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Horror Gore and Horror Tales: an Investigation of Noël Carroll's Narrative Logic of Horror and the Role of Spectacle in the Narrative.



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Abstract

Noël Carroll's theory on the narrative logic of horror has received criticism. One of the reasons is that his theory is difficult to apply to contemporary horror because of certain views he has on the monster. The aim of this thesis is not to provide an answer to that problem, but to add the element of spectacle to Carroll's theory to make his theory more applicable to contemporary horror. The central question in this research is: *what role does the use of spectacle in the contemporary horror film play in the narrative logic of the horror genre as formulated by Noël Carroll?* Carroll's points for a structured narrative logic were: the intention to horrify its spectator by creating a threatening and impure monster and ideally by identification between the spectator and the character; the *complex discovery plot* in which *onset*, *discovery*, *confirmation*, and *confrontation* occur (in variety of ways) or the *overreacher plot* in which the mad scientist prepares his experiment, the actual experiment, the experiment goes wrong and the destruction of the experiment; suspense created by the unlikely outcome of a good ending and the likely outcome of the bad ending; and the attraction created by the way the film discloses the curiosity of the viewer. Spectacle is integrated in the narrative by incorporating it into the diegesis of the film, by making set decoration, technologies, techniques, shots, styles, materials, and so on, spectacular. Spectacle occurs in the fiction world of the actual story and has to be causally linked to events within the narrative. The narrative logic of contemporary horror can be described in accordance with Carroll's theory. Spectacle is a leading motivator in the story, because it informs the audience of the level of threat and impurity of the monster, it informs the audience of the story and what is possibly going to happen next, it creates suspense by showing fast paced shots of deaths, and it discloses the curiosity by excessively showing the likely bad outcome. That also makes spectacle part of the attraction of horror. The audience knows that which they should not know: who the monster is. The spectacular death of the only person who knew the truth, also informs the viewer that the narrative is not over. Spectacle is not just something to be added while it adds nothing of narrative worth; spectacle can be an essential instruction to understand the narrative.

Word count: 5.364

Chapter 1 Introduction

Trudie: 'Did you pick a movie?'

Sherrie: 'Yeah, we're gonna go scary... SAW 4.'

Trudie: 'Ugh, I saw that in theaters. It sucks! It's not scary, it's gross. I hate all that 'torture porn' shit.'

Sherrie: 'How do you really feel?'

Sherrie: 'Well, I like Jigsaw, I think he kills people very creatively.'

Trudie: 'But, you don't give a shit who dies because there's no character developments... It's just body parts ripping and blood spewing, blagh!'¹

1.1 Introduction

It seems plausible to think that if people enjoy the horror of horror, the genre must have a way to keep them interested and attracted to it. In his book *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, philosopher Noël Carroll has examined the logic of the horror narrative and with it he has explained how the audience is pulled in by the genre. Horror has, according to Carroll, for example a specific nature of existence, several basic plot structures, and a certain attraction. Carroll has praised the horror genre for its narrative form and has claimed that the genre flourishes as a narrative art form.²

Carroll's theory on the horror genre has been the subject of discussion (his theory will be discussed in paragraph 2.1). It has received criticism, one of the reasons being that some of his concepts are difficult to apply to the contemporary horror film. In his article "The Paradox of Horror", Berys Gaut has disagreed with Carroll's claim that spectators do not enjoy negative emotions, but that they enjoy the curiosity that arises from horror. Gaut has claimed that spectators do enjoy them, because the audience wants to be frightened or horrified. Also, he has pointed out that Carroll's theory was unsatisfactory, because he made some crucial claims about monsters in horror films as one of the defining features of horror. One of these has been that a monster was a being that was believed not to exist according to contemporary science. However, Gaut stated that contemporary horror films do not deal with actual monsters, but with human serial killers. Therefore, the theory has not been applicable to every horror film.³

The criticism has not been limited to the application of the theory on contemporary horror. In his book, *The Pleasures of Horror*, Matt Hills has pointed out that Carroll's notion of the 'average consumer' is problematic, for it has raised the question whether there are multiple types of horror audiences. Hills claimed that Carroll has written from the point of view of a specialized consumer group, and that required an integrationist explanation. For Carroll, consumers treated horror as a sort

¹ *Scream 4*. Dir. Wes Craven. Perf. Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Courtney Cox, and Emma Roberts. 2011. Dimension Films.

² Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Ibidem, 125-128.

³ Gaut, Berys. "The Paradox of Horror." *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*. Ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley. London: Routledge, 2008. 317-319.

of test to see whether they can endure the disgust or revulsion. Hills has stated that this is problematic, because it would have meant that average consumers would respond differently than 'specialized consumers', for example.⁴

The criticism above points out that Carroll's theory is problematic, either it is with its application to contemporary horror, or with its application to his notion of the consumer. This thesis does not have the purpose to (dis-)agree with either of these critiques. However, another point of critique is added which possibly makes Carroll's theory of horror more applicable to the contemporary horror film. The discussion of the horror genre has often gone side-by-side with the concept of 'spectacle'. The quote of SCREAM 4 in the beginning of this thesis is an example of the criticism on films such as the SAW franchise. Film critics have criticized the narrative and its spectacularly excessive scenes. Film critic David Edelstein has coined the term 'torture porn', when he discussed that films such as HOSTEL (Eli Roth, 2006) go too far. However, Adam Lowenstein has attempted to reject the term and has pleaded to use the term 'spectacle horror'. For according to Lowenstein, 'the horror has explicit spectacle scene for the purpose of audience admiration, provocation, and shock and terror, without necessarily breaking ties with narrative development (...)'. Critics such as Edelstein have claimed that background stories are a mere justification for the film's excessive violence, but Lowenstein and other theorists have pointed out that the spectacle can function as an agent of narrative construction.⁵

It appears that Carroll's narrative logic of the horror genre is problematic; one way is when it is applied to contemporary horror. It also appears that spectacle can be an agent of narrative construction in contemporary horror. Because Carroll's theory has only been focused on horror stories from the classical periods (eighteenth century gothic horror and horror films from the classical cinema), it is interesting to see how his ideas can be applied to the narrative of contemporary horror film, what role spectacle plays in that narrative, and therefore what role spectacle has as an addition to Carroll's theory of narrative logic. The central question in this research is: *what role does the use of spectacle in the contemporary horror film play in the narrative logic of the horror genre as formulated by Noël Carroll?*

1.2 Methodology

To answer the central question of this research, it is necessary to undertake certain theoretical steps. First, Noël Carroll's narrative logic of the horror film is explained. His philosophy of horror contains certain points of view on the narrative structure, among which is plot structure, the relationship between spectator and characters, suspense, and the attraction or appeal of horror.

After that, the role of spectacle in the narrative of horror is explained. The debate on spectacle and narrative has not been restricted to horror. It has been debated on several genres in the contemporary Hollywood cinema, such as the musical. For example, Geoff King has pointed out that critics have implied that Hollywood has become such a spectacle, that the narrative is demised entirely. However,

⁴ Hills, Matt. *The Pleasures of Horror*. London: Continuum, 2005. 16-17

⁵ Lowenstein, Adam. "Spectacle Horror and Hostel: Why 'Torture Porn' Does Not Exist." *Critical Quarterly* 53.1: 42.

King has pleaded that this is a complete overstatement and that spectacular films still tend to incorporate stories, maybe less well integrated than classical narratives.⁶

To test whether or not Carroll's narrative logic is still applicable and what role spectacle plays in it, the narrative structure of the contemporary horror film *SAW V* (David Hackl, 2008) is analyzed. As is demonstrated in this thesis, *SAW V* has a complicated narrative structure and it has spectacularly excessive scenes which are of importance to the narrative. This film, and the entire *SAW* franchise, has been described as a postmodern, contemporary horror film by theorists such as Matt Hills.

The notion of a 'contemporary horror film' can be understood with Isabel Cristina Pinedo's article "Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film." According to Pinedo, a postmodern horror film breaks boundaries and is characterized by its incoherence. In horror films, violation is part of the narrative. The audience has come to get used to that incoherence and violation, and create expectations of being surprised. As Pinedo has claimed, the postmodern horror film usually begins with a violent disruption by the monster. The narrative of the postmodern horror revolves around the graphically violent rampages of that monster and the inefficiency of characters to resist the violence. These films usually have an open ending, with various forms: the monster has won, the monster has temporarily been defeated, or the outcome has been unclear. She ultimately has summed up five characteristics:

'First, horror constitutes a violent disruption of the everyday world. Second, horror transgresses and violates boundaries. Third, horror throws into question the validity of rationality. Fourth, postmodern repudiates narrative closure. Finally, horror produces a bounded experience of fear.'⁷

⁶ King, Geoff. "Spectacular Narratives: Twister, Independence Day, and Frontier Mythology in Contemporary Hollywood." *Journal of American Culture* 25.1: 25.

⁷ Pinedo, Isabel Cristina. "Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film." *The Horror Film*. Ed. Stephen Prince. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004.88-91.

Chapter 2 Narrative logic and suspense

2.1 Carroll's Narrative Logic

Noël Carroll's book *A Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, is a philosophical investigation of the narrative structure of the horror genre. He formulates his account of horror in light of the emotional effect it wants to generate within its audience: horror. That emotion has been the nature of horror and therefore it has characterized plot structures, which are designed to elicit the emotional effect. Because works of art elicit the emotion, he defines the emotion as 'art-horror'. Next to this, horror contains several paradoxes: one the one hand, the audience is frightened by it, but they know it is not real. On the other, people are interested in horror, even though they know it frightens them.⁸ In this paragraph, his characterization of horror and the genre's necessary narrative elements are explained.

Carroll has said that some genres, such as horror, are named after the provoked affect, and that they have a certain strategy in doing so. One has been to translate the intended emotional response of the audience in the emotional response of the characters. This means that when a character is afraid, the spectator supposed to be afraid. However, Carroll has pointed out, that this is an ideal situation: "the emotions of the audience are supposed to mirror those of the positive human characters in certain, but not all respects. (...) Our responses are meant, ideally, to parallel those of characters."⁹

According to Carroll, characters respond in two ways: with fear and/or disgust. These cognitive emotions often go hand in hand with physical agitation. The fear, or to disgust, on the one hand, the monster must be threatening, meaning that it is physically dangerous. On the other, it must be impure, meaning that it combines two cultural categories such as life and death. The latter can be done by fusion, fission, magnification or massification.¹⁰ Monsters are beings that have been believed not to exist according to contemporary science, which is expressed by its impurity and his threat. In short, art-horror is elicited by horrifying character, which can be provoked by threatening and impure monsters.

Horror art is generally narrative and it therefore also has some characteristic plot structure.¹¹ Carroll has focused on the abstract, narrative structures within the genre to explain its basic elements. The primary plot structure is the *complex discovery plot*. This plot has four basic elements: the *onset*, the *discovery*, the *confirmation*, and the *confrontation*. The *onset* is the point where the monster is introduced to the audience. *Discovery* is the moment when an individual or a group learns that the monster exists. The *confirmation* is the point when they want to convince others that the monster

⁸ Carroll, Noël. *A Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*. 7-9.

⁹ Ibidem, 18.

¹⁰ Ibidem, 43-50. Carroll defines the impurity of monsters in a number of ways: Horrific images or horrific bodies can be a fusion: creatures are constructed by means of combining two distinctions, such as life/death. A zombie, for example, is neither living nor dead. Also, a horrific creature can be fission: a character divided either in time or in space, where it becomes a symbol for categorically distinct or opposed elements, whereas with fusion, opposing elements become fused with one another. Further, a horrific image is impure because of magnification: a cultural phobia that is combined with a big size. In closing, impurity of a horrific creature comes from massification: a combination of a cultural category and in massive numbers.

¹¹ Ibidem, 97.

exists and the dangers of it. The *confrontation* eventually occurs when the discoverers go out to confront the monsters and attempt to defeat it.¹²

The second plot structure is the *overreacher plot*, with the 'mad scientist' as the leading personae. It starts with the preparation for the experiment, in which the overreacher or scientist gets what he needs to do his experiment. That phase is followed by the actual experiment, in which the overreacher creates whatever he set out to do. After this, the moment follows that the experiment, the monster, becomes dangerous, or as Carroll has put it: 'the moment the experiment has gone awry'.¹³ This eventually leads to the same last moment as the *complex discovery plot*: the moment of *confrontation*, when in this case the overreacher tries to destroy his experiment.¹⁴ *FRANKENSTEIN* (James Whale, 1931) is a good example (image 1).



Image 1. Doctor Henry Frankenstein with his experiment in *FRANKENSTEIN*.

Both plot structures allow variations, but the order of the phases has to be upheld, so Carroll has claimed. When the story, for example, has started with the phase of *discovery*, it can only be followed by the *confirmation* or the *confrontation*, not the *onset*. The logic of this is that the phases are ordered linear, but some phases do not necessarily have to appear. Carroll has explained these 'constraints' by distinguishing two important concepts: *fabula*, also known as the story, and *sujet*, the plot. *Fabula* contains a series of events, always described chronologically and causally. *Sujet* arranges the chronological and causal events, as long as the basic linearity in the *fabula* is preserved. So the phases in horror form the *fabula* (that is how the story goes), but the *sujet* can arrange them (the audience gets to perceive it in a certain way).¹⁵

Suspense is another important element for the narrative of horror. Suspense is dependent on the manner in which the plot is structured. Popular narrations, which Carroll has preferred to call 'erotic narrations', have constructed the plot in a simplistic question/answer model. Horror is such an

¹² *Ibidem*, 99-103.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 120.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 118-120.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 117.

example. The question has risen in the beginning and has been answered latter in the story. Carroll has claimed that:

‘suspense arises when a well-structured question (...) emerges from the narrative and calls forth what was earlier referred to as a simple answering scene. Suspense is an emotional state that accompanies such a scene up to the point when of the competing alternative outcomes is actualized.’¹⁶

The audience starts to ask questions on what the outcome of the narrative is. Suspense is felt, up tot the point when the answer to the formulated question is given. It arises when the outcome is such that a good ending is the less likely outcome but the preferable answer, and the bad ending is the more like outcome and the less preferred answer.¹⁷

Finally, another important point, according to Carroll, for the narrative of horror is that it has, at its core, an attraction: pleasure is derived from the way disclosure is situated in the narrative structure. The horror narrative is the attraction, but it ‘(...) revolves around proving, disclosing, discovering, and confirming the existence of something that is impossible, something that defies standing conceptual scenes’.¹⁸ This has everything to do with suspense: the audience creates its questions with certain expectations (does it have a good outcome, for example). It is curious; the audience wants to know what happens next, even though the narrative contains a monster which s in principle unknowable (it is not real). Curiosity is resolved, by revealing the formerly unknown properties of the monster. Next to curiosity, the audience is also fascinated: they are fascinated by the thing that is not supposed to be real. These two, curiosity and fascination, are the attraction of horror, so Carroll has claimed.¹⁹

2.2 Spectacle and narrative in horror

To understand what role spectacle plays in the narrative logic of the horror film genre, it is necessary to understand what spectacle is and how it plays a role within narrative of postmodern films in general. As Peter Verstraten pointed out in *Film Narratology*, the idea is that narrative patterns have been ‘sacrificed’ for the attraction of stylistically spectacular scenes.²⁰ The plot can be overshadowed by what Verstraten has called ‘filmic excess’: ‘style can be called excessive when it becomes so prominent that it interrupts or freezes those developments. When a certain style does not serve the plot, or even pushes it to the background, we can speak of overkill.’²¹ Excess come into play, when Excess comes into play, when ‘style for its own sake’ is noticed and stylistic, spectacular scenes are not motivated properly, as Kristin Thompson has put it in her article “The Concept of Cinematic

¹⁶ Ibidem, 137.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 128-145.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 128-145.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 159-191.

²⁰ Verstraten, Peter. *Film Narratology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2009. 19.

²¹ Ibidem, 188-189.

Excess".²² Excess has been a term saved for classical Hollywood cinema, even though Verstraten claims that in certain respect, every film has a certain degree of excess.²³

So, spectacle has been said to overshadow the narrative. Postmodern scholars such as Scott Lash and Steven Earnshaw have claimed that in postmodernist cinema, spectacle dominates the narrative in the sense that narrative is no longer of importance. Postmodern films have their narrative structures violated by events that add nothing of worth. Films with a narrative are realistic, as Lash claimed, but realism had to make way for spectacle in postmodern cinema such as the horror film.²⁴ Postmodern cinema has a disintegrated narrative, because it has focused more on spectacle than on narrative. This is, according to Earnshaw, a key notion of postmodernist cinema.²⁵ Scholar Jonathan Bignell thinks postmodernist cinema narrative has emphasized spectacle and visual excess, which bind a narrative together. About Bram Stoker's *DRACULA* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992) he states: 'the narrative of the film, then, is structured by returns to images which can be exchanged for each other.'²⁶

Some theorists have a different approach, especially with regards to the horror narrative. They attempted to describe how contemporary horror films make use of excessive imagery on the formal level of the diegesis and how these spectacularly excessive images instruct the viewer about the course of the narrative. In the article "Cutting into Concepts of "Reflectionist" Cinema?", Matt Hills pointed out that the representations in horror films, such as the *SAW* franchise are exaggerated, but that they instruct the viewer about important elements in the story, such as characters and story development. In his article, Hills referred to Cynthia Freeland and her discussion of the *HELLRAISER* franchise (image 2), in which Freeland has compared the spectacular representations of *HELLRAISER* to the song-and-dance numbers in the musical. Hills has quoted Freeland to explain how these representation function according to her:

'Films employ brilliant special effects, but the numbers in them are not just there as spectacles of mindless gore. They convey information about the monster, its nature and its desires, and who it will attack and why.'²⁷

Freeland claimed that spectacle is set up by the monster (in *HELLRAISER*'s case, Pinhead), which also constitutes the attraction. Like song in a musical, spectacular scenes in horror teach the audience to understand the narrative. As for the *Saw* franchise, Hills has claimed: 'The *Saw* franchise is powerfully focused on narrative machinery. Its moments of heightened, artificial spectacle are also exaggerated moments of narrative crisis, enforced life-or-death choices made against the clock'.²⁸

²² Thompson, Kristin. "The Concept of Cinematic Excess". *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*. Ed. Philip Rosen. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. 132.

²³ Verstraten, *Film Narratology*. 189.

²⁴ Lash, Scott. *The Sociology of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1990. 191.

²⁵ Donnelly, Kevin. "Postmodern Cinema? La Cinéma Postmoderne Expliquée Aux Enfants." *Just Postmodernism*. Ed. Steven Earnshaw. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1997: 245.

²⁶ Bignell, Jonathan. *Postmodern Media Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2000. 106-107.

²⁷ Matt, Hills. "Cutting into Concepts of "Reflectionist" Cinema? The *Saw* Franchise and Puzzles of Post-9-11 Horror." *Horror After 9/11: World of Fear, Cinema of Terror*. Ed. Aviva Briefel and Sam J. Miller. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. 114.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 109-120.



Image 2. Frank after solving the puzzle box. Spectacular violence in *HELLRAISER* (Clive Barker, 1987).

Finally, Wheeler W. Dixon attempted to demonstrate how contemporary horror films make use of spectacle in the narrative in his book *The Transparency of Spectacle*. A horror film needs to show the torture of victims on a diegetic level, because it is an integral part of the story and can therefore instruct the viewer on how the narrative is constructed. He pointed out, that healthy bodies in horror films exist to be corrupted and tortured in the diegesis of horror. In it, torture and dismemberment become vocal and seen. He stated that 'the tale being told in the horror film signifies the inevitability of torture through the agency of its narrative construction.' Torture, as a form of spectacle, has become an 'integral part' of the horror film.²⁹

So how can spectacle than function as a narrative agent? If spectacle appears within the diegesis of a film, it is important to understand how that would work. David Bordwell has pointed out that when one refers to the diegesis, one refers to the fictional world of the story.³⁰ The fictional world of the story consists of certain set decorations, technologies, techniques, shots, forms, styles, materials, and so on. Events in the diegesis have to qualify as being part of the narrative, by being for example an initiating event or an orientation for the narrative. These events have to be causally linked to one another.³¹ Thus, spectacular shots or sets, or spectacular materials used to torture victims can function as an initiating event to explain to the viewer what is going to happen in the narrative.

²⁹ Dixon, Wheeler W. *The Transparency of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. 103-112.

³⁰ Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. 16.

³¹ Branigan, Edward. *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. Oxon: Routledge, 1992. 36.

Chapter 3 Logic and suspense in the contemporary horror film *SAW V*



Image 3. Brit is one of the remaining victims, standing in front of the final trap.

3.1 Elements of the contemporary horror film in SAW V

Before explaining why *Saw V* is a characteristically contemporary horror film, the story (not the plot) must be explained. The story goes that Detective Hoffman has killed a man in a Jigsaw-deathtrap. He is captured by John Kramer, the original Jigsaw, who is insulted by the trap, because Hoffman actually wanted to kill someone and Jigsaw disapproves killing. However, Jigsaw and Hoffman decide to work together. Right before he dies, Jigsaw orders Hoffman to track down five people who are all responsible for a particular crime. When Jigsaw dies, agent Strahm finds him. He is captured by the 'new' Jigsaw, Detective Hoffman. Strahm escapes, along with Detective Hoffman who pretended to be captured by Jigsaw. Meanwhile, the five victims find themselves trapped in multiple Jigsaw traps, dying one by one. Strahm is mourning the loss of his partner and sets out to prove that Hoffman is the new Jigsaw, because he came out of the Jigsaw trap completely fine. Strahm is getting closer to discovering the truth and threatens Hoffman. Hoffman decides to plant evidence, and with it accusing Strahm of being the new Jigsaw by leading another detective, Dan Erickson, to the scene of the crime. Erickson saves the remaining two surviving victims (image 3). Strahm finds out that he was right about Hoffman, but Hoffman starts a fight with him. Strahm dies, while Hoffman escapes.

SAW V has all the characteristics of a contemporary horror film as described by Pinedo in the methodology of this thesis. It clearly violates the everyday world, especially for the five victims. They wake up in a room and have no idea where they are or why they are there. This hints towards the fact that they probably have been kidnapped from their everyday lives. Boundaries are violated, because, as pointed out earlier, in former *SAW* films the victims actually got out of the traps when they performed the heinous tasks set out for them. In this film, a victim such as Seth is not released from his trap. He was going to die, whether or not he destroyed his hands. Rationality is called into question, because the victims had to think rational, but actually chose to go for the irrational and the – at first logical – option of survival of the fittest. Narrative closure is repudiated, for *SAW V* lets the audiences know that the monster is still alive and gets away. He is free to go on with his torturing traps. Finally, *SAW V* can be considered fearful, but this is in a certain way a subjective call.

3.2 Carroll and Spectacle in SAW V

In this paragraph, it is answered how SAW V has a logic narrative structure that has spectacle integrated into it. Carroll's points for a structured narrative logic were: the intention to horrify its spectator by creating a threatening and impure monster and ideally by identification between the spectator and the character; the *complex discovery plot* in which *onset*, *discovery*, *confirmation*, and *confrontation* occur (in variety of ways) or the *overreacher plot* in which the mad scientist prepares his experiment, the actual experiment, the experiment goes wrong and the destruction of the experiment; suspense created by the unlikely outcome of a good ending and the likely outcome of the bad ending; and the attraction created by the way the film discloses the curiosity of the viewer. Spectacle is integrated in the narrative by incorporating it into the diegesis of the film, by making set decoration, technologies, techniques, shots, styles, materials, and so on, spectacular. Spectacle occurs in the fiction world of the actual story and has to be causally linked to events within the narrative.

In SAW V, art-horror is elicited by most characters in the film. The central characters for that emotion are the five victims. They are in constant fear of dying. They are afraid of the physically dangerous traps such as large knives, bomb, saws, and so on) and they are uncertain whether they will live or die. The traps are staged by detective Hoffman, the monster. At first, he does not seem disgusting or threatening, but the audience quickly learns that he actually is the monster. Art-horror is then elicited.

SAW V has the construction of a of a *complex discovery plot*. The *onset* is Seth's death, introducing the spectator to the fact that there is a monster, who is actually killing people, instead of letting them go when they have performed their tasks. The *discovery* occurs halfway, when Strahm realizes that it is Hoffman who has been working with the original Jigsaw. In a flashback, Hoffman discovers how his sister has been murdered by Seth and he kills him by putting him on the Jigsaw trap. Jigsaw is insulted by the performance and wants to teach Hoffman how to make people better their lives. The *confirmation* is done by Strahm, in in search of evidence that Detective Hoffman is the man behind the latest Jigsaw killings. In the *confrontation*, Hoffman and Strahm fight and Hoffman escapes by going into an odd coffin underground, while Strahm is crushed by the walls (image 4). The structure, even though it is disrupted by the story of the five victims and the story of Erickson, is chronologically linear.



Image 4. Detective Hoffman in the coffin and Strahm in the room, just before he is crush by the walls.

The unlikely good outcome in SAW V is that Strahm captures Hoffman and hands him over to Dan Erickson. The likely bad outcome is that Strahm is killed, Hoffman survives and Erickson sides with

Hoffman instead of Strahm. Unfortunately for Strahm, the likely bad outcome is the one that happens. In the end, Hoffman frames Strahm by putting his phone next to the thumbnail of the trap rooms where the five victims are in. Erickson discovers the phone and thinks Strahm is the guilty one. Strahm dies, without ever telling anyone what he found out. This is the way in which *SAW V* tried to create suspense. This is also the way the film discloses the curiosity of the viewer: by letting them know that the monster is Hoffman, while no one in the film itself knows.

Spectacle comes into play in the narrative of *SAW V*. The first moment of spectacle instructs the viewer on the motives of the monster. It is an exaggerated moment of narrative crisis, but it instructs the viewer about the nature of the monster. When Seth cannot escape and is cut in half by the pendulum, shows the vengeance Hoffman has towards him. Seth is forced to destroy the thing he used to kill people: his hands. The sound of breaking bones is heard and the blood is seen flowing from his hand. And then the pendulum drops, despite the fact that he destroyed his hands. His bloody intestines are exposed and Seth is slowly dying. It shows the anger the monster has towards Seth and he wants to torture him and make him suffer. It is not a random killing; it is the *onset* which gives the viewer a hint that there is a monster, a torturer present in this film.

In the scene in which Strahm discovers what was supposed to happen to him (what should have happened in *SAW IV*), a number of spectacular shots are shown which motivate the story. In a flashback, John Kramer hands Hoffman the files on the five victims. Strahm discovers the following: 'We were all supposed to die'. To inform the viewer, and as a spectacle, in a quick pace shots of previous victims appear, such as the spectacular death of Detective Matthews (image 5). These deaths help the audience to understand what has happened and what Strahm was talking about. The scenes are followed by Strahm saying: 'you were supposed to be the hero'. The audience now understands that the horrific spectacular actions of Hoffman were supposed to make him the innocent and heroic victim in the whole story. Strahm eventually dies by being crushed by walls. His breaking bones are seen and heard in the shot.



Image 5. Detective Matthews's head is crushed by to giant ice cubes.

The spectacular death scenes of the five victims are also important to the narrative, because they convey information about the monster. They are all motivated by the narrative in the sense that they are an example of the corruption and torture of healthy bodies in the diegesis what Dixon was talking about. They describe the threat and the impurity of the monster, for the victims are placed in the

disgusting and fearful traps which are created by someone and that someone is playing with the cultural categories of life and death. With the first trap for example, the threat is that when the rope is tightened, they will be beheaded. When the video starts playing, the Jigsaw puppet appears and Jigsaw's low and threatening voice is heard. Shots of scared faces follow. Suspense is built by introducing all the props the victims are confronted with: the blade, the key, the timer, and the nail bombs. In panic, Mallick runs towards the key, pulling all the other four characters back. The music and the camera start at a fast pace, spectacularly building up the tension. An extreme close-up of the timer is shown (image 6), informing the audience the characters have very little time. The following shorts are extremely short and then the timer hits zero. Ashley is pulled back and decapitated, her body falling down and her head sliding of the blade. A shot of a bleeding body with a twitching hand is shown, followed by Charles's scared face, and again followed by a shot of a bleeding head (image 6). The door now opens and the remaining victims have to go to the next trap.



Image 6 (left). Extreme close-up of timer, that starts to tick.

Image 7 (right). Ashley's bleeding head on the floor.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

The question asked in the beginning of this thesis was: *what role does the use of spectacle in the contemporary horror film play in the narrative logic of the horror genre as formulated by Noël Carroll?*

The aim was to add spectacle as a narrative element in Carroll's logic on the narrative structure of the horror genre. Carroll's theory has received criticism, one of the reasons being that some of his concepts are difficult to apply to the contemporary horror film. Spectacle has been an element important to horror, but it is not mentioned as an important element in the horror narrative.

As the analysis of *SAW V* has demonstrated, *SAW V*'s narrative logic can be described in accordance with Carroll's theory. In addition to that, spectacle turns about to be a leading motivator in the story, because it informs the audience of the level of threat and impurity of the monster, it informs the audience of the story and what is possible going to happen next, it creates suspense by showing fast paced shots of deaths, and it discloses the curiosity by excessively showing the likely bad outcome. That also makes spectacle part of the attraction of horror. The audience knows that which they should not know: who the monster is. The spectacular death of the only person who knew the truth, also informs the viewer that the narrative is not over.

Contemporary horror films still have the narrative logic as formulated by Carroll, but spectacle is an additional important aspect of contemporary horror that instructs the viewer of the narrative logic. Spectacle is not just something to be added while it adds nothing of narrative worth; spectacle can be an essential instruction to understand the narrative.

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