

# *ILLUSIONISM, MONSTERS AND META-HORROR*

Theatre as a Medium for the Horror Genre

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# Abstract

Horror in film is abundant, yet in theatre it is scarce. Within the field of Dutch contemporary theatre there are only two productions that label themselves as horror: Mart van Berckel's *Continenten* and Jakob Ahlbom Company's *Horror*. These incredibly different performances form both the inspiration for and the backbone of Merit Vessies' research into the way horror works and can work in the medium of theatre.

In "Illusionism, Monsters and Meta-Horror: Theatre as a Medium for the Horror Genre," Vessies first delves into the discourse surrounding horror in film, exploring different definitions of the genre and its many subgenres, and touching upon the different rules, characters and tropes belonging to different subgenres, and the different psychological explanations for why one can enjoy a horror film. Although there are many ways in which to approach the horror genre on an academic level, examining the way it works in theatre seems to be a first.

With the knowledge gathered from the field of film studies, Vessies goes into theory on intermediality and intertextuality that can be used as tools to analyze the way the theory on horror film works in theatre performances, specifically in the work of Van Berckel and Ahlbom. The research focuses in on the different ways in which the horror genre is referenced, either through 1) literal references of existing works of horror fiction, 2) thematic references to certain tropes, characters and/or subgenres, 3) techniques used that could be seen as emulating techniques used in film.

Through analyzing *Continenten* and *Horror* by looking at the way the performances reference the horror genre, this text shows the broadness of horror as well as its versatility and the amount of possibilities that exist for horror, both in film, in theatre, and in academics.

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# Introduction

Somewhere in the fall of 2019, I visited two theatre performances: *Continenten* by Mart van Berckel, and *Horror* by Jakop Ahlbom Company.<sup>1</sup> Both labelled themselves as part of the horror genre, and both provided me with laughter, beauty and fright. Afterwards, I realized a few things: 1) I had never before experienced horror in theatre, 2) both of these performances make use of Dutch mime techniques, and 3) both of these performances are inspired by films and make use of techniques belonging to that medium.

As someone who's always had quite an affinity for the horror genre, I dove into the topic with fervor – and made the discovery that horror in theatre hardly exists, both in academia and in theatre itself. Both horror and theatre are widely discussed, but always separate from one another. There's much to be found on horror as a genre – a movie genre, specifically – including discussions on the representation of gender, sex and sexuality, auditive and visual techniques, and subgenres and tropes like ghosts, monsters, vampires, slasher flicks, classics, and the origin of the genre in both film and literature. Within theory in theatre, the possibilities of topics seem almost endless – yet no works have been found on horror within the theatre.

This probably has to do with the fact that horror in theatre also hardly seems to exist. Events such as haunted houses and escape rooms are often horror-themed, and on occasion a theatre is used as an environment in a horror movie, but horror within the context of an actual theatre is not as common – or, I should say, is not commonly heard of. Many performances still make use of horror tropes and figures such as monsters, vampires, or techniques like jump-scaries, but these performances are often not presented/categorized as actual horror.

In the field of Dutch contemporary theatre however, although horror is still scarce, the few performances that label themselves as part of the horror genre take inspiration from film and manage to create some very original pieces within the medium of theatre. In both *Continenten* and *Horror*, specific inspiration is taken from (horror)films, and these films are

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<sup>1</sup> *Continenten*, directed by Mart van Berckel, Theater aan de Rijn, Arnhem: De martvanberckelgroep coproduced by De Nieuwe Oost, 30 September en 2 October, 2019, Theatre performance; *Horror*, directed by Jakop Ahlbom, Stadsschouwburg Utrecht, Utrecht: Jakop Ahlbom Company, 20 October, 2019, Theatre performance.

referenced in different ways throughout the works. This aspect of these performances will be the main focus of this research project.

From this point onward, this text will first further introduce the contents and the context of this project. Then the theoretical framework used to research the topic of horror in contemporary Dutch theatre will be further explained. The chapters that follow this will cover the analysis of van Berckel's *Continenten* and Ahlbom's *Horror*, before arriving at a conclusion.

## Horror Film vs. Horror Theatre

No matter how popular horror films are and have been since they came into existence with films such as *Nosferatu*, and the way they evolved with films like *Night of the Living Dead*, the immense popularity of slasher movies like *Halloween*, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, which all became large franchises with endless sequels.<sup>2</sup> Even now many original horror stories told in the medium of film have become a success, such as works by Ari Aster who created *Hereditary* and *Midsommar*, and Jordan Peele who is responsible for *Get Out* and *Us* and the upcoming remake of *Candyman*.<sup>3</sup> Horror continues to be a hit due to its many subgenres and rules, that somehow continuously provide room for experiment and innovation.

In the Netherlands, Dutch director Dick Maas has not shied away from horror with films like *De Lift* and *Sint*, and the classic subgenre of the slasher has been applied to Dutch films like *Sl8N8*, *Doodeind* and more recently movies like *Sneekweek*.<sup>4</sup> *Zombibi* dabbles in

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<sup>2</sup> *Nosferatu*, directed by F.W. Murnau (USA: Film Arts Guild, 1922); *Night of the Living Dead*, directed by George A. Romero (USA: Walter Reade Organization, 1968); *Halloween*, directed by John Carpenter (USA: Compass International Pictures, 1978); *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, directed by Sean S. Cunningham (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1980); *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, directed by Wes Craven (USA: New Line Cinema, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> *Hereditary*, directed by Ari Aster (USA: Palm Star Media, 2018); *Midsommar*, directed by Ari Aster (USA: A24, 2019); *Get Out*, directed by Jordan Peele (USA: Universal Pictures, 2017); *Us*, directed by Jordan Peele (USA: Universal Pictures, 2019); *Candyman*, directed by Bernard Rose (USA: Candyman Films, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> *De Lift*, directed by Dick Maas (Netherlands: Sigma Film Productions, 1983); *Sint*, directed by Dick Maas (Netherlands: Parachute Pictures, 2010); *Sl8N8* directed by Frank van Geloven

the subgenre of zombie movies, where *De Griezels* provides horror for children.<sup>5</sup> Horror is no strange phenomenon within the country, and the film *The Human Centipede* has become well known internationally.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas some of these films are in fact based on very specific Dutch traditions like Sinterklaas and Sneekweek, most of these films clearly obey specific rules and genre tropes made famous by their Hollywood counterparts. This is something seen regularly in USA-produced horror films as well, specifically in the subgenre of the slasher. The slasher flick has specific rules that are further explored and explained in works like Wickham Clayton's collection *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* and Carol J. Clover's *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*.<sup>7</sup>

While these specific rules won't play a large part in this text, it is of interest here to note that these rules can provide clear choices for both characters and construction of story, providing similar events that can be produced endlessly within different settings; a group of friends is murdered one by one, but this can happen in a suburban area, at summer camp, in a dream – the setting provides the newness, rather than the story. These three examples are taken from the notable slashers *Halloween*, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, respectively.<sup>8</sup> The examples of other films that seemingly imitate the structure presented in these films are endless, and easily traced back to horror in the Netherlands as well: *Sneekweek* presents its audience with a group of people participating in the Frisian tradition of Sneekweek while they are chased by a serial killer, clearly implementing the story of a

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and Edwin Visser (Netherlands: Lagestee Film BV, 2006); *Doodeind*, directed by Erwin van den Eshof (Netherlands: Icuri Productions, 2006); *Sneekweek*, directed by Martijn Heijne (Netherlands: Dutch Filmworks, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> *Zombibi*, directed by Martijn Smits and Erwin van den Eshof (Netherlands: Launch Works, 2012); *De Griezels*, directed by Pieter Kuijpers (Netherlands: Bos Bros. Film & TV Productions, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> *The Human Centipede*, directed by Tom Six (Netherlands: Six Entertainment, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Wickham Clayton, *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film – Updated Edition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter; *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, directed by Cunningham; *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, directed by Craven.

slasher into a setting it hasn't been seen in before.<sup>9</sup> *Sl8N8* changes it up a bit by including a supernatural element of demon possession which can be traced back to *The Exorcist*.<sup>10</sup> *Doodeind* includes a sequence with a rabid dogs eerily reminiscent of *Cujo*.<sup>11</sup>

These examples hopefully show that not only is the horror genre large, movies within this genre tend to repeat the same tropes, characters and rules, and reference each other often in different ways – whether it be through characters speaking about their favorite horror movies, copying visual cues, or implementing a jump scare to keep the audience on its toes.

While references like these show up in many horror films, they also show up in films that are not necessarily classified as horror; people speak about scary movies in films that are not meant to be scary. Drama films can show physical and/or emotional abuse just as well as any horror film. With a genre as wide as that of horror, it seems strange that people tend to classify it as one thing; scary. Brigid Cherry writes: '[...] any film that shocked, scared, frightened, terrified, horrified, sickened, or disgusted, or which made the viewer shiver, get the goosebumps, shudder, tremble, jump, gasp or scream in fear should be classified as horror. Yet this then raises a further question about what this means when a film that is clearly not a horror film is horrifying in ways that makes the audience experience one or more of these responses'.<sup>12</sup> The question implied here is, if these emotional and physical responses are not the things that make a horror movie a horror movie, as they can happen while viewing any film – what makes horror? Cherry argues that next to the response a film elicits, what happens around the production of the story matters just as much, like the way the film is marketed, how the expectations of the audience is constructed. All these elements are important to take into account when analyzing horror.<sup>13</sup>

While film has taken center stage in this text so far, this has mostly shown the horror in Dutch film is not necessarily innovative; while fun to watch, there is much more room for experimentation within the horror genre as a whole, which can be seen in non-Dutch films

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<sup>9</sup> *Sneekweek*, directed by Heijne.

<sup>10</sup> *Sl8N8*, directed by van Geloven and Visser; *The Exorcist*, directed by William Friedkin (USA: Warner Bros., 1973).

<sup>11</sup> *Doodeind*, directed by van den Eshof; *Cujo*, directed by Lewis Teague, story by Stephen King (USA: Warner Bros., 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Cherry, *Horror*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



like *Midsommar* and even *The Lighthouse*.<sup>14</sup> The possibilities of the genre, however, are very much explored in Dutch theatre.

## Case Studies

While there are many performances that use elements, characters and tropes belonging to the horror genre (like Huis Oostpools *Kinderen van Judas*, which focuses on vampires, and *Monsters* by Duda Paiva Company),<sup>15</sup> only Mart van Berckel and Jakop Ahlbom Company chose to label their performances as part of the horror genre.

Although it would be interesting to see how horror is utilized throughout different types of Dutch performances in theatre, possibly without their creators being properly aware of the genre, it is first important to look at the way the horror genre specifically and consciously exists within the field. Because of this, these two performances will be used as the case studies for this research project. Of course, one could have sufficed, but by choosing both the scope of the genre and the amount of possibilities it provides will be demonstrated, as well as the different ways the genre can be implemented in the theatre.

### Continenten

*Continenten* is a theatre performance made in 2020, inspired by Austrian director Michael Haneke's drama film *Der Siebente Kontinent*.<sup>16</sup> Although this film is categorized as a drama, director Mart van Berckel sees it as a horror movie, but a horror movie without blood, zombies or serial killers.<sup>17</sup> In other words; a horror movie without the tropes one often expects to be part of a horror movie. As mentioned earlier, there are many types of films that

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<sup>14</sup> *Midsommar*, directed by Aster; *The Lighthouse*, directed by Robert Eggers (USA: A24, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> *Kinderen van Judas*, directed by Jeroen de Man, Toneelgroep Oostpool in co-production with Het Nationale Theater, 2017, Theatre Performance; *Monsters*, directed by Duda Paiva, Duda Paiva Company, 2017, Theatre Performance.

<sup>16</sup> *Der Siebente Kontinent*, directed by Michael Haneke (Austria: Wega Films, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> Mart van Berckel, "Waarom Continenten? - Vier vragen aan Mart van Berckel," by De Nieuwe Oost, *De Nieuwe Oost*, September 3, 2019, <https://denieuweoost.nl/waarom-continenten-vier-vragen-aan-mart-van-berckel/>.

elicit the same responses out of its audience that a horror movie tends to. For van Berckel, *Der Siebente Kontinent* seems to be an example of that.

Van Berckel's performance presents its audience with two people in their living room, trying to continue living in their daily routine, but slowly succumbing to dark and violent desires. The performance lasts for about two hours, showing image after image with blackouts in between. These images seem like snapshots of time; they show the audience one thing, and the next thing happens in the next image, almost like a slideshow. This is done slowly and almost boringly; until everything finally unravels – and from that moment on, the images become more and more horrific with each blackout.

*Continenten* has many elements suitable for analysis, but in this project the focus will mainly be on the way it references the source material of Haneke's film, as well as the way the performance focuses on establishing horror for its audience.

### Horror

*Horror* is quite a different type of performance. Unfortunately, the company was not willing to provide a registration to be viewed for this research project. Because of this, the amount of information used will be from memory and notes made after viewing the performance, as well as from promotional material that confirms some of these memories. Because of this, the performance storyline cannot entirely be explained without assumption. However, the performance is too important to leave out of this research entirely, due to the fact that it is one of only two performances within the Dutch field of contemporary theatre that outwardly labels itself as horror.

While the storyline cannot be explained properly here, there are elements of the performance that will provide enough material to analyze in later chapters, including that of the character tropes, and specific references made to existing works of horror fiction. *Horror* includes tropes from multiple subgenres; gothic horror is alluded to through the costuming of certain characters and slasher films are referenced by having some young friends show up in the housing shown on stage while a storm rages on outside. The performance itself seems to be made up of references almost entirely, that are all brought together through movement, mime, and theatrical illusionism. These are the most important parts of the performance that will be analyzed in relation to both *Continenten* and the horror genre in the chapters coming.

## Focus

There are many parts of *Continenten*, *Horror* and the horror genre as a whole to interpret and analyze. However, there is only a certain amount of room for that here. As implied by Cherry, before looking for horror in things that do not label themselves as such, it is important to first look at what horror is in the things that have established themselves as part of that genre.<sup>18</sup>

While horror is very popular in any country, the focus here will be on the way the genre exists in the country the writer of this text exists in. And, while the focus could also have been on film, the field of theatre provides works within the horror genre that are more interesting to analyze, due to their more experimental nature; they do not simply use a success formula like that of the slasher. This leads to the two case studies of this project; *Continenten* and *Horror*.

These two performances can be analyzed beside one another with different intentions as well. For example, not only are they both horror performances, they also both exist within the genre of Dutch mime. The idea of mime in horror is not a strange one overall, either, with silent killers like Michael Myers in *Halloween* and movement-based scares like in *The Grudge*.<sup>19</sup> However, these observations will have to be saved for a future project, as the focus here will be on the way horror is created within the aforementioned case studies.

## Questions

The main research question is: How do Mart van Berckel's *Continenten* and Jakop Ahlbom Company's *Horror* employ techniques of and reference the horror film?

By posing this as the main question, this research will hopefully show the multitude of ways these two performances work with the horror genre, as well as explain different ways in which a genre can be referenced. In the future, this could lead to other performances being analyzed in a similar manner.

In order to answer this main question, the following sub-questions will need to be answered:

- How do *Horror* and *Continenten* reference specific movies/moments?

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<sup>18</sup> Cherry, *Horror*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter; *The Grudge*, directed by Takashi Shimizu (USA: Columbia Pictures, 2004).

- How do these performances reference horror through their use of character- and/or story tropes?
- How do these performances use/reference specific audiovisual techniques inherent to the horror genre?

These questions also limit the amount of material that will be used for analysis. In the case of *Continenten*, the specific references that will be looked at will be references to Haneke's *Der Siebente Kontinent*, the character- and/or story tropes that will be looked at will focus on Bruce F. Kawin's conceptualization of 'the monster', and the audiovisual techniques will include the way special effects are used, the way the cinema screen is referenced through its scenography and the way a radio is used as a prop.

Concerning *Horror*, the material that will be looked at will be specific references to films including *The Shining*, *The Grudge* and *The Addams Family*, character- and/or story tropes like the aforementioned gothic horror costuming and slasher film friend group, as well as audiovisual techniques like illusionism.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, this material will hopefully show the ways in which these performances implement and establish horror, and perhaps provide new ways of looking at horror in theatre as a whole.

## Looking Ahead

From here, a closer look will be taken at the theoretical works that will be used throughout this text, in the chapter on the theory of horror. After establishing the theory that will be used to provide further information on horror as a genre, and what theoretical works will be used to analyze both case studies from there on out, a look will be taken on the way these theoretical works that concern film can be applied to analyze theatre performances. This will include a section on intermediality and textuality, and the types of referencing that will be analyzed within both case studies. The chapter closes with a section on the methodology of this research project.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Shining*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (USA: Warner Bros., 1980; *The Grudge*, directed by Shimizu; *The Addams Family*, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1991).

The chapters that follow will focus on analyzing the different references made throughout the case studies. These will be organized as chapter two, on literal referencing, chapter three, concerning thematic referencing, and chapter four and five, which focus on visual and auditive technical referencing, respectively. Although it may seem like technical referencing is getting a bit more attention, the chapter was simply divided into two parts because the difference between visual references and auditive references is clear. To put these things into the same chapter would soon seem cluttered, and because the different ways are equally important, the decision was made to simply provide two chapters on technical referencing, rather than one.

After the chapters that focus on analyzing the case studies, the conclusion of this work will be presented. This conclusion will hopefully show that horror in the Netherlands can not only be inventive and original, but that the theatre itself could prove to be an excellent medium for the genre of horror overall.

# Chapter I: Theory of Horror

There is much theory to be found and read on the horror genre and its many subgenres. However, there is hardly anything written on the topic of horror in a more classical theatre setting, which is what will be focused on here. Because of this, the theory on horror will come from the field of film studies. In order to use this theory to analyze theatre performance, Irina Rajewsky's work on intermediality and Valerie Wee's work on intertextuality (specifically in the *Scream* movies) will provide a large part of the analysis, as their work provides adequate tools for analyzing the different ways horror is implemented in the chosen case studies.<sup>21</sup> This will be further explained in the section on intermediality and intertextuality. How the concepts will provide guidelines for this text can be found in the section on methodology.

As the genre of horror is so large, and consists of many subgenres, it seemed only natural to categorize different sources based on the different theory that would be needed here. Five different categories came into existence. The first category focuses on the history of the horror genre, to further contextualize the work itself. Here, the distinction between the theory important to the field and the theory specifically important to this text will be made.

The second category contains works on different rules, tropes, characters, traditions and conventions of the genre and its subgenres, specifically in relation to both case studies.

The third category focuses on sound design in horror. These works will be used to analyze the way sound is used in both case studies.

The theoretical works are categorized in this way specifically because it shows the distinction made between the different chapters that deal with analyzing the case studies. Through mirroring this distinction in this more theoretical section, the phenomena used in the later chapters can be explained clearly and concisely here. Below, each of these categories will be dealt with in further detail. These different categories provide different pools to dip

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<sup>21</sup> Irina Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," in *Intermédialités*, nr. 6 (August 10, 2011): 43-64; Valerie Wee, "The Scream Trilogy, "Hyperpostmodernism," and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film," in *Journal of Film and Video* 57, no. 3 (2005): 44-61.

into whilst analyzing the case studies, to hopefully create a more effective analysis and research overall.

## The Horror Genre and History

This text focuses on how horror is referenced and created in *Continenten* and *Horror*. It is therefore of importance to discuss what horror is. Due to the largeness of the genre, it seems many find this almost impossible to properly define; the amount of subgenres alone makes this a daunting task at the very least. As mentioned before, Brigid Cherry argues that it not only the response of the audience can define what makes something into horror; the context of the work is just as important.<sup>22</sup> In this book, aptly titled *Horror*, Cherry takes a closer look at horror and how it has evolved; she distinguishes between different cycles of horror and different subgenres, and looks at when and how these cycles operate and how they relate to a larger societal context. She looks at different films and examines how horrific images are created within these examples, in order to provide a cinematic/stylistic (technological) explanation for how horror imagery is created, and how this imagery establishes fear/disgust within its audience. In short; she seeks to explain how horror films construct psychological and cognitive responses, and how they address spectators and their inner desires and fears, and frames these ideas in a larger cultural context.<sup>23</sup> Although it does not necessarily provide usable concept for analyzing theatre performances, it does provide a clear overview of the history and development of the horror genre.

In Marc Jancovich's *Horror, the Film Reader*, key articles from the horror film discourse have been edited together, in order to provide a resource specifically for students of horror cinema.<sup>24</sup> Through these articles, the development of the genre is addressed, starting with the early horror *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* to the modern classic *The Blair Witch Project*. A clear notion of the debates surrounding the genre is also given through this collection. After its introduction, this work functions in four specific parts: 1) theorizing horror, outlining important scholars from within the field including the above mentioned Noël Carroll, 2) gender and sexuality within the horror film, as this is a specific part of the discourse of the horror film, 3) producing horrors, which focuses on (re)production and on

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<sup>22</sup> Cherry, *Horror*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Cherry, *Horror*.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Jancovich, *Horror, the Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002).

subgenres from specific locations such as euro-horror and British horror, and 4) consuming fears, where a turn towards the spectator is taken, focusing on the cultural perception and reception of horror.<sup>25</sup> By looking at the discourse surrounding the horror genre, this work creates a clear opportunity for selecting the parts of the discourse most relevant to the research done here.

There are many more works that show the development of the genre in different ways; Viktória Prohászková wrote an article in which she outlines different horror subgenres (rural, cosmic, apocalyptic, crime, erotic, occult, visceral, etc.) through categorizing them as 1) the uncanny, 2) the marvelous horror and 3) the fantastic horror.<sup>26</sup>

Bordwell, Thompson and Smith focus in on different types of films in *Film Art: An Introduction*. When writing about the horror genre, they define it simply through the goal it has; to horrify (although, as noted a few times, this is perhaps too simple of a way to look at defining the genre). This impulse is, according to them, the thing that gives shape to the other conventions and traditions of the genre.<sup>27</sup>

The works on horror by Wheeler Winston Dixon provide more examples of different types of horror films. In *A History of Horror*, many films pass the revue in five different chapters that cover five different eras of horror, starting with Origins, in which he notes that the origins of horror might be traced back to ‘the beginning of narrative itself’, as Dixon writes it.<sup>28</sup> He then goes into the classics, which covers horror films made in the period from 1930 to 1948, before delving into the period of rebirth (1949 – 1970) and that of so-called ‘new blood’ (1970 – 1990). The book of course concludes with the present.<sup>29</sup>

Ken Gelder, like Jancovich, created a horror reader compiled of different articles, the focus here being exploring different subgenres and turns within the horror genre and the surrounding discourse, providing more insight into many aspects of horror films. All these works combined have provided a clear view of the history of the genre, and the way different

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<sup>25</sup> Jancovich, *Horror, the Film Reader*.

<sup>26</sup> Viktória Prohászková, “The genre of horror,” in *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* 2, no. 4 (2012): 132-142.

<sup>27</sup> David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Jeff Smith, *Film Art – An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019), 341.

<sup>28</sup> Wheeler Winston Dixon, *A History of Horror* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Dixon, *A History of Horror*.



subgenres have developed, as well as how horror has been perceived and discussed throughout the years.

Although this also provided a lot of information that will not be directly relevant to the case studies at hand, it does further contextualize this research as well; none of these works have anything to do with the way horror works in theatre. In part, that is due to the fact that nothing seems to have been written on this subject so far. Furthermore, horror in theatre is scarce at best, meaning there are not many performances to take into account when wanting to write about the topic. Hopefully this research will show that horror in theatre not only exists, but that the medium can actually give the genre another new opportunity to thrive and expand its history in a new way.

There is one author that has not yet been named, even though he is one of the most influential writers within the field of horror. Noël Carroll wrote the book *The Philosophy of Horror*, one of the leading works within the discourse around the horror film genre. Throughout the text, Carroll studies the how and why of people experiencing pleasure and fun whilst spectating horror. He also states that horror pieces are made with a specific goal in mind; to let the spectator experience the emotion of ‘art-horror’ – a term he coined in this work. Art-horror is a combination of fear and revulsion/disgust. The distinction is therefore made between horror made in art – as the word clearly suggests – with that goal in mind, and horror in (for example) a documentary showing the horrors of cults/wars/etc. According to Carroll, a work is art-horror when 1) a monster shown results in a physical response like screaming, shaking or experiencing nausea within a spectator, 2) when this monster is unclean/disgusting or when this uncleanliness is suggested within the work, and 3) when these elements are paired with the desire of the spectator to avoid the monster altogether.<sup>30</sup>

Even though this is one of the more influential works within the horror discourse, it will sadly not play a large part throughout this research project; the focus in *The Philosophy of Horror* is specifically on the affect horror has on the spectator, whereas the focus here is specifically on the way horror is referenced within theatre performance.<sup>31</sup>

For this same reason, other theoretical works will have to take a backseat as well, including Thomas Fahy’s collection of essays – also titled *The Philosophy of Horror* – that is specifically organized around several philosophical concepts such as morality, identity,

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<sup>30</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 15-27.

<sup>31</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*.

cultural history, and aesthetics/medium.<sup>32</sup> These different essays provide different insight into the genre from a more philosophical perspective. As a result, it also examines a wide array of horror films, tropes and subgenres, ranging from classics such as Hitchcock's *Psycho* to tortureporn in *Saw* and even vampires and television by looking at the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*-series' spin-off *Angel* and its main character; Angel, a vampire with a soul. It comes at the genre from a multitude of perspectives.<sup>33</sup>

Works like Charles Derry's *Dark Dreams 2.0, A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film from the 1950s to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Jeffrey Goldstein's *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*, Cynthia A. Hoffner and Kenneth J. Levine's *Enjoyment of Mediated Fright and Violence: A Meta-Analysis* all provide more information on the more psychological aspects of watching horror films.<sup>34</sup> While further research into the way horror affects the viewer is already interesting, to delve into the way horror affects the spectator in a theatre setting seems like an important step – albeit a step for a different research project. The focus here remains on the way horror is referenced and implemented in the theatre; before being able to look at the way horror affects the spectator in the theatre, the way horror exists in theatre should be examined first.

## Tropes, Characters and Conventions

Whereas the theory from the section on the history of horror will be implemented largely as contextual theory, and the first chapter of analysis will focus on references to existing works of horror fiction, the second chapter and therefore this section of the theoretical framework will focus on the way *Continenten* and *Horror* respectively reference different, tropes, characters and conventions from the horror genre.

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Derry, *Dark Dreams 2.0 – A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film From the 1950s to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009); Jeffrey Goldstein, *Why We Watch – The Attractions of Violent Entertainment* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Cynthia A. Hoffner and Kenneth J. Levine, "Enjoyment of Mediated Fright and Violence: A Meta-Analysis," in *Media Psychology* 7, no. 2 (2005): 207-237.

Slashers remain some of the most popular horror movies to date, originating largely in the late 1970's and the early 1980's with movies like *Halloween*, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.<sup>35</sup> There are very specific tropes and ideas (one could even say 'rules', as they do when reflecting upon the genre in the 90s film *Scream*) connected to this subgenre, that still hold true today. Wickham Clayton specifically created *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film* to further explore the different specific styles, tropes and so-called 'rules' of this subgenre, in the form of a collection of articles that examine and analyze different elements of the narrative and stylistic construction of specific movies.<sup>36</sup> While the slasher as a subgenre doesn't play the largest part, the way slashers are constructed will come into play whilst further analyzing Ahlbom's *Horror*, specifically the way a few friends enter the performance. As Ian Conrich writes in Clayton's collection: "The slasher film was preoccupied with an assault on teenagers – who were often promiscuous or transgressive".<sup>37</sup> This idea of teenagers being hunted down by a killer will come into play in the chapter on thematic referencing as well, using the *Scream* as a useful example to show how this trope can be turned around, before looking at the way it is implemented in *Horror*.<sup>38</sup>

The other most important notion to study here is that of the character of the monster. There are many types of monsters as evidenced in a selection of works that describe and list monsters present throughout the horror genre.<sup>39</sup> However, the work that will be specifically focused on here will be Bruce F. Kawin's book *Horror and the Horror Film*. This is one of the 'heavy-hitters' in the horror discourse and it provides clear categories of monsters that are specifically applicable to the monsters that can be found in both case studies.<sup>40</sup>

In this book, Kawin uses examples of films to look at different horror tropes and images that return, and provides insight on what these tropes and images can mean/symbolize. He looks at these different examples, analyses their narrative strategies (in

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<sup>35</sup> Ken Gelder, *The Horror Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Clayton, *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*.

<sup>37</sup> Clayton, *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*, 112.

<sup>38</sup> *Scream*, directed by Wes Craven (USA: Dimension Films, 1996).

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Marina Levina, *Monster Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Reader* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *The Monster Theory Reader* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> Bruce F. Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, (London: Anthem Press, 2012).

story, imagery, sound and other cinematic elements), providing a clear look at different elements belonging to horror and its subgenres.<sup>41</sup>

What is of specific interest here is the way he categorizes monsters, namely, through establishing only three major subgenres within the horror film, dependent on the kind of threat presented: 1) monsters without supernatural characteristics, 2) supernatural forces or monsters, and 3) monstrous humans.<sup>42</sup> Kawin writes: “While I agree with [Noël] Carroll that a horror film needs a monster or a figure that focuses and embodies the horror – or even a disembodied an undefined force [...] – I believe that there are more kinds of monsters in the genre than he allows. I propose that the scope and the subjects of the genre depend on how one defines the films’ central threats, their horror figures or monsters”.<sup>43</sup> Through broadening the lens on monsters, Kawin provides clear subcategories of film, but of the types of monsters that perform in horror films as well. That is what is of specific interest to *Continents and Horror*: what types of monsters are presented to their audiences?

Finally, Kawin writes that the fear of the unknown is a base element of horror. The fear of a monster is enhanced by the dark; the unknown space in which the monster can make you its victim.<sup>44</sup> Bordwell, Thompson and Smith, mentioned earlier in the section on the history of the genre, also name the contrast in lighting in horror as one of the stylistic techniques used in horror to create fear.<sup>45</sup> While it has been established and repeated that simply the experience of fear might be too small as a reason for something to be horror, these ideas of fear and threat seem to come forward in every text that focuses on horror, whether this is the main focus, as in works mentioned before, or simply in passing.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 46.

<sup>45</sup> Bordwell, Thompson and Smith, *Film Art – An Introduction*, 332-344.

<sup>46</sup> Isabel Pinedo, “Recreational Terror: Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film,” in *Journal of Film and Video* 48, no. ½ (1996): 17-31; Philip J. Nickel, “Horror and the Idea of Everyday Life: On Skeptical Threats in Psycho and The Birds,” in *The Philosophy of Horror*, edited by Fahy Thomas, (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 14-32; Prohászková, “The genre of horror,” 132-142.

The notions of fear and threat are also evident in both *Horror* and *Continenten*, and the references to horror that will be looked at throughout the analysis of these performances could also be seen as tools of the genre to create the desired reaction within its audience. However, that distinction between desired response and actual tool is important, as only the last of these can be analyzed within a performance itself, which is the focus of this research project.

## Horror Sound Design

In this final section on theory that focuses on the horror film, different techniques will be looked at, specifically the way sound is treated throughout the horror genre – and one type of sound in particular: that of the music box.

Children have been a staple in the horror genre for a long time, both in literature from the likes of Henry James, as in more recent classic horror films like *The Omen* and *The Exorcist*.<sup>47</sup> Songs that refer to childhood or are sung by children also seem to be quite popular within the genre, for example the song that states ‘One, two, Freddy’s coming for you’ that *A Nightmare on Elm Street Opens* features.<sup>48</sup> In the John Carpenter classic *Halloween*, the babysitters are the ones being killed by a serial killer – the film also opens with a scene in which the killer is still a child himself, and murders his teenage sister in cold blood.<sup>49</sup> In short, there are many different ways in which children and childhood are presented within and connected to the horror genre. However, the subject of children singing and the use of lullabies in horror soundtracks isn’t as often mentioned in academic circles.

Philip Hayward’s *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema* includes essays from different authors on the subject of soundtracks in the horror genre, which focus on topics ranging from auditive foreshadowing, to the use of sound in the subgenre of documentary horror, to the use of popular music and heavy metal, yet there is no mention of lullabies or anything similar.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *The Omen*, directed by Richard Donner (USA: Twentieth Century Fox, 1976).; *The Exorcist*, directed by Friedkin.

<sup>48</sup> *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, directed by Craven.

<sup>49</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter.

<sup>50</sup> Philip Hayward, *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2009).

The one essay that does specifically address the sounds of music boxes, carousels, and other objects that can easily be connected to the idea of childhood, is “The Monster and the Music Box: Children and the Soundtrack of Horror”, which is included in Neil Lerner’s book *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear*. Here, author Stan Link focuses on the way innocence takes shape in music and sound design, and the way this is often used within the horror genre, and very much connects this to the children shown in the films he uses as case studies.<sup>51</sup> He writes: ‘Sound is not merely symptomatic, but becomes the very site of transformation from innocence to obscenity.’<sup>52</sup> In the chapter on technical referencing that focuses on the use of sound throughout the case studies, the following question will therefore be posed: How does the sound in these two performances provide a site of transformation from innocence to obscenity (if it does at all)?

Due to the fact that no registration was made available for *Horror*, the focus will be on *Continenten* only – the audio used in the promotional material may not line up with the audio used in the actual performance, and there is no way to check this without a registration. However, *Continenten* uses a radio as a prop, and specific choices in sound design that seem to fulfill the same task the music box Lerner describes tends to.

Another important source to note is Harry M. Benshoff’s ‘A Companion to the Horror Film’. Here, again many different aspects of the ‘horror soundtrack’ (so to speak) are looked into in depth, yet again none of the texts included in the work specifically address the notion of children, innocence or lullabies in the way the topic can hopefully be addressed here.<sup>53</sup> The book does include the essay “Horror Sound Design” by William Whittington, which addresses silences in horror soundtracks, as these tend to have a very specific meaning within the horror genre: ‘The horror sound track offers its own version of the existential abyss in the form of silence. But paradoxically, silence in film has never been silent. It is filled with both noise and meaning – most readily it symbolizes death.’<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Stan Link, “The Monster and the Music Box: Children and the Soundtrack of Horror,” in *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear*, ed. Neil Lerner (London: Routledge, 2010), 38-55.

<sup>52</sup> Link, “The Monster and the Music Box: Children and the Soundtrack of Horror,” 38.

<sup>53</sup> Harry M. Benshoff, *A Companion to the Horror Film* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> William Whittington, “Horror Sound Design,” in *A Companion to the Horror Film*, ed. Harry M. Benshoff (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 183.

Again only in relation to *Continenten* (not to *Horror*, for the same reasons noted above), the question of silence will be posed: how does the silence in *Continenten* offer the symbol of death (if it does at all)?

The theoretical focus for this section of the research will stay on Link and Whittington's work, as they specifically concern audio design in relation to horror, and relative to the case studies at hand. By limiting the theoretical framework in this way, it will provide a clear understanding of the way horror works in the case study/studies, and therefore in how horror sound design can work in theatre. If made larger, the focus would become blurred, because regular film-tropes would be included in the project, whereas the focus should remain on the horror genre, as this is the main topic of the text.

## Intermediality and Intertextuality

All the theory discussed up to this point has concerned horror films; however, this text will go on to analyze performances that take place in the theatre. Because nothing seems to have been written on how the horror genre is implemented in a more classical theatre performance setting, it seemed only logical to use theory on what the genre is to further analyze how it works within these theatre performances. But, theatre is a different medium altogether, meaning, a certain translation of these genre conventions should be taken into account. In order to do so, a few works on intermediality and textuality have been selected to help out with the way horror is referenced throughout these performances, and how these techniques can be defined and recognized, as well as why they can be used. This section will focus on establishing the concepts and types of referencing that will be looked at throughout the analytical chapters. These will provide the analytical tools, whereas the theory on horror provides contextual knowledge of the genre and its many works.

In the article "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality", Rajewsky focuses on intermediality and intermedial references, and the so-called 'as if'-character of these references.<sup>55</sup> She describes this as a mode in which one can bridge the gap between two pieces of media through reference, for example: a writer can act 'as if' they use cinematic tools within literature, but in the end this will still exist within written words. If this writer were to zoom in in the literary sense, or describe what is seen as

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<sup>55</sup> Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," 43-64.

though shown through a panning camera, this is an intermedial reference; a reference, because it only creates the illusion of the cinematic technique, rather than it actually being film.<sup>56</sup>

These ideas on intermediality and intermedial references are important to take into account here, because of the intermedial references in both *Continenten* and *Horror*; both are in large part inspired by different (horror)films, and film theory also plays a large part in the rest of this research. The concept of the ‘as if’ character will be used as an analytical tool throughout this research, and specifically in the chapters on technical referencing, as the concept concerns techniques from one medium being ‘translated’ to another. In this case, it concerns theatre creating the illusion of cinematic techniques. Although actual cinematic techniques can on occasion also be used as there is some overlap between the medium of film and the medium of theatre, these would not necessarily fall in the category of the as-if character. However, these techniques will be included in the chapters on technical referencing as well, because they do literally concern the same techniques. A good example of this is the jumpscare: a jumpscare is a piece of sound design often used in horror movies, and it can be used in the same way in theatre. Nothing about the technique of creating a jumpscare has to be translated/changed to be used in the theatre, yet it is still used in a different medium, therefore referencing film, and specifically, the horror genre. Therefore, these instances cannot be omitted.

It could be argued that the as-if character can be used in a broader scope. Rajewsky speaks on it in regards to techniques used in different media, but in the same way, it can be used to view the case studies here as performances acting ‘as-if’ they are a horror film. This thought leads to other kinds of referencing that will be studied in this text: 1) literal referencing, and 2) thematic referencing.

When speaking of literal referencing in this text, it simply concerns moments in the performances studied that literally reference a moment from a horror film. A good example of this is the letter on the wall at the end of *Continenten*, as there is also a message left on the wall of *Der Siebente Kontinent*, which the performance is inspired by. This idea of referencing, however simple it may seem, has been very popular within the horror genre as a whole.

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<sup>56</sup> Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality,” 54-59.



Valerie Wee wrote the article “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film”, in which she presents the idea of hyperpostmodernism through the way intertextual referencing works throughout the original *Scream* trilogy.<sup>57</sup> She identifies hyperpostmodernism in this trilogy in two ways: 1) as intertextual referencing and self-reflexivity going from tongue-in-cheek subtext to becoming actual text, and 2) as actively using and/or referencing themes, styles and techniques of other media forms.<sup>58</sup>

While Wee is focused on the way hyperpostmodernism works within the *Scream* films, the distinction between intertextuality and self-reflexivity as text of a film and the active use and/or referencing of specific themes, styles and formats provides two different types of referencing that can be used to analyze the way horror is used in theatre as well.

Certain similarities can be seen between what Wee describes as referencing specific themes, styles and formats, and the way Rajewsky discusses the ‘as-if’ character; they both speak of the way certain works can implement elements of other media. Rajewsky, however, focuses on the use of techniques, whereas Wee zooms in on the way different themes and styles are used to create an additional level of amusement.<sup>59</sup> This therefore shows another way of look at referencing within media; one that focuses on theme rather than technique. This idea will be further explored in the chapter on thematic referencing.

The other category Wee describes is that of intertextual referencing going from subtext to text. While referencing itself is of course not a new phenomenon when it is done in *Scream*, it is not limited to nods to other works that do not influence the story: ‘Instead, a significant portion of the intertextual referencing in the *Scream* films functions as *text*. [...] The *Scream* films, therefore, take the previously subtle and covert intertextual reference and transform it into an overt, discursive act.’<sup>60</sup> This in itself describes two types of referencing; covert referencing to existing work, such as *Halloween*’s Dr. Loomis having the same last name as *Psycho*’s Sam Loomis, and overt referencing which shows characters being aware of

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<sup>57</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 44-61.

<sup>58</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 44.

<sup>59</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 47.

the works they are discussing, which the character of Randy in *Scream* is a good example of; he is a fan of horror himself and consistently speaks on the rules and tropes of the horror genre throughout the film.<sup>61</sup>

Both of these types of referencing will be covered in the chapter on literal referencing, because both concern literal references to existing works, whether done in subtext or as actual text. It is also good to note the reason intertextual referencing works well in the horror genre. As Wee points out, the creators of the successful *Scream* trilogy recognize that horror films – and specifically slashers – had become predictable to the audience. Through referencing the tropes and conventions the audience had become so familiar with (to the point of cynicism), and letting the characters in the film be aware of these horror rules as well, it allowed the audience to engage more with the equally aware characters on screen.<sup>62</sup>

## Methodology

In order to effectively research the way these two performances make use of different aspects and techniques of the horror genre, this research can be divided into three parts: 1) literal referencing, 2) thematic referencing, and 3) horror film techniques (or: intermedial referencing).

Valerie Wee provides useful ways of looking at different types of intertextual referencing and distinguishes between literal referencing as subtext and actual text, as well as between literal referencing and thematic/stylistic referencing. These concepts will be used to analyze both case studies in the chapters on literal referencing and thematic referencing, respectively.<sup>63</sup>

First, the focus will be on literal referencing within both performances. They are inspired by film, of course, but how do they make use of all of this pre-existing material? In what ways are the films that these performances are inspired by, referenced within the performances themselves? Do these references contribute to the horror experience? And if so, in what way(s)?

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<sup>61</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter; *Scream*, directed by Craven.

<sup>62</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 49.

<sup>63</sup> Wee, “The Scream Trilogy, “Hyperpostmodernism,” and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film,” 44-61.

Then, a closer look will be taken at thematic referencing; what tropes and characters imply or are borrowed from the horror genre and its tropes, and to what end do these references seem to be used? What role do these references play in creating the horror aspect of the performance? Do they make it more or less horrific? These are sub-questions that can be answered by observing the way masks are used in *Continenten* and the way Ahlbom visually references things such as gothic horror, the teenagers in a slasher flick, and even a wooden panel being smashed which is very reminiscent of *The Shining*<sup>64</sup> – with these observations, one can take a closer look at where in these performances these references are made, and whether they intend to either further the horror within the performance or not.

As a third step, the notion of horror techniques will be addressed. It is important to note the difference between references and techniques, as the references in these performances do not explicitly mean to further the horror, whereas horror techniques aim to do exactly that; these are techniques used to create horror. The main focus of this part of the research will be on both sound- and light design/scenography. The parts of the performances that will be focused on for this consist of looking for jump-scares (a horror staple that is in large part auditive), contrasts in lighting (as famously used in *The Exorcist*)<sup>65</sup>, and the role of illusionism within these performances. Without movie magic, after all, the theatre has to find ways to perhaps let hands walk around on their own (like Ahlbom masterfully does).

By using Irina Rajewsky's concept of intermedial referencing and the 'as if'-characters to analyze both performances, a light will be shed on the different ways filmic techniques are employed within the performances, such as the visibly different uses of screens on stage. This part of the analysis can provide further insight into the techniques and references used (because this concept provides a greater insight into the intermedial aspect of the performances as a whole), and how they are used within each performance.

These analytical parts of the research effectively work to answer the three sub-questions presented earlier on in this plan, therefore contributing directly to answering the overarching research question. The focus throughout will be on analyzing both Ahlbom's and Van Berckel's performances through the use of horror theory and the concept of intermedial referencing. For both performances, video registrations exist, and access to *Continenten* has already been granted. However, Jakob Ahlbom Company sadly refuses to share the registration of *Horror* for research. Therefore, the performance cannot be analyzed as in-

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<sup>64</sup> *The Shining*, directed by Kubrick.

<sup>65</sup> *The Exorcist*, directed by Friedkin.

depth as *Continenten*. However, there are specific moments that will be called upon from memory (and confirmed to exist through promotional material), in order to still show the ways the performance shows horror on stage.

# Chapter II: Literal Referencing

## Scream: Why Literal Referencing Works

To first introduce the topic of literal referencing within the context of this text, Wes Craven's movie *Scream* is an excellent example of how this type of referencing enhances both the joy and the fear that can be experienced whilst viewing/experiencing horror fiction.<sup>66</sup>

As mentioned before, Valerie Wee described how the intertextuality of the *Scream* films is a clear sign of hyperpostmodernism, and how the intertextual references occur to such an extent that it in part becomes actual text of the film, rather than only subtext.<sup>67</sup> She also notes that the *Scream* films are films about slasher films.<sup>68</sup> While this is true, there is a substantial difference between the *Scream* trilogy and, for example, films like *Scary Movie*.<sup>69</sup>

In Wickham Clayton's book *Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film*, Fran Pheasant-Kelly describes both the *Scream* and the *Scary Movie* franchises as films that parody the horror genre, but it is implied that this awareness of the characters in *Scream* also creates genuinely tense scenes. Of course, there are plenty of horror films now that use the same formula, treating the slasher genre ironically.<sup>70</sup>

*Scary Movie*, for example, focuses on the humor of spoofing the genre, making the films funny rather than scary (although that of course remains subjective). But, as Kendall R. Phillips notes, other films that tried to blend humor and terror in such a way can't seem to get the balance between (self-reflexive) intertextuality and fear quite right.<sup>71</sup>

There is a scene in *Scream* that shows perfectly how intertextuality both becomes part of the actual text of the film, and enhances the horror aspect of it. This example takes place when Randy – the most self-aware character of the series who continuously explains the

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<sup>66</sup> *Scream*, directed by Craven.

<sup>67</sup> Wee, "The *Scream* Trilogy, "Hyperpostmodernism," and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film," 47.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Scary Movie*, directed by Keenen Ivory Wayans (USA: Dimension Films, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Jancovich, *Horror, the Film Reader*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Kendall R. Phillips, *Dark Directions: Romero, Craven, Carpenter, and the Modern Horror Film* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 88.

‘rules’ of horror to the others – is alone in a living room, watching Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween* on a television screen. At the same time, journalist Gale Weathers is looking at Randy shouting comments at the television through a camera she set up in the space earlier. The killer enters the space, invisible to Randy who is still telling off the characters in *Halloween*, while Gale Weathers starts to shout at the screen she’s looking at because she can see the killer behind Randy.<sup>72</sup>

Randy knows everything about horror, yet somehow still fails to spot the killer right behind him. At the same time, the journalist is watching this scene with the audience, but from her position in a van, spying on the inside of the house – and her camera is on a slight delay, creating an aspect of uncertainty of what is happening, what has happened and most of all: what is going to happen. This is almost a kind of Droste-effect, which is broadened by the spectator of *Scream*, who is watching Gale watch Randy who is watching *Halloween*, engaging the viewer entirely. This exemplifies how tension and suspense are created through literally referencing both other films and the film *Scream* itself, which in turn demonstrates the way a literal reference (in this case to *Halloween* and to *Scream*) can be used to enhance the experience of a film.

In this chapter, a closer look will be taken at what literal references exist in *Continenten* and *Horror*.

## Literal References in *Continenten*

*Continenten* is based on a movie, and its literal references therefore seem to only to be to its source material; Michael Haneke’s film *Der Siebente Kontinent*, which shows a couple preparing for moving to Australia. Their planning, however, turns out to have been preparatory work for destroying their house and eventually themselves through committing suicide.<sup>73</sup>

In *Continenten*, the concept of this movie is taken and put onto the stage; a man and a woman spend the first hour or so of the performance doing small things like cleaning plants, bringing home groceries, checking a watch, feeding a fish, all sorts of mundane things. The tension in the story is made palpable from the very beginning through, for example, the occasional flash of a knife.

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<sup>72</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter.

<sup>73</sup> *Der Siebente Kontinent*, directed by Haneke.

The performance can be seen as a literal reference as a whole; not only is the spectator given a title that directly references Haneke's film (more information on this will be given near the end of the chapter), they are also presented with a plot that tells more or less the same story.

Using the same plot could perhaps lessen the anticipation one feels, specifically in a horror movie, where it is common knowledge for the spectator that there is a danger, and things will go wrong for the characters. However, even though the performance recreates so much of the plot of the original film, the format used to depict the events of the plot creates unease. Van Berckel chose to show a short image on stage, before using a blackout to put the audience in the dark, over and over again. The performance works as a sort of slideshow, alternating between image and darkness. While it is dark, the audience does not know what is going to happen next. This, in combination with the occasional flashes of weapons and the fact that the faces of the performers are unreadable through the masks they wear throughout the performance, makes excellent use of the fear of unpredictability, the unknown. As Kawin states, the dark is a societal fear.<sup>74</sup>

This way of using the source material and applying different techniques to enhance the frightening aspect of it, will be noted again in the chapter on visual technical referencing, as this clearly concerns technical aspects of the performance.

## Literal References in *Horror*

Ahlbom's *Horror* contains an enormous amount of references. As was noted in the section on methodology, the company sadly refused to share a registration of the performance to analyze. However, the trailer alone already shows quite a few references, namely a hand walking around on its own, similar to Thing, in *The Addams Family*, and a woman walking down the stairs using all four limbs, reminiscent of a scene from *The Grudge*.<sup>75</sup>

These are only two examples of references within the performance, chosen because these are the ones that can be verified at this point in time. The most important note to make here, is that the references in *Horror* are used to scare the audience - by showing them a hand

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<sup>74</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 46.

<sup>75</sup> Jakop Ahlbom Company, "Jakop Ahlbom Company – Horror [trailer]," Youtube Video, 01:27, April 24, 2019, /<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpF0B-Bne2g/>; *The Addams Family*, directed by Sonnenfeld; *The Grudge*, directed by Shimizu.

walking around on its own after it's been cut off, and a woman creepily making her way down a set of stairs – but also for the sense of fun. The way the references are used here, are very similar to the way they are used in *Scream* (albeit seemingly less self-aware, though this could be due to the fact that *Horror* is a mime performance without dialogue). They are employed to engage the viewer, whereas *Continenten* seems to primarily employ its referencing to set up the plot, letting the techniques perform more of the excitement and fright.

## Meta-horror?

To shortly conclude this chapter on literal referencing, it seems useful to elaborate a bit on the idea horror that is aware of itself, and/or horror that is not aware of itself but references other pieces of horror media to let the audience know that the creator(s) is/are aware of the genre they are working in.

Characters that are aware of the fact that they exist within horror don't seem to be present in either case study. Van Berckel shows awareness of the genre by using violence and sex right beside one another, as well as through the use of the occasional jump scare. The only literal references made are to *Der Siebente Kontinent*, which, because it is technically categorized as a drama-film, is not horror.<sup>76</sup> The horrific aspects of this performance are created through different techniques, which will be looked at more in the chapters on technical referencing.

In *Horror*, nothing seems to be off-limits when it comes to literal referencing, as evidenced by the references already shown in the trailer.<sup>77</sup> (There are many more examples to give, such as someone hacking down a cabinet door like this is done in *The Shining*, yet these examples cannot be verified and will therefore not be used in the argumentation of this text.)<sup>78</sup> These references work because they are accessible to any spectator as fun and scary elements of the performance, and especially because viewers that are familiar with the genre will get even more joy out of seeing these things play out on stage, making them feel like they are 'in the know', almost like they're part of a secret club. This can create a meaningful connection with what is happening on stage.

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<sup>76</sup> *Der Siebente Kontinent*, directed by Haneke.

<sup>77</sup> *The Grudge*, directed by Shimizu; *The Addams Family*, directed by Sonnenfeld.

<sup>78</sup> *The Shining*, directed by Kubrick.



As a last note on literal referencing, it is fun to see that both *Continenten* and *Horror* respectively reference their source material in their respective titles. ‘Continenten’ is the Dutch word for ‘continents’, where *Der Siebente Kontinent* is German for ‘the seventh continent’ (in the case of this film referring to Australia).<sup>79</sup> Van Berckel’s title implies a largeness and references the original title of the work that inspired the performance. And Ahlbom’s title of course directly references the horror genre; while this could seem lazy, it can also be seen as implying the sheer immensity of the genre itself, and the large amount of horror tropes and references Ahlbom decided to include in the performance.

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<sup>79</sup> *Der Siebente Kontinent*, directed by Haneke.

# Chapter III: Thematic Referencing

## Tropes, Characters and Conventions

The idea of meta-horror suggests an awareness of the genre, which will be expanded upon in this chapter. In this section relevant rules, characters, and conventions of horror will be introduced and explained. As noted in the section on the theoretical framework, there are many rules, characters, and conventions belonging to the genre that do not appear within these case studies. Therefore, these will not be used to analyze these performances. The ones that are of specific interest to these cases are, for *Continenten*, the notion of the monster, which will be looked at through the ideas that Kawin presents, and for *Horror*, the notions of different subgenres, and how these are combined in Ahlbom's work.

## Thematic References in *Continenten*

While themes of boredom and the rut of ordinary life, the longing for an escape, are all themes that could be identified within *Continenten*, the horror of the performance cannot be escaped; it is what the performance revolves around. With every scene, another piece of the horrific puzzle is given to the audience. Even simple objects shown like a plant and a goldfish in an aquarium and glasses are later eaten by the characters, blood dripping from their mouths.

Similar to the one literal reference made in *Continenten*, namely, its entire plot, there also seems to be only one thematic reference to the performance. When speaking of thematic references here, this could include different monsters, types of violence, types of subgenres, and other tropes belonging to the horror genre. When analyzing *Continenten*, there is actually one concept that entails all of these things, namely, that of the monster.

While the characters wear masks throughout the performance, they are still very much humans. But, every horror story needs a monster.<sup>80</sup> In this case, the characters seem to be the definition of monstrous humans; humans that act as monsters. However, there are still many kinds of monstrous humans, including but not limited to mad scientists, sadists, torturers,

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<sup>80</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 11.

mad killers and cannibals.<sup>81</sup> While Kawin provides excellent examples that could possibly be applied to the characters in *Continenten*, this is difficult, as the only thing we learn about them is that they are in fact monstrous. The mundane tasks they perform are not specific enough to provide information on certain characteristics, other than their monstrosity. In fact, if anything, they are most similar to silent serial killer Michael Myers from *Halloween*.<sup>82</sup> We know nothing about this character, who, coincidentally also always wears a mask. In this film, psychiatrist Samuel Loomis (a name that references a character from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*), even refers to Myers as 'it' rather than using actual pronouns.<sup>83</sup> He later states: "I spent eight years trying to reach [Michael], and then another seven trying to keep him locked up because I realized that what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply... evil".<sup>84</sup>

This type of evil is exactly what seems to take place in *Continenten*; while one can always look for reasoning, especially when looking at its source material, nothing within the performance suggests an actual reason for the characters' behaviour. They are simply monstrous. This actually aligns perfectly with the way the performance uses literal darkness to enhance fear within its audience; the unknown is not only there in the darkness, the characters themselves are equally inscrutable.

## Thematic References in *Horror*

Again, for *Horror*, there are less verifiably aspects of the performance to analyze, but the importance of the thematic reference made throughout this performance is not necessarily in the specifics of them; it is in the amount. Like with the large amount of literal references included in the performance, the thematic references do the same. As evident from the trailer as well, there are multiple references to different story and character tropes from different parts of the horror genre, including things falling off the wall, gratuitous violence, a person

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<sup>81</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 152-196.

<sup>82</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter.

<sup>83</sup> *Psycho*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1960).

<sup>84</sup> *Halloween*, directed by Carpenter.

showing up in an empty house while there's a storm raging on outside.<sup>85</sup> These moments reference ghost stories, gore movies and slasher films, respectively.

In the case of *Horror*, these references seem to have the same intention as the literal references. These tropes are of course tropes because they have been used so much throughout different works of horror fiction, and they have been used so much presumably because they are successful. What makes this performance unique, is that all of the tropes are being used together; Ahlbom weaves all kinds of horror subgenres into one performance. While it is specifically fun to watch these genres come together for a horror fanatic, it also creates a sense of unpredictability. And, as stated whilst analyzing *Continenten*, the unpredictable is connected to the unknown, and can therefore invoke fear.

Here, it also becomes evident how different these two performances are; where *Continenten* focuses in on the element of the unknown within horror, *Horror* includes unbelievable amounts of references in different ways.

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<sup>85</sup> Jakob Ahlbom Company, "Jakob Ahlbom Company – Horror [trailer]"; *The Addams Family*, directed by Sonnenfeld; *The Grudge*, directed by Shimizu.

# Chapter IV: Technical Referencing I:

## Visual References

### Movie Magic

The first point of focus in this chapter will be medial conventions in horror film, specifically visual ones: what does horror look like? Because of its inherent goal of scaring people, horror will often include lots of violence, and make use of common shared societal fears as well. As Kawin notes, this is why Japanese horror films often include water, and a good western example of a shared fear would for example be the dark.<sup>86</sup>

In a film like *The Exorcist*, the idea of contrasting light and dark is clearly shown in the shot of the priest standing outside the house; everything is dark, apart from the light of the streetlamp right above him, and the light coming from the window in the very top of the house; the room where a possessed girl awaits him.<sup>87</sup> This clearly shows the idea of low-key and high-contrast lighting, which standard in horror.<sup>88</sup>

Another important visual clue often belonging to horror is that of gore and blood; limbs being ripped off, people being cut in half, people and monsters alike throwing up and eyes being gouged out. Examples of this phenomenon include many of the films mentioned in this text so far, and many other works like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *American Horror Story*, *Zombieland*, and of course *Saw* (and the movies that followed it) - the list could be endless.<sup>89</sup>

These visual aspects of the genre both show up in very different ways throughout both case studies. The contrasting lighting almost speaks for itself; in both performances, darkness and light are used in contrast to one another to enhance the eeriness of a scene (the cold storm

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<sup>86</sup> Kawin, *Horror and the Horror Film*, 46.

<sup>87</sup> *The Exorcist*, directed by Friedkin.

<sup>88</sup> Bordwell, Thompson and Smith, *Film Art – An Introduction*, 332.

<sup>89</sup> *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, directed by Tobe Hooper (USA: Vortex, 1974); *American Horror Story*, created for television by Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk (USA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011-present); *Zombieland*, directed by Ruben Fleischer (USA: Columbia Pictures, 2009); *Saw*, directed by James Wan (USA: Evolution Entertainment, 2004).

outside and the warmer looking inside of the house in *Horror*, and the stroboscope flashing between bright light and utter darkness in *Continenten*, for example). The so-called gore, however, is more interesting to analyze in regards to theatre; a live setting with live bodies, without the possibility for special effects to enhance the spectacle of violence.

It can be argued that this is where Rajewsky's concept of the as-if character comes into play; while the performances of course make use of theatre techniques, these moments are in large part implemented because they are horror, and therefore emulate film.<sup>90</sup> Both Ahlbom and van Berckel use interesting methods to perform this more spectacular side of the genre, which is what will be zoomed in on now.

## Ahlbom's Illusionism

In *Horror*, large amounts of gore are presented to the audience. Much like in film, however, the audience of course realizes that none of it is real. Another interesting topic of research could also be this theatrical form of horror versus the terrifying horror found in performances by Marina Abramovich, where she puts her body in very real pain. However, this text focuses on horror in a more classical theatre setting, which is why this will not be elaborated upon any further at this point in time.

Ahlbom's performance shows people being hacked to pieces, blood spurting around, a hand walking around without its body – and the audience knows that none of the people are actually being hurt on stage, similar to the way the audience of a slasher flick knows that none of the actors were actually murdered during the filming. Whether or not it is real is not why people watch; with these types of films, it is about the joy of being scared, and maybe even the idea that you could be smarter if you were ever in a situation like that. On occasion, with a franchise like the *Saw* movies, it is about the most inventive deaths, or the most disgusting one, and so forth. In Ahlbom's performance, however, it doesn't necessarily seem to be about any of these things. In a sense, it is much more comparable to watching a magic show. Illusionist Hans Klok even appeared in a promotional video for the performance, in which he states the amount of horror films that pass the revue during the performance, and that the entire performance is a concatenation of tricks, both of the physical and the

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<sup>90</sup> Rajewsky, "Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality," 54-59

illusionistic kind.<sup>91</sup> The way people disappear into sofa cushions, or the way a hand walks around on its own, isn't something you see every day; and this is not a movie. The audience knows it isn't real, but they also know it isn't CGI or another special effect.

## Special Effects in *Continenten*

In *Continenten*, no special effects are used. Everything is smaller, more toned down, and the explosion of violence in the second half of the performance lasts for a long time, able to make a spectator regret wanting more to happen during the first half. For a long time, the focus in the performance is on small things within small scenes. A woman cleans a plant. A man checks his watch. A man moves his hand. A fan on a table. The audience is shown image after image, but no matter how violent these images are, the people continue to say nothing. When one of them cuts open first the man's arm, then her own, all the focus of this one, slow, torturous action. Because of the quietness of this, the realism of the performance, one can start doubting whether this is actually happening. Again, because the audience is aware that on film, none of this would be real, the theatre provides a live setting in which anything is possible. Clearly no Hollywood special effects are used in a scene like this, so the question becomes: how is this happening? How are they doing this? And from there, it is only a small step to: what if this is real?

This is the same phenomenon found in Ahlbom's *Horror*, yet because of their context, can provide very different emotional results. Whilst viewing *Horror*, it is fun, intriguing, and sparks curiosity; how do all these tricks work? In *Continenten* the special effects are used for enhancing both the fear and the disgust that the performance revolves around.

## The Cinema Screen

As a final element of visual referencing, it is important to note the way the living room set-up in *Continenten* is presented to the audience, namely: behind a see-through white screen. This references the context of a movie theatre quite literally; a white screen on (or in this case, behind) which things are shown to an audience. This also literally emphasizes a distance

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<sup>91</sup> Theater de Vest, "Hans Klok over 'Horror' van Jakop Ahlbom Company," Youtube Video, 02:10, September 27, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baSdecmtK5w/>.

between the audience and the performance. When watching a horror film in a cinema, one still feels safe overall, knowing that the film is prerecorded and shown on a screen, and the events depicted are nowhere near the real lives of the audience members. In *Continenten*, this screen between audience and performers creates a similar feeling; even though it is live performance, the screen suggests that they won't come closer to the audience; they are still untouchable by the events depicted. Which is why it is even scarier when, during the narrative climax of the performance, the performers pushed their hands into the soft fabric of the screen, pushing this part of it forward, closer to the audience. This established that they are in fact sitting in an actual theatre, watching a live performance – not safely tucked into a cinema chair viewing something prerecorded. This one short move clearly demonstrates the fact that, no matter how movie-like the performance seems, it is still very much live, and the performers are as close to their audience as they usually are in a theatre setting. The concept of live performance is emphasized at the moment of climax of the performance; when the two people on stage are (finally) ending their lives. By combining the scariest moment of the performance with the emphasis on the fact that these performers are still real people right in front of their audience, touchable, *Continenten* enhances the experience of fear in a way that has not yet been done in the hours beforehand.



# Chapter V: Technical Referencing II:

## Auditory References

### The Music Box

As mentioned in the chapter covering the theoretical framework of this research project, although children and sounds reminiscent of childhood and innocence appear in the horror genre again and again, not much has been written on this topic within academic circles. In this section, the most important question asked will be based on the way Stan Link describes the function of the music box in horror in his essay “The Monster and the Music Box: Children and the Soundtrack of Horror”. He writes: ‘Sound is not merely symptomatic, but becomes the very site of transformation from innocence to obscenity.’<sup>92</sup> So, how does the sound in these two performances provide a site of transformation from innocence to obscenity (if it does at all)?

A good example of this so-called site of transformation can be seen in a scene from the second episode of Mike Flanagan’s new series *The Haunting of Bly Manor*,<sup>93</sup> inspired by several of Henry James’ stories, most notably *The Turn of the Screw*.<sup>94</sup> In this scene, a young girl goes up to the attic whilst playing hide and seek with her brother and their governess. She starts humming a tune (that can be heard throughout the series, therefore the spectator is already familiar with the melody) reminiscent of a lullaby. Soon after the girl starts humming, a reedy voice is heard joining the tune. A sound similar to that of a xylophone or a classic music box can be heard joining in as well. A humanoid figure can be seen moving behind the girl, who promptly stops humming, turns around and shushes the ghostly figure, who then indeed stops humming.

Within this scene, there is no literal music box present; yet through the humming of the girl and the xylophone-like sounds being combined, it feels like there is. Though no

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<sup>92</sup> Link, “The Monster and the Music Box: Children and the Soundtrack of Horror,” 38.

<sup>93</sup> *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, season 1, episode 2, “The Pupil,” created for television by Mike Flanagan, released on October 9, 2020, on Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/watch/81086351?trackId=200257859>.

<sup>94</sup> Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Waiheke Island: Floating Press, 2009).

physical music box is in the room shown, the sound of the music box is still heard. This, combined with the unknown figure in the background, creates an unsettling scene. More often than not, the child is the one in danger, and here, the girl is presented to be in danger right up to the moment where she turns around and shooshes the figure, clearly establishing that she's the one in control. This creates another layer of unease and unpredictability. First, she is recognizable as a child, therefore innocent, but by handing the control over the ghostly figure to the girl, she becomes something more powerful than that. By having her hum and stop humming, she also gains literal control of the sound of the music box; and therefore of the innocence that is auditorily presented to the spectator.

This example illustrates how the music box is often used within horror; to present something as innocent, before showing something horrific/scary. This scene also shows that the music box does not have to be physically present, in the literal sense of an object; it is the kind of sound that the object produces that is needed to create a scene like this.

One of the scenes in *Continenten* consists of the couple sitting at their table, listening to the radio. This seems like regular act. A fun, happy song starts playing, but the characters just stay seated, unmoving apart from an occasional twitch of the hand, and no facial expression visible through their masks. The music is also not coming directly from the radio in the scene; it is played through the auditorium speakers. This evokes the memory or idea of listening to music in your own home, yet it makes it unfamiliar and almost uncomfortable, both through the non-responses of the performers and through the music not coming from the source that is presented on stage.

While the music used here, does not necessarily invoke innocence, it is reminiscent of a sense of security and familiarity. It could be argued that Links idea of sound providing a site of transformation still applies here; the site being the sound of the radio, lulling the spectator into a (false) sense of safety, and the transformation being from comfort to obscenity (rather than from innocence to obscenity).

# Conclusion

## The Scope of Medium and Genre

The main question of this thesis was: How do Mart van Berckel's *Continenten* and Jakob Ahlbom Company's *Horror* employ techniques of and reference the horror film?

Over the course of five different chapters, the way horror exists in these case studies has been explored, which has provided answers to each of the three sub-questions, respectively.

After delving into the theoretical works needed to analyze horror in theatre, the chapter on literal referencing explained the different ways in which van Berckel and *Ahlbom* used literal references. Ahlbom implemented many different references to many different works of horror fiction, to provide the spectator with both fear and enjoyment in a manner similar to the *Scream* films. Van Berckel chose to only reference the film the performance is based on, by taking the plot and reworking it, using light and blackouts to create a new experience of the story.

The second sub-question concerned the ways horror was referenced in the case studies through their use of character- and/or storytropes. In Ahlbom's case, the work done here was similar to the way the literal references were made. Where *Horror* shines, is the way all of these different references and subgenres are woven together to become one frightening and spectacular tale. *Continenten*, however, continues on into the unknown, creating characters that are as inscrutable as darkness itself. What is evident throughout both performances, however, is the notion of unpredictability; in *Horror* this is because anything seems to be possible, and in *Continenten* the characters themselves are unpredictable.

The last sub-question posed was: how do these performances use/reference specific audiovisual techniques inherent to the horror genre? This question was answered over the course of the last two chapters, dealing with visual and auditory referencing, respectively. In both chapters, *Horror* takes a backseat to *Continenten*, because of the absence of a registration. However, this does not take away from the fact that Ahlbom employs illusionism as a technique to perform the gore and spectacle inherent to the horror genre. The special effects used in *Continenten*, in contrast, are there to continuously disturb its audience, rather than making them wonder how the trick works.

With these answers, the different ways *Horror* and *Continenten* employ techniques of and reference the horror film have been shown, therefore answering the main question. However, it is evident that there are many more possibilities for research into not only these two performances, but into the horror genre and how it can be applied in theatre as a whole as well. Through their differences, these performances already show a large amount of different ways horror can exist within theatre, that will hopefully be explored further in the future.

## Reflection

At this point in the text, right near the very end, it seems only right to include a short reflection on specific (structural) choices made throughout the document.

The choice to include two case studies, even though there was no registration available for one of them, is still important; both because these are two performances that proudly call themselves horror, and especially because these performances differ from one another so much. By analyzing these performances side by side, the versatility and further possibility of the genre is illustrated perfectly.

This thesis also includes short analytical sections that look at scenes from works other than the selected case studies, such as *Scream* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor*.<sup>95</sup> This was done to provide clear examples of the way specific horror tropes work on screen, before analyzing how they work in theatre.

The same goes for the amount of theoretical works included in the chapter on theoretical framework; while a lot of it still had to be put aside, it also shows that the genre itself calls for discussion and analysis; a genre worthy of not only existence, but active use. While the idea of horror as low-brow persists, the genre never fails to reinvent itself. And here, hopefully, the theatre as a medium for the genre has hopefully been established as a new way for horror to reinvent itself.

However, the sheer amount of information should perhaps have been taken down even further; on occasion, the information that needed to be given had to be rushed a bit more than would have been ideal. The decision to keep all of these different elements in may have at times seemed to clutter up the overarching argument, these elements are also the things that show the versatility of the genre, and have therefore consciously been kept in place.

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<sup>95</sup> *Scream*, directed by Craven; *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, created for television by Flanagan.

If anything, this thesis hopefully shows the amount of different possibilities the horror genre provides; so many areas have had to go uncovered, as the genre covers such a large amount of different storytelling rules, tropes, characters, designs and conventions. Within the larger context of the analysis of the genre, this can really only be seen as a beginning into researching how the genre can act within the theatre, with exciting possibilities of bringing the fear horror tries to establish closer to its audience than ever before.

## New Possibilities

Due to the size of the research project, there are of course many different elements left untouched. Things like jump scares (a horror staple, and while used in the case studies, not much can be said about it other than the fact that they are used in the theatre in the way they usually are in film), silence, the interesting combination of Dutch mime and the horror genre, sadly had to be left out. While these topics did not take away from the arguments that is made throughout this project (namely, that horror is more versatile than is often thought, and that theatre as a medium provides an excellent space to further explore this versatility), there were more interesting elements of both performances to analyze in the context of the posed research questions. While these topics are still something well worth exploring, perhaps this will have to be done in follow-up research, concerning more ways in which horror exists in theatre, different ways it can be used in this country, the way horror rules are broken and different manners in which sound can scare the spectator - there are endless options to keep researching a genre that has this much to offer, both in performances that acknowledge the fact that they are horror, and those that don't.

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