that the creature is not only moving in the darkness but heading directly for the woman elevates the audience's fear of the unknown to a new level. We don't know what the creature's intentions are but the fact that it moves only under the cover of darkness suggests that the nature of its movement is threatening and this evokes a palpable sense of tension and suspense.



Figure 7: The Long-Haired Entity Manifests In The Darkness



Figure 8: The Long-Haired Entity Disappears In The Light

That overwhelming sense of suspense is compounded when it is revealed that the creature can not only move in the darkness, but can also create more darkness to travel

in by turning out existing light sources. When the woman learns that the creature can only manifest in darkness, she takes the first logical step that any of us would to combat this frightening situation; she leaves the lights on. She even takes precautions a step further by securing her light switches in the 'on' position with tape to prevent them from being turned off. The light brings the audience a sense of safety. The creature cannot materialise in light and so the threat is thwarted. But the security provided by the light is false, and suspense resurges once the comfort the light provides is ripped away. When the woman returns to her bedroom, she leaves both her bedside lamp and hallway lights on, believing that the light will keep the nocturnal creature at bay. But the hallway light soon flickers and goes out. After a few anxiety inducing moments in which the creature's footsteps are heard approaching and entering the room, the woman struggles to keep her flickering bedside lamp alight and briefly succeeds. Eventually however, the grisly, white-eyed face of the humanoid monster appears right next to her bedside and switches off the lamp, turning the screen pitch black and ending the film.



Figure 9: The Long-Haired Entity Switching The Bedside Lamp Off

The '*Lights Out*' short is so effective at building fear and suspense because it exploits the fear of the unknown by suggesting that darkness is capable of harbouring imperceptible dangers. Utilising darkness is clearly a very useful method for suspense building, but there are further cinematography techniques that can be used to

manipulate the fear of the unknown and build suspense as a result. For example, instead of hiding parts of a scene using darkness alone, one could hide parts of a scene by simply holding a tighter shot on a character. A Close-Up shot of a character's face can align the audience more closely with how that character is feeling. As well as that, holding a tighter shot on a character in a horror scene can give the impression to the viewer that the monster could be right next to the character, but remain hidden from view by lingering just outside of the frame. The suspense then lies in the question of when the threat will be revealed.

A scene that perfectly showcases the effectiveness of the close-up shot is the car scene from Jennifer Kent's film *'The Babadook'* (2014). The film follows widowed mother Amelia and her young son Samuel who are haunted by a bogeyman-esque monster from a children's storybook. The cinematography of this chilling scene is calculated, intentionally manipulating the fear of the unknown to create suspense. In the scene, as she is driving, Amelia becomes increasingly frustrated when Samuel won't stop screaming and flailing in the backseat. The camera cuts back and forth between close up shots of the strung out mother and her wailing son as Amelia struggles to continue driving while begging Samuel to stop. The chaotic cuts between the shots of Samuel's incessant blood-curdling shrieking and Amelia's desperate pleading creates a completely disorientating viewing experience with an unbearably tense atmosphere. This sense of tension builds to a crescendo when in a final close-up shot Samuel is abruptly silent and glances to the left in terror, reacting to something out of shot and telling it to go away. Though the very next shot reveals that there is in fact nothing there, Samuel's reaction is terrifying to the viewer nonetheless as it implies that he sees something that we don't. The fact that we cannot see what he can makes us feel vulnerable.



Figure 10: Close-up Shot Of Samuel Screaming At His Mother



Figure 11: Samuel Sees Something Outside Of The Frame



Figure 12: Samuel Reacts To Something Outside Of The Frame



Figure 13: A Close-up Shot Of Amelia's POV Showing The Empty Seat Next To Samuel

Another advantageous suspense-building cinematography technique is the POV (Point Of View) shot. The main purpose of a POV shot in a horror film is to momentarily place the viewer into the character's shoes so they may experience the world of the film from their perspective. The viewer becomes the character in that moment which is very important as gives them a unique insight into what the character is seeing and feeling in the scene, which in turn can make the audience feel more sympathy for them. According to suspense theory, having the audience sympathise with the protagonist(s) is an essential element in the creation of suspense. Theoretician Peter Vorderer explains the relation between audience sympathy and suspense in the following way:

“From the positive affects toward the persons whose actions the viewers approve of, and from the negative affects toward those whose actions they disapprove of, arise certain expectations and emotions: the hope for a positive outcome and fear of a negative outcome for likeable protagonists; and conversely, fear regarding a possible positive outcome and hope for a negative outcome for the disliked antagonists.” (Vorderer,1996)

Therefore, the audience must find the protagonist of a horror film likeable in order to feel suspense more strongly. Additionally, the audience should be rooting for the character's survival during the film's most suspenseful scenes, and so it becomes very problematic when a character is disliked because it ruins the emotional effect. Thus, POV shots are a brilliant solution as the audience is more likely to sympathise with the character that they are supposed to be sympathising with and care deeply about the

outcome of their situation if they are forced to experience the terror that character is feeling in those high-tension moments themselves.

POV shots fall under the category of what is called the ‘Subjective Camera’ in cinematography, where the audience views the events of the film either through the eyes of the characters or something watching the characters. A ‘Subjective Camera’ shot can sometimes be as obvious as a shaky camera half-hiding behind a curtain while looking through a window. In James Watkins’ *‘The Woman In Black’* (2012), a similar POV shot occurs as the eponymous ghostly Woman In Black watches main character Arthur Kipps through a window as he walks up the pathway to enter Eel Marsh House.



Figure 14: Ghost's POV Watching Arthur Through A Window

Other examples of ‘Subjective Camera’ shots include a camera moving and suddenly stopping, or even just slowly pushing in toward a character before cutting away to a new shot. Each method conveys a similar impression of characters watching and/or being watched, which is very effective in building suspense as it implies to the viewer that the character being watched is in danger in some way that they are unaware of in that moment and this makes us feel anxious for them.

One technique in horror cinematography that stands out as the most simple yet powerful means of building suspense is the use of negative space in a shot. Negative space is common element of cinematography that many directors will consider when

composing a shot for a film. In horror cinematography however, it is an invaluable tool in the creation of an unsettling suspenseful atmosphere. Negative space when used correctly has the ability to make the audience uncomfortable. An empty space behind a character can convey that something is missing there. It can also feel like an obvious threat to the audience as the conspicuousness of the negative space implies that someone or something might appear there later. Moreover, negative space communicates to the viewer that something is off about the setting that the character is in, and because the majority of those watching a horror film understand the cinematic language of such films, this easily instills a sense of unease within viewers.

The ‘ghost’ scene in Bong Joon-Ho’s *Parasite* (2019) is a fantastic example of how negative space can be used to create a sense of suspense and fear in the audience. In this flashback sequence, Park Yeon-Gyo recounts the chilling tale of when her young son Da-Song witnessed a ‘ghost’ in the house during the night of his previous birthday. In the first shot of the scene, we see little Da-Song in the Park’s modern kitchen sitting on the floor eating his birthday cake in the darkness. He is initially entirely focused on the cake, but suddenly looks up and away to the left side of the screen. The film cuts away to a tight floor level shot of the open passageway that leads to the Park’s basement. The passageway is a completely pitch black rectangle, perfectly centered in the frame between two shelving units. The shelves give off the faintest hint of orange light, which further emphasises the comparative inky blackness of the empty space between them. For several seconds the shot is held and nothing happens, then suddenly the top half of a white-eyed ghostly face slowly rises from the bottom of the passageway.



Figure 15: A Close-Up Shot Of Da-Song Eating His Birthday Cake



Figure 16: Da-Song Reacts To Something Out Of Frame

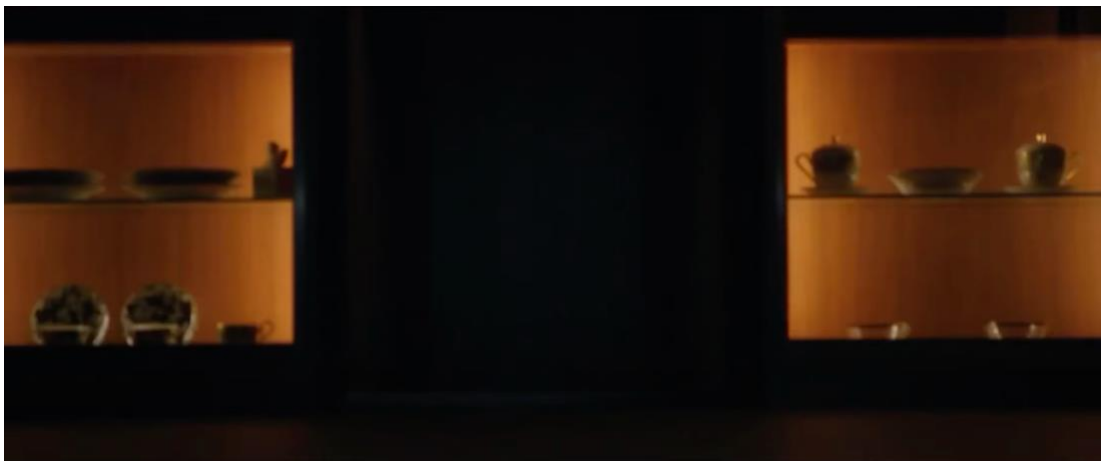


Figure 17: A Floor Level Shot Of The Park's Open Basement Passageway

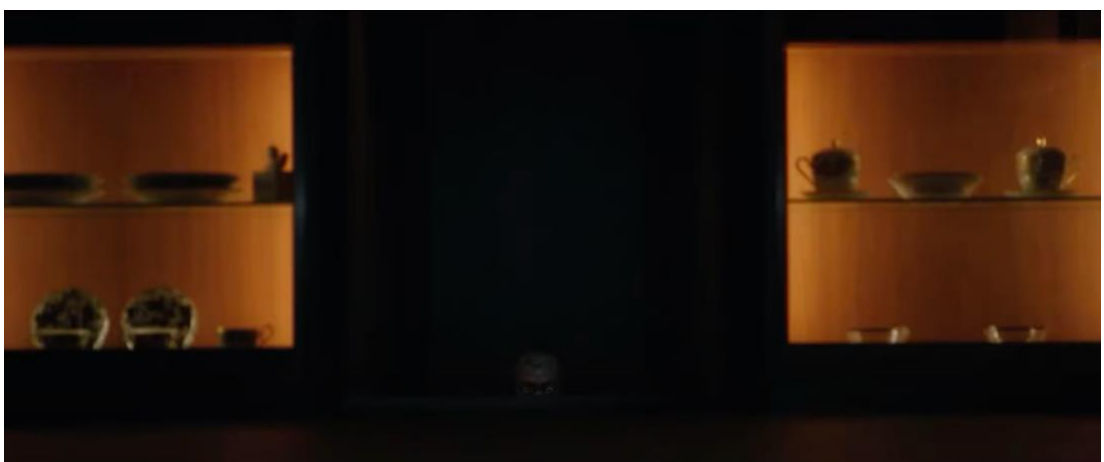


Figure 18: A Ghostly Head Rises From The Negative Space Between The Two Shelves

The 'ghost' scene is a textbook example of how one can use negative space to create a suspenseful atmosphere in a horror sequence. When an otherwise uninteresting negative space shot like that of the passageway seems to linger, a red flag is raised subconsciously in the mind of the viewer, giving a sense that there is something important about the empty space that is not yet clear. Furthermore, because it is a horror sequence, that feeling evoked by the negative space of the passageway seamlessly translates into suspense and unease within the audience. They instinctively know that the empty space may soon be unexpectedly filled by someone or something, but have no way of telling when it will happen. So, when the 'ghost' finally does appear, the effect is absolutely terrifying.

Another very popular method for building horror suspense through cinematography is showing the audience an impending danger while keeping the character unaware. This technique was pioneered by Hitchcock in the well-known shower sequence of his film *'Psycho'* (1960). In the most famous shot of the black and white scene, we see a close-up of the face of main character Marion Crane as she showers. Marion's face is located off to the right of the frame, allowing the translucent shower curtain behind her to dominate the shot and create a huge area of negative space. This space is soon filled when we suddenly glimpse a shadowy figure emerge behind the curtain and begin to approach her.



Figure 19: A Close-up Shot Of Marion's Face As She Showers



Figure 20: A Shadowy Figure Appears In The Negative Space Of The Curtain Backdrop Unnoticed By Marion

What makes the scene so suspenseful and horrifying for the audience is not the appearance of the figure alone, but also the fact that we can see how Marion does not realise that she is in danger as she happily continues to bathe. Witnessing this moment, the viewer may feel an intense desire to shout out a warning to Marion and alert her to the presence of the threatening figure creeping up behind her. Ultimately however, despite strongly desiring her to escape, the audience can only watch on in dismay as a mysterious man rips back the curtain and begins fatally stabbing Marion.

The curtain shot perfectly illustrates Aaron Smuts' Desire Frustration Theory for creating suspense. Simply allowing the viewer to know more than the protagonist alone may not result in suspense. However, as explained by Smuts, "...when we know something that could help a character we care about stay alive, and we are unable to relay the information, we feel suspense." (Smuts,2018). Thus, knowing through the cinematography of the shot that Marion is in danger, but being unable to warn her and possibly save her life with that knowledge, significantly intensifies feelings of suspense for the viewer. The viewer may desire to help her, but that desire is frustrated by their lack of ability to make use of the information they possess, and so suspense arises as a result.

The above discussion of various cinematography techniques, and films which successfully utilise them, reveals the crucial role that the careful crafting of visual elements plays in the creation of suspense in horror films. Cinematography is however only one of two vital keys to success in building fear, tension, and ultimately suspense in horror. In the next chapter, I will discuss the equally essential role played by Sound Design in the cultivating of horror suspense.

Chapter Three

The Sound of Suspense

While visuals have a critical hand in creating horror suspense, great sound design is equally essential in the crafting of a tension-filled atmosphere for the viewer. One needs only watch a horror film scene with the sound turned off to fully grasp the vital role that it plays in elevating an audience's sense of suspense. Often, once a horror scene is muted, the viewer finds that the onscreen events that would usually have had them gripped with terror are curiously more bearable despite being unchanged visually. Turn the sound back on however, and suddenly those creaking footsteps are in the room with you, the haunting whispers are in your ears, and the world of the film now feels too close for comfort.

The primary purpose of sound in a horror film is to instill a sense of nervous anticipation within the audience. It often functions as the herald of unseen but imminent dangers and is therefore an invaluable tool for elevating tensions and creating suspense in a horror scene. Through a combination of suspense building sounds as well as foley sounds, a horror film can very effectively communicate a tangible sense of tension to the audience. We cannot see sound, therefore it can easily unsettle us. Combine that unease with eerie settings and clever cinematography, and the result is a perfect formula for suspense.

Sounds that fall under that first category of suspense building are referred to as 'non-diegetic sounds'. This typically includes sounds that the audience can hear but the characters in the film cannot. Non-diegetic sound also typically appropriates classical music techniques such as “..droning tones, ostinati, and tremolos” (Donnelly,2005) which are used specifically to unsettle the audience. Aside from simply being anxiety inducing, these kinds of non-diegetic sounds are also suspenseful because they function as a warning to the audience of an impending threat. In his book *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television (2005)*, author Kevin J. Donnelly states that non-diegetic sounds are “..often atonal, and dissonant, refusing to become melodic”. They typically start off quiet and barely perceptible to the viewer, but will then become progressively louder as a scene unfolds to build tension.

According to research by psychologist Bryan J. Kemp, auditory stimulus typically only takes 8-10 milliseconds to reach the human brain whereas visual stimulus takes 20-40 milliseconds. Horror film sound design exploits this phenomenon to generate more powerful scares for the audience through the use of non-diegetic sounds such as Sting Chords (i.e., the deafening noise that often accompanies a jump-scare). When directly following a period of slow-building, non-diegetic sound, an aggressive blasting sting can actually enhance the overall emotional impact of a scare for the audience. Additionally, because the sting is so universally understood in the world of horror cinema as a harbinger of immediate terror, many films will further enhance the startling effect of a sting by cutting all sound in the seconds preceding it.

A fantastic example of a very effective sting is seen in James Watkins' *The Woman In Black* (2012) when main character Arthur Kipps finds himself lost in the midst of a dense fog after being lured by the sound of a disembodied scream. While Arthur frantically searches the obscure terrain for the source of the sound, a cacophony of voices, droning sounds, and screams echoes from multiple directions. His footfalls crunch on the ground beneath him as he haphazardly races around; while wind blows in such a way that one feels as though they are running alongside him. The effect is just as confusing and disorientating for the viewer as it is for Arthur himself, and one can't help but empathise with his distress as he hopelessly tries to follow each noise.



Figure 21: Arthur Enters The Fog.



Figure 22: Arthur Loses His Way Searching For The Source Of The Sounds.

When Arthur eventually halts in his tracks, all sounds fade out until we can hear nothing but his laboured breathing. The silence is held for several excruciatingly suspenseful seconds, in which Arthur does nothing but breathe and stare incredulously into the thick mist. Then he whips around and a sting assaults the viewer's eardrums with a shrieking blast as his driver Keckwick appears quite literally out of the blue directly behind him. The period of silence preceding the sting makes it much more frightening when it lands than it might otherwise have been, simply because the sudden onslaught of noise comes across as far more ear-splitting in comparison.

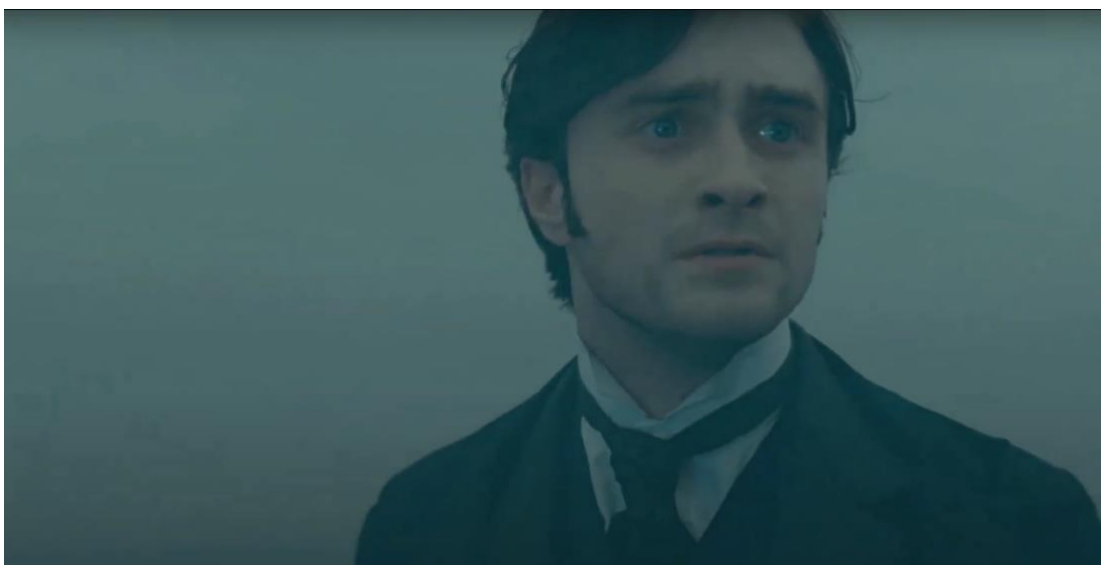


Figure 23: A Close-Up Shot As Arthur Stares Into The Fog.



Figure 24: A Swift Panning Close-Up Shot Reveals Driver Keckwick Suddenly Appearing Directly Behind Arthur.

The non-diegetic sounds within this scene are extremely effective in delivering a massive scare for the audience. However, the suspense here is also delivered through the foley sounds that feature throughout the scene. Foley sounds are the second category of sounds that feature heavily throughout many horror films. They typically include realistic noises such as creaking floorboards, scraping nails, and whispering voices. These kinds of sounds are referred to as ‘diegetic sounds’, meaning that they can be heard by both the viewer and the character.

The function of diegetic sound is to give the audience the sense that they are placed in the scene with the character. When diegetic sounds appear in a horror film they are generally unaccompanied by any music or other non-diegetic sound, with the aim of further enhancing the sense of suspense that they provide for the viewer. By limiting the sound in a scene to just diegetic sounds, like Arthur’s heavy breathing, the audience is more likely to feel involved in the scene. Moreover, if the audience feels involved in the scene they are more likely to empathise with the character experiencing the petrifying events and then become anxious on their behalf, thereby generating the desired emotional effects of suspense. This notion is supported by psychologist Dolf Zillmann, who places great importance on audience empathy in the creation of suspense in his article *The Logic of Suspense and Mystery* (1991) stating, “..witnessing a liked protagonist suffer from such distressing conditions and events must be expected to produce considerable empathetic distress”.

Since the audience is never shown the source of the sounds that lead Arthur into the fog, the scene allows for the imagination to conjure up anxiety as to what the source of the sound may be. The more anxious the audience gets, the more likely they are to project their own fears onto the invisible source of the sound and feel suspense. This is akin to what psychologist Sigmund Freud describes in his text *The Uncanny* (1919) as the “return of the repressed” which he describes as a phenomenon where “..anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs”. This essentially means that repressed fears that exist in our unconscious minds “recur” and cause anxiety when we encounter an unknown or “uncanny” event. Therefore, when unsettling events like those that we encounter alongside Arthur in this scene occur, we imagine that the sounds we hear are made by the entities that haunt our own subconscious nightmares. Consequently, suspense and fear arise within us as we anticipate the confrontation of that horror.

Leigh Whannel’s film *‘The Invisible Man’* (2020), is a textbook example of how one can utilise foley sounds to create suspense in a horror film. Generally, foley sounds are only used in a film to briefly suggest the presence of an off-screen character. Interestingly however, the foley sounds of *‘The Invisible Man’* are integral to the plot, as the presence of the antagonist is indicated by sound alone. The narrative follows Cecilia Kass, a woman terrorised by her abusive ex-boyfriend Adrian who uses invisibility technology to stalk and torment her after faking his own death. The film is pervaded by disembodied foley sounds that are expertly used to suggest the antagonistic presence of Adrian.

In one particularly frightening scene, Cecilia calls her supposedly dead boyfriend’s mobile phone while home alone expecting no response. In a chilling turn of events however, the muffled vibration of a ringing phone is heard through the ceiling directly above her head. Foley sounds dominate the otherwise silent scene as Cecilia searches for the phone in the attic of the house.



Figure 25: Cecilia Calls Her Supposedly Dead Boyfriend Adrian's Phone.



Figure 26: Cecilia Hears A Phone Vibration Through The Ceiling.

The audience hears every single little sound that Cecilia makes as if it were amplified by a microphone, from the metallic creaks caused by her weight on the ladder, to the rustle of her clothes as she climbs, to the shakiness of her breath as she peaks her head up into the attic. The effect is so wickedly tense and suspenseful that when Cecilia rings the phone again to find it, the abruptness of the vibration sound reverberating through the deathly quiet space is transformed into an almost heart-attack inducing jump scare.



Figure 27: Cecilia Climbs A Metal Ladder To The Attic.



Figure 28: Cecilia Peeks Up Into The Dark Attic.



Figure 29: Cecilia Calls Adrian's Phone, Causing It To Vibrate & Light Up In The Darkness.

The impact of the suspense of the scene is then heightened to a new level when Adrian's presence is revealed through background foley sounds. When Cecilia finds the phone she is disturbed to discover that its recent camera roll is filled with pictures of her asleep in her bed. More frightening than that, she also finds a huge kitchen knife wrapped in a plastic bag as well as her work portfolio that had inexplicably disappeared earlier in the film. An attentive viewer quickly will come to the horrifying realisation that, while Cecilia is distracted by her disturbing discoveries, the metallic sound of someone climbing the attic's ladder has returned and echoes through the space. Cecilia's lack of awareness regarding the ladder noise is maddening for the audience, who will hear it becoming progressively louder as invisible Adrian ascends. One almost feels compelled to shout at Cecilia to run, such is the unbearable level of tension produced by the noise. The suspenseful emotions evoked by the foley sounds in the scene are so overpowering that when Cecilia finally notices the noise of the ladder herself, the viewer is practically falling off the edge of their seat with anxiety for her. The scene excellently illustrates the power that diegetic foley sounds possess in terms of evoking suspense within a horror film audience.

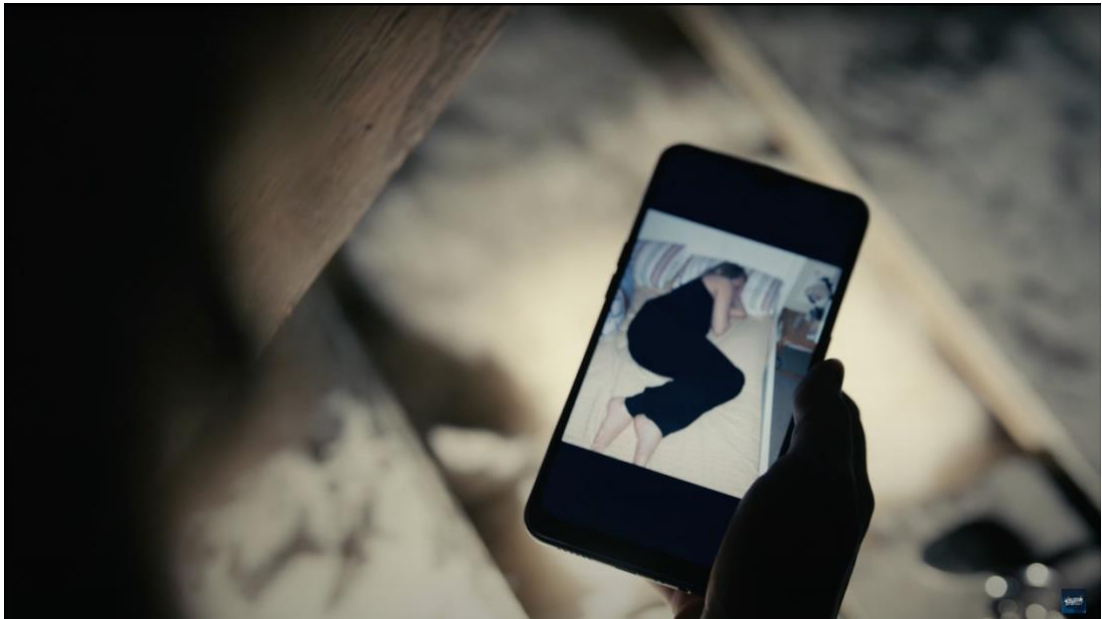


Figure 30: Cecilia Finds Images Of Herself Sleeping In Adrian's Recent Camera Roll.



Figure 31: Cecilia Inspects Her Disturbing Discoveries, Unaware Of Invisible Adrian's Approach.

While we have covered both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds and how they can each affect suspense levels, there is a third less obvious category of sound that is equally integral to a horror film's score. That is the lack of sound, or more simply, silence. As author Isabella Van Elferen eloquently put it in her text *Sonic Horror (2016)*, silence is “..sound's impenetrably dark, inconceivably hollow, categorically unknowable mirror image..”. The thought that silence is as powerful as audible sounds in creating

suspense may appear absurd at first, but it is actually one of the most important tools in a horror film's arsenal in terms of the emotional impact it can wield over the audience. As previously mentioned, our imaginations are very powerful and can create anxiety in the absence of stimuli such as sound. Thus, stripping a scene of all sound creates a void that a viewer's imagination can then run wild in. This in turn will generate both fear and suspense as silence in this genre suggests to the audience that something bad is about to happen.

A film that conveys a very impressive understanding of how silence can be used to create suspense in a horror film is John Krasinski's *'A Quiet Place'* (2018). This post-apocalyptic horror follows the story of the Abbott family as they do their best to survive in a world which forces them to live as silently as possible due to an invasion of predatory alien creatures with hyper-sensitive hearing. What makes *'A Quiet Place'* particularly compelling is the way in which it manipulates a near complete lack of sound to create suspense. The film maintains the audience's attention through the use of very short and calculated instances of sound to emphasise particular high-tension moments. Both non-diegetic and diegetic sound are used extremely sparingly throughout the soundscape in this way to contrast the film's overall silence.

For example, in a particularly harrowing scene, the Abbotts come to a bridge over a river while traversing a sand path through dense woodland. While ambient non-diegetic piano music plays in the moments before the family reaches the bridge; A silence completely devoid of either diegetic or non-diegetic sound falls over the scene as they begin to cross. This silence is held for several seconds, and the viewer is shown cross-cutting close-up shots of each family member as they walk in single file. The silence at this point appears peaceful to the viewer, a feeling which is strengthened by the serene looks on each of the Abbotts' faces.



Figure 32: Silence Descends As The Abbotts Approach A Bridge Over A River In Dense Woodland.



Figure 33: The Abbotts Cross The Bridge In Single File, Youngest Son Beau Follows Behind.



Figure 34: A Close-Up Shot Shows Father Lee Abbott Gazing At The Scenery As He Leads His Family Across The Bridge Carrying Eldest Son Marcus.



Figure 35: Another Close-Up Shot Shows Mother Evelyn Smiling While Watching Her Husband And Son Ahead.

However, in the background of a close-up shot on eldest daughter Regan we see her younger brother Beau stop to mess with something in his hands. Then, to the utter horror of both the family and the audience, the melodic beeping of an electronic device blasts through the silence. The noise is akin to a bomb going off in that moment as it is amplified by the complete lack of any other sound. Pure shock is quickly turned into heart-pounding suspense for the viewer in this moment because even the slightest noise is known at this point to summon the film's murderous invading alien creatures due to their abnormally heightened sense of hearing.



Figure 36: A Further Close-Up Shot Shows Daughter Regan Calmly Following Her Parents Across The Bridge, Beau Is Seen Over Regan's Shoulder.



Figure 37: Regan Halts In Shock & Confusion As A Loud Electronic Noise Sounds Behind.

In a following close-up shot, the audience is shown that the source of the sound is a toy plane which was confiscated from Beau by his father Lee earlier in the film. Anxiety inducing silence returns to hold dominion over the moments after the toy is sounded. One can't help but be gripped with terror-stricken suspense as Lee soundlessly sprints back down the bridge at full speed to get Beau.



Figure 38: Beau Loudly Plays With His Previously Confiscated Electronic Plane Toy.



Figure 39: Lee Charges Back Down The Bridge To Get To Beau.



Figure 40: Lee's POV As He Sprints Toward Beau.

Despite his desperate charge to reach his son he is already too late. A booming crescendo of sound usurps the silence of the scene as an enormous creature explodes out of the tree line, tackling Beau over the edge of the bridge before Lee can reach him. The grief of the family is literally unspeakable as they can do nothing but keep quiet despite having just witnessed the horrific death of Beau.



Figure 41: An Enormous Alien Creature Attracted By The Sound Of The Toy Explodes Out Of the Tree Line Next To Beau At Supernatural Speed.



Figure 42: Regan & Evelyn Silently Watch On In Horror.



Figure 43: The Creature Violently Tackles Beau.



Figure 44: Lee Stumbles To A Halt As Beau & The Creature Hurtle Out Of Frame.

The near complete silence of '*A Quiet Place*' seems a bizarre choice upon first viewing. However, it is that silence which permeates it that makes the film so brilliant at building suspense. The suspenseful power that the film's overall silence possesses becomes especially apparent in the case of scenes such as the one described above, where a complete lack of sound massively enhances the impact of the few instances where diegetic and non-diegetic sounds are used during high-tension moments. In this way, '*A Quiet Place*' highlights just how important and useful silence can be as a tool for generating horror suspense.

To conclude, it is clear from the points raised in this chapter that sound plays an invaluable role equal to that of visuals in the creation and elevation of suspense in horror films. Quality sound design provides audiences with an immersive viewing experience through the manipulation of diegetic sound, non-diegetic sound, and silence. The result is that viewers are left feeling more involved in the events of the film which in turn heightens their feelings of suspense.

Conclusion

This thesis emphasised the unquestionably powerful influence that suspense wields as a narrative tool within the Horror film genre. When applied successfully in the context of a horror film through the careful combination of Cinematography and Sound Design, suspense is highly effective in evoking the desired responses of fear, anxiety, and tension in audiences that horror filmmakers strive to achieve.

The academic theories and definitions surrounding suspense, as discussed in Chapter One, provided a framework of understanding as to what exactly suspense is and how it can be utilised as a narrative tool within a film. Through analysis of theoretical texts on the concept of suspense by scholars Andrew Ortony et al, Richard Gerrig, Aaron Smuts, Dolf Zillmann, and Peter Vorderer, several specific methods for building suspense within a narrative were established. These specific methods were summarised as follows:

1. Suspense is primarily an emotional experience which can be evoked in response to the combination of fears and hopes one might feel regarding the potential outcome of a narrative.
2. The exact outcome of the narrative is irrelevant to this experience as suspense arises only as a result of the events foregoing the outcome.
3. Uncertainty can be considered a factor in suspense building but is not absolutely necessary to achieve suspense.
4. The audience must care deeply about the outcome of the narrative. Only an intense desire to affect the outcome will result in the greatest level of suspense.
5. The most effective method for achieving narrative suspense is to structure the plot in such a way that the audience receives information critical to the outcome of an imminent event before the characters do.
6. The audience must find the protagonist(s) of a narrative likeable in order to feel suspense most strongly. Any indifference towards the protagonist(s) will result in the emotional effect being diminished.

Furthermore, Chapters Two and Three demonstrated how horror filmmakers can apply these key elements of suspense to their films through various

Cinematography and Sound Design techniques in order to create terrifying viewing experiences for their audiences. Chapter 2 focused on the discussion of Cinematography and its crucial role in suspense building in horror films. There are innumerable possibilities for how a single horror film scene might be shot and multitudes of cinematography techniques that could be used to do so. Thus, five key cinematography techniques which are most effective for building horror suspense were identified in this chapter. They include the Exploitation of Darkness, Close-up Shots, POV/Subjective Camera Shots, Negative Space Shots, and finally Desire-Frustration Shots in which the audience is shown critical narrative information before the unaware characters. These five suspense-building techniques were explained through discussion of examples from past and present horror films which excellently illustrate the effectiveness of each technique in the cultivating of feelings of fear, tension, and suspense for viewers. The five techniques ultimately show that the ability of a horror film to generate the greatest levels of suspense and evoke feelings of genuine fear and tension within audiences lies not only in the content of its narrative, but in the execution of that narrative onscreen through the universal visual language of Cinematography.

Finally, Chapter Three discussed the role of Sound Design in the building of horror film suspense. Sound Design in a horror film provides audiences with an immersive aural experience through the manipulation of three distinct categories of sound. The three categories of horror film sound identified were: Diegetic Sound, Non-Diegetic Sound, and Silence. Diegetic Sound consists of sounds that can be heard by both the film characters and the audience and builds fear, tension, and suspense by giving horror audiences the immersive sense that they are involved in the film and experiencing the petrifying events. Conversely, Non-Diegetic Sound, consists of sounds that only the audience can hear and appropriates classical music techniques such as stings, droning tones, ostinato, and tremolo to slowly build suspense and fear in high-tension scenes. This chapter also proposed that the emotional impact of suspense that both Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Sound create in a horror film is further intensified through Silence. The human imagination creates anxiety in the absence of stimuli such as sound, thus, stripping a horror scene of all sound creates a void in which feelings of fear and suspense are generated. The effectiveness and emotional impact of each of these

three categories of sound was demonstrated through analysis of contemporary horror films which each utilise combinations of Diegetic Sound, Non-Diegetic Sound, and Silence to create suspense during their most terrifying scenes. The issues raised in Chapter Three highlighted the equally invaluable role that quality Sound Design plays alongside Cinematography in the cultivation of horror film suspense.

In conclusion, the theories, practical techniques, and cinematic utilisations discussed throughout this thesis reveal the integral role that the concept of suspense plays both in filmmaking generally and in the creation of truly terrifying horror films specifically. As once stated by Hitchcock, “There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it”. Therefore, if one seeks to raise tensions to extraordinary heights and strike fear deep into the hearts of an audience during the scariest of horror film scenes, then the importance of suspense cannot be understated.

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