UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

School of Philosophy

The Veneer of Fear: Understanding Movie Horror

by

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ABSTRACT

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Over the past half century, theorists have grappled with the issue that spectators engage with, and are emotionally affected by, fiction. In particular, film fiction has aroused interest because of the strength of emotional response. Traditional thinking about film accepted that illusion was a component of a spectator's experience of film. However, contemporary theory has veered significantly from this and assumed that the spectator is always aware of the fictional nature of the content. In this thesis I argue that certain horror movies do, in fact, lead to an experience that is best characterized and understood in terms of illusion.

Analysing key theories that attempt to explain an audience's emotional responses to fiction, I aim to demonstrate that popular non-illusionistic theories fail to acknowledge both sides of the filmatic relationship (the spectator and the film) and have mistakenly attempted to provide an explanation for all emotional responses across media. A more refined approach is needed, both to emotion and the medium through which it is evoked. Thus, I incorporate an empirical analytical method in my philosophical project, analysing a number of *paradigm* horror movies and drivers of film spectatorship, to demonstrate how conditions for illusion are present. I also place emphasis on the phenomenological account of the spectator.

My thesis offers an account of a type of horror movie experience that considers both the causal and conceptual issues of emotionally responding to film fiction. This explanation also offers a solution to the paradox of fiction but one that is not required to accord with those that attempt to explain other emotions evoked by works of art.

Contents

List of Tables

Declaration of Authorship

I, Stuart John Hitchcock

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The Veneer of Fear: Understanding Movie Horror

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission:

Signed:

Date: 11th August 2016

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”Welcome to Fright Night...for real”

Jerry, *Fright Night* (1985)

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Introduction

Emotional response to representational art has been an area of philosophical investigation for over two millennia and in the western context found early expression in the writings of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. While new breakthroughs might be deemed unlikely, not all media formats have been in existence for that long and, as methods of artistic expression evolve, some of the original questions remain as valid today as they did then.

The medium of film has existed in earnest for just over a century and has been accompanied by philosophical conjecture since its birth. Early film theorists such as Arnheim, Balázs, Bazin and Kracauer focused on whether film differs from, or mechanically reproduces, reality. This triggered a further question, which is whether watching film can result in a reality-like experience. In 1895, *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* by the Lumière brothers reputedly had spectators running from the auditorium, but they were unfamiliar with the medium. So what should we make of filmatic experience today, where the medium is so significant a part of our culture?

For the most part, filmatic experience is well explained by existing theory. Comedies make us laugh, thrillers enthrall us and action movies have us rooting for the protagonist; and, we seem to be aware of the fictionality of events. However, there is one genre that often results in a rather peculiar (perhaps unique) spectator experience – that anomaly is the *horror film*. Filmatic horror, at its most effective, has spectators glued to their chairs, genuinely fearing the monster (or so it seems) and being affected for some time afterwards. The experience, to which spectators attest in great number with select films, suggests they are momentarily under the illusion that the monster is real and present. However, the philosophical community is broadly allergic to illusion; they are committed to constant reality awareness and deny belief in the existence of what is seen.

I think the dismissal of illusion is a mistake and reflects a problematic analytical approach to movie experience, one that has prevented a compelling explanation of a particular horror movie experience. The problem lies in the tendency to universalize emotional experience through the provision of an all-encompassing theory, often across multiple media, rather than explaining *that* experience correctly. One would hardly expect the exhaust system of a Fiat to fit that of a Porsche, notwithstanding functional similarity, so why should a single theory universally explain emotional responses to fiction?

There are two key areas of philosophical debate concerning horror movie experience. The first is how we respond with such emotion to what we know to be fictional. The second is what makes us seek out something (supposedly) unpleasant, time and again. It is the first question that has taken a detour from the truth over recent years, theory typically denying what we know to be true from experience, namely,

that horror movies *do* horrify us. Further, I suggest it is *because* they horrify that we continue to seek them out.

In this thesis I provide a theory for a certain type of horror movie experience and in doing so will unapologetically use a similar approach to Nöel Carroll in his seminal text on horror fiction, *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Carroll's work was the first concentrated effort at analysing the horror genre in art and attempted to provide an account of the emotional experience of the genre across different types of media. Although I focus solely on the medium of film, and despite disagreement with his position, Carroll's work is superbly structured and my appreciation of his thinking has increased significantly over time.

In the first chapter, I analyse and redefine the emotion of art-horror to better capture what the spectator experiences with certain types of horror movie. I have considered art-horror independently of other emotions aroused by the filmatic medium; first and foremost, I want to capture the phenomenology unburdened by implications for other filmatic experiences. I select a number of *paradigm* horror movies and their art-horrific moments to substantiate my position and will use these throughout the thesis. Nowhere is the lack of real connection to subject matter more evident than in film philosophy, where commentators avoid substantiating their position (or do so unsuccessfully) by reference to example. These films and moments do not demand universal acknowledgement, of course, and likely many will find them uncompelling. I would respectfully request that they replace these with alternatives that led to their own art-horrification and hope they reach the same conclusion as to the feeling, and hence definition, of the emotional experience I propose.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I explain the way in which spectators engage with horror movies, how they respond emotionally to these works in the way they do, and how this experience should be characterized.

Following Carroll's methodological lead, Chapter 2 focuses on evaluating key theories that attempt to explain an audience's emotional response to fiction. I suggest that the most popular theoretical groups fail to acknowledge the importance of both the emotion and medium of horror film spectatorship, resulting in a misdescription of the experience and leaving the door open for an illusionistic account.

In Chapter 3 I aim to be constructive and offer a causal explanation of art-horror experience. I explore some important aspects of horror movie spectatorship that provide a compelling framework within which illusion can pertain. Broadly speaking, these may be described as *facts about the spectator* and *facts about the film*. I first address the spectator's engagement with film, which leads to cognitive, physical and emotional engagement. I then consider the emotion being aroused and why this is important. Lastly, I consider the filmatic medium, which can promote both contextual and sensory illusion. Together, these factors can promote a dispositional psychological state in which the spectator momentarily experiences the monster as real and present.

In Chapter 4 I consider a non-cinematic experience that offers a better understanding of art-horror experience. Although others have considered analogous activities before, I think this proposition is more compelling and it supports illusion. Intriguingly, the analogue proposed raises an issue at the heart of the discussion of emotional response to fictions, which is the conceptual requirement of emotions entailing belief. I propose an alternative conception of the situation, which challenges the landscape of discussion.

In conclusion, I propose that in moments of art-horror arousal what one commonly conceives of as *fiction* is actually taken as *fact* in the eyes and minds of the spectator, and this explains why certain horror films have such a powerful and persisting impact. I also propose that underlying the infamous *paradox of fiction*, a philosophical conundrum that underlies significant past discussion, is a mistaken generalization of emotions. Art-horror provides a solution to the paradox but one, I suggest, that may only work in the context of that emotion.

Bringing together this work has given me the pleasure and opportunity to analyze the genre for which I have had a passion for over three decades. I hope this work adds to the field of thought and, importantly, provides an account that reconciles with horror movie experience.

Stuart Hitchcock, London (2016)

Chapter 1

The Territory of Horror

Introduction

”What’s the matter, Sidney? You look like you’ve seen a ghost”

Billy, *Scream* (1996)

In the first instance, horror is an emotion. Generally speaking, it embodies a feeling of fear, terror and shock. Horror is often associated with an intense feeling of repugnance and fear, of dislike and abhorrence. Within the context of art, horror is a genre or collection of works that embody characteristics of a certain sort. Works of horror seem designed to elicit the emotion of horror in an audience.

I think it is fair to say that most horror movies do not horrify and this has resulted in the genre generally being considered second rate. To see what a work is trying to do but witness it do this unsuccessfully is like watching a bad magician who allows you to see how a trick is done; it is distracting, sometimes embarrassing and often annoying. However, when works of horror are successful I think it difficult to find another genre that arouses emotion in such an effective way. Horror films make us scream, cover our eyes and they may even stop us continuing to engage with them. Done correctly, they are known to momentarily paralyze spectators who perceive themselves as in the presence of a monstrous something. Yet despite this, spectators keep coming back. Horror is an enigma and how wonderfully confusing it is for being that.

The most complete philosophical dissection of the horror genre comes from Nöel Carroll in his seminal work *The Philosophy of Horror: or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Although many have looked at aspects of horror, both as an emotion and genre, Carroll’s work is the most thorough in its address of horror as a body of work and he will be influential throughout my project. Carroll addresses horror as “a cross-art cross-media genre whose existence is already recognised in ordinary language” (Carroll, 1990: 12). Allowing that there is a general consensus as to what horror as an artistic genre is, he sets about detailing criteria for identifying works of horror that are already in existence in the world of art (whether film or book etc). Carroll’s premise is that horror may be defined by the characteristic response that it is intended to elicit:

> “…the genres of suspense, mystery and horror derive their very names from the affects they are intended to promote – a sense of suspense, a sense of mystery, and a sense

> of horror. The cross-art, cross-media genre of horror takes its title from the emotion it characteristically or ideally promotes; this emotion constitutes the identifying mark of horror." (Carroll, 1990: 14)

Like Aristotle, whose focus in the *Poetics* was on tragedy, Carroll is offering us "a comprehensive account" of horror, "in terms of the emotional effect that it is supposed to bring about" (Carroll, 1990: 7). Carroll's objective is to do two things: i) characterise the emotional effect, and; ii) dissect the elements of works of horror that bring about this effect e.g. plot, imagery, characters. He also aims to try and solve "certain puzzles" (Carroll, 1990: 8) of the genre, namely, why do we fear what we *know* does not exist? And, why would we be interested in arousing an emotion that is fundamentally unpleasant? My focus is on the first problem.

In this chapter, I aim to describe and analyse a characteristic emotional response to horror movie spectatorship. I consider Carroll's approach to understanding horror, through the lens of the emotion that works are intended to elicit, as promising. However, his approach leads to the prohibition of the kind of emotion clearly possible with horror film spectatorship. Key problems that arise through Carroll's analysis, and which pervade wider discussion about horror film spectatorship, are as follows:

First, Carroll illustrates the horror emotion (which defines the genre) through the reaction of characters in the movie and he makes a significant point of this because it is the observed emotional state of the character(s) that the audience is intended to be in an *analogous* state to. The experience of the characters necessarily incorporates the notion of *fear* but with this comes problematic baggage; the implied framework of emotion means that the spectator should be in an analogous state to the characters, seemingly imputing *belief* in the monster, which Carroll denies.

Second, an empirical analysis of indisputable examples of the horror genre shows that character responses are not obviously like that described by Carroll. Therefore, the definition of the emotion requires reconsideration.

Third, the focus on the character's emotional reaction to the monster leaves out something fundamental to horror movie experience - the *phenomenological experience* of the audience member. *Art-horror*, the emotional response to horror fiction coined by Carroll, does not reflect the experience described by intensely affected film spectators. Although it was likely never meant to (such experience is denied), I believe we would benefit from taking into greater consideration the spectator's phenomenological experience. To understand the emotion one also needs to look within oneself and, by extension, observe other spectators. Such observation motivates my increased focus on the notion of fear, a new characterisation of which more accurately describes an emotion more intense and nuanced than that described by Carroll.

Art-Horror

I briefly want to describe Carroll's definition of *art-horror*, setting out his position on the audience *mirroring-effect*, structure of the emotion, and the object of the emotion (the monster). These are crucial in understanding the kind of audience emotional affectation that horror films are deemed capable of. I will then aim to show that the definition is unsatisfactory when held up to both internal and external examination.

Definition

By defining the horror genre in terms of the emotional effect that works of this kind bring about, Carroll provides us with a definition of that emotion:

> "…art-horror is an emotional state wherein, essentially, some nonordinary physical state of agitation is caused by the thought of a monster, in terms of the details presented by a fiction of an image, which thought also includes the recognition that the monster is threatening and impure" (Carroll, 1990: 35)

This is more practically clarified by way of a formula, which I have formatted for ease of consumption:

> "Assuming that "I-as-audience-member" am in an analogous emotional state to that which fictional characters beset by monsters are described to be in, then: I am occurently art-horrified by some monster X, say Dracula, if and only if
>
> 1) I am in some state of abnormal, physically felt agitation (shuddering, tingling, screaming, etc.) which
>
> 2) Has been *caused* by:
>
>   a. The thought: that Dracula is a possible being; and by the evaluative thoughts: that
>
>   b. Said Dracula has the property of being physically (and perhaps morally and socially) threatening in the ways portrayed in the fiction and that
>
>   c. Said Dracula has the property of being impure, where
>
> 3) Such thoughts are usually accompanied by the desire to avoid the touch of things like Dracula" (Carroll, 1990: 27)

Carroll holds that art-horror is a real emotion but not like the horror experienced in real life, because it is aroused in relation to a work of art.

Audience Mirroring-Effect

For Carroll, the genre of horror is "designed to elicit" ("ideally") emotions in the audience that will "run parallel to the emotions of the characters" (Carroll, 1990: 17). In works of horror, characters react to objects (monsters) in a specific way and these reactions are intended to bring about an emotional response from the audience. The work will provide *cues* for the audience to mirror the emotional reactions of the characters. He is clear, however, that while convergence of reaction is the aim (ideal), it will not be an exact duplication because spectators are reacting to a work of art.

If the work of horror is good, a spectator's emotional response will effectively mirror that of the characters'. This synchronisation is in "certain pertinent respects" (Carroll, 1990: 18), observable by looking at the characters and, in some way, at the audience, although the emphasis is on the former. Carroll views this methodology as providing an advantage to theories that rely on introspection because one can simply look at the film and observe reactions. Assuming that the spectator's emotional responses are modelled in a similar fashion (by viewing the monster in a particular way), looking at the screen should enable one to determine how the spectator feels.

In horror fiction, characters are horrified and frightened - they scream, cower and exhibit emotions and reactions one would associate with fear and horror - and this is joined by "revulsion, nausea, and disgust" (Carroll, 1990: 22) If the audience is genuinely experiencing art-horror, he suggests they will also have this combination of fear and disgust, reacting with "shuddering, nausea, shrinking, paralysis, screaming and revulsion" (Carroll, 1990: 18). Thus, horror seems unlike other genres, which do not intend to bring about mirroring reactions in its audience. The generation of these responses relies upon a view of the object of the emotion, and the object of art-horror is the monster.

Framework of Emotion

In order to understand the problems associated with the mirroring of emotions, it is important to understand the concept of an emotion. This will be discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 4.

Carroll draws a distinction between real emotions and the art-horror of the audience. He says that art-horror is a real, occurrent emotional state rather than a dispositional state like envy or negativity and, being such, will have both *physical* and *cognitive* dimensions. The physical dimension of an emotion is its sensation or feeling and involves a "physiological moving of some sort". The emotional state requires that there is a "physical agitation" like getting "hot under the collar" when one is angry (Carroll, 1990: 25). Physical sensations of art-horror would include recurring sensations or automatic responses, such as: tension, frozenness, shuddering, recoiling, tingling, nausea, heightened alertness, or perhaps even screaming. The cognitive dimension individuates an emotional state, and relates to the thoughts and beliefs about an object or situation. Evaluation contextualises physiology; for example, I may shudder because it is cold or because an apparition is moving towards me and think it

endangers my wellbeing. Together, the physical and cognitive aspects produce the emotion of art-horror, which is individuated from other emotions by virtue of different evaluative components.

This cognitive view of emotions means that whilst a physical agitation "must obtain", an emotion "will not be identified by being associated with a unique physical state or even a unique assortment of physical states" (Carroll, 1990: 25), because people may physically respond differently and such states may vary within a single person depending on the occasion. As such, only when there is a cognitive dimension can the emotion be truly deemed present, although it will not always be possible to determine whether someone is art-horrified by observing them. Trust must be placed in audience member testimony. Emphasis is thus placed on the response of the character to identify art-horror, to avoid the difficulties of assessing emotions when a spectator's overt reaction is not apparent or in keeping with one's understanding of the kind of reactions the work is meant to elicit. In this regard, Carroll's approach makes sense, because characters would seem to respond more uniformly in the way expected, although as I will argue, this approach crucially misses the importance of the spectator's experience and their behaviour (an area of disagreement between me and important theorists).

Evaluative criteria are important because they constitute what Carroll describes as "the formal object of the emotion" (Carroll, 1990: 28) and tell us what kind of object that the emotion can focus upon. This provides a blueprint for the monster. Although he does not make the distinction, one might view the specific monster of the horror film as the *material* object of the emotion e.g. Freddy Krueger.

According to Carroll, the monster of horror is *threatening* and *impure*; the evaluation of threat arouses the feeling of *fear* and the sense of impurity the feeling of *revulsion*. Art-horror requires *both* components, and together they result in the physical agitation. As I discuss below, Carroll's reason for treating these as relevant evaluative components is the fact that monsters in horror stories appear to be "uniformly dangerous" and "impure", the latter a result of the regularity with which fictional monsters are deemed to be:

> "disgusting, abominations and so forth…further supported by the gestures of characters in the works of art that act in way to suggest that the monster is both a threat and "noxious or impure."" (Carroll, 1990: 28)

Art-horror requires a monster and it must be threatening and impure; if it is not, Carroll says, then the emotion is not art-horror. Importantly for Carroll, art-horror can be induced *without* the belief that the monster necessarily exists. This marks a distinction between spectator and character, who believes the monster to be real[1].

Carroll also suggests a third evaluative criterion - the desire to avoid physical contact with the monster. However, he qualifies this as *usually* correct and not necessarily an essential ingredient of art-horror. I

[1] I address this in Chapter 2

view the desire to avoid physical contact as a logical extension of evaluating the monster to be a threat of a certain kind and, hence, one might not regard avoidance as an evaluative component itself.

The Monster

Central to works of horror is the presence of a monster, the object of emotion. The monster explains the emotion experienced by the characters of a fiction *and* the spectator, in two principle ways: i) the monster is deemed to be dangerous (= fear), and; ii) the monster is deemed to be repulsive (= revulsion). The presence of a monster, Carroll says, distinguishes art-horror from terror, such as that rooted with abnormal psychologies. What demarcates a horror from other stories that have as central to their story a monster of some sort, like a myth or fairy tale, is the *attitude* of characters to the monsters they encounter; they both fear and are repulsed by it. Carroll correctly highlights that horror movies often cut to characters before the monster is revealed, their faces reflecting disbelief and fear, indicating how the audience should similarly feel when they see it.

Carroll's conception of a monster is as a *category mistake*, taking its inspiration from the work of Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*. A monster in Carroll's horror fiction is "an extraordinary character in an ordinary world" (Carroll, 1990: 16), which breaches "the norms of ontological proprietary presumed by the positive human characters in the story", i.e. they are not physically like us, and are identified as "impure and unclean" (Carroll, 1990: 23). Monsters of horror are "shudder-inducing, nauseating, rank – not something one would want either to touch or be touched by" (Carroll, 1990: 17). Characters are convinced that physical contact with such breaches of nature can be dangerous, and it is the addition of physical revulsion that seems to allow him to distinguish between monsters being horrifying and merely threatening.

The monster's impurity primarily seems to be the result of its physical constitution and appearance; monsters are physically repulsive because they are violations of nature. This kind of monster would have been prevalent in the horror fictions of Carroll's younger years, like those of the Universal monster movies of the 1950's and 1960's (*The Fly, The Deadly Mantis etc*) and I would suggest likely influenced the definition. As a theory that is meant to work across media, this thinking certainly has purchase; references to literary works from H.P. Lovecraft and Clive Barker support the notion of physical impurity. However, this does not reflect the nature of, nor audience response to, all horror film monsters, specifically those that have widely horrified audiences over the past 40 years.

A Reason to Question Carroll's Definition

If "the formal object or evaluative category of the emotion is part of the concept of the emotion" (Carroll, 1990: 29), the evaluative criteria must be accurate or else the definition of the emotion will be erroneous. A correct conception of art-horror would be a sensible, if not essential, starting block from

which to develop an understanding of the filmatic engagement process. *I believe Carroll's definition of art-horror is incorrect or, to put it another way, I see an experience of horror movie spectatorship as breaching what Carroll views as possible and want to redefine art-horror to capture this. This, I believe, is the emotion that horror movies aim at arousing; and some do.*

One may reasonably question why I start from Carroll's definition; to this I reply that Carroll's quasi-treatise provides a fantastic starting point to present my description of the emotion, and to consider how this experience is possible. *The art-horror experience of which I speak is one where the spectator sits frozen in the chair, fearful of the monster that momentarily seems real and present*. Likely this kind of emotion would incite a response from the philosophical community that Carrie's mother fires at her daughter ("They're all gonna laugh at you") but this genuinely captures what horror movies are capable of and is the experience for which I will vehemently argue.

Both aspects of the emotion (fear and repulsion) are, as defined by Carroll, contestable. His description of a character frozen "in a moment of recoil, transfixed, sometimes paralyzed" (Carroll, 1990: 22) with fear correctly summarises the experience. However, it is proposed that an important feature of horror fiction is that art-horror can be induced without the belief that the monster necessarily exists. This looks problematic because one would question whether such paralysis is possible in response to something *constantly known to be fictitious*. Moreover, repulsion does not seem characteristic of filmatic art-horror experience. On Carroll's account, one would seem to require a putrid drooling being that looks more like something from a written work of Clive Barker than the masked figure stalking the residents of Haddonfield. The repulsive nature seems to be guided by the monster's status as a category mistake, but this notion seems to mistakenly deny indisputable examples of monsters and allow for monstrous beings that would unlikely ever be considered as such. Audiences are *not* repulsed by the monsters of horror in the way Carroll describes and, whilst I think we can acknowledge a desire (by both character and audience member) not to be touched by them, I suggest this desire is driven by a different evaluation.

In the following sections, I propose a new definition of art-horror that places greater emphasis on audience experience. Introspection should not be avoided in the way that Carroll seems to:

> "If phenomenology cannot deliver pure 'facts', it nevertheless provides, at the very least, intersubjectively verifiable descriptions that we cannot do without if we want to talk about experience" (Hanich, 2010: 42)

By focusing on particular horror films, and the spectator's phenomenological experience of them, we may better characterise the fearful aspect of the emotion and justify the intensity of the experience. I will also demonstrate that repulsion does not play a (central) role and explain why one would not want to be in the presence of the monster.

Frame of Reference

Like Carroll, I am interested in the emotional response that horror is supposed to elicit. Carroll suggests he has based his theory of art-horror on "extrapolations from paradigm cases", putting in place a framework for the "necessary and sufficient conditions" (Carroll, 1990: 38) for the emotion to hold. This is an admirable starting place but requires something important, namely, that the paradigm cases are convincing; and, I do not find Carroll's examples compelling. This could, of course, be driven by my sensitivities and his cross-media approach, but if examples are meant to highlight the types of work that elicit art-horror it is hardly surprising that the resulting definition misses the mark. Carroll says:

> "…it seems advantageous to advance this theory of horror in its strongest form in order to encourage discussion and the production of more (perhaps countervailing) evidence. That is, progress in the study of art-horror is most likely to progress if strong conjectures are initially introduced, if only to be ultimately refuted" (Carroll, 1992: 45)

Challenge accepted. Starting with a description of the art-horrific cinematic experience, I will offer a list of *paradigm* horror movies and their art-horrific moments, which I think supports the description.

My investigation is focused solely on horror *film*. I will not argue that the filmatic medium is the only medium through which art-horror can be aroused, that it is the best medium for its evocation, or that it is the only medium through which it should be aroused. Film does seem advantageous, however, as a means of presenting the content in an absorbing way and there are plentiful reasons for suggesting it is the superior form for art-horror evocation. Film allows moments of horror to be realised before one's very eyes in a highly tailored way. It is, as Christian Metz says in *The Imaginary Signifier*, "*more perceptual*, if the phrase is allowable" because "it mobilizes a larger number of the axes of perception": books need to be read; paintings and photography are devoid of auditory percepts and "certain important dimensions such as time and movement" (Metz, 1977: 43); music is non-visual and typically lacks speech. A compelling narrative with likeable or believable characters, supplemented by appropriate visual and auditory stimuli, can promote a perspective that may be taken without the spectator being explicitly told to do so. One can visually experience something closer to that of the protagonist of the movie. A shock experienced in relation to film seems difficult to replicate in response to the written word or a static representation. Further, an image can be genuinely disturbing (Reagan in *The Exorcist*) and the spectator does not have to create it; it is there, in front of one's eyes. One can also consider the nature of filmatic representation and its consumption as ideal for the loss of peripheral and reality awareness. Although I *do* believe that film is likely the most effective medium for the arousal of art-horror my thesis does not rely on that being true. I will discuss the medium of film in Chapter 3.

Art-Horror Cinematic Experience

I want to begin by describing the experience of cinematic art-horror, which will illuminate aspects to be discussed in this paper.

Pre-Film

I go to the cinema to watch *The Blair Witch Project*. Despite rumours of it being real, I know the content is fictional because the actors are alive and well. I am excited about seeing the movie because it has affected many spectators and I have been brought to experience art-horror in the cinema before. I hope the film frightens me but am simultaneously anxious because of this potential. I am aware that I will be sitting in front of a movie screen and watching a sequence of images, acted out by professionals, telling a story that has been made to horrify me. I will be surrounded by others who will be engaging with the film in a similar way.

During-Film

I sit in the auditorium, in a comfortable seat that is pointed at the screen. The room darkens, the screen widens and the movie begins. At the start I am aware that I am sitting in the cinema. I take a sip of my drink and may be aware of latecomers to the presentation.

I follow the three filmmakers as they begin their adventure. I want to lend myself to this situation, to become immersed. I imagine being in the position of the documentarians; I try to understand how they would think and feel, to evoke particular emotions which should be in tune with theirs. This is relatively easy to do because I see the environment in a way that I would expect the characters to see it. The imagery is appropriate, the grainy effects and shaky movements of the camera reflecting what is happening and is not distracting.

The film provides stimuli in the form of images and sounds, contextual and informative aspects setting out the story of the Blair Witch that I am focused on understanding. Images and sounds impact on my eyes and ears. I am not asked to visually imagine what is in front of me; I see and hear things as they appear to me. As I become immersed my awareness of the imagining, cinematic surroundings, movie watching and content fictionality dissipates. I take a certain perspective; here, I am asked to feel lost and alone in the woods, with the threat of a child-murdering witch at large. Thoughts and emotions are aroused in me as I move through the woods with the characters. Certain moments, such as the discovery of piles of stones outside the tent, unsettle me.

At some stage, during a moment intended to horrify, I enter an emotional state that feels like real horror. I am completely immersed and feel present in a room where I see my associate standing

against the wall. I remember that this is how the witch used to abuse children and am suddenly frozen as I realise she is here in the room with me. I am art-horrified, feeling the primordial fear for oneself that momentarily nullifies other thoughts and feelings. The situation is momentary. The film stops and reality returns. I am once again aware of where I am and that it is only a movie. I do not run from the cinema.

Post-Film

The lights go up in the auditorium and I feel relief that the experience is over. However, I feel different to when I entered the cinema, a sense of insecurity that did not exist before persisting. My experience was unlike that of typical movie watching, the impactful emotional evocation suggesting that I did truly take the monster to be real and present at one point. That is my recollection. It results in my ongoing thinking about the monster, like a post-traumatic experience. Eventually, perhaps days later, my thinking about the experience and the monster ceases.

This description of the art-horror experience may seem quite ridiculous in the cold light of day but *is* the experience of many horror movie spectators. My description tries to capture the phenomenology of the experience (momentary paralysis, feeling that the monster is real and present) and I hope this resonates with the reader's own experience. This would seem to be a cornerstone of a successful thesis, although I hope to show that even if one does not experience it, the explanation of its evocation provides justification for agreeing that others do really experience what they say they do.

It is also important to draw a distinction between art-horror and other horror-related reactions. For example, *Drag Me To Hell* is beset with jumpy moments (old lady cursing the female bank employee) but is directed in such a jovial style and with a focus on the disgusting (slimy drool), that laughter occurs at numerous points. The *Scream* and *Saw* series films are also of this ilk. Some films evoke uneasiness but lack a definitive moment of horrification e.g. *Dark Water*, *Audrey Rose*, *Paperhouse* and *Return to Oz*. Some films incorporate loud noises that make one jump but this seems more like a physiological reaction sans fear. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4.

A similar but more phenomenologically focused effort to explain cinematic emotion has been made by Julian Hanich in *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: The Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear*. In trying to demonstrate that fear may be pleasurable[2], Hanich offers a refined analysis of fear in the cinematic experience, differentiating between: direct horror, suggested horror,

[2] Also see Chapter 3, p.90-94

cinematic shock, cinematic dread and cinematic terror. Hanich, like me, suggests that without taking into account the phenomenological experience, in which the audience has "various hues of fear" (Hanich, 2010: 28), no experience is really had. *Phenomenology* in Hanich's terms means the "subjectively experienced phenomena encountered in the world – whether these phenomena can be objectively accounted for scientifically or not" (Hanich, 2010: 38) and relates to those experiences of which one is conscious and can thus be described. Of course, such is the similarity or synchronization of certain types of attested experience (art-horror being one), that I think we may confidently infer that such an experience should be given a descriptive, intersubjective voice. Hanich's approach is fascinating and although I do not follow his methodological lead (detailing various fear-based experiences or talking purely in phenomenological terms) because I want to supplement the cognitive theory of emotions with phenomenological experiential description[3], my description of the art-horror experience has similarities with *direct horror*[4]. However, as I will demonstrate, we fundamentally differ on how this emotional response is to be causally explained. What is important to note is that cinematic experience is not static and that if, as Hanich proposes, there are three foci ("a) the film, b) the viewer's lived body, and c) the cinematic surroundings (with the rest of the audience in particular)" (Hanich, 2010: 39)), then art-horror marks a moment where the focus is dominated by the film, specifically the sight of the monster presented to the spectator.

[3] I disagree with Hanich's stance that scientific studies should be sidelined because they do not describe experience. Admittedly, "we cannot judge from these recordings *what* the viewer was experiencing" (Hanich, 2010: 47) but to dismiss potentially insightful information from third-party observation seems as short-sighted as Carroll's position of giving little credibility to the spectator's testimony. I propose supplementing existing cognitive theory with both phenomenological description and scientific research, and first- and third-person observation.
[4] Hanich (2010), p.81-107

Paradigm Horror

Some films have been particularly successful in arousing art-horror, their impact spanning continents, cultures, genders, faiths and sexual preferences. For the purpose of my analysis, I have selected a body of work that has art-horrified audiences and is, I think, uncontroversially *horror*. They might be considered as "prototypes" that are "recognized as best averages, because they share attributes with most members of the category…iconographic motives, character types, subject matters – or emotions" (Hanich, 2010: 31) but mostly, I propose, because they have so similarly affected spectators in the way I have described. These films, which I call *paradigm horror*, have undeniably affected thousands in a similar way to me. They are "paradigm" because of their success in arousing art-horror en masse and in being clear examples of the horror genre. I have also highlighted moments of art-horror, as testified and/or witnessed. These works allow us to look at art-horror in a way that Carroll's account misses.

For clarity, I do not want to consider what a particular film or set of films has to say but determine what is distinctive about a body of work and whether this helps to define the emotion experienced. Also, I am not attempting to suggest how one might evoke art-horror, for even if one took the appropriate ingredients for an art-horrifying film, I think it unlikely that one would successfully arouse it. This takes skill and the successful synthesis of the film and spectator. The situation is comparable to a food recipe; one might have the ingredients but fail to bring them together to create the correct taste. My aim is to clarify how art-horror tastes.

Paradigm Horror Film List

Table 1 – Paradigm Horror Films

	Film	Art-Horror Moment(s)
1	*Rosemary's Baby (1968)*	- Final scene: revelation
2	*The Exorcist (1973)*	- Reagan's attack on her mother - Spider walk down the stairs (not part of the original release)
3	*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974)*	- Leatherface's first appearance - Final escape from the farm house
4	*The Omen (1976)*	- Decapitation of Jennings - Mrs Baylock appearing behind, and attacking, Robert Thorn
5	*Halloween (1978)*	- Michael appearing from behind the hedge - Wardrobe attack on Laurie
6	*The Shining (1980)*	- Appearance of the twins in the hallway - Old woman appearing to Jack in room 237 - Jack following Wendy upstairs following the typewriter discovery
7	*Poltergeist (1982)*	- Stacked chairs - Clown coming alive in the bedroom
8	*A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)*	- First death (Tina)
9	*The Blair Witch Project (1999)*	- Final scene: seeing the person standing in the corner

Redefining Art-Horror

A) The Feeling

i) Fear

The definition of art-horror should convey the experience that horror movies are capable of arousing. First and foremost, the nature of the fear experienced needs to be refined and paradigm horror helps us with this. Though unplanned, it is useful to start with a group of films that are not of the same horror sub-genre[5] to deflect accusations of particular theme/monster affectation. I will briefly explore some aspects of paradigm films to determine if any recurrent themes illuminate the nature of this fear.

The *monsters* of paradigm horror differ in type: some are human while others are inhuman or supernatural; some perish, others survive; some communicate verbally while others remain silent; we see all monsters except the Blair Witch.

The *characters* (protagonists) under threat from the monster seem to vary and, initially at least, do not seem to afford fearful clarity: a mother in *Rosemary's Baby*; young adults in *Halloween, A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *The Blair Witch Project*; a child and mother in *The Shining*. I propose that those under threat in *The Exorcist* are those around Reagan, primarily the priest Karras (middle-aged, male), despite the vile abuse of Reagan by the demon.

With respect to *setting*, it is interesting to note the proliferation of familiar locations. A number of the films are set in seemingly peaceful suburban settings, although I do not deem this a requirement for successful horror; *The Omen* is not really set anywhere (although there is the infiltration of a home), *Rosemary's Baby* is set in an unsettling building that belies the term 'home', and *The Blair Witch Project* is set in the woods. Locations seem to afford support to how the protagonists and spectators feel, and is likely a tool for creating that feeling.

The quality of a film's *production* and *direction* matters but *appropriateness* is the key. Many horror films are so poorly made as to be laughable, but often poor visual quality is central to the feel a film targets. Some paradigm films are of a low budget with little in the way of effects (*Halloween, The Blair Witch Project*), whereas others have a more polished feel (*The Omen, The Shining*) and/or use elaborate special effects (*Poltergeist, A Nightmare on Elm Street*). I do not think one should link production quality to the fearful feeling but it is essential that production communicates a narrative and sets the mood appropriately. I struggle to imagine *The Blair Witch Project* being effective in high definition ("HD"), enriched by lucid colours, razor-sharp imagery and steady, sweeping camera shots - this much was proven by its terrible sequel. HD often results in an interest in the imagery that hinders engagement. The direction of a film, a primary tool for communicating the narrative effectively and

[5] See Penner, Schneider and Duncan (2008)

pulling a spectator into the filmatic world, *is* important and helps to arouse the emotion. I will discuss this at greater length in Chapter 3.

Music often acts as a powerful device to augment engagement and direct mood. The absence of music in *The Blair Witch Project* suggests that music is not itself essential for art-horror experience, although appropriate auditory inputs (noises, speech etc) may be. One should watch a horror movie without sound to appreciate the ineffectiveness of such films.

I initially implied that the protagonist is incidental to the emotion of art-horror. On Carroll's view, the protagonist of horror is the subject with whom the spectator is meant to align and whose emotional response they are meant to echo. But how does one empathize with a priest, young mother, female babysitter, quirky child or annoying students? Ostensibly, these characters might seem so different to the spectator that they might struggle to identify with them, and some level of identification would seem to be a requisite for the kind of mirroring Carroll suggests occurs. As he says, a work of horror has built into it "a set of instructions about the appropriate way the audience is to respond to it" (Carroll, 1990: 31). Here Carroll makes an insightful claim, allowing us to visually pinpoint the fear felt by the spectator.

The fear of art-horror is depicted in the image of young Danny in *The Shining*, paralyzed with fear as he foresees what is going to happen at the hotel. He sits frozen, shaking, incapacitated by what he is seeing. Danny's expression is comparable to Chris MacNeil's face (*The Exorcist*) as she enters Reagan's room and Rosemary as she discovers the truth about her child (*Rosemary's Baby*). These looks capture art-horror experience, where one momentarily freezes in horror, the hairs standing up on the back of one's neck, as one views oneself in the presence of the mortal threat. By looking more closely at paradigm films we are able to see something that Carroll's account misses. Like Carroll, we see the protagonist frozen with fear, but we can move from the protagonist to the audience and witness the same expression on their faces; and we can introspect. Carroll suggests paralysis as a physical response, yes, but the focus is on the protagonist and the derivative nature of the emotion (in response to a work of art) undermines the strict paralleling of protagonist and spectator i.e. they are analogous but not strictly the same. In contrast, I suggest what we witness is real momentary paralleling.

Let us take this observation further. The protagonist exhibits a look of pure horror, and where more apt to see this than on the face of a child? One only has to watch video clips of reality shows like *You've Been Framed* to see a child frozen by fear. It is a feeling I am positive most people have experienced and if one looks at the list of paradigm films it is striking how frequently children (or, the youthful) are used. *The Exorcist, The Omen, The Shining* and *Poltergeist* unashamedly have children as a central narrative focus, whether as victim or threat. *Rosemary's Baby* is about a yet-to-be-born infant, although the young mother is the protagonist and it is from her perspective that the film plays out. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Halloween* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* focus on teenagers under attack. *The Blair Witch Project* has a dual child focus, with teenagers as protagonists and the monster a notorious

child-killer, the chilling finale finishing with the view of our friend standing in the corner of a room like a naughty child about to be punished. *This focus on the child is essential and it is my view that art-horror can be characterized as the feeling of horror experienced as a child*. In paradigm films, protagonists are made to feel child-like in their respective environments and it is this reduction to child-likeness, if the word is allowable, that characterizes the fear felt.

Numerous devices are used to create this child-like feeling, including (amongst others): lack of protective parental figures (*The Exorcist, Poltergeist, A Nightmare on Elm Street*); audible stimuli such as tinkling piano music reminiscent of childhood musical toys (*Halloween, A Nightmare on Elm Street*), and; controlling adult figures (*Rosemary's Baby, The Shining*). Direction-wise, an oft-used technique for creating a child-like perspective of events is that of low camera angles, which is used across the genre and evident in the paradigm list - traveling with Danny around the Overlook Hotel, feeling small amongst the tall trees in Burkittsville or watching Tina being dragged across the ceiling in a house on Elm Street. These examples are not exhaustive but indicative of the point at hand.

This child-like characterization of the feeling seems to be supported by other films notoriously successful in frightening spectators, including works not traditionally considered as horror: *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (the Child Catcher); *Return to Oz*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Salem's Lot* (child protagonists in all, with the second film having an escape sequence reminiscent of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the latter famously incorporating a scene with a child vampire scratching at a child's bedroom window); *Eyes Without a Face* (parental control); *IT* (Pennywise preys on children and brings adults back to childhood); *Don't Look Now* (death of a child and a murderous midget reminiscent of one). The focus on children and the youthful is a key aspect of many successful Asian horror movies; *Ju-On* (aka *The Grudge;* appearance of the child at the bed) and *A Tale of Two Sisters* (the approach of the girl in the bedroom would likely make one want to hide under the covers like a child) are notable examples.

I need to tread very carefully here because I am not stating that a child needs to be present in a film to evoke art-horror, although it certainly seems that children have often been used as a device to arouse that particular feeling. As Karen Lury suggests in reference to the use of children in war films, the "innocence ascribed to children and animals often makes them an object, if not the subject, of film…in a strategy designed to provoke emotion and moral satisfaction." (Lury, 2010: 107) What I *am* suggesting is that art-horror has the feeling of fear felt as a child. This is important because it underlines the strength of emotion aroused and has ramifications for the epistemic force of the experience. I will now attempt to elucidate how this *child-like* notion is to be understood.

Child-Like Fear

Characterizing art-horrific fear as akin to that experienced as a child can be justified in two key ways, under the headings of *comprehension* and *control*:

i) Comprehension: A sense of the unknown, loss of frame of reference and ability to rationalize
ii) Control: A sense of powerlessness, inability to control one's surroundings or protect oneself against the threat

There is a third aspect of the fearful feeling that I do not think necessary for the assessment of the emotion as child-like, namely, that of the *fear for oneself*. This intriguing position, of the monster being momentarily perceived as a threat to the spectator *(*as opposed to the protagonist), requires further analysis because it is a position with a significant philosophical burden to shed. Although I will refer to this aspect of the emotion in this chapter I will defer my analysis of how this is possible until Chapter 3.

Comprehension

This aspect of the child-like feeling relates to the spectator's inability to rationalize the situation in the moment of art-horror. If one considers the moment of being frozen with fear, rationalizing does not seem to be a part of the process. Certainly, one is not conscious of the desire to rationalize the situation nor does one seem capable of doing so. The spectator is unreflective, overwhelmed by the impression that the monster is real and present, and there does not seem to be any nagging suspicion about its authenticity. But why is this 'child-like' as opposed to merely being an intense reaction felt as an adult?

Lury provides an excellent insight in *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales*. Lury looks at the sense of the child in film, at how "child and childhood, and indeed children themselves, occupy a situation in which they are 'other': other to the supposedly rational, civilized, 'grown up' human adult that is the adult". (Lury, 2010: 1) Focusing on Japanese horror movies ("J-Horror") and those films that centre on bringing children to the foreground of the film, with child as both monster and victim, she highlights how a child's experience differs from that of an adult and explains how filmatic experience can make a spectator feel like a child.

The presence of children in film, Lury suggests, can "evoke fragile webs of experience" *in the spectator* "as they attempt to replicate the perspective of their child protagonists" (Lury, 20101: 9) and, in a process similar to Carroll's mirroring, the spectator will strip away "adult subjectivity" (Lury, 2010: 14). Unlike an adult's experience, a child's experience can be confused and context-less; experiences of new things, specifically those that one might regard as shocking, can be: i) a-temporal; ii) non-linear (I prefer to call this 'incomprehensible'); and iii) incommunicable.

A child's frame of reference may be limited or even non-existent. It is often the case that knowledge, or explaining away, of what is causing a fear will destroy it. A child does not necessarily have this and representations lacking prior experience or context can thus be described as *a-temporal*. One might recall the first time one saw somebody wearing a scary mask, the frightening appearance not immediately rationalized away because there was no prior experience to recall that people might wear them. With no frame of reference there might be nothing to ground one's visual experience and quell the intensity of reaction. It is also the case that experiences might not make sense and, therefore, cannot be rationalized for communicative purposes. This can be truly frightening. The concept of a ghost, for example, is something that is "not so much a return from the past, but more as a representation of something 'other', something that precisely *cannot* be spoken" (Lury, 2010: 19). Ghosts "push the boundaries of language and thought…disturbing our sense of what is possible" (Lury, 2010: 20). They "remain fundamentally untranslatable" and "disturb our (modern) sense of temporality." (Lury, 2010: 21) In J-Horror, Lury suggests that ghosts "threaten the apparent coherence or unquestioned naturalness of the now that we understand as the present" (Lury, 2010: 22). In this way, the experience of a ghost can be *incomprehensible* and *incommunicable*; how does one express that which one does not understand?

Horror movies often generate confusion through unsettling images and sounds. A common trait of monsters is that they are silent or make incomprehensible noises (*Halloween, The Ring, The Grudge*). Sounds are often distinctly out of place: hidden voices in Reagan's speech (*The Exorcist*); ominous synthesizer sounds accompanying satanic dogs (*The Omen*); the sound of a metal door slamming in a wooden house (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*). These confuse the spectator, challenging their frame of reference, and are not dissimilar to a child's first experience of a particular kind where experience contradicts or challenges existing knowledge and expectations. These throw one's understanding out of kilter and can be truly unsettling. It may also explain why science fiction films, even those with horror aspects (*Alien*) may have less effect on spectators and may even not be considered works of horror at all. Like Carroll's interpretation of the fairy tale, one has a fantastical monster in a fantastical world; the world of spaceships may be too far removed from one's daily existence that the monster is not seen as being so fantastical in that environment.

A powerful interpretation of horror is provided by acknowledging a child's inability to speak of their experience. Lury draws on a controversial text by Giorgio Agamben who, in *Remnants of Auschwitz: the witness and the archive*, states that the only true witness of war is "characterized, perversely, by their inability to speak" (Lury, 2010: 2). The idea is that if one can speak of the horror of an event such as the Holocaust, then one has immediately rationalized it and distilled the experience, rendering it removed from the true horror of the event. Since children are apparently unable to communicate this effectively, they are perhaps the only true witness of the horror:

> "…there is an explicit tension between the immediacy and openness of childhood experience – it is vivid and mundane, and it makes the general, abstract story of war

> personal, unique and accessible – and the requirements of the adult who remembers and who may feel the need to make sure the viewer is aware of the wider history of which their story is a part. Yet the qualities of childish experience, which is narcissistic, fragmented, temporally chaotic, often context-less, are counter to the demands of the conventional narratives of history, which construct an omniscient and chronological perspective, thereby producing comprehensible, coherent stories informed by cause and effect" (Lury, 2010: 110)

Such experience was demonstrated by the destruction of the Twin Towers, where images of onlookers (physically paralyzed, unable to speak) may be regarded as the most haunting document of the event. This interpretation is compelling in the context of the art-horror experience for it *is*, in some way, incommunicable when experienced. One would not suggest it impossible to express "I am thrilled" during an action adventure and not be telling the truth, but to say "I am horrified and believe the monster is present" is unreasonable; it entails a level of reflection not immediately obvious or present, perhaps explained by the primordial emotion being experienced[6]. *Art-horror has this feeling of a-temporality, incomprehensibility and inability to communicate. Fear-driven paralysis belies immediate rationalization and feels like the experience of something for the first time.*

Conceiving of art-horrific fear as childlike clarifies some horror movie-related dynamics. First, it explains why many of the most frightening films for adults are those that centre on things that sidestep experience; this includes narratives focused on ghosts, the occult or where inexplicable malevolence is directed towards characters, particularly women and children (*Funny Games*). Second, it explains the recent interest in so-called 'torture porn' (*Saw*, *Hostel, The Human Centipede*), which expand viewers' experiences, although these are typically not art-horrifying. Lastly, it explains experience of the genre over time, where exposure tends to lessen emotional reactions. An apt analogy is that of boxing, where fighters become accustomed to being hit. They initially reel at shots but over time the impact lessens and they are less likely to be affected. However, even when highly seasoned, a punch may be thrown at an unusual angle or with such force that it catches a fighter off guard. When a boxer is knocked out, it stays with them and changes their outlook; one often hears a beaten fighter referring to reassessing their entire approach to the sport. The film critic and horror movie expert Mark Kermode sums up the situation well:

> "the more movies you see the more sober your reaction to each new film tends to be. This is particularly true of horror movies, or more precisely scary movies. The first time you see someone closing a bathroom cabinet and catching sight of the killer's reflection in the mirror, chances are you'll jump out of your skin. But by the time you've seen that same gag done a hundred times or more, the effect is rather lessened. That

[6] See Chapter 3, p.106-111

> doesn't mean it can't still be scary; rather that it has to be executed with a little more flair, panache and wit to have the desired effect" (Kermode, 2011: 178)

Experience suggests that those less familiar with horror films are more susceptible to emotional arousal, as demonstrated by a relatively recent global box office success, *The Conjuring.* The story is centered on the haunting of a house investigated by the Warrens, a paranormal investigative couple famous for their involvement with the house in Amityville. Like *The Amityville Horror*, it is set in the 1970s and was generating significant word-of-mouth about the effect it was having on cinemagoers. Disappointingly, the movie did not move me to art-horror because certain aspects were distracting: the fact that the Warrens kept such tainted items in their house around their daughter; the interspersion of university lectures were a cheap explanatory device; the evil spirit (shown above the mother on the bed) was reminiscent of those in other recent films like *Insidious*; an over-elaborate finale had characters somehow knowing what was going on despite the ensuing chaos (and assuming it was all over at the end). Overall, many spectators felt as though they had seen it all before and began making comparisons during the film that prevented engagement.

Control

> "No, you haven't been having any progress, and you're *not* in control.
> *It* is in control, and if you think you're in control, then you're being an idiot!"
>
> Katie, *Paranormal Activity* (2007)

Control is fundamental to the art-horror experience. I consider the *lack* of control experienced by the spectator as explicable both in terms of loss of control over filmatic imagery and feeling powerless against the monster. In this section, I will identify and describe how one should characterise this control loss and will refer to the theorist Torben Grodal, whose analysis of the nature of filmatic experience acknowledges the spectator's role in identifying with the protagonist and provides a compelling description of horror film experience. I will then describe how the monster contributes to this feeling. I will provide a more detailed account of *identification* in Chapter 3.

A characteristic feeling of art-horror is the sense of powerlessness against the monster. In art-horrifying moments characters respond in a child-like way. They scream, cower or weakly retreat, seemingly incapacitated by the threat of the monster that is present to them: Chris MacNeil cowers on the floor under Reagan's attack; Jack moves backwards like a terrified child as the old lady approaches in Room 237; Tina runs weakly away from Freddy and Rod sits helpless on the floor as he witnesses her death. Protagonists' behaviour indicates not just fear but one coloured by a particular perception of the monster; this results in a child-like physical response. The spectator's response is the same.

In *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings, and Cognition*, Grodal hypothesizes that the cognitive and emotional aspects of cinematic experience are "intimately linked" (Grodal, 1997: 1), describing how the interaction of a visual fiction (film) and viewer will lead to the viewer having a particular experience of that work. Grodal's work is important because it considers film experience in a holistic way, undertaking a formal analysis of film in the context of multiple research disciplines (film theory, neuroscience, physiology) that have typically been investigated in isolation. Grodal proposes that there is a "systematic relation" (Grodal, 1997: 3) between viewers' mental processes and certain types of visual fiction (e.g. genre), and the viewers' experienced emotions. Like Carroll, he thinks that horror film fiction has a unique emotional response but, like me, considers the spectator of significance. He suggests that a viewer's phenomenal experiences are not to be considered subjective in the sense that they are only known to the viewer themselves; given the framework within which experiences take place, including the nature of viewer identification with the contents of the fiction, one should be able to accurately infer emotional states in viewers. Convincingly suggesting that film genres arouse and combine particular emotions and sensations, Grodal proposes that genres are based on cognitive structures defined by feelings and sensations, which echoes Carroll's conception of the horror genre being defined by the emotion it is designed to evoke.

If one's understanding of the world is challenged, like the characters' of horror, one might not have a way of questioning what is presented or the ability to trust current beliefs. Further, if the viewer accepts the content of the fiction then it is sensible to suggest that the emotional response will be strong. This certainly seems to be an objective of the horror director, namely, to communicate a narrative in a way that places the spectator in a position where a particular cognitive and emotional perspective is taken, which may challenge current beliefs. In such a scenario, spectatorship may become increasingly passive as there is little to guide consumption of unfamiliar content: how does Rosemary react in a world where everyone seems to be against her? how does one fight a monster in a dream?

Grodal proposes that, like crime fiction, horror fiction places a strong emphasis on *control*:

> "…horror fiction also deals with cognitive control, but, whereas the motivation in detection fiction is primarily cognitive gratification, in horror fiction the effort to gain cognitive control is mostly derived from a motivation to maintain personal and body autonomy, which is under severe attack from uncontrollable phenomena." (Grodal, 1997: 236)

Grodal highlights two psychological aspects related to control in the movie-going experience, which he calls *distanciation* and *dissonance.*

Distanciation

Cognitive distanciation relates to the closeness of the audience to the narrative's main character(s) (the protagonist), who are the focal point for the audience's empathetic engagement. Like Carroll, it is proposed that a kind of mirroring takes place in film spectatorship, where the spectator takes the protagonist's point of view. Whereas Carroll would suggest 'assimilation'[7] or 'allegiance', denying that the spectator can truly identify with the characters (seeing the through their eyes, so to speak) because of various information discrepancies between character and spectator, Grodal proposes that engagement *is* in the form of character identification:

> "When watching a visual representation of phenomena without any centering anthropomorphic actants, we often 'lose interest' owing to lack of emotional motivation for the cognitive analysis of the perceived…When the viewer's attention has been caught, the application of a set of cognitive procedures follows. These will be labeled cognitive identification: the viewer will try to simulate the subject-actant by constructing the subject-actants perceptions…Finally, the viewer will try to construct the subject actant's emotions, affects, and proprioceptive sensations, based on context (a man close to a tiger = fear)" (Grodal, 1997: 89)

Cognitive and emotional identification with protagonists is supported by research that has shown special object-oriented neurons of the brain being stimulated when watching others[8], implying object- and goal-oriented perception. By cognitively and emotionally arousing the character of a film the spectator may also be aroused; spectators will cognitively identify with characters (understand what they are doing) and empathize (simulate the assumed emotions of the character), driven by human preferences and concerns (e.g. security). Further, more intense identification will occur when the focal point is a single character (even when focus shifts) and not when identification is shared between characters at a moment in time.

The balance and direction of the spectator's interest and identification will be influenced by the type of film and presentation of protagonist. In crime fiction, for example, a typical objective is to represent facts of the narrative in a way that arouses the spectator's mystery-solving (cognitive) interest. The spectator may become so interested in the 'whodunnit?' aspect of the representation ("hermeneutic curiosity" (Grodal, 1997: 239)) that they become emotionally detached. Crime fictions are also notorious for distancing the spectator from the central protagonist, with the detective often being aloof and mysterious. With the spectator's focus on problem-solving, emotional attachment is hindered and a dead body being discovered might, at its extreme, arouse in the spectator little interest in the murderer's punishment because they construct only a "shadow representation of the way in which these people react emotionally under normal circumstances" (Grodal, 1997: 238). As such, the

[7] See Chapter 3, p.96-98
[8] See Chapter 3, p.102-104

spectator's reaction may be ironically contrary to normal feelings and behaviours. In other cases, the construction of the detective's emotions may be realistic (expressing moral revulsion or fear) and the spectator may experience strong emotions, but since the narrative places such great emphasis on problem solving and the detective's peculiar psychological make-up, it hinders the kind of emotional identification that other genres allow. The detective's psychological idiosyncrasies are often overemphasized; assuming that the spectator's empathetic identification is with that character they will see the fiction through the 'frame' of that character (i.e. from the detective's idiosyncratic perspective); this creates distance.

Hermeneutic focus differs across genres. The less a film focuses on this in preference to the physical, the more there will be a corresponding reduction in distanciation between spectator and protagonist. Increasing one's concern for the detective, perhaps through an understanding of their love interest or impending threat to their wellbeing, may increase the spectator's empathetic tendencies; the emotional distance between spectator and protagonist will correspondingly reduce, as will the spectator's emotional control. Where there is an effective combination of an emotion (e.g. attraction rather than repulsion) and physical interaction (a confrontation where the protagonist's well-being is threatened), the spectator may experience "saturated feelings of fear and empathy with the pain the hero suffers" (Grodal, 1997: 244). As such, Grodal proposes a progression between genres. A crime fiction may become a thriller and, when the distanciation is closed, as he deems it to be in horror, it might be possible to experience the perceptions and emotions of the protagonist. In this way, horror might be viewed as the most extreme point on a spectrum of distanciation, where a major breakdown in cognitive and emotional distance between spectator and character occurs. Spectator control may disappear.

This thinking is persuasive in the context of horror film experience. Consider a film from Giallo master Dario Argento (*Tenebrae*) and compare it to another of his works (*Suspiria*). In the prior case our interest is in who the killer is whereas *Suspiria* is focused on personal threat and emotion, allowing us to care for the character and feel threatened as they do. A similar comparison can be made between paradigm horror *The Shining* and an enjoyable chiller called *Session 9*. These films have content similarity (abandoned buildings with a caretaker and cleaning crew, respectively) but in the former we move from a desire to work something out to emotional engagement, and in the latter we move in the opposite direction (emotional engagement to hermeneutic curiosity).

Dissonance

Another way in which horror films contribute to the sense of lacking control is through *cognitive dissonance*, where belief is consistently challenged through new experience, supporting the notion of child-like experience.

Effective horror films often embed a sense of cognitive inconsistency and paranoia. Spectators have a framework of sensory experience and beliefs, reinforced over time through interaction with the world. One's view of the world is often represented or understood through emotional reactions to that world, and where experience of the world is inconsistent or contradictory, stress and discomfort may increase. Horror film often trades on (amongst other things) situations in which events take place with unfamiliar beings in familiar places. A detective narrative might have unfamiliar locations (nighttime scenes in unknown places) that serve as a means of arousal, whereas horror often has familiar and typically safe environments like homes, schools and hotels (*Rosemary's Baby, Halloween, The Shining, Poltergeist, A Nightmare on Elm Street*). The visual presentation of those locations (camera angles making corridors seem longer or more desolate (*The Shining*), colours promoting a particular 'sense' of the location or character) will create unfamiliarity, as will the introduction of foreign or out-of-place objects (stones in *The Blair Witch Project* or Ouija board in *The Exorcist*). The protagonist and (through identification) the spectator, no longer feels safe and in control:

> "the protagonist and spectator are put in a dissociative situation; all that is familiar, safe, and 'good' in the first model becomes unfamiliar, uncanny, and lethal in the second." (Grodal, 1997: 247)

Dissonance is also achieved through the presence of a being that means mortal harm.

It is also important to consider *causality* in dissonant cinematic experience. Grodal highlights two components to the kind of conditioning that gives spectators their sense of typical causality; the first is cognitive (linking two phenomena via an inferred causal link) and the second is "affective-emotional" (Grodal, 1997: 248) (the pleasure or pain associated with the experience). This cognitive-emotional model of experience conditions animals and humans, and is the means by which they learn e.g. running one's hand across a sharp blade = pain. Horror films often arouse strong emotions by virtue of the content (e.g. a fear of death or loss of mind-body control) against the backdrop of a narrative that persuasively entertains things that undermine strongly held beliefs e.g. that we are not under mortal threat from monsters or that science explains everything (science is undermined in *The Exorcist, Poltergeist* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*). In these situations, an engrossed spectator may have their beliefs undermined; this may allow other visual propositions to take hold. Adverse emotional reactions may also be promoted by the dissonance of facial expressions and actual intent, undermining the normal way in which one establishes emotional relations e.g. Jack Torrance (*The Shining*) following Wendy up the stairs and verbalizing his intent ("I'm not gonna hurt ya. I'm just going to bash your brains in…gonna bash 'em right the fuck in!"), smiling; Freddy Krueger is even more joyous about his deadly intent.

Physical Control

The last and perhaps clearest sense of lacking control is the momentary feeling of being powerless against the monster. Given the feeling of uncertainty about the world (e.g. behaviours, locations and causalities), there is an undermining of "normal means to control the monster" (Grodal, 1997: 249). Horror films often promote this feeling of powerlessness by removing sources of protection; figures of authority like doctors (*Rosemary's Baby, The Exorcist, A Nightmare on Elm Street*), parents (*The Exorcist, Poltergeist, A Nightmare on Elm Street*), police (*Halloween, A Nightmare on Elm Street*), scientists (*The Exorcist, Poltergeist*), third parties (gas station owner in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), or even religious figures (*The Exorcist, The Omen*) are unable to help, and in *The Blair Witch Project* there is no protective figure at all. Further, even if protection were forthcoming it would likely be deemed useless because of our view of the monster.

The sense of powerlessness and of losing physical control is, I think, best understood in relation to the child-like paralysis. It is not a generic sense of being unable to control a monster of the type portrayed but the *specific* monster presented. Art-horrifying monsters are often perceived as embodying something akin to a supernatural aura. Whether actually supernatural or human with abnormal traits, monsters are portrayed in a way that makes the protagonist feel powerless against them. In the forthcoming analysis of the monster, I will propose a reason for this view and challenge a major aspect of Carroll's monstrous construct.

ii) The Threat to Me

As will have become apparent, I view art-horror as signifying a movement beyond typical character identification. The emotional response is characterized by what I call the *threat to me*. This is the spectator's view of the monster as real and present, understood through the child-like fear experienced and frozen physical response. Art-horror is a momentary phenomenon and not one that could be experienced for more than mere seconds, or else retaining one's position in one's seat would be untenable or indicative of persisting psychosis. In the moment, the emotion experienced is like that of the protagonist. Unlike my concern for Indiana Jones as he finds himself in some impossibly dangerous predicament, the moment of art-horror is not focused on the concern for others. Placed in the wardrobe with Laurie, I momentarily find myself concerned with *my* wellbeing, not hers; it feels as if Michael is facing *me*.

Art-horror experience indicates a breach of the typical audience-screen relationship, where a spectator feels in spatial and temporal proximity with the fictional object, experiencing the monster as being both real and really present. Despite the strength of philosophical challenge to this position, I consider *personal perception* as the other key phenomenological aspect of the emotion, to which so many spectators attest and whose reactions seem to support this claim.

It is evident that most horror films do not arouse the art-horror that I speak of. Acknowledging the many ways a horror film experience might develop, I view there to be three salient ones: first, the spectator is not engaged to any real degree and experiences little emotional arousal; second, there is engagement but the experience is treated as something of a game, and; third, the spectator achieves art-horror. Grodal makes a similar comment:

> "From the point of view of emotion-engineering in visual fiction, fear and terror caused by cognitive dissociation and/or violence have the morally dubious advantage of creating high levels of arousal and strengthening the viewers' wish for emotional autonomy and control by aversion, unless 'trust' is established by credulity, a situation that most viewers only accept as a game." (Grodal, 1997: 252)

The last position demarcates the arena in which art-horror operates, where trust is established but the experience is not treated as a game. If cognitive and emotional control regulates levels of engagement, the potential for distance closure and the momentary acceptance of the representation in the same way as the protagonist seems to be on offer. The experience would mirror that of the characters but in a far closer way than Carroll would allow. Observation and experience show that filmatic content and events, regardless of how ridiculous they seem outside of the auditorium, seem real to the art-horrified spectator. I consider the longer-term art-horror effect, which persists beyond the movie screen, as illustrating this predicament. It is similar to a post-traumatic stress, reflecting an epistemically impactful experience[9] and leaving a psychological imprint.

In arguing for this personal perspective, I am adopting a position at odds with far more usual thought, namely, that perceptions and emotions evoked by representational art remain a step removed from real life. Undoubtedly, this experience requires a compelling explanation of the mechanics of the transition from watching a movie as spectator (perhaps caring for the character) to that of fearing for oneself, being medium and reality unaware. Even though I view this type as possible, it has significant barriers to entry for the spectator and it is no wonder that most horror movies do not achieve it. In Chapters 3 and 4 I offer an explanation of how this is possible.

[9] See Chapter 4, p.152-161

B) The Object of Art-Horror

"Supernatural, perhaps; baloney, perhaps not"

Dr. Vitus Werdegast, *The Black Cat* (1934)

The evaluative components of an emotion individuate and, hence, define it. Carroll's art-horror is explained through the spectator's evaluation of the monster. The evaluation of it as a threat creates *fear* and the sense of impurity creates the feeling of *revulsion*, and both components together result in the physical agitation. For Carroll, the monster is deemed threatening and physically repulsive because it is a *category mistake*. Monsters are, he says:

> "regarded to be violations of nature, and abnormal, and this is made clear in the reactions of the protagonists. They not only fear such monsters; they find them repellent, loathsome, disgusting, repulsive and impure. They are unnatural in the sense that they are metaphysical misfits, and, in consequence, they elicit disgust from fictional characters, and, in turn, they are supposed to elicit a congruent response from the audience." (Carroll, 1990: 54)

Ergo, if these two components are not present together then the emotion is not art-horror and it allows for what seems like a straightforward evaluation of whether a being is a monster.

While I agree with Carroll's premise that the monster is the object of the emotion, I think we need to question this definition. In the first instance, the evaluative criteria misconstrue the type of being that could be a monster; both Leatherface and Michael Myers would, arguably, not satisfy the requirements because they are not obvious physical violations of nature. Empirical analysis of the monsters of paradigm horror films *and* characters' reactions to them demonstrate this. Second, the spectator's view of the monster (through introspection, observable responses and testimony) does not accord with the evaluation.

In the following two sections, I reconsider and redefine the type of monster that can art-horrify. I will argue that the current definition must be expanded to allow for living things currently in existence. I also propose that the notion of revulsion is unnecessary and should be replaced with another type of norm transgression, a move that questions whether the notion of category mistake is relevant at all. By redefining the monster we will better capture the spectator's emotional response and finally pull theory closer to experience.

i) Monster Type

In agreement with Carroll, monsters must be horrifying and not merely threatening; many things can be threatening without being horrifying, such as a gangster or parental figure, although this does not prevent these from being monsters. This criterion limits the kinds of object the emotion can focus upon.

Carroll proposes that monsters are meant to "defy nature as we know it" and embody a "violation of nature" (Carroll, 1990: 57). The concept 'monster' trades on two evaluative criteria: first, it must not be "any being...believed to exist now" (Carroll, 1990: 27), and; second, it is deemed to be impure (disgusting, revolting). Together, non-existence and impurity lead to the sense of the beings as existing in violation of the natural order.

Revulsion is driven by the evaluation of the monster's impurity. Carroll himself acknowledges that the notion of impurity is a little woolly and questions the kind of impurity that would give rise to the horrified reactions of the characters. Thus, he suggests that monsters are "transgressions or violation of schemes of cultural categorization", a concept taken from Douglas[10]. Under these terms, a monster is a *category mistake*, something whose constitution breaches our culturally accepted categories for objects or beings of a particular type. It is, so to speak "categorically interstitial, categorically contradictory, incomplete, or formless" (Carroll, 1990: 31). A man with wings or features characteristic of an insect would be categorically interstitial, breaching the culturally accepted normative concept of what a man should look like. This is an admirable adjustment that allows for monsters to be: living or dead beings (vampires, zombies); haunted houses and objects or demonically possessed individuals (the compounding of two categorically distinct individuals), and; abnormally giant creatures (*Alligator, Grizzly, Jaws*). Categorical incompleteness, Carroll argues, leads to the feeling of disgust, just as readily as something that drools and is putrid. It also allows for beings with missing limbs or those in some state of disintegration. Although I dispute that not being complete or different necessarily leads to disgust, horror movies certainly lend support to this conception: monsters *are* often putrid or perceived in the presence of putrid aspects such as faeces or vomit, and; monsters are often obviously categorically opposed e.g. being 'undead' like a zombie or vampire. Further, monsters are often deemed impure by being given unnatural powers e.g. Jason Vorhees (*Friday the 13th* series).

My analysis of the monster will begin, like Carroll's, by looking at the monsters of paradigm horror film and the response of characters to those monsters. I will then consider the experience of the spectator.

[10] Douglas (1966) p.48-50

Paradigm Horror Film - Monsters

The table below analyses the monsters of paradigm horror, held under the spotlight of Carroll's requirements of existence and repulsion. A perceived threat is indisputable, otherwise fear is unwarranted by either character or spectator, so I have ignored this.

Table 2 – Paradigm Horror Film Monsters

	Film	Monster	In Existence / Knowable?	Physically Repulsive?
1	*Rosemary's Baby*	The Castavets The Devil	Yes Maybe	No Not obviously
2	*The Exorcist*	Pazuzu (possessed Reagan)	Maybe	Yes
3	*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*	Leatherface	Yes	Maybe
4	*The Omen*	Mrs Baylock Damien	Yes Maybe	No No
5	*Halloween*	Michael Myers	Yes	No
6	*The Shining*	Old lady from room 237 Jack Torrance	No Yes	Yes Maybe
7	*Poltergeist*	The poltergeist(s)	No	No
8	*A Nightmare on Elm Street*	Freddy Krueger	No	Yes
9	*The Blair Witch Project*	The Witch	Maybe	N/A

As the analysis demonstrates, non-existence (in accordance with contemporary science) is not a defining feature of the art-horrifying monster. Monsters like Leatherface exist in our normal realms of scientific understanding and beings like them *do* exist in real life (Leatherface was based upon the real life cannibalistic killer, Ed Gein); they are not just thoughts of things that might have existed or could exist in the future. One can also extend the notion to include beings that *could* exist ("Maybe", *Table 2*) and will be subject to the character's and spectator's own belief system; this would include spiritually-oriented monsters like ghosts and demons. Biblical connotations fundamentally undermine the requirement for scientific knowability.

Acknowledging that impurity may have been driven by the prevalence of so-called 'monster movies' (with their gargantuan animals and extraterrestrial beings) in Carroll's more emotionally sensitive years, it is nonetheless clear that the concept of disgust does not work. Revulsion, in either the

physically putrid or categorically interstitial sense, is not necessarily at the forefront of one's experience of the monster. Michael Myers (probably the most obvious example), Leatherface (initially), Mrs Baylock and Damien (and, arguably, Jack Torrance) are not perceived as impure by virtue of appearance or physical being. The Blair Witch may fit the bill, too, although one could argue that the thought of her is as disgusting. The lack of revulsion is confirmed both by the view and reaction of the characters and spectators of paradigm horror.

Paradigm Horror Film - Character Emotional Response

It should be the case that characters respond to the monsters of paradigm horror with the mixture of fear and disgust that Carroll suggests. However, they do not universally respond in this way.

Table 3 – Paradigm Horror Film Character Response

	Film	Monster	Fear?	Revulsion?
1	*Rosemary's Baby*	The Castavets	Yes	No
		The Devil	Yes	Yes
2	*The Exorcist*	Pazuzu (possessed Reagan)	Yes	Yes
3	*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*	Leatherface	Yes	No
4	*The Omen*	Mrs Baylock	Yes	No
		Damien	Yes	No
5	*Halloween*	Michael Myers	Yes	No
6	*The Shining*	Old lady from room 237	Yes	Yes
		Jack Torrance	Yes	Maybe
7	*Poltergeist*	The poltergeist(s)	Yes	No
8	*A Nightmare on Elm Street*	Freddy Krueger	Yes	Yes
9	*The Blair Witch Project*	The Witch	Yes	No

Even when not obviously visible, if one allows for an element of revulsion in some circumstances (such as the protagonist's response to Freddy Krueger, who *is* physically repulsive), the characters' reactions to the monsters of paradigm horror prevent a conclusion that disgust is universally experienced. Three prime examples of this are: i) the wardrobe attack scene in *Halloween*; ii) the bedroom attack on Robert Thorn by Mrs Baylock in *The Omen,* and; iii) the toy clown coming alive in *Poltergeist.*

If it is not revulsion that the characters experience, we must ask what does make them (and spectators) experience the horror they do; fear is not enough because this may be experienced in response to many things that do not result in the impression of a mortal threat. Carroll might argue that, like the Freddy Krueger example, revulsion of some sort *is* present and can be ascertained by inference. I think this is weak and, keeping with his requirement to look at the characters for the answer, revulsion is neither observable nor naturally inferable. I think the answer is revealed by giving greater consideration to the spectator's perception of the monster.

Paradigm Horror Film - Spectator Analysis

Supporting the notion of some form of mirroring, the reaction of spectator *is* like that of the character. In paradigm film, characters do not seem to experience revulsion and neither does the spectator. By stating this, I am not simply extrapolating from personal experience but considering the reactions and reports of horrified movie spectators. Were disgust present, one should expect spectators to have contorted faces, expressing themselves accordingly with sounds like "eugh"; this is not the case. The advent of movie trailers capturing the reactions of audience members is helpful here; these do not suggest revulsion and neither do their phenomenological reports.

The observable and reported reaction of spectators who experience art-horror is of frozen paralysis, and Carroll himself acknowledges this as an art-horror response. Something must be capable of making both character and spectator momentarily freeze and not want to touch it. The answer, I think, is connected to *why* (evaluation) we consider the monster a mortal threat, which I will shortly discuss. I also consider the threat to be self-directed, meaning that the audience is fearful for their own wellbeing (not the protagonist's), although for the purposes of this part of the analysis I am confident that we can compellingly demonstrate that this perception is present in the characters first and foremost.

Adjustments Required

The definition of 'monster' must allow for the mad, deranged or psychopathic being. Being categorically contradictory or transgressive does not require the contradictory to be just physical or scientific. The definition should encompass the scientifically possible, 'real' monster, and by doing this we allow for those beings universally regarded to be monsters in the horror film universe, such as Michael Myers from *Halloween*. Under Carroll's definition these monsters might not be classified as such. These monsters do not abide by a generally accepted moral code and violate our conception of how normal humans act; these monsters are cognitively threatening, not just physically.

In his paper 'On a Paradox of the Heart', Alex Neill considers a similar point. Neill suggests that Carroll is wrong in equating the spectator's pleasure in horror fictions coming from "the revelation of unknown and unknowable – unbelievable and incredible – impossible beings", of which monsters are for Carroll,

"obviously...natural subjects for proof." (Carroll, 1990: 184) This *impossibility* is based upon the notion of the monster being a category mistake. Carroll says:

> "the being whose existence is in question might be something that defies standing cultural categories: thus disgust, so to say, is itself more or less mandated by the kind of curiosity that the horror narrative puts in place." (Carroll, 1990: 184)

If horror narratives trade on unknowability, and disgust is to be understood by the breach of cultural categories, Neill argues that God or Superman could potentially be classified as 'monster'. I prefer to give Carroll the benefit of the doubt here and suggest his language belies what he really means, which is that disgust relies more on the physically transgressive. Hence, God and Superman, while transgressive in a cultural sense (unknowable and "as far 'outside the outside the bounds of knowledge' as the creatures of horror fictions" (Neill, 1991: 56)), should not really be considered monstrous. Even if one does shoot fire from one's eyes (Superman), this is neither necessarily nor naturally perceived as disgusting. However, Neill offers one example that *is* of serious concern for Carroll, which is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Near to the end of the film the Ark is opened, whereupon skeletal ghosts exit it and set about killing the baddies. The scene can be quite frightening and it certainly is gory. Further, the ghostly entities would conform to the physically transgressive requirement. However, Slimer in *Ghostbusters*, Barbara Maitland in *Beetlejuice* and even the non-ghostly Sloth from *The Goonies*, whilst being (in some sense) loathsome, are *not* art-horrifying. The ghosts of *Raiders* leave the protagonist alone and are not perceived in the same way as those of paradigm horror; the spectator does not sit frozen in their chair. This is because our perception of their *intention* is different. Once one has a particular view of the monster's intention, it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to find them art-horrifying, regardless of how putrid and other-worldly they might seem. This view may be driven by our knowledge of their character through the narrative and their actions or, in the case of Slimer's appearance in the hallway, through light-hearted music and Ray's comment "Don't move...it won't hurt you", both of which suggest we should view it in a particular way.

Carroll either creates too narrow of a definition of 'monster' (ruling out paradigm examples of horror film monsters) or opens up the possibility for non-monstrous persons being considered as such. *Notably, both the character's and spectator's emotional responses do not align with the definition – they are art-horrified by what is in existence and without disgust.* Nevertheless, I think adjustments can be made to accurately capture the types of monster that may art-horrify. First, as discussed, we should allow for living, existing or human (knowable) beings as monsters. Second, we must disregard revulsion. This exclusion includes the notion of disgust in relation to acts of violence, because what we are looking for is the evaluative criterion that makes the spectator consider the monster as a mortal threat at the moment of art-horror, and disgust at prior acts is not present. What *is* present is the view that the monster threatens our wellbeing and whatever previous acts have been committed, or might be committed, contribute to that. Therefore, I suggest we retain a sense of impurity but focus on the cognitive. I propose we introduce the concept of *evil*.

ii) Evil

> "I spent eight years trying to reach him, and then another seven trying to keep him locked up because I realized what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply...evil"
>
> Dr. Sam Loomis, *Halloween* (1978)

In James Whale's 1931 masterpiece, *Frankenstein*, the 'monster' in question is undoubtedly impure, strung together from the organs and bodily pieces of thieves and murderers. He is also a potentially potent threat, which is conveyed through his size and lack of natural empathy towards others. We know that the monster has been made out of bad natural resources and yet he is really an innocent. Our emotions shift towards the monster as we see him born, make friends with a blind man and (initially) interact gently with a young girl by a lake. We know he did not set out to be what he is. We view the characters of David Kessler (*An American Werewolf in London*) and Seth Brundle (*The Fly*) in a similar way; their monstrous alter egos are threatening but we know they are flipsides of good people, which eventually shine through even in their monstrous state. The view of paradigm monsters is fundamentally different. The monsters that art-horrify are seen as *evil*.

In *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror*, Cynthia Freeland analyses the concept of evil and its necessary presence in horror. Freeland's premise is that horror films prompt an audience's reflections on evil, and good horror films do this in a profound and ultimately pleasurable way. Freeland claims that evil manifests itself in many ways, "localized in a monster like a six-foot cockroach, or it may dwell inside us humans – within a mad scientist like Dr. Frankenstein or a psychopathic killer like Hannibal Lecter." (Freeland, 2000: 2) If a being is viewed as evil it is imbued with a truly concerning characteristic, one that justifies the character's and spectator's view of it as a mortal threat and something to be avoided. In contrast to Freeland's suggestion that evil may be manifested in a generic entity, I believe it should be individualised. Evil manifested in the form of racism or corporate greed does not seem to fit the bill for 'monster', for even if one considers them thoroughly abhorrent concepts they cannot elicit art-horror and physical avoidance would be confusing. They do not create an individualised mortal threat to the protagonist or spectator and the concept of racism does not have purchase without people being racist.

Introducing evil[11] follows the methodology of Carroll's project, constructing the criteria for identifying horror by defining the emotion that it attempts to evoke. It allows different beings to be classified as

[11] My conception of necessary evil is similar but not identical to Hanich's view of the horrifying object of direct horror, which may be either a violent act (which I deny) or a monstrous entity that indicates "*intentional* and *disproportional immorality* in combination with *disturbing brutality*" (Hanich, 2010: 83) *Evil* better sums up the situation and "disturbing brutality" is not always apparent.

'monster' provided they embody this characteristic and, importantly, evil supports how the experience looks and feels. An *evil* threat explains why one could be momentarily frozen with fear upon deeming oneself to be in its presence, and why God and Superman are not monsters. When a spectator views the monster as evil, they can feel threatened during even the most banal moments, such as hearing a story of the monster's bad-doings (*The Blair Witch Project*) or simply seeing it (Michael Myers standing by the hedge). Evil clarifies 'impurity' and explains why monsters are often deemed physically potent to quasi-supernatural effect, something Carroll also notes. Evilness alters our view of the threat, as small or physically diminutive beings can have an aura of unnatural strength or power; we might think these beings will go to any length, through pain or restriction, to harm us. It also extends to feeling threatened by Devilish beings that might not yet be physically developed (*Rosemary's Baby* or *The Omen*) but deemed capable of harm.

The art-horrifying monster aims to hurt the specific characters of the movie, with whom spectators have empathized and taken an analogous perceptual position. Nazis directing a nuclear bomb towards England may be horrifying and evil in one sense, but it is not art-horrific. Evil means that art-horrifying monsters do monstrous things for their own gratification and this allows us to reject works that could mistakenly creep into the horror genre; this includes works where individuals act in a supposedly evil way for the purpose of achieving some higher good, such as John Doe in *Se7en*. It also explains why gangsters are typically not art-horrific. Gangsters' ends are usually directed towards money and power, often operating under senior orders and within certain social parameters, despite committing acts of horrendous brutality. A monster's evil doing is for the sake of gratification, gained through the pain and death of another, and whilst this would allow a gangster to be a monster it does not define gangsters as monsters.

The introduction of evil suggests a further adjustment can, and potentially should, be made. Carroll is lead to category violation through putridness, which differentiates art-horror from common fear. He considers things that people find revolting and, turning to Douglas, suggests that things people find revolting cross barriers. He thus arrives at art-horror through revulsion by way of modelling the response of characters in fiction. However, if the monsters are not revolting the notion of category mistake may be unnecessary. What kind of different class can Michael Myers be put in to maintain the notion of category violation if he is not revolting? The notion of category mistake may only exist to support the notion of revulsion. Admittedly, there is something appealing about the concept of category mistake; monsters are meant to be transgressive and category mistake would seem to reflect *transgression*. However, physical transgression suggests that Michael Myers or Jack Torrance either are not monsters or need to be shoe-horned into being a category mistake. If the monster is deemed evil then it is *not like us*, but not in the way that leads to us seeing it as belonging to some other category and to our immediate disgust. I suggest the transgression is not of a category boundary but of a normative boundary and, thus, the notion of category mistake may be unnecessary.

Monsters deemed as evil creates one puzzle (which may not be that interesting), which is whether a change to our view of them prevents a work that is art-horrifying being a work of horror. *The Orphanage* and *The Devil's Backbone*, films that have widely terrified audiences, exemplify this change in view. On initial viewing the ghosts may be experienced as terrifying but one eventually realises they are anything but the dangers presumed. The ghost in *The Orphanage* tries to point the orphanage owner to where her son is; the spirit's will is good, not malevolent. Despite fear during the scene in which the mother wanders through the dormitory, the evaluative criteria for a truly art-horrific experience may be deemed incongruous because after realizing that the ghost is good one may come away from the movie with a positive feeling towards it. One line of thought would be that if a work evokes art-horror then it should be considered a work of horror, even if the net response to the work is positive. However, I view this as a mistake, because films may evoke art-horror but not primarily be works of horror. Overall, I think that horror films are characterised by the overwhelming emotion they mean to (or do) evoke during spectatorship. This may not always be clear but, as I have suggested, it may not be that interesting either. What *is* interesting is how art-horror functions in the movie and whether this emotion is "at the center of their generic promise" (Hanich, 2010: 31).

Summary

The correct way to understand the art-horror experience is to consider it unburdened by the necessity to fit a universal theory of emotional response to fiction; capture the experience of the emotion first and then try to explain it. In this chapter, I have redefined art-horror to describe an experience of horror film spectatorship, the one I believe horror films aim at. Explaining how this emotion is aroused requires further analysis, however. It requires we analyse the mechanics of the process, the emotion involved, the filmatic medium (including techniques of presentation), conditions of immersion and psychological drivers in the process. The analysis is a price worth paying to confirm that horror movies do horrify in the way I propose.

Through the identification of paradigm horror films, we now have a conception of horror movie experience that accords with the spectator's experience of certain types of horror movie and the responses of the characters to their respective monsters. By considering examples that have undisputedly horrified and placing greater emphasis on the phenomenological experience of the spectator, we have a conception of the emotion that reflects what certain movies are capable of doing. I would not expect everyone to agree with my paradigm examples but believe these help us accurately describe the specificity of the emotion, and to which others will (I hope) attest with their own art-horrifying filmatic examples.

The art-horror I describe is circumscribed by evaluative components of the monster that arouse the emotion, it being viewed as threatening and evil, and correspondingly something one would want to avoid coming into contact with. This conception acknowledges that a spectator may be momentarily overwhelmed and experience something much more like that of the protagonist than Carroll (and others) would allow. This is the result of a momentary view that the monster is real and present, and, therefore, a mortal threat to the spectator.

Art-horror has the characteristic feeling of horror experienced as a child – at the moment of arousal, one does not (and perhaps cannot) rationalize the monstrous threat. This momentary feeling dissipates as awareness of the real world returns.

It has been suggested that the spectator is, in the moment of either a violent act or appearance of threatening monster, "both frightened and fascinated" by it (experiencing a contemporaneous "luring pull *towards* the frightening object of fascination and the threatening push *away* from the fascinating object of fright" (Hanich, 2010: 82)), a balancing act where the spectator aims not to let the content turn into unpleasant fear. To the contrary, I do *not* propose that fascination holds in the moment of overwhelming art-horror.

One may question my position. First, the experience proposed seems to go beyond typical experiences of fictions, so I may be held as stretching things too far. Further, one might ask how an adult can say they have a childlike feeling when they are weighed down with experience. How does

one claim to talk about something childlike when it is also claimed that as soon as one begins to rationalize one loses the immediacy of it and, hence, the honesty of the experience? To use a clichéd adage, am I not standing on a ladder and trying to kick it away?

In acknowledgement of the last challenge, I think a problem with understanding art-horror is that we *do* talk about it. Describing being paralyzed with fear while watching a film sounds rather ridiculous. However, I think these challenges are diffused in the face of the non-verbalised art-horror experience; cinemagoers' reactions and an honest assessment of experience demonstrate the profound effect that horror movies have. Witnessing the audience in these moments rekindles memories of the faces of Danny, Mrs McNeill or Rosemary, or of horrified children on television video clip shows. To quote the inimitable Vincent Price:

> "It may exist for only a fraction of a second, but...there's something in every frightened person that's as solid as steel. The only way we'll ever isolate it is to catch someone...at the instant of complete terror. Not before, not after." – Dr Warren Chapin, *The Tingler* (1959)

The horror genre brings people together to discuss filmatic experiences, regardless of creed, colour, economic or intellectual background. Horror movie discussion centres on perceptual and emotional experiences; audiences recall how they jumped out of their skin, locked the car doors on the way home or checked around their house. Spectators talk about how movies made them feel, long before the critique of casting, cinematography or subtle character development, as worthy as they may be of discussion. Observable behaviour suggests something important has been touched, and something that belies a spectator's typical reflective capabilities. It also explains why the genre is prone to ridicule and scathing reviews when works are unsuccessful in their endeavour.

I deem the spectator as responding in the same (or essentially but indistinguishably similar) way as characters of the film or as they might do in real life were they confronted by the monster. This position sounds quite extreme and is widely panned by theorists who distinguish between real life emotion and that experienced in response to representational art. However, this is *exactly* what I am suggesting. In the next chapter I will set the ground for a theory that explains art-horror experience by reanalysing the key theories that attempt to describe how spectators can be moved by fictions.

Chapter 2

Fearing Fiction

Introduction

”This is no dream! This is really happening!”

Rosemary, *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968)

In the previous chapter I described a characteristic horror movie experience, maintaining the term *art-horror* for it. This re-characterization seems to indicate an extreme of cinematic engagement, one that requires an explanation not so much of how movie fiction can bring an audience to feel emotion but one that looks and feels like genuine horror (fear for oneself). Prima facie, art-horror seems to imply much closer alignment between character and spectator than Carroll suggests. The peculiarity is amplified because spectators go to watch a horror movie *knowing* it is a film and a fiction.

Emotionally responding to fiction is an issue that has puzzled philosophers of art for centuries. That a work of art (painting, photograph, music, literature, film etc) can result in a spectator having emotion is uncontroversial, but such intense emotional affectation is more complex. Over recent decades philosophical discourse has focused on understanding and characterizing engagement with, and the experience of, representational art, paying particular attention to the rationality of the audience’s emotional response and the epistemic status of that experience. A catalyst for this discussion is the now (in)famous *paradox of fiction*. Finding one of its earliest and clearest expressions in Colin Radford’s ‘How Can We Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?’, the paradox results from what seem to be three singularly truthful propositions about a spectator’s experience of art that, taken together, are inconsistent. To explain how one can engage with fiction in the way one does, the paradox suggests one must deny either that: one must believe in the existence (reality) of the characters and events of the fiction; one is only genuinely moved by what is actual, or; one is truly emotionally moved by fictions (having an emotion of the sort that they claim to have).

Spectators are often effortlessly engrossed by films. However, since they *know* that the characters and events are not real *and* that they are engaging with representational art, claims of spectators to being so wrapped up that they lost hold of reality is difficult for theorists to digest. The notion of reality-slippage is the heartland of what is broadly labeled Illusion Theory (“Illusionism”). A strong version of Illusionism holds that, during engagement with certain works of art, there is a cognitive lapse by the spectator; they are swept up in the fiction (so to speak), perceiving and responding to characters and

events as though they were real. It may be said that under illusion the spectator sees the fictional world and objects of the film as existentially real and present (spatially and temporally), which seems less like the experience of art generally and more like virtual reality. Perhaps unsurprisingly this illusionistic option has been widely and popularly rejected. Theorists have argued that belief is not in fact required for an affective emotional response to representational art, that one is only making-believe and/or that one's emotional state is not as described. While the majority of filmatic experience cannot, I agree, be characterized as illusionistic, the theory has been dismissed without much care for analysis of the uniqueness of the medium of representation or the emotion involved. Interestingly, I think this uniqueness *is* something that some theorists have begrudgingly acknowledged but, attempting to analyse emotional affection to art on a much grander scale (pan-media and pan-emotion), it is ignored as an unlikely anomaly. Such generalist approaches have inhibited a meaningful application and explanation of illusionism in the appropriate context and I think it is time to reassess the position. Art-horror provides the appropriate impetus for such investigation.

In this chapter, I want to consider theories that attempt to explain a spectator's emotional response to fiction. My analysis will begin with an overview of the nature of emotion and the paradox of fiction, which sets the theoretical battleground to the discussion. Key theories can be categorized into three core groups, each offering a resolution to the paradox. I hasten to highlight that my analysis is not driven by the same desire. Although the theoretical landscape is more comprehensive than that covered in *The Philosophy of Horror*, I think it praiseworthy that Carroll sets out the causal approaches into the three essential response groups: i) Simulation Theory (my labelling); ii) Thought Theory, and; iii) Illusion Theory. I will also focus on these core theories, the analysis and misconstruals of which illuminate important considerations required to develop a correct theory of art-horror experience, specifically:

- *Causal* question: What generates emotions in response to fiction?
- *Conceptual* question: Is the spectator correctly labeling emotional response to fiction?
- *Procedural* and *temporal* aspects of engagement
    - Uniqueness and capabilities of the medium of representation
    - The spectator's involvement in filmatic engagement
    - Temporal requirement of emotional arousal
- Subjective and objective emotional observation and analysis i.e. first- and third- person assessment of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, behaviour and testimony

I propose that illusion has been inadequately considered and mistakenly dismissed by theorists, and alternative approaches miss crucial aspects of horror movie experience that result in a failure to explain art-horror experience. *Causally*, one should acknowledge that film may do something that other

media cannot; popular theory demonstrates a distinct unwillingness to analyse the very intense emotional response that horror *movies* seem to elicit. Further, the spectator's role in engagement is broadly underplayed. In the filmatic context, one should consider whether horror-oriented content is uniquely capable of engaging audiences; although I make no claim that horror is unique, I emphasize the desire to analyse horror (aroused through film) separate from other emotions and modes of representation. *Conceptually*, we should consider that spectators may be labeling the emotion correctly and that there is inconclusive proof they are not; it is the view of the third party that brings this into question. I consider the behaviour of the art-horrified spectator as appropriate and the experience as, potentially, indistinguishable from the real emotion from the perspective of both external observer and spectator.

If art-horror experience is only evoked through film, if horror film is uniquely capable of activating a certain type of psychological participation by the spectator, and if art-horror-inducing engagement with fiction is the only engagement that entails illusion, so be it; a supposed anomaly (a very popular one at that) is still deserving of a philosophical voice.

Nature of Emotion

In his excellent summary paper 'Emotion in Response to Art'[12] in *Contemplating Art: Essays in Aesthetics*, Jerrold Levinson outlines key theories that attempt to explain a spectator's emotional response to works of art. In order to analyse an audience's response to fiction, Levinson (like Carroll) proposes that a sensible starting point is to understand the type of emotion that can be aroused and then to explain how "we coherently have emotions for fictional persons or situations, given we do not believe in their existence" (Levinson, 2006: 38). I want to briefly retread this ground because the nature of emotion will be firmly in the spotlight in the coming chapters.

Levinson highlights two principle conceptions of emotion - *feeling* (sensation) based and *thought* (cognition) based. Feeling based conceptions view the core of an emotion as its internal feeling or sensation to a subject. Cognition based conceptions take the core to be a particular kind of thought (judgment/evaluation). Like Carroll, Levinson thinks it is right to insist on a bodily response (to signal the emotion) but that one must also acknowledge cognitive elements in many emotions. Thus, the common consensus is that an emotion is:

> "best thought of as a bodily response with a distinctive physiological, phenomenological, and expressive profile, one that serves to focus attention in a given

[12] First published as 'Emotion in Response to Art: A Survey of the Terrain' (1997)

> direction, and which involves cognition to varying degrees and at various levels" (Levinson, 2006: 40)

If one thought of emotions as only feelings, it would be difficult to explain the intentionality (object-directedness) of an emotion. Similarly, were emotions based purely on judgments (thoughts and beliefs about objects) then one would ignore the particular experiential aspects that individuate it i.e. how it feels. At the root of experienced emotion, he says, is the "intentionality or directedness of emotions (as opposed, say, to moods)" (Levinson, 2006: 40), meaning that the experiencing subject will focus concern towards an object that causes the emotion, it being deemed significant in some way.

Levinson proposes that different emotions have different levels of cognitive involvement; in this way, emotions are not homogenous but heterogeneous. For example, a startle reaction may be considered animalistic and involving minimal cognition, whereas feeling shame or pride is more complex, likely involving morally influenced thought. The complexity and uniqueness of emotions will be important in forthcoming discussion. In support of Levinson's conception of emotions as "*ordered* complexes", they do seem to be coloured by cognitions that are often complex; my anger at the bus driver is a result of my needing to be at an important job interview at a certain time, my frustration at missing the first bus and prior altercations with the driver over being able to change a ten pound note.

Levinson proposes that responses to art are typically of "the moderately, or highly, cognitively involved sort" (Levinson, 2006: 41), seeing fear, anger and lust as being in the middle of the response spectrum. By placing emotion on a cognitive spectrum, it would thus preclude emotions aroused in relation to works of art as not being cognitive enough for them to mirror real life emotions because they are deemed to lack certain existential cognitions. This assumption, of the prevalence of fictional awareness (of characters and events), overshadows the entire discussion of emotional response to fiction and, as I will show, is a position that should be treated with significant scepticism.

The Paradox of Fiction

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Carroll's second chapter focuses on exploring the nature of an audience's interaction with fiction, and specifically how horror fiction can move an audience by the presentation of "beings and events...that, in some sense, do not exist and which we must know do not exist" (Carroll, 1990: 59) Carroll rightly believes there is nothing strange about responding with genuine emotion to fictional characters (including monsters) but suggests there *is* something strange about reacting with *real* horror to a work of fiction, which is what spectators often claim. Spectators are not, prior to consumption, confused about the status of the content and nature of engagement.

To highlight the problem, Carroll asks us to consider a thought experiment where we are asked to imagine the sister of a friend being terminally ill, and the thought of her children being consigned to a

life of misery in the care of a horrible uncle. The story is meant to generate an emotion in the listener. We are then told that the story is fabricated, at which point we presume the emotion dissipates, replaced by annoyance (or another emotion) at having being duped. The aim of this experiment is to "putatively indicate…that there is a necessary bond between our beliefs and our emotions" (Carroll, 1990: 61), that we must have beliefs about the situation in question, including a belief in the existence of the characters. Carroll suggests this is also supported by simple facts about those things that extinguish the emotion, such as being told that a story is made up, or being told an emotion is irrational because it is founded on false or misconceived beliefs. The assumption is that "variations in beliefs seem to correlate with variations in the associated emotions" (Carroll, 1990: 61)

Carroll's thinking is influenced by the aforementioned cognitive theory of emotion, the cognitive element commonly being construed as *belief* and that once belief "fails to obtain, the emotion fails to appear." (Carroll, 1990: 61) Earlier notions of this appear in Radford[13], who proposed that if emotional responses are not grounded in belief the response is irrational or incoherent. In the case of horror fiction, the characters' nonexistence is known by the spectator prior to engagement, as is the fact the spectator is engaging with a representation, meaning that being horrified is irrational.

Emotionally responding to fiction may be understood in the context of a wider problem, called the *paradox of fiction*. The paradox occurs because of a set of widely held statements about the relationship of audiences to fiction that, taken together, is inconsistent. The paradox comprises three seemingly singularly truthful propositions; I have included both Carroll's and Levinson's (*italics*) formulations:

a) We are genuinely moved by fictions, or;
   We often have emotions for fictional characters and situations known to be purely fictional
b) We know that which is portrayed in fictions is not actual, or;
   We do not harbour beliefs in the existence and features of objects known to be fictional
c) We are only genuinely moved by what we believe is actual, or;
   Emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the existence and features of the object in question

It is worth noting that Carroll himself acknowledges the need to question that there really is a problem, for we can clearly be moved by what we know is fictional. What is not clear, however, is how we should understand what we are moved *to*. The paradox seems to challenge the idea that a spectator can genuinely respond to works of horror fiction if one deems *belief* in the objects of the fiction as necessary for such emotion.

[13] Radford (1975)

In order to resolve the problem, theorists have provided a number of accounts of an audience's interactions with, and responses to, fiction. Although Levinson provides a more expansive overview of the terrain[14], the theories can be categorized as belonging to the three basic groups that Carroll analyses; each denies, respectively, one of the propositions of the paradox, thereby removing the contradiction and helping to explain the emotional response. These theories are:

i) Pretend Theory (Carroll's labeling; I will call this *Simulation Theory*) - denies proposition a),

ii) Illusion Theory - denies proposition b); and

iii) Thought Theory - denies proposition c)

Simulation theories deny, conceptually, that we experience real emotions but something less intense that we mistakenly label as the real thing. Causal interpretations propose (generally) that one simulates a situation in imagination and this is responded to. *Thought theories* deny that we require existence beliefs to generate real emotion. *Illusion theories* deny that, when responding to the content of a fiction, we know it is fictional.

While Levinson thinks that Make-Believe (Pretend Theory, denying proposition a)) is the best solution to the paradox, for a full account of emotional responses to fiction one would probably want to acknowledge the Non-Intentionalist and Surrogate-Object proposals (both denying proposition a)) as well. He also acknowledges that the Irrationalist proposal might "contain a grain of truth, for perhaps we are, at least at moments of maximum involvement, in the incoherent states of mind it postulates as ours throughout" (Levinson, 2006: 49), implying validity of the second construal (denying c)). By suggesting that emotional response to fiction may be heterogeneously explained, Levinson makes a compelling move, which I will aim to demonstrate as correct in Chapter 3.

In segregating the analysis into these three groups, however, an oversight occurs, which is noted in one of the most important and misconstrued papers in the discussion, Kendall Walton's 'Fearing Fictions'. The failure to distinguish between the *conceptual* and the *causal* interpretations of the paradox has meant that theories often argue at tangents to each other; they either focus on the conceptual but fail (or refuse) to explain the causal (Walton), or fail to recognize the conceptual and still fall short of explaining the causal (Carroll). If we are aware of these interpretations, we have an opportunity to better assess explanations of emotional response and ensure a new solution addresses both conceptual and causal issues.

In the coming sections, I will analyse the key groups of theories. I will first analyse Simulation Theory by addressing Walton's Quasi-Fear theory (my labeling). Walton offers an excellent filmatic example to

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[14] Including: *i) The Non-Intentionalist solution (denies proposition a)); ii) The Suspension-of-Disbelief* solution (denies proposition b))*;* iii) *The Surrogate-Object solution* (denies proposition a)); iv) *The Anti-Judgmentalist* solution (denies proposition c)); v) *The Surrogate-Belief* solution (denies proposition b)); vi) *The Irrationalist* solution (first construal denies proposition b), second construal denies proposition c)); vii) *The Make-Believe, or Imaginary,* solution (denies proposition a))

work with and allows us to consider the *conceptual* question of whether the spectator is labeling the emotion correctly and the appropriateness of the game-playing analogy for art-horror film spectatorship. Analysing Pretend Theory (Carroll's misunderstanding of Walton) allows us to consider the *causal* interpretation of simulation theories more generally. Next, I will consider Thought Theory. While agreeing with Carroll's premise that thoughts can evoke emotion, I think it relatively uninteresting in the context of an emotion that thoughts alone seem unlikely to arouse and, certainly, with disbelief persistent. I will then return to simulation to discuss a compelling simulation-based theory (Simulation Hypothesis) that moves us closer to a practical explanation of filmatic engagement. Lastly, I will discuss Illusion Theory, setting out an interpretation of illusion in the filmatic context and highlighting a number of objections to it. I aim to show that objections miss things crucial to art-horror experience and that need to be addressed before rejection can occur.

If art-horror experience (defined in Chapter 1) is accurate, it requires a compelling answer to two important questions, namely: What are we actually afraid *of*?, and; What we are moved *to*? I am not interested in the general paradox, as such. My focus is on horror film engagement that results in art-horror, and if an explanation of this engagement provides a solution to the paradox that diverges from those theories explaining other genres or modes of representation, that is acceptable. Theorists have not worked on an account of art-horror arousal (that was not their objective) but on a theory they believe most neatly solves the paradox. In doing this, a particular film experience has slipped through the net and pushes open the door for the most derided of the key theories - Illusionism.

A) Simulation Theory

Simulation Theory, often labeled *pretend* or *make-believe* theory, is an explanation of emotional response to fiction that has evolved from a (mistaken) causal reading of Kendall Walton's famous paper 'Fearing Fictions'. Walton's paper has been as influential in the analysis of emotional response to fiction as any other, although his hypothesis has often been misconstrued. In this section, I will provide an overview of Walton, setting out both *conceptual* and *causal* construals (the former being the correct one).

Walton's conceptual approach to dissolving the paradox of fiction is to question whether a spectator is accurately labeling their emotional response to a fiction. Walton suggests that the spectator who claims to be horrified by a horror movie is not horrified; on his account they are inaccurately labeling the emotion experienced. What they experience, he says, is not standard fear because the emotion is aroused in relation to fiction, although the emotion is fear-*like.*

It is important to note that Walton is not making a causal claim about what generates an emotional response to fiction, although it is understandable that others have read him this way. Walton's proposal *would* seem to need a causal explanation. Under the misconstrued interpretation, the cause of the emotional response is deemed to be make-believe (imaginative game-playing) and has now evolved (notably through Gregory Currie) to provide a rather compelling explanation of cinematic engagement, at least in part. Simulation *is*, I will argue in Chapter 3, an aspect of the engagement process that ends in art-horror, but ultimately fails to account for its arousal.

i) Quasi-Fear Theory

The Theory

Walton's paper begins with a cinematic example:

> "Charles is watching a horror movie about a terrible green slime. He cringes in his seat as the slime oozes slowly but relentlessly over the earth destroying everything in its path. Soon a greasy head emerges from the undulating mass, and two beady eyes roll around, finally fixing on the camera. The slime, picking up speed, oozes on a new course straight toward the viewers. Charles emits a shriek and clutches desperately at his chair. Afterwards, still shaken, Charles confesses that he was "terrified" of the slime. Was he?" (Walton, 1978: 258)

This example is excellent. Not only is it cinematic but it introduces a monster with humanistic features that may be seen as creating an imminent threat to the viewer as it approaches the screen. These support perceptions of evil and fear for oneself that characterise art-horror. Whilst admitting that audiences getting caught up in works of art, however, Walton is sceptical about Charles' testimony.

Despite the fact that "physical interaction is possible only with what actually exists" (Walton, 1978: 234), it does not seem to logically prevent the audience from fearing the slime. One may be frightened by the thought of an event such as an earthquake that has not yet occurred or a ghost because one "*believes* that there is, or at least might be, one" (Walton, 1978: 235). However, Walton sees Charles' predicament as different because he goes to the movie theatre with the *knowledge* that the slime does not exist. As such, he denies that Charles really believes he is in danger, even if Charles does experience fear-*like* physiological responses. Physically there will be signs of Charles' tensed muscles and quickened pulse but Walton believes that the characteristic physiological and psychological state is "quasi-fear", not "actual fear", because the states of Charles and that of a person experiencing true fear are "crucially different" (Walton, 1978: 235).

By stating that Charles *knows* that the slime is fictional, Walton differentiates between something that is known not to be the case and something that is questionable, implying that reality knowledge is always present regardless of how absorbed one is. Furthermore, he suggests that a strong reason for dismissing Charles' statement is his inaction when faced with the monster - he does not run from the theatre. Walton views the situation as one of confusion, where Charles has mislabeled his emotional experience because it feels (potentially very much) like fear.

Walton's analogy for entertaining fictions is *game-playing*. Fictions, he suggests, create a fictional world that is specific to each corresponding work of art, whether "novel, painting, film, game of make-believe, dream or daydream" (Walton, 1978: 237), and in each fiction there are *fictional truths* specific to that world. It would be fictionally true, for example, that in the world where Elm Street exists there is

a serial killer who stalks people in their dreams. One may *imagine* that a fictional proposition is true (this is not always a deliberate or self-conscious act) or, less directly, in a *game of make-believe* one enters into a fictional world where the truth is make-believe e.g. pretending a mud pie is a real pie. When playing a game of make-believe, it is proposed that the rules of the game are recognized by the participants, the fictionality of objects and events being constantly in mind. Entertaining fiction is deemed comparable to playing a game of make-believe.

The emotion generated in response to the game is genuine emotion but, despite appearances, not the emotion it is described to be because it is aroused in relation to the game and lacks the existential belief that generates real life emotion. The emotion generated in response to fiction is called a *quasi-emotion* (although it would likely have been better called *emotion-like* to avoid confusion). As Neill, who has most clearly explained the conceptual nature of his position in 'Fear, Fiction and Make-Believe', says, Walton's proposal is that the spectator's statement of feeling fear (in relation to what they *know* to be fictional) is "occurring within the scope of the operator "It is make-believe that..."" (Neill, 1991: 48). The spectator is seen as being aware of certain make-believe truths e.g. make-believedly they are under threat from the monster.

Walton's model for quasi-emotion is that of *the undemonstrative child*, Charles' predicament compared to a child playing with their father who is pretending to be a monster and chases the child. In the game the child flees, screaming, but with a smile on their face. Any scream is involuntary but the child is perfectly aware they are just playing. Only *make-believedly*, Walton thinks, does the child believe there is a monster and hence real fear is not experienced - this would require belief. The situation is seen as a sort of "theatrical event", with the father a kind of actor. Similarly, Charles is deemed as playing a game of make-believe in which the screen images are props, with the slime taking the place of the father. Charles takes onto stage with him actual thoughts and beliefs, and these affect the way in which he views the truths that constitute the world of make-believe. Charles really knows that:

> "make-believedly the green slime is bearing down on him and he is in danger of being destroyed by it. His quasi-fear results from this belief...[this] generates the truth that make-believedly he is afraid of the slime." (Walton, 1978: 238)

For Walton, the ambiguity of the paradox of fiction is the *concept* of emotion. Although Charles experiences feelings that are similar to, and indicative of, fear (e.g. a quickened pulse and adrenalin) he has mistakenly labeled his emotion. Real fear would require *belief* in the threatening object but since those beliefs (judgments or attitudes) are not present the emotion cannot be fear – it is fear-*like*. Charles does not truly believe the slime exists, only make-believedly so in his game, and the quasi-fear comes from the "belief or realization that it is make-believedly the case that he is in danger" (Neill, 1991: 49).

As Neill's analysis highlights, Walton's approach to the paradox construes proposition c) (emotions for objects logically presuppose beliefs in the existence and features of the object in question) as making a

conceptual claim about emotions, not a causal one. Walton's view that real fear requires belief in the existence of the object does not deny that fear-like feelings are experienced in response to fictional objects, but they are not of the genuine emotion type. As such, Walton dissolves the paradox by *denying proposition a)*: it is not *literally* true that we often have emotions for fictional characters and situations known to be purely fictional. One can consider Walton's position as "it is sometimes *fictional* that we believe we experience such emotions".

Walton's construal of proposition c) differs from that of Carroll, Peter Lamarque[15] and Robert Yanal[16]. These theorists interpret the proposition as making a *causal* claim about what is required to trigger an emotion. By considering the proposition as making a causal claim, they attempt to dissolve the paradox by denying proposition c).

An advantage of Walton's approach is that if one views it an *institution of fiction* that one must be able to enjoy the fiction (Carroll holds this), making emotions *quasi* would seem to allow one to savour the story; thinking the monster was real might render enjoyment impossible. Further, the quasi- nature of the emotion would seem to explain why the audience does not behave in a manner that Walton believes is becoming of someone truly terrified i.e. running.

Objections

Walton's subtle analysis of the paradox is important because it raises the conceptual question of how an experienced emotion is to be correctly described. However, it has a number of challenges.

First, it is difficult to see how one characterizes Charles' testimony that he is afraid in light of Walton's claim that he is not really afraid. To question Charles' testimony one would need to prove that the "relevant principle of make-believe is accepted or recognized by someone" (Walton, 1978: 239). Walton suggests that Charles does indeed understand that the principles are in place and that his non-reflective "act of imagining himself afraid" is triggered by feeling those fear-like sensations. Since Charles has a tendency to imagine himself as *make-believedly* afraid of something when he has certain physiological responses (e.g. a racing pulse), the production of these feelings in relation to a fiction concurrently arouses a private recognition of the principles of the make-believe game. Placing this recognition internally is, Walton suggests, persuasive enough to state that Charles accepts the principle that "his experience makes it make-believe that he is afraid" (Walton, 1978: 240). However, this is a mysterious explanation. One is meant to conclude that despite a behavioural response (frozen paralysis) and testimony that would imply fear, one must dismiss it. Furthermore, there is no publicly recognizable principle upon which one can say that Charles is definitely experiencing quasi-fear and

[15] Lamarque (1981)
[16] Yanal (1999)

hence make-believedly afraid. The privately recognized explanation may be less convincing than the spectator's testimony.

Second, Charles' ability to distinguish between quasi-fear and real fear suggests an introspective sophistication that stretches plausibility, specifically with respect to an emotion like fear that may be, as I will discuss further on, self-directed and plays on primordial concerns.

Third, game-playing analogy is flawed in a number of important ways. In the game it is easy to see that the father is not actually a monster; the child sees him every day, she is giggling as she plays etc. The child is actively involved (physically and cognitively) in the action, too. In comparison, while fictional engagement does begin with what one might regard as a game-like set-up (the spectator's wants to engage and become absorbed), little attention is paid to *types* of fictional engagement. Walton should not have ignored the need to address the causal aspect of the engagement, because this will almost certainly determine how aware one is of the medium and of making-believe. Filmatic imagery does not present what we already know (unlike the father's image to the child) and the spectator does not seem to be required to see or imagine something that is not in front of them (although the spectator is likely required to imagine other contextual aspects of the narrative, adopting *fictional truths*).

Noting the need for a causal explanation, Neill argues that Walton fails to recognize that both external and internal perspectives are being taken. He says:

> "From the external standpoint, one has *beliefs* about what is make-believedly the case relative to the game. From the internal standpoint, one makes-believe" (Neill, 1991: 51)

This is an important point. An external observer sees the game that the child (or cinemagoer) is playing, and the external observer is at liberty to claim they believe the child is make-believedly being chased by a monster. However, the child does *not believe* that they are making-believe – they are just making-believe because they are playing the game i.e. making-believe that they are being chased. Thus, Walton implies that Charles looks in on the game, taking a detached perceptual stance that would justify one's questioning his feeling real fear. Yet such external perspective is questionable when playing games. Were one to try to help Walton out by suggesting that Charles has a foot in both perspective positions (both playing the game and looking in on it), one might argue that the external position creates (at least) a nagging suspicion about the authenticity of the representation, but this dual position changes the landscape of the engagement; it offers the possibility of overriding the external viewpoint with the appropriate content and mode of presentation. This is the foundation of my causal enterprise in Chapter 3.

Fifth, Walton's approach does not account for all emotions. Fearing a monster (as it approaches the spectator) is different to feeling pity for Anna Karenina. Fear requires both a psychological and physiological response, and art-horror is self-directed. Pity, on the other hand, does not seem to involve a characteristic physiological response. The feelings and sensations of quasi-fear are not specific to it, something Walton recognizes and in response to which he introduces the notion of

Charles believing that make-believedly he is threatened. But Charles is making-believe, not believing that he is making believe, and the sensations felt (without existential belief) are not unique to it. To save Walton, Charles would need to experience more than just a sensation i.e. to evaluate the monster as threatening, and this would seem to entail something like belief in the internal perspective (at the very least, a lack of disbelief). If one attempts to save the theory again, by suggesting that Charles experiences a *desire* (to escape the monster) as part of the quasi-fear sensation package, this would contradict Walton's claim that Charles never experiences a desire to escape; either that, or he actually half-believes he is in danger. Walton's proposal that Charles never even desires escape is explained by his not moving from his chair. This is something that Carroll and Neill also seem to support. However, I dispute this. Just as we have no proof that Charles has a quasi-emotion, one cannot prove that Charles does not momentarily wish to escape the monster. More importantly, I propose that Charles' behaviour, like that of frozen spectators in response to paradigm horror and the horrified child, is *entirely appropriate*.

In summary, certain experiences in relation to fiction (art-horror) suggest *reaction* (real response) rather than *action* (making believe), and *suffering* rather than *doing*. In this context, it is unclear how one can place faith in Walton's proposal of quasi-emotion for certain emotions; external observation is inconclusive and internal observation suggests the emotion claimed. Unfortunately for Walton, this undermines his task, which is to demonstrate that spectators are labeling their emotions incorrectly. Modifications demonstrate that it is susceptible to the experience being labeled, with reasonable conviction, as the real emotion.

ii) Pretend Theory

The Theory

Carroll's misconstrual of Walton's paper results in what he labels "Pretend Theory", a causal interpretation of Quasi-Fear Theory that he critiques in *The Paradox of Horror*. Pretend Theory can be summarized as the spectator never actually being moved by fiction and only pretending to be so. The misconstrual is precipitated by Walton placing *belief* in the discussion of make-believe and Carroll incorrectly assuming that Walton is making a causal claim about fictional engagement. Interestingly, in misreading Walton, Carroll is not actually arguing against him and raises points that are pertinent to the wider discussion, specifically with respect to the spectator's engagement with film and the phenomenology of the experience. Further, the theory is a not wholly unjustified explanation of how one might engage with fiction under Walton's conceptual approach.

Pretend Theory proposes that, when engaging with a fiction, the spectator pretends both that the content is real and to be a part of the fictional world. While pretending that the fictional truths are fact, however, the spectator never actually believes that is the case. The following passage from Walton suggests this reading:

> "we accomplish the "decrease of distance" not by promoting fictions to our level but by descending to theirs. (More accurately, we extend ourselves to their level, since we do not stop actually existing when it becomes fictional that we exist)...Rather than somehow fooling ourselves into thinking fictions are real, we become fictional...This enables us to comprehend our sense of closeness to the fictions, without attributing to ourselves patently false beliefs." (Walton, 1978: 243)

Pretend Theory could be described as a *two worlds* theory. First, there is the spectator's world (reality) and, second, the world of the fiction. The spectator engages with a film but with pre-programmed experiences that affect reception of the fictional world presented. Consequently, the extent of a spectator's immersion in that world is limited. When Charles watches the film he would pretend that he is seeing a world where there existed a monstrous green slime; this leads him to pretend that he experiences emotions in relation to events and characters in that world. In pretending, he would naturally talk about the monster in a specific, pretend (make-believe) way. This theory takes an internal perceptual stance, meaning that the spectator cognitively works (pretends/imagines) to experience a fictional world but always carries with them the knowledge that what they are seeing is fictional. This *is* like the model of the undemonstrative child.

Carroll's view of Pretend Theory is that fictions produce emotion in the audience but not *genuine* emotion like that experienced in real life. By considering fictional engagement in this way, Carroll views Walton as allowing for a certain type of belief (pretend belief), held in relation to the fictional world with which the spectator is engaging. When watching a horror film, for example, a spectator would be

pretending to believe that the monster is threatening them and this would move the spectator to feeling fear-like sensations. It would not be real fear because the spectator is only pretending to be scared and always knows they are consuming a fiction. Therefore, what is produced is a *quasi-fear*. Pretend Theory maintains belief, experienced in a fictional world, but which renders the emotion as non-genuine (fictional), thus dissolving the paradox of fiction by denying proposition a) (that we are genuinely moved by fictions). This contrasts with Walton's proposal that the emotion produced *is* genuine, but not as labeled.

Notwithstanding its misread genesis, Pretend Theory offers an interesting causal account of a spectator's engagement with, and response to, fiction. Notions of *imagination* and *simulation*, though not discussed in detail by Carroll, are at least evident and these are important, as I will discuss shortly.

Objections

There are a number of critical objections to Pretend Theory, which are also applicable to other simulation-based theories. Pretend Theory does, as Carroll suggests, relegate "our emotional responses to fiction to the realm of make-believe" (Carroll, 1990: 73). *Making-believe* implies active involvement by the spectator and suggests a level of control over engagement not evident when intensely engaged with certain types of representational fiction (notably, horror film). One would not question spectator activity in the cinematic process, such as the decision to go to the cinema or the effort made to engage with, understand and attempt to accept the fictional content (using imagination). However, such activity is not evident when fully immersed. In moments of art-horror one sits, seemingly unaware either of the fictionality of characters and event *or* the game of make-believe one is meant to be playing.

Mirroring my contestation of the dissimilarity with game-playing, Carroll says that it "strains credulity" to suggest that a game of mud-pies (or playing monsters with one's father, for that matter) is analogous to engaging in fictions. We have not spoken to another person and agreed to do something; we have simply engaged with a work of fiction and are not asked to imagine that a series of images (of the monster or other character) is something other than itself. The monster may be unfamiliar to the audience and its appearance supplemented by mood influencers (e.g. music, lighting) that leads them taking a certain attitude towards it. Making-believe while engaged with a horror film might suggest that one could "refuse to make believe I was horrified" (Carroll, 1990: 74) but such control is not conspicuous and neither is game-playing. In the game the spectator has the ability to say "stop" (provided the father acknowledges the request), although one may of course stop engaging with the film. One should acknowledge, though, potentially powerful social and even economic reasons for persisting with the engagement and which may prevent cessation.

That we do not seem to be aware of playing a game, nor are we able to stop it, implies it is no longer a game. One might suggest, as I infer Walton might, that the game (and its rules) is somehow implicit in

what we are doing; but as Carroll remarks, “We are not merely unaware of tacitly respecting some of the details of the game, we are completely unaware of playing a game” (Carroll, 1990: 74). An obvious explanation for losing sight of the game is that during engagement one gets so wrapped up as to forget certain principles and facts, including the pretend nature of the characters playing, although at some gut level the suspicion of falseness remains. Applied universally *this* strains credulity as I will attempt to show.

Importantly, Pretend Theory fails to capture the phenomenology of art-horror experience. During the moment of art-horror arousal we are unaware of the fiction and respond to the monster. We do not laugh after being frightened like a child playing a game with their father, either. Paradigm horrors have haunted audiences after the event. Surely it should be easy to dispose of such responses to make-believe, but art-horror is not of this ilk. One of Carroll’s strongest objections to Pretend Theory is that it misdescribes the sense and direction of the emotional response. Charles describes the monster as attacking *him* but Carroll insists that the emotions experienced in response to fiction are spent on the literal characters of fictions rather than oneself. It is true that fearful feelings can be elicited by the recognition that something is “fearsome, even if we do not believe it constitutes clear and present danger” (Carroll, 1978: 76) but art-horror experience entails this personal perspective; in the moment of emotional arousal awareness of the protagonist has disappeared. Carroll’s challenge misfires with certain horror movie experiences.

Without understanding the filmatic medium and the emotion involved (the former is certainly not Carroll’s objective and the latter is not Walton’s even though he focuses on fear) I suspect one will always fail to capture the experience of art-horror.

Before discussing a second causal simulation theory (Simulation Hypothesis), I wish to analyze the second key approach to explaining emotional response to fictions, Thought Theory. Simulation Hypothesis provides a plausible account of the spectator’s use of imagination in relation to fictions and brings together aspects of both Pretend and Thought Theory, so Thought Theory should be addressed first.

B) Thought Theory

The Theory

Thought Theory, a label coined by Carroll, explains an audience member's emotional response to fiction by focusing on the role of *thought*. Thought Theorists propose that thoughts can generate emotions in a spectator and that belief is unnecessary, thus resolving the paradox of fiction by denying the proposition that "we are only genuinely moved by what we believe is actual" (proposition c)). The Theory has garnered significant attention over the past quarter century but I regard it as relatively inane in its current form. This is neither a derogatory nor dismissive remark, for Thought Theory has a real place in the arousal of emotions in relation to fiction, but it fails to explain art-horror experience.

In 'How Can We Fear and Pity Fictions?', Lamarque rightly suggests that since audiences seem to respond so regularly with emotion to fictions that one should not dismiss the fact that a spectator is having a genuine emotional response (the misconstrued view of Walton), but to understand whether belief is involved in or necessary for that emotional arousal. Lamarque highlights what he calls the "tension between the beliefs we hold about the nature of fiction and the beliefs needed to explain our responses to fiction" (Lamarque, 1981: 292)

Thought Theory construes the third proposition of the paradox as claiming that belief plays a necessary causal role in emotion. Thought Theory's most prominent proponents (Lamarque, Carroll and Yanal), all take a slightly different view of the third proposition but with the same overall causal point: Lamarque thinks the proposition suggests that certain types of experience are only explicable causally if someone has certain beliefs about the object they entertain; Carroll's view is that it suggests real emotion requires belief (period), and; Yanal thinks it takes belief to be a trigger for an emotion ("any person experiences an emotion only if he believes that the object of his emotion both exists and exhibits at least some of the emotion inducing properties specific to that emotion" (Yanal, 1999: 10)).

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Carroll proposes Thought Theory as a way to "render emotional responses to fiction intelligible…while also preserving our conviction that they [the spectator] really are frightened by horror stories" (Carroll, 1990: 79). Carroll dismisses the presence of *belief* in the monster's existence; to the contrary, he holds that spectators are constantly aware of its fictionality. An "informed consumer" (Carroll, 1990: 84) of horror fiction, he says, knows that the monster does not exist, and since one cannot have competing beliefs about what is true it makes no sense to suggest that an audience can pretend otherwise. Logically, he suggests, if we are constantly aware of the fiction then fear is "inconsistent with our knowledge" (Carroll, 1990: 79). To resolve the issue, Carroll proposes that it *is* possible to have a genuine emotional response to the monster without belief in its existence.

Thought Theory trades on two positions, both of which are reasonable to hold: i) emotion can be generated without belief, and; ii) there is a distinction between a *thought* and a *belief.* Carroll says:

> "we might wish to reject the presumption that we are only moved emotionally where we believe that the object of our emotion exists…art-horror here is a genuine emotion, not a pretend emotion, because actual emotion can be generated by entertaining the thought of something horrible...
>
> ...To have a belief is to entertain a proposition assertively; to have a thought is to entertain it nonassertively. Both beliefs and thoughts have propositional content. But with thoughts the content is merely entertained without commitment to it being the case; to have belief is to be committed (to) the truth of the proposition" (Carroll, 1990: 80)

To demonstrate how genuine emotion can be aroused without belief, Carroll proposes a thought experiment where we imagine ourselves standing on the edge of a precipice. He suggests that we entertain the thought of falling over the edge, which may be accompanied by physical effects such as chills or tremors. It is proposed that the fear of falling (cognition coupled with the physical response) is brought about not by the belief that we are going to fall but by the *thought* of falling. The situation might not be something we think probable but allows us to scare ourselves by:

> "imagining the sequence of events that we know to be highly unlikely. Moreover, we are not frightened by the *event* of our thinking of falling, but by the *content* of our thought of falling – perhaps the mental image of plummeting through space." (Carroll, 1990: 80)

Thought Theory involves imagination and this provides colour to thoughts by introducing "thought-clusters" (Lamarque, 1981: 295). Mental images supplement the representation seen, allowing the spectator to take imaginative images or events through to a conclusion e.g. if the monster sees me he will want to hurt me. Carroll supports this view by reflecting on how spectators redirect their thinking during a particularly unnerving horror film e.g. averting their eyes from the screen or focusing on another part of the screen away from the action. Here, the spectator is "distracting" themselves:

> "from the thought of what is being portrayed on the screen. One is not attempting to extinguish the belief that the referent of the representation exists nor the belief that the representation itself exists. Rather, one is attempting not to think about the content of the representation – that is, not to entertain the content of the representation as the content of one's own thought" (Carroll, 1990: 80-81)

Distinguishing between thoughts and beliefs, Carroll proposes that in relation to horror fiction, "one can have the thought of Dracula or the thought of Dracula as an impure and dangerous being without believing that Dracula exists" (Carroll, 1990: 84).

The monster may be understood in two ways, as the *formal reality of thought* and as *objective reality*. The spectator's horror is directed towards the monster (the intentional object) and, in the fiction, the monster has a name and particular traits. This collection of properties, as described or portrayed on screen, imbues the monster with a *sense*; the name *Michael Myers* refers to the *sense* of Michael Myers, which is a large, evil and powerful killer. When a spectator watches *Halloween*, Thought Theory holds that the *thought* of Michael Myers is of this collection of properties. As Lamarque describes it, the sense of Michael Myers is given by the descriptions that "characterize and identify its internal reference" (Lamarque, 1981: 299).

Thought Theory may be seen as attempting to resolve issues of Pretend Theory. Rather than the spectator lowering themselves to the fictional world through imagination (i.e. making believe something is real whilst simultaneously holding onto real belief in the real world), they bring the thoughts of the monster into the real world. The spectator does not bring the character of Michael Myers into their thoughts but the collection of properties that constitute his name (referent) in the fictional world. As such, there is a shift in focus from the reference (Michael Myers) to the sense (descriptions found in the fiction, such as large, powerful, evil etc); but there is a real emotion that is directed at a real but psychological object. Carroll believes that there is no reason to deny that such a collection of properties might horrify us and it does *not* require that the spectator believes Michael Myers exists:

> "Since we are horrified by thought contents, we do not believe that we are in danger, and do not take any measures to protect ourselves. We are not pretending to be horrified; we are genuinely horrified, but by the thought of Dracula rather than by our conviction that we are his next victim...For we can think of the Green Slime without subscribing to its existence, and we can be horrified by the content of that thought. Whereas the illusion theory of response to fiction saddles the audience with false beliefs, and the pretend theory burdens us with make-believe emotions, the thought theory keeps our beliefs respectable and our emotions genuine". (Carroll, 1990: 86)

Thought Theory maintains that fictions, through thought contents, may produce genuine emotion and allows Carroll to explain a spectator's behaviour. Further, Carroll suggests that it explains modal qualifications when speaking about fictions (not using phrases such as "in the fiction…"), and emotions aroused in relation to different types of:

> "knowingly reading fictions we are led to reflect on the content of the description of the monsters, which content becomes the basis of our thoughts and which content causes fear and loathing in us" (Carroll, 1990: 81)

Objections

Before considering its shortcomings, we should dissolve one objection to Thought Theory. Walton suggests that Thought Theory takes Charles to fear "the *thought* of the slime (or the "sense" of a description of it)" (Walton, 1990: 203) i.e. fearing the thought as the object of emotion, as opposed to the monster. Walton is right to raise the point but this is a misinterpretation; the theory is focused not on what the object of fear is but what does the causal work in arousing the emotion. Thoughts are not the objects of emotion but thoughts *about* the monster may generate emotions. This interpretation likely results from Walton's view that Thought Theorists are concerned with the same conceptual issue as he (that only objects believed to exist will result in the emotion you claim to have) as opposed to what causes the emotion.

The idea that one can generate emotion through thought provocation seems uncontroversial. One only need think about unpleasant things to begin to feel a certain way; the potential presence of a ghost in the old house I am thinking of begins to make me feel nervous and does not require belief in the ghost or house. However, in responding to thoughts one needs to be able to answer a question that both Lamarque and I have raised, namely, what is one moved *to*? If I imagine (generate thoughts about) being confronted by Michael Myers but do not really believe he confronts me, I think it can be said that I have unnerved myself by the thought of being confronted by him but it would seem strange to suggest that I am afraid of him because I *know* he is not present. By focusing on the causal explanation of emotional response to fiction, Carroll et al have failed to recognize Walton's conceptual interpretation of the paradox's third proposition, namely, that *some* responses to fiction might logically require belief to result in the *experience* of a particular emotion. By attributing thoughts to the creation of emotion, Carroll suggests that we better explain the phenomenological and logical problems that art-horror poses, without the need to postulate mystical-psychological illusion or psychologically placing ourselves in fictional worlds and retaining belief. However, Thought Theory fails to do that job; it fails to capture art-horror phenomenology and undermines introspective testimony. Even if art-horror *responses* do not require belief to causally evoke them, the *experience* of art-horror seems to require something like it, or at least the masking of the disbelief in the monster. *Momentarily* deeming the monster as real and present is what makes the experience what it is.

It would not be unreasonable to question whether it is rational or even possible to be frightened so intensely (specifically, to be "paralyzed by psychotic fantasies about being watched by Martians" (Carroll, 1990: 83) or Freddy moving towards us in the alleyway), by the mere contents of thoughts (coloured by disbelief). Carroll has failed to acknowledge this *conceptual* question and although Thought Theory may explain the generation of other emotions, an absence of something belief-like leaves a questionable stimulus for art-horror. A similar view is taken by Steven Schneider:

> "Nöel Carroll…fails to note this difference between actual and possible existence beliefs. Wisely rejecting the blanket assumption that "we are only moved emotionally where we believe that the object of our emotion exists," Carroll goes too far in the other

> direction, claiming (i) that "the thought of a fearsome and disgusting character like Dracula is something that can be entertained without believing that Dracula exists," and (ii) that "thought contents we entertain without believing them can genuinely move us emotionally."…By itself, (i) is utterly harmless. But combined with (ii), it is simply mistaken. The mere entertaining in one's mind of a horror film monster is insufficient to generate fear; at the very least, it renders the production of such an emotional response either mysterious or irrational. Unless a belief in the possible existence of such a being (however fleeting this belief may be), is presupposed by the activity of entertaining, there is nothing—certainly nothing rational—for the fear to latch on to…possession of a possible (not an actual) existence belief is required for the necessary conflict of judgment to occur." (Schneider, 1999: 8)

Consider watching *Halloween*. I work to understand the contents on screen and will begin to have particular thoughts about, and attitudes towards, the characters (including the monster). However, when Michael appears through the slats in the wardrobe door, my experience is not of thought contents about the type of monster that could threaten me in the way that Michael does. I see Michael, the monster, and it is *his* presence that arouses the feelings I experience. The perception that he is evil and a mortal danger, established before arousal, results in the emotion when the monster appears. This experience is different to that of my viewing the bedroom scenes in *The Conjuring.* I have feelings of trepidation towards the being that might exist in the shadows or on top of the wardrobe, and may even feel shocked when the latter appears. However, I never waiver in the belief I am watching a movie; perhaps one might say I am never free of the burden that what I have is a thought and that is fear-like. The thought contents incorporate the knowledge that I am watching a fiction so it is not art-horror.

No matter how hard I try, thoughts of being confronted by Michael Myers (or other monster) fails to raise my emotions in the requisite manner. I cannot overcome my disbelief and am always aware of the fictitious nature of the situation. Perhaps my imagination is not powerful enough or perhaps I am aware of my efforts, which prevents immersion. Yet I, like many others, might entertain the thought of a disturbing scenario and cease the thought project before it gets too much. This is a point Yanal makes in relation to disbelief. Introducing a modified version of Thought Theory ("Thought Theory T") in *Paradoxes of Emotion and Fiction*, Yanal teases what I think is a compelling psychological account of fictional engagement. He describes what he views as the spectator's role in engaging with works of art (something other theorists fail to do) and suggests that in engagement the disbelief a spectator holds about a work of fiction may be controlled i.e. toned down or increased. He views the spectator as aiming to lower the activity of disbelieving in the fictionality of the characters and events, if possible, to the appropriate level in order to enjoy it:

> "In saying that our belief in the unreality of a fictional character or situation should be inactive I do not mean that it should play no role whatsoever in our experience of fiction

> (this is the very worst understanding of the “suspension of disbelief”). I mean that our belief in the unreality of fiction should be of a *low degree*...Low enough to allow an emotional response without entrapping the spectator into believing that the fictional is real, or worse, in attempting to interact with fictions.” (Yanal, 1999: 105)

In acknowledging the role of the spectator in the engagement process (beyond simply entertaining images) Yanal also recognizes the potential for inactivating disbelief and a situation where we might “lose our grip and begin to react to fictions as if they were real” (Yanal, 1999, 105). This reflects how people behave both in relation to movies and real life, for example, when stopping a thought process or averting one’s eyes from a screen before it becomes too much. On the one hand, it might be argued that entertaining disturbing thoughts is simply unpleasant and enough to warrant stopping the process. On the other, I suggest it is because one has the capacity to lose hold of reality, masking knowledge of fictionality; this would seem to allow for a belief-like scenario and could genuinely be unpleasant.

Thought Theory fails to properly acknowledge the role of the spectator and the role of the film. It underplays the influence of the filmatic medium and that the spectators’ perceptions are driven by sensual stimuli. Filmatic stimuli direct one’s thoughts, impacting on one’s eyes and ears in a temporally dynamic way; one is not always focused on thought contents but what one sees before one’s eyes. This is fundamentally different to reading a book. Yanal seems to recognize the special nature of the filmatic medium to promote emotion, as demonstrated by his discussion of the non-propositional thoughts that films provoke. By non-propositional, Yanal means nonlinguistically structured thoughts, which differs from accounts that operate on a propositional basis (Walton, Lamarque) where thoughts are always structured with a subject and predicate. Yanal notes that sounds and images might not present the same type of thought to be translated, for example, one could see a dark and empty school hallway accompanied by ominous synthesizer notes and the intermittent tinkling of a bell; this would not necessarily require translation into a proposition like “so-and-so is in a school corridor and is lost and alone at night“, but the scene still arouses anxiety in the spectator. Unfortunately, Yanal does not continue with this promising thinking by analysing how the spectator views the images on screen but I assume he never wished to. I will explore this in the next chapter. For now I think it reasonable to say that one would be ill advised to assume or require the same potential emotional experience in response to literature as to a film.

Finally, Thought Theory fails to explain both how we talk about the experience (we talk of Michael Myers confronting *us* in the wardrobe) and the strong after-effects of the experience. The latter suggests a challenge to one’s perception of the world, one that persists beyond the movie. One might say that these are just thoughts themselves but it seems reasonable to suggest that only something that resembles a belief-driven experience could drive such a post-traumatic thought state.

Simulation Hypothesis

The Theory

In this section I want to analyze a theory of cinematic engagement and emotional response, developed most notably by Gregory Currie, which focuses on the spectator's use of imagination. Crafted with reference to film, Simulation Hypothesis is a compelling explanation of cinematic engagement and explicitly Waltonesque, developing a practical theory of make-believe that retains the notion of quasi-emotion but also illustrating the limits of imagination (thoughts) in explaining certain types of emotional response to fiction.

Simulation Hypothesis is a conception of the theoretical mechanism by which audiences engage with fiction. In fictional engagement Currie suggests that imagination is a faculty running "off-line", as "disconnected from…normal sensory inputs and behavioural outputs" (Currie, 1995: 142). One might imagine having beliefs or desires and temporarily accept them in order to understand and describe one's own beliefs and desires. Currie uses the non-cinematic example of someone who imagines seeing a lion running towards them:

> "I start (if my imagining is vivid enough) to feel the visceral sensations of fear, and I decide to flee. But I don't flee; these beliefs and desires – let us call them pretend or imaginary beliefs and desires – differ from my own real beliefs and desires not just in being temporary and cancellable. Unlike my real beliefs and desires, they are run off-line, disconnected from their normal perceptual input and behavioural outputs." (Currie, 1995: 142-143)

This initial description would seem to fall foul of the inherent problem with simultaneous external and internal perspectives of fictional engagement noted in my discussion of Walton, opening up the possibility of real belief, but we should consider the procedural aspects of simulation. According to Simulation Hypothesis, when imagining we are running a simulation *without the cause of response being initiated by seeing the object* i.e. we imagine what it would be like to be faced by a threatening lion (the object of our emotion), mentally simulating the situation and its objects. We then end the simulation before it translates into action. In this way, simulation helps the spectator understand the mental state of the fictional character being threatened by the fictional lion, presuming that the protagonist has mental states like their own. According to Currie, it is *in imagination* that we have certain beliefs, desires and decisions; but we attribute them to another. As such, we are merely observing how we respond in our imagination.

Currie says that the ability to imagine occurs when a child is able to project him/herself into the position of another person (a "perceptual state different from her own" (Currie, 1995: 145)). One should be quite accurate in simulating the position because others have minds similar to one's own and one should be

able to reliably model their state. This reasonably implies a mental bell-curve, in that if one takes a sizeable enough population a sizeable portion should have a similar mental state; this is interesting in the context of the popularity of paradigm films, which demonstrate significant affection of audiences.

People run simulations for both real and fictional people. Fictional works often require us to simulate the mental states of characters (putting ourselves *in their shoes*) and imagine that the filmatic environment exists. This is also what we seem to *want* to do when we go to watch a movie. The more or less that we can engage with the fiction effectively will, of course, be hindered or promoted by various factors, including (amongst others): mood (something else is on our mind); technicalities of media projection (poor projection that distracts us); film content (unbelievable scenarios, poor acting and dialogue), and; inappropriate direction. We might say that anything that helps us imagine (run a simulation) effectively and does not distract us should help us engage with the film and produce thoughts, desires, beliefs and emotions. It is also reasonable to suggest that the more realistically a film captures a situation the less we need to imagine. Identification typically relates to that of the protagonist and is promoted by a movie that allows us to entertain their position i.e. visual imagining with the transposing of thoughts and beliefs.

Currie proposes two types of imagining in the fictional engagement experience; imagining what is fictional and imagining what is true in the story. These are called *primary imaginings* and *secondary imaginings*, respectively. In the situation where we are asked to imagine how a character feels when they are walking down a dark alley (what are their thoughts? do they feel threatened or anxious?) we will likely need to supplement the visual and auditory inputs of the film. Recreating full specificity with respect to the protagonist may be impossible, so the audience does work by filling in the blanks, and this is where imagination kicks in. Sometimes we are constrained in our ability to understand the character's mental state but when we are able to get into the character's situation (empathetic re-enactment - secondary imagining) the fiction really takes hold.

Despite the often intense emotional response to fictions, however, Currie maintains that belief is absent because imagination is run "off line", separate from normal consciousness that harbours true emotions and desires. Simulated mental states are thus always underpinned by conscious knowledge of the fictionality of events and contents (disbelief), like a parallel train of thought where one is asserted and the other unasserted. One might view this as implying a transcendental ego (hidden observer) and would support both Walton's and Carroll's belief that knowledge of the fictionality is always present. We are, as Currie points out, playing "a largely internalized game of make-believe" (Currie, 1990: 196). Consequently, "what we acquire instead of beliefs is imaginings which simulate belief" (Currie, 1995: 148); imagination functionally replaces belief and prevents us from believing that what we see is real. Since the emotion aroused is not literally the emotion one takes it to be, Simulation Hypothesis denies proposition a) (that one has genuine emotions (of the type they describe) in response to fictional characters). This theory offers a practical explanation of Walton's work, where a lack of belief in the existence of the object ensures that the real emotion one claims to have is inaccurate.

Under Simulation Hypothesis, make-believe is akin to imagination. Although the experience (imagining) is *perceptual* (incorporating a judgment towards the object) and can be extremely vivid (images portray characters that we see and may be lifelike), it is also seen as *impersonal* because one does not really view oneself as being in the situation presented. Currie's opposition to personal experience reflects his aversion to psychologism, the notion that representational experience is in some sense personal and that psychological factors play a role in the experience. Currie's opposition is summarized as follows:

> "His critique of it [psychologism] is scathing. First, the hypothesis undermines the narrative content of most films: "do I imagine myself on the battlefield, mysteriously immune to the violence around me, lying next to the lovers, somehow invisible to them, viewing earth from deep space one minute, watching the dinner guests from the ceiling the next?". Second, certain cinematic devices, such as a long shot of distant people with a soundtrack of their conversation heard up close, would require us to imagine having perceptual powers we do not have and that are not authorized by the fiction. At the same time, we are to imagine our visual powers as oddly restricted in so far as we exercise no control over them. Fourth, it is implausible to suppose that in a scene that shows an unobserved intruder I am called on to imagine that I see what is unseen. This imagining distorts or is inappropriate to the content of the film. Finally there are problems with the suggestion that in shots from a character's point of view we are to imagine identifying with him or her." (Lopes, 1997: 347)

Objections

Simulation Hypothesis offers a convincing description of the mechanics of engagement with cinematic fiction: while watching *Die Hard* I imagine what it is like to be John McClane running around the Nakatomi Plaza, trying to avoid capture by Hans Gruber's henchmen; in *The Blair Witch Project* I try to imagine what it would be like to be lost in a forest like the three documentarians. However, through imagination, cognitive distance is maintained and the spectator ends up pinning beliefs and desires on another, which ends up misdescribing the spectator's experience. Consider the closet scene in *Halloween*: *I see Laurie being chased by the masked monster who is wielding a knife. She is hiding in a wardrobe and I am being shown images from her position or nearby. I imagine that being stalked like this must be terrifying so I imagine being in this position by creating the mental image of a similar situation and a monster like the one in the picture. I experience some feelings I presume to be like that which someone in the situation would have. I know that these are imaginary and the result of my generating a simulation of the situation.*

The unintentionally sarcastic description makes an important point, namely, that it may correctly describe certain horror movie experiences but it is not the art-horror experience. Currie might suggest that introspection is flawed:

> "Because we are rarely aware of the detailed structure of our emotions, it is plausible that there is room for error and confusion in our judgments about exactly what state we are in when we supposed ourselves to be in the grip of an emotion. Emotions turn out to be quite complex entities with identifying features that are far from transparent to introspection" (Currie, 1990: 195)

Equally as valid as Currie's statement is why a spectator's introspected summary is to be dismissed. The spectator is, after all, the being experiencing the emotion and it seems ill-judged to whitewash such testimony should certain conditions pertain, as I will shortly explain. Simulation Hypothesis makes the same erroneous move as Walton, making the emotional response mysteriously mistaken to/by the only being to experience it and giving greater weight to the external observer.

A problem with accepting Simulation Hypothesis as an explanation of art-horror is its implication that a subject's imagination is so prominently engaged in film watching that it maintains a cognitive distance from the filmatic content. Certainly, one would not deny imaginative involvement in movie watching (it is likely necessary, as I will discuss in the next chapter) but Currie fails to acknowledge that we are not creating the imagery ourselves; there is more at work than the spectator imagining a character's situation. Simulation Hypothesis underplays the sensory input of the screen, implying that we imagine the characters and what happens without acknowledging that we see it. Dominic Lopes raises the same concern, suggesting that in Currie's attempt to replace imagination with quasi-experience (i.e. visualization with quasi-belief) he has missed something essential about cinema, namely, the sensory input. Lopes suggests we must move back to visualization as part of the experiential process, otherwise there is no more to cinematic experience than simulated perceptual belief. The screen is more than just a prop to help us imagine and we are not using a mud pie as a cake; the images on screen are crafted to show us the object in a particular, ideally affective, way. In an experience of a cinematically portrayed King Kong:

> "I do not merely imagine (simulated perceptual belief in) a rich, bundled proposition about King Kong, namely that he looks thus and so; I have an experience of Kong (which subsequently might prompt such a belief). There is more to cinematic experience than perceptual belief or imagining." (Lopes, 1997: 348)

Imagery is crucial to the art-horror experience. In the case of the paradigm horror *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, were Simulation Hypothesis correct then there would seem to be no real difference in reading the narrative or watching it; I would imagine Leatherface, simulating perceptual belief in the monster. This will not work as an explanation. The image of Leatherface appearing at the doorway and lifting his hammer prompts the response; it is *Leatherface*, the being momentarily seen as standing in front of me, whom I fear and respond to. Moreover, the speed of the event challenges my ability to imaginatively consider the situation or be aware of doing so. Here, imagination is secondary to visual experience and even if it is running I seem unaware of it.

In order to account for the difference between imagination and experience, Lopes distinguishes between two types of experience involved in watching films, and this is interesting in the context of what I propose in the next two chapters. The first is *screen experience*, which is the spectators' seeing images and hearing sounds that represent objects. The second experience is *cinematic experience*, which relates to the experiences we have of the events that the images and sounds portray. Lopes thinks that we have experiences of what a film represents, regardless of whether the things the film represents actually exist i.e. we might not know, just by looking at a screen, that what our experience represents is factual or fictional. In this sense, experience may be regarded as "ontologically neutral" (Lopes, 1997: 345) and raises the possibility of *contextual* (cognitive) illusion. With respect *sensory* illusionism (an object mistakenly seen as real even if the spectator does not believe it to be), Currie suggests that film experience is not illusory because the image is real. Lopes rightly points out that this is only an argument against screen experience as illusory, not cinematic experience. Thus, Currie leaves the door open for illusion.

Lopes also insists that there must be a distinction between experience and belief, and that the "distinction is not merely phenomenological" (Lopes, 1997: 249). I can have an experience of Leatherface despite knowledge that there is no Leatherface. Since my experience is separate from my belief, it is also separate from what I imagine, challenging Currie's account of imagination as simulated belief. Lopes says that this situation is demonstrated by audience experience; when I am scared during a movie, I might try and imagine the opposite of what is on screen by looking away, but when I return to face the screen Leatherface is still running wild and chasing the heroine:

> "Just as experience gives rise to belief, cinematic experience (illusion) gives rise to belief and imagination" (Lopes, 1997: 350)

These issues affect the simulation-based theories in Levinson's survey of the terrain. *The Non-Intentionalist solution* (emotional responses purported to be just mood) is only applicable to a small percentage of the range of emotional responses to fiction and would not explain a seemingly *cognition-necessary* emotion like art-horror. *The Surrogate-Object solution* (swapping fictional objects of response with real-life objects) fails to capture the *phenomenology* of the response, which is directed to the object presented. Despising monsters like Michael Myers is not, as Levinson puts it, "simply reducible to despising people of that sort generally, or to despising some actual similar individual of one's acquaintance" (Levinson, 1996: 43) *Make-Believe theories*, under which Pretend Theory and Simulation Hypothesis may fall, fail to acknowledge that emotions feel very much the same to the spectator and may be indistinguishable. They miss the phenomenology of certain emotional experiences (e.g. art-horror), assuming that the spectator is sophisticated enough to distinguish between the emotion proper and the one experienced in relation to the fiction *or* they are simply mistaken and irrational in responding the way they do.

Thoughts, Imaginings and Beliefs

Simulation and Thought theories both provide partially compelling explanations of a spectator's engagement with fictions but fail to explain the art-horror experience. We are left assuming that we are simply mistaken in our assessment of the experience. Did we really not seem to momentarily see the monster as real and present? In which case, why did we respond and subsequently testify to the experience in the way we did? Walton's seminal paper highlights that in order to explain a spectator's emotional response to fictions we must have adequately understood the *conceptual* aspects of fictional experience. We must also understand the causal. We must ensure we are labeling the emotion correctly and be able to compellingly explain how we can be driven to the experience we have. The oversight of these two theoretical groups in addressing both aspects results in a failure to provide a complete theory of emotional responses to fictions. Walton fails to offer a causal explanation and claims that the emotions are *quasi-* (i.e. not the ones we say we experience), although it is not watertight that they are not the emotions we say we have. By not addressing the causal account of engagement, his analysis is too narrow to provide a proper account of emotional response and, therefore, cannot comprehensively dissolve the paradox of fiction. The more significant issue for simulation is that it results in the spectator retaining knowledge of the outside world by maintaining a cognitive foot in that world. This external position belies experience of certain horror films and makes us question whether we could experience quasi-fear at all because we are at least partially outside of the game we are supposed to be playing. I think an internal stance is far more plausible in justifying quasi-emotion but results in the potential to confuse quasi- and real emotion. In the case of Thought theories, focusing on the cause of emotions neglects the conceptual. Theorists provide an intuitively attractive causal explanation of certain fictional interactions by allowing internal thoughts (coloured by the knowledge of their fictionality rather than requiring an opposing external point of view) to arouse emotions. However, these fail to appreciate that certain emotions, like art-horror, may require something belief-*like* to result in the experience.

Simulation and Thought theories are not battling with one another in the way they presume and I can envisage a hybrid of these two theories as explaining some cinematic experience, for example: a spectator goes to see *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and knows the film is a fiction (including characters and events) and uses imagination (thoughts) to try to understand the narrative and take certain perspectives (how characters are feeling and what they are seeing etc). The result of affective engagement would be real emotion, generated by thoughts of things that are prompted by the content on screen presented in the context of an engaging narrative. However, this still falls short of achieving the kind of experience audiences speak of and would justify frozen paralysis. Art-horror experience is thus misdescribed and, per Radford, such emotion would seem irrational. Ostensibly, thoughts alone (couched in disbelief) just do not seem to cut it.

A reason for the failure of these theories to account for experiences like art-horror is their generic approach to explaining emotional responses to fiction. To understand art-horror, I believe one must consider idiosyncratic factors pertinent to *that* experience:

- *The Paradox*: The paradox of fiction, construed either causally and/or conceptually, is a generalization of emotional arousal in response to fiction. It neither differentiates between the types of emotions aroused nor the methods of representation. This oversight by Simulation and Thought theories is crucial, for it seems uncontroversial to hold that some emotions are less complex than others and some methods of representation are more effective in arousing emotion (and in differing degrees of intensity) than others.
- *The Emotion*: I think it wrong to assume that emotions are of a homogenous class. Art-horror needs to be analyzed separately from other emotions because it may not be susceptible to the same rules and analysis as an emotion like pity. Some emotions are directed at characters of fictions but others, like art-horror, for oneself. The former seems likely easier to achieve and less obviously in need of something belief-like to explain it. Carroll's view of art-horror as being directed at the fate of characters misses the phenomenology of the experience I describe.
- *The Medium*: One must consider the nature of film and how this affects the spectator's experience. An emotion like art-horror may be best, or only, aroused through engagement with film.
- *The Spectator*: One must consider the role of the spectator in the engagement process. Psychological attributes of the spectator have been broadly overlooked but without considering these one will fail to appreciate how deeply immersed in, and affected by, a representation a spectator may be. Yanal acknowledges this and makes a concerted effort to explain an aspect of the spectator's involvement with fiction through the notion of disbelief. The question this raises, dismissed by many without psychological analysis, is whether an overriding of disbelief is possible.

The *problem*, as it is seen by many, of emotionally responding to fictional characters is in taking those characters to exist; this seems to entail belief, and it is the notion of belief that underpins the paradox of fiction. It also raises more fundamental issues, including: what are thoughts?; how are thoughts produced, held and experienced by a spectator?; how does one distinguish between a thought and belief?; for how long does a thought need to be held and asserted to constitute a belief? And; what constitutes an assertion?

I do not intend getting into a complex discussion of the concepts of thought and belief *here*, pulling the rug up on a constructive discussion that is perfectly acceptable for this part of the analysis. However, it is worth considering these issues briefly.

Although it seems to have no generally accepted definition or agreement on its creation, a *thought* can be considered an idea or view produced by the brain. A thought may be considered a single product or a collection of thoughts more complex in nature. One may see a lion and have the thought that it is

yellow, tall, short or fat etc, comparing it to experience. Thoughts may be produced in relation to a real object or situation, or in relation to an object or situation manufactured in the mind of a person. The latter may be termed an *imagining.* Imaginings are produced *all of the time* and give understanding and context to our interactions with other persons and situations, both real and fictional. Imagining is often effortless and undertaken without us thinking about, or being aware of, doing so. Simulation Hypothesis compellingly describes how imagination is involved in certain types of engagement.

At any given time, a person may have a number of thoughts in their head. Some are actively thought about ("How do I write this sentence in an appropriately clear way for the reader?"), some are nagging ("I have a sore toe and I can feel it throbbing away" or "I need to finish this section before 6pm, because I need to be at a dinner for 7pm"). It is against this backdrop that the nature of emotional response to fictional engagement is set. Upon seeing a person walking towards us we may have the thought that they are, from information previously provided, dangerous. In this way, thoughts may be evaluative in nature and could be termed *judgments* or *beliefs* i.e. thoughts that something *is* or *is not* the case. Further, beliefs may be held alongside other beliefs, such as "this person is dangerous, but I know they are a fictional character portrayed on screen and not real". Thinking is often highly complex and is susceptible to being based on false information and sensory perceptions.

Carroll thinks that by merely entertaining a thought it can generate an affective emotional response, and seems to separate thoughts and beliefs into two separate mental entities e.g. one may have the thought of a lion and, separately, have the belief (an asserted thought) that it is dangerous. However, this does not seem quite right, and I think a better way to understand the situation is as belief as a single mental product – the thought of the lion is coloured (so to speak) by the assertion that it is dangerous. As I watch heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua enter the ring for his latest title fight on television, there seems to be no reason for separating the belief that he is on TV from the thought of him as being a boxer that I am watching. My experience suggests I am not aware of the distinctive trains of thoughts until I am asked to consciously consider the propositions, at which point my attention is detached from the image of Joshua and the experience is different. I want us to consider the experience of the image (of the monster, in horror film), similarly, as a bundled thought. Thinking of the monster will incorporate asserted and unasserted thoughts (such as it being dangerous and/or fictional) and these will be more or less evident to the spectator depending on circumstance. Sometimes we lose sight of certain thoughts, and this seems to be how real life is experienced. A number of real life personally experienced examples highlight considerations for fictional experience:

Example 1) I lose a sentimental object, which causes me great pain and I constantly think about it. I know I will never be able to replace it and its loss will affect me for a long time. However, as I sit down to cry I am called by someone who tells me some wonderful news about a mutual friend getting a new job after a horrible year. The thought of this overrides the thought of the lost object.

Example 2) On the top floor of my apartment is a room with a doorway that leads into a communal hallway. I walk upstairs to turn the lights off and see my heavy desk placed in front of the door, which I

am waiting to put into storage. I check the locks on the door, as I always do. I go downstairs to the living room to watch a film and, as I am doing so, hear footsteps that I know are coming from someone walking along the corridor outside the top room. I then hear further footsteps, which seem as though they are coming from the top room. I know this would be impossible without breaking down the door and moving the gargantuan desk. Further footsteps suddenly arouse in me the view that somebody is in the top room and, after momentarily freezing, I go to check it out. The view, as irrational as it might have been, masked my knowledge of the restrictions to such situation occurring.

Example 3) At a local fair I gather with a few hundred people in a big tent to watch a 3D film. Wearing uncomfortable red- and green- lens glasses, the film presents a group of clowns, misbehaving in a big top as they do; ladders spin around at head height and buckets of water-come-confetti are fictitiously thrown at the audience. Despite distracting aspects to the performance, such as uncomfortable glasses and people talking, the image of the ladder moving towards me makes me move my head and a couple of spectators fall over. The deception is quickly laughed away, as would be expected. In this situation, when the ladder moved towards me, was the moving of my head the result of the thought content of a ladder hitting me or the momentary belief that it was going to hit me? Being aware of its fictional nature, should I not have remained still? What I seemed to experience was a momentary concern for my safety that resulted in an appropriate and unreflective physical reaction. Of course, there was no feeling of monstrous malevolence but it seems that the response was driven by something belief-like.

These examples seem to demonstrate the ability to override (supposedly) strongly held beliefs by an appropriate stimulus. The latter two demonstrate the masking of knowledge (either *overriding belief* or *masking disbelief*). They also suggest we reconsider the temporal and information requirements for a thought to be considered *belief*. Perhaps most importantly, however, is the need to acknowledge the importance of *facts about the spectator* and *facts about the nature of the stimulus* that influence the experience, such as personal sensitivities (concerns about safety) and the type of stimuli that one receives. I will address all of these things in the next two chapters but will now close this chapter with an overview of the third key approach to explaining emotional responses to fiction – Illusion Theory. This widely disregarded explanation finds it origins in theory developed before the filmatic medium was in existence but in some regards looks to have been made for it. Illusionism offers clear answers to the conceptual and causal issues posed by the paradox but, as will be shown, has found little support and significant opposition.

C) Illusion Theory

The Theory

Illusion Theory purports that when engaged with a fiction it is possible for an illusion to take hold of the spectator. In the context of the art-horror experience, the theory suggests that "theatrical, or alternatively, cinematic techniques of verisimilitude so overwhelm us that we are deceived into believing that a monster really looms before us" (Carroll, 1990: 63). There is, in effect, a lost hold of reality where what is fictional is perceived as real. An illusionistic line of thinking dissolves the paradox by denying proposition b), holding that a spectator may believe in the existence and features of the object presented to them. In the case of a horror film, Illusionism would say that the spectator *believes* the monster to be real and, therefore, emotionally responds with *real horror*.

Illusionism is broadly disregarded, often with bemusing brevity and vitriol, by theorists. It is certainly the most derided of the theories that attempt to account for an audience's emotional response to fiction. Before discussing these objections, I will set out how illusion has been, or may be, viewed.

Illusion may be thought of as cognitive and/or sensory distortion. Illusion could be cognitive (*contextual*, such as believing something is real when it is in fact fictional) or sensory (mistakenly seeing or hearing something fictional as though it were real e.g. seeing a photograph of oranges that look real and/or present). The common feature of these types of illusion is a spectator perceiving something in a way that strictly it is not. In the context of art-horror, a spectator may be under the illusion that the monster exists and is really standing before them. Unlike a hallucination, film provides an external stimulus for a spectator to mistake the object in either a contextual and/or sensorial way.

In a horror film, we may watch the narrative play out in a location that may or may not exist in the real world. The narrative itself may be fabricated or an interpretation (potentially highly accurate) of a true story, played out within the temporal constraints of the filmatic medium in a way that is designed to be projected onto a screen. The protagonists are played by actors/actresses who are carrying out actions required by the narrative. We can see them on screen and hear them; strictly speaking we may not touch them and we cannot smell or taste them, except in some incredible circumstance where senses are engaged as a result of the narrative (perhaps in combination with imagination, at which point I am truly pushing the boundaries of potential). Using Walton's terminology, there would be truth within the world of the fiction but the film itself is a representation. The emotional object of the horror (the monster) may or may not possibly exist in the real world but remains, in actuality, a character in a projected (celluloid or digital) world.

Illusion Theory would seem to manifest itself in what I think are four principle situations:

i) A spectator is deceived into believing the content of the film is real or at least a credible reflection of reality. One believes that the monster could or does exist, although they remain medium aware. This situation is indicative of contextual illusion.

ii) A spectator is deceived into seeing an object as real but remains aware that the object is not literally real. This may be considered a non-epistemic sensory illusion.

iii) A spectator is deceived both cognitively and sensorially, perceiving an object, event or fictional world as reality itself. For either an extended period of time or for as long as one is engaged with the work of art then one is deceived into believing that it is actuality.

iv) A modification of iii), this situation suggests that the spectator is drawn into seeing the world as real (as per iii)) but only momentarily. This has often been likened to momentary forgetfulness and marks an important deviation from more usual thinking about illusion, which is seen as obtaining for a sustained period of time.

These options are not exhaustive but intended to highlight conceptions and gradations of illusory affect. The first situation suggests that the film creates an illusion of truth with respect to the existential status of the contents but not in a way that leads to a perception of presentness. The second proposal suggests a sensory deception. The third and fourth proposals are more akin to how someone wrapped up in a work of film horror says they feel. The difference between the two is primarily temporal and the third proposition may be deemed as highly unlikely as it would no doubt render a stationary position in a theatre seat impossible. Phenomenally, scenario iv) best describes art-horror experience, seemingly justifying a spectator's freezing or screaming etc. Spectators speak of being swept up in filmatic fiction and have emotional responses that, one may argue (as I will), more accurately mimic that of real life than one might expect of someone engaging with what they constantly know to be fictional. However, such momentary-ness is used to dismiss belief and, hence, illusionism too.

Illusionism addresses the *conceptual* issue raised by the paradox of fiction, proposing that the spectator is correctly labeling their emotion by the presence of belief or (potentially more pertinently) dismissing disbelief at the moment of arousal. It does not dismiss the spectator's introspected testimony. *Causally*, the theory explains the generation of a spectator's emotion by their perception of fictional content as existentially real, at least momentarily. As such, Illusionism would seem to offer a thorough account of an emotional response to fiction. However, even if illusion is plausible, it is highly *implausible* that it could explain the experience of all (or even many) types of fictional engagement; consider, for example, a stationary pencil drawing of stick men fighting or a Picasso painting as compared to the dynamic IMAX filmatic presentation of Reagan crawling backwards down the stairs towards the camera.

Illusionistic thinking acknowledges the ability of representational art to create illusion and the role of the spectator in engaging with fiction. The spectator's role has most famously been explained by the concept of *the willing suspension of disbelief*, originally proposed by Samuel Coleridge in *Biographica Literaria*. This notion suggests that we (the spectator) wants to engage with a work of fiction and

attempt to override knowledge of this fictionality when engaging, to allow the representation to be taken as real. When suspending our disbelief we allow “poetic faith” by entertaining the “interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of the emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them to be real.” (Carroll, 1990: 65) This psychological move suggests we create the illusion of truth with respect to something we know to be false.

It is important to highlight a number of questions pertaining to the nature of the illusion, namely, what the illusion is (of). These are particularly important in the context of art-horror:

- Existential awareness: Does the spectator perceive the monster as really existing?
- Medium awareness: Does the spectator lose sight of the fact they are watching a film, perceiving the monster as real and present (spatially and temporally)?
- Behaviour: Was the spectator’s behavioral response appropriate to the perception of the monster’s reality and threat?

If art-horror experience is deemed to positively answer the above questions it would suggest momentary *full blown* illusion (cognitive and sensory) and of the spectator taking the imagery as reality. Support of illusion is thin to say the least and two leading contemporary theorists, notable in their support of illusion in the experience of fiction, shy away from full blown illusion. Richard Allen[17] proposes that cinema provides an illusion of reality (sensory illusion), although what the spectator sees is always taken to be a fiction. Allen’s account, which I refer to in the next chapter, offers an account of the suspension of disbelief that occurs in response to representations that are vision and/or sound based. Alan Paskow’s[18] phenomenological approach to a spectator’s response to fictional representations proposes a refocus on the psychology and consciousness of the spectator. Paskow rightly suggests that Simulation and Thought theories have ignored the phenomenology of experience and that certain artistic representations generate an experience that feels much more like the experience of a real situation than a fictional one. Paskow considers that the characters of a fictional representation (like Michael Myers) can be perceived as existentially real (which generates emotional engagement) but denies that they are currently perceived (sensorily present) because the spectator is always aware of the representational nature of the image. Thus, full blown illusion is resisted by both, the former maintaining existential disbelief and the latter sensory disbelief.

Objections

[17] Allen (1995)
[18] Paskow (2004)

In this section, I highlight key objections to Illusion Theory, although I will resist rebuking them at this stage. Illusionism has been so widely ostracized it is difficult to know where to turn for an opening remark, so I will share the honours chronologically:

> "…those logically suspect and intuitively implausible views arise which attribute to the person moved by fiction either total confusion about the situation he finds himself in, or amazing gullibility" (Schaper, 1978: 39)

> "Hardly anyone ever literally believes the content of a fiction when he knows it be a fiction; if it happens at moments of forgetfulness or intense realism in the story (which I doubt), such moments are too brief to underwrite our often sustained responses to fictional events and characters" (Currie, 1990: 187-188)

> "The mistaking of plays and films for actual "real-life" events by benighted yokels is a standard, universally appreciated and old-age gag of both theatre and film just because one would have to be so dim-witted to make such an error…The apocryphal yokels are funny because of their extraordinary ignorance. They are not normal viewers. They are such stereotypical comic butts just because everyone else, the normal viewers, can feel superior to them" (Carroll, 1998: 96)

The overall position against Illusionism can, I think, be summed up by the view that spectators have a "rather tenuous grip on reality and an amazing ability to manipulate their beliefs at will" (Levinson, 1996: 42). The most significant challenge to Illusionism is that the spectator, as a result of engaging with a work that they *know* to be fictional, will always be aware that what they see or hear is a fiction. Eva Schaper calls this the "disclaimer" (Schaper, 1978: 32) of fictional engagement, and a number of conditions of engaging with filmatic fiction support this: a spectator has gone to the cinema with the intention of watching a work of art they know is fictional; they sit in a cinema seat with physical distance between themselves and the screen; they are surrounded by others; the imagery is projected onto a screen and may take visual and emotional perspectives unachievable in real life. Carroll says that since "we know that that which is portrayed in fictions is not actual", and that because the monsters are "illusionistically contrived", we will always remain "superstitious" (Carroll, 1990: 63) of the fiction.

The proof that the spectator really does not lose hold of reality is held to be their behaviour. Walton objects to the spectator believing what they see on the premise of a lack of belief, which is demonstrated by their behaviour. He suggests that half believing something is to "be not quite sure that it is true", and since Charles has no doubt about whether he is in the presence of real slime he does not act in the way that we expect him to:

> "even a hesitant belief, a mere suspicion, that the slime is real would induce any normal person seriously to consider calling the police and warning his family." (Walton, 1978: 235)

Even allowing that at some “gut” (unconscious) level he fears (but intellectually does not), it is argued that Charles lacks even the inclination to leave the cinema; the physical responses do not give us reason to infer belief, which would make such responses reasonable:

> “if one really believed that the theater were beset by lethal shape changers, demons, intergalactic cannibals, or toxic zombies, one would hardly sit by for long. One would probably attempt to flee, to hide, to protect oneself, or to contact the proper authorities…People, that is, just don’t behave as though they really believed there were monsters in the vicinity when they consume horror spectacles.” (Carroll, 1990: 63)

If belief is inferred, viewer behaviour is viewed as “inexplicably complacent, if not downright self-destructive and dumb” (Carroll, 1990: 63) As such, knowledge of the fictionality, established in advance and presumably always present, is deemed so strong that it prevents any sort of cognitive slippage during the engagement.

Illusion is certainly held by theorists to need to hold for more than mere moments, and this is a critical aspect of challenges to it. The idea of losing hold of reality momentarily and believing the object of the emotion to be real, but the moment being too brief to be able to react legitimately, is unconvincing to Walton and Carroll. Walton believes that quasi-fear responses (e.g. a racing heart) are long-term and yet still not responded to, indicating the presence of continuous knowledge of the fiction. Carroll agrees, suggesting that forgetfulness suffers the same behavioural challenges as more persistent deception and that persons in this situation should “still behave more prudently than normal horror audiences do” (Carroll, 1990: 64)

In comparison to feelings of pity that can be applied to fiction even when not watching the film, Walton argues that the momentary-fear theory, “even if it were plausible, would not throw much light on cases in which we apparently have other psychological attitudes towards fictions.” (Walton, 1978: 236) Using the example of the movie *Jaws*, Walton suggests that one should question whether the audience was in fact afraid of the actual shark in the movie or, in his opinion more likely, fearful of sharks in general. This move attempts to undermine Charles’ testimony, who speaks as though he was under the illusion that the slime was going to get *him*, by suggesting an aspect of his psychological attitude was directed at generic slime and not the one on screen.

A causal challenge to illusionism is the spectator’s assumed control over beliefs relating to works of fiction, and this is linked to the notion of *the willing suspension of disbelief.* The willing suspension of disbelief holds that in order to engage with a work of fiction in an intense way, a spectator will actively suspend their knowledge of a work’s fictionality while engaged. This psychological move suggests the spectator creates the illusion of truth (or suppresses disbelief) with respect to the fiction, and this creates a psychological state in which they may end up believing what they see. The suspension has usually been deemed to be of truths related to the fiction, such as “Freddy Krueger does not exist”. I view this concept as the way in which the spectator is seen as contributing to a dispositional state in

which a spectator may be susceptible to being overcome, where the spectator's knowledge is "somehow thrown out of gear in a way that enables or permits us to respond to depictions and descriptions of him [Dracula] with emotional conviction" (Carroll, 1990: 64). Suspending disbelief is vehemently opposed by a number of theorists. Carroll views the concept as paradoxical and Schaper's noteworthy rebuttal suggests it is both paradoxical *and* unnecessary.

Carroll argues that the state of the audience member trying to suspend their disbelief is fundamentally different from those affected by illusion, deception or forgetfulness. These states imply "passivity and a lack of self-consciousness on the part of the audience" (Carroll, 1990: 65). Rather than being deceived or forgetful, which implies a lack of knowledge, "willing suspension" implies audience activity and that for the duration of the suspension the audience is able to accept the fiction (characters, events etc) as real. In the case of Freddy Krueger, it would suggest that the spectator (through volition) suspends the knowledge that he is not real and this enables them to believe that he is. The action to "voluntarily opt to give up our conviction" (Carroll, 1990: 65), seemingly allows for an emotional response that presumes the opposite of our conviction to be true i.e. that Freddy exists. Further, we may or may not be conscious of this activity of willing. The first challenge is that if one is not conscious of the act of willing (through repression or the subconscious), then it is hardly a "willing" suspension at all. Second, if one actively wills it would seem illogical (or practically impossible) to think that one can will a "disbelief". If, as Carroll points out, "disbelief is just negative belief" it "seems to entail that it is possible for one to will what one believes" (Carroll, 1990: 65). However, one does not seem to be able to will beliefs in this way. If you know something to be true, then so long as you are conscious of the falsehood of the proposition then it would be difficult to believe it to be otherwise. Beliefs are attained through knowledge or perception, so one must ask what might change the viewer's conviction as to the fictionality of events. To this end, an act of self-deception looks like a non-starter because actively willing something whilst simultaneously believing the opposite seems illogical.

Alternatively, while watching *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the theory might be viewed as proposing *not* that I am willing the belief that Freddy is real but *desiring* the suspension of the belief that he is not real. Carroll argues that this is also not possible because a "condition…for suspending our belief in this matter was that the belief was being undermined. Our conviction had been shaken. Evidence and argument was piling up against it." This suggests that prior to being able to will the suspension the beliefs must somehow be under fire, giving us "grounds to at least suspect that it is false" (Carroll, 1990: 66).

Carroll rejects the idea of controllable belief, where one puts themselves in situations that might challenge commonly held beliefs, saying:

> "this measured admission of the restricted degree to which the suspension of belief can be voluntarily guided offers no support to those who would wish to apply the notion to fictions. For we do not seek out the sort of contestations of our belief that Dracula does not exist in order to suspend it. Not only is there nothing to be found to undermine it; so

> there is nowhere to look for countervailing opinions. Moreover, even if there were countervailing opinions, we don't search for them while indulging our fictions. And, in any case, I submit we never actually give up our conviction that Dracula is a fiction." (Carroll, 1990: 67)

Schaper's challenge to the willing suspension of disbelief is that it is ultimately unnecessary, and this is based upon her view of the structure and order of beliefs in fictional engagement. Schaper proposes that in a spectator's engagement with fiction, they hold different types of belief. To begin, she views the spectator as holding *first-order beliefs*, which are beliefs about the spectator's knowing they are engaging with a fiction e.g. Freddy is not alive, I am watching a film, and Freddy is played by an actor. Schaper suggests the spectator must have these beliefs "in order to have any appropriate response to the work at all" (Schaper, 1978: 35). The spectator is also deemed to hold *second-order beliefs*, which are related to facts about the characters and events that move them. These beliefs require no existential commitment i.e. "something presented in fiction can be grasped as an event to be believed in without thereby assuming that such an event has a spacetime location I inhabit" (Schaper, 1978: 42) Both types of belief can be true or false but she views it a requirement that one holds first-order beliefs in order to have the second-order beliefs:

> "The relevant beliefs about objects of compassion, grief, indignation or sadness are the second-order beliefs which not only do not conflict with any first-order beliefs which are entailed by our knowledge that we are dealing with fiction, but are actually made possible by them." (Schaper, 1978: 43)

Schaper's view is that if one is easily taken in and loses sight of the first order beliefs then it is not a "willing" suspension at all (knowledge claims must be left intact for the willing suspension to take place) and the spectator is seen as being either totally confused or incredibly gullible. If willing does occur, however, then it occurs in relation to second-order beliefs, and these not only do not require first-order beliefs to be suspended but they also do not contain existential claims. Hence, theorists that suggest a spectator willingly suspends disbelief are seen as misidentifying the beliefs being willed – they are not about the knowledge of the fiction but about the character and events *in* the fiction, and these contain no existential beliefs at all. Consequently, Schaper suggests that presuppositions of the paradox (such as, i) knowledge entails belief, and ii) emotional responses require belief) are left intact and the willing suspension of disbelief is seen as unnecessary as an explanation to dissolve the paradox of fiction (since it deals with beliefs within the context of knowledge of the fiction, unaffecting the paradox).

The final two challenges to illusion are, I think, less important to the objectives of this paper, although the first has prompted significant discussion over recent decades and will receive air time in the next chapter.

According to Carroll, the kinds of art-horror-inducing illusions created by works of art would eliminate the possibility of appreciation or enjoyment; for example, if one became convinced that Freddy actually

existed and was present, then according to Carroll it would be “difficult to continue to savor the story” (Carroll, 1990: 64). He says:

> “A very condition of there being an institution of fiction from which we derive entertainment and pleasure is that we know that the persons and events are not actual…Obviously, in the case of horror, we could not be secure in our enjoyment of the spectacle if we believed in its reality. Were the illusion theory true, horror would be too unnerving for all save heroes, consummate masochists, and professional vampire killers.“ (Carroll, 1990: 64)

Lastly, an argument made against Illusionism is its inability to explain, or be applied to, literature. How does one understand the exact illusion that can be applied to certain narratives when the surrounding circumstances do not lend themselves to the illusion e.g. reading *The Exorcist* (set in Georgetown) while sitting in Highgate? To the extent illusion has any truth Carroll suggests that “illusion-talk probably is best applied to visual phenomena” (Carroll, 1990: 63) or else one will have to develop a theory of literary illusion that explains the behaviour of readers. I think this is a telling remark.

As stated at the beginning of this section, I do not intend rebuking challenges to illusion here (I will do this in Chapters 3 and 4), although I will highlight some considerations that should be made in assessing their validity.

To begin, it is taken for granted by some that the spectator’s knowledge of the fiction never leaves them and that if it does they are considered stupid (my labeling), childlike or gullible. In my opinion, this commitment to the knowledge disclaimer wreaks of intellectual snobbery that belies audience experience. *Causally*, there are real problems with the challenges. First, the psychology (activity and capability) of the spectator is broadly ignored and, together with neglecting the capabilities of the medium of representation, challenges fail to take the possibility of overriding one’s knowledge seriously. Interestingly, Schaper, Currie and Yanal all seem to permit a lost hold of reality but with respect to certain types of spectator who are, for want of a better expression, psychologically questionable. These are not viewed as ordinary spectators, but I think they are wrong to claim this. Second, the willing suspension of disbelief is viewed as being an activity that is ongoing, constituting either a conflict of beliefs or focus on beliefs that entail no existential importance, but these are not the only conceptions. Lastly, the timing and duration of such willing is misunderstood. *Conceptually*, the notion of illusion requires reassessment. The duration of illusory affect is currently almost certainly required to be more than mere seconds and this seems to be intimately linked to the notion of belief, which is seen as requiring conscious assessment (an occurrent belief). Given the momentary nature of art-horror, one needs to understand what kind of belief is justified in this context and, potentially, whether belief is required at all.

With respect to the institution of fiction, I respectfully suggest this issue is worth sidelining, as should the theory's applicability to multiple media. These are unnecessary. A discussion of literature would seem liable to court confusion or question a theory that works perfectly well for the filmatic medium.

Summary

By considering key approaches that attempt to explain a spectator's emotional response to fictions, it seems clear there is nothing unusual or irrational in a spectator responding emotionally to such works. However, the experience of art-horror seems inexplicable under the two most popular explanatory approaches. The most compelling account, phenomenally at least, is provided by some form of Illusionism, although this has been strongly rejected by theorists. At the heart of this opposition are claims about fictional interactions, namely, that the spectator *never forgets that they are engaging with a fiction* and their *behaviour does not indicate belief*. Consequently, Illusionism has been swept aside.

As will be clear from the preceding analysis, there are a number of shortcomings in the key groups of theories, which can be broadly categorized under the headings of *facts about the work* and *facts about the spectator*:

- Facts about the work
    - Acknowledgment and analysis of the particular capabilities of the medium of representation, such as the type of sensory stimuli involved and the environment in which the work is experienced
    - Analysis of the content and the way in which it is presented
- Facts about the spectator
    - Acknowledgment of the spectator's role in engaging with the work, including an appreciation of psychological traits and susceptibilities e.g. desire, imagination, expectation and compliance
    - Analysis of the particular emotion aroused

In failing to acknowledge or sufficiently account for these aspects, Simulation and Thought theories try to force a square peg into a round hole - not all emotional experiences in relation to fiction are explicable under these. Both fail to capture the experience of art-horror, undermine one's ability to label their emotions and are causally unable to explain how one may sit in frozen paralysis (or it would seem implausible).

The correct approach to explaining one's emotional response to fiction requires discrimination and this has been far from forthcoming in popular theory, which seems to have been focused on dissolving the paradox of fiction. Without discriminating between emotions and showing how they individually work we will be unable to provide a thorough explanation of an audience's interaction with fiction. Since I am attempting to understand the logic of the *horror emotion* experienced in relation to *film*, I approach the problem from a more refined (narrower) perspective than many eminent theorists.

I propose that Illusion Theory, in some form, has been mistakenly overlooked; no-one has really given it a voice (causally and conceptually) in the context of a specific emotion and medium. The art-horror filmatic experience, described in Chapter 1, offers a reason for revisiting Illusionism. I hypothesize that the complex and immersive nature of horror film engagement (acknowledging facts about the film and facts about the spectator) offers a compelling reason for accepting a modified conception of Illusion Theory as an explanation of the art-horror experience, one that supports a modified conception of the suspension of disbelief. This will finally offer an answer to the two important questions that have shadowed this project since the very beginning, namely, what are we afraid *of*? And what are we moved *to*?

Chapter 3

Cinematic Illusion

Introduction

> "I took Gotham's white knight and brought him down to our level. It wasn't hard. You see, madness, as you know, is like gravity. All it takes is a little push."
>
> The Joker, *The Dark Knight* (2008)

In this chapter I want to be constructive. I aim to provide a causal explanation of a spectator's emotional response to select horror movies and show how the art-horror experience, described in Chapter 1, is possible. I will do this by analysing some aspects of cinematic experience that provide the conditions for a spectator to be psychologically disposed to momentarily experience the monster as real and present, and hence to fear for oneself.

The aspects I analyse relate to both sides of the interactional relationship of filmatic experience, namely, the spectator and the film. I believe that *facts about the spectator* and *facts about the film* contribute to an experience that is best described as illusory, albeit one not as currently conceived. There is something right about illusion but Carroll and others parody the notion. At the core of this parody is something that is missed, which is the momentary nature of art-horror, and this oversight manifests itself in the language used to describe illusionistic experience. I want to move away from this playground, note the momentary nature of the experience and describe how art-horror in this context is possible.

I view the contributing factors to the dispositional state in which illusionistic art-horror may be experienced, as: i) the nature of a spectator's engagement with film; ii) the emotion, and; iii) the medium of film.

The spectator's *desire* and willingness to become immersed in the cinematic experience leads to their activity of *identifying* with characters of the narrative. Empathetic identification leads the spectator to experience intense emotions *with* the protagonist of the movie. A key factor in the spectator's interest in and engagement with the film, and one rarely focused on by theorists, is the *emotion* involved. I suggest that emotions are not all part of a homogenous class and that the self-directed, fear-based emotion of horror plays on primordial concerns spectators are biologically programmed to be sensitive to. The way in which the fictional objects are presented is crucial to the experience of art-horror and I

propose that the *medium of film*, which provides a compelling and realistic presentation of objects and events, has the capacity to generate contextual and sensory illusion.

Together, these factors leave the spectator susceptible to a *trigger* that leads to the monster being momentarily experienced as real and present. The trigger, I suggest, is a visual perspective evident in paradigm horror that promotes an egocentric perceptual position. Understanding the monster as evil and threatening, the momentary experience of art-horror is thus plausibly evoked. This experience lacks awareness of both engagement with a cinematic medium and the fictitious nature of the object of concern. This is momentary *illusion*.

I believe this offers a compelling model for how a spectator may view a cinematically presented object as real and present, and justifies the behavioural response of momentary frozenness. This model corrects the shortcomings of other theories of emotional responses to fiction by placing emphasis on the psychological and procedural aspects of spectatorship, which I view as providing a modified version of the *willing suspension of disbelief*. I will discuss this further in Chapter 4, with reference to a non-cinematic experience that I think further supports the illusionistic nature of art-horror experience and offers an alternative way of looking at the epistemic status of the experience.

Surprisingly, perhaps, I accept the accusation of spectator gullibility, but this is not to undermine their psychological constitution for there are so many who experience art-horror. I simply acknowledge dispositional traits and the power of certain films to play on these. I also accept there will be challenge to what I propose because some are unable or unwilling to experience it. My theory will not be applicable to those cinemagoers but I suggest it offers an explanation for the response of other spectators. Lastly, I do not view art-horror experience as an exception to the rule. Art-horror is indicative of a particular art-driven experience, the explanation of which has been swept aside because it fails to explain cinematic experience generally. By taking illusion seriously in the context of a subset of a film genre, we may better understand other emotions aroused in response to other genres and/or media.

A) Cinematic Engagement

> "We watch films with our eyes and ears, but we experience films with our minds and bodies. Films do things to us, but we also do things with them. A film pulls a surprise; we jump. It sets up scenes; we follow them. It plants hints; we remember them. It prompts us to feel emotions; we feel them. If we want to know more – the how, the secrets of the craft – it would seem logical to ask the filmmakers. What enables them to get us to respond so precisely? Unfortunately for us, they usually can't tell us...they leave that to film scholars, psychologists, and others" (Bordwell, 2012: 1)

In this section, I will explore the role of the spectator in the art-horror experience - following my terminology, this section analyses some important *facts about the spectator.* It is my hypothesis that the nature of a spectator's engagement with cinematic fiction is a contributing factor to the *dispositional state* where the content may take hold in a significantly impactful way.

I begin this section with an overview of *why* a spectator would want to watch, and become emotionally involved with, a film. I then analyse *how* a spectator engages with film.

i) Why Spectators Engage with Film

"You survived. You don't come out the other side of something like this weaker"

Father Perez, *Annabelle* (2014)

Introduction

Why someone would want to engage with, and become highly immersed in, a work of art is a question that has been discussed for centuries and has been at the forefront of film theory since inception. Over recent decades the reason for attending to horror film has coveted increased attention, for it is popularly held that experiencing a so-called *negative emotion* like fear is fundamentally undesirable. If horror film can lead to the experience I propose, the situation may be considered even more difficult to explain.

While it is not the intention of this paper to provide an exhaustive list of reasons for attending to horror film (this would likely warrant a further thesis), it would be remiss of me not to address the issue because the spectator's psychological constitution is a fundamental driver of the art-horror experience. Why is it that film, and in particular horror film, has the audience it has?

There are compelling reasons for spectators wanting to engage with films in the way that they do, to become immersed to the extent they do, and the evocation of art-horror fails to prevent such engagement (were this not obvious enough with the scores of people that go to cinemas to be horrified).

Engagement

A spectator's desire to engage with film *generally* is explicable in a number of ways, but may be captured by two high-level reasons: *pleasure* and *value*. These are neither mutually exclusive nor necessarily independent.

One may hold that filmatic experience is, simply put, *pleasurable*. It is justifiably held by many, including Carroll, that it is an *institution of fiction* that spectators must be able to take some form of pleasure in engaging with works of art. Pleasure may be taken in many aspects of filmatic experience: appreciating the artistry of the work; seeing new worlds, and being interested in and exhilarated by its content; experiencing emotion (both new and familiar); engaging in an activity with others and being able to discuss the experience afterwards (social factors). Horror film would seem to offer many, if not all, of these reasons for engagement.

The pleasure of entertaining fiction that focuses on so-called negative emotions has been addressed by many theorists - famously, Aristotle (the *Poetics*) and Hume (*On Tragedy*) - and I wish to highlight some pertinent horror-focused contemporary views here. Carroll suggests that the pleasure taken from engaging with horror fiction is explicable in terms of narrative structure. Narratives typically rely on the spectator's desire to know something and, in the case of horror fiction, he deems the spectator as interested in an *unknowable* being (a category mistake), establishing its existence, noticing its particular properties and then determining whether the protagonist can destroy it. By focusing on the unknowable, horror fictions thus evoke *cognitive pleasures*:

> "pleasure derived from the horror fiction and the source of our interest in it resides, first and foremost, in the processes of discovery, proof, and confirmation that horror fictions often employ" (Carroll, 1990: 184)

The appearance of the monster, within the construct of an interesting narrative, is deemed to satisfy the spectator's curiosity. However:

> "the locus of our gratification is not the monster as such but the whole narrative structure in which the presentation of the monster is staged" (Carroll, 1990: 181)

Thus, the spectator's pleasure comes from the process of discovering the monster, which is the job of the narrative, and the resulting disgust and fear is simply the "price to be paid for the pleasure of their disclosure" (Carroll, 1990: 184). Carroll acknowledges a criticism of this position – that the spectator's

interest is purely a function of plot – but counters by proposing that while plots heighten curiosity, the monsters are themselves inherently interesting to spectators because of their unknowability and they generate curiosity whether they are in poor narratives or viewed in a non-narrative context.

While this offers a partially compelling reason for attendance to such works, it fails to demonstrate that this satisfaction outweighs the potential unpleasantness of the experienced emotion. In this regard, Roger Scruton provides a more compelling account of why horror fictions interest spectators, by considering their psychological disposition. Acknowledging that spectators may want to engage with a work of art to appreciate the execution of techniques or for conventions of the genre or medium, Scruton proposes that there can also be something less artistic about engagement, including potentially deep-seated desires to experience events portrayed on screen impossible or undesirable in real life[19].

Images of monsters and thoughts of being in situations portrayed in horror *do* hold fascination with audiences. In real life, one is typically prohibited from putting oneself in mortal harm and film would seem to offer the spectator a substitute. Whilst one may have a desire to witness events that mirror those played out in one's mind, Scruton says that "fear, sympathy and respect for human life make it abhorrent…to realize this desire, either by producing the circumstance which fascinates…or be frequenting those places where it might be found" (Scruton, 1983: 38). If a representational medium can satisfy these desires but without putting the spectator in harm's way, then it is understandable why a spectator would pursue this. I view this as similar to thrill-seekers going on roller coasters. Scruton proposes that film can satisfy both artistic and non-artistic desires through different faculties, the former pursued in *imagination* and the latter in *fantasy*. A desire:

> "exhibits fantasy when (i) its object in thought is not the object towards which it is expressed, or which it pursues; (ii) the object pursued acts as a substitute for the object in thought; and (iii) the pursuit of the substitute is to be explained in terms of a personal prohibition" (Scruton, 1983: 37)

Film, Scruton suggests, may afford a spectator an opportunity to perceive an object not as a representation but as the perfect simulacrum of the unreal object, and makes a distinction between *realism* and *realization*, which are sought in imagination and fantasy, respectively. *Realism* is the attempt to represent the world as it truly is; this requires no substitute for the object of desire and is pursued in *imagination. Realization* is the desire to experience an object more realistically by way of a substitute, and this is pursued in *fantasy.* In both situations there is an impression of reality but the former tries to understand the object and the latter tries to experience it. This fantasy experience is more intense than one that is imagined and goes right to the heart of our real, personal desires (to

[19] Hanich's position is similar – see Chapter 1

experience the object as it is and not for the way it is portrayed). Accordingly, the object one aims to perceive in fantasy will only be satisfied through something:

> "grossly obvious, or explicit…not a highly mannered or literary description, nor a painterly portrayal, of its chosen subject, but a perfect simulacrum – such as a waxwork, or a photograph" (Scruton, 1983: 38)

This thinking justifies the pursuit of particular modes of representation. Fantasy would seem to demand the presentation of objects in a medium that minimises (negates) awareness of the conventions or styles of the medium. To get close to the real thing leads one to seek the cinematic medium, which allows the object to be as close to being "perfectly 'realized" as possible, and which "leaves nothing to the imagination" (Scruton, 1983: 38). Notwithstanding my hunch that Scruton's proposal reflects a desire to distinguish between types of art deemed 'easy' or devoid of artistic merit (fantasy) and others in which genuine engagement is more difficult but worthwhile for artistic merit (imagination), he credibly captures the psyche of the horror filmgoer.

Berys Gaut has famously offered an explanation with horror fiction engagement that focuses on the spectator's desire to experience the "negative emotions" aroused by them. Gaut's intriguing account argues that the feeling aroused by horror fiction is not itself a negative feeling sitting alongside the pleasure taken in things such as the narrative, but is itself a source of pleasure. Accurately summing up how horror film spectators feel when those films fail to do the job they are meant to, he says:

> "consider Norman, a disappointed spectator who comes out of a horror film and complains that it wasn't scary enough. He wanted to be *really* frightened, but the film hardly raised a mild tremor of apprehension in him" (Gaut, 1993: 319)

Those suggesting a paradox in feeling pleasure in the experience of emotions like horror, Gaut argues, have misinterpreted the nature of emotion, specifically that negative emotions are "understood as intrinsically unpleasant" (Gaut, 1993: 327). Gaut suggests that one should understand the negativity of emotions not as necessarily unpleasant but as incorporating negative evaluations, such as "the monster means me harm". *Typically*, he says, spectators find both the objects of the emotion *and* the emotion unpleasant, but that it is "only a conceptual requirement that people *typically* don't enjoy them" (Gaut, 1993: 327) and this holds in real life as well in relation to fiction. As such, spectators may take pleasure in the experience of horror and there is no paradox.

While I admire Gaut's attempt to dissolve the paradox, it is not immediately apparent that art-horror is pleasurable although I think the overall emotional experience may, on balance, be deemed pleasurable. A far more plausible explanation is that pleasure is derived in the lead up to, and in the relief from, the emotion (realising that one is not truly in danger), although one may still question if this is enough to outweigh the momentary fear for oneself.

I have thus far sidelined pleasure in the art form itself (cinematography, direction etc) because audiences seem to seek out horror movies for the emotional experience and what this brings, not the artistry of the medium, as worthy of praise as that may be. Certainly, it is not the first thing on spectators' lips when discussing horror film and I think this provides good reason for saying it is a secondary reason for engaging.

Engagement need not only be directed at hedonic ends, a point made by Kathleen Stock. Considering Scruton's position, Stock agrees that "a fantasy is a response to a desire for some situation S, where the fantasy represents S as being the case" (Stock, 2009: 2) but suggests not everything in the fantasy needs to represent S, only some aspects of it. An example would be the desire for others' caring about a subject where the subject fantasizes about being ill. If the desire is to experience something for an end, it is typically seen as an hedonic end e.g. the desire to see dead bodies (deemed morally transgressive) would cause the subject to look for realistic waxworks, thinking that only these types of object would provide the kind of pleasure that seeing dead bodies will bring. However, fantasy may also be "invited by a work for some cognitive end" (Stock, 2009: 5), such as fantasizing about war to better understand the consequences of conflict. Consequently, she suggests that one should ignore Scruton's notion of moral transgression and accept that some works invite fantasy responses and that these are appropriate to it.

The second line of reasoning for engaging with film is *value*. I do not intend providing a detailed account of the artistic value of film, whether "relative or absolute, subjective or intersubjective" (Budd, 1995: 3) However, I will highlight why imputed value may encourage spectators to engage with film in the way they do.

The term *value* may be defined in a number of ways but, broadly speaking, as *good*, *better* or *best* (and their inverse referents *bad*, *worse* and *worst*). These terms are evaluative; the term *good*, for example, can be used as a *simpliciter* ("it is good that you managed to escape from that man"), *good for* claims ("this crucifix is good for you to have if you are entering that old castle the vampire frequents") or as a *predicate modifier* ("that is a good crucifix"). Each evaluation is attached to a point of view. Value is often categorised in terms of *intrinsic* and *instrumental* value. One may hold that emotional experience is intrinsically valuable, although what is often meant is that emotional experience is valuable for what it leads to e.g. a more experienced person able to make better decisions. The filmatic experience may be valuable for its instrumental (causal) role in bringing about an *end*, which may or may not have intrinsic value; pleasure may be viewed as intrinsically valuable (viewed under the construction of "pleasure is good" above). I do not wish to dwell on this distinction, but note the compelling view of Levinson, who suggests that experiences are not "the proper subjects of attributions of intrinsic value" (Levinson, 1996: 412). Rather, experiences (artistic or actual) are not unconditionally valuable when taken out of the context of a life; feeling horrified, or even the existence of a horror-inducing film, is likely not intrinsically valuable out of the context of what it affords to a subject. I would like to focus on how filmatic experience may be instrumentally valuable.

Malcolm Budd summarises some types of value that works of art are judged to have:

> "A work of art can have many different kinds of value – a cognitive value, a social value, an educational value, a historical value, a sentimental value, a religious value, an economic value, a therapeutic value; it can possess as many kinds of value as there are points of view from which it can be evaluated" (Budd, 1995: 1)

Ignoring what I would describe as less important value, such as keeping a spectator occupied, the experience of film may be described as valuable for all of the reasons Budd highlights. Of experiential pertinence; films may educate a spectator (e.g. historical information or emotional experience), have sentimental value (e.g. home movie recordings of births and marriages) and may be used for therapeutic purposes (e.g. stress relief, relieving fears of flying).

A popular reason for valuing art generally is education, both cognitive and emotional. Films may provide insight into, amongst others: historical events and persons; cultures and pastimes; political systems; cultural norms, moralities and religious practises; how decisions shape outcomes; issues that ourselves and others face. Films provide a wealth of factual insight and in some cases *demanding*, as with *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Inside Job*, the audience to reflect on content. Film can be extremely influential and valuable for this reason and emotional affectation is what often leads to real life action.

Since understanding of the real world is gained through (amongst other things) the process of empathising, the experience of film may credibly be held to benefit actual life too. One may come to understand the world better through the entertaining of fictions; by simulating situations, imaginatively projecting oneself into another's shoes, understanding both the possible causal permutations of decisions and how others may view the world. In the next section I propose that *empathy* plays a significant role in one's engagement with horror movies.

Emotionally, it was famously proposed by Aristotle in the *Poetics* that part of the value of tragic art is in the arousal and catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear. By the arousal and purging of these emotions, fictions may be deemed emotionally educational. Films are but a relatively new mode of representation, helping to evoke a range of emotions and may thus be viewed as valuable for these reasons, but also because they broaden one's emotional experience. Experiencing new or variations of previously experienced emotions, whether through actual or fictionally-created situations, provides practise as to the ways in which one can (and perhaps should) respond in such situations.

Tragedy has been popularly held as providing great worldly insight. I do not believe that horror films imbue one with great insight but they certainly offer insight into how one feels when either another or oneself is in harm's way, as well as other things that may be beneficial (never investigate a haunted house alone; always make sure the monster is dead! etc). Horror aims at arousing primordial concerns of spectators (self-preservation, avoidance of pain) and this suggests limited cognitive value. Fear is less complex than other emotions, a point I will address in the second section.

Another value of watching horror films may be the strengthening of one's resolve. Being exposed to the types of being and emotion that horror films promote would potentially be valuable were one really confronted by a mortally threatening being. This strengthening may also be pleasurable; successfully managing to experience an unpleasant ordeal is often seen as a badge of honour and which can be relayed to others.

Summary

There are many good reasons for wanting to engage with horror films. Just as one will endure the pain of a tattoo or fear of flying to achieve an end, which may be both pleasurable and valuable, the desire to become immersed in horror films is explicable. Even allowing for the momentary experience of art-horror as unpleasant, it fails to prohibit the desire and/or willingness to endure it. One may be fully aware of what entertaining such films is capable of emotionally entailing but view this as a price worth paying for the overall experience. It is interesting to note that audiences flock to cinemas to be petrified by films like *The Exorcist, The Blair Witch Project, The Conjuring, The Ring (US), Paranormal Activity* and *The Amityville Horror* (original), but steer clear of more stomach-churning films like *The Human Centipede* or Category 3 Asian horrors like the *Guinea Pig* series. To me this suggests a determination that valuable emotional arousal is not involved, that nausea induction is not a price worth paying, and that my definition of art-horror has something going for it.

Without veering into the territory of memoir, I think it important for someone proposing a theory of horror film spectatorship to explain why they watch horror movies, particularly if one believes that they can lead to a momentary perception of the monster as real and present. Theorists often argue from the position of intellectual outsider, rather than experiencing cinemagoer, and theory feels detached from experience. My experience suggests that value and pleasure are involved, and both are related to the emotion aroused. I watch horror films *to be horrified*, not to take pleasure in the narrative. I simultaneously feel excitement and trepidation at the thought of being frightened but know the broader context of the experience - shortly after arousal I will remember I am watching a movie. Even as a horror film fan I do not straightforwardly view horror films as enjoyable, although others might. I enjoy the excitement of potentially being horrified before watching a movie and the sense of relief as the emotion dissipates, but choose when and where to watch them. I avoid watching horror films alone at night in my apartment because of what I know might happen (being fearful and on edge); that is *not* pleasurable. A reason for watching so many horrors, and being disappointed by their failure to horrify, is that I find the horror experience fortifying. I enjoy being able to talk about these experiences with others (admitting to my momentary horror) and value the idea that, over time, these films may make me more emotionally resilient.

Crucially, I understand that in order experience what the work has to offer (hopefully, art-horror), I must allow myself to be absorbed. I am disposed to watching the film in a certain way, focusing on the

content in a way that is not overshadowed by constant questioning of authenticity (although this sometimes happens), as this allows me to become cognitively and emotionally engaged. Notwithstanding, it is also possible to be engrossed by the film despite an unwillingness to be so. As such, *I propose rewording the "disclaimer" of spectatorship* (Schaper's terminology but implied by Walton and Carroll, also) that has plagued discussion of emotional arousal in response to fiction, namely, that the spectator *knows* they are engaging with a fiction. I suggest the disclaimer is not "I know what I am attending to is fictional" (known beforehand and deemed present throughout the viewing), but "I know that what I will watch is a fiction but I may be overwhelmed momentarily and not be aware that is the case; it is acceptable for this to occur, even with content that may horrify me, because the experience will be just that – momentary".

ii) How Spectators Engage with Film

"I wanna play a game"

Jigsaw, *Saw* (2004)

Introduction

The way in which a spectator engages with a film determines their level of *immersion* (absorption), and I assume the spectator wants (*desire*) to become immersed in the filmatic narratives for reasons discussed in the previous section. Should a spectator watch a film but have no interest in being cognitively or emotionally engaged, they may remain quite unmoved; however, it is possible for a film to grip the spectator despite such barriers being up. Engagement is often more passive than others give it credit for, for very good reason, as I will discuss in the following section.

In attempting to explain our experience of certain horror films, I refer back to Chapter 1 in which I described the experience of the art-horrified spectator. I proposed that the experience entails the spectator's momentary perception of the monster as present and a threat to them. To achieve this, an *attitude* towards the monster needs to be taken. If a monster was simply destroying a city one might be unmoved, seeing it as a generic act with little personal impact and one may even be enthralled by its power. When the monster means something to a spectator it may deeply affect them.

I view the process by which the spectator engages with horror movie fiction as the *imaginative* project of *getting into the protagonist's shoes*. The term *identification* has been broadly used to describe this, although I propose refining to *empathising*. Empathy is at the heart of a spectator's engagement with horror film, helping to arouse emotions towards the fiction, and should be understood as the spectator

taking a perspective like that of the protagonist. By doing this a spectator attains an understanding of a character's beliefs, desires and feelings, and may feel *with* them, not *for* them. This emotional direction distinguishes empathy from sympathy and marks a detour from Carroll's view that the spectator's concern is directed at (for) the characters of fictional narratives. Horror films often *demand* empathy.

Imaginative identification is natural, an instinctive psychological activity one may not be conscious of undertaking (or even wanting to). The empathetic project of film spectatorship is like that of real life. Further, it is not a solely imaginative process; one has imagery and narrative context to shape their thinking. This is important in the context of a contemporary view of physiological empathy I will describe.

Empathy has garnered significant attention from theorists, a major objection being the notion of empathising with fictional characters who do not exist (and we know do not exist) and thus strictly have no beliefs, desires or attitudes. I suggest this challenge is easily overcome.

Identification

> "[The viewer] certainly has to identify…if he did not the film would become incomprehensible" (Metz, 1977: 46)

It has been suggested that emotions directed at fictions are not the same as those experienced in everyday life, that filmatic engagement is like a child playing a game of make-believe. However, while both are deemed imaginative activities, there is a big difference; the child takes centre stage whereas the film spectator looks in on the characters and it is for those that he/she is deemed to feel emotion. Cases like Charles', where the monster seems to address the spectator, are seen as exceptions to the way fictions normally operate. I do *not* believe these are exceptions but, acknowledging that film spectators are *generally* asked to feel *for* characters, let us analyse how these feelings are aroused in this context.

Imagination is central to emotional engagement with film. "To imagine" can be considered as *to conceive of something* (objects, scenarios, thoughts etc) that is not necessarily present or true. In addition, imagination may be deemed a faculty that allows certain conceptions to be entertained. Imagination has certainly been conceived of in more refined ways, as demonstrated by Leslie Stevenson's 'Twelve Conceptions of Imagination', but for the purposes of this discussion, I propose that imagination is understood as: *A faculty utilised by a spectator to engage with, and better understand, a work of cinematic fiction. A spectator may imaginatively put themselves in the position of the protagonist(s) to understand their thoughts, beliefs and feelings. They may also imagine that events are true or possible. The spectator may or may not be aware of using their imagination.*

In film spectatorship, imagination is used to understand the story, the environment and the characters. Contextually, a spectator would use imagination to support veracity of content e.g. that a world like the

one projected could be true and look as it does. The narrative and sensory stimuli contribute to this. Understanding the content seems to implicitly require that a spectator takes an attitude towards things portrayed in the film, and to do this they may imaginatively project themselves into the fictional world and entertain the protagonist's perspective. This result is the spectator coming to understand how characters think and feel towards things, and they may also adopt an attitude towards them. Extra-filmatically, a spectator may imagine that film has the capability of engaging them in a particular way, introducing the concept of *expectancy* that I examine in Chapter 4.

Consider the paradigm horror *Halloween*. We are asked to care about the protagonist, Laurie Strode, who is presented as a likeable girl with values and traits to which we can relate and/or aspire (she is similar to Nancy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, a girl unlikely to engage in carnal delights like her friends). We come to know Laurie against the backdrop of an identifiable environment (home, high school) that it is easy to imagine being in. Attachment to Laurie occurs and we can understand her thoughts, beliefs, desires and feelings in certain situations. We attain insights into these things through the translation of Laurie's bodily movements, facial expressions and verbal communication (*cues*, as Carroll calls them). Other aspects also help us to identify, such as narrative content (antagonists, events that conspire and locations), which may be presented in a highly believable way comparable to real life. Reflecting an observation Currie makes, realism can also be engendered by incorporating events or social relations that are deeply accepted to be true. We might even identify with characters that are unlike or annoying to us, such as the female protagonist in *The Blair Witch Project*.

Imaginative engagement raises a number of questions: i) operationally, how does the spectator use imagination?; ii) *when* is imagination used?, and; iii) is the spectator always *aware* of using their imagination?

Character identification is imaginative. By imaginatively projecting oneself into the protagonist's position, the spectator may come to care for the characters, such as being concerned when Laurie is under threat. Given the presumed identification in question is between a real person (spectator) and a fictional character, however, theorists such as Carroll have been suspicious about this activity really taking place. It has been suggested that it is illogical to experience emotion towards fictional characters and that the process of emotional arousal (and its response) is crucially different because of divergent information.

Assimilation

In *Paradoxes of the Heart*, Carroll considers identification, suggesting the following non-mutually exclusive ways of characterising supposed identification with the protagonist:

i) We like the protagonist

ii) We recognise their circumstances from those of our past experience (we could imagine those circumstances, too)
iii) We sympathize with the protagonist
iv) We share the protagonist's values
v) We are one in interest, or feeling, or principle, of all of these with the protagonist
vi) We see the action unfolding in the fiction from the protagonist's point of view
vii) We are entranced (or manipulated/deceived) so that we fall under the illusion that we regard ourselves as the protagonist

Positions i) to iv) seem harmless to hold and much of our engagement with screen-based fiction has this character. I was recently taken by the acting of Adam Woodyatt in *Eastenders* and found myself deeply sympathizing with him following the murder of his daughter. Art-horror experience is different, however. One experiences emotion directed towards the monster, which suggests taking either the position of protagonist or oneself (some may say *from within the scene*). In this regard, positions v), vi) and vii) better reflect the experience. What is notable about art-horror experience is the momentary lapse in awareness of the protagonist, a point I will come back to.

Carroll questions the "curious metaphysical process" (Carroll, 1990: 89) by which a spectator's mental state aligns with that of the protagonist. Character-identification, he says, requires strict symmetry (duplication) of emotional state between audience and protagonist, which he views as unachievable, and for what seems like a longer period than the moment of art-horror (with respect to vii), Carroll includes the wording "for the duration of the intercourse with the fiction" (Carroll, 1990: 89), which I have deleted for reasons previously discussed). Literal replication of the protagonist's thoughts and emotions are deemed metaphysically impossible. The *mental state*, he argues, must be different to the protagonist's because we do not believe a monster is going to attack us. In the case of the *emotional state*, he argues that there is great asymmetry with the protagonist. He highlights the case of a woman splashing about freely in the water and feeling delighted while we feel afraid *for* her well-being because we know a killer shark is about to attack her. Carroll says this demonstrates a concern for another person; the protagonist's "emotions in such cases will always be self-regarding or egoistic, whereas the audience's emotions are other-regarding and altruistic" (Carroll, 1990: 91), incorporating sympathy which the protagonist cannot have. So, while the fiction may cue the audience to have responses to the monster, he says it in no way requires that they identify with the character or are in the same emotional state; "parallel emotive appraisals does not entail identification" (Carroll, 1990: 92).

Carroll proposes that the process by which the spectator engages with fictional characters is *assimilation*. Rather than being 'at one' with the protagonist, the spectator assimilates their situation (by considering their thoughts etc) and is led, through narration, to feel a similar way to them:

> "With horror, when a character is beset by a monster, part of my response is grounded in the recognition that the protagonist regards herself as confronting something that is threatening and repellent…I must have access to what makes her assessment

> intelligible…this is easily come by. To do this, we need not replicate the mental state of the protagonist, but only know reliably how she assesses it. And we can know how she feels without duplicating her feelings in ourselves." (Carroll, 1990: 95)

Accordingly, a spectator's response will involve assimilating the protagonist's internal point of view and this will in part lead to another response. We can feel *for* the protagonist but "in a great many cases" (Carroll, 1990: 90) not *with* them. A similar line is used by Currie, who proposes that the spectator's imaginative simulation is run "off-line" and thus a personal perspective is unattainable (denying vii), and likely denying vi) also).

Carroll's *Jaws*-influenced counterexample certainly demonstrates a willingness to approach the issue head on, focusing on the once biggest grossing film of all time that terrified audiences globally. However, one should be sceptical of this example. As spectator we may, of course, be concerned about the girl in the water (this is natural when seeing others in danger) but, as the shark attacks and she is pulled under the water, we may wonder "where is the monster?" and "is it us next?" Hearing the girl's screams creates the view that the shark is life-threatening and causal understanding (scream = pain) may arouse thoughts of what has happened beneath the water, what she is feeling (entailing some form of identification) and very natural concerns about one's wellbeing. This could plausibly momentarily overwhelm any altruistic concerns one has. As such, the example fails to acknowledge drivers of experience generally, namely, the importance of the emotion involved and natural empathetic imaginative tendencies when assessing situations[20]. The situation, emotion evoked and the direction of emotion suggest identification does not logically demand perfect symmetry of information. Carroll's procedural explanation also fails to account for naturalistic tendencies and phenomenology of certain cinematic experiences, suggesting a more consciously active mental simulation than either real life or cinematic experience suggests.

Empathy

I view identification as an important aspect of most filmatic experience, a position that seems to have attained increasing support over the recent past. As Neill points out in 'Empathy and (Film) Fiction', general failure by theorists to distinguish between emotional responses has led to an unsuccessful resolution to the problem of explaining our responses to fiction. This problem manifests itself in Carroll's work. He says:

> "our emotional responses – whether to fictional or to actual persons and events – are not all of a kind. For example, we can distinguish (at least roughly) between emotional responses in which the focus of concern is *oneself* (as, for example, in fear for

[20] Gaut (1999: 265) similarly objects to the *Jaws* example

> oneself), and those in which the focus is *another*. And among "other-focused" emotional responses, we may distinguish between *sympathetic* responses (such as those in which I fear *for* you), and *empathetic* responses (for I may also feel fear *with* you)" (Neill, 1996: 247)

Neill is right to make these distinctions. Films aim to promote emotions in an audience and, depending on the genre, will aim to evoke a specific emotion above others. In the case of horror movies, fear (horror) is promoted and often the fear is *for oneself*. While we may be concerned for Laurie Strode, it is intended that we feel *with* her, and this is the experience claimed by audiences. This point is also made by Neill, who argues for *empathy* being prevalent in one's emotional engagement with fiction and that without it one's emotions "would hardly be intelligible" (Neill, 1996: 251)

Empathy is an essential aspect of everyday life, which we use to understand and predict the thoughts and behaviours of others. Although this does not necessarily entail it is a fundamental part of *filmatic* experience, if one views the value of film to be the pleasure or benefit of emotional experience and education, and if empathy helps one engage with filmatic fiction to attain this, empathetic engagement will be undertaken accordingly. More pertinently, empathising is something humans tend to do effortlessly; it makes life intelligible. In the case of Laurie, were the spectator not empathising, if one were to view her behaviours as downright stupid (why does she hide in an unprotective wardrobe?) then our emotional involvement in the events that unfold would likely be significantly diluted or "lost to us" (Neill, 1996: 251) To this end, we must consider her actions as understandable and this suggests we have taken her point of view to justify it. *Halloween* is *not* lost on thousands of spectators and it is no wonder so many horror films do not successfully arouse the emotion they are meant to: how often we see protagonists knowingly walking into dangerous situations or investigating strange noises and think to ourselves "that is stupid, I wouldn't do that"; and characters are often too beautiful. These things may break identification, even with spectators who are *up for it* and willing to entertain improbable characters and situations.

Horror films, and films generally, present events from a *certain point of view* and this is crucial to understanding the spectator's emotional response:

> "We find it terrifying because *they* find it terrifying. In short, our terror here is at least largely empathetic terror" (Neill, 1996: 251)

The fear we feel during the closet attack scene in *Halloween* depends on our willingness to adopt Laurie's point of view i.e. take her view as our own. While at various points we may have concern for Laurie, we do not pity her when she is in wardrobe; "we come to feel something of her horror" (Neill, 1996: 251) because we see the monster from her point of view and *our* fear is based on the fact that *she* feels fear. Our emotion is predicated on her psychological state.

In order to explain how the feelings we experience are empathetic, we must consider the relationship between the spectator's and protagonist's psychological states. It has been held, notably by Susan

Feagin[21], that to empathize requires a connection between the two mental states and this is explained by belief. Feagin suggests that since a spectator holds beliefs about the other person's beliefs, this is a second-order belief, which makes the beliefs involved in their respective emotional responses different. Since fictional characters do not strictly have beliefs (the spectator *knows* they are fictional), she suggests that empathetic engagement that rests on belief does not work. In order to respond empathetically to fictions, Feagin proposes that imagination plays the functional role of belief i.e. the spectator imagines what the character think, feel and believe. However, as Neill points out, this "results in a distorted conception of empathy" (Neill, 1996: 252) Having beliefs about others' beliefs does not result in empathy, for their beliefs may leave one unmoved or move one to a sympathetic response. Accounting for empathy in terms of belief fails to explain that empathy is "*understanding how things are with her*" (Neil, 1996: 252) i.e. knowing what it is like to have the other person's thoughts, beliefs and feelings.

This conception of empathy encompasses Carroll's resonant thoughts on the internal understanding of a character that a spectator aims to achieve and which provides the basis of an appropriate emotional response, but suggests that in order to do so the spectator adopts the protagonist's point of view (at least in part). The spectator can achieve an internal understanding of another, whether they are a fictional character or an actual person, by becoming "the "protagonist" of an imaginative project, a project in which I represent to myself her thoughts, beliefs, desires, feelings, and so on *as though they were my own*" (Neill, 1996: 254) Thus, the spectator may feel *with* the protagonist, in the way that horror film experience suggests, where a spectator "may himself come *actually* to feel what the woman is *imagined* as feeling" (Neill, 1996: 254). This imaginative activity is undertaken in everyday life, instinctively, and incorporates belief. One must hold beliefs about what the protagonist would think, believe and feel in order to empathize; this would seem to be a prerequisite for taking another's point of view at all.

One may, of course, empathize incorrectly; the feelings I have *with* the protagonist may not perfectly replicate theirs, a point Carroll makes. However, partial synchronisation of feeling still qualifies as empathy and even if the spectator has little information about the protagonist's mental state, it is highly plausible that close synchronisation may still occur. Whether empathising with real or fictional people, the spectator will have limited knowledge of the other person's psychological state and, as Neill suggests, this likely makes filmatic fiction more life-like than other media such as literature. As my criticism of *The Conjuring* implied, the more information we have the less like real life the imaginative process might be. Gaut has compellingly developed this view in 'Identification and Emotion in Narrative Film'. If one considers identification as the imagining of oneself in another's shoes, perfect identification (identifying with *all* aspects of the protagonist) is impossible. He proposes that identification is *aspectual*, that the spectator only imagines (identifies with) particular aspects of the

[21] Feagin (1988)

character's situation. Psychologically, four different kinds of identification are proposed: *perceptual, affective, motivational* and *epistemic*:

> "To identify perceptually with a character is to imagine seeing from his point of view; to identify affectively with him is to imagine feeling what he feels; to identify motivationally is to imagine wanting what he wants; to identify epistemically with him is to imagine believing what he believes, and so on" (Gaut, 1999: 263)

With this view the problems of strict identification with the protagonist are averted, the spectator not being required to imagine all possible views of the protagonist. It also explains why a spectator is able to identify with characters often very different from them. This better reflects filmatic experience; one will focus on salient aspects of the character and story to encourage understanding and engagement, ignoring distracting aspects, and one will do the same with respect to the imagery that I discuss in the third section of this chapter.

The imaginative project may be regarded as something actively undertaken by the spectator but also passively/instinctively done. For example, it is easy to identify with Laurie from perceptual and affective perspectives as Michael appears at the closet door; I am close to her visual position and, knowing what I do about him, I may identify with how she feels about him. In this regard, *common ground* allows for much better identification and alignment of perspective. Further, certain types of identification may be enough to understand how another would feel and to emotionally respond in an appropriate fashion. Perfect identification is *not* necessary. Gaut also suggests that types of identification are not law bound, in that if a spectator is identifying in one or two ways with a character, it does not follow that they will identify in the other ways, although one might more regularly generate others. During the closet attack scene in *Halloween*, one might identify perceptually and affectively with Laurie, but fail to identify epistemically (potentially because one has slightly different information than she does). Arguably, one might have worse thoughts because of what they do or do not know about Michael but common ground is still achievable.

Perspective

Art-horror experience asserts that one does not feel for or with the character but, momentarily, for oneself. Imaginatively putting oneself in another's shoes explains how we may come to feel *with* the character but it is not a solely imaginative process. Spectators have content and characters to understand, as they do in real life, and are provided with that in a particular way. A way that films often promote perspective is the use *point of view* ("POV") shots.

Gaut considers POV shooting as a tool for perceptual identification, in response to which the spectator may have a "tendency to affective identification" (Gaut, 1999: 265) and even identify epistemically. POV shots are not necessary for perceptual identification, for the view of a protagonist's face (which

humans are expert at interpreting) may conjure imaginings far worse than what is shown, such as in the exceptional thriller *Se7en*. Allen makes a similar point, saying that the emotional response of the audience:

> "is not predicated ordinarily upon the fact that she has adopted the visual field of the camera as her own...character identification occurs independently...although our experience...can be encouraged through that identification." (Allen, 1995: 134)

Allen suggests that we have a capacity to respond emotionally to film and to imagine that we are part of (or witness to) events of the film but without these being necessarily tied. A reason for taking this position is to respond to Baudry and Metz, who characterised the audience's point of view as being that of the camera, and that when we experience reality in film it is akin to transcendentally perceiving the world by occupying a place in it. In order for an audience member to believe they are watching real events it has been argued that they would require a perspective that is in some way aligned with the camera, moving with it through the environment of the film. Objections to this include the difficulty of sustaining this perspective and of being placed in peculiar locations within the film space, impossible for a human body. POV shooting technique is rejected by Currie, who suggests that, "cinematic shots are only rarely from a psychological point of view" and, therefore, one must "abandon the thesis that the viewer identifies with an intelligence whose point of view is the camera" (Currie, 1995: 26).

I think it is unnecessary for shots to consistently align with a psychological point of view. When watching horror films, we are never constantly aligned with either the character (either visually or psychologically) or camera (psychologically), although alignment may occur. Similarly, I may be psychologically involved and aligned when the character is not on screen or camera misaligned. Gaut rightly suggests that character shots may "cue the spectator to imagine seeing from the character's point of view" (Gaut, 1999: 266) and, in this sense, considers POV shots as (potentially) crude because they fail to move the spectator either sympathetically or empathetically. In their criticisms of POV as a tool for identification a crucial point is made, and it is one of importance to the art-horror experience. *Subjective camera angles* may break identification and thus the emotional response as being *for* or *with* the protagonist, and this *does* reflect the art-horrified spectator's experience of the monster. I will discuss this phenomenon in the third part of this chapter.

Physiological Identification

A relatively new reason for suggesting empathetic identification is prevalent in cinematic experience is currently being developed in the world of neuroscience. This paper will not provide a detailed assessment of this but I propose that, with time, it may offer a compelling practical and biological explanation of the engagement I propose and spawn a new sub-industry of film theory. In fact, it has already received the title *neurocinematics*.

Neuroscientific research has discovered a type of neuron (the *mirror neuron*) and accompanying mechanisms in the brain, which demonstrate that neural structures are affected either by experiencing emotion in real life or seeing others exhibiting emotion. Researchers discovered mirror neurons when working with a group of monkeys. It was noticed when a monkey saw a person grab a peanut, the same neurons fired in the monkey's brain that fired when actually grabbing a peanut. Thus, the body seems to replicate what others are doing and feeling by seeing them. The mirroring mechanism has since been established as present in humans, the same cortical regions of the brain being activated when one is involved in acts that result in pain or fear as when ones witnesses acts of those experiences[22].

Historically, one's understanding of others' actions, thoughts, feelings and emotions (in relation to, say, reaching out to take hold of a coffee cup) was understood through the translation of "your neighbor's biological motions, in principle intentionally opaque, into the mental representation about her *desire* to drink coffee and her *belief* about the fact that the dark brown liquid filling the cup is indeed coffee" (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014: 4) This third-party understanding of others, however, is supplemented by one's understanding of others as "bodily selves":

> "When we are exposed to others' expressive behaviours, reactions, and inclinations, we simultaneously experience their goal directedness or intentional character, as we experience ourselves as the agent of *our* actions; the subjects of *our* affects, feelings, and emotions; and the owners of *our* thoughts, fantasies, imaginations, and dreams." (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014: 7)

When seeing or even hearing others, one can be highly attuned to them by way of experienced bodily functions ("motor knowledge"), the result of observing others often being unconscious imitation. Such mirroring has potentially significant ramifications for our understanding of emotion. For example, when observing others' facial expressions, such mimicry can take place in the observer "with an intensity proportional to their empathetic nature" (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014: 14) An observer may voluntarily mimic, both neurologically and behaviourally, the observed. The mimicry may be a form of compliance and does not necessarily mean that the observer will subjectively experience the same emotion as the observed. However, this can happen, depending on circumstance, and has been observed in the perception of pain:

> "When looking at the body of someone else being touched, caressed, slapped, or injured, part of our own somatosensory system, normally mapping our own subjectively experienced tactile and painful sensations, is also activated." (Ammaniti & Gallese, 2014: 15)

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[22] I believe this is what Grodal (see Chapter 1, p.26) is also referring to.

The physiological mirroring mechanism is seen as a type of simulation ("Embodied Simulation"), a functional process of understanding others i.e. *placing oneself in their shoes* (empathetic identification). According to Gallese, the simulation mechanism is triggered by perception, either when imagining or actually perceiving something, and is engendered by memories of experience. It has also been suggested that the mechanism is free from needing to model things in the real world, meaning that the subject will leave the real world behind and lend themselves to the world of the work of art in order to understand it.

If one considers this in relation to film engagement, the simulation mechanism may be unconsciously activated and stimulate the creation of real emotions and sensations that mirror those of the characters. In the context of horror movie spectatorship, this suggests we may unreflectively mirror the sensations and perceptions of the protagonist, resulting in our physiologically experiencing something similar to them. The spectator's neurological system is wired in the same way as the protagonist and such physiological mimicry may take place unconsciously, without the necessity for significant mental contemplation of events characteristic of folk psychology and theorists discussing emotional responses to fiction, which is often held as a hindrance to immersion in the fiction. This is a potentially groundbreaking addendum to explaining cinematic experience, in which the intersubjectivity of experience (between spectator and protagonist) is explicable in more than just mentally simulated terms, strengthening the view that empathy (here, bodily) is a key aspect of spectatorship and that film offers a particularly immersive experience.

Summary

Sitting frozen with momentary fear for oneself suggests an appreciation of, and alignment with, the protagonist's perceptual position, but of which one is unaware. In a sense, identification is a misnomer because it implies awareness of paralleling, understood from the position of onlooker rather than experiencing spectator. I suggest art-horror experience is the *result* of identification with a film character (empathetic identification) but not an instance of conscious identification.

Identification is the process by which a spectator gets *into the protagonist's shoes* and this helps them achieve a particular view of the objects seen. The spectator will actively imagine what is going on and how a character thinks and feels in various scenarios. Depending on the situation and the character with whom one is meant to identify, this may lead to strong cognitive and emotional engagement. The activity is often effortless because one undertakes this process every day in order to comprehend the world. Further, the psychological make-up of spectators means that in engaging with the film (seeing and hearing characters and interactions), they may unconsciously imitate character's behaviours and emotions, coming to physically feel what they feel, as well. Thus, the spectator is identifying cognitively and physically *with* the protagonist, empathetically engaging in a more intense way than proposed by the theorists discussed herein.

Both Neill's and Gaut's insights are helpful in allowing us to construct a compelling process of engaging spectatorship. However, I think Neill could have gone further and Gaut failed to recognise a potential psychological sequence of events. Gaut denies illusion by assessing it in the same functional breath as identification, suggesting that illusionists have held that spectators are under the impression that they are the protagonists with whom they identify. In proposing that one type of identification may foster another, however, he fails to acknowledge that identification may foster illusion. This is what I propose occurs through the cultivation of a spectator's dispositional state, in which the monster may be seen as real and present. Empathy is a contributing factor.

In order to understand how a self-directed emotion in relation to a monster is possible, we must consider both the emotion being aroused and the presentation of the monster. These aspects, together with the strength of empathetic engagement, plausibly offer a situation where the spectator may be open to fearing for him/herself. Some horror films, I argue, encourage a state where empathetic identification is broken.

B) Emotion

"No tears please, it's a waste of good suffering"

Pinhead, *Hellraiser* (1987)

Introduction

I will begin this section with a statement that seems obvious – *not all emotions are the same*. But what does this have to do with our experience of what we *know* to be fictional? I suggest it is crucial to understanding art-horror experience.

According to the cognitive theory of emotion upon which this discussion takes place, an emotion is a combination of an evaluation of, and physiological response to, an object or situation. It is also a function of a subject's psychological make-up. Emotions result from evaluations of different aspects of one's or another's lives; humans are affected in different ways by different situations, which reflect their own particular concerns, and are thus sensitive to particular emotional affectation (both susceptibility to arousal and intensity of emotion aroused). Emotions vary in complexity and biologically affect different regions of the brain. They may be more or less easy to identify and arouse, promoting or hindering both sympathy and empathy accordingly.

I believe the emotion of fear is a key reason for spectators becoming immersed and falling momentarily under the illusion that the monster is real and present. To some extent, it is surprising this has not been focused on more extensively before, and that a more procedurally and psychologically focused account of horror film spectatorship has not made its way to the forefront of discussion. In this section, I want to demonstrate why the fear-based emotion of horror is important.

Emotion

Emotions aroused in response to fiction are often treated homogenously, as though each one is part of a monolithic group; they are not, and this point is made by Neill in 'Fiction and the Emotions', which I regard as an overlooked paper in the discussion. Radford has suggested that emotional responses to fiction are irrational *because* the spectator knows them to be fictional, but Neill suggests that he (and, I suggest, those that have followed) fails to note the uniqueness of emotions. Echoing Neill's comments, I think that without discriminating between emotions and showing how they work one does not stand a chance of being able to fully explain how one may be moved by fictions.

According to a popular reading of the cognitive theory of emotion, beliefs are required to emotionally respond to fictions. In the case of a spectator who fears for Laurie in *Halloween*, the cognitive view

would seem to require that the spectator needs to believe in the existence of Laurie in order to truly fear for her safety. This is Walton's conceptual point. Noting this, Neill rightly argues that one may harbour beliefs about what is *fictionally* true about fictional characters and that these may be as "causally efficacious with respect to emotion" (Neill, 1993: 3) as what is actually the case. So, a spectator may have beliefs that, *fictionally*, Laurie is a kind-hearted individual who is threatened by Michael Myers, and that these beliefs are not logically less efficacious in arousing emotions for her than would be the case if she actually existed. A reason for causal efficacy is that the spectator adopts a point of view through empathy and people undertake this activity with respect to both real and fictional people. However, not all emotions are directed in the same way. Neill says:

> "Not all emotions...stem from adopting another's perspective. And this suggests that the various emotions to which we commonly appeal in attempting to describe our affective responses to fiction may not be amenable to treatment as a monolithic group, and hence that in discussing this issue we need to be wary of generalizing, and alert to the differences between various sorts of emotion and affective response." (Neill, 1993: 4)

Neill proposes that there is at least one emotion that cannot be based on beliefs about what is fictional, and that is a *fear for oneself*, which characterises art-horror experience. This emotion requires that the spectator feels they are themselves threatened by the monster, and if one *knows* that the monster is fictional, he correctly suggests that not only can one not believe that one is threatened, one cannot "believe that it is fictionally the case that I am threatened" (Neill, 1993: 4) either. Fearing for oneself does not seem to result from taking another's point of view and it also requires the spectator perceiving themselves "as standing in a certain sort of relation to the object of the response, a relation that cannot obtain between the inhabitants of different ontological "worlds"" (Neill, 1993: 4) While one is unlikely to be able to be afraid (for oneself) of something that is known to be fictional, one may feel fear *for* or *with* fictional characters because they can take an imaginative point of view, which results from the spectator believing what is fictionally the case. Further, Neill proposes that in most cases, when one reflects on their experience, those experiences will be better characterised as fear of counterparts (i.e. being afraid of beings *like* Leatherface or ghosts *like* those in *Poltergeist*) or "non-belief reactive states" (Neill, 1993: 5). Notwithstanding my view that there is a further perceptual option available, I wish to question the dismissal of the egocentrically concerned position, not by challenging the position that one cannot fear for oneself in the context of fictional awareness but by showing that this awareness is not always present. I propose that fearing for oneself *is* possible in relation to fiction because the spectator's awareness of the fictionality of the monster is momentarily overridden, and this is at least partly a function of the emotion involved, confirming (in support of Neill) that emotions should not be treated homogenously.

Emotions, construed as embodying both a physiological and evaluative component, vary in complexity. Consider pity. Feeling pity for a person, whether fictional or actual, will typically require feelings of

sorrow and mercy for that person, who is deemed unfortunate in some way. Perhaps the person is good natured and well meaning, but has come to suffer in a way that is deemed unjust. The person to be pitied is viewed as undeserving of their current predicament. This judgement likely requires the pity-er having enough experience to appreciate that the person really is undeserving of their predicament. This pity *for* a person likely entails personal and social evaluation, and that the spectator likes the person enough to pity them in the first place. To pity also seems to require a broader appreciation of what makes it a situation worthy of pity for anyone. Next, consider love, which seems to be another complex emotion. When I see two friends in love, I may have an idea of how they feel but find their emotional predicament cringeworthy; I find the girl materialistic (not an appealing trait) and know that the male counterpart has been in love numerous times before (undermining my view of how special this relationship is). I see them display affection but fail to feel the emotion for or with them. Similarly, when I see Anakin falling in love with Padme in *Attack of the Clones*, I may think about my own experiences of love to believe that, fictionally, their situation really is love, but fail to believe it is. My experience of the emotion is so tied to the nuances of my own preferences that others' predicaments seem foreign to me, although I can imagine how they *might* feel. I do not fall in love with Padme or think that I might. Romance films may make me feel generally soppy and disposed to being romantic, but I do not feel love. Now consider fear.

I know what it is like to be fearful of something that may harm me and have experienced this emotion from what seems like the moment I was conscious. Fearful situations are etched in my memory, marking some of the most important moments of my life. I remember the experience of a bee stinging me in the dining room when I was a toddler, ever since linking bees with pain and marking them as something to be fearful of. When I see a person in harm's way or a potentially dangerous situation, I may fear *for* their safety. I may also feel fear *with* a person, such as seeing a frightened passenger on a plane when it is turbulent. I imagine why they feel the way they do and how they feel, simulating their situation. The imaginative activity may result in me beginning to feel the same way, as I begin to question the plane's safety despite prior knowledge that it is the safest way to travel. I need not like the person I see and may empathize with them. The same occurs with horror movie fiction. Watching *The Shining*, I feel fear for Wendy as Jack tries to smash his way through the bathroom door. As Danny hides in the kitchen cabinet from an axe-wielding Jack, I imagine how it feels to be chased by him. I am *with* Danny. But *why* is it so easy for me to identify with (feeling *for* or *with*) a character in this situation?

In my view the emotion of fear is, simply put, easier to understand. It is more accessible because of what it means to my *being* and requires significantly less context than other, more complex, emotions. I may have more or less information than characters in horror movies threatened by the monster, but the emotion involved is as basic as it comes:

> "Every object which excites an instinct excites an emotion as well" (Denton, 2005: 111)

Humans are biologically programmed to be concerned about their survival. As diverse and complex as our species is, it is held that a number of primal ("primordial") emotions have existed since the beginning of human evolution. A primordial emotion is defined as "an imperious arousal compulsive of intention that has emerged during evolution because it is apt for the survival of the organism" (Denton, 2005: 3), and the limited set of these includes: thirst, hunger, hunger for air, and pain. These "primal emotions signalled that the very existence of the organism was threatened" (Denton, 2005: 7)

The instinctive desire to avoid pain is the basis for fear, a situation-driven emotion that evokes this primal concern. A scenario that arouses feelings of threat will naturally be of significant and instinctive interest to a person, creating a particularly intense state of arousal in relevant circumstances. When scared, people become more focused and alert, their senses heightened; they hear the faintest of noises and question what made it.

Perceiving either oneself or another as adequately threatened may motivate unreflective behaviour. Consider how people react to protect themselves (circus tent example (Chapter 2)) or another when in harm's way, or freeze when confronted by a being that is dangerous to them. Fight or flight. The ease with which one comes to sense and understand potential threats is experientially verifiable; one may be alert to danger when there is nothing immediately present to create that impression. Humans are hardwired to be on guard, to constantly assess situations and other beings; it is as natural as breathing.

As Robert Thorn enters Damien's bedroom (*The Omen*) to check for the mark of the Devil, we are aware of potential danger both from the child and his protectors (dogs and followers). We may feel *for* Robert Thorn, deeming him (fictionally) to be in a situation that poses danger. We may also feel *with* Thorn, imagining being in the situation and, upon seeing the markings on Damien's scalp, feel fear-like emotions. Suddenly we hear a cry and Mrs Baylock appears, attacking Thorn. Our unreflective assessment that she is a threat and, seeing her attack, instinctively arouses fear, which may be experienced *for* or *with* Thorn. However, the emotion may also be felt *for oneself*.

It has been held that one remains aware of the fictional nature of the characters and events, but:

> "Pain is a powerful primary emotion, which if severe may expel any other perceptions from the stream of consciousness" (Denton, 2005: 162)

Subject to a compelling situation being appropriately presented, adequate immersion and a particular perspective being taken, the fear aroused may not only be directed for or with the protagonist. An *evil* threat, assessed as a danger to oneself were one in the same space as it, may arouse concerns for oneself even though this is not the overwhelming feeling during the majority of movie watching. The spectator, empathetically engaged and deeming the monster to be a threat, may find that when it appears the fear momentarily aroused not only excludes other perceptions and feelings towards or with the content, but of the fictional nature of the content itself.

Horror movies offer characters and situations that play on primordial concerns. The presence of a threat, fictional or actual, creates a state of heightened awareness where bodily responses feed back to heighten the cognitive situation further; the result is a state of high emotional sensitivity (I will call this predicament the *dispositional state*). It may only take the slightest of compelling stimuli to evoke the appropriate response. Consider how a spectator jumps easily when nervous or frightened. It may be, of course, that they are nervous of a loud bang or jump occurring and predicting when this might occur, like a runner predicting when the gun will go off. However, a startle or jump response, caused by a sudden loud noise or appearance of an object (a cat leaping out of nowhere is a popular device in horror movies) is typically laughed away. This physical reaction lacks the cognitive involvement of art-horror and is typically seen as duping or deception.

The emotion involved explains why so many films fail to frighten. As a simple and instinctive emotion, it may also be considered easy to suppress or dismiss e.g. when one watches a movie that has unconvincing monsters one easily laughs them away. This is a revealing response. The gleeful dismissal of these monsters is, I believe, the result of the assessment "you're not going to frighten me", a statement implying the potential of fearing for oneself and not of the characters on screen. I will come back to the distinction between art-horror and startle responses in the next chapter.

The basis of fear may also justify my claim that arousing art-horror is difficult to envisage being able to do through imagination alone (thought *sans* visual stimuli). Fear arising from the appearance of a threatening object like Michael Myers may ignite neural networks that arouse the amygdala, a part of the brain that plays a primary role in decision making, memory and emotional reactions and has been implicated in the evolution of fear; this heightens arousal significantly:

> "This may in some way also underlie the capacities of being able electively to overrule to a greater or lesser extent the compulsions that the emotion generates in consciousness. It may also underlie the difference in capacity at will to electively summon the emotion to consciousness, and to experience it as a seemingly near reality" (Denton, 2005: 180)

Situations involving the arousal of primordial concerns affect homeostasis, creating a feeling that the human body is out of equilibrium i.e. not in a state of existential comfort. Experiments in which the neurological systems engaged in fear are electrically stimulated have resulted in subjects feeling a sense of dread and foreboding, resulting in fear that is described as *deeply unpleasant*. In this context, it is suggested that "we feel pleasure and relief when we undertake acts that correct distortion of the equilibrium state" (Denton, 2015: 213). Although this does not deny the potential for Gaut's atypical horror movie spectator, it supports my suggestion that pleasure is typically not taken in the emotional arousal but in its relief, and a recalibration of the body's equilibrium may be argued as being extremely pleasant and valuable.

Summary

Horror films may promote the self-directed emotion of fear for oneself. We may be concerned *for* Tina as Freddy Krueger appears in the alleyway but we may also imaginatively place ourselves in the situation and empathize (fear) *with* Tina. It is unsurprising that spectators are so engaged by horror movies because they arouse something fundamental to them – their survival. Potential threats to survival grip spectators and by being empathetically involved in situations that promote it, may contribute to a dispositional state of high emotional sensitivity. As they empathize, self-directed feelings will be aroused because they are imaginatively placing themselves in that situation. Under certain conditions, self-concern may occur at the expense of sympathy and empathy.

Fear is a powerful emotion. Consider how spectators become edgy simply by knowing they are about to watch a horror film. This is often heightened by knowledge that the film frightened others. I propose this is because the spectator thinks there is something to be frightened *of*; being cautious and on guard is instinctive. This situation introduces notions of *expectancy* and *compliance*; we may be expectant that we will be frightened and be compelled to respond accordingly when the threatening object appears. Fear explains why asymmetry of information is a distracting and potentially irrelevant issue. In agreement with Carroll, Deborah Knight[23] has suggested that the simulation of fictional characters is not truly analogous because one has knowledge that those characters do not have, but I suggest that the emotion of fear may makes this irrelevant. Primordial emotions momentarily eradicate other thoughts and feelings. Asymmetry is a factual observation but given the primitive emotion fails to show that one may differentiate between spectator and character. *I believe that horror films may promote an emotional experience that is as symmetrical to the protagonist's as fictional engagement allows.*

[23] Knight (2006)

C) Presentation

"I see dead people"

Cole, *The Sixth Sense* (1991)

Introduction

> "In the cinema the camera carries the spectator into the film picture itself. We are seeing everything from the inside as it were and are surrounded by the characters of the film. They need not tell us what they feel, for we see what they see and see it as they see it" (Balazs, 1952: 47)

Balazs' claim, familiar as it might be to some spectators, is not reflective of most filmatic experience and a sweeping claim should not be made about the mechanism of film working in this way. However, the art-horror experience challenges the popular alternative, with the world of the fiction momentarily having "all the immediacy of our own" (Allen, 1995: 107).

Carroll rejects the idea that cinema can produce the belief that the spectacle on film is a "real event", not just an event that happened but one at which they were present:

> "If movie makers ever succeeded in convincing audiences that they were witnesses to "real events", such filmmakers would probably alienate our affections." (Carroll, 1998: 101/2)

On the basis that people flock to see horror films, Carroll's claim might constitute a practical reason for denying the spectator's claim of seeing the monster as real and present but, as I have shown, there is good reason for attendance to such works despite such potential. It is my belief that a spectator may indeed momentarily experience filmatic imagery as real and present, and in this section I aim to demonstrate that the realistic and immersive nature of film may lead to both contextual and sensory illusion.

The experience of artistic (fictional) imagery has been fertile ground for philosophical debate, ongoing since the early twentieth century in the case of film. I am also interested in this and, specifically, whether film can engender an experience that may be extremely similar to, and potentially indistinguishable from, real life. That films may present objects in a realistic way seems an uncontroversial claim, but can it present objects in a way where they may be momentarily experienced as *real* and *present*? I think so.

Currie provides an excellent introduction to cinematic realism in *Image and Mind*, highlighting what he calls the "three doctrines" of cinema, all of which have been called "realism" (Currie, 1995: 19) and

have framed thinking about cinematic engagement. The first is the doctrine of *Transparency*, where film, using visual/photographic techniques, "reproduces rather than merely represents the real world". This view is associated with Bazin and suggests that when we watch a film we see through the medium of the film and into the real world, like looking through a lens. The second doctrine is termed *Likeness*, again by Bazin, and states "the experience of film watching approximates the normal experience of perceiving the world". The third doctrine is *Illusionism*, which suggests "film is realistic in its capacity to engender in the viewer an illusion of the reality and presentness of fictional characters and events portrayed" (Currie, 1995: 20). It has been judged that while all three doctrines are linked, Likeness and Illusionism are strongly linked because the better a film captures the experience of viewing the real world the better the film will create the illusion of reality for the viewer. This seems an intuitively acceptable suggestion.

There are at least two important phenomenological claims that arise from this discussion. The first is that film causes cognitive illusions:

> "film watching, in some systematic way, and as part of the normal process of the viewers' engagement, causes the viewer to have the false belief that the fictional characters and events represented are real" (Currie, 1995: 22).

The second claim is that film often draws viewers into believing that they are witnessing real events:

> "the illusion peculiar to film is that the viewer is present at the events of the story, watching from the position actually occupied by the camera, which the viewer thinks of as his or her position." (Currie, 1995: 23)

For the purpose of this discussion I will label these two claims as indicating *contextual* and *sensory* illusion, respectively. Both individually and in combination they face staunch opposition. Carroll, for example, views those that suggest they took the film as real as "benighted yokels" (Carroll, 1998: 96). First, since a spectator has decided to watch a movie *knowing* it is a fiction, the potential for thinking that the characters and events of the movie are real is deemed fundamentally undermined, even if they are presented in a very realistic manner. Second, if the perception of an object as real relies on a direct causal relationship between the object and retina, the presence of a screen may undermine the potential for sensory illusion. Together with cinematic imagery not being perfect replicas of objects, it may be held that there is a difference (perhaps very subtle) in the experience of objects viewed in real life and on screen that, even when highly engaged, the viewer is aware of.

I propose that cinematic imagery may be both life-like and transparent, but also has the capacity to be viewed in a way that undermines the disclaimer that we know what we see is fictional because it may be momentarily indistinguishable from reality. As such, cinematic image has the capacity to be illusory. The Lumière example demonstrates what cinema *can* do and where a perceptual boundary has been breached. I believe art-horror experience indicates something similar.

i) Contextual Illusion

Contextual illusion may be regarded as the perception of fictional content as fact. In a way, all fiction that does not overtly acknowledge its own fictionality can be viewed as of this type and may be considered a convention of film watching, like a tacit rule of spectatorship: *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is a fictional story but presented as true; a fictional event may be reproduced in a documentary style to create a sense of authenticity (*The Blair Witch Project*, *Cannibal Holocaust*); alternatively, one might take a story that is based on fact (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) and adapt it for the screen.

Using a similar line of argument as Carroll and Walton, Allen suggests that one's perception of a representation is *context dependent*, in that were one told that a photograph were staged then one might not be deceived. However, cinema offers an intriguing alternative, for despite engaging with what one knows to be fictional one may still be momentarily duped about the fictional status of the content (that what is on screen does not exist). This represents an illusion because it is a misinterpretation of what is actually the case.

Walton, Schaper, Carroll and Currie miss something important about the psychological disposition of spectators that the filmatic medium plays on, which is that humans are often disposed to assume the evidentiary status of images and accept what they see "unless there is reasonable evidence to the contrary" (Allen, 1995: 91). In the absence of knowledge or cues to the contrary, representations may "carry a presumption of truth for the viewer that rests upon the causal relationship between object and image." (Allen, 1995: 91) Fred Dretske suitably sums up this humanistic phenomenon:

> "Bottom-uppers like myself prefer...examples involving sense perception, because it is here that justification, inference, reasoning, and evidence (the sorts of things that top-downers think important) seem least relevant – seem, in fact, totally irrelevant. We know it, just as Fido knows it, because we can see it. We don't have to reason about it, think about it, have a justification for believing it. The justification – if indeed, this kind of talk even makes sense in this context – lies in the seeing. As J.L.Austin was fond of pointing out, when things are in front of your nose, you don't need evidence for thinking they are there." (Dretske, 2000: 88)

The use of cinèma verité has been a popular way of promoting an impression of reality. Shooting films with hand-held cameras and live sound recording without music, evident in films such as in *The Blair Witch Project* or *.Rec*, may create a sense of 'being there' in the action and seeing things in a way that a character might. Documentary-style set-ups are often employed in fictions to promote a sense of authenticity, and one may be deceived outright by scenes in genuine documentaries that are staged. Despite the small industry of 'found footage' films over the past decade, this type of film constitutes only one paradigm example, however, the majority being of a more traditional structure that "employ a system of restricted narration, which conveys external events as well as the knowledge, thoughts, and

feelings of one or two characters without the interaction of an explicit narrator." (Pragamaggiore and Wallis, 2011: 79)

If the characters and events of a narrative are compelling and if one can bypass a reticence to being deceived, I think it is possible to be duped into thinking that "staged events are actual events captured by the filmmaker" (Allen, 1995: 95). Skill is required to convey fictional *facts* in such a way that they are not immediately questioned and the filmatic medium has a distinct advantage in this department. Movement and sound support the consumption of imagery, and what is reported is conveyed in a way that broadly mimics that of real life e.g. dynamic visual imagery supplemented by sound. The movie should be directed appropriately, presenting characters and events in way that is neither distracting nor completely unbelievable. Characters may be engaging, their actions and dialogue delivered in a way that is realistic and which promotes emotional engagement. Seeing an unfamiliar actor/actress directed by an unknown director may contribute to a sense of authenticity because the spectator may be less likely to question what they see or analyse against prior experience; however, this is not a necessity, as evidenced by famous actors/actresses in *The Omen* and *The Shining*. Events may unfold in familiar, identifiable or broadly believable environments. Overall, there is a significant amount of information to promote an impression of reality, whilst no commitment is required to the presentness of the objects. What *is* important is the attitude and emotional disposition of the spectator, which augments engagement and susceptibility to being duped.

Dretske emphasises the importance of examples in understanding what people or animals make of things; so it is with representational art. One can point to television soap opera and professional wrestling as examples of contextual illusion. For many, professional wrestling draws one into buying its storylines and characters. In a world that increasingly covets the reality of mixed martial arts, this staged art-form still engages its fans en masse with character feuds that are mistakenly accepted by the audience as true. The physicality of wrestling is certainly not fictitious but the principle of the engagement is and yet, despite awareness of pre-determined outcomes, spectators become so highly immersed that they end up thinking the flamboyant characters are real and engaging in a real fight. Soap operas are notorious for resulting in fans abusing actors in real life, addressing them as the characters they play each week on television. I see films as operating in the same way, reflected in the reactions of spectators who tense up as Indiana Jones runs from the boulder or Danny runs from his axe-wielding father. It seems to me that the spectator must consider someone to be at risk in order to react the way they do.

In summary, evidence to support the claim that we may be drawn into accepting as true the content of a fiction is significant, and I think this is achievable across genres and media. The presentation of characters and objects stimulate the same primary sensory receptors engaged in real life and, subject to an appropriate narrative that engages the spectator, they may easily slip between acknowledging their fictional status and not passing judgment, accepting what they see as real (experienced *as if* it were real). I view the art-horror experience as momentary, so I do not see the contextual illusion (of the

monster as real) pertaining for a significant period of time, although I suggest it may be sustained for longer than a perception of the monster as present, which is confirmed by the persisting affect of paradigm movies outside of the auditorium. Commitment to the existence of the monster *generally* does not result in frozen paralysis and it is to this species of illusion that I will now turn.

ii) Sensory Illusion

Sensory illusion is the sensory experience of something in a way that that it strictly is not. In the context of film, one may think of this (in its strongest sense) as the situation where a spectator perceives a represented object as real (the thing itself, not a representation), as spatially and temporally present. This may not, however, require that the spectator *believes* what they see, for they may still hold that it does not really exist or reflect its true nature. The sensory experience may be indistinguishable from the real life experience of that object (were it existentially present) but understood as illusory. A non-filmatic example of such a non-epistemic but compelling sensory illusion is that of a MagicEye picture, where a two dimensional image gives the impression of a three dimensional object but the spectator knows that its basis is two dimensional. One might argue that even if the illusion was stronger and began to mask one's awareness of the deception, there would still be a nagging suspicion that what is seen is not really as it seems.

I propose that cinematic images can create sensory illusion, with objects experienced as momentarily indistinguishable from reality. Film is particularly capable of doing this and factors such as setting promote illusion, immersing the spectator and diminishing awareness of the medium at various points. Carroll thinks that postulating the '"psychic machinery" of an unconscious oscillation of this nature would be too elaborate and is convinced that "ordinary facts of attending to representations militate against the claim that viewers misapprehend the nature of the visual arrays before them." (Carroll, 1998: 99) To the contrary, I suggest that the kind of analysis required to bridge the gap between awareness and illusion *is* possible *and* worthwhile.

Visual Experience

Looking at a cinematic image is similar to looking at the real world. The sensory stimuli of both real life objects and those presented by film create a visual experience for the spectator. Seeing Freddy Krueger on screen is still an instance of seeing, and the spectator's activity of looking at and examining the objects presented is "striking analogous to investigating them by looking at them directly" (Walton, 1984: 270). A spectator's eyes and ears are impacted by visual and audible stimuli; the image of an object is projected onto a screen and sounds that relate to that object accompany.

Unlike looking at a painting or reading, films are not in need of translation. The spectator's experience of a cinematic image of Freddy does not rely on an understanding of what the director was thinking; they are not required to take words and create mental imagery nor consider the use of brush strokes to interpret the image. Imagery stimulates the spectator and, assuming no manipulation has occurred (which requires trust), there is a much closer causal relationship between the spectator and the object captured by the camera than other media. It is noteworthy that, just as we may be duped in real life by an object that looks like one thing but is not, one may be duped by a cinematically projected image. Unlike a real life object, of course, it does not follow that the experience I have of seeing Freddy on screen gives me objectively verifiable facts about the world. However, the filmatic medium provides an experience that is, in important ways, *life-like*.

Realism

Pictorial images have the capacity to deceive spectators, demonstrated by the optical illusion of a trompe l'oeil, a type of visual art that uses realistic imagery to create the illusion of real object e.g. photographic wallpaper depicting bookshelves. Films project a series of photographic images that dynamically presents characters and events. They are not static pictorial depictions like photographs or paintings, and do not require imaginative interpretation (creation of imagery) like literature.

Film presents objects that existed, or may be presumed to have existed, before the camera that captured them. Assuming the horror films that concern us utilise real objects (real people acting, as opposed to obvious animation) then, as Walton suggests in his influential paper on photography, film is "always...of something which actually exists." Even vampires and zombies portrayed in movies are of "actual things: actors, stage, sets, costumes" (Walton, 1984: 250) and this "profoundly affects our experience of them." (Walton, 1984: 266) One may object that not everything seen by the spectator was captured by the camera, as is the case with special effects. Some effects will be so obvious or unrealistic that our critical eye is distracted by them (e.g. the creatures of the *Star Wars* prequels), although others are indistinguishable from real objects (e.g. *Pan's Labyrinth*). I suggest that scenes may include both objects that existed before the camera and those that were manufactured, but such is the realism and integration of these objects that they may provide for a realistic and seamless image.

Cinematic sense-data received by the spectator can be extremely similar to that attained through the perception of real life objects. Film is photographic and a spectator may not be aware of the coloured pixels that constitute the photographic image; this differentiates photographic media from most painting. Photographic imagery captures, to varying degrees, detail of presented objects that replicates what one could see in real life and may be focused on in the same way e.g. texture and shadow. As in real life experience, the spectator will not be fully aware of all these details and is "satisfied to take in essentials" (Arnheim, 1957: 29).

Like real life, film provides an impression of perspective and depth, and, thus, three-dimensionality. Objects are presented from perspectives that a spectator may adopt in real life, adding to the authenticity of what they see. Although cinematic imagery is projected onto a screen that has a fixed size and position (unlike the spectator's field of vision) I suggest, in opposition to Arnheim, that the "limitation of the picture" (Arnheim, 1957: 17) is *not* always felt by the spectator. Their tendency to focus in on objects (as in the real world) may mask awareness of the periphery.

From the perspective of the spectator, film captures movement, space and time. The objects of the film move in relation to the screen and the spectator, which Currie suggests is in fact not illusory at all:

> "We see the cinematic image of a man, and we see that it is in one place on the screen, and we later see that it is in another; indeed, we see that image move from one place to another on the screen...It is not like the image in a painting, which consists of a certain conglomeration of physical pigments, at least relatively stable over time. It is an image sustained by the continuous impact of light on the surface of the screen, and no particular light wave or particle is more than minutely constitutive of it. Nonetheless, that image is a particular thing, and a thing which moves" (Currie, 1995: 41)

Although a film may be comprised of a number of independent scenes presented in a sequentially disjointed manner (cutting from one place to another and disrupting the time continuum by jumping several hours in a millisecond), a scene itself may present an event in a temporally accurate way.

Cinematic imagery may be accompanied by sound that mirrors how one experiences an object in real life. The scratching of Quint's fingernails across the blackboard in *Jaws* captures how the action would sound in real life, fulfilling audible expectations.

Films may provide characters that not only look and sound realistic but who *behave* realistically, thus promoting a sense of *naturalism*:

> "The characters must talk as people do in real life, a servant like a servant, a duke like a duke" (Arnheim, 1957: 22)

Even when characters or events portrayed on screen challenge what they might think of as probable, that the spectator sees and hears the characters and events unfolding adds a sense of authenticity that may undermine probability. When engaged, the spectator is not constantly assessing the imagery to confirm that it is film and the dynamic nature of the sensory data further weakens this seeking of assurance. Continually engaged in understanding the objects and events portrayed, spectators may have scant time to critically assess what is seen.

Object Perception

What is it for a spectator to see the projected image of a character in a film? And can an object seen in a work of art be (momentarily) indistinguishable from real life?

Walton has famously proposed that photographic imagery is *transparent*, in that it allows the spectator to see, literally, the world through it:

> "objects cause their photographs and the visual experiences of viewers mechanically; so we see the objects through the photographs" (Walton, 1984: 261)

When a spectator sees a relative or scene of a massacre in a photograph, Walton suggests that they literally see those things. This is a compelling view. When I see a photo of myself as a baby with my parents, I look at my parents and see *them* in the photo. I recognise them and attend to details such as how young they look. I do seem to see *through* the photograph, seeing my parents and not a collection of aspects of light on a two dimensional sheet, and I imagine what they were up to and how they were feeling. This is similar to filmatic experience but not, typically, of viewing paintings (assuming they are not of a photographic quality); here, I am interested in the effect of the work, how the painter created the image and what they aimed to convey. *The visual experiences are different*. I regard myself as seeing a *re*presentation of parents, not a presentation (if the distinction is allowable).

Walton proposes that in seeing my parents in the photograph I also see the photograph i.e. I know that I cannot touch my parents and am aware I am attending to a photograph. Walton describes the situation of seeing a photograph as follows - *fictionally* I see the object but *factually* I see the photographed image of the object. However, this position falls foul of the same issue raised against Quasi-Fear Theory, which is that it has a perceptual foot outside of the experience and it is not conclusive this medium awareness is always present, although its validity in respect of photographic experience is more compelling than with film.

There are a number of arguments against Transparency, which also affect Illusion, the pertinent of which are as follows. First, one might hold that with visual fictions the spectator does not really see the real world but "actors, props, sets and locations, not the unreal world of fictional characters" (Currie, 1995: 48). As such, it is a representational medium, not a presentational one, and the spectator is aware of this. Second, if photographs capture the image of people who no longer exist, the spectator does not really see them. Third, even if one accepts the greater "intimacy" between the spectator and object of a photograph than painting, it may be argued that there is a difference in seeing a real object and a photograph of it; thus, one will more likely be affected by seeing the actual thing than seeing a photo of it. Currie proposes an "ordering" (Currie, 1995: 56) of physical effect in response to engagement with visual works. Fourth, seeing a real object provides *egocentric information* that includes judgments not present in seeing a photograph. This includes information that one receives about the "spatial and temporal relations between the object seen and ourselves":

> "Photographs...do not convey egocentric information; seeing a photograph does not tell me anything much about where the object photographed is in relation to me...there is no question of my failing to discriminate properly concerning the egocentric information conveyed by one" (Currie, 1995: 66)

Currie, who subscribes to the doctrine of *Likeness*, suggests that while cinematic imagery is more *like* real seeing than photography it fails to provide the spectator with egocentric information. Even if cinematic imagery provides transtemporal information (seeing events occurring over a certain period of time and in a causal sequence), he suggests it does not make the images transparent or seem present because the function of normal seeing retains a "crucial ecological connection with the environment" (Currie, 1995: 69), a connection that provides important egocentric information used by humans in essential aspects of daily life such as *survival* (my emphasis).

The filmatic image is, on Currie's view, a *re*presentation. Images may engage the spectator's analytical recognition capabilities for distinguishing visual features of objects (distinguishing an object as a horse takes place in relation to both real life and pictures), and they may depict space and time realistically, but one does not judge the object in the picture to be real and spatially present. A picture image being perceived indistinguishably from a real object is something that is held as an exception "under very particular circumstances" (Currie, 1995: 80). Under *normal* circumstances, a reason held for not confusing the real and present nature of a pictured object is a view about the structure of the human mind. One view of the brain is as a complex and hierarchical structure and the determination of whether an object is spatially present is an evaluation undertaken by the spectator (actively) at the higher, more intellectually-oriented levels of the cognitive hierarchy (where information, evidence and reason are strongly operating). Judgments are made upon the receipt of certain stimuli and these determine what other judgments are then made. In the case of viewing of a picture of a horse, the evaluation of the object is deemed undertaken immediately and then the judgment that the imaged object is *horse-like* may take place (echoing Schaper's view of belief ordering). It is suggested that *this* activity is common to both real life and pictorial experience, which is commensurable with Carroll's position that we do not see the object of the pictorial representation but access previously stored object images through recognition. So, when seeing Michael Myers a spectator is viewed as recognising an object in a film to be a representation of a certain type of thing and they also recognise it as a representation no matter how real it looks.

I think one needs to be critical of this position. We do not need a theory to explain all artistic engagement, nor accept that because photographic imagery is *typically* less efficacious than real object seeing that it cannot be indistinguishable from perception of a real object, even momentarily. Consider the sudden appearance of the frightening image of Reagan from *The Exorcist* in a video we are watching on YouTube about the boxer Manny Pacquaio (this has been done as a practical joke). We are watching the video on our television screen. We know we are watching a video and are engrossed in fight excerpts. Suddenly the image of Reagan appears, looking straight at us,

accompanied by the sound of her rasping demonic voice. Acknowledging the shock factor, we may also experience fear in relation to the object we know to be threatening. During the few initial seconds of her appearing on screen, is she seen as a representation? And, is there no egocentric information or perspective? My familiarity with Reagan seems to trigger an immediate and unconscious recognition of her as dangerous. I freeze. She is staring straight at me and is photographically real. I propose this offers an insight into the kind of situation under which sensory illusion is possible. Awareness of the medium is highly questionable if not improbable under certain circumstances.

The Case for Sensory Illusion

I propose three key reasons for holding that a spectator may *momentarily* view an object as real and present (denoting sensory illusion) *and* from an egocentric perspective.

i) Visual Imagery

Allen has not unreasonably suggested three possible sensory experiences of a representation: i) we look at the representation *as* a representation and notice the object therein i.e. we are medium aware; ii) we attend to features of the medium (e.g. surface of the painting or movie screen) and not as a representation of anything, and; iii) we lose awareness of the medium entirely and imagine/visualize the object as standing before us, unmediated by representation.

Allen proposes that cinema can promote an experience similar to the latter situation, which is like a trompe l'oeil and which he labels *projective illusion*. For a true photographic trompe l'oeil to occur, he suggests one would require either "(1) that what one sees is really an object and not a photograph, or (2) that what one sees is a nonphotographic representation of an object" (Allen, 1995: 83). Since cinematic imagery is entertained in a situation where certain aspects differ from real life (e.g. image on screen, largeness of screen and lack of three-dimensionality), it is proposed that this makes "the possibility of trompe l'oeil illusion extremely unlikely" and "we would have to mistake the film for real life in the manner of the proverbial spectators of the Lumières' Arrival of a Train at the Station." (Allen, 1995: 85) Thus, Allen proposes says that cinema can uniquely facilitate sensory illusion but where one's interest is "consumed by exploring this effect", like the MagicEye picture. To demonstrate how cinematic images work and affect spectators, he considers some pictorial deceptions and compares these to cinematic images. I think this is revealing and want to consider the two most pertinent here, both of which relate to deceptions with a correct interpretation of the content seen i.e. *illusion*.

The first visual illusion is that of the *Müller-Lyer lines*, where lines of equal length are perceived as of unequal lengths. In this example a conflict can occur between our senses and judgment, the illusion driving "a wedge between perception and belief" (Allen, 1995: 98), because we perceive the lines as being of different lengths even though we *know* they are not. The sensory illusion is accompanied by

the thought of unequal length but does not entail the *belief* in the inequality. The proposition that the lines are not equal is not entertained assertively and hence the thought is not entertained assertively; on Carroll's terms, since belief is an asserted proposition, there is no belief.

The *egg box* illusion is a pictorial deception in which one sees the semi-spheres of a box that hold eggs as either concave or convex. The spectator "sees-as", in that they see the box as either concave or convex, and there *is* a correct interpretation. Further, the spectator can identify a change in their visual field that shows the change from one perception to the other. Illusion is present because only the concave interpretation is correct but "we leave the safe haven of a congruence between thought and perception to experience an incongruity between the two" (Allen, 1995: 104). The egg-box example is like the Müller-Lyer illusion because, from just seeing, the spectator cannot tell which perception is correct. However, even when told the correct interpretation the spectator may still experience the illusion of the convex egg-box – information about the correct interpretation does not inhibit sensory illusion.

Allen proposes that cinema can produce a similar illusory experience to the Müller-Lyer lines but not the egg-box illusion (which is compelling even when we are told the correct interpretation). In the context of horror movies, cinematic imagery may create the sensory illusion of a monster, which would be accompanied by the thoughts of the monster being real, but which is entertained non-assertively. In this way, cinematic experience is context dependent and like seeing an object reflected in a mirror; once we know that it is a mirror image our senses are no longer deceived and we give up belief in the illusion. As such, cinematic sensory illusion is held to be unlike seeing in general and the ability to voluntarily entertain the experience means it is not necessarily experienced.

These visual deceptions demonstrate how easily humans are duped by imagery and, I think, highlight shortcomings in comparing different types of imagery, which emphasises the power of the cinematic image. Static pictorial deceptions may allow for a level of reflection that cinematic imagery prevents. While a spectator may approach cinematic imagery in broadly the same way (knowing that they are going to watch a fiction, and inspecting what they see) the dynamic nature of the imagery, supported by sound in a narrative context, offers a constantly changing visual and contextual environment to understand. Changes in imagery (scenery, characters) and character interactions continuously activate a spectator's cognitive and emotional apparatus. Retinal focus is constantly changing and emotional engagement may evolve during the presentation. We are, as Stock suggests, sometimes "powerless with respect to the speed at which fictional events unfold within one's consciousness", and one is often unable to "break off from engaging with a film and reflect upon it" (Stock, 2009: 13). Such inhibition captures the average cinemagoer's experience of an engrossing film, acknowledging the power of film and of the tension between it and spectator.

Films provide content that is to be viewed *in a certain way* and *from a certain perspective*. Spectators have a narrative to understand and may be asked to take a certain attitude to objects through identification with the protagonist. It is not unreasonable to hold that, as the movie unfolds in front of

the spectators' eyes, they are not always aware of or thinking about the fictitious nature of the images. This is just too demanding a requirement. Imagine focusing on an image of a sweater to see what it is made of; as one looks more closely and determines that the fibres are woollen one may lose awareness of the fictitious nature of the image. Now imagine viewing a succession of images (e.g. watching a crazed Reagan in her bedroom), where a spectator is engaged with a particular attitude to characters, their viewpoint moving with Reagan's mother to the floor as the door shuts and the wardrobe moves towards them. Film imagery has a force that reflective and unemotional viewing of static representations does not.

I propose that cinematic imagery has the capacity to be like the egg-box illusion. As I highlighted with reference to shortcomings with Simulation Hypothesis, cinematic experience provides sensory data that, from just receiving it, may prevent us from analysing it in the way theorists hold. Some visual situations are presented in a highly realistic and detailed manner, in others more vague (with vagueness and mystery a crucial part of the character's nature). Most likely, realistic portrayals lead to better illusion but it is not a necessity. *Appropriateness for realization*, to use Scruton's terminology, is the core requirement.

Interestingly, Stock says that if we "cannot experience P [a prop] as visually resembling S [the actual situation] without being simultaneously immediately conscious of the fact that P is non-identical to S, then this seems [to me] too strong a constraint on experienced resemblance" (Stock, 2009: 12). A spectator might experience an object as a visual resemblance whilst at the same time knowing it is not the real thing, even if they are nor "immediately conscious of the belief as one experiences" it (Stock, 2009: 12). However, this cannot hold true in certain circumstances, like those who believed that the train really was coming towards them in L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat. Thus, one might experience a film image as visually resembling an entity where awareness of the entity's fictionality is eliminated[24].

ii) Sense Data

By causally impacting on our senses, objects cause visual experiences. An argument against sensory illusion is that the imagery is experientially different to real life and ensures the spectator is never duped into believing the object is real and present, even when highly realistic and the spectator is deeply immersed. I challenge this position and suggest that important theorists (notably Carroll, Currie and Schaper) accept that under certain circumstances such an experience *is* possible, although such duping would be unreflective of *normal* cinematic experience and the spectator is demonstrating significant gullibility.

[24] Although Stock suggests that some knowledge of the entity's fictionality might be retained, it is not specified how.

Spectators may different visual experiences of objects and here I highlight three pertinent to this discussion:

i) *Direct object visualisation* – the spectator looks directly at an object, its properties causally impacting on the spectator's senses, unmediated, to create a visual experience of the object
ii) *Cinematic visualisation* – the spectator sees the image of an object that is projected onto a screen. There is a direct causal relation between the image and the spectator's retina but not, strictly, between a real object and the retina
iii) *Hallucination* – the spectator's neurological system is stimulated in such a way as to create a visual experience of an object. There is no object and no direct causal relation to the object (or physical representation) but the spectator experiences an image of the object as if it were being seen

It has been argued that one's experience of real objects and images of those objects are different because they are derived from different stimuli, although the stimuli function in the same way. According to the disjunctive theory of perception, which finds its roots (but not terminology) in the writings of Michael Hinton[25], perceptual experiences can be divided in to three generic types: i) veridical perceptions; ii) illusions, and; iii) hallucinations. It is proposed that disjunction occurs between appearance and the fact that reality behind the appearance may be perceptually present to the spectator. As such, veridical perceptions (direct object visualisation), illusions and hallucinations are not members of a common class of mental states and the only thing common to these perceptions is that the subject cannot tell, via introspection alone, that one is not having a veridical perception. Disjunctivists hold that when one experiences a veridical perception, their experience includes the external, mind-independent object(s) of a perception. Since cinematic imagery (as highly realistic as it may be) is attained through objects projected indirectly onto a screen (and hallucination has no external object to relate to), it is argued that there is a different experience of cinematic sense-stimuli. One may suggest this creates a feeling (suspicion) that the object is not the real thing.

Although there is a difference in physical set-up of object to retina, disjunctivism falls foul of a number of common perceptual state arguments. First, all of the perceptual experiences produce similar behavioural effects, regardless of the stimuli e.g. ducking when a projected ladder image moves towards us, or being paralyzed with fear. Second, we can know what it is like to have a monster come towards us, regardless of the nature of the stimuli. Mirror neurons suggest that seeing others generates physiological reactions, regardless of the stimuli, highlighting a further similarity between real and fictional experience. Third and arguably most important, the perceptions may be introspectively indistinguishable. If one activates the brain of a subject in the same way as when they actually experience the world, then an illusion would causally mirror direct object perception. One would certainly need to give the same report of the experience because they have the same neural

[25] Hinton (1973)

stimuli, and accept that the experience of an illusion is the same as that of a veridical perception. One might suggest that since the causal processes are not strictly the same, brain process mirroring is not enough to draw the conclusion that the perception or psychological effects are the same. However, a spectator only has their phenomenal experience to work from and if introspection does not conclusively demonstrate a difference then we must once again reject the only experiential evidence we have to go on (acknowledging momentary paralysis as the appropriate behavioural response). As with Quasi-Fear Theory, the mistake of denying common perceptual experience is not debating the spectator's point of view but the causal relations viewable to a third party who knows what is actually happening, a truth that exists beyond the knowledge of the spectator.

iii) Viewing Conditions

A spectator imagines the environment of, and events that take place in, the film but the film provides the spectator with a world and characters to be seen. Cinema affords spectators a particularly effective environment for sensory and psychological engagement, which I believe contributes to their *immersion* and seeing the filmatic object as real and present.

A spectator is able to avoid the claims of extra-representational awareness by the swallowing of their immediate visual field. A screen is unlikely to take up the spectator's entire visual field but is supplemented by their disposition to focus in on film imagery, to understand the content and detail of the presented world. This focusing occurs when watching a movie on a cinema, television screen or other device.

The darkness of the auditorium helps to mask peripheral distractions and augment focus on the screen. It seems to me that the darkness is particularly suited to the watching of horror films, perhaps because of the natural association of the boogieman coming at night time and one's inclination to look around when danger may be present; one should watch a horror movie in the morning with light streaming through the window to understand the strength of this point, although I do not claim this to be universally true.

Sound accompanying what is seen is typically projected at a volume that commands the spectator's attention and may filter out non-film related noise. Surround sound provides a richer, life like, audible environment.

Movie theatre chairs are typically comfortable, ensuring the spectator is not distracted by physical annoyances like an aching posterior. They are also typically sizeable enough to cocoon the spectator and at a slight recline, placing the spectator in a more passive physical relationship with the screen than, say, the investigative position of sitting at a desk and looking down on an object to be analysed.

I will now turn to the moment that brings everything together.

Cinematic Perspective

> "We are with Rosemary. We, I mean the audience. It's shown from her point of view. The whole film is shown from her point of view. Like the book, it's written almost in the first person. There's no scene in the film which could not be seen by Rosemary"-
> Roman Polanski, *Making of Rosemary's Baby Featurette*

It has been proposed that film is only rarely experienced from a psychological point of view that may be taken by the spectator and cinematic imagery is not fundamentally egocentric. Thus, cinema is held as incapable of making objects seem real and present, and illusion is dismissed. To the contrary, I believe that certain horror films *do* promote an egocentric perspective and, combined with the absorbing nature of cinematic engagement, leads to the kind of illusory experience (both contextual and sensory) art-horrified spectators describe.

Films are carefully crafted to promote perspective. *Generally*, films encourage the audience to empathize with, and care for, characters. This is supported by a spectator's disposition to engage with cinematic fictions in the way they do. Their desire to get into the protagonist's position helps to drive cognitive and emotional alignment. I now wish to demonstrate an egocentric perspective *is* taken through an empirical analysis of moments of art-horror in paradigm horror, which I propose marks the moment of *consummation* where illusion occurs.

Joseph Mascelli, whose work *The Five C's of Cinematography* is regarded as a seminal film-making text, highlights the importance of the camera in driving perspective and three types of camera angle prevalent in film: i) objective; ii) subjective, and; iii) point of view ("POV"). *Objective* camera angles are shots taken from a "sideline viewpoint", where the spectator will view events through "the eyes of an unseen observer, as if eavesdropping" (Mascelli, 1965: 13-14). Since the viewpoint is from someone outside of the scene, the camera angle is deemed *impersonal. Subjective* camera angles are those where the spectator is "placed in the picture, either on his own as an active participant, or by trading places with a person in the picture and seeing the event through his eyes" (Mascelli, 1965: 14). The camera acts as the viewer's eyes and participation in the screen action is deemed a *personal* experience. *POV* camera angles fall between objective and subjective. Here, the camera is placed at the side of the key subjective character (the protagonist) in the film whose viewpoint is being depicted, but the view is not necessarily through the protagonist's eyes. The aim is to place the spectator "cheek-to-cheek with the off-screen player" (Mascelli, 1965: 22), often employing angles from behind the shoulder of the protagonist. The angle is both objective (not the protagonist's eyes) and subjective (because the spectator may experience the protagonist's viewpoint), and the spectator is seen as not involved in the action but *in* the picture. This "intimate glimpse" is *personal* because a viewpoint is taken that allows the spectator to identify more closely with the subject of the action. To note, POV shooting is, in common vernacular today, typically understood as subjective and commonly used in found footage horror and pornography.

An analysis of art-horrific moments in paradigm films challenges arguments against egocentricity. These films encourage the spectator to observe the action from the point of view that is *in* the action and, revealingly, in *every moment of art-horror* highlighted, a subjective perspective is taken: moving with Rosemary through the apartment to the cot (from Rosemary's shoulder) and subsequent image of the Devil's face on screen (subjectively seen); Reagan's attack on her mother (low view with Chris MacNeil on the floor) and spider walking towards the camera (subjective images)[26]; Leatherface's first appearance (we look up at him) and the end chase (subjective views from inside the truck); the decapitation of Jennings (intermittent subjective and POV, ending with a reflected view of 'our' decapitated head in the glass) and Mrs Baylock appearing (looking down at markings on Damien's head); Laurie's walk home and the closet attack (Michael faces *us*); Danny being confronted by the twins in the corridor (POV), Jack's visit to Room 237 (subjective and POV), and Wendy discovering the truth (we are followed up the stairs, next to Wendy); the stacking of chairs (child's position from behind the mother) and the clown attack in the bedroom (looking at the chair from our bed, then down); Tina's death (viewed from Rod's position on the floor); seeing our friend standing in the corner opposite the wall (subjective view through the handheld camera lens).

In each art-horrific moment, the camera visually places the viewer *in* the film space, offering a view (*psychologically*) either from the position of the protagonist or of someone within the same space. One might regard the perspective as subjective, although the non-strict alignment of lens and protagonist's eyes does not lend itself to an assessment of perfect subjective alignment under Mascelli's definition. Nevertheless, the perspective promoted is from in the space where one is in the presence of the monster i.e. egocentric; a spatial relation is made.

One might argue that non-continuous alignment (at one point focusing on the protagonist and at another subjectively looking in without concern for them) undermines the personal subjective experience, but as Mascelli convincingly suggests, "abruptly inserted in an otherwise objectively filmed picture, subjective shots increase audience involvement and interest" (Mascelli, 1965: 14). Consistent alignment of the camera with the protagonist's eyes would be boring and distracting, as the spectator tries to understand events but becomes annoyed by the limited view the camera allows. Echoing Gaut's comments, continuous alignment may result in the viewer being suspicious of the direction, a natural tension occurring between where the camera looks and where the spectator might wish to look. Moreover, subjective alignment would potentially undermine certain film instructions, such as the kind of reactions and thoughts we should have that are indicated through the protagonist's facial expressions. Without objective shots, a wedge would be driven between the real and fictional. An interspersion of objective and subjective camera angles maintains a viewer's interest and engagement in the action, allowing for the moment where the camera angle changes and places the viewer in the picture. In this moment:

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[26] The tape recording revelation has also affected many spectators (subjectively heard).

> "the audience is shocked when it is abruptly switched from an unseen observer *outside* the picture...to a participant in the picture (directly relating with the players). The viewer may want to become *emotionally involved* in the story, but he may be uncomfortably surprised when required to become actively involved with the players!" (Mascelli, 1965: 16)

When visually positioned in the closet with Laurie, her presence is unnoticed as Michael peers through the door. The visual experience is of *our* being in the closet, confronted by the monster. Michael is momentarily experienced as spatially present.

Allen's suggestion that the "quality of a spectator's look at a film is never dictated or determined by the film; it is only, at most, fostered or encouraged by it" (Allen, 1995: 135) is a non-contentious point. However, *if film presents an evil and mortally threatening monster, the spectator may begin to experience concerns that, when the monster suddenly appears to them, are consummated*. The presence of subjective camera angles in moments of art-horror vindicates the claim that art-horror is *personally perceived*. Directors aim to pull spectators into the perceptual position of a body in the film space. One does not need to be in the protagonist's shoes – one needs to be drawn in and feel themselves as present to the monster (and vice versa).

Summary

Seeing cinematically portrayed and real life objects is structurally similar and sense data received under both circumstances are comparable in important ways. Horror movie imagery impacts, in my opinion, the two most important sense organs and may create a realistic sensory experience. Unlike a painting or literature, the imagery is not in need of translation and is investigated in much the same way as real life, with the spectator focusing on what they deem important. Imagery is dynamic and photographic, making objects look realistic.

Imagery is presented in the context of a narrative that is meant to engage the spectator in a particular way. The spectator may become focused on the content and this draws their thinking away from the medium (investigating its effects). When imagery interests the spectator, they look through the medium to the objects, and under appropriate conditions may momentarily mistake what they see as real and present. Analysis of paradigm horror shows that the egocentric perspective is promoted.

It is highly unlikely that a spectator will always be aware that they are looking at a cinematic image. The cinematic environment provides an excellent setting for a spectator to become immersed. The loss of medium awareness is a familiar condition of spectatorship and in certain moments one may fail to differentiate between filmatic imagery and reality. Both contextual and sensory illusion are not just possible but *probable*.

Summary

Harry:
"Professor, is this all real or is it just happening inside my head?"
Dumbledore:
"Of course it's happening inside your head, Harry. Why should that mean that it's not real?"

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2 (2011)

It is popularly held that a spectator is aware of the fictional nature of film content (both prior to engagement and during) and is prevented from falling under the illusion that what they see is real and present. In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that horror movies are capable of challenging this philosophical status quo. An analysis of some key aspects of horror movie spectatorship (hitherto under-analyzed or analyzed in isolation), offers a procedurally and psychologically compelling explanation of the art-horror experience I describe in Chapter 1. This *causally* explains art-horror phenomenology and acknowledges the psychological and emotional dispositions of the spectator, an approach distinctly lacking in other accounts. I call this illusionistic account of a specific emotional response to horror movies *Momentary Monster Hypothesis*.

Momentary Monster Hypothesis

Cinematic engagement is not simply a case of a spectator sitting in front of the screen, hoping for things to engross them and draw them into the film world. The spectator's role in film spectatorship, the emotion involved and the manner in which the content is presented, allows them to buy into the content and experience the monster as real and present. It may be that achieving this situation is difficult or even impossible for some spectators, and this is an acceptable position. However, for others the ability to be overwhelmed by film is easy; some are highly disposed to wanting to be engaged and so easily absorbed they embrace the content of a film with incredible ease. *Facts about the spectator* and *facts about the film* allow the experience of art-horror to take place.

A spectator watches a film and *wants to engage*, to become immersed and experience emotions that are ideally intended to be evoked. There are various reasons for this, which may be broadly categorised as pleasure and value. Spectators also seem to appreciate that in order to fully experience the film, they will likely need to lend themselves to it and not constantly question its truth. A key method of engagement is *empathetic identification* with the protagonist of the film, through the use of imagination. This allows the spectator to *place themselves in the protagonist's shoes*, which is something people do in everyday life instinctively and unconsciously. Identification heightens engagement by allowing the spectator to understand events from a certain *perspective* and to take an

attitude towards content like the monster (the object of emotion). Empathetic identification is not just *cognitive* but, it seems increasingly correct to say, *physiological* also.

Art-horror is a *self-directed, fear-based emotion, that plays on the primal concerns of humans*, namely, survival and the avoidance of pain. Despite engaging with a fiction, subject matter that involves these concerns heightens the spectator's attention. I suggest that the concern is principally *for* the protagonist to begin, but as the film progresses and the spectator becomes immersed they will begin to feel *with* them. Such is the susceptibility of humans to being scared that simply knowing they are going to watch a horror movie often significantly heightens their capacity for immersion and emotional predisposition.

Film may produce both contextual and sensory illusion. Filmatic imagery is often highly realistic but, importantly, is immersive because of its nature as a dynamic, real object capturing medium that shows us characters and events in a way that is similar to real life. It stimulates the two key sensory organs for a life-like experience and it is a natural human disposition to accept what one sees, often without immediate judgement. Engaging aspects of the film (plot, characters, locations, interactions and sounds), together with viewing aspects (screen size, darkness of surroundings, volume of sound etc) contribute to a viewing experience that is highly immersive.

The effective combination of these factors (engagement, emotion and presentation) contributes to a spectator's psychological disposition, making them susceptible to a moment when the monster appears. This *consummation* occurs with a subjective camera angle that perceptually places the spectator in proximity to the monster. At this point, the spectator's point of view is not of the protagonist; empathetic identification has been broken. The spectator is unaware, *momentarily*, of the monster's fictionality or that they are watching a film. Reality and medium awareness have disappeared, evaluation faculties overridden. They freeze. Since the monster is seen as real and present, which is not the actual state of affairs, the spectator is momentarily under an *illusion*.

The spectator's response is a result of prior work, of the perception of the monster as an evil and mortal threat. It may also be promoted by the knowledge that one is watching a horror film. Because of this, the experience of art-horror is unlike a reactionary startle at a sudden or loud noise (e.g. a plate smashing). The moment of art-horror is the result of the spectator's prior understanding of the monster as a threat and experiencing it as present. The experience is as-if the monster were there, indistinguishable from reality.

This situation finally explains the behaviour and testimony of spectators, as well as the persistent nature of the emotion after ceasing to watch the film. Typically the spectator sees the monster, although *The Blair Witch Project* demonstrates that visually placing the spectator in the same space as the monster (its presence presumed by the sight of a colleague standing in the corner) may work also.

My hypothesis is a refreshing and potentially controversial addition to the landscape of thinking that attempts to explain emotional responses to fiction. However, it is important to note three things. First, it

does not deny that Thought or Simulation Theories pertain in the overall process of arousing the emotion but the moment of art-horror is only reasonably explained through illusionism. Second, this account makes no claim about cinematic experience or emotional responses to fictions generally working in this way. Third, it plausibly explains the experience from the perspective of both first person and external observer, but does not have a cognitive foot in both positions.

Challenges to Illusion

The art-horror experience rebukes a number of popular challenges to Illusionism.

It has been argued that the "institution of fiction from which we derive entertainment and pleasure is that we know that the persons and events are not actual" (Carroll, 1990: 64). This situation may generally be characterized by descriptions of distance, and it is a spectator's perceptual distance from the fiction that seems to allow them to appreciate it. Illusion proposes a closure of this distance, placing the spectator into perceived physical proximity with the monster, and perhaps eliminating means for appreciation. However, this situation neither dismisses illusion as explaining the experience nor prevents one from engaging. In agreement with Carroll, I do not think that the moment of art-horror is typically pleasurable for spectators, although this does not deny that it might be. I think the excitement and subsequent relief, together with social factors of endurance, are pleasurable, perhaps making the overall experience net-positive. Further, one may view the experience as worthwhile because it is deemed valuable to one's education and resolve. Even viewed as momentary illusion, the experience is justifiable in terms of both pleasure and value, satisfying the requirements of the institution of fiction.

Walton has proposed that the momentary-fear theory, "even if it were plausible, would not throw much light on cases in which we apparently have other psychological attitudes towards fictions." (Walton, 1978: 236) Although I do not claim that other psychological attitudes are not present at other points during the film viewing, I view the moment of art-horror as eradicating other attitudes because it is a primal, self-directed emotion. And it is momentary.

In his seminal text, Carroll equates illusion with the *willing suspension of disbelief* and, in the context of the art-horrifying movies I am analysing, this is helpful. I think that famous challengers of the notion (notably, Schaper and Carroll) misconstrue the nature of the *willing* involved and, thus, the disclaimer made by the spectator when engaging with horror movie fiction. Carroll suggests that for beliefs to be suspended they must be questionable and, in the case of a fictional character like Freddy Krueger, one's belief about the fictional nature of the monster does not waiver. This position rests upon both the idea that, typically, one's consciousness of reality never waivers and that the monster is "any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science" (Carroll, 1990: 27). As such, not only is the spectator's psychological predicament deemed resolute but even when looking at the screen there is "no evidence to undermine or contest these beliefs". This also reflects Walton's view that knowledge of the fiction never leaves them. As I have argued, the monster is not as Carroll describes and conditions

pertain in the cinematic experience to challenge both medium and reality awareness. The spectator influences the latter. I suggest that the willing is *not* a contemporaneous willing the disbelief of what is known to be case, but a willing in advance of presentation that one can be engrossed in the film and accept the possibility of the things on screen as possible or real. One wills (likely unconsciously given medium familiarity) themselves to be disposed to being immersed, like a psychological submission to allow the film to achieve what it may be capable of. As I will aim to demonstrate in Chapter 4, the notion of the willing suspension of disbelief finds an analogous existence in another experience, introducing psychological notions of *desire*, *expectancy* and *compliance* that add further support to illusion.

Epistemic Considerations

The experience of art-horror is *momentary,* lasting no more than mere seconds; however, this should not dismiss illusion and I thus propose adjusting the popular conception of illusion as being required to hold for a sustained period of time. However, I do understand why the issue arises, because it is attached to the crucial question that Walton rightly raised and which, without addressing, would undermine my illusionistic efforts.

Walton's *conceptual* question is whether certain emotions require *belief* to make them what they are. Walton suggests that real fear requires belief in the existence of the monster and without it the emotion is, at best, *quasi-fear* (fear-*like*). A spectator not leaving the cinema is adjudged to prove this. Carroll has also denied that, even if optical illusions are possible under "very special circumstances", cinematic representations can possibly "purport themselves convincingly as something they are not meant to be" (Carroll, 1998: 93). Once a spectator can "perform physical operations in relation to the screen" (Carroll, 1998: 97), he says, the film will lose its power to create the illusion of an object. The ability to move one's head (to see the edge of the screen or objects outside of it), prior knowledge of the "institutions" of the cinematic form, and the fact that entire films are not optical illusions, will ensure that a spectator is not led into perceiving the cinematic images in a way that encourages belief. Thus, only the highly gullible would believe what they see and he denies that cinematic imagery may instil "illusions of reality which...in consequence, putatively immobilizes our ability to criticize what we see" (Carroll, 1998: 90-91)

Intuitively, if one holds that the art-horror experience is illusory, momentary belief in the monster's existence seems the logical conclusion. I propose this is not the only solution.

In the next chapter, I aim to provide an account of art-horror's epistemic status. Rather than taking issue with either Walton or Carroll, I wish to demonstrate that both have correctly noted something about the situation but that the emotional experience I am trying to characterize requires a richer account of the presence, or lack, of belief.

Chapter 4

Hypnotic Horror

Introduction

"Whatever you do, don't fall asleep"

Nancy, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984)

The position that the viewer is always aware of the fictional nature of cinematic content and imagery is the safe haven of theorists. A wedge is driven between what is seen and what is believed, the spectator's experience always coloured by the knowledge that what they see is not real. In the previous chapter I proposed a route to illusion in film spectatorship by analysing the spectator and the film. Acknowledging the spectator's psychological and emotional disposition, I propose that certain movies play on these by encouraging a particular attitude to be taken towards the monster and then promote a perspective that momentarily results in the spectator deeming the monster as real and present. It is a journey that may be easily hindered but eminently achievable and provides the most compelling explanation of the phenomenology of the art-horror experience I describe. Under illusion, the spectator's ability to distinguish between fiction and reality is put on hold and their behaviour is appropriate. Of course, this is a causal explanation and I am conscious of falling foul of the criticism I leveled at theorists who have attempted to solve the paradox of fiction, namely, that they either consider the causal at the expense of the conceptual or vice versa.

In this chapter, I want to consider a non-cinematic experience that I believe is significantly analogous to cinematic experience and helps us unlock the puzzle of art-horror[27]. The experience is that of *hypnosis*. Hypnosis illuminates the filmatic engagement process, strength of immersion and response, and supports an illusionistic *causal* explanation. Moreover, it offers us a way of considering the *conceptual* issue of emotional response to fiction in a way that has been missed.

In 'Fearing Fictions', Walton raises the issue of whether emotions require belief, arguing that fear requires belief in the existence of the monster and threat to the protagonist (or, in Charles' exceptional

[27] I am conscious of the use of bad analogy, pertinently highlighted by Currie: "Film theorists have used intellectual strategies that were almost bound to lead to disaster. One of them is the casual employment of vague analogies. Profound connections have been claimed between the cinema and Plato's cave, between the screen and the breast, between the experience of movie watching and dreaming…we must pick our analogies with care and attend to the details of their justification" (Currie, 1995: preface xviii-xix)

case, him). As Charles *knows* he is watching a fiction (and never gives this up), he is deemed to lack the requisite beliefs to experience real fear and experiences quasi-fear instead. Walton's account makes a true and insightful claim about the conceptual requirement for belief to make certain emotions what they are, but I think the confusion surrounding *belief* has prevented a correct interpretation of experiences like art-horror.

Where belief is causally required for emotional responses to fictions, it is assumed it is actively thought about (an *occurrent belief*) and not *dispositional* (too short to be considered important). With respect to art-horror, actively asserted thought regarding knowledge of the monster's fictionality undermines illusion and potentially even the intense reactions spectators say they experience. Carroll spotted this issue, even in misconstruing Walton's point as causal, and tries to eliminate occurrent belief from the discussion. He rightly thinks that mere thoughts of things (sans belief) may arouse emotions. However, in doing so he maintains belief by way of the back door, holding that *disbelief* is always maintained. He thus falls foul of Walton's conceptual point. That thoughts can causally evoke emotions is a relatively uninteresting position; of course they do. But art-horror experience would seem mysterious if disbelief is held i.e. why would one respond in the way they do, or even at all? Something belief-*like* must surely be required to evoke such intense emotion (causal) and to make art-horror what it is (conceptual).

Hitherto, discussion has focused on the adoption of a binary belief stance. One view is that art-horror entails belief, and for art-horror to occur it requires a movement from disbelief to occurrent belief. An alternative is that if occurrent belief is not present (as Carroll holds), disbelief is maintained (even to a low degree). I suggest there is another option, which has some similarities with Carroll's account but is richer through the analysis of hypnosis.

Without trying to make the emotion more mysterious than it already seems, I propose that the spectator *neither believes nor disbelieves* at the moment of art-horror emotional arousal. This position neither denies that the experience of the monster is *as if* one believed it was momentarily real and present, nor does it does dispel illusion. I believe that belief is truly *suspended*, although the state is belief-*like*, and propose that hypnosis provides a way of showing how this may be explained. This position challenges constant reality awareness, the notion of a *hidden observer* that maintains a foothold in reality and offers a refreshing take on the infamous paradox of fiction.

A) Cinematic Experience

"I believe the most rational mind can play tricks in the dark"

Daily, *The Woman in Black* (2012)

Background

Cinematic experience has been compared to the activity of dreaming (both dream and daydream) in the work of Metz[28], Baudry[29], Walton[30], Allen[31] and Hanich[32]. Baudry proposed that the cinema-going experience recreates some core similarities with that of sleep, such as darkness and relative immobility of the audience in their seat and, in agreement, we do sometimes experience events depicted in a film with "some of the psychological closeness and somatic intensity of our own dreams" (Allen, 1995: 125) Dreaming may be so similar to waking life that it feels like one's waking consciousness and discussion continues about whether a subject is conscious during a dream, either of themselves or of the fact that they are dreaming. Ernest Sosa[33] suggests that in dreams the subject make-believes i.e. they do not really believe the content and this fails to undermine their core waking beliefs. Jonathan Ichikawa[34], on the other hand, while agreeing with Sosa's imagination driven dreamscape, suggests that the subject cannot tell whether beliefs in waking life are beliefs or imaginings, concluding that dream experience is still subjectively indistinguishable from waking experience.

Research issues make dreaming an imperfect analogy for cinematic experience. A subject may have a number of dreams during a single sleep and significant difficulty recalling the experience, and the dream world has been personally imagined without external stimuli. Despite some similarities between art-horror and the experience of an intense nightmare (one is awoken by the moment of horror), I suggest focusing elsewhere.

I propose that *hypnosis* provides a better analogy for the art-horror experience. I want to consider hypnosis because of its structural and phenomenological closeness to art-horror experience. Hypnosis utilizes the kind of imaginative facets and immersory tactics prevalent in cinema, closely mirroring art-horror experience both procedurally (pre-, during and post-viewing) and phenomenally. It also provides a refreshing way of looking at the epistemic status of the experience.

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[28] Metz (1977) p.106-109
[29] Baudry (1975) p.299-318
[30] Walton (1978) p.50
[31] Allen (1995) p.122-128
[32] Hanich (2010) p.98
[33] Sosa (2007) p.1-21
[34] Ichikawa (2008) p.519-527

Hypnotic Introduction

Understandably, hypnosis brings to mind the trickery of a stage hypnotist. The most drastic state might be conceived of as trance-like, where the ability of the subject to function under his/her own volition is suspended, and might be accompanied by some altered perception. One imagines a subject barking like a dog, racing an invisible horse or thinking that members of the audience pose a threat. Alternatively, one might consider less dramatic acts like being convinced to do something that one does not want to do (through subtle suggestion) as hypnotic e.g. dropping a glass of water or pressing the button on a machine that will electrocute an innocent kitten. Hypnosis may also be used for therapeutic purposes e.g. to give up smoking or manage a fear of flying. This might happen over multiple sessions with a longer-term impact.

The traditional view of hypnosis is as some kind of altered state of consciousness, where an individual's level of awareness is modified, and superficially resembling sleep. Following years of research, the contemporary view is of hypnosis as more a change in perception than zombie-like trance state, reflecting the latest definition provided by the Society for Psychological Hypnosis, Division 30 of the American Psychological Association (2014):

> "*Hypnosis*: A state of consciousness involving focused attention and reduced peripheral awareness characterized by an enhanced capacity for response to suggestion.
>
> *Hypnotizability*: An individual's ability to experience suggested alterations in physiology, sensations, emotions, thoughts, or behavior during hypnosis." ("About Division 30")

It is proposed that under hypnosis the subject remains awake but their attention is simultaneously redirected and awareness of other influences reduced. This results in a dramatic increase in suggestibility where suggestions, whether true in reality or not, are capable of being accepted e.g. that cigarettes taste horrible or the subject is in a place they have been asked to imagine. The hypnotized subject focuses on the commands and suggestions of the hypnotist, failing to pass a critical eye over their truth, which may result in a suggestion being taken that is in contradiction to what the subject typically believes to be true. This suggestion might then affect the subject's waking life afterwards. Humans seem capable of moving into something like a hypnotic state during their daily lives, for example; when someone drives along a motorway and suddenly realises they are miles down the road without having ever remembered getting there, and in daydreaming activity. Cinematic experience fits the bill, too.

A crude but, I think, helpful snapshot of the hypnotic process (from the perspective of the subject) is as follows:

- I want to undergo a process that will allow me to become engaged and may potentially affect me both psychologically and emotionally

- I know the process is manufactured (fictional), but I may become extremely immersed and experience something that makes me think and feel differently about things
- I go through an induction procedure
- I am awake as I receive sensory stimuli and am asked to imagine certain things
- I become immersed; my attention is focused and I am drawn into a state where I am susceptible to suggestion. Reality is masked
- I come out of my immersed state and am aware of the real world again
- I do not feel as though I have been asleep. I feel as though something has changed, perhaps through a challenge to, or reprogramming of, prior knowledge or beliefs

Movie watching is not like standing up on stage and riding an invisible horse and I do not wish to claim that art-horror experience is a form of hypnosis. Temporally and physiologically there are differences between the film spectator and deeply entranced hypnotized subject that suggest analogy rather than equivalence: i) the supposed 'awakeness' of the subject; ii) the nature of the imagery involved (one will primarily be concerned with mental imagery, the other with screen imagery), and iii) persistence. Despite differences, I propose analogy is highly compelling, particularly because of the significant procedural and phenomenal similarities of the two experiences. I suspect that, with the evolution of neurological imaging, this analogy is worthy of deeper analysis.

I hypothesize that the mechanisms of hypnosis are operative in film spectatorship. Film provides content that plays the role of suggestion. We, the spectator, are asked to imagine that places and characters in the story are real and events really happening. Our focus will be a function of what the director wants and the genre of movie; action movies ask us to root for someone and paradigm horror asks *us* to fear the monster. Procedurally, we sit in a chair and become absorbed by the imagery and narrative, which is functionally equivalent to the hypnotic set-up. Factors that affect hypnotic absorption, the blurring of reality boundaries and the loss of self and reality awareness also affect film spectators. These factors, which I will analyze in the coming sections, include: *imagination, attitude, compliance* and *expectation*.

In art-horror experience *it is as if we forget where we are and that we are watching a movie.* Film spectatorship, like hypnosis, can be strong enough for subjects to "talk about images as if they really exist", which indicates something like a fantasy state where fictional content is perceived as real. One might consider that in "every image there is a germ of hallucination" (Sheen and Robertson, 1996: 11), suggesting the potential for an epistemically forceful perception of a fictional suggestion, which echoes that of the hypnotized subject. I call the immersed state of cinematic spectatorship *cinematosis*, and I now wish to show how this cinematic dispositional psychological state may be better understood by considering hypnosis.

Hypnotic Induction

Hypnosis is brought about through an induction procedure, a way of immersing the spectator so that suggestions can take hold. Generally, induction calls for muscular relaxation and something like a comfortable posture, with optical focus but, in practice, a range of techniques are employed. Although reclining in a chair and hearing the hypnotist's verbal suggestions is a popular method, a subject may just as well be standing up with their eyes open. Less direct suggestions also work, including metaphors and non-verbal suggestions in the form of mental *imagery*, verbal tonality and physical interference.

In the movie going experience, one decides to watch the movie (likely with the desire to become immersed), enters the theatre and takes a position in a (usually) comfortable chair. The room darkens, reducing visual awareness of one's surroundings and the movie is then projected onto a large screen that ideally swallows most of one's visual field.[35] Although one's eyes are open, the large screen, darkened room and comfortable chair are suitably comparable to that of the reclining-with-closed-eyes position of the hypnotist's subject.

Film content (characters, location, plot and events) is typically presented as fictionally true and functionally plays the role of the hypnotist's suggestions. A key to the spectator's buy-in is their willingness to use imagination, which is used both to accept the content and to empathize with the characters. Like the hypnotist asking his subject to imagine certain phenomena, the movie is designed to have the audience imagine and accept as possible the presented world. Such commands are implicit rather than explicit and the movie provides the spectator with a sensual field that the hypnotist is unable to.

Drivers of Hypnosis

The quality of suggestion and a subject's disposition significantly affect the level of a subject's immersion in the hypnotic process and whether they become hypnotized. These hypnotic operative mechanisms are similarly present in cinematic spectatorship, reflecting the *facts about the spectator* and *facts about the film* I highlighted in the previous chapter. With respect to hypnosis, Sheehan and Robertson point out a number of factors that contribute to subject immersion; these "major correlates of hypnotizability" (Sheehan and Robertson, 1996: 5), are analogous to factors that affect cinematic engagement:

[35] Alternatively, one might be in front of a small screen with focused attention so as to encourage the disappearance of the external distractions, typically also aiming to sit comfortably.

Table 4 – Major Correlates of Hypnotizability

	Major Correlate	Aspects	
1	***Imagery***	-	Vividness of imagery
		-	Ease of imaging
		-	Control over imagery
		-	Imagic style
2	***Fantasy***	-	Proneness to fantasy
		-	Ease of fantasizing
		-	Motivation for development
3	***Absorption***	-	Attention capacity
		-	Concentration on inner feelings and thoughts
		-	Effortless experiencing
4	***Dissociation***	-	Involuntariness of response
		-	Dualistic thinking
5	***Rapport***	-	Relationship with the hypnotist
		-	Interpersonal attraction
		-	Evaluation apprehension
6	***Ease of Relaxation***		
7	***Context***	-	Situational constraints
		-	Demand characteristics
		-	Attitudes and preconceptions
		-	Expectancies and beliefs

These correlates are “theoretically related to each other” and, importantly in the context of the analogy I am making, draw “attention to the importance of major social psychological influences on hypnotizability” (Sheen and Robertson, 1996: 5). It is easy to see how art-horror experience is hindered by the failing of one or more of these correlates (applied to film): uncompelling special effects like visible wires suspending vampire bats in later Hammer horror films (*Imagery* correlate); distracting audience noise (*Absorption* and *Ease of Relaxation* correlates); ridiculous metamorphic turns e.g. *Jeepers Creepers* (*Context* correlate); distracting directorial traits e.g. the films of James Wan or Quentin Tarantino (*Rapport* and *Context* correlates); enjoyment of the monster’s presence in the *Elm Street* sequels (*Dissociation* correlate); spectator’s poor attention span (*Absorption* correlate); demand for realism hindering the ability to fantasize (*Fantasy* correlate).

Although imagery can significantly enhance engagement, the spectator plays a major part in hypnotizability. The ability to *imagine*, for example, is positively correlated to hypnotizability and

underpinned by the skill or fantasy-proneness of the subject, supporting the spectator's active imaginative role in cinematic engagement. The hypnotic subject brings particular cognitive skills to the process that affects the reception of suggestions and good hypnotic subjects are "highly sensitive" to the contextual cues of the narrative. Moreover, *context*, such as the subject's attitudes and expectancies, will shape the influence of imagery, adding support to my view that the *context* of cinematic engagement should be reconsidered. Attitudes affect subject immersion and give efficacy to suggestions (sensual stimuli and narrative content) that may be understood as false prior to engagement. The subject's beliefs, if attuned to the contents of the suggestion, may achieve the same hypnotic result in "ways that diminish the apparent relevance of imagery" (Sheen and Robertson, 1996: 8), thus allowing less realistic imagery to take hold e.g. the grainy black and white imagery of *The Blair Witch Project* or cartoonish long arms of Freddy Krueger as he approaches in the alleyway in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

Psychological Drivers of Hypnotic Susceptibility

Dispositional subject traits have been shown to play a significant role in hypnosis. These psychological factors include: the *desire* to be hypnotized; the belief or *expectancy* that the process will engage the subject, and; the ability to *comply* with the process. Graham F. Wagstaff emphasizes the importance of the subject in the hypnotic process[36]:

> "Responsiveness to the majority of hypnotic suggestions requires the active deliberate participation by subjects. Moreover, different suggestions may require different strategies to "pass" them; some (such as "involuntary" arm lowering, and some degree of forgetting) may, at least at some point, be experienced as "genuine", so long as subjects know what strategies to adopt and how to interpret their experiences; while others can only be "passed" by employing pure compliance (these include "real as real" hallucinations, total negative hallucinations, and profound hypnotic deafness). So, if subjects are to respond to a full range of suggestions, the following factors must be present:
>
> 1) they must have positive attitudes towards hypnosis (for instance, they must not be extremely afraid or totally unwilling to actively participate);
>
> 2) they must have appropriate expectancies (for instance, they have to realize that they must actively try to respond by adopting a range of strategies, and not passively wait for something to happen; and they must accept such action as "legitimate" if they are to experience certain phenomena as "genuine");

[36] I have formatted 1) to 4) for clarity and underlined important aspects.

> 3) they must have the capacity to devise the appropriate strategies; and very importantly,
>
> 4) subjects must have a willingness or capacity to comply in the hypnotic situation.
>
> Perhaps it is not necessary to add a *high* general propensity for imaginative involvement as an extra requirement, nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that all these conditions are more likely to be fulfilled if subjects have some minimal capacity for, and certainly willingness to employ, imaginative involvement." (Wagstaff, 1996: 37)

Hypnotic behavior involves "a willingness to cooperate with suggestions" and "a shift in cognitive orientation to one of imaginative involvement" (Wagstaff, 1996: 19). A subject is not required to believe the content before embarking on the hypnotic adventure – it may even run against their internal convictions – but the subject does have an ability to overcome these convictions if appropriately engaged and content compelling (and compellingly presented). This analysis has real application to cinematic engagement, reflects my focus on the importance of the spectator in cinematic experience and resurrects the notion of the *willing suspension of disbelief*.

Imagination

Imagination is involved in the hypnotic process but it is disputed where and to what extent it plays a part, reflecting *state* and *non-state* theories. One views it as a by-product of, and the other a contributing factor to, hypnotic responding. On the *state view*, hypnosis is considered an altered state of consciousness, with varying degrees, such that the deepest states of hypnosis will result in extremely profound phenomenological experiences. This view has been rejected by *non-state* psychologists who found that the phenomena could be explained better in terms of "more mundane psychological concepts, such as, attitudes, expectancies, beliefs, compliance, attention, concentration, distraction and relaxation" (Wagstaff, 1996: 19). Notwithstanding, since imagination is not working alone imaginative awareness may be muted, challenging an argument against illusion.

On the traditional *state* view, the ability to be involved in imagining is a significant influence of hypnotic susceptibility. One interpretation is that in hypnosis *dissociations* occur, where a subject might be aware of what they are doing or feeling but not be aware of what is making them do or feel it; hence, the affect is experienced as involuntary. This is important because it suggests that a subject is a complex arrangement of cognitive control systems, controlled by a central consciousness that keeps things monitored and imagination is the result of engagement that overrides normal monitoring processes and awareness:

> "normally these structures are under the influence of a central control structure, or "executive ego", but when subjects enter the hypnotic state they surrender to the

> hypnotist much of their capacity to control and monitor the various cognitive structures that are involved in behavior and experience" (Wagstaff, 1996: 20)

As we become more involved in the hypnotic procedure we lose control of, and awareness of, cognitive control functions. We become immersed in the process and this facilitates imaginative involvement because we are able to 'let go'. Subjects may be aware of their responses (such as arm-raising) but these are involuntary; dissociation of cognitive mechanisms has occurred. This perspective supports Stock's compelling identification of spectators being "distracted" (Stock, 2009: 13) by film fiction, of events which take place at a speed where one is unable to reflect upon them; by (involuntarily) turning one's attention to the content and away from its genesis (fiction, film) one loses sight of the fact that what one sees and is undergoing is manufactured.

Non-state theorists propose that, provided factors such as "positive attitudes and appropriate expectancies" are present, "involvement in imaginings and fantasy per se can facilitate successful hypnotic responding" (Wagstaff, 1996: 20). An example of this would be the construction of a *goal-directed fantasy* such as imagining a heavy weight on an arm that results more readily in involuntary arm lowering. By positively thinking about a situation and imagining it to be happening, one may become so wrapped up that one has something like an experience of doing so. This fantasy goal supports Scruton's[37] view of *attitude* in the cinematic experience; movie-watchers do (often) have a positive inclination to get wrapped up in the narrative on screen.

Positive Attitude

The intensity and quality of a movie experience is widely regarded as a function of our willingness to be involved. If we are not *up for it* a movie is usually less likely to affect us. Those who struggle or are unwilling to entertain the content of certain types of movie (horror being a prime example) or imagine a fictional situation, often have difficulty engaging in a way where the imagery takes hold. Many often expect failure and this affects efforts made to engage. Hypnosis bears similar results:

> "subjects with negative attitudes and/or scoring low on measures of imaginal ability rarely, if ever, score high on hypnotic susceptibility; hence, positive attitudes towards hypnosis, and a willingness and ability to construct and become involved in imaginings may be necessary to respond to hypnotic suggestions" (Wagstaff, 1996: 22).

Of course, just because someone has a positive attitude and strong imaginative capability does not ensure they will successfully respond to suggestions. What subjects need are "appropriate sets to interpret the suggestion"; they must know what to do to respond to a suggestion and, importantly, need to understand they must be actively involved "and not passively "wait for something to happen"".

[37] See Chapter 3

Hypnotic susceptibility was tested using the Carleton Skills Training Package ("CSTP"), which helps encourage positive attitudes and motivations towards hypnosis. A specific emphasis was placed on "the importance of absorption in imagining "make-believe" situations" and the test also provided information about how to interpret suggestions of different kinds. Results demonstrated a successful improvement in hypnotic susceptibility. Although one may be sceptical about the modifiability of susceptibility to hypnotic suggestion (there is an argument that subjects might simply be doing what they are told) it has been argued that improvements using CSTP could not be the result of compliance alone since the "susceptibility gains…are substantial and…stable over time" (Wagstaff, 1996: 22).

The importance of positive attitude in filmatic immersion is evident in horror movie spectatorship. If one is determined not to be affected or convinced a film will leave them unaffected, experience suggests that the expected result will follow. In order to experience the monster as real and present (the aim of certain horror movies), one should allow oneself to become immersed and adopt the appropriate engagement strategy. Such strategy would be to allow that the film may take hold, that at a point it may be seen as real, and it will likely also be understood that this is acceptable because this will not be experienced in perpetuity. I further propose that, even if not consciously acknowledged, maintaining one's focus on the characters and events on screen is required, with the attitude that by doing so one may become gripped.

Compliance

Compliance is viewed as conformity, of acting in a way with another's wishes or demands, and has been shown to be a very powerful factor in hypnosis. In the context of hypnotic experimentation there is:

> "considerable evidence to suggest that subjects…perceive their role as one of behaving like "good", cooperative subjects, and fulfilling the experimenter's expectations", a kind of "tacit agreement" to do what is expected and to "break this agreement is to commit a severe social impropriety" (Wagstaff, 1996: 25)

There are various types of compliance; one might comply because they want to and it could occur despite the request being against a subject's own convictions. The latter might also be broken down into those scenarios where it is contrary to the wishes or beliefs of the subject, and those where it is both against their wishes but also intended to deceive the observer. Examples include the aforementioned kitten electrocution experiment (against wishes but not deceiving others) or someone suggesting that a film did not scare them because it did not scare others (deceiving others).

Imaginative game-play and compliance may lead to hypnotic experience through the *foot in the door* effect:

> "…subjects may be strongly motivated initially to "go along" with suggestions by overtly acting them, even if they fail privately to experience them, in the hope that "something might happen" later. As a result they may fall victim to what social psychologists call the "foot in the door effect", and the "low ball tactic"; that is, having first committed themselves to respond in a particular way, even if minimally, subjects may find it difficult to "back out" in the face of more extreme demands." (Wagstaff, 1996: 26)

A subject may comply "for fun…or as a way of satisfying their curiosity by ensuring their continued participation in a study" (Wagstaff, 1996: 25) and they might also be driven by the fact they expect something to happen. This is not necessarily deceptive. Subjects will often motivate themselves in hypnosis by trying to get themselves into a state of relaxation, by sitting quietly and breathing in a particular way, just as spectators prepare themselves for filmatic immersion. If compliance is influential, the role of imagination may be better refined as playing a dual role: i) it facilitates the use of strategies to enable responses to specific suggestions to be experienced as "genuine" or "believable", and; ii) it can influence attitudes and strategies that facilitate compliant responses:

> "Compliance hypnotic responding requires what Sarbin terms, "role-skills," and a willingness or capacity to become involved in imaginings would seem to be beneficial as part of a compliant responder's role-skill repertoire. Also, subjects with a propensity to involve themselves in imaginings might be more likely to attempt and experience hypnotic suggestions in the first place; by doing so they could be more likely to commit themselves early to responding, even if only to the induction procedure, and having committed themselves they would be susceptible to the "foot in the door" effect, and find it difficult to refrain from responding to suggestions that can only be enacted compliantly" (Wagstaff, 1996: 31).

Hypnotic responding may be viewed as a three-stage process called the Expectation, Strategy, Compliance ("ESC") process:

i) The subject works out what is expected of them (like a role-play)
ii) They try to respond appropriately to suggestions/events ("normal" cognitive strategies)
iii) If they fail to experience the appropriate subjective experiences demanded, they will behaviourally comply (or "sham"), potentially to try to get the "foot in the door" (Wagstaff, 1996: 28)

ESC closely reflects the kind of imaginative game-playing strategy that Walton and Currie propose occurs in cinematic spectatorship. Research forerunning the proposal of Simulation Hypothesis demonstrates the ability to engage in imaginings strongly correlates with hypnotic susceptibility, supporting compliance. Wilson and Barber[38] discovered that individual susceptibility to hypnosis is

[38] Wilson and Barber (1982)

affected by a “fantasy prone personality”, proposing that “excellent hypnotic subjects derive from a small percentage of the normal population whom they have termed “fantasy-prone personalities”, denoting a profound fantasy life. These subjects report particularly vivid sensory experiences, such as voluntary “as real as real” hallucinations” (Wagstaff, 1996: 31).

In the context of horror movie spectatorship, the spectator is asked to take the content as true, focus on the image to immerse oneself in the fictional world and to adopt attitudes, and respond in a fashion commensurate, with the protagonist. Watching *A Nightmare on Elm Street* we understand the need to allow the exotic suggestion that a man with knife-adorned gloves can stalk people in their dreams, in order to engage in a particular way. At the beginning we know we are watching a horror (a tacit understanding is that horror movies scare) and learn how a particular character should be viewed (Freddy makes his gloves and attacks a girl in her dream, leaving tears in her nightgown). Such game-playing may be usurped by engrossing sequences thereafter, such as Tina venturing outside at night and seeing the monster approaching in the alleyway. One may not actually feel frightened but react as though they are or might be (attempted empathy) in order to arouse feelings that might allow future moments to take hold.

Engagement will also be affected by the context of the experiment. Even if one feels like responding, they might not want to express this to others, and one could postulate this as a reason for not leaving the cinema. However, there is significant data to indicate that hypnotized subjects are not faking (acting purely out of compliance) and “highly responsive subjects are as responsive when they think they are alone as they are when an observer is present” (Council, Kirsch and Grant, 1996: 45).

To underline the potency of compliance, some deeply hypnotized subjects often have *negative hallucinations* e.g. a subject is shown a number and then told that they have seen nothing, whereby the figure begins to fades away. One might consider a negative hallucination in the cinema as the blocking out of the screen border and periphery.

Expectancy

Expectation is linked to the attitude and strategy employed by the subject. Research suggests there is a strong causal relationship between expectations and hypnotizability, and those who expect results are more responsive to suggestion. A subject’s expectations “determine when hypnotic responses occur…what subjects experience and how they behave in hypnotic situations” (Council, Kirsch and Grant, 1996: 44), and are see seen as one of the only stable correlates of hypnotizability.

Expectancy has been deemed the best predictor of hypnotic response and that setting expectations through the provision of information may override the “the effects of imaginative strategies on hypnotic responding” (Council, Kirsch and Grant, 1996: 60). If a subject thinks that it is ok to “interpret an amnesia suggestion as an invitation to attend away from the target” (Wagstaff, 1996: 34), then should

an imaginative strategy be employed to disrupt their ability to recall things, they might not be acting compliantly or, at least, to the extent they are then it might coincide with actual forgetting.

In the cinematic context, if a spectator expects a film to be frightening, they are often more willing to embrace the content of the film. It is also influenced by the emotion involved, as discussed in the previous chapter. A film based on real events or a film that has horrified spectators may enhance the expectation that what is seen will be more believable. A film provides a sensual field that may take hold of the spectator in a way that an imagined situation does not because it has an authenticity that better fulfills expectations (of how characters look and behave etc).

Research also suggests that expectancies can affect experience regardless of imagery, providing an ability to look past ineffectual content to embrace the narrative and continue with the project. Expectation may even be essential for immersive film engagement, for why would one want to enter into an engagement where there is no expectation of the appropriate response being evoked?

The Art-Horror Experience

I now wish to use hypnosis to help *re*describe the art-horror experience set out in Chapter 1.

Pre-Film

I go to the cinema to watch *The Blair Witch Project*. Despite rumours of it being real, I know the film is fictional because the actors are alive and well. I am excited about seeing the movie because it has affected many spectators and I have been brought to art-horror in the cinema before. I hope the film frightens me but am simultaneously anxious because of this potential. I know that I will need to lend myself to the filmatic content in order to become engrossed and will do my best to do this, although it is something I do effortlessly. I have a *positive attitude* and *expectancy* towards the horror movie experience. I am aware I will be sitting in front of a movie screen and watching a sequence of images, acted out by professionals, telling a story that has been made to horrify me. I will be surrounded by others who will be engaging with the film in a similar way. The film (through visual, aural and narrative content) will provide *suggestions* as to what to imagine and how to feel.

During-Film

An *induction* procedure begins. I sit in the auditorium in a comfortable seat that is pointed at the screen. I will look to make myself comfortable if not. The auditorium darkens, the screen widens and the movie begins. At the start I am aware of sitting in the cinema. I take a sip of my drink and may be aware of latecomers to the presentation.

I watch the three filmmakers as they begin their adventure. I want to lend myself to this situation, to become immersed. I try to *imagine* being in the position of the documentarians; I empathize, trying to understand how they would think and feel, to evoke particular emotions which should be in tune with theirs. There is *active engagement* on my part and depending on the quality of narrative content I will use *strategies* to become further engaged. One strategy might be to try to forget how annoying the female lead is, another to focus more closely on the screen and aspects of the image to negate distractions around me. This is relatively easy to do because I see the environment in a way that I would expect the characters to see it. The imagery is appropriate, the grainy effects and shaky movements of the camera reflecting what is happening and is not distracting.

The film provides stimuli and suggestions in the form of images and sounds, contextual and informative aspects setting out the story of the Blair Witch that I am focused on understanding. While there is a *desire* to do this I am also being *compliant* and not questioning the content of the story (a tacit game-playing strategy). Images and sounds impact on my eyes and ears. I am not asked to visually imagine what is in front of me; I see and hear things as they appear to me. As I become immersed my awareness of imagining dissipates. I have built a *rapport* with the representation, like a subject with a hypnotist. I am *absorbed* and lose consciousness of my cinematic surroundings, the fact I am watching a movie and the fictional nature of the content. I take a certain perspective; here, I am asked to feel lost and alone in the woods, with the threat of a murderous, evil witch at large. Thoughts and emotions are aroused in me as I move through the woods with the characters. Certain moments, such as the discovery of piles of stones outside the tent, unsettle me. *Dissociations* occur; my thinking is not dualistic and my responses are becoming involuntary as I feel discomfort for myself as much as for the characters, experiencing events as though I were part of them. The use of subjective camera shots promote this, similar to the way a hypnotist will have me imagine being in a particular location.

I am completely immersed and feel present in the room where I see my associate standing against the wall. I remember this is how the witch used to abuse children and I am suddenly frozen as I realise she is here in the room with me, the gasp of the female voice prompting acceptance that she is. The experience is as if the monster is present and I feel the art-horrific threat, a primordial fear for oneself that momentarily nullifies other thoughts and feelings. The situation is momentary. The film stops and reality returns. I am once again aware of where I am and that it is only movie. I do not run from the cinema.

Post-Film

The lights go up in the auditorium and I feel relief that the experience is over. However, I feel differently to when I entered the cinema, a sense of insecurity that did not exist before persisting. My experience was unlike that of typical movie watching, the impactful emotional evocation suggesting that I did truly take the monster to be real at one point. It results in my ongoing thinking about the monster, like a

post-traumatic experience. Eventually, perhaps days later, my thinking about the experience and the monster, ceases. The experience is like the post-hypnotherapeutic experience; something suggested stuck with me, although persists for less time.

Conceiving art-horror experience as analogous to the hypnotic experience helps us to understand spectator immersion and (potentially) cinematic experience more generally. As an experimentally verifiable process that is, I propose, more operatively analogous to cinematic immersion than dreaming (the subject is awake and provided with external stimuli), hypnosis supports the importance of the spectator in engaging with fictional content and the psychological drivers of immersion.

The willing subject's attitude towards engagement, their expectancy and compliant nature helps to explain how they may become susceptible to filmatic content (playing the role of *suggestion*). Under these conditions a spectator may become incredibly absorbed in the process and by the content. Attention is focused and suggestions take hold, the suggestions of horror movies being that the monster is real, present and, as a result of the spectator's deeming it evil, threatening. It is as if reality and medium awareness have been forgotten.

It is against the backdrop of the hypnosis analogue that reality and medium awareness in cinematic experience are truly under the microscope, in a way they have not been in popular theory. Hypnosis is experimentally proven to lead to the overriding of a subject's imaginative awareness and resulting in their acceptance of what is presented. Hypnotically suggestible subjects may start off engaging in active compliance with the demands of the experiment but for some this turns into a genuine, involuntary response to the suggestion. Game-playing ceases. This is what happens with art-horrifying movie spectatorship. Hypnosis also challenges the presence of the *hidden observer*, the reality control mechanism deemed to maintain a subject's cognitive foothold in reality (regardless of absorption) and which has similarly been held as prevalent in film spectatorship. I now wish to demonstrate how hypnosis may shine light on the *conceptual* nature of art-horror experience.

B) Conceptual Considerations

i) The Hidden Observer

Originally proposed by Ernest R. Hilgard[39], the *hidden observer* describes a theoretical human cognitive substructure that maintains awareness of reality, regardless of how deeply hypnotized one is. It has been used to support the fact that a subject would unlikely kill someone if asked to by the hypnotist. In the context of emotional responses to art, a similar notion of the hidden observer is also present in the work of Carroll, Walton, Currie and Allen. They have all proposed, in some way, that a spectator's cognitive control system is always firing away in the background. Like hypnosis, the justification for its presence is held to be behaviour, namely, not running from the cinema.

An early test for the presence of a hidden observer was telling a hypnotized blind student that he would become deaf. The strength of suggestion from the hypnotist was supposedly so strong that the subject failed to respond to auditory prompts. However, when the student was asked if he could hear, he lifted his finger in acknowledgement. Practical evidence of such a secondary mechanism might be the recalling of repressed memories, controversially used in the courtroom. Here, subjects might have experienced something like a false memory that was proven incorrect through the use of hypnosis, the implication being that the hidden observer had retained knowledge of what was actually going on at the time.

The concept of the hidden observer is appealing when one considers daily flights of fantasy e.g. unconscious driving down a road. However, it also faces empirical challenge. On the one hand, the fact a subject can retain knowledge of reality does not guarantee that the hidden observer is not bypassed or negated during the process. Kunzendorf and Boisvert[40] have highlighted tests that show deeply hypnotized subjects achieve a masking of peripheral aspects and subconscious mechanisms. On the other hand, the existence of such mechanism has simply been denied, as it has been by Wilson and Barber[41].

Working from the assumption that the sense-checking mechanism does exist, tests have shown that imagery entertained during hypnosis can be powerful enough to override awareness of reality:

> "The *presence of a hidden observer*…can occur only when deafening imagery is not vivid enough to prevent them from being registered as perceptual in source"
> (Kunzendorf and Boisvert, 1996: 223)

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[39] Hilgard (1977)
[40] Kunzendorf and Boisvert (1996)
[41] Wilson and Barber (1982)

Anatomical studies have shown that “vividly imaged sensations of a juvenal, musical, or hypnotizable mind can centrifugally mask dissimilar ones” (Kunzendorf and Boisvert, 1996: 224). Hypnotized subjects were able to create vivid auditory imaginings (negative hallucinations such as imagining a tune or sound being significantly increased in volume) that were able to block out other sounds. Unhypnotized children and musicians are also (the most) capable of this. Anatomical research is pertinent because it shows that imagined sounds (Auditory Evoked Potentials (“AEPs”) or Brainstem Auditory Evoked Potentials (“BSAEPs”)) have sensory components that emanate from the cochlea. Thus, imaginings may mask dissimilar ones because they affect the same part of the anatomy and, in deafness experimentation, one may not recover an “auditory percept” (from a supposed hidden observer) because the percept has been totally deafened. Consequently, there is a loss or failure of source monitoring.

It has also been found that *contextual demands* “contribute to the illusion of a “hidden observer”” (Kunzendorf and Boisvert, 1996: 225) both in partial and total deafness scenarios, hypnosis strongly influencing the loss of source monitoring where subjects experience total deafness. A group of vivid and less vivid imagers were hypnotically induced and then asked to negatively hallucinate, to imagine some music so loud that they would be unable to hear the hypnotist’s voice (or other noises) until the hypnotist tapped them on the shoulder. Those capable of vivid imaging were able to amplify the sounds by “vividly imaging the evoking percepts “louder”, and can mask their BSAEPs by vividly fantasizing percept-muffling music” (Kunzendorf and Boisvert, 1996: 231). Of eight subjects who scored extremely high on the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale (11-12 out of 12), four subjects were unable to recall the blocked out rhyme. Test conclusions were as follows:

i. “negative hallucinators with no “hidden observer” are *vivid fantasizers* who can imaginally mask perceptual sensations in the peripheral nervous system and cannot possible retrieve these totally masked sensations”
ii. Unhypnotized vivid imagers are capable of masking BSAEPs and “irretrievably muffle auditory percepts”
iii. Those subjects who suggested a hidden observer (i.e. totally deafened but subsequently recalled the sounds) could not hallucinate vividly enough to obstruct the BSAEPs of auditory percepts. However, the subjects could *not* say that they “consciously perceived during deafness”, rather, they said that they remembered the percepts as “consciously imaged during deafness” or “subconsciously perceived during deafness”

Since sounds outside of the hallucinated deafness are not “self-consciously “monitored” as perceptual in source and are consequently misinterpreted either as imaginal in source or as subconscious in source”, there is deemed to be no “plurality of I’s or selves” (Kunzendorf and Boisvert, 1996: 231-232). A subject has a conscious sensation without any self-awareness of whether one is imaging or perceiving the sensation and, therefore, it has been suggested that there is no such thing as a hidden observer.

This analysis is important. For too long theorists have avoided acknowledging that intense cinematic experience may mask awareness of reality, except for the highly gullible, preferring to place reality awareness in the subconscious and justify it through behaviour. However, it does *not always* hold true, as the hypnosis analogue seems to suggest.

I believe the art-horror behavioural response *is* appropriate and that phenomenal experience, either during or afterwards, does not retrieve knowledge of reality. Even those subjects that recall aspects of the outside world cannot say this was *conscious*; rather, what they are able to *remember* is intertwined with the cinematically-generated imagery. Perhaps one could argue that this is symptomatic of a disjunctivist position, in that there is a different feeling between reality and the fiction-driven experiences, but recall fails to support this. As I will shortly discuss, experience may be erroneously described because of a conceptual assumption.

I propose that external sensations (auditorium sounds, imagery surrounding the screen, distance from screen to audience member etc) are obstructed when the horror movie spectator is deeply immersed. The emotion involved and perspective adopted obstructs self-monitoring and rationalizing tools, overriding prior knowledge of fictionality. Thus, they may momentarily take what they see as real. This predicament is not required to persist for long, for the nature of the emotion aroused jolts the spectator back into reality as survival mechanisms kick in. An appropriate sensory field would be helpful in achieving this, including compelling visual and auditory stimuli, and a perspective that engrosses the spectator. These would help mute the subconscious and reality percepts.

Ordinarily, knowledge of the fiction acts as a deterrent to certain types of action or response – this knowledge is a prophylactic. However, in response to certain sorts of fiction this prophylactic becomes ineffective; art-horrifying movie experiences provide such a situation. The most plausible explanation is that the spectator is unaware of reality and any sense checking mechanism (assuming it exists) is momentarily overridden. To propose otherwise courts more confusion than the opposite, and the spectator's testimony is no longer dismissed.

It would seem natural (perhaps logical) to conclude that in the moment of art-horror the spectator *believes* the monster to be real. Certainly, this would allow me to: address Walton's conceptual claim that belief is required for certain emotions by demonstrating that belief pertains; counter Carroll's proposal that belief is not required for the emotion, and; demonstrate that responses are not irrational, as Radford proposed. This would round out a thoroughly illusionistic theory. I am not going to make this move.

ii) Belief

Luke:
"I don't, I don't believe it"
Yoda:
"That is why you fail"

The Empire Strikes Back (1980)

There are clear examples of people falling under illusion in real life and I propose horror film spectatorship is one of them. Under normal film watching conditions the spectator's knowledge of the fiction acts as a deterrent to certain types of response. The prophylactic nature of awareness of fiction typically prevents spectators believing the monster is real and present. However, in the art-horror experience disbelief ceases to be relevant. Therefore, we should ask what status the experience of the monster, during the moment it is seen as real and present, has. Does this force us into the *belief* that it is real and present?

A belief is a type of thought, where one has an asserted view about something e.g. "I believe all polar bears are white". One is regarded as having an *attitude* towards the proposition, which implies an accompanying mental state. One might further differentiate between a belief that is or has been actively thought about (an *occurrent belief*) and one that has not (a *dispositional belief*) e.g. "all financiers are awful philosophers" (I believe this could be true but have never properly thought about). Beliefs are created, reinforced and refined throughout one's life. One absorbs information through the senses, assesses it in the brain and draws conclusions. Many beliefs will be viewed as being sound but others less so.

Walton raised the conceptual question of whether belief is required for certain responses to be correctly understood as constituting emotions proper, concluding that for the emotion of fear (for oneself or another) existential belief in the threat is required. Since the spectator knows they are watching a film, Walton states this belief does not pertain and the emotion cannot be fear. Carroll also saw that belief was the heart of the issue and, interpreting the paradox causally, attempted to demonstrate that belief was not required for the arousal of genuine emotion i.e. that thoughts of monsters may achieve the same emotional outcome.

Popular theories (Simulation and Thought) make the art-horror experience mysterious. If, as both Walton and Carroll propose, the spectator does not believe in the monster then puzzles arise, notably, why one would respond in the way they do (or at all) to horror movies. Certainly, it would seem implausible that the art-horror experience I propose is possible. Without something belief-like, thoughts just do not seem to cut it and testimony would, as Walton rightly says, seem to indicate an emotion but not the one the spectator attests to. The problem of belief was described (strikingly accurately) by

Lamarque, who highlighted the “tension between the beliefs we hold about the nature of fiction and the beliefs needed to explain our responses to fiction” (Lamarque, 1981: 292)

Both Walton and Carroll have proposed that the spectator does not hold an occurrent belief in the monster but in his causal theory Carroll has, despite saying that beliefs are not required for emotions, maintained belief in the monster in the form of disbelief. This prevents thoughts of the monster being asserted and, typically, never allows the spectator to cognitively slip into the realms of occurrent belief. As I have tried to demonstrate in both Chapter 3 and the first part of this chapter, I think Carroll was wrong to hold onto disbelief and in doing so his account misses the character of the experience.

So, how *do* we justify the response and testimony of spectators to horror movies without occurrent belief or if thoughts are coloured (underpinned) by disbelief? One suggestion might be to embrace *dispositional belief* in the monster but I think this skates the same unsteady surface as other theories and misses the conceptual issue. The solution, I propose, is to ask a more fundamental question. This re-raises Walton’s conceptual question and also notes Carroll’s causal solution, albeit using my analysis to correct his mistake of holding onto disbelief. I ask the following - *do we need belief (at all) for art-horror experience?*

Why Belief?

Consider a visit to the supermarket. I enter the car park and head to the bays nearest the entrance. I reverse into the parking space to ensure efficient loading and a safer exit on departure. I enter the store and take a large shopping trolley (I have a lot of items to purchase). As I reach the end of the first aisle (now with fruit on board) I turn left and notice a group of children making their way down the second aisle to the left. I continue to the other end and decide to make my way back through the supermarket so as not to get caught behind them (school children in groups have a habit of annoying me). Knowing that the last aisle stocks alcohol I push the fruit to the front of the trolley to make room for bottles at the back (lower probability of breakage if I get bumped). As I turn into the drinks aisle another trolley is travelling into me so I maneouvre quickly to avoid collision. I notice a shelf stocking Guinness (on my shopping list), which makes me gravitate towards the right side of the aisle. I zip up my jacket as I reach the shelf so that when I lift the box into the trolley it does not catch on my zip, this having happened before. I take the alcohol before turning the corner and moving back up into the cereal aisle. I see a Kellogg’s Variety Pack that immediately reminds me of childhood and grab it despite it not being on my list. I reach the end of the aisle and spot the shine of some milk that has been spilt on the floor, immediately moving to avoid this and calling an assistant to clear it up for accident avoidance. When I have finished shopping I go to the cashier. I unload the items onto the conveyor belt in groups (dairy, fruit, canned items etc) in order to bag them accordingly and for efficient storage when at home. After bagging I make payment, reaching into my right pocket for my wallet and the credit card I always use. I instinctively place the card into the machine slot and type in my pin. I

leave the store, positioning my trolley to the left side of my car so I can open the boot and lift the bags in at a comfortable angle. I first place the heavy bags furthest in, then the lightest nearest the door. I shut the car door and return the trolley to where I found it, knowing I have a pound coin to reclaim.

This description of a mundane shopping trip illuminates cognitive processing in some everyday activities: avoiding groups of children and an oncoming trolley; zipping a jacket; grouping items; finding a card and typing a pin number; placing a trolley in a particular position; returning the trolley from whence it came. In each of these activities, *at the time*, *I did not seem to say to myself "I should really avoid this oncoming trolley because I believe it will hit me" or "I believe if I put the card into the slot it will work". However, when I am pressed to describe the experience I will probably begin to use terms like "belief". I think this is a disingenuous recollection of the experience*. The experiences were *as-if* I believed, but conscious/occurrent belief (asserted thoughts) seemed absent; my actions seemed to be governed more by habit and instinct (belief patterns, perhaps) upon seeing objects that generated automatic and unreflective responses in light of prior consideration. This contrasts with other activities I undertake like taking my laptop home from work at the weekend because there will be cleaners in the office and I believe they might steal it. I think it is wrong to describe certain experiences in terms of belief. Now consider the art-horror situation.

The spectator is led to understand that the monster is a mortal threat and, being evil, would pose a threat to oneself, were one faced with it. Absorbed in the activity of movie watching (understanding the narrative etc), cocooned in the immersive environment, focused in on the fictional world and alert to the monster and what its presence means; when the monster appears as present, the spectator responds accordingly. *When this occurs, must the fear (art-horror) momentarily experienced be explained in terms of belief?* By being momentarily unaware of the monster's fictionality (disbelief has gone), must I now *believe* in the monster's existence? I suggest not. This experience would seem to be belief-*like* but, like the shopping example, it seems disingenuous to describe the emotional response in terms of belief. Rather than the adoption of a binary belief stance, namely, art-horror reflecting a movement from disbelief to belief, I propose that the masking of disbelief does not require a movement to occurrent belief. However, the absence of disbelief makes the experience belief-*like*. Here, the analogue of hypnotism gives further supportive food for thought.

Hypnosis has been shown as providing suggestions that can cause a subject to "experience distortions in perception and memory and also to *believe* temporarily in the external and physical reality of these experiences" (Connors, 2015: 28) Hypnosis may also be used to mask, or *suspend*, belief. I imagine I am a budding stage hypnotist and want to push a needle through the skin of a willing subject. The subject knows this would typically hurt (they *believe* it will hurt) from experience of sharp objects. In this scenario, my role may not necessarily be to move the subject from the belief it hurts to the belief it does not (or disbelief in the pain) but to suspend the belief it hurts. Hypnosis may be used to create the illusion that it does not hurt by masking the belief that it does, perhaps by *reframing*. In hypnosis the "clinical skill involved in reframing is to suspend the client's self-limiting belief system long enough for

him or her to consider an alternative viewpoint" (Yapko, 1994: 180) An example of hypnotic reframing is a woman who complains about her husband's snoring but is then told a story about how a similar woman lost her husband and missed the snoring because it meant he was alongside her. Reframing the experience of the snoring did not move her to enjoy it (belief) but to appreciate that it marked him being alive and present. Here, a *suspension of belief* occurs to allow the new view to take hold. With respect to the needle example, pain management is a very popular use of hypnosis and typically undertaken to facilitate analgesia (relief from pain) or anesthesia (numbness). Techniques often include the suggestion of "sensation of no sensation" (Yapko, 1994: 204) or a change in temperature perception that facilitates numbness and thus nullifies or prohibits the sensation of pain. The experience does not entail belief about pain, although the experience of the needle passing through the skin would seem to *mirror* the situation where one believed it was not painful.

Hypnosis shows us how a subject may have an experience that is *as-if* they were harnessing a belief. I want to characterise the art-horror experience similarly, as a situation where the masking of disbelief (that the monster exists) results in a momentary state of neither belief nor disbelief – the existential proposition is simply not considered. Prior information about the monster results in an instinctive primordial response when the monster is seen as present. Here, knowledge of the monster's fictionality is overridden, the absence of *disbelief* resulting in a momentary experience indistinguishable from a real experience of this nature i.e. one freezes. Such an account would justify Charles' testimony that he experienced the monster as really bearing down on him and is indicative of illusion. *Illusion may only denote the suspending of disbelief in the case of fear, not the illusion that one occurrently believes the monster to exist.*

This account does not fall foul of the problem of simultaneously harbouring beliefs and disbeliefs, which both Schaper and Carroll used to challenge the willing suspension of disbelief. Belief is *suspended*. The suspension is only momentary and the monster's presence is quickly assessed for credulity. As soon as we realise we are sitting in a cinema and the monster is a projected image on a screen, we know it is a fiction once again; belief is back and we do not run.

This solution is also alluded to (but not held or developed) by Hanich, who suggests that vivid presentation of imagery is enough to generate fear, but without belief being involved in the emotion. Of the impressive presentation of threatening imagery, he says:

> "Its emotional impact is clearly rooted in the *present*: in our momentary confrontation with dangerous moving images and sounds. However, we must also take into account the possibility that we are instinctively and unconsciously afraid of *future* effect. The *episodic* appraisal ("This is threatening to my well being right now!") might be interlinked with a *long-standing* appraisal ("This can harm my physical integrity for a long time!"). It is always possible that we fear that we will have to remember these perceptions" (Hanich, 2010: 98)

Yanal's commentary also provides support:

> "When we have thoughts about a fictional object, we have thoughts principally on that object's qualities…We think only secondarily that it is a fiction." (Yanal, 1999: 106)

Suggesting that disbelief may be tuned down to levels of near complete inactivity, Yanal goes on to say that there is no "reason why we can't care about what is merely present to the mind…without existential commitment" (Yanal, 1999: 108)

Theories of emotional response to fiction typically speak of emotions as belief-driven in a propositional context i.e. that before the subject emotes, they establish what they are reacting to in the context of "this is Freddy Krueger and I should be afraid of him because etc". But not all experiences are of this nature and "qualities of narrative fiction that are not captured in the propositions but when captured in thought bring on emotion" (Yanal, 1999: 116). Such a situation might be a sequence in a film where the heroine hides in a wardrobe, seeing the monster outside. The images and sounds are entertained non-propositionally against the backdrop of high anxiety that has been created prior to this.

I propose that the fear for oneself may not necessarily require belief (existential) at the moment of arousal, it being an instinctive reaction to the (illusory) sight of a monster one is pre-programmed to respond to in a certain way. It is not entertained propositionally in the way emotions like pity and sorrow are. This seems to mirror the immediate response to *real* horror situations and the child-like nature of the emotion, which lacks the kind of active propositional contemplation of other emotions. Underlining analysis of Chapter 3, the primordial nature of fear is crucial.

Fear without Belief

Dispensing with belief is not original in the context of the discussion of emotional responses to fiction and specifically with respect to fear, but I think it *is* in the context of an illusionistic account.

In 'Fear Without Belief', John Morreall questions Walton's account of fear by challenging the cognitive theory of emotions. As I have attempted to do in this project, Morreall assesses fear independently of other emotions and, in this context, the cognitive theory holds that i) fear has an intentional object, and ii) in order to fear something, one must believe that it is dangerous to them. Against this, Morreall argues that "fear need not have an intentional object; and when it does, one need not believe that the object is dangerous to him" (Morreall, 1993: 360). To demonstrate this, Morreall offers some counterexamples. The first counterexample, of a startle response to a loud noise, attempts to show that fear may be experienced instinctively but without time to discriminate the source of the noise (no intentional object). A further example used to support this is the generic fear that humans feel when others are fearful, like a contagion. With respect to the second claim, he uses the example of stage fright. Morreall's counterexamples fail to do the job they are meant to.

In trying to show that fear does not need an intentional object, his use of a startle response does not justify the claim that someone is *afraid*, so it is not a counterexample. The distinction between a startle and being afraid seems to be the involvement of a cognition which Neill rightly takes to mean an object to which the emotion is directed. Morreall says that fear "can be cognitively simpler than the cognitive theory claims" (Morreall, 1993: 362), echoing my interpretation of fear as a primordial emotion that may not be subject to the same kind of assessment or epistemic structure as more complex emotions. However, it does not dispel cognition. Certain instinctive responses are evolutionary (and powerful) but differ from simple startles. Consider watching a television programme about antiques and, following information about certain makes of china plate being valuable, we decide to check some of our own dinner plates. We find a pile of plates and, with curiosity, pick up the top one to look underneath for the manufacturer's mark. As we lift the plate, an insect suddenly scurries across the plate beneath. Here, the startle kills curiosity but is laughed off – it has no cognitive baggage, so to speak. Now consider Leatherface's first appearance in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. We identify with the male protagonist as he makes his way into the farmhouse. Hearing the sound of a pig coming from inside the house, he makes his way to a doorway to the left of the staircase. We see animal skulls adorning the wall, informing (implying) that whoever lives here is familiar with killing. We are already on edge. The protagonist trips through the doorway. Suddenly the camera pans up to a large body wearing an apron and as it fixes on his face we see the figure is wearing a mask. This is a shocking moment, the perspective first person; empathy is broken. We are startled, yes, but a consummation occurs, *we feel threatened*. Previous information has contributed to our fearful disposition, leading to the instinctive reaction upon seeing an *object* that immediately satisfies the requirements of self-directed fear consummation. This is different to a startle.

In Morreall's second contestation to the cognitive theory, cases of stage fright and fear of public speaking may reflect the belief that one will expose oneself to others and look bad. As such, "these are case of fear; but they are not cases of "Fear without Belief"" (Neill, 1995: 98).

Despite its shortcomings, I think Morreall's project is insightful. Neill suggests that Morreall may be proposing that one cannot fear in the way that spectator's attest (for oneself) and, if this is the case, one may hold it as difficult to explain without appeal to the cognitive theory of emotions. I think art-horror reignites the challenge to cognitive theory as a *universal* explanation of emotions.

The emotion of art-horror is the product of viewing the monster as evil and threatening (fictionally), which in a moment of feeling as though one is in its presence results in instinctive primordial physiological and cognitive paralysis. Education (information) beforehand leads to this response when the monster appears and this information may be attained from the simple knowledge that one is watching a horror[42]. The experience has an intentional object and the fear is for oneself, confirmed by

[42] As Hanich says, genres "are helpful instruments of orientation, expectation and convention that circulate between industry, film, and viewer. Due to their standardized, formulaic nature genres allow the spectator to judge in advance what he or she will encounter." (Hanich, 2010: 28-29)

the spectator's perspective and phenomenal experience. The instinct-based experience is *as-if* one really believed but at that moment lacks conscious or active rationalization, thus lacking occurrent belief or disbelief. Upon subsequent evaluation (almost immediately after arousal) belief returns in the form of disbelief and dissolves the emotion. This, I argue, is no different to real horror, which would also momentarily paralyze the subject – they see what is happening, instinctively freezing because of experiential pre-programming, but existential belief is absent.

This position has similarities to the *Anti-Judgmentalist* position[43], which focuses on the cognitive element of a judgment (belief) and holds that emotional responses do not logically require belief in *the existence or features* of those objects. A variation of Thought Theory, Anti-Judgmentalism denies that spectators are only genuinely moved by what they believe is real (proposition c) of the paradox). Cognitions that are not belief-based (thoughts, seeing or conceiving of an object a certain way) are deemed satisfactory to generate genuine emotion and could be of two types: i) reflexive responses unmediated by thought e.g. to the disgust of a python felt on one's leg, or; ii) the representation formed is either not propositional in nature, or else does not have the status of a judgment, or both (e.g. phobia of pythons).

However, Levinson suggests that:

> "even if emotions at this cognitive level do not necessarily involve beliefs of a *characterizing* sort about their objects, such emotions, it seems, must still involve *existential* beliefs in regard to those objects, or something very close to that, i.e. attitudes or stances on the order of *taking to exist* or *regarding as existent*. Otherwise, the state attributed becomes unintelligible, whether as an emotion or anything else" (Levinson, 1996: 43-44)

Levinson's suggestion is that, to have an emotion directed towards something like the monster, one must "at least *take* or *regard* as existing" (Levinson, 1996: 44) that being. I suggest that the *taking* is the visual impression (non-propositional) of the monster as present that, like viewing the world every day, is not assessed as "I believe this to be real" and should thus not be considered as *believed to be real*. The monster is simply taken as real by seeing it with our eyes; imagery, cinematic or otherwise, is not always reality tested if compelling (realistic and dynamic). Thus, the experience of the monster is belief-like (it feels like it) but is not reflective of conscious belief. Interestingly, Levinson talks of "middle and upper ranges of cognitive emotional complexity" when arguing this position, referring to pity, sorrow, love, admiration, anger, hate, hope" (Levinson, 1996: 44). Fear is notably absent here but mentioned in a footnote:

[43] Levinson (2006) p.43

> "Full-blown fear of X has an irreducible cognitive component, one part of which is a *viewing or perceiving X as dangerous*, but another part of which is a *taking or regarding X to exist*" (Levinson, 1996: footnote, 44)

I propose that the *perceiving of the monster as dangerous* is undertaken as part of the assessment process in advance of arousal and the *taking to exist* a result of the realistic presentation of the imagery. The moment of art-horror arousal is belief-inspired (prior assessment – "I believe that, fictionally, the monster is mortally threatening") but not occurrently belief-dependent. This non-belief dependent conception of fear is perfectly explicable under illusion.

One objection to my proposal might be that taking something as real entails conviction and "under normal circumstances, *P*'s being a state that carries conviction for its subject can be an almost infallible sign that *P* is a belief of the subject" (Currie and Ravenscroft, 2002: 176) To recognize the monster as a monster would seem to entail assertion. However, conscious propositional assertion ("the monster is fictional") is far from obvious and its presence (spatial and temporal) being experienced is non-propositional. The audience may be disposed to react a certain way to certain objects (in the case of horror, the monster) and, under the momentary illusion it is present, they react accordingly. It is *as if* they made the propositional conviction that the monster is real, but they have not. This is just like my movements away from the oncoming shopping trolley and towards the Guinness in the supermarket – no existential assessment has been made but I react *as if* I had made that assessment.

The notion of experiencing *as if*, and of eradicating disbelief, is also cited by Oswald Hanfling in an excellent paper called 'Fact, Fiction and Feeling', which considers the conceptual and psychological aspects of discussing emotions. Taking Walton's example of Charles claiming he was afraid by the slime, to the question "why?" Hanfling suggests Charles' reply might be "It seemed as if…" But, of course, Charles is deemed to *know* that the monster does not exist. However, Hanfling says:

> "The difficulty would not arise if there were a 'suspension of disbelief'. In that case one would actually cease, albeit temporarily, to have the belief that the characters one is reading about or seeing on the stage are unreal, so that the belief situation would be the same in the fictional as in the corresponding real case. But, as has often been pointed out, this is not what normally happens." (Hanfling, 1996: 357)

In expressing "I feared the monster", he says, I may either be stating that I regard the monster as something for which fear is appropriate *or* that I am expressing the *feeling* the monster aroused in me (and feeling something is the one thing that is not in question). Whereas envy may require belief (e.g. the belief that someone has something I want), fear of the monster does not seem to require such occurrent beliefs, and this may be the same in responses to real life objects as it is in response to fictional objects. Given prior convictions about what the being means were one to confront it, its compelling presentation (experienced as present to us) may result in an experience that momentarily

mirrors real life. The “absence of a suitable belief does not render it unintelligible” (Hanfling, 1996: 363).

Belief talk is a convenient way of describing situations but if that is the only reason for holding onto belief then I suggest it is unnecessary. Not every situation (decisions, reactions etc) is best or legitimately described in terms of belief. Existential considerations are neither always apparent nor present in emotional responses and I argue this is for a very good reason - they are not part of that experience.

Walton was right to ask the question of whether certain emotions require belief, and Carroll was right to say that emotions can be aroused without belief. However, both fail to note that belief may only pertain in assessing, fictionally and in advance, what the monster’s presence would mean if one is confronted by it. They also fail to note (or accept) that Charles’ disbelief in the slime disappears when he is confronted by it under illusion. This experience does not transform disbelief into an occurrent belief in the slime because of the emotion aroused. Fearing for oneself is a primordial and instinctive response to the presence of something deemed evil and threatening, an assessment made prior to its appearance. Charles’ experience may be accurately described as being *as if* he believed the monster existed but such belief is absent and unnecessary.

The Willing Suspension of Disbelief

If art-horror experience does not require belief, a plausible version of the *willing suspension of disbelief* is finally on offer.

By considering the analogous experience of hypnosis, we have a way of describing how spectators enter a manufactured (fictional) process that may result in a masking of their awareness of the fiction. This relies on their attitude towards the fiction, their ability to engage in the right way, and also relies on appropriately powerful filmatic suggestions. The *willing* is undertaken, perhaps unconsciously, in advance and may be again during the presentation, to allow the foot in the door and to be absorbed. We need to move away from *willing* as contemporaneous i.e. of believing and disbelieving at the same time during presentation. Hanich[44], like Schaper and Carroll before him, make this mistake.

The *willing* subject may be to be predisposed to being overwhelmed by imagery, as well as to accept (or, rather, not challenge) the content of the fiction i.e. that the monster may be possible[45] The former is similar to that suggested by Hanfling, who proposes that the *suspension* may not be of belief in the characters of the fiction but the “*sense of reality* concerning the world outside the fiction”, the change

[44] I am surprised Hanich did not consider hypnosis as an analogue of *direct horror* given his reference to cinematic experience as an “affective trance” (Hanich, 2010: 93) that reduces distance between the film and spectator.

[45] As per Scheider’s requirement that “possession of a possible (not an actual) existence belief is required for the necessary conflict of judgment to occur” (Schneider, 1999: 8)

being *experiential* rather than *epistemic*. In this way, he suggests we may *forget* the real world and that this may have both “an epistemic and non-epistemic sense”, the non-epistemic sense meaning “forgetting where we are, being oblivious to anything other than the play” (Hanfling, 1996: 364) This is like the mindset of the hypnotic subject, who may be *open to getting wrapped up* in the activity, to forget about the outside world by focusing on the suggestions of the hypnotist. Like the hypnotic process of reframing, the activity results in a suspension, not a turning of disbelief into belief. This does not logically prevent the experience being *as-if* one believes or as efficacious as the real thing.

Spectator testimony of being oblivious to the outside world, of feeling as though the monster were real and present, is finally explicable.

Conclusion

> "It's so easy to create a victim, young lady, so easy. You lock someone in a dark room. They begin to suffer. You feed that suffering. Methodically, systematically and coldly. And make it last. Your subject goes through a number of states. After a while, their trauma, that small easily opened crack, makes them see things that don't exist."
>
> Mademoiselle, *Martyrs* (2008)

I began this project describing horror movie experience as an "enigma" and in light of my conception of the art-horror experience I see no reason to alter that description; but it is by no means inexplicable. The self-directed primordial fear-based emotion of art-horror is mysterious if one's explanation is restricted to the same explanatory court as other emotional responses to fiction. To attain the correct explanation we must push aside, at least to begin, the desire to unravel the paradox of fiction and look at the emotion in question, the medium in response to which it is aroused and the nature of the spectator's engagement. When we do this, an explanation materialises that bucks the trend but captures the experience to which so many spectators attest. The theoretical account proposed in this thesis causally accounts for emotional arousal and offers a conceptual interpretation of the emotion, but it challenges popular theories of emotional responses to fiction.

Art-horror experience, an emotional response to horror movies, is the result of a spectator being momentarily under the illusion that the monster is real and present. As I set out in Chapter 3, *causally* the process is explained by what I have labelled 'Momentary Monster Hypothesis', taking into account aspects of the work and the spectator that result in illusion. In Chapter 4 I argued that the illusory experience is analogous to hypnotic experience, in that the absorbing filmatic medium, combined with dispositional traits of the spectator, allows the spectator to focus on fictional content in a way that results in that content being momentarily experienced as if it were reality. In light of this explanation, finally, I think we can answer the two questions posed at the very beginning, namely, what are we afraid *of* and what are we moved *to*?

- The spectator is *afraid of the monster* because, under illusion, it is experienced as real and present
- The spectator is *moved to really fear for themselves*, momentarily

For too long, discussion of emotional responses to fiction has been burdened by the thought that it is a conceptual requirement for the experience of emotion to entail belief (either causally or conceptually); because of this assumption, we have problems explaining the experience of art-horror. However, not all actions are belief-dependent, although they are the result of prior evaluations (including of things that are fictional). Given the nature of the evaluation (of something being threatening, which arouses

primordial concerns) and the disposition of the spectator, when a monster is presented in a compelling manner an immediate response is triggered that feels momentarily indistinguishable from real life; it is *as if* one believed but belief is neither present nor required. Momentary illusion masks disbelief in the monster's fictionality and, upon seeing it, one freezes. The feeling of fear in response to a real monstrous threat may also have this paralytic nature. Consider walking the corridors of an old mansion house at night, alone and feeling terribly nervous after hearing stories about an old lady who once preyed on children here. When an old lady appears out of the shadows, does our momentary paralysis upon seeing her reflect belief or, more likely, an instinctive response to seeing the being? Further assessments will then be made and this will reinforce the belief or disbelief in her presence, but the moment she appears it feels incorrect to attach belief to the situation. The unreflective recognition of the being triggers the response – it does not necessarily require a belief (or disbelief) that it exists. Art-horror operates differently to other emotional experiences like pity or envy because it is less cognitively complex and does not require epistemic colour/attachment at arousal. This non-epistemic explanation fits with the phenomenology described by spectators. To be clear, "non-epistemic" does not undermine the incredible power of the experience – it reflects a real experience that mirrors that of real life. It is an emotional response that overrides all other thoughts, beliefs and emotions. Once belief creeps in other emotions and psychological attitudes will join the fearful emotion and it then ceases to be (art-)horror. Fear without belief is supportable under illusion and reflects the childlike feeling of a fear for oneself, where rationalizing is absent.

The primordial nature of the experience is as basic as it gets and highlights the complexity of theorizing about responses to fiction. Theorists have been committed to resolving the paradox of fiction but I view the generation of the paradox as the result of a mistaken generalization of responses to fiction. The paradox fails to differentiate between emotions aroused and the medium of representation, shoehorning explanations of sorrowful responses to literature into the same bracket as fear in relation to horror film. Art-horror evoked in relation to film spectatorship, under the guise of illusion, offers an alternative interpretation of the paradox. *Causally*, the account I have outlined under the label 'Momentary Monster Hypothesis' denies that we know that which is portrayed in fictions is not actual because, under illusion, our knowledge of the fictional nature of the content is momentarily overridden. However, art-horror experience is *not* reflective of most cinematic experience, so I propose one must treat causal solutions to the paradox cautiously. Comedies, for example, are likely better explained by other accounts of emotional responses to fiction. *Conceptually*, my hypothesis goes further. The suspension of belief makes it true that neither belief nor disbelief is harboured at arousal. The experience of art-horror thus seems to challenge both the hypothesis that we know that which is portrayed in fictions is not actual (at arousal) *and* that we are only genuinely moved by what we believe is actual. This suggests that the cognitive theory of emotions is not, as Morreall also implies, unequivocally authoritative.

One might view an illusion-based explanation of art-horror in the context of Occam's razor, a principle of problem solving that suggests that where there are competing theories to explain a situation the

simplest should be selected. If one considers the nature of the art-horror experience, in which reality and medium awareness are momentarily absent, Illusionism would seem to be the simplest explanation. I think it no wonder that, in the early stages of the philosophical theorising about motion pictures, Illusionism was entertained. It is also understandable why this thinking failed to maintain a grip. Experience results in barriers to illusion being built. Over time, the numbing of audiences to horror movie efforts, in addition to the inadequacies of the films, ensures that art-horror does not take place. Thus, Illusion Theory has to be abandoned as an explanation of general horror movie experience. However, typically does not mean always, and it is clear that theorists have attempted to discredit appeals to illusion without investigating the kinds of situation under which it provides a very credible account. This (again) smacks of an illegitimate generalisation, with theorists extrapolating from the analysis of cases where illusion is clearly not a credible explanation. I have provided a different set of responses which I claim are no less paradigmatic but nonetheless requires an alternative account of the emotional experience.

By focusing on a particular experience (to which so many spectators attest) and by pointing to filmatic examples that have achieved this (set out in Chapter 1), I have tried to demonstrate that cognitive barriers can be overcome and that the intuitively simplest explanation *is* supportable. Through an analysis of both the spectator and film, we can shed the burden of contemporary philosophical challenge, but we must also place to the side some prevailing philosophical debris that hinders the path, such as the paradox of fiction requiring a resolution that accounts for all emotions and all media formats. As I am focused on a particular experience in response to a particular medium, my account may be held without contradicting the non-illusionistic accounts of those other experiences.

Walton, Carroll, and Currie all have something right about filmatic experience and I hope my analysis of their work in Chapters 2 reflects a subtle handling of what is important thinking. Walton, in particular, is a theorist I have admiration for. His central claim (the conceptual point that some emotions require belief to be what they are) is perfectly consistent with my position. Charles does *not*, at the moment of art-horror (which I will assume he experienced given his testimony of the monster threatening *him*), occurrently believe the monster is real and present. However, I propose that Charles' *disbelief* in the monster is not present either. Disbelief, I argue, is overcome through the various factors involved in (certain) horror movie spectatorship (Chapter 3). I propose a spectator may have an experience that is *as if* they believed – it is indistinguishable from the real thing (Chapter 4). Charles' testimony of the momentary fear for himself is perfectly appropriate and he has *not*, from what he experiences in *this* situation, mislabelled his emotion.

Furthermore, Carroll, the catalyst for this project and whose ideal emotional experience (i.e. art-horror – the genre's aim) I have recharacterized both conceptually and causally, was correct and insightful in his central causal claim – emotional arousal does not always require belief. Unfortunately, Carroll mistakenly holds onto disbelief for all typical fictional interactions and fails to notice the spectator's appropriate behaviour. I appreciate, of course, that Carroll never meant to address the type of

emotional experience I focus on because he denies it as a feasible response from the typical (normal) spectator. Even though we differ on the art of the possible in relation to fiction, I like to think of my project as a spiritual extension of Carroll's, focusing on what he may describe as an anomaly and I think of as far more usual experience.

I propose that, far from being the experience of the benighted yokel, horror movie experience *is* often being correctly described by the lay cinemagoer. Theorists need to dispense with the kind of intellectual snobbery that has clouded this discussion topic and allow that many become immersed and experience what they say they do. Horror films demonstrate that illusion can be experienced, that different ontological worlds may interact – at least from the spectator's point of view because they do remain physically separate – and that it may be worthwhile for other emotional responses to specific modes of representation to be assessed in a similar manner.

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