

Evil Eyes Look Back:
Exploring the Returned Gaze in Horror Cinema

by

Colin Ben Mackey

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Abstract

What happens when a horror movie monster looks or appears to look at you, the viewer? What does this look do to the filmic fiction? It is often the case in the horror film where the monster is framed looking at the camera. Despite its prevalence in the genre, the returned gaze is often dismissed or forgotten in horror. By adopting a cognitive methodology that draws on both narratological and psychological theories, I argue that, when the gaze is returned in horror films, affects of unease or discomfort are produced. As they do this, they do not rupture the cinematic illusion or our emotional engagement because cinema is not an illusion to begin with. Ultimately, the returned gaze is a formal choice in horror that is rooted in certain innate human behaviours. I analyse various instances of the returned gaze in *Halloween* (1978) and *The Shining* (1980) to demonstrate how this phenomenon in horror engages us.

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Introduction

The most ancient and universal belief is that the eye of an evil one will injure wherever its gaze happens to fall. This force may emanate from the eyes of animals, demons, even from the painted or sculptured eyes of inanimate objects, as well as from the eyes of human beings.

-Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 374

Eyes and mutual eye-contact is significant in human culture, and one of the most common and persistent myths is the belief in the “evil eye.” As Silvan Tomkins has famously argued, the evil eye is characterized by the belief that certain individuals can cause harm unto another by virtue of their gaze. Discussing this ancient belief, Allan Berger notes that the evil eye can cause headaches, fever, impotence and even “sudden or lingering death” (Berger 1099). Historically, there has been a distinction between two instances of the evil eye. According to Tomkins, the first is a voluntary one which is mainly attributed to those who have made pacts with demons or devils like witches or sorcerers (Tomkins 375). The second is the involuntary evil eye which is usually attributed to innocent people or those possessing some moral failing like envy (375).

In demonstrating the value and significance placed on eyes and mutual eye-contact throughout history, these myths, for Tomkins, repeat the long-standing taboo on mutual looking because it is a powerful way of communicating emotions and affects (385). Vision has, after all, played a significant role in gathering information, shaping perceptions and receiving emotions. As a primarily visual medium, film is effective in producing emotions, especially a genre like horror. A seldom discussed topic in horror

cinema is the prevalence of shots that emulate mutual eye-contact where the villain or monster looks at the camera. Like the myths surrounding the evil eye, the argument could be made that these mutual looks in horror exploit the still existing taboos surrounding ocular intimacy.

The prevalence of the returned gaze in the genre can hardly be understated because it is present in many horror films, both old and new. It notably occurs in films like *The Town that Dreaded Sundown* (Charles Pierce, 1976) where the “Phantom Killer” looks at his victims before attacking them (see Figure 0.1). Such instances are framed in such a way that the killer is looking at the camera and returning the gaze. *The Omen* (Richard Donner, 1976) also features an important instance of a returned gaze when, following the death of his mother and father, Damien, the Antichrist, turns to the camera and smiles (See Figure 0.2). Similarly, much of the promotional material in Andy Muschietti’s 2017 adaptation of *It* featured Pennywise the clown returning the gaze. The film itself features a memorable instance where Pennywise looks to the camera with a sinister smile as he holds and waves a severed arm to the viewer (see Figure 0.3). These are only a few instances in an otherwise rich tapestry of examples.

With that said, many questions do indeed arise when these moments occur. What does the look at the camera do to the fiction as it relates to questions of filmic narrative, narrators and enunciation? How can we begin to characterize the returned gaze? What is the emotional effect produced by this technique in horror, and how might it intersect with viewer knowledge? Through a detailed analysis of the returned gaze, I argue that, when a monster or villain in a horror film looks or appears to look at the camera, their gaze engages the viewer emotionally as if inviting them into the realm of the fiction itself. The

emotional affects of unease or discomfort that are brought up by the returned gaze are deeply rooted in human nature. But, because it does not completely reproduce the experience of mutual eye-contact, aesthetic and formal possibilities arise. As such, the construction and presentation of these instances in horror plays a significant role in shaping the emotional and affectual experience.

When engaging with questions of film and emotion, the lasting legacy of psychoanalysis is difficult to ignore. Freud, Lacan and their theories on psychoanalysis and semiotics influenced much of 1970s and 1980s film and feminist film theory. Laura Mulvey, Linda Williams and Carol Clover are notable examples. Psychoanalysis, however, is conceptually limited because, as Carl Plantinga points out, it is concerned with the structures of pleasure and desire which are too broad to provide any specific insight into “how a particular film makes its emotional appeal at any given moment” (“Introduction” 11). With regards to my particular project, there is much more going on beyond emotions of pleasure/displeasure and desire when the gaze is returned in horror; emotions that are both nuanced and complex. Moreover, questions of pleasure and desire in film are often linked to questions of “why”; why are we drawn to the cinema? In addition to “why,” we should equally focus on questions of “how”; how do we receive cinematic images and, what do they do to us? This is essentially the guiding framework of this project. Since psychoanalysis is not properly suited to answer these questions, I am favoring a cognitive approach to cinema, emotion and affect to examine how we perceive certain instances of the returned gaze. More will be said regarding this cognitive approach while discussing the various bodies of literature that I engage with.

While I will be drawing on a wide range of films from different countries to demonstrate the applicability of my theories, the horror films I mention will be mostly limited to the US and UK because the effects rooted in human nature assume different symbolic forms in different cultures. Aaron Smuts says something similar in his discussion of the horror genre. The returned gaze in horror films from other regions might not have the same effect. Furthermore, despite its prevalence in the genre, the returned gaze might only happen once or twice per film and, for this reason, the last two chapters are dedicated to a close examination of both *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978) and *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) because the returned gaze is a consistent formal technique used to elicit emotions and affects in these films. Through this approach, the formal construction of certain returned gazes will be analysed with the aim of explaining how aspects like the nature of the look, performance, mise-en-scène, framing, camera movement and sound contribute to our response.

When it comes to defining certain key terms like affects, emotions, feelings and sensations, my cognitive approach is heavily influenced by the writings of Silvan Tomkins, Noël Carroll and Carl Plantinga. There is much debate surrounding the term “affect” and what it is, but it has often been defined in conjunction with the term “emotion.” Noël Carroll makes a distinction between emotions and affects as he discusses how certain “garden-variety” emotions become central to our filmic experience. For Carroll, garden-variety emotions are those emotions which are considered paradigms in ordinary human language like fear or love (“Film, Emotion” 22). He eventually argues that, “what we are calling emotions proper at least involve both cognitions and feeling states where the two are linked inasmuch as the former cause the latter” (26). As such,

something like the bodily sensation of discomfort is not considered because it lacks a proper cognitive component. In other words, by defining emotions, Carroll positions affect as the pre-cognitive element of emotions. Plantinga more or less shares the same definitions of emotions and affects which is echoed in my own project.

However, I also engage with the theories of Silvan Tomkins who has his own definitions of affects, emotions and feelings which need to be accounted for. For Tomkins, affects refers to “a group of nine highly specific unmodulated physiological reactions present from birth” (Nathanson xiv). Feelings refer to “our awareness that an affect has been triggered” (xiv). He uses the term emotions to describe “the combination of whatever affect has just been triggered as it is coassembled with our memory of previous experiences of that affect” (xiv). As I engage with Tomkins, I do not strictly adhere to these terminological differences since I use “feelings,” “affects” and “sensations” interchangeably. However, in his definition of emotion, Tomkins does position affects as part of larger emotion scripts which is relatively similar to my usage of the term.

The very fact of a look at the camera raises questions about narratives, narrators and our engagement with fiction and, for this reason, the body of literature relating to the study of narratology is particularly useful. While much of the first chapter and part of the second is dedicated to working out these questions in detail, it is worth mentioning some key authors. Seymour Chatman uses a structural theory of narratives to explore the various elements of a narrative text. It is through his analysis that we can identify the narrator and the enunciator when the gaze is returned. Chatman allows film a narrator by positioning it as a non-physical entity that is partially shaped by the viewer and partially

shaped by the film itself. When the gaze is returned in film, it is because the filmic narrator – which can be characterized as the narrative logic of a film – has allowed it to happen.

As a fictional and enunciative device, the returned gaze has often been seen as interrupting the narrative fiction and halting our narrative and, therefore, emotional engagement with film. This, however, is a false assumption and it is one that centers on the idea that film is an illusion. I draw on Gregory Currie and Murray Smith who argue that film is not an illusion. Smith also discusses how it is we can feel real emotions towards filmic fictions. From there I argue why the returned gaze in horror is not alienating and how the technique is able to produce real emotions and real affects despite our knowledge that what we are seeing on screen is not real.

The other body of literature that I draw on is that dedicated to specifically examining the returned gaze in film. A notable gap in this literature is a detailed account of the look at the camera in the horror genre. Wheeler Winston Dixon, Tom Brown and Marc Vernet are authors that I consider in the first and second chapters. Dixon argues that it is the cinema screen itself that looks at the viewer by reflecting culture. I mostly use Dixon's term the "returned gaze" to reference what it is I am talking about when a monster in a horror film returns our gaze even though our characterizations of the term are vastly different. By contrast, Brown examines what is commonly referred to as the "fourth wall break" or the "direct address" and what it means for the filmic narrative. Though Brown is too strict with his characterization in a way that would seemingly exclude the horror genre, I do draw on certain points as relevant to my notion of the communicative gaze which functions as a kind of returned gaze. The communicative

gaze is important because it takes us to the heart of the issues in narrative theory. Vernet also examines the look at the camera, its characterization and its function. His skepticism regarding its rigid classification is something I expand on.

Ultimately, as the crux of my first chapter, I use these authors in addition to others to argue for the functional diversity of the returned gaze because it has different functions within different contexts. In the second chapter, I use what these authors say as the basis for my own characterization of the returned gaze. My notion of the returned gaze is less broad than Dixon and less strict than Brown or Vernet. Some differentiating features of my own classification involves a consideration for the shot/reverse-shot structure as well as certain kinds of framing and focal lengths. What is important is that the exact certainty of a moment's status as a returned gaze might not be as rigid as originally thought because it could be a matter of feeling.

Much of the third and fourth chapters engage with certain physiological, psychological and evolutionary theories like those brought up by Tomkins. I also use them to explore the affects produced by the technique. I draw on environmental psychology like the study of proxemic patterns in human behavior and apply it to character framing. Environmental moods and stressors are considered as they relate to the construction and presentation of space when the gaze is returned. Furthermore, keeping the difference between actual eye-contact and filmic eye-contact in mind, I identify unease or discomfort as the recurring affect in the returned gaze in horror by looking at theories of mutual eye-contact in everyday life.

Tomkins though has played a significant role in shaping my argument. I return to him and his theories at various points throughout this thesis. In the second chapter, I use

him to justify certain aspects of my characterization and, in the third, I use his discussion about the perception of the face in human interactions in relation to the narrative construction of the horror villain. He also talks about emotion scripts of fear and its link to the evolutionary concept of looming as well as the taboos on mutual eye-contact which I then use to explain the returned gaze in horror.

While I am not the first to bring up Tomkins in a discussion on cinema and emotion, Tomkins seems to have something specific to offer to an analysis of the horror film which I engage with.¹ He also helps us understand what is really going on when we experience fear in film. Similarly, there is a wealth of literature that is concerned with the horror monster, its symbolic meaning and how it functions to produce fear, but there is very little written on how the horror film is so meticulously and formally crafted in such a way that transcends content with the goal of exploiting certain innate human instincts.

Looking at the returned gaze in the way that I do can offer further insight into the nature of fiction and our engagement with it. For instance, since the returned gaze as I have characterized it is not alienating in the Brechtian sense, what might this mean for other filmic techniques that are considered alienating in the same way? Moreover, the way I identify the returned gaze is somewhat unique in relation to the other theories I mention which can further our understanding of the look at the camera.

¹ Authors like Simon Petch and Roslyn Jolly use Tomkins' theories of shame and contempt to analyse the driving forces behind the characters in the film *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961) in their article "The Radical Vision of *One-Eyed Jacks*." Carl Plantinga also briefly mentions his theory of facial recognition while discussing the effect seeing the human face in "The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face in Film." Aubrey Anable's book *Playing with Feelings: Videogames and Affect* draws on Tomkins in her examination of the videogame and is a good example of an application of his theories in the broader field of media studies.

Chapter 1: The Question of the Returned Gaze

Robert Eggers' 2015 period-drama/horror film *The Witch* follows a New England family in the seventeenth century who are banished into exile by a Puritan colony. Having newly settled near an isolated forest, strange and terrible things start happening after the family's newborn baby vanishes. A significant moment in the film occurs after Caleb, the eldest son, ventures into the woods to look for his missing sibling. The sequence that follows is best described as a complex medley of emotion and affect. Formally, the sequence begins with a POV shot from Caleb's perspective as he approaches a witch's hut. The resident witch slowly emerges while maintaining eye-contact with the camera as she gradually approaches (see Figure 1.1). She wears a red cloak with a corset dress which prominently displays her bust. All of this occurs in a single continuous shot that last roughly 40 seconds; 12 of which the witch occupies when she first enters the shot. Next there is a sequence of shot/reverse-shots of Caleb and the witch before she embraces him, and a demonic and decrepit hand reaches out and violently grabs his hair. As this happens, the music, consisting of a gentle yet ominous choir humming which has been slowly building abruptly ends.

It is the witch's returned gaze that makes this sequence so effective. Her gaze produces in us a lingering sense of unease and powerlessness which, like the score, intensifies as she approaches. This is combined with strong sexual and erotic affects which are connected to the theme of sexual repression throughout the film; the witch, in this moment, represents everything Caleb's puritanical teachings have warned him about. Here, every aspect of the image converges to create this particular effect which hinges on

the moment where the gaze is returned. One could argue that, had this moment been filmed differently, the salience and affective power would be lost.

With this example in mind, the returned gaze in film is best characterized as a moment when a character looks or, at the very least, appears to look at the viewer. The term “returned gaze” is borrowed from Wheeler Winston Dixon’s book *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*, even though our uses of the terms differ (these differences and my justification for them will be explained later on). The concept of the returned gaze is not a phenomenon isolated to film; it arguably has its origins in other arts like painting and even literature. As such, this chapter will examine the early history of the returned gaze in other arts before examining how it has been used in film theory. It will also engage with some of the more complex questions that arise when considering filmic narration and enunciation. Ultimately, through this discussion, it will be demonstrated that the returned gaze in art is as old as painting with no specific point of origin and that it has performed many different functions. As a result, it cannot be accounted for in any specific way. This will become especially evident when examining the literature of the returned gaze in film which reveals that it has no singular or unifying function; context and genre must be accounted for. Function and context are terms worth explaining as they relate to the returned gaze.

As will be demonstrated, many different authors have placed significant meaning on the returned gaze and its use, not just within film, but in other media as well. For those discussing the returned gaze in portrait painting, it has functioned as an indicator of status, assertion or even as a challenge to social norms and hierarchies. In some cases, it has even been used to highlight certain meta-discursive elements in the work itself by

foregrounding the role of the spectator. Film has more or less followed the same pattern when it comes to ascribing a function to the technique. Some have argued that it serves to highlight a character's assertiveness while others have interpreted it as a way of making us aware of the filmic fiction through a direct address. The latter interpretation has raised some interesting questions regarding the function of the technique as it relates to narratives and narrators. However, in their attempts to ascribe a function to the returned gaze in film, some authors forget that it has the potential to do all of these things or even none of them. In this respect, the returned gaze in film has no singular function.

To be able to determine one of the many functions of the returned gaze, we need to identify the context. Here, "context" refers to a group of conditions in which the returned gaze occurs. By identifying the context of a returned gaze, we can begin to narrow down its function. Some important contexts include medium specificity, genre and interpretive discourse. Medium specificity refers to the medium making use of the returned gaze like film, theater, painting and literature. The function of the technique depends on the medium in which it appears. As a context, the interpretive discourse refers to the methodology chosen by the author to make sense of the returned gaze. There are certain interpretive discourses that are more appropriate than others when discussing the technique in fiction. Furthermore, genre is related to medium specificity as it refers to a body of work that shares stylistic, thematic and narrative similarities. A returned gaze in a comedy is very different from one in a serious character-driven drama. Certain film theorists demonstrate their awareness of the contextual diversity of the returned gaze while others do not.

The Returned Gaze in Painting and Literature

While the returned gaze can be found in many works of art throughout the history of painting, it notably appears frequently in the portrait painting. But, to trace the technique to its origins would seem fruitless because the history of painting and the portrait can date back to the early years of human civilization. For instance, *Portrait of Paquius Proculo and his Wife* (70-79 CE) is a fresco painting from Pompeii which features a husband holding a scroll and his wife holding a writing instrument, both of whom return the gaze (see Figure 1.2). According to Fred Kleiner, the garments they wear and the items they hold suggest that this was a Roman marriage portrait where the couple desired to present themselves as intellectuals to their guests (Kleiner 173). It could be argued that, here, the gaze functions as a way to show off their status to their guests. As Kleiner notes, the portrait painting was usually seen as a symbol of wealth and status; often commissioned by royalty or the wealthy who had a significant influence over their artistic depiction which was usually youthful and/or godlike (xxiv). In this respect, it would not be difficult to imagine that the look at the viewer is a symbol of power and assertion.

Power and assertion are especially prominent in portraits and self-portraits of women artists which often feature a look at the viewer. Talking about eighteenth-century depictions of women artists, Catherine King writes, “[these] new images [of women] ... usually bowed to convention in emphasising her marital status, in showing her as conscious of the judging masculine gaze as to her attractive appearance, and aware of her exceptional skills as a woman” (King 381). In *Self-Portrait* (1790) by Elizabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, she depicts herself painting one of her portraits while looking at the

viewer (see Figure 1.3). Her look and posture in the painting is often interpreted as a “self-confident stance of a woman whose art has won her an independent role in her society” (Kleiner 593). Though predating this painting, it could be argued that the *Mona Lisa* (Leonardo Da Vinci, 1503-1505) has a similar effect when the gaze is returned (see Figure 1.4). Kleiner explains that the character’s clothing suggests that she is not a wealthy patron while her posture, half-formed smile and gaze towards the viewer allows us to see her as a “self-assured young woman without the trappings of power” (461). He also notes that, at the time, Renaissance etiquette “dictated that a woman should not look directly into a man’s eyes,” presumably because such an act carries certain sexual connotations (461). Thus, one could characterize her gaze as both seductive and rebellious.

To briefly return to *Self-Portrait* to add to its interpretation, I would argue that Vigée-Lebrun’s posture – i.e. holding a paintbrush to a canvas – and her gaze makes it appear as though she was painting the viewer. Here, the gaze functions to directly implicate the viewer in the act of painting. This function is one that is especially explicit in *Las Meninas* (Diego Velázquez, 1656) which is a rather complex painting that appears to openly engage with and implicate the viewer. The painting can be characterized as a self-portrait because it features Velázquez with a paintbrush in hand facing a canvas. Beside him are members of the Spanish Royal Family and their servants; most of whom – including Velázquez himself – return the gaze. Most notably, there appears to be a reflection of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana in the mirror on the wall behind Velázquez (see Figure 1.5). One possible interpretation of this detail would suggest “the presence of the king and queen in the viewer’s space, outside the confines of the picture”

(Kleiner 547). Therefore, the multiple gazes not only implicate the viewer, they also position the viewer in the space of royalty. This is all to show that the returned gaze in painting has been used to varying effects.

In a similar manner, it could equally be argued that literature addresses its readers through a gaze of sorts, or what is often described in optical terms as a perspective, or a point of view. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* by Laurence Sterne is a memorable example of an early work of literature that emphasizes the formal possibilities of literary perspective, exploring its very limits. Published in nine volumes between 1759 and 1767, the novel is about the title character as he attempts to recount his life story. However, his long and frequent digressions and ramblings prevent him from doing so. Not only does Sterne (as Tristram Shandy) address the reader but he also frequently calls attention to the nature of the literary medium. For instance, in volume one, chapter four, he addresses the reader;

In the beginning of the last chapter, I inform'd you exactly *when* I was born; – but I did not inform you, *how*. *No*; that particular was reserved for a chapter entirely by itself; – besides, Sir, as you and I are in a manner perfect strangers to each other, it would not have been proper to have let you into too many circumstances relating to myself all at once. (10)

The rest of the chapter goes on like this as he calls attention to the relationship between the character/narrator and the reader. By invoking first and second person pronouns “I” and “you,” he addresses the audience. In a similar example during chapter twelve of the same volume, he blacks out the rest of the chapter before ending it (33-34). Another similar instance occurs in chapter eighteen and nineteen of volume nine when he

intentionally leaves both pages blank (621- 622). Here, Sterne is calling attention to the nature of the medium by demonstrating his control over it which functions as a communicative address to the reader. Such an address is often used to humorous effect, but, insofar as it does, it is returning a metaphorical gaze.

Questions of Narratives, Narrators and Enunciation

The returned gaze in film functions differently from painting and literature and, because film is a different representational medium with various complex mechanisms, the look at the camera has often been characterized as an enunciative device that offers a glimpse into those complex mechanisms. Wheeler Winston Dixon's account of the returned gaze is perhaps one of the most developed of this phenomenon in film. However, in order to fully grasp the complexity of his argument, it is important to first locate it within a broader context of enunciation and direct address as they relate to questions of the narrator. The term "enunciate" broadly means "to announce," to give expression to an idea in a discursive manner, but in narratological terms it refers to the means by which a text makes its voice known. When a look at the camera occurs, who is engaging the viewer? Is it the filmmaker? Is it the person looking at the camera? Or, is it some unspoken narrator that guides the logic of a film? In this section, I try to answer these complex questions in relation to the returned gaze.

First, however, it is important to understand how narratives work and what they consist of. Drawing on a structural theory of narratives, Seymour Chatman offers a general outline of the elements of a narrative text. A narrative text mainly consists of the story and the discourse. The story "is the content of the narrative expression" which consists of events (actions and happenings) and existents (characters and settings) (*Story*

19, 23). The discourse is the way in which the story is expressed (23). While taking media specificity into account, Chatman modifies this outline by considering the structure of narrative transmission and the way in which it is manifested under the category of discourse (26). The structure of narrative transmission relates to “the elements shared by narratives in any medium” (24), and the manifestation related to the properties of the specific medium telling the narrative (26). For instance, the manifestation of discourse in a film text occurs cinematically as it draws on all of the rules and conventions of the cinema to express the narrative. With this in mind, it can be surmised that questions of enunciation that arise from the look at the camera will be answered by examining the discourse of the narrative which shifts the focus towards narration.

Complications do arise when we consider cinematic narration mainly because, while film does use language (e.g., character dialogue), it is not realized through language like literature. Chatman takes up the question of cinematic narration by aligning himself with David Bordwell’s theory which “allows for film a ‘narration’ but not a narrator” (*Coming to Terms* 125). Despite this alignment, Chatman does, however, find issue with the fact that, in denying a filmic narrator, Bordwell offers no agency to a film in the process of narration. He argues that the viewer does not just construct, but that they reconstruct film narration based on the filmic cues of any given cinematic text (127). In this respect, a film has agency by virtue of being a pre-arranged text. Thus, a film more or less demonstrates self-consciousness in that it recognizes that it is addressing the audience (129). It is important to specify that when Chatman talks about a cinematic narrator, he is not referring to voice-over narration, because the narrator “is not a human being” (134). Rather, it refers to an agent that shows the film which consists of the

combined communicative effort between the auditory channel (i.e. diegetic/non-diegetic music, dialogue, sound effects, etc.) and the visual channel (i.e. cinematography, editing, actors, mise-en-scène , etc.) (134-35).

Returning to this question of cinematic enunciation during instances of the look at the camera, the answer is to be found primarily in the discursive organization of a film. It is the cinematic narrator that enunciates even though it is the character that returns the gaze. To demonstrate, it might be useful to look at cinematic narration in a film like *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) which is a noir mystery filmed almost entirely from the first-person perspective of private detective Phillip Marlowe. The film begins with Marlowe addressing the viewer while maintaining the gaze as he explains the premise and presentation of the film as if it were a challenge:

You'll see it just as I saw it. You'll meet the people, you'll find the clues and maybe you'll solve it quick and, maybe you won't. You think you will, eh? Okay, you're smart, but let me give you a tip: you gotta watch them... You gotta watch them all the time. Most things happen when you least expect them.

It is very tempting to argue that the character Marlowe is the cinematic narrator and that when a character looks at us through Marlowe's perspective, it is that character that is enunciating. This, however, would be an erroneous assumption because it is the guiding narrative logic of the film that is the narrator. In this case, the challenge that this film offers its viewers dictates the formal and visual style of the film, thus restricting the camera to Marlowe's perspective. But this is a decision that can, strictly speaking, only be made by the film's "narrator," which (or who) we cannot see. Therefore, when a look at the camera occurs, it is because the narrator has made it so.

Chatman also points out that films do not simply engage the viewer perceptually, but also conceptually, as they consider “the rules of language and culture” to perform an act of “semiotic processing” (135). Chatman’s construction of cinematic narrators and narration can be placed in relation to those offered by Christian Metz and Francesco Casetti who, in their theories, point to the direct address as it relates to the act of enunciation.

Metz is concerned with the question of impersonal enunciation and examines the look at the camera as the voice of address in the image. The address by the gaze, he argues, has a reflexive mirror effect that is unlike written or spoken language (Metz 27). “In this way the look to camera introduces a turning back that casts suspicion on the apparatus [*dispositif*]” (28). He notes that nothing explicit is being said in these looks and that they are not addresses. The voice-in address does, however, because it is marked by the combination of a character’s verbal address and their look to the camera (29). For Metz, this is ostensibly the voice of the image. He also makes it clear that, unlike the popular belief that these modes of enunciation reveal the operations of the cinematic apparatus, potentially destroying the illusion, such instances are in fact more constructive than revelatory; it expands the diegesis by denouncing the cinematic illusion (30). Some films do this more than others and function to different degrees in relation to the diegesis. The voice-in address can be extradiegetic as it exists within the fiction but outside of the story, or it can be heterodiegetic where it is outside of the story, or it can be homodiegetic where it exists inside the story (34). For instance, *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) begins with a character walking on a stage and informing the viewer – directly addressing the camera – that what they are about to see may terrify and horrify them. This instance

can be labeled extra-heterodiegetic because the person on stage is in the fiction but outside the story. Metz then relates these forms of cinematic address to a deixis, a grammatical indicator, or words that are used to describe space (here, there, etc.), time (now, then, tomorrow, etc.) and persons (I, he/she, you, etc.). Because, as Metz says, “the film ‘addresses itself’ to the spectator, the latter finds himself cast in the role of the grammatical second person” (37). It is on the basis of such clearly marked instances of address that Metz argues that there is a bigger, metadiscursive form of narration at play in film, one that calls on the “second person” without relying on its verbal or linguistic utterance. “This is in part because of the metalanguage, the folding of the film on itself, which gives the impression of deixis, blindly firing and hitting its target without knowing where it is, thereby creating a very particular YOU” (38).

Casetti is similar to Metz in that he is concerned with film’s awareness of the spectator’s presence, or what he refers to as “cinematographic enunciation.” “The term refers to an appropriation of the expressive possibilities of the cinema which gives body and consistency to a film” (Casetti 18). Similar to Metz, he points to deictic terms as the axes of enunciation. Film, he argues, constructs a specific point of view that functions as the marker of enunciation which points to the deictic coordinates of the filmic discourse (18-19). For Casetti, moments of direct address in a film double film’s enunciative abilities; they are instances of enunciated enunciation (22). Moments of direct address call attention to the act of enunciation by making “us aware of what is important” (24). Casetti also mentions the perceived taboo associated with the look to camera or the direct address which is often thought to reveal the secrets behind the fiction and endanger cinematic engagement. He uses textual context and compatibility to argue that such a

taboo is relative. Instances of looks to camera or direct address “must appear coherent in relation to both the frame established by the text as well as the genres and rules which govern it” (28). As such, he explains that some genres like the comedy and the musical are more appropriately suited to handle direct addresses whereas others like the adventure film are not (28-29). This is all to say that there are different levels of enunciation within film which point to the figure of the spectator, and the direct address is but one instance.

In their attempts to find that elusive grand narrator/enunciator and its relation to the spectator, both Metz and Casetti make use of a linguistic and literary analysis of film. Film, however, does not function like literature or language because it has its very own set of rules and conventions. Language and literature is a much more cognitive process, one that requires a higher form of thinking which often eschews questions of emotion. Perhaps this is why Casetti seems to think that the direct address in the adventure film is inappropriate because it is much more sensual, requiring a continuous and uninterrupted narrative flow. To draw on George Wilson, “the fundamentals of film narration are extremely obscure” (144). For this reason, if I am going to settle on a theory of narration, it will be the one outlined by Chatman earlier because he accounts for the way in which the viewer perceives the narrative and in so doing, contributes to its construction. He is also aware of the problems with applying linguistic analysis to film which is why he tries to make appropriate adjustments to his theory. With that said, I agree with Metz and Casetti and their shared notion that the look at the camera does not inherently threaten the viewer’s filmic engagement, but I do not go as far as them in their linguistic methodology. As a result of their analysis, they argue that, in directly addressing the viewer, a film is projecting its gaze outward to engage the viewer cognitively in the same

way a passage in a book might. Instead, could it not be argued that, because film engages us directly, it is through our own gaze – through the very act of looking – that we are able to feel emotions towards images? On the same note, emotions are produced by seeing a character gaze back at us and, with this in mind, we can begin to account for the returned gaze in horror.

The Look at the Camera in Film and Film History

This is where Dixon's characterization of the returned gaze becomes especially relevant. In his book, he makes the claim that the returned gaze is a function inherent within the cinematic medium (Dixon 3). By this he means that it is the frame itself which looks back at the viewer. It is no longer just a "look at the camera" but rather a "look of the screen" (7). He characterizes the returned gaze as independent of an actor and suggests that locating it within the site of performance fails to take the concept far enough beyond reception theory and psychoanalysis. "If there is a finite background to every shot in the cinema... there is still a look that is *returned* by the frame, by a force deep within the field it embraces, a force focussed by the rectangular dimensions of the screen – a window, a portal, an emitter of light into the audience" (7). As a result, Dixon's focus is how returned gaze acts as a mirror reflection of culture; it is the cinematic screen that, in a manner of speaking, watches us. Moreover, when discussing the cinema and the cinema space as a method of surveillance, he explains that "the cinema gaze functions most pronouncedly from the zone of recorded space *outwards*" and that every glance, every movement and every gesture of the performer/character "is an *address* to the audience, a gaze that challenges the viewer to return the gaze" (46). Dixon concludes his book by examining how the "look back" has impacted viewing

audiences. He explains that it draws the viewer into a connection with the image in such a way that “instructs, admonishes, takes us into its confidence, and allows us to enter into the spectacle being created as a participant” (199). He does, however, warn about how this places viewers in a submissive position primed for domination for commercial or political gain (199). The only way to resist domination is to understand how these images function as a reflection of culture or ideology (200).

Dixon also puts his finger on another important topic within film theory, that being, of course, the relation between percept and concept. Irving Singer uses these terms and explains them when discussing the phenomenological difference between the literary and the cinematic. Percept in film is best thought of as the visual pleasures – which themselves entail emotions and sensations – while concept, in Singer’s terms, can be characterized as an intellectual elaboration (Singer 88). These terms are more broadly associated with the realist/formalist debate. With that said, Singer explains that it is often the case where writers who strongly align themselves with the realists argue that seeing a cinematic image is like, or very similar to, the perception of things in the world. Singer, however, disagrees, arguing that the cinematic image is very different from actual perception, but admitting that it does closely resemble the retinal image. This is to say that film does involve a perceptual process, but this process does not mimic how we perceive things in reality. By virtue of this process, it involves some conceptual engagement to transform what is seen (83). He offers the Italian neo-realists as an example, explaining how they were not only encouraged to examine reality and record it but also to study it, analyse it, and perhaps even modify it (84). While Singer examines percept and concept as they relate to cinema as a whole (as a self-enclosed text), he

makes the case that film is both perceptual and conceptual. However, when examining a specific formal element of a film like the look at the camera, the argument becomes less straightforward. What I mean here will become more clear as this argument progresses.

For Dixon, in the most general sense, all films address the audience to some extent and, insofar as it addresses the viewer, it conceptually engages with them which entails certain political and ideological implications. This suggests that the returned gaze does more than make the viewer see and feel (or perceive), it also makes them intellectually contemplate to create meaning. Insofar as it does this, the film is enunciating something to us and, because it is the film that enunciates regardless of any character, parallels can be made with both Metz and Casetti. In a strange way, Dixon seems to be making a case for a certain kind of cinematic narration; one that points to the viewer but with an ideological and/or political goal in mind.

To exemplify, it is worth examining an instance of his notion of the returned gaze from Dorothy Arzner's *Dance, Girl, Dance* (1940). The specific instance to which I am referring to is where Judy, an aspiring ballet dancer turned Burlesque performer, addresses her rowdy male audience who have been heckling her to take off her clothes during her routine. Angrily, she marches back on stage and says,

I know you want me to tear my clothes off so you can look your fifty cents worth. Fifty cents for the privilege of staring at a girl the way your wives won't let you. What do you suppose we think of you up here with your silly smirks that your mothers would be ashamed of [...] What's it for? So as you can go home when the show is over and strut before your wives and sweethearts and play at being the strongest sex for a minute? I'm sure they see through you just like we do.

During this scene, Judy never looks at the camera but, despite this and in accordance with Dixon's theory, a gaze is still being returned. This is because Judy is pointing to male viewing habits and the process of objectification which was emblematic of a larger patriarchal culture. As Dixon suggests while discussing the films of Dorothy Arzner, it arguably turns "the gaze of feminist film practice back into an audience expecting the confines of patriarchal narrative" (Dixon 8).² By pointing out the marginalization of women in commercial Hollywood filmmaking, the film is asking us to conceptually engage with Judy's monologue by finding meaning in it and realizing that it is not Judy that is speaking to the audience at her show but rather the film that is speaking to the film viewer.

While I do not agree with Dixon, I am, however, choosing to re-appropriate his usage of the term "returned gaze." There is a specific reason to this beyond the obvious fact that it is shorter than the "look at the camera." The "look at the camera" only really implies that an actor is simply looking at the camera, but the "returned gaze" directly implicates the viewer in a character's act of looking; by implicating the viewer, an emotional and affective exchange takes place. By virtue of looking, the character extends their look as if inviting the viewer into their diegetic realm but without necessarily rupturing or calling attention to the diegesis. However, the problems with Dixon's

² Of course, when discussing gazes in film and patriarchy, Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema" immediately comes to mind. Drawing on Freudian psychoanalysis, she argues that the patriarchal unconscious is embedded within cinematic pleasure (Mulvey 201). She explains that there is a certain pleasure in looking without being looked at and that the cinematic apparatus reproduces this kind of pleasure (202-203). She also describes three different kinds of looks in the cinema. The first is the look of the camera which "records the pro-filmic event" (208). The second is the look of the audience that watches the completed film and, the third is the looks of the characters to each other (208). To ensure cinematic pleasure, Mulvey argues that the first two looks are subdued by the third to prevent any kind of distancing effect (208). As she advocates for the destruction of pleasure in cinema, one could make the claim that the returned gaze can be a means of achieving that goal. For a response to Mulvey, see E. Ann Kaplan's "Is the Gaze Male?" where she takes issue with certain aspects of Mulvey's argument mainly relating to the effects of the male gaze on female viewers. She ultimately proposes that we need to move beyond rigid linguistic and social binaries to account for the complexity of cinema.

characterization are best summarized by a footnote in Tom Brown's *Breaking the Fourth Wall*, where he says, "Dixon's focus is too diffuse, too casual [...], and, I would contend, too obfuscatory to be useful here" (Brown 39). Brown's problem with Dixon is that it is not substantial enough to be useful to his development of a theory that accounts for characters that appear to acknowledge the spectator. Though I disagree that Dixon is not of any use, because I do think that film does indeed act as a cultural mirror, Brown's footnote adequately captures my concerns regarding his argument. Furthermore, while Dixon does account for horror, his account only examines how the idea of the look becomes an important thematic element rather than how it is actualized and enacted (Dixon 99-105).

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the term "direct address" which has been used by Casetti, Brown and others is a problematic term. To show how and why it is problematic, it is worth considering Brown's definition of the term. As the title of his book suggests, Brown is concerned with what is commonly known as the "fourth wall break," where characters in a film appear to acknowledge the presence of the spectator. In defining the direct address, Brown mentions how he is not interested in moments where the look at the camera is part of a POV structure because this assumes that the camera is part of the diegetic space of the fiction (Brown xi-xiii). He also specifies that the direct address is more than "just the blunt, verbal communication of themes and feelings" and can include wordless gestures and looks that express things that cannot be communicated verbally (13). He points out that, while the direct address has many different functions in different contexts, one can conclude that the direct address can serve as a metaphor "for the problems of vision experienced by film characters" (166). It similarly gives viewers

the opportunity to observe the true “essence” of a character through their performance (166-167). The direct address is also, according to Brown, best suited for comedies and musicals. In the comedy, the direct address serves “as the awakening from the obliviousness that often characterises comic performance” (168). In the musical, it represents the performer’s desire to “connect” with their audience (168). Moreover, it is most common at the end of films because it serves as a reflective device which prepares viewers to move out of the fiction when they leave the theater or turn off the TV (175-176).

While Brown does acknowledge that the direct address can have different effects in different contexts, he seldom mentions the horror genre. There is, of course a distinction to be made between Brown’s notion of the direct address and what I am referring to as the returned gaze. By virtue of referring to this enunciative device as a “direct address,” Brown is already imposing limitations on the various functions a returned gaze can have by indicating that it always points to the viewer. A direct address implies that a film is *directly addressing* the audience; it shatters the metaphorical fourth wall to reach out to the audience. By contrast, the term “returned gaze” does not carry this kind of weight because the gaze does not call attention to itself in any direct way.

Taking a step back for a moment, it is worth considering the history of the returned gaze in film. Tom Gunning traces it all the way back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the period he famously refers to as the “cinema of attractions.” Gunning’s concept derives from his dissatisfaction with writings on early film which always viewed it as a slow progression towards narrative storytelling and would often place the Lumière brothers and George Méliès on opposing ends of the

narrative/non-narrative spectrum (Gunning 57). As he explains, the cinema of attractions marks a period from 1895 to 1906 (or 1907) where early silent films placed significant emphasis on the spectacle of the cinematic medium (57). Rather than presenting a voyeuristic narrative emblematic of later films, he explains that the cinema of attractions was primarily rooted in “its ability to *show* something” (57). This, according to Gunning, is due to cinema’s roots in vaudeville and the fairground from which it developed and evolved. These kinds of early exhibitions were never intended to show off specific films but rather to demonstrate the cinematic apparatus in general (58). In its attempt to directly solicit the attention of the spectator, the cinema of attractions’ “energy moves outwards towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inwards towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative” (59). It could thus be argued that the cinema of attractions is inherently based in the direct address to the spectator. One could even go so far as to argue that, with the cinema of attractions, we begin to see an early form of cinematic enunciation.

As part of film’s vaudevillian and exhibitionist aesthetic which drew attention to itself as a medium, the look at the camera became a rather common technique which directed its address outwards. Gunning explains that the returned gaze in the cinema of attraction aims to establish contact with the audience by functioning as the performer’s bow to the crowd or even a “direct assault” as is the case in *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903) where an outlaw fires his pistol towards the camera (60).³ Thus, the returned gaze is a technique in early cinema which, for Gunning, demonstrates a

³ Some film theorists like Metz and Casetti point out that this moment in *The Great Train Robbery* was either placed at the very beginning of the film or at the very end depending on the projectionist. In this regard, Casetti points out that this moment boards the film and thus poses no threat to the narrative flow of the film.

willingness “to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator” (58). With that said, it is also important to note that films of the time were inherently addressed to the spectator because it called attention to itself regardless of any returned gazes. This is what Gunning seems to be getting at when he talks about the “cinema of attractions.”

While techniques that emphasize attraction fell out of favor with the turn to more narrative-driven films, Gunning does suggest that much of what characterizes the cinema of attraction still exists in contemporary cinema, albeit covertly. Much like many of the other aspects of the cinema of attractions, Gunning explains that the returned gaze becomes taboo as it ceases to be a novelty trick that draws attention to itself and becomes a technique for dramatic expression borrowed from theatre (60). However, to think of attractions as disappearing entirely would be a mistake because it is still “an essential part of popular film-making” (60) which is evident by genre films like musicals and the Spielberg/Lucas/Coppola films which, according to Gunning, falls under this category of the “cinema of effects” (61).

Though he seldom mentions the horror genre, it could easily be argued that the genre can be classified under the cinema of effects, especially considering that he likens the cinema of effects to a carnival ride. This aspect of his argument is particularly interesting because, if one were to take his carnival ride analogy further, it would reveal that certain genre films produce in us a variety of sensations and emotions much in the same way a carnival ride does, and would suggest that the returned gaze in horror can be such a technique. To follow this reasoning, the returned gaze is situated somewhere in between attraction and narrative; it confronts the viewer with sensations and emotions but

it doesn't call attention to itself in a way that was typical of the cinema of attractions or dramatic performances. In this regard, the returned gaze can be deemed "covert."

Moreover, if we locate Gunning within the percept/concept debate, it will reveal that the cinema of attractions was mainly perceptual as, in its effort to impress the spectator with the workings of the cinematic apparatus, it aimed to evoke some sort of reaction from its audience. This is where the infamous myth of the first film screening comes from, and it's not difficult to imagine spectators recoiling in their seat at the sight of an outlaw firing his revolver in front of the camera, or, at the very least, this seems to be its intention. By contrast, insofar as it functions within a classical narrative system, the returned gaze functions much more conceptually. When a character in a comedy looks at the camera and addresses the spectator, what they say is often related to the plot or themes of the film; they often take the shape of humorous observations that are meant to engage the viewer on some intellectual level. In keeping with Gunning, this technique within narrative cinema seems to come from theatrical traditions.

Predating Gunning, Pascal Bonitzer was one of the first to explore the returned gaze in depth as well as the questions of enunciation that arise from it. He makes the case that the look at the camera performs two functions within the narrative. He begins by explaining that when a look at the camera occurs and if the camera takes on a subjective perspective, the camera becomes a substitute for a character and thus exists within the diegetic realm of the film; it, therefore, does not count as a look (Bonitzer 41). When the camera takes on an objective perspective, he further adds that this is likely an accident that violates the unspoken rule of film acting where actors should never look at the camera. He also adds that when the look appears in a shot/reverse-shot structure, it

assumes that there is a presence beyond the frame and thus, “the questions surrounding the provenance of this look (the question of enunciation) are forgotten” (42; my translation). However, when it is not an accident he makes a distinction between two kinds of looks. The first is what he (problematically) refers to as the “feminine look” which “addresses the other as master, director, which confines the spectator to the imaginary fiction” (45; my translation). In other words, this look functions paradoxically as it confirms the viewer’s position as masters of the actors while placing them in a subservient position to the narrative fiction. The second look is a defiant and self-aware look addressed to the spectator which forces them to confront their scopisic impulses.

With that said, Bonitzer’s argument is loosely based in psychoanalysis, evident by the fact that he references “scopisic impulses” and hidden desires which are often at the root of the look at the camera. He also uses it to describe the spectator’s relation to film. Such an approach offers limited insight into how the look at the camera might be able to produce some emotional effect. Furthermore, Bonitzer also does not look at genre films; opting instead to examine auteurist art films. Herein lies an important point worth further developing; aside from the problem of narrative alienation (more will be said about this later) and his use of psychoanalytic language, Bonitzer is not wrong in analysing a returned gaze as seductive or defiant, but when he does so, he does it within a very specific context and a specific genre. By limiting his discussion to a specific range of films, he makes it seem like the returned gaze can only perform those two functions that he had outlined, both of which are conceptual in their role. This is far from the case when exploring a wider range of films from different genres. Antoine Doinel’s look at the camera at the end of *The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959) is arguably meant to

represent his youthful rebellion (see Figure 1.6). Such an interpretation would seem unfitting if applied to a returned gaze from a horror movie monster, much in the same way that the emotions and interpretations of the returned gaze within post-colonial contexts⁴ are significantly different from those produced by a Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' musical. This is to say that cultural context is important when considering the emotional affect produced by the returned gaze in cinema which, in fact, reveals a limitation to Bonitzer's argument.

Building off of Bonitzer, Marc Vernet questions and engages with many of his ideas. Vernet is concerned with what we mean when we speak of a look at the camera. It should be mentioned that, while Vernet does build off of Bonitzer, he is much more theoretical in his approach, whereas Bonitzer, having written the article for *Cahier du Cinéma*, is more journalistic and critical in his account. For Vernet, what we refer to as "the look at the camera" is problematic because it marks an alignment of the space of filming, the diegetic world and the theater space (Vernet 49). He asks if this alignment only happens for the benefit of the spectator with the intention of giving the impression that, "a character in the diegesis, or an actor during the filming, is looking directly at them in their precise spot in the movie theater" (49). Much like Bonitzer, Vernet characterizes the look at the camera by outlining certain criteria that should be met: (1) the actor must look at the camera without anything coming between the look and the camera; (2) the actor must be framed in such a way that the direction of the gaze is visible

⁴ For more information on the returned gaze in colonial and post-colonial contexts, Paula Amad's "Visual Riposte: Looking Back at the Return of the Gaze as Postcolonial Theory's Gift to Film Studies" is a good place to start. In it she questions the claims which suggest that the return of the gaze from colonized groups is a defiant and disruptive act against their colonizers. However, Amad argues that this claim repeats what she refers to as a "visual riposte" which allows scholars to "elide the historical and contemporary oppression of neo-colonizing regimes of vision" (Amad 52). Such gazes are often fetishized because they re-create a "desire for – based on the historical lack of – the irrecoverable reverse shot of the Other's view of the world" (56).

thus favoring close-ups and medium shots; and (3) the look is typically but not always an isolated fragment that is independent of a counter-shot of an object or character reaction (49-51). Ultimately, “[if] one of these conditions is not satisfied, the status of the ‘look at the camera’ will be put into question” (49). In relation to filmic enunciation, it is additionally worth noting that for Vernet, the look at the camera is never truly aimed at anyone but is a “utopian position” (54). By this he means that, in order to be all-seeing, “the spectator does not need to be somewhere, the spectator only needs to be nowhere” (54).

Of all the aforementioned authors to directly engage with the look at the camera, it is those theories presented by Vernet that come closest to my own because he does demonstrate a fair amount of skepticism regarding the seeming rigidity of his classification. After suggesting that the status of the look is put into question if certain criteria are not met, he says, “[but], inversely, all it takes is for one or several (but not necessarily all) of these conditions to come into play for the possibility to arise that such a look, or such a rendering evident of the presence of the camera, appear to the spectator” (49). He also does take genre into consideration as he offers horror films, musicals and comedies as examples. Although the conclusions we reach may appear similar, the way in which we go about achieving them will be vastly different. Such differences manifest through his overall psychoanalytic approach as he concerns himself with the symbolic in his analysis of moments of a look at the camera. For instance, he argues that a severed head looking at the camera in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) – which is a dubious classification on its own – represents the fear of castration or, when he examines the look

from Frankenstein's monster, he argues that it is the look of death (59, 61). Such an analysis fails to account for spectator reaction or perception.

When it comes to my own theory of the returned gaze and its presence in horror, and, as demonstrated by the opening example from *The Witch*, it can be both perceptual and conceptual. The gaze from the witch produces a lingering sense of unease that is linked to a certain eroticism. This sensation contributes to the theme of sexual repression that is expressed throughout the film. However, this is not always the case when it comes to the returned gaze in horror or even film in general for that matter. There are certain gazes whose function ends after producing a sensation and there are others where the context of the gaze combined with the sensation it produces can have a deeper meaning within a film. While the way the gaze functions to produce meaning is certainly relevant and will be noted when appropriate, it is not my central interest in studying this phenomenon in horror. I am primarily interested in the perceptual aspect of the returned gaze.

What then does all of this mean when placed in relation to my overall argument? It means that no form has, in itself, an intrinsic value, and this could not be truer when it comes to the returned gaze in film. Hopefully this overview has also shown that the returned gaze has many different functions for different authors within many different contexts and, that none of them really account for horror, and that those who do, do not do so in any meaningful way that takes emotional experience into consideration. Using the horror genre as my context, in the following chapter I examine the question of alienation as it relates to emotions and, how this relates to a deeper problem within

certain theories of film. In positioning myself in relation to these authors, I also outline how we can characterize and identify the returned gaze within a horror context.

A Return to *The Witch* and its Returned Gaze

To return to the example from *The Witch*, we can further our understanding of this sequence by considering what has just been discussed. When the witch returns the gaze, questions of narration and enunciation do indeed arise. Through Chatman, we can position the witch's gaze as a technique that draws on the rules of cinema and any possible answers about narration and enunciation are to be found under the category of discourse. The narrator presented in this scene is neither Caleb nor the witch but rather the film which is partially a pre-arranged text resulting from the combined efforts of the visual and auditory channels and partially the result of the filmic spectator's re-constructive efforts. The film is a horror film meaning that the narrating logic formally arranges the film with the purpose of producing horror related emotions. It would follow that this returned gaze functions to further the goals of the horror-oriented narrator which dictates how the gaze is to be formally presented. The stationary camera, the approaching witch looking into the camera, the rising music and the shot duration are the result of the horror narrator. Therefore, while the witch is technically the one who returns the gaze, it is the guiding narrative logic that is the one enunciating. Moreover, while the returned gaze in *The Witch* does have a cognitive and intellectual element to it as the witch is presented in such a way that contrasts with Caleb's puritanical teachings, her gaze engages us directly and thus produces certain emotions when she is perceived.

As a horror film with a horror narrator, it seems appropriate to argue that the function of the witch's returned gaze in this film is to produce unease and discomfort in

the viewer. Certain psychological, physiological and evolutionary theories, especially those offered by Tomkins, might demonstrate that the witch's overtly sexual gaze is discomfoting because of the various cultural and social taboos surrounding mutual eye-contact which, in this example, positions the witch as the dominant looker who desires to interact with us through Caleb's subjective position; something we otherwise want to avoid. Subsequently, a formal analysis using research related to proxemics, environmental stressors and moods might reveal that the witch's continuous movement towards the camera marks a gradual intensification of the discomfort that is felt. This brief analysis was only of one instance of the returned gaze in one film. I expand on these particular ideas in later chapters where I analyse multiple instances in two whole films.

Chapter 2: Characterizing the Returned Gaze in Horror Cinema

Within the context of horror, the returned gaze comes to serve a very specific function; one which emotionally and affectively engages the viewer. As such, I will be examining the questions of narrative engagement and alienation which often arise in discussions of the returned gaze and how this is problematic when discussing horror emotions and affects. Such problems arise as a result of the assumption that filmic engagement is best characterized as illusory. By characterizing the cinema as illusory, the return of the gaze is seen as rupturing the cinematic illusion and hindering emotional engagement. This, as I argue, is not the case. Having laid out this foundation, I will subsequently outline how I will be characterizing and identifying the returned gaze in horror. By doing so, it will become clear that, in my characterization of the returned gaze, I am much less broad than Dixon but much less strict than Vernet or Bonitzer. This will ultimately lead into a discussion of the role that knowledge has in the returned gaze and how that relates to what I will call the “communicative gaze.” First, however, it is necessary to have a general account of the context within which I am situating the returned gaze.

Defining the Horror Context

What is horror? Such a question is not as easily answered, as one may anticipate. Noël Carroll takes on this question in relation to genre. He explains that the word “horror” derives from the Latin “horrere” which means to bristle, stand on end or shudder (*Philosophy* 24). We could then assume that a horror film is one that produces these kinds of sensations. However, Carroll specifies that not every work of art that is horrifying is

part of the horror genre. The genre, as he notes, is context specific since it did not emerge until the time when *Frankenstein* (the novel) was published in 1818 and, while he does indeed note that there were instances of horrifying images that predated this period (like the various depictions of Hell), those images only really coalesce “between the last half of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth as a variation on the Gothic form in England” (13). Moreover, another identifier of the genre according to Carroll is the presence of the monster. The monster in horror is depicted as an unnatural force in the world, existing outside of the realm of current science. “The monsters are regarded to be violations of nature, and abnormal, and this is made clear in the reactions of protagonists. They not only fear such monsters; they find them repellent, loathsome, disgusting, repulsive and impure” (54). This is how he is able to distinguish between fairy tale monsters and horror monsters. Shelob the giant spider from *Return of the King* (Peter Jackson, 2003) is indeed horrifying, but it is seen as a normal aspect of the hellish landscape of Mordor which has been established throughout the fantastical world of the three films (and novels). By contrast, the giant ants in *Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954) are unnatural monsters because they exist in a world where ants are supposed to be small. Carroll’s definition seems fitting when applied to the returned gaze from *The Witch* since, through the witch’s returned gaze, we become a witness to her impurity due to her seductive appearance and her monstrous presence. However, there are certain limitations to this theory that must be accounted for.

The returned gaze necessitates a physical presence with eyes that can look back, which is why it is tempting to subscribe to Carroll’s theory. However, under his definition, serial killers and murderous psychopaths are, indeed, horrific but they are

nonetheless part of our reality and the reality of the films they appear in. This is problematic since “slasher films” – including the first *Halloween* (1978) and *Friday the 13th* (Sean Cunningham, 1980), before the plots became convoluted and super-natural in their sequels – are unquestionably regarded as horror films; to suggest that these films are not part of the genre is a dubious claim. Films like *Psycho* (1960) and *The Town that Dreaded Sundown* (Charles Pierce, 1976) for instance had an influence on the slasher sub-genre but are similarly excluded under this definition. As Aaron Smuts points out, Carroll’s theory is narrow enough to account for recurring themes, familiar plot structures and its effect, while making any of the possible problems that arise manageable (Smuts 507). This is simply to say that, as tempting as it is to fully subscribe to Carroll’s definition of horror, the genre is too diverse to be accounted for in this way. For this reason, without completely eschewing Carroll’s definition, I am choosing to place more of an emphasis on the emotional aspect of his theory because horror is, by virtue, intrinsically linked to emotions. A theory that focuses less on the iconography of the genre would seem more productive. But, on the same note, the construction of the horror monster has an impact on our perception of it, which, in turn, impacts our affectual response which engages the body in a very visceral way.

Horror is, as Linda Williams puts it, a “body genre.” By this she means that it is a genre that, like melodrama and pornography, prominently displays the body in a heightened emotional state with the aims of producing something similar in the viewer (Williams 4). And, while I might disagree with her overall approach to the question – her psychoanalytic method combined with her focus on gender reveals a strong sexual element in such body genre – I do agree with her general assessment of these genres

being linked to and partially defined by visceral reactions (9). Placed within the context of horror, the varied functions of the returned gaze become problematic because of its alienating function.

Illusion, Alienation and Emotional Engagement

At this point, most, if not all of the aforementioned authors in the previous chapter have either implicitly or explicitly raised the question of alienation and the subsequent diegetic rupture that occurs when the gaze is returned in film. For Gunning it is seen as “spoiling the realistic illusion of the cinema” (57), by rupturing the narrative; something that was emblematic of early films exhibitionist qualities. Similarly, for Bonitzer, the accidental look at the camera informs the viewer that the film is nothing but an artifice; something they do not want to know, and which also happens to violate their right (*liberté*) to get lost in a narrative (Bonitzer 41). “We could thus propose the following maxim; in film, as soon as an actor deliberately looks at the camera, there is a de-sublimation, a separation from our scopic impulses” (Bonitzer 44; my translation). This ultimately culminates in his distinction of the two looks; one that poses no threat to the cinematic illusion (the feminine gaze) and another that shatters said illusion. What I wish to point out here is that, when discussing the alienating effect of the returned gaze, these authors frequently characterize cinema as an illusion which implies a false belief in the images. The question of belief is, itself, connected to emotions and how we understand emotional or even affectual responses. However, the concept of alienation and its relation to our engagement with fiction is worth considering in depth before such a deconstruction can occur.

In discussing the alienating effect of the returned gaze in film, many of the authors point to the work of Bertolt Brecht who was, of course, known for being one of the first to describe such an effect in theater. In his discussion on Chinese acting, Brecht explains that alienation occurs when spectators are made consciously aware of their engagement with the fiction and its status as such. The effect is achieved when the actor acts knowing that there is no invisible fourth wall that separates them from the spectators and “makes it clear that he knows he is being looked at” (Brecht 130). “The audience forfeits the illusion of being unseen spectators at an event which is really taking place” (130). As he explains, the goal for the performer is to appear so alien to the spectator as to prevent them from emotionally engaging with characters or events. While this alienation prevents any sort of emotional contagion – a process by which a spectator emulates the emotions of a character – it is not emotionless since, as he explains, emotions are achieved through other, more self-aware means (133). Nevertheless, we can clearly see that Brecht constructs the engagement with traditional theater as illusory. This is evident as he uses the term “illusion” to characterize traditional theater and our engagement with it as a “self-surrender” where the performer’s responsibility is to “bring the spectator as close as possible to the events and the character being presented” (Brecht; 130, 131, 132). This demonstrates that the concept of alienation is closely related to the idea that fiction is illusory.

Compared to Bonitzer and Gunning, Marc Vernet is actually quite skeptical about the alienating effects of the returned gaze in his discussion of genre. He explains that in the musical comedy (a genre in which the returned gaze is common), the look at the camera is usually a signal that marks the transition from dramatic scene to a stage show

(Vernet 52). During such a transition, as viewers, we accept that we are no longer watching a drama unfold but rather a musical stage show which has a different set of traditions and norms that allows the look at the camera to fall within acceptable bounds.

[The] musical number appears in such a case as the effigy of an event that would seem to have taken place previously and, above all, would really seem to have taken place, with a real audience in the presence of the actor, an actor of flesh and blood. But this prior event is one, nonetheless, that we, the film spectators, were not able to attend.

(Vernet 52)

This is to say that this kind of address is not interruptive. Something similar is said regarding the comedy genre as characters look at the camera to offer some witty commentary on their situation. In this case, the position of the spectator is not threatened because the look is directed to the spectator as a third party witness that is “a much larger and more abstract entity, the public as a whole or, in an even greater way, to the entire universe” (52). One could certainly try to imagine how we could go about discussing the returned gaze in horror along similar lines. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge that there are some cases where the returned gaze ruptures the cinematic illusion, thus acknowledging that cinema is an illusion to begin with.

Alienation and the cinematic illusion are related to a broader debate within film criticism. As he explores how we make meaning from narratives, Gregory Currie discusses the internal and external perspectives which guide film analysis. The external perspective is when we examine the narrative elements of a film as a representation of some external force which we attribute to the author (*Narratives* 49). Such a perspective usually concerns itself with the symbolic and representational. This is contrasted with the

internal perspective where we examine the world of the story itself “as if it were actual; we speak and think directly of the characters and events of the story, though much of this speaking and thinking may be make-believe” (49). He argues that we can only understand narratives by combining both internal and external perspectives (52). However, he does suggest that there are instances where one approach might be more appropriate than another. He looks at the means by which a film like *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963) is able to create narrative irony which, as he defines it, is a form of pretence that “substitutes a pretended assertion for a real one” (171).⁵ Irony in *The Birds* is a result of the way it foregrounds its status as an artifice while refusing to offer any reason behind the attacking birds, and indeed even goes so far as to resist any explanation at all (173-174). Moreover, he argues that there is no symbolic relation between the birds and the psychology of the characters because, within the world of the story, the birds have no symbolic meaning (176). Here, Currie resists certain kinds of external interpretations by limiting his interpretation within the confines of the story and narrative.

What does all of this mean in relation to the returned gaze? What I wish to draw out here is that, in arguing that the returned gaze disrupts the act of narration for some symbolic meaning where the gaze is a symbol of our desire and obsession with looking, many of the aforementioned authors adopt external readings of the returned gaze. Since I am arguing for the functional diversity of the technique and locating it within a horror context, such external readings are unsatisfying and often insufficient for getting at what is truly going on. For this reason, my approach leans towards an internal reading. Though the following passage is taken out of context and does not directly relate to the returned

⁵ The concept of cinematic irony as outlined by Currie will be further detailed in the next chapter.

gaze in horror, it nonetheless captures what I am trying to articulate. Discussing effective horror narration and how the ghost stories of M. R. James resists offering theories explaining the ghosts' *raison d'être* within the narrative, Currie says "they retain their power only so long as they are held in narrative form" (183). As I see it, this could not be more true with regards to the returned gaze in horror, because it is most effective when internal readings are ascribed to it. The returned gaze in horror loses its power when taken out of the narrative and by ascribing some symbolic or alienating function to it, and it is often the case that these kinds of external readings carry with them the assumption that the cinema is an illusory medium which is an assumption that is still persistent in film theory.

In his dismissal of illusion-based theories of film, Currie maps out two discourses from which film has typically been categorized; it is either a cognitive illusion or a perceptual illusion. As he explains, a theory of film as a cognitive illusion follows that film causes a viewer to falsely believe that what they are seeing represented on screen is real (*Image* 22). "[The] illusion peculiar to film is that the viewer is present at the events of the story, watching from the position actually occupied by the camera, which the viewer thinks of as his or her position" (23). Perceptual illusions differ since they occur as our perceptions construct the world in a certain way despite knowing that the world is not that way (29). Perceptual illusions can be linked to *tromp l'oeil* art where, and include for instance, two lines of identical length are made to look different in size due to the direction of the arrow heads at the end of the lines (known as the Muller-Lyre illusion). In this example, we may know that both lines are the exact same size, but they nonetheless appear to be different lengths. Within film theory, cinema has often been

considered a perceptual illusion because of the illusion of movement it reproduces; as viewers, we know that what we see on screen is nothing but a series of still images that are shown rapidly in succession to create the illusion of movement which we experience as real (30).

But what if cinema was not an illusion to begin with? Perhaps it is time to rethink how we go about discussing the returned gaze as destroying the cinematic illusion and ruining narrative engagement. The reason why alienation is so problematic is because it would be counterproductive for a horror film to alienate its viewers from the narrative since it is so clearly invested in the production of emotions and visceral reactions. There are, of course, exceptions when it comes to genre because there are films that try to make us aware of our engagement with the fiction, but we need not assume that film is an illusion or like a dream to go about describing how they might accomplish this effect.

The returned gaze might not rupture the cinematic illusion because there is no illusion to begin with. As Currie brings up those illusion/dream centered theories, he also points out why they are problematic. With cognitive illusions, Currie argues that we do not react the same way to fictional events in a manner that suggests that we actually believe what is going on on-screen (24). We might gasp in terror at the sight of a monster in a film, but if we were actually in that fictional situation, we would likely flee as fast as possible. For his case against the perceptual illusion of the cinema (i.e. the illusion of movement), he draws on certain metaphysical principles to argue that cinematic motion is real because it is “reidentifiable across time and occupying different positions at different times during the viewing of the shot” (47).

Murray Smith makes some similar claims. He explains that describing cinema as a dream or illusion fails to explain our experience of fiction (M. Smith 113). I would also add that it assumes that viewers are inherently passive – observers of a dream or fools falling for an illusion – which has been another recurring issue in film theory. Smith argues that the persistence of this notion is due to the assumptions that “our emotional responses to fictions are to be understood by the fact that we take the fiction to be referring to real events and persons” and that “we do not merely mistake one form of representation for another, but that we mistake the fictional representation for an actual event” (114).

As previously mentioned, belief has traditionally been considered crucial for the production of emotion; not only regarding our responses to fiction but also to actual events. For instance, in an article on the assessment of emotions, Jerome Shaffer writes:

To undergo a particular emotion is [...] to undergo a particular kind of physiological and/or sensational state which was caused by a particular complex of belief and desire. What emotion it is will be determined by the kind of beliefs and desires and the kind of physiological and sensational effects. (Shaffer 161)

But how might this account for our responses to fiction? It seems dubious to propose that we can actually mistake fiction for reality. It is often the case that these accounts of emotion fail to consider how we might respond to fiction and, in doing so, suggest that any response to fiction is irrational and perhaps even less genuine. This has often been referred to as the paradox of fiction. Carl Plantinga points out that the knowledge of fiction as artifice is a crucial requirement lest the spectator’s safety and comfort be threatened (“Emotion and Affect” 88). Likewise, Jinhee Choi argues that the real-life

principle – which centers on believing that a fictitious situation is real – is not enough to explain how certain emotions are aesthetically warranted (Choi 309). This leads me to a similar conclusion akin to that which Plantinga reaches, where it is possible that the paradox of fiction might not be paradoxical to begin with if we consider that belief has a minimal role to play in fictional emotions (*Moving Viewers* 66).

In lieu of illusionism, Currie argues that fictions “appeal not to belief, but to the faculty of imagination” (*Image* 141). In his account of imagination, he draws on simulation theory which suggests that, in shaping our understanding of ourselves in relation to others, we imagine ourselves to be in the position of another, and this, in a manner of speaking, is how we gain access to the minds of others (142, 144). He argues that this theory grants us further understanding about our engagement of fiction because fictions “encourage and guide the imagination” (147). Instead of receiving beliefs from fictions, we receive what Currie refers to as “imaginings” which mimic belief (148). He explains that, as we imagine in fiction, we take on the imaginary thoughts, feelings and attitudes of fictional characters which is referred to as “empathetic reenactment” (153).

As Currie’s specific conceptualization of the role of imagination appears to be adequate in response to illusionist theories of fiction, he unintentionally (or perhaps intentionally) argues for a view of emotions where beliefs and desires consists of the core elements of an emotion. He says:

While fictions do not cause us to believe in the reality of the fictional story, they can engage us to the extent of causing within us the sometimes pleasant and sometimes unpleasant bodily states we associate with being emotionally moved by events. If fiction encourages simulation, and simulated beliefs and desires retain their

connection to our bodily states, that is exactly what we would expect. The anxiety that watching a horror movie induces in me does not cause me to call the police, but it does cause me to *feel* afraid. (156)

Here, Currie proposes that we experience bodily states that we associate with actual emotions and, through the process of imagination, they become simulated emotions. Likewise, the word “feel” is emphasized to highlight the simulated quality of the emotion which suggests that the emotion itself is not real; the fear you experience is not a real experience but rather something that approximates it. To argue that the fear we experience is real does not entail a reaction like calling the police. In fact, to argue that a real emotion always entails an external reaction seems dubious as well. Though I disagree with this aspect of Currie’s theory, he is nonetheless putting his finger on something important.

By contrast, Smith argues that the experience of fiction “is better understood in terms of *attention, imagination, perception, and sensation*” (M. Smith 113). He explains that, as we perceive a fiction, we imaginatively entertain what is being presented to us in the text much like we would if we were to shudder at the imagined scenario of gripping the blade of a sharp knife. The concept of imagination is “supplemented by the (perfectly ordinary) concepts of perception and sensation, without any recourse to notions of belief [...] or illusion” (118). He then argues that the experience of film is somewhere in between that of the novel and that of the amusement park ride; with the novel, words act as prompts with which we imaginatively entertain to experience certain sensations, whereas a ride made to resemble a Viking ship, for instance, might simulate the perceptions and sensations of being on an actual Viking ship but nonetheless requires a certain amount of imaginative engagement (118-19). Film is less literary (but more

literal) than a novel and simultaneously less experiential than a ride. Therefore, regardless of how realistic a particular perceptual or sensual effect is, “the whole experience is framed by our knowledge that we are engaging with an imaginary scenario, a fiction” (119).

Both Aaron Smuts and Plantinga come to similar conclusions regarding the role of imagination. For Smuts, in order for horror films to affect us, all we really need to do is entertain certain thoughts in order to be moved by them (Smuts 507-08). For Plantinga, the emotions and affective states produced by a fiction are the result of impressions derived from an individual’s perceptions and sensations regulated by their knowledge of the story’s status as a fiction as aural and visual impressions are registered (*Moving Viewers* 65-66). Unlike Smith, both authors do acknowledge that belief does have a small role in the spectator’s emotional response. As Plantinga asserts, belief and judgment has a minimal role in shaping our emotions because they are too conscious – especially when we take automatic responses into consideration – but he also spends little time actually elaborating on its role because it is so minimal. By contrast, Smuts does account for its role by offering an example proposed by Noël Carroll in which an individual may be frightened of falling off a cliff despite knowing that they are secure; the individual’s response is governed by imaginatively entertaining that falling is a possibility rather than the belief that they will actually fall. However, he adds that certain trivial beliefs are required to entertain such a thought, belief in, for instance, the laws of physics which assumes that falling can happen and that serious injury or death may follow (Smuts 508). While belief does have a very minimal role, it nonetheless has a role to begin with; to

emotionally respond to the returned gaze, we need to believe that certain kinds of returned gazes in reality can invite the possibility of harm.

All of this comes back to the alienating effect produced by the returned gaze. The question of alienation hinges on the rupturing of the cinematic illusion – it is best thought of as an awareness of the artificiality of the filmic narrative – but, if, as Smith and others suggests, there is no illusion to rupture due to our constant awareness of the fiction, then it would follow that to characterize the returned gaze as alienating (in the Brechtian sense) would be erroneous. When the horror returns the gaze, we know that they are not real and looking at us personally, but we imaginatively entertain that they are which allows the elicitation of emotions and affects to occur.

It is worth examining an instance of the returned gaze to place all of this into perspective. In *Frankenstein* (1931), there is a moment, not long after the monster is brought to life where he (Frankenstein's monster) returns the gaze (see Figure 2.1). The returned gaze takes the shape of a close-up of the monster's face and, it is an early example of a returned gaze in horror that was clearly meant to elicit *real* emotions from the spectator. When this moment occurs, we, as spectators, imaginatively engage with the image as we process both visual and aural input to entertain that we are being looked at by this hideous monster. This generates in us an emotional and affective response. We know it is not real but the emotions we experience are. Formally, this is a rather interesting moment because it begins with the monster walking backwards into focus; as he turns around, he maintains eye-contact with the camera and, once he is fully facing the camera, there are two cuts that bring the camera closer to the monster's face. The emphasis placed on the monster's reveal is clearly meant to provoke the audience. Given

the cultural significance of this film in the history of Western horror, it would be absurd to claim that this moment of the returned gaze ruptures the narrative fiction to confront the viewer with some contemplative message on the nature of fiction or on their desire to look or any external meaning for that matter.

Identifying the Returned Gaze in Horror

How are we then to identify the returned gaze in horror? When doing so, first, it is important that the monster or the antagonistic force has a face with eyes from which it can return the gaze to begin with. While this may seem like an inarguable fact, it is worth noting that the face is rather important for the communication of affect. Silvan Tomkins notes its importance by locating it as the primary site of affect where each facial muscle communicates something. “From time immemorial the face has been recognized as an organ of prime value and a site of great expressiveness, of great potency and of great vulnerability” (Tomkins 117). For Tomkins, the importance of the human face is punctuated by the fact that its maturation in human development comes before the other parts of the body (114). The eyes more or less serve the same function. The horror antagonist can, however, wear a mask which might obscure the face which is, as I see it, equally expressive.⁶

Similarly, the gaze need not be addressed to the viewer specifically because the camera acts as a surrogate. The viewer identifies with the camera as it reveals to them important information of the narrative through various formal means. Moreover, as Vernet suggests, the returned gaze can take the form of a close-up or a medium close-up,

⁶ The use of the mask in horror as it relates to the affective power of the face is further explored when discussing *Halloween* (1978).

but I would also add that it can appear as long-shots and extreme long-shots. A particular problem arises here as it could be argued that, with the long-shot and extreme long-shot, the direction of the gaze might not be visible, thus putting it into question. However, the exact certainty of the gaze's direction might not be as important as originally thought. In the absence of clear facial expressions, body movement and body language can become expressive tools. More importantly though, according to Vernet, determining the direction of the gaze can be a matter of feeling, evident when he asks, "[is] he looking at the camera? [A character's] distance from the camera and the shadowy lighting don't let us know with certainty, although the fixity of the camera and the forward movement of the character lead me to believe or *feel* that he is" (Vernet 49-50; emphasis added). For instance, when a possessed Regan twists her head around in *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), we feel as though she is looking at us despite the fact that a still image of this moment might reveal that she is looking slightly to the right of the camera (see Figure 2.2). The point here being that, as it happens in the film, as soon as it feels like she is looking at us, an emotional affect is produced, therefore we can categorize it as a returned gaze. Likewise, considering the returned gaze as an extreme close-up can be problematic if the eyes are not the main focus of the shot. While the face is indeed the primary site of expression, the returned gaze hinges on the idea of a gaze to begin with. To gaze is an action that requires the eyes and, if they are not included in said shot or, at the very least, implied, then it cannot be considered a returned gaze.

There are, however, limitations that must be imposed during moments of excessive expository dialogue while the gaze is being returned. I argue that, during such moments, our attention is focused on the aural instead of the visual and the emotions that

might derive from it are the result of what is heard rather than what is seen. My reasoning here is based off of Tomkins who argues that formal spoken language often blocks our ability to learn or absorb facial language because, “the messages in the formal language of communication are sufficiently complex and urgent to reduce the visibility of the face in interpersonal interaction” (Tomkins 120). When Hannibal Lecter describes how he ate a man who once tried to evaluate him in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), he does so by glancing at the camera. In fact, during much of the Hannibal/Clarice interview sequences, the film makes use of claustrophobic close-ups where both are occasionally framed looking at the camera. However, these sequences and that specific moment in particular are not returned gazes because the emphasis is being placed on the words and the sounds that Hannibal makes which are the primary sites of emotion. It would, however, be erroneous to suggest that sound is not important when considering the returned gaze because sound is, in fact, very important.

There are occasional exceptions to this rule when considering the returned gaze at the end of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) where we hear Norman Bates’ internal monologue in his dead mother’s voice (see Figure 2.3). Because the monologue only happens in Norman’s head, he does not need to move his mouth to speak, which would otherwise be distracting from the affective power of his malevolent stare towards the viewer. It could also be argued that the words serve to emphasize the affective purpose of his facial movements. When he says, in his mother’s voice, “[they’ll] see and they’ll know and they’ll say ‘why, she wouldn’t even harm a fly,’” he gives a sinister smile to the camera; the monologue accentuates the ominous nature of his returned gaze.

Similarly, the duration of the gaze in relation to the dialogue is important to consider before disqualifying the gaze entirely. If the dialogue is minimal and the shot of the gaze lingers after the dialogue, then it can be considered a returned gaze. For instance, in *The Shining*, as Wendy is trying to escape the evil of the Overlook Hotel, she encounters an apparition of a man in a tuxedo with a bloody head wound who returns the gaze and says, “Great party, isn’t it?” (see Figure 2.4). The shot lingers for roughly a second on the apparition after saying those words and, as with the example from *Psycho*, the dialogue accentuates the gaze. With the example from *The Silence of the Lambs*, the shot of the gaze ends as soon as the dialogue ends and the sound does not punctuate or work in tandem with the facial expressions, unlike the ending of *Psycho* or the example from *The Shining*.

For many of the authors, the shot/reverse-shot has been problematic in identifying the returned gaze. But, when considering the returned gaze as an emotive device, it more or less fulfils the same function when placed within a shot/reverse-shot structure. Noël Carroll brings up many relevant points in his discussion on point-of-view editing. Drawing on Edward Branigan, Carroll describes the two kinds of shots that POV editing consists of; the point/glance shot which generally depicts a person looking off-screen and the point/object shot which is of whatever the person is looking at (“Towards a Theory” 126). He proposes three hypothesises in relation to this kind of editing, two of which are relevant to my argument. The first is that POV editing serves to communicate something to us since it is a visual representation of our natural information-gathering behavior (130). The second hypothesis suggests that the point/glance shot and the point/object shot function in unison to communicate specific emotions. The point/glance shot “sets out a

global range of emotions that broadly characterizes the neighborhood of affective states which the character could be” (135). The point/object shot specifies the emotions that a character is feeling by showing the object they are reacting to (134-36).

While Carroll is more concerned with emotion recognition rather than transmission, the returned gaze can be considered as a point/object shot because it communicates specific emotions to the viewer. Therefore it more or less fulfills its same function were it independent of a shot/reverse-shot structure. I would, however, add that an emotion (and its affectual components) is still transmitted insofar as the viewer identifies with the camera. Such a clarification is important because most returned gazes in horror exist within this kind of structure; to exclude it would be to exclude many instances. Perhaps it is for this reason that the returned gaze in horror has not been examined in any meaningful detail in the past.

The Communicative Gaze and the Role of Viewer Knowledge

On the occasions where the returned gaze happens to be an isolated fragment, I argue that they can be regarded as “communicative gazes.” This term is inspired by Tom Brown’s notion of the “direct address.” Although it should be noted that, while the concept of the communicative gaze is inspired by Brown’s notion of the direct address, it means something slightly different. To recapitulate Brown’s point, the direct address cannot be a part of a POV shot structure and a direct verbal acknowledgment of the spectator’s presence is not always needed (Brown xi-xiii, 13). In other words, the returned gaze, as Brown sees it, is merely an aspect of the direct address.

Where the communicative gaze differs is that it can be a *kind* of returned gaze. In his preface, he states that the term “direct address” is by no means absolute, which gives

me some theoretical leeway to develop my own term and definition in relation to how I have characterized the returned gaze thus far. I use the word “communicative” because, as Brown notes in defining the direct address, his term implies that something is being communicated to a non-material spectator (Brown x-xi). However, as a word, “communicative” or the concept of communication is worth interrogating because to communicate to someone is to transmit information to them by using discourse to arrange and present that information. In this respect, communication in language is unambiguous. Nevertheless, as Tomkins notes, looks, especially mutual eye-contact, can be very communicative. It can communicate a wide range of affects like intimacy, sexual interest, anger and many more (Tomkins 373, 380-81). This is to say that the returned gaze can communicate something to the viewer through non-linguistic means and, while it is not as precise as written or spoken language, communication through bodily and facial language can be equally unambiguous given the proper context. During moments of the communicative gaze, there is a certain amount of interpretive space that remains ambiguous, but the context narrows down the kinds of interpretations that can be made. When a villain looks at the camera at the end of a film without speaking, we may not know exactly what he is communicating to us but we can make a fairly just interpretation based on the context.

Moreover, there are aspects of Brown’s characterization that I wish to highlight as relevant to the communicative gaze. According to Brown, having a character address the audience produces a particular *intimacy* which may be described as threatening or perhaps even too intimate (Brown 13). Likewise, it is often the case where the character who addresses the audience possesses a certain amount of *agency* within the narrative.

Such agency often implies that they have the ability to shape the narrative logic of the film (13-14). Brown does mention the horror genre here, explaining that many horror films end with the monster glancing at the viewer, although he dismisses these moments as cliché. Furthermore, the character who addresses the audience has a *superior epistemic position within the fictional world* which usually means that the characters generally know more than the viewer (14). Agency and knowledge are particularly important when it comes to establishing the difference between the returned gaze and the communicative gaze.

When it comes to differentiating a returned gaze from the communicative gaze, one must ask: “Who is the monster’s gaze intended for?” It is simply a returned gaze if the gaze is part of a shot/reverse-shot structure as the emotions are transmitted through proxy. The returned gaze can be labeled as a communicative one if the gaze is specifically intended for the viewer. To put it bluntly, when viewer and character agency as well as viewer and character knowledge are the primary cause of the emotions produced in a horror film, then those moments can be labeled as communicative gazes, because it is often the case where, as they look or appear to look at us, it is as if the horror monster is communicating with us by flaunting their power over the narrative. This subsequently reminds us of our powerlessness within the narrative and our inability to act. To a certain extent, knowledge is important in all instances of the returned gaze but in moments where a communicative gaze occurs, the function of knowledge seems more profound.

To clarify, it is worth considering a few examples of the communicative gaze in horror. The final moments of *Psycho* in which Norman Bates looks into the camera is,

indeed, a communicative gaze because there are no characters observing his gaze, thus indicating that it is specifically intended for the viewer. An entrance into his thoughts and the tight framing arguably produces an unwanted intimacy that we only have access to. The stare highlights his agency within the narrative as he informs us that he will manipulate the authorities into thinking that he is harmless while he forces us to confront our knowledge of his true nature. This moment produces the base sensation of unease that may be combined with other affects which derive from our knowledge of the rest of the film and our ultimate powerlessness to do anything about it as Norman stares at us and taunts us. This is further punctuated by the skull that is graphically matched on top of Norman's face mid-transition which is, again, intended for the viewer (see Figure 2.3).

Similarly, a communicative gaze also occurs at the end of *Jeepers Creepers* (Victor Salva, 2001) which centers on two siblings on a cross-country road trip who are endlessly pursued by a flesh-eating monster who can replace his body parts with those that he has devoured. After abducting the brother from a police station, the film ends with a slow pan upwards on the brother's dead body, revealing two big holes where his eyes should be. The camera moves closer towards one of his eye holes where the monster emerges and looks at the viewer with what is implied to be the eyes of the brother (see Figure 2.5). Such a moment is undoubtedly intended for the viewer since there is no one else present in the scene who could stand in for the camera; within the diegetic realm, there is no logical reason why the monster would do this. This instance of the communicative gaze is a proclamation to the viewer that the monster has won and that there was nothing that could have been done to stop it; he is playfully taunting the viewer while demonstrating his power over the narrative logic of the film. The emotions that this

shot generates comes from the knowledge of his nature as a monster (which had been established throughout the film) and his agency and our subsequent lack thereof which again, is punctuated by him looking at us with the eyes of the brother.

These examples of the communicative gaze happen at the end of their respective films, which is similar to what Brown says about the direct address in relation to horror. While the communicative gaze as I see it is perhaps most common at the end of films, it can nonetheless occur throughout a film. Similarly, as is the case with the example from *Psycho*, a spoken acknowledgment of the spectator's presence is not needed for the classification of the communicative gaze.

By locating the returned gaze in horror in a horror context, it seems absurd to claim that it produces an alienating effect because such an effect is based on the false assumption that cinema is an illusion and that belief is a prerequisite for emotional reactions towards fictions. Instead, we can account for our reactions towards the returned gaze in horror by means of imaginatively entertaining them which occurs through an engagement with imagination, perception and sensation. From here we can go about characterizing and identifying the returned gaze within horror, and subsequently we can make a distinction between the returned gaze and the communicative gaze which functions as a kind of returned gaze. Though my characterization did briefly touch on some of the formal qualities of the image, the following chapter will further explore how the aesthetics of the image contribute to the effect when the gaze is returned as I use *Halloween* as a case study.

Chapter 3: Looking from a Distance in *Halloween*

Certain formal elements and stylistic choices like editing, framing, mise-en-scène and performance can contribute to the overall emotional and affective exchange initiated by the returned gaze. On their own, the aesthetic aspects of the image serve an individual purpose, but when used alongside a character looking at the camera, they elevate and regulate the potency of the returned gaze. In the example of *The Witch* from the first chapter, it was not just the returned gaze that produced that lingering and intensifying sense of unease but the way in which the music, framing, mise-en-scène and performance (to name a few) seemed to work with the returned gaze to produce that particular effect. We can begin to understand the effectiveness of the returned gaze in horror by considering certain works in the field of environmental psychology. Proximity and the usage of space between individuals can be applied to framing and the distance between characters and the camera. Similarly, moods as influenced by the lighting, colour, aesthetic complexity and the presence of another in an environment can be applied to the production of cinematic moods in film. Environmental stressors like noises and crowding are arguably just as effective in film as they are in real life. Again, these can function individually, but they function in unison when placed alongside the returned gaze in horror. This is especially evident and effectively used in a film like *Halloween* (1978) where the killer, Michael Myers, is framed looking from a distance while returning the gaze.

Halloween is about an escaped murderer who goes on a killing spree on Halloween night, targeting teenagers in his hometown of Haddonfield, Illinois. It is often

considered to be an important film in the Western canon of horror cinema because, while it may not have been the first to establish the conventions of the slasher sub-genre, it prominently makes use of them. By analysing instances of the returned gaze in *Halloween*, I argue that narrative perception, faces and filmic aesthetics all contribute to the emotional affect created by such instances. Although I will not be going into too much detail on the emotional affect that this produces yet, what I say in this chapter will be the foundation for that particular discussion later on.

Carol Clover's Forgotten Argument: The Prevalence of Eyes in Horror

Halloween has been discussed at length by film theorists and critics alike. While it would be superfluous to go through every different way the film has been examined, it is worth mentioning what is perhaps a forgotten aspect of a particularly notable account, Carol Clover's argument in her foundational book on horror, where she discusses the prevalence of eyes in the genre. She notes that eyes seem to be everywhere in horror, ranging from posters to opening title sequences. She argues that horror is "about eyes" because it brings up the problem of vision: "seeing too little (to the point of blindness) or seeing too much (to the point of insanity)" (Clover 166). As horror films take up this question of looking, they reveal a self-reflexive and "metacinematic dimension" to the genre (168). As she brings up the gaze in horror, she considers the opening sequence of *Halloween*, where Michael kills his older sister as an example of an "assaultive gaze." This sequence makes use of a first-person camera to emulate the perspective of a stalker, who we later discover to be a young Michael Myers, as he stalks and brutally murders his teenage sister. As Clover suggests "we are invited to look not through a murderous camera, but with our murderous eyes, listening to the beat of our heart and the breath of

our lungs” (186). However, this phallic and sadistic gaze that the viewer has become complicit in is always unstable; the bearer of the gaze is vanquished or blinded by the end of the film (189). This forgotten aspect of Clover’s argument is the foundation for her larger discussion of gender in the horror film and how it is never fixed to one position as it constantly oscillates between male and female.

By contrast, the most popular and even overstated part of Clover’s argument looks at the slasher sub-genre and its conventions regarding gender and sexuality. She cites *Halloween* as a film that emulates those conventions. She explains that, in the slasher, sexual transgressors are usually the first to be punished because the sex they have is “illicit” (Clover 33). Sexual transgressors are often placed in relation to what Clover famously referred to as the “final girl.” The final girl is typically the survivor of the monster’s reign of terror; she is the one who confronts the male monster/psycho during the climax (36). As she notes, the final girl is a virginal, intelligent and resourceful character, who notices the signs of danger that her friends otherwise ignore, and who often possesses a masculine quality (37-39). Laurie Strode, the protagonist of *Halloween* is typical as a final girl, possessing all of these qualities.

What is worth drawing out from this brief summary is that horror films are indeed preoccupied with eyes and vision. Even though she relies on psychoanalysis and seldom accounts for the returned gaze, we can take this forgotten yet crucial part of Clover’s argument even further by examining what it means to be looked at in horror. Developing an instance of self-reflective looking in horror can restore the full integrity of her argument. Moreover, a critical examination of what it means to be looked at can further any discussion about the metacinematic dimensions of the genre.

The Narrative Construction of the Monster and the Importance of Faces

Horror's preoccupation with eyes and vision is especially evident in the opening title sequence of *Halloween*. The sequence itself serves a subtle conceptual function as it features a slow tracking shot towards a carved pumpkin which is facing the camera, appearing to return the gaze (see Figure 3.1). The sequence is also accompanied by the iconic theme music from the film. This instance can be considered a returned gaze, but which uses an inanimate object to highlight the uncanniness. It also functions to establish the atmosphere and tone of the film through the use of the theme music and the camera movement. The sequence emphasizes the importance of faces and eyes and the power they have over us.⁷

J.P. Telotte makes a similar claim as he analyses the title sequence of *Halloween* to discuss the self-reflexive nature of horror. He argues that the sequence informs the viewer that the film will be concerned with “the way in which we see ourselves and others” by asking us to view the world as a threatening place that “clearly stares back at us,” making us aware of how we normally perceive the world (Telotte 140). “What the best films can offer us, then, is a type of ‘eye contact’ which [...] might prod us into seeing beneath the surfaces, even into ourselves as we are mirrored in their shimmering image patterns” (139). Though further inquiries might demonstrate more intersections between our arguments, it is important to note that when Telotte talks about eye contact

⁷ It is interesting to note that the title sequence is strikingly similar to the one in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) (see Figure 3.2). Moreover, Hitchcock was also a filmmaker that was concerned with faces, eyes, and looking in many of his films, especially *Vertigo*. Considering this, one could argue that, in the opening to *Halloween*, Carpenter is paying homage to Hitchcock's film as it introduces us to the importance of faces, eyes and vision.

and staring he is making a more abstract claim, one that comes closer to Dixon's conception of the returned gaze where the gaze is independent from any face.

The opening sequence, with the anthropomorphic image of the jack-o-lantern, is particularly significant as it relates to our perception of Michael Myers as the antagonist and the question of whether he is human or monster. Broadly defined, to anthropomorphize something is to ascribe human features to inanimate objects. The long-standing Halloween tradition of carving a face into a pumpkin falls under this category. A parallel can be made between the jack-o-lantern and Michael Myers since he can be viewed as inhuman with ascribed human features and, like the jack-o'-lantern, Michael is nothing but a hollow husk of a man. His inhuman quality is constantly reinforced in the film through various means. He is repeatedly characterised as the "Bogeyman," and Dr. Loomis, his clinical psychiatrist, always describes Michael as inhuman and, interestingly, avoids using clinical terms to characterize his psychotic afflictions. This parallel could not be more evident given that the title sequence transitions to the first-person shot of a young Michael stalking his sister. One could take this analysis a step further and relate it to cinema's ability to animate characters. Cinematic images are still frames played in succession to create movement and otherwise give life to those images. Through cinema's ability to give life to still images of people and things, we are able to emotionally connect and respond to what is being shown.

While my goal is not to examine the events of the film's narrative, narrative does play a significant role in shaping our perceptions and emotions. Noël Carroll examines just that in his discussion of emotion and genre. He argues that characters and narrative events function to create emotional investment ("Film, Emotion" 31). As he explains it, a

film text can be “criterially prefocused,” by which he means that a film is “so structured that the descriptions and depictions of the object of our attention in the text will activate our subsumption of the relevant characters and events under the categories that are criterially apposite to the emotional state in question” (30). Moreover, in his discussion on horror, he says, “[harmfulness]... is the criterion for fear. Thus, the depictions and descriptions in horror films are criterially prefocused to make the prospects for harm salient in the world of the fiction” (38). It is the way in which the narrative depicts and characterizes the horror monster that is enough to induce emotions.⁸ Carroll offers the example of a slimy monster with many tentacles and how it might make us nauseous, which effectively demonstrates how the monster’s narrative depiction can shape viewer perception and produce emotion. The fact that narrative describes and depicts Michael as hollow and empty like a jack-o-lantern significantly contributes to the emotions and affects that are produced when we perceive him returning the gaze.

By taking Carroll’s argument, as well as the role of the face in the communication of emotions and affects, into consideration, we can begin to understand how Michael, as the antagonist, is characterized. As previously mentioned, Silvan Tomkins notes that the face is the primary site of affect since we are often most aware of our own face and the faces of others during interactions. “The body image is dominated by the face image” (Tomkins 115). He adds that, if it was possible to amputate the face and continue living, the longevity of the phantom face that would appear would be significant because we are constantly aware of faces (115). According to Tomkins (and drawing on Spitz), anything with two eyes and a face, “even if it’d be a grotesque mask” is able to elicit a reaction

⁸ Here, I am tempted to say “emotions and their affects,” but Carroll is very clear in this article that he is concerned with larger cognitive emotions.

(117). While he views the face as a positive stimulus in human development that offers novelty and familiarity – unfamiliar faces produce interest and familiar ones produce joy – negative affects can still be produced (118). Moreover, positive and negative facial interactions are fixed within what he refers to as “facial styles.” As Tomkins explains, facial styles represent enduring affects as a consequence of deprivation and failure resulting in the permanence of a particular face like sadness for instance (122). “These distinguishable components may in combination produce a resultant facial expression which is difficult to identify since it represents part goal, part expectation of outcome of instrumental activity, part reaction to the past, part reaction to the present and part expectation of the future” (Tomkins 122). Likewise, “reading” the face of others – interpreting facial expressions – is also a learned skill which allows one to imitate the look and feel of certain faces. “In this way we become capable of putting on masks” (119).

Michael Myers wears a pale white mask that is made to resemble an actual human face. Telotte describes it as “neither grotesquely distorted nor natural, but more resembling the face of a dead man” (Telotte 142). Despite his mask, we still perceive him as having a face, but our engagement with it as he returns the gaze is limited because the mask hides his expressiveness and makes him unreadable; we are unable to perceive his expressions and possible motivations when he returns the gaze. Since his true face is never revealed in a comprehensive way, his mask becomes a disembodied phantom face that is horrifyingly unexpressive. The mask itself is anatomically based on a human face that is permanently locked in a facial style of ambivalence which inevitably reflects Michael’s ambivalence towards murdering his sister in the past, towards stalking and

murdering teenagers in the present, as well as the expectation that he will remain ambivalent as he continues to do so in the future (which he does in the sequels). Such indifference is perhaps more frightening than any psychotic or deviant motivation which relates back to his characterization as an “it” – as a non-human entity with ascribed human features – which plays a role in our perception of him as he returns the gaze.

Regulating the Intensity of the Returned Gaze

Having considered the influence of narrative characterization on perception, it would be productive to examine how certain formal features of a sequence might be used in conjunction with the returned gaze to influence the intensity of the produced effects. In examining the pre-rational aspects of film reception, Carl Plantinga characterizes film as a sensual medium because it activates our senses to produce physical and bodily responses. He examines perception that is not “mediated by language or conscious thought,” because films are constructed artifacts where the spectator is invited to have an embodied experience (*Moving Viewers* 114, 117). This is how he is able to justify his approach of examining the formal properties of film. In accounting for the involuntary physiological responses – what is referred to as direct affect – he is able to consider the way in which the cinema engages with the physicality of the spectator. He also explains how one could go about accounting for the physicality in relation to bodily movement, and character distance before stating that this type of study has seldom been explored. In relation to the returned gaze, the formal presentation and construction of time and space around the gaze can produce these pre-rational sensations which contributes to the emotional and affective power of it. For this reason, it is worth looking at certain psychological theories to further my analysis of the film.

John Aiello's discussion of human spatial behaviour, or proxemics, is particularly useful in explaining the relation between focal length and character distance and emotional response. Drawing on E. T. Hall, Aiello defines proxemics as the study of our usage of space and its relation to culture (Aiello 391). Continuing with Hall, Aiello outlines four different spatial zones of human interaction. (1) Intimate distance ranges from 0 to 18 inches where sensory inputs are particularly strong; (2) personal distance ranges from 1.5 to 4 feet where sensory perceptions are minimally perceptible, a distance that is common amongst friends and acquaintances; (3) social distance ranges from 4 to 12 feet where people generally do not touch or expect to be touched; (4) public distance goes beyond 12 feet where actions must be exaggerated in order to be perceptible (like a speaker in an audience) (Aiello 392). One's desired level of involvement becomes a factor when it comes to the regulation of discomfort in interpersonal interactions from various distances. If someone is too close and the desired level of involvement is too low, then discomfort occurs (403). Similarly, discomfort is also likely to occur if someone is too far and the desired level of involvement is too low (403).

These can be roughly applied to focal length and camera distance when it comes to framing the subject returning the gaze. In dealing with the horror genre, it is important to specify that the level of discomfort is regulated by the distance between the camera and the horror because it seems reasonable to assume that the closer something threatening is, the stronger our reaction will be. The close-up and extreme close-up can be linked to intimate space where the level of discomfort is high. The medium close-up can relate to personal space where discomfort is still relatively high but less than that produced by its predecessor. Social space can encompass the medium shot and the

medium long shot with a moderate level of discomfort. Long shots and extreme long shots emulate public space where discomfort is low because the threat is at its lowest.

Such an assessment, however, becomes a little more complex when considering the desired level of involvement, because the very act of watching a film requires a high level of involvement, and this is especially true with the horror film. If a spectator finds that a film is too horrifying, distasteful, upsetting, or unwatchable, they have the power to leave the theater, turn off the TV or close their laptop. How then can we account for this involvement as a regulator of intensity? A viewer goes into a horror movie expecting, perhaps even hoping, for a certain level of discomfort. For this reason, I propose we look to our emotional engagement with the fiction itself in which we attentively, imaginatively, perceptually and sensorially engage with the subjective experiences of the fictional characters (as mentioned in the previous chapter). Therefore, it would only make sense that the desired level of involvement for a character in a horror film would be low; the film risks becoming a self-parody or a comedy otherwise. With regard to the communicative gaze which exists outside of the shot/reverse-shot structure and thus outside any diegetic subjectivity, the viewer engages with a hypothetical or imagined subjectivity which exists within the horror context and assumes a low desired level of involvement.

James Russell and Jacalyn Snodgrass examine how certain places can elicit certain emotions. They try to account for how features of certain places can produce various effects and all of the additional variables worth considering. Important to their study is defining what a “mood” is. A mood, according to them, refers to “the core emotional feeling of a person’s subjective state at any given moment” (Russell and

Snodgrass 247). Such a definition of a mood, to me, is somewhat vague, which is why it is worth further elaborating. In discussing cinematic moods and emotions, Greg M. Smith defines a mood as “a preparatory state in which one is seeking to express a particular emotion or an emotion set... A mood, therefore, is a longer lasting but less forceful emotion state whose orienting function encourages us to express a particular group of emotions” (G. Smith 113). With this definition in mind, Russell and Snodgrass argue that moods are influenced by aspects of the environment (Russell and Snodgrass 259). This is further explored as they explain that sensory dimensions of the environment like lighting, colour and noise are often assessed as mood-altering (260). However, they do note that the exact relation between sensory dimension and mood-altering elements in the environment is still somewhat ambiguous (260). The aesthetic complexity of the environment is briefly discussed as there exists a relationship between the level of complexity and the level of sensorial arousal (262). The final point worth mentioning is their discussion of persons and spaces. In it, the authors argue that “[the] physical presence of another person is a salient part of any environment” (266). The physical presence of another person in the environment or even the mere belief of their presence is enough to produce arousal (266).

When it comes to film, specifically horror, it seems reasonable to suggest that the *mise-en-scène* is designed to arouse certain moods. Darker lighting and colours can be used to obscure and/or hide certain objects in the frame which might influence the mood of a sequence where the gaze is returned. The complexity of a scene’s arrangement on its own might not appear as significant but, when placed alongside the returned gaze, it can influence the level of unease that is felt. In relation to the physical presence of another

person, all returned gazes rely on a visible physical presence, but there are times where the physical presence is hidden in plain sight due to its position in the environment. I argue that, in these instances, it is the realization of the monster's physical presence in the environment and that they are returning the gaze which is especially arousing. It subsequently influences the mood because there is a sense that the horror is lurking around every corner.

Gary Evans and Sheldon Cohen take up a similar project, as they examine specific environmental characteristics and their relation to stress and discomfort. The authors explain that all physical environments have certain characteristics that produce stress and that all biological organisms must self-regulate in the face of changing environmental demands (Evans and Cohen 571). According to the authors, stress is “a process that occurs when there is an imbalance between environmental demands and response capabilities of the organism” (573). They explain that stress happens when a person decides that environmental stimuli goes beyond their ability to manage it (573). They then categorize certain factors that might contribute to the stress. The perceptual salience of the stressor, the degree of controllability and predictability as well as duration and periodicity appear to be the most relevant to my project. Noise, crowding, heat and air pollution are subsequently examined as environmental stressors. Heat and air pollution do have some role to play when characterizing the filmic experience, but they are not very relevant to my current discussion and, for that reason, they will be excluded. The intensity, frequency, and duration is how noise is typically characterized. Loud and unpredictable noises typically increase stress (586-587). Crowding refers to “a psychological state that occurs when the needs for space exceed the available supply”

(589). Here, crowding can refer to the amount of people or objects in a given space. In both cases, stress is likely to occur when crowding is high (589-591). I would also add that stress might occur in environments where crowding is low. One could speculate that, as organisms, we crave an enclosed space; a wide-open space might deny us the security we derive from the protections that enclosed spaces provide.

As was the case with the desired level of involvement, filmic stress is entirely voluntary, perhaps even desired and, when it comes to the degree of controllability, it requires that we engage with the subjectivity of a character. It is also worth specifying that stress is not an emotion but rather a mental state in which tension or strain is applied to a particular emotion or affect. Additionally, noise can be linked to both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. The use of noise as a stressor in film is especially evident in horror; moments of still ambient noise are usually followed by a sudden and unexpected sound, or what is sometimes called a “stinger,” that startles the viewer. This is also commonly referred to as the “jump scare,” and its usage has been criticized within non-academic discourses because of the genre’s seeming overreliance on the technique, making it a predictable trope in the modern horror film. In relation to the returned gaze, the jump-scare or the sudden introduction of music can act as a preparatory mechanism which primes the viewer for the affects produced by the returned gaze. This, however, is not always the case. Furthermore, crowding is not to be confused with spatial complexity. Spatial complexity in film is best thought of as the arrangement of objects or people in a filmic space whereas crowding, as I see it, refers to the sense of openness and closedness that is produced by the spatial complexity. As the monster returns the gaze, crowding

which has a relation to framing, plays a significant role in the gaze's perception, perhaps contributing to a sense of vulnerability.

The Returned Gazes in *Halloween*

The first instance of the returned gaze in *Halloween* (1978) occurs when Laurie, Linda and Annie are walking home from school. After Linda parts ways and Annie is distracted, Laurie spots Michael from a distance who is partially hidden behind a hedge (see Figure 3.3). As Laurie brings his presence to Annie's attention, he vanishes behind the hedge. During this sequence, and as Michael appears, he is returning the gaze. This moment in the film is interesting because it is also the viewer's first partial glimpse of what Michael looks like. This glimpse is, however, partially obscured because of his distance relative to the camera and the fact that he is partially hidden behind the hedge. Despite being partially visible, the direction of his head coupled with the lighting and the innate feeling that he is looking at us allows one to conclude that this is indeed a returned gaze. Formally speaking, the sequence begins with a shot of Laurie and Annie walking. The following shot is of Michael from Laurie's perspective as she spots him looking at her while she is simultaneously moving towards him. The shot of Michael lasts roughly two seconds before cutting back to a shot of Annie and Laurie which emphasises her reaction of discomfort and curiosity to this staring stranger. Following this is the same POV shot of Michael as he vanishes behind the hedge. The sequence occurs within a shot/reverse-shot POV structure from Laurie's perspective as the camera slowly approaches Michael before stopping.

Through compositional means, the film emphasizes the returned gaze in this sequence. For the most part, the sequence in question is rather mundane; not much

happens as the three teenagers discuss their plans for Halloween night. Ominous music can be heard, but it eventually fades away. When Michael is first spotted, though, the very same music starts up again which queues our attention to his presence. Moreover, he is framed in such a way that positions him on a straight cement pathway surrounded by grass. The juxtaposition of the grass with the narrow pathway naturally directs our gaze towards Michael's. This is furthered as the shot, which is from Laurie's visual perspective, moves towards him, thus conveying a sense of forward momentum that equally captures our attention.

Michael is placed at a far distance from the camera – which assumes Laurie's subjective position – and thus can be characterized as a long shot or an extreme long shot. As a long shot, it perceptually imitates public space and our level of discomfort we experience from Michael returning the gaze is low. On a fundamental level, it is unsettling to notice someone staring at you in a public space, however, despite his distance, this moment is naturally unsettling. Conversely, since this is the first instance of the returned gaze, it seems reasonable to assess that the threat Michael Myers poses to the protagonist this early in the film is low. Regarding the production of mood, there is an interesting tension that is produced by juxtaposing Michael gazing with the bright afternoon lighting and fall colours of the suburbs. The tension produced is the result of positioning something threatening (Michael) somewhere that is designed to be soothing (the suburbs). The environment is not complex since it is minimally arousing as the suburbs are intended to be. One could also add that, because of the simplistic and non-threatening nature of the suburbs, Michael's gaze is much more threatening and unsettling than it would otherwise be in the city. The space itself is relatively open and

the stress from the sense of vulnerability is low. Taking this analysis into account, we can conclude that the unease produced by the returned gaze is minimal and, considering that this moment occurs early in the film and it is our first glimpse of Michael, such an assessment makes sense.

The next instance of the returned gaze is an interesting contrast to the first. After entering her room, Laurie walks over to an open window and sees Michael in her backyard, hiding behind white sheets hanging on the laundry line as he returns the gaze (see Figure 3.4). When he appears, his eyes are not visible due to his mask and his distance from the camera – in fact, much of his head is momentarily obscured by the sheet – nonetheless, the direction of his head and the feeling of his gaze allows me to surmise that this is an instance of the returned gaze. This moment exists within a shot/reverse-shot structure beginning with a shot of Laurie looking out the window followed by the shot of Michael which lasts roughly three seconds.

Unlike the previous sequence which focused the direction of our gaze towards Michael's, it is fairly easy to miss him during this sequence because he is positioned slightly to the right of the frame and camouflaged by the white sheets. Since he is not immediately perceptible, the sudden realization that he is intruding in an otherwise private space and returning the gaze arouses our sense of discomfort. The space itself is aesthetically complex and crowded as tree branches and bushes overlap into the borders of the frame while the sheets blowing in the wind occupy a significant portion of the frame. This environment lacks the sense of symmetry offered by the previous sequence which affects the mood and regulates the stress that is experienced. However, like the previous sequence, the lighting remains the same which produces the same kind of effect.

Similarly, Michael's returned gaze is framed as a long shot which means that the intensity of the discomfort remains low, but, coupled with all the other formal elements, this moment is felt more intensely.

The following instance of the returned gaze functions equally as a communicative gaze. To recap, the communicative gaze exists independently from a shot/reverse-shot structure where it appears as though, through their gaze, the horror antagonist is trying to communicate something to the viewer, and where viewer knowledge becomes one of the primary sources of the affects. This instance occurs after Annie enters the Wallace's laundry room. There is a shot that shows the door closing behind her which is followed by another of Annie looking at the door. The next shot is of the closed door being blown open by the wind and, as this happens, Michael becomes more visible from behind the window as the door closes (see Figure 3.5). While his face is partially obscured by the sheer draping of the door, certain features of his mask are still visible, and the direction of his head indicates that he is looking towards the camera. Not only can we conclude that this is a returned gaze but that it is a communicative one because Annie is not aware of Michael's presence, but we are.

Formally, the shot of Michael functions like the first two returned gazes. The shot itself is a medium close-up that lasts roughly four seconds. As a medium close-up, it perceptually emulates personal space where the intensity of the discomfort is strongly felt. It is dark outside at this point which means that darker color and lighting is used to enhance the mood, although this, in itself, is not unique to this film. In this moment, Michael does have a spectral quality to him because of the sheer drapes he is looking through. Because of the tight framing, the environment is not that complex, but it feels

crowded which, as a stressor, enhances the feeling of closedness. Moreover, like the previous sequence where Michael was hidden in the environment, he is not initially visible; his gaze in the shot is slowly revealed as the door closes. The viewer is given a false sense of security before becoming aware of his gaze which contributes to the overall feeling that he is around every corner.

With the communicative gaze, Michael establishes a superior epistemic position towards Annie, and the viewer, since she is unaware of (but suspects) his presence. It is as if he were teasing us. His gaze subsequently informs us of Annie's vulnerability and helplessness as we are confronted with our lack of agency since we cannot warn her that Michael is nearby. It is very clear that he is the driving narrative force in the film who possesses a certain amount of narrative agency that all the other characters seem to lack. This kind of communication produces an unwanted sense of intimacy between Michael and the viewer, as if he is letting us in on a secret. While the formal aspects of the image do have an impact on our perception of the returned gaze, as it exists outside of a POV shot structure, it is communicating something to the viewer without necessarily directly addressing them.

The final significant and discernable instance of the returned gaze occurs immediately after Bob's death where Michael, covered in a sheet with Bob's glasses, looks at Lynda. This sequence is perhaps more complex than the previous ones because the instance where the returned gaze occurs is not limited to one shot. The sequence starts with a shot of Lynda in bed followed by a shot of the door at the end of the bed opening to show Michael disguised as Bob (see Figure 3.6). The rest of the sequence largely consists of shot/reverse-shots of Michael looking at Lynda and Lynda talking to Michael

who she thinks is Bob. In total there are seven shots of Michael returning the gaze. The first two are medium long shots, the next two are medium shots and the last three are medium close-ups. The fact that he wears a sheet on top of his mask further obscures the direction of his gaze. There is, of course, no way of knowing for sure that he is returning the gaze, but it nonetheless feels as though he is. Like the first instance, Michael is positioned in such a way that directs our gaze towards his, made evident by the fact that he is positioned in the doorway and that he is strangely wearing glasses. The glasses subsequently direct our eyes to his.

In accordance with the model of analysis that I have been using, we can continue to analyze the formal aspects of this returned gaze. The first few shots of Michael, as medium shots and medium long shots, emulate social space, but the last few shots, as medium close-ups, emulate personal space; the intensity of the discomfort gradually intensifies. This is particularly noticeable as Lynda teases Michael (whom she thinks is Bob) with her naked body. As the framing becomes tighter, the space becomes more closed off and we can gradually hear Michael's breathing intensify. There is a more immediate sense of danger in this sequence which the other instances lack. Since this intensification occurs as Lynda sexually teases Michael, it is tempting to relate back to Clover and her notion of illicit sex and punishment in horror. Despite my best efforts to avoid these kinds of interpretations, perhaps they are inevitable when discussing genres like horror or the slasher.

While this is a very effective moment of the returned gaze, Telotte, speaking about this instance, calls it a "grotesquely ironic commentary on the way in which people see in the film" (Telotte 142). Although I am not concerned with its status as a

commentary, I would argue that this moment serves a conceptual function that aligns with Currie's definition of cinematic or representational irony. Currie explains that nature itself cannot be an ironic representation because irony is a matter of performance, as "the maker does something in the act of representing that makes the representation ironic" (*Narratives* 150). In this sense, ironic representations are artefactually created. Irony, according to Currie, involves a contrast between the different effects produced by an ironic utterance and the intended effects of that utterance if it were to be taken seriously (152). "In speaking or picturing or merely acting ironically one expresses, via an act of pretending, an attitude towards something" (154). In this particular sequence, irony is produced by the discrepancy between Michael Myers' comical and absurd disguise – which is, itself, a very simplistic and cliché signifier for a ghost – and the unease produced by the returned gaze which is framed by our knowledge that, in that moment, Michael will likely kill Lynda.

I had previously mentioned that interpretations that connect sex and violence seem inevitable in the horror film. Such a reading would suggest a rather puritanical and conservative outlook on sex, one in which sex is ironically equal to death. This is a reading one can ascribe to most horror or slasher films. In *Halloween*, as an agent of death, Michael punishes those who have sex. He does, after all, kill Bob, Lynda and his sister after having sex, as well as Annie who was presumably on her way to have sex. As was discussed in the previous chapter, though, with Currie and the appropriateness of certain kinds of interpretations, it might not always be productive to make such interpretations because their value and usefulness can be questioned. He says, "I am puzzled by the idea that we have made interpretive progress when we have said that this

thing is a symbol for that thing” (*Narratives* 177). He goes on to explain that in certain psychological theories where a person’s irrational behaviors are symbolic for their state of mind, any insight gained allows one to intervene to prevent that irrational behavior (178). In his analysis of *The Birds*, Currie explains that;

[There] is little to be learned about the causal structure of the emotional tensions among the characters from the causal structure of the birds’ attacks. While it may sound promising to suggest that the birds ‘symbolize’ various psychical forces, any attempt to specify what might actually be learned from this falters at the first step. (180)

It falters because the behavior of the birds lacks coordination as well as a “complex and systematic structure, elements of which... could be seen as correlates for aspects of the relationships between the human characters” (180). In this regard, Michael Myers is similar to the birds in that he lacks any real systematic structure. No real motive is given for his murder spree and he is not directly identified as deviant so there is no real correlation between the people he kills and the act of sex. As was the case with the birds, there does indeed seem to be some semblance of coordination on a macro level to Michael’s killings, but let us not forget the mechanic he kills off-screen and his attempt to kill Laurie who happens to stumble into his wake of death. Moreover, what does this tell us about the characters? How does it further our understanding of their emotional state? All that comes to mind is the fact that teenagers are reckless in their decision to be sexually active which is, itself, not of much use when furthering our understanding of the film or the returned gaze.

While the returned gaze is not a convention of the slasher *per se*, (unlike the seeming relation between sex and death), these instances do contribute to an overall

stalker aesthetic that this film deploys to its advantage. I am certainly not the first to notice this, but I am the first to place a significant emphasis on the returned gaze and its role within the film. It is particularly noticeable that, in all of the instances that were described, Michael is never framed in a close-up or extreme close-up which would otherwise emulate intimate space. If he was framed as such early in the film, the slow building anticipation would otherwise be lost. He looks from a distance and only ever approaches the camera when he is about to kill (as was the case with Lynda). In this way, the returned gaze mirrors a predator/prey dynamic where Michael is positioned as the predator hunting his prey and where we, as viewers, are ostensibly positioned as his prey.

By drawing on Tomkins and Carroll, we can begin to account for the importance of the face and how its presentation via the returned gaze can influence our perception of the character who looks. Similarly, using psychological literature on proxemic patterns, the relation between spaces and moods as well as environmental stress, we can consider the formal presentation and construction of the image as influencing and regulating our reaction to the returned gaze. All of this was possible through a close analysis of certain returned gazes in *Halloween*. The next chapter will attempt to clarify the specific power of the returned gaze and the emotion it produces in relation to horror. This will become possible by closely examining instances of the returned gaze in *The Shining*.

Chapter 4: Ghostly Looks in *The Shining*

On a fundamental level, emotions towards fiction are different from emotions in everyday life and, despite their “realness” or verisimilitude, it is useful to understand the different kinds of filmic or spectator emotions. Carl Plantinga categorizes the various types of spectator emotions, beginning with the difference between those that are global and local. He explains that global emotions “are important for maintaining the spectator’s focus and concern throughout the viewing of a film,” which usually includes emotions of suspense, anticipation and curiosity (*Moving Viewers* 68-69). Global emotions are also typically longer lasting and last the duration of a film (68-69). For instance, in *The Shining* (1980), we might feel anticipation every time Jack is shown because we are expecting a murderous rampage. As a global emotion, this anticipation captures and maintains our attention throughout the film. By contrast, local emotions are brief, typically lasting only a few seconds, and are the result of specific moments in a film (68-69). Being more intense than global emotions, local emotions “help to sustain interest” (68). The emotions associated with the returned gaze is more appropriately classified as local emotions because they are brief, intense, marked and isolated to moments where the monster looks at the camera.

The Shining is about the Torrance family – Jack, Wendy and their son Danny – who become the caretakers for the secluded Overlook Hotel during its off-season. Alone in the hotel, Danny, who has psychical abilities, is haunted by the ghosts of the hotel while Jack slowly descends into madness. The first instance of the returned gaze occurs when Danny has his first premonition while brushing his teeth. During his vision, the

Grady sisters are briefly seen for half a second returning the gaze. The shot is presumably taken from the moment where he encounters them for the second time. This single moment, while brief and combined with other equally horrifying images, produce local emotions that maintain our interest especially since these images are seen outside of their narrative context.

Difficulties do however arise when further considering the distinctions that Plantinga makes. The most relevant includes his distinction between direct emotions (not to be confused with direct affects which was mentioned in the previous chapter) and fiction emotions. He explains that direct emotions “stem from the spectator’s concerns about and interest in the content of the unfolding story” (72). These kinds of emotions appear to be related to viewer knowledge as direct emotions are usually the result of introducing or revealing new story elements. What is implicit here is that those story elements serve to move the plot forward. It is difficult to imagine how the fear of the returned gaze – and the subsequent unease that follows – would enrich our understanding of *The Shining*. But there is the occasional exception such as the ending of the film where Jack Torrance is presented in a picture from 1921 returning the gaze. Its counterpart, sympathetic/antipathetic emotions are the result of the viewer’s assessment of a character’s narrative situation as well as their goals, concerns and welfare (72). As is the case with direct emotions, it is difficult to imagine how what is produced by the returned gaze fits into this category. Likewise, fiction emotions “[take] as their object some element of the film’s fictional world” (69). Though he does not elaborate further, he does suggest that fiction emotions can relate to the way in which a film may formally present its fictional world and characters (74-75). As a formal choice in horror, the returned gaze

is ostensibly a way of presenting its monster. However, since, according to Plantinga, direct emotions and sympathetic/antipathetic emotions are usually fiction emotions, how can we begin to describe what is produced by the returned gaze as a fiction emotion if it is not entirely direct or sympathetic/antipathetic? This question reveals a possible limitation to Plantinga's approach since the effects produced by the returned gaze do not seem stable within the categories he outlines.

In spite of these limitations, horror films and their formal construction undoubtedly have some kind of effect on us which engages us emotionally and affectually. But, how can we identify the kinds of filmic emotions and affects that are produced by the returned gaze in horror? We can find possible answers by looking at certain psychological theories relating to emotions and mutual eye-contact in human interaction such as those offered by Mark Cook, Allan Mazur and his associates as well as those offered by Silvan Tomkins. Tomkins is specifically worth singling out because many of his theories, like those relating to fear, can be adapted to film to offer some insight into an analysis of horror film fiction, especially a film like *The Shining* which appears to be very aware of how it achieves the desired effects. This is precisely because it is a meticulously crafted and formally complex horror film that effectively uses the returned gaze as one of its primary means of producing fear and unease. The returned gaze seems especially significant in the film because most of the encounters with the various ghosts of the Overlook Hotel are presented to us through this technique.⁹

⁹ Though I am seldom concerned with auteurist arguments, there may be an auteurist aspect to the returned gaze in the films of Stanley Kubrick since it seems to reoccur in many of his films. Such moments include the opening shots of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) or the masquerade scene and those moments after where Bill realizes he is being followed in *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).

It is through an analysis of the returned gazes in *The Shining* that I will demonstrate how we can characterize an emotion like fear in horror fiction which seems to be connected to affects of excitement rather than terror. I also discuss how unease or discomfort comes about from the kind of mutual eye-contact that is emulated in horror. Broadly speaking, the point worth drawing out in this chapter is that the source of fear in the horror film is not just limited to its content like the monsters or certain scary narrative events, but it is also, and importantly, a result of the formal design of the filmed fiction, the effects of which are rooted in physiological, psychological and evolutionary facts. At the center of these formal effects is the returned gaze which is particularly powerful in demonstrating how this is manifested in horror.

The Production of Fear and Unease via Returned Gaze

When the gaze is returned in horror fiction, unease or discomfort is produced in the viewer. Such unease or discomfort, I argue, can be considered affects that function within the larger emotion script of fear. While the idea of a horror film producing fear is not new, the way in which discomfort or unease of the returned gaze is located within fear is worth considering. Fear is something that Tomkins discusses thoroughly. While he does not consider fear as an emotion – emotion being a term he later abandons in favor of the word “script” – he discusses fear-based scripts at length which can easily be interpreted as fear-based emotions (Nathanson xiv). First, Tomkins notes that we should not confuse fear with its activator. The activator is the signal that provokes fear (Tomkins 931). In the case of the returned gaze in horror, it is the mutual look that functions as the activator of fear. The affect of terror, according to Tomkins, is often accompanied by fear in fear-based scripts, but this does not seem to be the case in the horror film because

terror is described as “a response that is very toxic even in small doses,” and as “an overly compelling persuader designed for emergency motivation of a life-and-death significance” (933). For this reason, he explains that the cost of terror is high to the point where sustained terror over the course of a few days is enough to induce death (933). Horror films are not punishing in this way when presented to their intended audience.¹⁰ Rather, excitement seems to be what accompanies fear in the case of cinema. Tomkins explains that, instead of terror, excitement might follow which, in contrast to terror, is rewarding instead of punishing (932). Moreover, later he says that fear “may be sought and fused with excitement, for pure affect ‘kicks’ in which fear serves the function of a spice, converting a negative affect into varying ratios of mixed affect to heighten excitement and enjoyment” (951). This seems to adequately describe filmic fear.

It is also worth mentioning that fear, according to Tomkins (who draws on Schiff, Caviness, and Gibson), appears to be related to the optical stimuli produced by “looming” (Tomkins 938). Looming is perceived by animals as a sign of impending danger because the rapid approach of a solid body usually indicates an inevitable collision (938-939). Impending collision, as an aspect of fear, seems relevant to the horror film (i.e. those with a monster) because, in the most basic sense, fear comes from the impending collision of the characters and viewers with the monster. Certain horror films play with this fact through their usage of the returned gaze and character or camera movement.¹¹ This tells me that, in some fundamental way, certain instances of looming seem to be connected to

¹⁰ Here, I say “intended audience” because horror films can produce terror in children or individuals who try to avoid such films. The point here being that any terror response evoked by a media text is unintentional.

¹¹ A film like *It Follows* (David Robert Mitchell 2014) often frames its monster continuously walking towards a stationary camera while returning the gaze. The film’s plot establishes that, if “it” (the monster) catches up with you, you are dead.

the act of mutual eye-contact. In the case of a predator hunting its prey, for instance, it seems sensible to assume that it is not just the predator's continuous forward momentum that alerts the prey of danger but the fact that the predator is looking at, and therefore targeting its prey. While Tomkins himself does not mention this, one could argue that looming (in interactions between animals or people) involves a returned gaze or even the feeling of one because the signs of danger involves the recognition that you are about to collide with someone or something.

Of course, fear of collision and looming in animals is very different in humans. Despite our evolutionary progress, though, there is still some aspect that remains. For this reason, it is worth examining what is produced in addition to how and why it is produced when the gaze is returned. In discussing the gaze and mutual gaze in social encounters, Mark Cook argues that the gaze is one of the main signals of non-verbal communication. In essence, the gaze, according to Cook and the authors he cites, can say a lot about the opinions and attitudes of the person imposing it on another (Cook 330). In this respect, overt hostility can be communicated through a gaze. The gaze has also been interpreted as a sign of dominance with certain animals like primates (330). In such cases, the submissive animal usually avoids the gaze to prevent an attack. Cook, however, is skeptical when it comes to ascribing this kind of behavior to humans because of the difficulties of measuring dominance in humans (330). While this may be the case with human interactions, what about interactions with fiction? It seems plausible to suggest that, when the monster or horror antagonist returns the gaze, it is positioning itself as dominant. This is made most explicit during instances of the communicative gaze but perhaps functions more subtly in ordinary instances of the returned gaze. Moreover, Cook

notes that there is an anticipatory response that may result from being looked at. He explains, “[if] someone is looked at by a stranger or by someone he is not interacting with, he expects something to happen or an interaction to start” (331). It could be argued that the returned gaze in horror teases us with the possibility of an interaction with the monster which may or may not occur. This relates back to looming and the possibility of collision. This is evident during Lynda’s final moments leading up to her death in *Halloween* (1978) as the returned gaze anticipates – thus producing a kind of tension in the viewer – the moment where Michael finally attacks. Ultimately though, unease seems to be produced when the gaze is returned, evident by a study Cook references where strangers being stared at in a college library showed signs of unease by either leaving the room or objecting to the person gazing (332). Unease, as I argue, is the primary feeling provoked by the returned gaze which is related to fear-based emotions and the accompanying excitement.

Allan Mazur et al. discuss the physiological aspects of communication via the mutual gaze, the intensity of which, as they argue, can be manipulated through eyebrow signaling (Mazur et al. 50). They specify that the effect produced by mutual eye-contact is highly dependant on the context and how each participant perceives that context (51). With that said, they seem to be concerned with those contexts where the mutual gaze is perceived as a sign of assertion. They explain that, aside from overt combat, dominance amongst animals can be established through very subtle signals like a continuous look. “A mechanism postulated to operate across this range is the manipulation of discomfort levels during these encounters” (52). The goal for the animals in these encounters is to “outstress” the other and, when one animal is clearly bigger and more powerful than the

other, a single stare is often enough to produce submissive behaviours in the smaller animal (52). As such, the gaze for animals becomes a form of establishing social dominance (52). Although it is much more overt in animals, these physiological responses function at a subtle level within humans. For this reason, the authors use machines that measure blood circulation to determine stress levels in participants during their experiments. It should be noted that when the authors talk about stress, they mean something akin to discomfort or unease. Following their experiments – where subjects looked at each other with certain variations on conditions – they conclude that “an actor can manipulate elements of the stress response in another person through nonverbal signals in the eye contact channel” (72). As already established in a previous chapter, this process seems equally applicable to film. To expand on the points made in relation to Cook, I argue that this is what happens when the gaze is returned in horror; a hierarchy is produced when the monster returns the gaze (as the dominant) thus producing in us a subtle discomfort.

With that said, in *The Shining*, the second instance of the returned gaze happens when Danny is playing darts in the Overlook’s game room. As he goes to retrieve the darts, he turns around and sees the ghosts of Delbert Grady’s young daughters who are, of course, returning the gaze (see Figure 4.1). The sequence begins with a shot of Danny throwing darts. The camera follows him as he approaches the dart board. He turns around and the camera zooms on his face. The next shot is of the sisters returning the gaze which lasts roughly six seconds before cutting back to a shot of Danny looking. The same shot of the sisters follows, lasting nine seconds, before they walk away. This informs us that both shots of the returned gaze are part of a shot/reverse-shot structure. The film also

focuses our gaze towards the sisters by positioning them in the center of the frame, in the space between furniture and almost aligned with, though not entirely under, the doorway.

The source of the discomfort in this sequence is the very gaze that the Grady sisters return. Though their look is not overtly hostile towards Danny or the viewer, it is blank and expressionless which makes their gaze quite ominous. As a result, an unspoken hierarchy is produced through their gaze which positions them as dominant. Their gaze also produces in us a certain tension which is the result of the building anticipation of a possible interaction with characters we otherwise do not desire to interact with. The fact that their gaze is drawn out only amplifies this tension. With that in mind, discomfort is produced due to the imposed hierarchy and the tension of a possible interaction that ultimately does not occur. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the various formal aspects of the image regulate the intensity of the discomfort. Insofar as the shot of the sisters is a long shot, it emulates public space, meaning that the intensity of the discomfort is relatively low. However, the music – which is a high-pitched droning noise – combined with the very long shot duration of the gaze compensates for the low intensity of the characters' proximity.¹² The space itself appears crowded due to the arrangement of the furniture which does leave an open space, which is, however, occupied by the sisters.

The next occurrence of the returned gaze is quite complex and its classification as a returned gaze can be put into question. As Danny rides his tricycle down the corridors of the Overlook, he, once again, encounters the Grady sisters. The sequence begins with a tracking shot that trails Danny from behind as he makes his way through the halls and

¹² It is worth briefly mentioning that the usage of lighting and colours remains relatively consistent throughout the film. What is perhaps interesting is that the film uses very vibrant colours when inside the hotel.

corridors of the hotel. He turns the corner and the sisters are there at the end of the hall. What follows is a complex sequence of shots placed together to create a kind of rhythmic chaos. First, there is a shot of Danny which is followed by a shot of the girls looking in which Danny's head is visible at the bottom center of the frame. Those two shots repeat themselves as the sisters start talking. Then there is a very brief shot of their bloodied and butchered bodies which jumps to another of them returning the gaze.¹³ With every following shot, the image of them returning the gaze gets increasingly closer (see Figure 4.2). In total, there are three shots where the gaze is returned.

If we were to strictly adhere to the rules of identification outlined in the second chapter, the status of the returned gaze is put into question. When the sisters are first seen, Danny is present in the frame suggesting that they are looking at him. For this reason, this shot is not a returned gaze. Similarly, they start talking when it is clear that the gaze is being returned. As previously mentioned, overt exposition when the gaze is returned can distract from the pure affective potential of the gaze itself. However, there are loose exceptions if we consider it as similar to the ending of *Psycho* (1960). The first shot of the sisters returning the gaze (i.e. those where Danny is not visible in the frame) is framed in a long shot thus making their mouths barely visible as they talk. It is only with the second and third shots that we see their mouths moving. Moreover, in those second and third shots, what they are saying is not complicated enough to distract from their gaze. There is also a slight pause after each utterance of "and ever." Despite the relative

¹³ Among the many iconic moments in the film, this moment seems to be the most well-recognized. A film like *The Conjuring 2* (James Wan, 2016) takes inspiration from this moment when it frames a demonic nun returning the gaze in a narrow hallway (see Figure 4.3). The wallpaper on the walls is almost, if not entirely, identical to the wallpaper in *The Shining*.

ambiguity of this moment's status, there is still enough reason to surmise that it can be a returned gaze.

As was the case with the previous example, the gaze that is returned is not overtly hostile, but it is more sinister and less ambivalent than before. What they say – “come play with us Danny... for ever... and ever... and ever” – reinforces their sinister intentions. Their pale faces coupled with the shading around their eyes resemble skulls. This places them in a dominant position, tempting us to look away just as Danny does when he covers his eyes at the end of the sequence. Unease is the resulting affect that is produced and, as always, the formal elements regulate the intensity of this unease. The first shot is a long shot, the second is a medium-long shot and the third is a medium shot. Though they are not placed consecutively, they mark a gradual intensification of the affect. The space is not complex but, as it is a narrow hallway – which, in turn, focuses our gaze towards theirs – there is a strong sense of being enclosed. This intensifies as the camera gets increasingly closer, making it appear as if the space was closing in on us. But, simply leaving this analysis at that seems insufficient, because the sequence is much more complex. If we are going to account for the affective power of this sequence as a whole, we also need to consider the music, Danny's reaction shot and the shot of the dead sisters that are edited together to produce an overwhelming sensation which the unease is a part of. There is more going on beyond the unease resulting from the returned gaze. One could argue that this sequence is overwhelming because it imitates Danny's extra-sensory perception. Though this moment is rooted in the perceptual, when we apply this kind of reading to it, it verges into the realm of the conceptual.

The Affective Nuances of the Returned Gaze

Since moments of the returned gaze can be nuanced and complex, it is worth further considering Silvan Tomkins to account for such nuance. He does indeed discuss mutual eye-contact but, in doing so, he links it to the affect of shame-humiliation. He begins by explaining that, generally, mutual eye-contact is still somewhat of a taboo. “The taboo on mutual looking, because of the taboo on expression of affects, arises in part because of the unique capacity of the look–look with respect to expression, communication, contagion, escalation and control of affects” (Tomkins 373). In other words, because the expression of affects like anger are not seen as acceptable, the mutual look is similarly discouraged because of its ability to communicate and express such affects. He argues that, due to these long-standing taboos, shame-humiliation is closely connected to and usually follows moments of mutual looking (380). Looking is also closely connected to sexuality through what he refers to as “the sexual eye.” Amongst the various affects the eyes can express, he argues, they are “particularly well suited for the expression of sexual intent” (380). Sexual intent is often recognized through the act of staring which is, according to Tomkins, a more direct and effective way of guaranteeing a mutual awareness of sexual intent (381). The realization of such a look has the potential to produce excitement, shyness or fear in the person being looked at (381). While Tomkins does not link mutual eye-contact with discomfort or unease, he does say that the “eyes are used to express, receive and share experience of every kind of affect” which does not negate this possibility (386). Similarly, based on his argument, one could then argue that the affects exchanged by mutual looking are, or can be, multi-layered since being looked at can produce excitement with or without distress. He later notes that

sexual excitement can have a role in fear-based scripts as well which lends credibility that certain returned gazes can produce nuanced affects like unease and sexual excitement and still be broadly part of fear emotions.

From here we can begin to see how these nuances can apply to the returned gaze in horror. The claim could be made that, by utilizing the returned gaze as a technique, it is exploiting the taboo surrounding mutual looking to produce certain affects. Furthermore, while discomfort or unease is common amongst most, if not, all instances of the returned gaze in horror, it can also utilize other affects to produce more nuanced and complicated sensations. For instance, some horror films will imbue their monster with the “sexual eye” thus making their returned gaze unsettling but simultaneously erotic as we are confronted with discomfort and sexual desire. This is what is happening in the sequence in *The Witch* (2015) where the witch’s look is clearly seductive yet simultaneously unsettling. One could even suggest that her gaze is discomforting because it is so overtly sexual. Other films might present us with something disgusting that, when it returns the gaze, evokes both disgust and unease.

We can therefore begin to make sense of the Room 237 sequence, where Jack enters the room on Wendy’s behalf after Danny shows up with bruises on his neck, claiming that a woman did it to him. In this scene, Jack enters the room to investigate. As he enters the bathroom, he spots a young naked woman bathing. She gets out of the tub and approaches Jack. Jack impulsively embraces her only to look in the mirror to see that she has transformed into a decaying old woman who proceeds to chase him out of the

room (see Figure 4.4).¹⁴ The sequence begins with a shot of Danny in a trance, presumably using his psychic abilities to communicate with Dick Hallorann about Jack, evident by the high pitched droning noise that carries over to a POV shot from Jack's perspective. This shot pans over the interior of Room 237 before focussing on and approaching the bathroom door. Still in the continuous POV shot, Jack enters the bathroom and we see that the curtain to the bathtub is drawn with a faint figure looming behind it. This is followed by a shot of Jack reacting to this person's presence. After, we see the naked bathing woman slowly pull back the curtain. As she does this, she returns the gaze. For the first part of the sequence (i.e. before the young beautiful woman becomes old and decrepit) five shots of Jack reacting to the woman's presence are intercut with four shots of the woman getting out of the bathtub while returning the gaze. Each shot of the woman returning the gaze is ten seconds in length on average. Jack walks towards the woman and they embrace each other. After the camera pans to the mirror to show that the woman has spots of rotting flesh, we begin to hear maniacal laughter as shots of Danny, the old woman in the bathtub, Jack scurrying away, and the old woman returning the gaze while approaching the camera are intercut with each other. For the second part of the sequence, there are only two shots of her returning the gaze.

For the first part of the sequence, feelings of unease are combined with feelings of lasciviousness and are constantly working and feeding off one another. The discomfort from this sequence is, in part, linked to the narrative context in which it occurs. As the caretakers of the Overlook, the Torrance family are the only people living in the hotel.

¹⁴ One can begin to draw parallels between this sequence and the sequence from *The Witch*. They both have a woman seducing the character as they return the gaze. They also both end with the woman revealing her true nature.

Therefore, the realization that, not only is there someone where there should not be anyone, but that they are also looking at you, is enough to produce some discomfort. The initial source of unease is the result of the woman pulling back the curtains to reveal her presence and her gaze. Her look only becomes overtly sexual after Jack smiles with excitement. When this happens, her gaze becomes imbued with sexual intent, or the “sexual eye,” as Tomkins would put it. Her intention to seduce Jack is further punctuated by the way in which she slowly gets up and steps out of the tub and strikes an inviting pose all while maintaining our gaze. Her seductive look – which positions her as the dominant looker – and her forward momentum towards the camera anticipates the possibility of a sexual encounter which produces discomfort but also perhaps sexual arousal. Similarly, unease is also the result of an overtly sexual gaze that seems inappropriate given the tone and the slow pace of the first part of this sequence. This undoubtedly has to do with our access to non-diegetic elements like the music which guides our feelings, as if warning us not to succumb to the woman’s seductive and inviting gaze.

When the woman’s presumed true nature is revealed in the second part of the sequence, sexual arousal is quickly replaced with disgust which is combined with the usual discomfort as she returns the gaze. Disgust comes from the obvious fact that she is showing visible signs of decay, aspects emphasised by virtue of returning the gaze. With her arms extended outwards and her seemingly frozen toothless grin, she appears to want to reach out, to further interact with us and, given that she is taking pleasure in our disgust, any further interaction with her is something to be avoided. And yet, the fact that she is continuously walking forwards while the camera moves backwards, makes it seem

as though we cannot escape her gaze and further interaction with her appears inevitable. This suggests that she is in the dominant position with her hostile gaze which, again, generates unease.

Furthermore, the intensity of the feelings produced by each half of the sequence is reflected by their aesthetic composition. In the first part, the woman's gaze is framed as a long shot, meaning that the intensity of unease is at its lowest. It arguably escalates slightly as she approaches the camera, thus turning a long shot into a medium-long shot which makes her sexual intentions apparent. Because of the long shot and medium-long shot, we get a better sense of the environment of the bathroom which is colourful and oddly (perhaps even unrealistically) open, with a lot of empty space. This functions to both focus our gaze and produce a false sense of security. The second half intensifies as the old woman is framed from a closer distance which, while it technically imitates social space, feels as though it is imitating personal space because of the escalated intensity. This tells me that my methodology, as rigorous as it appears to be, is not an exact science, because our reactions to fictions, while real, are different from our reactions to the real phenomena which Tomkins and others are trying to explain. Furthermore, as a result of the woman's close proximity to the camera, she takes up most of the frame, making the space feel more enclosed. Likewise, as a persistent and continuous stressor, her maniacal laugh which, upon close examination, might not even be emanating from her because her mouth does not even move, emphasizes her ominous nature. Like the previous sequence with Danny and the Grady sisters, shots of the woman returning the gaze are intercut with different shots which have different functions in relation to the returned gaze. The shot of Danny convulsing functions to further our narrative understanding as it implies that he is

psychically observing the events in Room 237 unfold. The shot of the old woman in the bathtub contributes to our emotion of disgust as we see her rotting corpse from another angle.¹⁵ The other shot is of Jack reacting to the old woman moving towards him and trying to get away which functions as a point/glance shot to orient us towards the proper emotions and its affects.

The next instance of the returned gaze occurs just after Jack murders Hallorann, when Wendy, trying to escape the hotel, encounters two men in one of the rooms, one of whom is wearing a bear or dog costume and performing fellatio on the other man. Noticing Wendy's presence, they return the gaze (see Figure 4.5). This moment is much less complex than previous instances, but it nonetheless functions as an activator of fear through its exploitation of unease and bewilderment. Bewilderment is the result of the strange, perhaps even shocking sight of a man in a costume performing oral sex on another man within the context of the film. In fact, because there is no narrative context given for this particular sight, we are overcome by shock and perplexity. Both men appear to be reacting to Wendy's presence. The look offered by the man is one of annoyance, as if preparing to tell us something which presents the possibility of an interaction. While the mask that the man in the costume wears obscures his face, we can still see his eyes returning the gaze, and it could be assumed that he shares the same look as the other man. As always, their looks position them as the dominant. The resulting unease is combined with a dramatic zoom-in, which not only emulates the fear of collision but also forces us to acknowledge their gaze by magnifying it.

¹⁵ It is not clear how the shot of the old woman dead in the tub fits into the narrative because, in that moment, she is in two places at once. One could speculate though that this image comes from Danny's experience in Room 237, which took place off-screen.

The shot, from beginning to end, lasts roughly ten seconds, and it begins with a long shot of the costumed man on his knees and hunched over the bed. Our view of him is partially obscured by the doorframe to the point where, for the first few seconds of this shot (where the gaze is not returned), it is not immediately clear what we are looking at. As they move and look at us, we are confronted with their presence, and this realization stimulates arousal thus contributing to our unease. Furthermore, the dramatic zoom marks a sudden shift from long shot to medium shot where public space becomes social space and the likelihood of an interaction seems inevitable. The zoom also shrinks the space and increases the sense of crowding.

Jack's Returned Gazes and the July 4th Picture

The last notable instance of the returned gaze functions as a communicative gaze with conceptual meaning. This moment occurs after we see Jack's frozen corpse in the hedge maze. We then see an image of Jack smiling and returning the gaze in a picture dated July 4, 1921. I argue that, being the final shot of this film, to fully consider its weight, we need to consider the two other instances where Jack returns the gaze, which arguably brings him closer to madness and that final shot. The first is when Danny goes to retrieve a toy from their room and sees Jack, awake, in bed, as he slowly turns his head to return the gaze. The second happens just before the Room 237 sequence where, angry at being accused of harming his son, Jack goes to the ballroom bar and Lloyd the bartender appears, either as a product of Jack's imagination or the machinations of the Overlook Hotel. Their importance has more to do with what they represent for Jack as a character rather than what they produce.

As Danny enters the room in the first occurrence, the camera swings around to Jack who is sitting on his bed, looking into the distance. He then slowly looks towards Danny to return the gaze (see Figure 4.6). The shot itself lasts ten seconds with the returned gaze only occupying about a second and a half of that time. This moment is drawn out because it builds anticipation leading to the returned gaze especially since Danny was warned beforehand not to bother his sleeping father. It, of course, produces unease through the same ways the other instances have, but what is relevant here is the significance of the scene itself. For Jack, it is the first time that the idea of hurting his family comes up. But, more specifically, since the beginning of the film, Jack has been gazing at his wife and son from a distance – notable moments include when he imagines himself looking over them as they play in the hedge maze and when he looks at them playing in the snow with a blank expression on his face – but his gaze is never returned to the viewer in the way that I have been describing. Up until this point, all of the returned gazes have been from the ghosts of the Overlook. As such, when Jack first returns the gaze, we are meant to perceive him as a potential threat as was the case with those previous gazes.

In the second occurrence, Jack, looking for a drink, goes into the ballroom. After proclaiming that he would “give his goddamn soul for just a glass of beer,” the next shot is of him facing the camera with his hands covering his face. As he reveals his face, not only is he returning the gaze, but he is smiling as well (see Figure 4.7). Following this smile, he addresses the ghostly bartender Lloyd whom we then see in the following shot. As his look produces an unsettling feeling, it is becoming clearer that Jack’s status as the villain is becoming less ambiguous. Moreover, within the narrative, this is a significant

moment because it is Jack's first interaction with a ghost where he vents his frustrations and indulges his alcoholism which foreshadows his rampage. The argument could thus be made that, through the use of the affects produced by the returned gazes from Jack, the film prepares us for the climax of the film where he tries to kill his family, and it subsequently prepares us for the final shot of the film.

As something that is built-up and anticipated, the final shot of Jack in the photograph from 1921 functions as a communicative gaze because of the absence of a subjective character perspective (see Figure 4.8). Unlike the instance in *Halloween*, this one is a little more complex because, while Jack is returning the gaze, he is not necessarily the one that is communicating to us. Rather, by using Jack's gaze, it is the Overlook Hotel that is communicating to us. The song "Midnight, the Stars and You" – which is used in an earlier scene in the hotel ballroom – is heard echoing through the halls of the hotel as the camera approaches the picture and focuses in on Jack's face.¹⁶ From this, one could make the claim that the hotel is its own autonomous entity and, as such, reveals itself to be the true antagonist of the film that had the most narrative agency to begin with. In this moment, the hotel is revealing its presence, but it does so through Jack's gaze. Through an unwanted intimacy, it is communicating to us that if it was going to lose, it was not going to do so empty-handed, by claiming Jack's life. Jack is a part of the hotel, frozen in a single moment in time. One can make parallels to his face and Tomkins' notion of "facial styles," except, in this case, through the act of photography, Jack is literally stuck with a particular face. This face is the face of joy which informs us that he is happy. The happiness conveyed through his gaze is particularly unsettling

¹⁶ Interestingly, one of the lyrics in the song is "your eyes held a message tender" which is coincidentally fitting.

considering what we, as viewers, witnessed him do. As a facial style it subsequently informs us of Jack's reaction to his past, to his present as well as his expectations of the future which, in turn, echoes the fact that Jack is a part of the Overlook and always has been.

By making use of Silvan Tomkins, we can see how, as a formal technique, the returned gaze in the horror genre imitates perceptual stimuli associated with looming which, in turn, exploits larger emotion scripts of fear that, in the case of fiction, is closely associated with excitement. Such fear is related to the possibility of collision with the horror monster. Despite the difficulties of locating the returned gaze within the various kinds of spectator emotions that Plantinga outlines, we are nonetheless able to identify the various affects that the returned gaze produces with unease being the most reliable and recurring affect. Through Mark Cook and Allan Mazur et al., we can see how and why unease comes about when the gaze is returned in horror. Ultimately, through an analysis of the various returned gazes in a cerebral and formally complex horror film like *The Shining*, we can begin to understand how horror films can evoke real reactions through various formal means that are rooted in human psychology, physiology and evolution.

Conclusion

The returned gaze, as I have described it, is particularly evocative when it is used in the horror film. It raises many difficult questions regarding narration, narrators and enunciation, but, ultimately, certain vagaries can be set aside as we consider the narrative logic of a film as the enunciator when a character returns the gaze. Moreover, the technique is one that is functionally diverse and varies depending on the context in which it is examined. To argue that it has a specific function regardless of context does not do the returned gaze justice.

Many authors have argued that the technique has a distancing effect where the viewer is pulled out of the cinematic fiction for some intellectual contemplation that has little to do with emotions and affects. By locating the returned gaze within a horror context, it becomes evident that this is indeed a false assumption because it assumes that cinema is an illusion and that emotions are rooted in belief. Instead, emotions produced by the returned gaze in fiction are the result of the viewer's sensual, perceptual and imaginative engagement with the fiction. It is through this dismissal that we can identify what returned gazes and communicative gazes are.

Subsequently, an analysis of the technique can resurrect and even further Carol Clover's argument about horror's obsession with eyes, faces and the gaze. Moreover, by considering the narrative characterization of the horror and how its face is perceived, we can gain some insight into the influence it has over us when they return their gaze. Similarly, by considering certain theories in environmental psychology as well as a detailed analysis of certain moments in *Halloween*, the formal possibilities of the

returned gaze were explored. As such, the formal presentation of the returned gaze functions to regulate the intensity of the emotions and their affects.

The gaze itself functions as an activator of fear-based scripts where unease or discomfort are the primary and consistently reoccurring affects when the gaze is returned. Unease from ocular intimacy is the result of certain facts inherent to human nature which is subsequently exploited by the horror film every time the gaze is returned. Any singular instance of the returned gaze in horror is more layered and nuanced beyond the affect of unease as it incorporates other affects like disgust or sexual intent. All of this is evident in a formally complex film like *The Shining* which uses the returned gaze frequently as a way of transmitting these affects.

Much of what has been said can be expanded upon and even taken in different directions, especially those ambiguities that remain in my discussion of narratives. As Metz and Casetti point out, the effect of the returned gaze happens in degrees, since certain gazes can be alienating without assuming that cinema is an illusion. With my characterization of the returned gaze, I could go about describing how it might be alienating in horror. A good place to start would be Tom Brown, because I imagine that the resulting identification would be similar to his notion of the “direct address.”

We could also examine questions of gender when the gaze is returned in horror. After all, Tomkins and Berger both explain that the evil eye has been historically attributed to women. To begin thinking about the question of gender, Laura Mulvey would be useful because she is concerned with the male gaze. Further inquiries would consider or problematize gender and character identification and might ask what the

difference is when the character being looked at is male with a female looker and vice-versa.

More could also be discussed regarding the emotions and affects of the returned gaze in different non-horror contexts. While much has already been said regarding the effect of the returned gaze in the musical and the comedy, I would imagine that using the technique as I have characterized it would yield different results. A discussion about the technique in the fantasy, action or adventure genre might even be interesting. For instance, during the last episode of *Game of Thrones* second season, the White Walkers, the enigmatic and magical antagonists of the series, are revealed for the first time. It is significant that this reveal takes the form of a returned gaze (see Figure 5.1).

One could even consider the returned gaze in a medium like videogames which are similar to, but also fundamentally different from cinema. Many interesting narratological questions would arise by considering videogames that make use of the first-person perspective where player agency and narration converge with the returned gaze. The returned gaze might even be more acceptable in a medium like videogames because it functions to further player engagement. There are also some instances where the returned gaze becomes a gameplay element. This is the case in a game like *Metro 2033* which is a first-person horror survival game where, at one point, players are forced to confront mutated monsters who can easily kill them. However, one way of preventing an attack is to make eye-contact with them while maintaining a certain distance. After a few seconds of staring, they eventually run off, but, if eye-contact is broken, they will attack. These encounters are both intense and unsettling because players are forced to confront an otherwise dangerous enemy through non-hostile means.

Known as *oculus fascinus* by the Romans, *baskania* by the Greeks, *arnabissa* by the Syrians, and *böser Blick* by the Germans, the myth of the evil eye is perhaps one of the most universally recognized beliefs (Tomkins 374). With the proliferation of scientific and modern developments, the belief in the myth of the evil eye is slowly disappearing. Despite its disappearance, there is still some aspect of the myth that exists within our collective subconscious. Thus, the claim could be made that, through the returned gaze in the horror film, the myth of the evil eye lives on through a more historically contemporary medium.

Appendices

Introduction

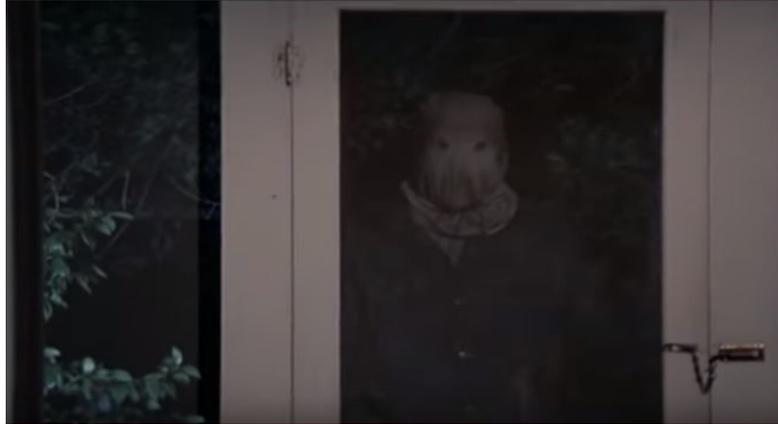


Figure 0.1: The Phantom Killer as he returns the gaze before attacking his victim in *The Town that Dreaded Sundown* (1976).



Figure 0.2: Damien looks at the camera as if informing the viewer that he has won in *The Omen* (1976).



Figure 0.3: Pennywise taunts Mike by looking at the camera and returning the gaze in *It* (2017).

Chapter 1: The Question of the Returned Gaze



Figure 1.1: The witch exits her home to seduce Caleb by returning the gaze in *The Witch* (2015).



Figure 1.2: *Portrait of Paquius Proculo and his Wife* (70-79 CE).



Figure 1.3: *Self-Portrait* (1790) by Elizabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun.



Figure 1.4: *Mona Lisa* (1503-1505) by Leonardo Da Vinci.



Figure 1.5: *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez.



Figure 1.6: Antoine Doinel looks at the camera after escaping a detention center for youths in *The 400 Blows* (1959).

Chapter 2: Characterizing the Returned Gaze in Horror Cinema



Figure 2.1: Frankenstein's monster is seen for the first time in *Frankenstein* (1931).



Figure 2.2: A possessed Regan twists her head and appears as though she is returning the gaze in *The Exorcist* (1973).



Figure 2.3: Norman Bates returns the gaze and a skull is graphically matched with his face as the scene transitions in *Psycho* (1960).



Figure 2.4: A ghost of the Overlook Hotel returns the gaze in *The Shining* (1980).



Figure 2.5: The monster looks through the burrowed-out eye sockets to look at the camera in *Jeepers Creepers* (2001)

Chapter 3: Looking from a Distance in *Halloween*



Figure 3.1: The camera slowly approaches the flickering light in the pumpkin's eye in *Halloween* (1978).



Figure 3.2: The opening title sequence of *Vertigo* (1958) explores the features of a woman's face which is similar to the title sequence in *Halloween*.



Figure 3.3: Our first real glimpse of Michael Myers who is returning the gaze from a distance while stalking Laurie.



Figure 3.4: Michael stalks Laurie from her backyard as he returns the gaze. He is not initially perceptible because of his positioning within the frame and because of the sheets which camouflages him



Figure 3.5: Michael stalks Annie who is unaware of his presence. Since he appears to be looking at the camera, this moment functions as a communicative gaze.



Figure 3.6: Beginning with the top left image, these are the three different camera positions from which Michael is framed as he's disguised as Bob.

Chapter 4: Ghostly Looks in *The Shining*



Figure 4.1: The Grady sisters return the gaze to us and Danny in the Overlook game room.



Figure 4.2: From left to right, this is Danny's second encounter with the sisters. Each still represents the different camera positions as the sisters return the gaze. However, as is noted, the first still does not count as a returned gaze because we can see Danny in the frame.



Figure 4.3: This moment from *The Conjuring 2* (2016) where a demonic nun returns the gaze is formally similar to the previous instance in *The Shining* with the Grady sisters.



Figure 4.4: The ghostly woman engages us and Jack through a seductive “sex look” before turning into a decaying old woman. The top row represents the first half of the sequence while the bottom row represents the second half.



Figure 4.5: Beginning from the top left, both men return the gaze as they realize that Wendy is watching them.



Figure 4.6: Jack returns the gaze for the first time making his status as the villain less ambiguous.



Figure 4.7: Jack once again returns the gaze as he sees or imagines Lloyd, the bartender. This also contributes to Jack's evolution as a character.



Figure 4.8: Through Jack's frozen gaze in a picture from 1921, the Overlook Hotel communicates to us.

Conclusion



Figure 5.1: A White Walker returns the gaze in the season two finale of *Game of Thrones*. This moment is significant because it is our first glimpse of these enigmatic beings.

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