

**The Evolution and Analysis of Grown-up Horror using the
contemporary example of *The Invisible Man* and classical Horror**

The Sixth Sense

Name:

Course:

Student ID:

Question: The genre of New Horror has also been called “grown-up horror” because it appeals to a more mature and sophisticated public and is frequently focused on the family unit and/or the domestic sphere and contemporary “real-world” anxieties. As Aviva Briefel puts it, “In contrast to instances of horror that push outward, pointing to uncontrollable and circulatory contagious forces such as zombies, pandemics, or conspiracies, [“grown-up horror”] refers to films and TV shows that “draw audiences inward into increasingly small spaces of fear.” Discuss the genre using 1 or 2 appropriate examples from contemporary screen culture.

Introduction

Horror movies originally used absurd plots from fiction and visual and auditory for thrilling purposes, such as Sadako, monsters, zombies, and others to form terror. Horror films use screened exaggeration to induce fear in individuals and also to release fears and anxiety deep inside the human consciousness (Park, 2018). Grown-up horror has appeared to avoid excessive reliance on horror film characters and their supernatural experiences, using real human personality features and fears. According to Andrews (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic upset stable value orders and This has led to a state of "digital dissensus," marked by fragmented ideologies and a breakdown of prior political and social consensus (Andrews, 2020). These changes in society offer good incentives for adult horror to develop fears stemming from real-life experiences. In traditional horror genres, grown-up horror is designed to target mature people, not only in terms of age but also in terms of views. The horror aspect here deals with social and familial problems inspired by practical living conditions to resonate with the audience. The essay aims to explore the progression of horror films, regarding the ways grown-up horror pertains to real-life concerns, changes in society and psychological issues that appeal to the audience. Therefore, the thesis statement argues that grown-up horror incorporates families and emotional horror as a way of attracting

viewers. Thus, the essay focuses on addressing the grown-up horror through the analysis of two films *The Sixth Sense*, and *The Invisible Man* to bring forward the ‘real-world’ anxieties.

Discussion

Traditional horror movies use special effects to create a scary atmosphere on the other hand adult horror is often linked to the social background and more in-depth discussion of some problems and phenomena in real life. According to Jancovich (2013), horror movies of the 1930s and 1940s were closely related to gangster movies and spy thrillers revealing the social issues of that period. This states that traditional horror movies based on social issues influence the character’s heart and emotions to bring the audience a deeper experience. The important factors in adult horror are family relationships and close relationships because in real life all have come across arguments with family members. The need to face the fear of wanting to escape from social issues is difficult to adjust along with the fear of breaking the familial bond between the parent and child. The other is the real-world problem or the present situation, the material or Spiritual trouble met in the present life will be magnified in adult horror. Miller et al. (2023) argued that people watch horror movies because of their power between control and fear and, therefore have distinctive experiences that hold the attention of the viewers. This states that this balance is especially achieved in adult horror, which looks into other feelings and psychological traumas and makes the viewer experience close to real life. Thus, authors and directors do not appeal to the language of an anarchic using a camera to build this uncertainty, yet they produce a curiosity that can and should be searched and developed, also implying and involving the audience.

The movie *The Sixth Sense* shows the importance of family and relationships playing a critical role in developing fear and detachment in grown-up horror movies, exploiting the

emotions of individuals presented. The two characters in this film, Malcolm and Cole are presented whose relationship originates from Malcolm as he tries to treat fears of Cole while trying to make things right after failing a patient (Shyamalan, 1999). Marcole is a psychiatrist, Cole goes to him because he feels guilty that one of his patients showed up dead, at the same time attempting to reconcile with his wife. Cole lives with his single mother and he has yin and yang eyes which terrifies him and he hates going to school because the children there dislike him. During the treatment, Malkor helped Cole to change their fear from being a possession of ghosts to confronting them and helping them to do what they have not been able to do before life. According to Hart (2007), children get a sense of relief, especially through efforts to control their environment. This means Cole recreates order in the home by helping ghosts complete their unresolved desires to become more beneficial entities. This transformation shows adult horror combines spectral scares with feeling. Thus, this film also explores loneliness and misunderstanding in familial contexts through the characters.

The character of Cole, failure to recount a story of a ghost immediately leads to separation from the mother showing that disbelief and mistrust are the source of unfamiliarity and discomfort with family members. According to Loiperdinger and Elzer (2004) the audiences of the first preview of "Arrival of the Train" were engulfed with a feeling of losing control as the train portrayed to come directly at them, and the creation of a dazzling and stunning effect occurs as the film before the screening crosses the vision of the audience. Similarly, the audience in *The Sixth Sense* shares Cole's sense of helplessness. For example, in "The Beauty and Violence of Horror Vacui: Waiting in Christian Petzold's Transit," Landry (2020) discusses the concept of "horror vacui," which reflects the fear of the unknown and the inability to heighten the psychological horror. In *The Sixth Sense*, because of the psychological thriller, Cole does not know when he can meet ghosts, this feeling of powerlessness is also reflected in the audience. This is fuelled by the child's poor with his

mother whom he believes does not understand or support his ability to see ghosts. This is used by the film to generate feelings of discord and loneliness, as such accurately mirroring actual life scenarios in observations of children is not worth the consideration of adults. Thus, the movie links the supernatural with ongoing family struggles, providing an audience with both psychological and traditional horror at some point intertwines into one.

The film *The Invisible Man* changes from family to the social aspect and focuses on the issues of domestic abuse, especially the psychological cause. The film follows Cecilia, who is tortured by her abusive ex-partner Adrian. After Sisi flees with his sister Adrian fakes his death and uses the invisibility of a Cloak to continue harassing and controlling Sisi, who ends up killing him (Whannell, 2020). This states that the use of an invisibility cloak symbolizes the hidden nature of domestic violence, where victims often face disbelief and isolation. This resonates with the concept of the "protective gaze" which refers to the desire to protect an object in need of care and the heightened awareness of potential threats to that object (Middleton, 2022). This idea is particularly evident in horror narratives involving children, where the caregiver's gaze conveys both affection and fear on behalf of the child. This means the invisibility cloak not only constructs traditional horror space suspense feeling but also reveals real-life fears such as invasion and loss of control. However, Loiperdinger and Elzer (2004) analyse the reaction to *Arrival of the Train*, the feelings experienced by Cecilia can also be categorized as helplessness and dread. This feature of grown-up horror because it focuses on issues of psychological manipulation and societal issues. Real-life domestic violence is not an alien concept either and similar to Cecilia, who is harassed under the invisibility cloak, her pain is minimized to being a case of schizophrenia. This depicts that she is a woman who is afraid, and helpless and gets empowered in the end, The invisibility cloak represents the secret side of the abuse. Thus, making a given connection with actual aspects of society leads to an insightful and meaningful response from the audience.

Traditional horror and grown-up horror are on a similar level in terms of physiological effects including faster heart rates and improvements in alertness and audience. According to Graff et al, (2021), the audiences will produce physiological responses similar to real threats. This states that Classic horror often produces this physiological response through the visual and auditory shaping of the scary atmosphere while adult horror works more through the mental and emotional changes of the characters and connect with reality. For example, as the final twist of Doctor in *The Sixth Sense*, he has passed away, and it turns out that the process he helped the little boy was also helping him free himself (Shyamalan, 1999). Thus, similarly, in *The Invisible Man*, the setting of the invisibility cloak is the phenomenon of domestic violence that exists today, showing how both films leave different emotions and fears.

Conclusion

The essay aimed to explore the progression of horror films, regarding the ways grown-up horror pertains to real-life concerns, changes in society and psychological issues that appeal to the audience. The thesis statement argued that grown-up horror incorporates families and emotional horror as a way of attracting viewers. Grown-up horror was found to reflect a transition in the genre from over-sophisticated fiction to emotional and psychological aspects. The films *The Sixth Sense* and *The Invisible Man* show how this type of film regards family and social problems to appeal to an adult audience and to reflect their concerns. Therefore, change was contiguous with the changing society, making grown-up horror genres an important contribution in drawing the audience in the increasingly small spaces of fear.

References

- Andrews, P. (2020). Receipts, radicalisation, reactionaries, and repentance: The digital dissensus, fandom, and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(6), 902-907. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1796214>
- Graff, T. C., Fitzgerald, J. R., Luke, S. G., & Birmingham, W. C. (2021). Spousal emotional support and relationship quality buffers pupillary response to horror movies. *PLOS ONE*, 16(9), e0256823. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256823>
- Hart, R. (2007). "Complete Freedom of Movement: Video Games as Gendered Play Spaces." In *The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture*. NYU Press.
- Jancovich, M. (2013). It's About Time British Actors Kicked Against These Roles in Horror Films: Horror Stars, Psychological Films, and the Tyranny of the Old World in Classical Horror Cinema. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 33(2), 214-233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2013.798077>
- Landry, M. (2020). The Beauty and Violence of Horror Vacui: Waiting in Christian Petzold's *Transit*. *The German Quarterly*, 93(1), 45-60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gequ.12173>
- Loiperdinger, M., & Elzer, B. (2004). Lumiere's Arrival of the Train: Cinema's Founding Myth. *The Moving Image*, 4(1), 89-118. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mov.2004.0014>
- Middleton, J. (2022). The Protective Gaze and the Ideology of the Endangered Child. *Discourse*, 44(3), 328-348. <https://doi.org/10.1353/dis.2022.0022>
- Miller, M., White, B., & Scrivner, C. (2023). Surfing uncertainty with screams: Predictive processing, error dynamics, and horror films. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 379, 20220425. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2022.0425>

Park, M. (2018). The Aesthetics and Psychology Behind Horror Films. *Undergraduate Honors College Theses 2016-*, 31.

Shyamalan, N. (Director). (1999). *The Sixth Sense*. Hollywood Pictures.

Whannell, L. (Director). (2020). *The Invisible Man*. Universal Pictures.