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**TRAUMATIZED CHARACTERS IN TRAUMATIZED ENVIRONMENTS:  
A LOOK AT REPRESSION AND HORROR**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud once wrote, “Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways”.<sup>1</sup> Freud’s theories still permeate Western culture and scholarship, and his ideas saturate numerous fields of study.<sup>2</sup> Although many of his theories have long been overturned in psychology, Freud remains at the heart of film analysis. He offers a valuable notion of trauma, based within his concept of repression, that provides an interesting analysis into how the environments of films function around expressions of trauma. From a Freudian point of view, trauma often functions within the unconscious, as these unexpressed emotions are pushed away from the conscious mind and result in repression.

‘Return of the repressed’ is a process by which repressed wishes, desires, or traumas become forever re-emerging “in the shape of secondary and more or less unrecognizable derivatives of the unconscious”.<sup>3</sup> Trauma manifests as a symptom of repression in the environments of three specific horror films; Nicholas Roeg’s *Don’t Look Now* (1974), Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980), and Ari Aster’s *Midsommar* (2019). Environment here refers to the specific narrative space of each film and includes the characters, places, and sounds. Film environments are cinematic spaces of meaning, conducive to analysis. These spaces operate as a medium on which film and theories can be integrated.<sup>4</sup> Film environments thus become testing grounds for reflections and interpretations of theoretical concepts and perform a crucial role in decoding the texts of individual films.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, 1915-17.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Blum, “Freud is Everywhere”, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychoanalysis-unplugged/201705/freud-is-everywhere> (accessed December 4, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Jacobson, *Constructions of Cinematic Space: Spatial Practice at the Intersection of Film and Theory*, 2005, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Jacobson 20.

Each of these three films illustrates Freud's concept of return of the repressed through character arcs that progress within these particular film environments that are ultimately representative of and interactive with the protagonist's trauma and repression. Freud's 'return of the repressed' provides the basis on which to explore this paper's claim that the repressed traumas of the protagonists return as manifestations in the cinematic space each character inhabits, as they exist in a space that is equally as traumatized as they are. This is exemplified through the characters' journeys within these traumatized spaces—spaces that ultimately reflect the trauma they have yet to process.

Clive Barker, esteemed horror writer and director, acknowledges the horror genres existence within both the ordinary realm of reality and the nightmarish realm of fantasy.<sup>6</sup> The horror genre stands apart from traditional Hollywood cinema, providing a space that welcomes the taboos of society. Gina Wisker writes that horror is a way of “dramatizing our hidden fears through fantasy that takes the everyday that few steps farther”.<sup>7</sup> Theorists concur that horror films are often the first to push boundaries, containing monsters that stand for the insecurities lurking beneath social orders as they depict the ever-present threat of social disintegration.<sup>8</sup> The structure of the horror film allows for a separation of human and monster that leads the film to exist in a space separate from our human world, and therefore a space more palatable for which to critique it. Horror often makes use of a traumatized environment as a space that allows the characters to interact with their own trauma. The genre has been written about in relation to commentary on national traumas, as these films often put the fears of a nation into words and images, such as Georges Franju's depiction of post-Holocaust trauma in *Le Sang des Bêtes*

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<sup>6</sup> Clive Barker, *Where Nightmares Come From*, 2017, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Gina Wisker, *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*, 2005, 1

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Anker, “The Liberalism of Horror,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 81. 4 (Feb. 2014): 796, online, Internet 5 Dec. 2019. Available:<https://muse-jhu-edu.ccl.idm.oclc.org/article/566953/pdf>.

(1949) and Eli Roth's critique of biological warfare in relation to the aftermath of 9/11 in his film *Cabin Fever* (2002).<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> The genre, however, also provides a strikingly realistic representation of personal traumas, creating an environment that is filled with the personification of individual trauma. This interaction between horror film environments and individual trauma leads to a deeper understanding of the return of repressed trauma. These insights get taken up in productive ways by two thinkers in particular, Slavoj Žižek and Robin Wood, whose works enhance the analysis of these three critically acclaimed horror films that provide exemplary connections between trauma and environment.

Though these three films explore different notions of traumas in different film environments, they follow relatively similar trajectories, which allows for the comparative analysis between the three films to explore a deeper truth gained from the study of horror and trauma. *Don't Look Now* and *The Shining* follow two families succeeding events of familial trauma, conceived at the hands of the patriarch, as they move to new environments that essentially mirror their trauma. Ultimately, neither John (*Don't Look Now*) nor Jack (*The Shining*) are able to progress through their environments, overwhelmed and overtaken by the manifestations of their own traumas that reassert themselves throughout the traumatized spaces they end up in. In *The Shining*, however, Jack's son Danny interacts with the space in a more advantageous way, eventually outwitting both Jack and the space itself. In *Midsommar*, it is the female protagonist, Dani, who outlives her male counterparts, successfully navigating her repressed trauma as enforced through the environment of the film. Dani's journey in *Midsommar* differs from the two other films, as she finds herself in a society that welcomes her trauma

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, 2005, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Jacobson, *Constructions of Cinematic Space: Spatial Practice at the Intersection of Film and Theory*, 2005, 20. Amanda Alvarado, *Living in Terror: Post 9/11 Horror Films*, MA Thesis. Indiana University, 2007, 16.

instead of burying it. Leaving the confines of traditional Western society behind in the pagan commune of Hårga, the environment not only invites Dani's repressed trauma out of the woodwork, but also encourages a processing of it instead of a fear. This is exemplified through Robin Wood's notation of basic repression versus surplus repression.<sup>11</sup> This notion sets up the stage for the contrasting outcomes of *Don't Look Now* and *The Shining* in relation to the recent text of *Midsommar*, drawing attention towards the enforced repression of trauma brought about through Western society, and the implications of living within a society that represses trauma instead of welcoming it.

### **NICOLAS ROEG'S *DON'T LOOK NOW* (1973): UNCOVERING TRAUMA THROUGH MISRECOGNITION IN THE ENVIRONMENT**

"The unconscious body acts faster than the mind ever can" is a line that the protagonist of *Don't Look Now*, John Baxter, relays to his wife Laura.<sup>12</sup> This one sentence hints at the films interplay between trauma and unconscious thought, with a nod to Freud's theory of repression. The film follows the protagonists, John and Laura Baxter, beginning with the tragic drowning of their daughter Christine. Hidden from the pouring rain inside their country cottage, John studies an upside-down polaroid of an old Italian church while Christine and her brother Johnny play outside. Upon closer examination, a small red coated figure lurks, barely visible in the background of the photograph. Suddenly, John knocks over a jar on his desk, covering the image with water and red ink. Seemingly overtaken by some sort of psychic feeling, John rushes outside, seconds too late, to discover his red coated daughter, Christine, face down in the water.

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<sup>11</sup> Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond*, 2003, 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Don't Look Now*, Dir. Nicolas Roeg, Casey Productions & Eldorado Films, 1973. Film.

As he tries to resuscitate her, the red ink flashes over the image of the church, marking the Italian landscape before the couple even arrives.

John feels particularly responsible for this traumatizing event, as it was he who allowed Christine to play near the pond. Struggling to cope with the trauma, John uproots himself and Laura, after taking a job restoring an old church, likely the same church from the photograph, in an attempt to leave behind their painful memories. Somewhat ironically, the couple find themselves in Venice, Italy, an environment that is eerily representative of the source of their trauma—a space characterized by its complete encompassment by the surrounding waterways and a recurring theme of the color red. Venice, in this sense, can be understood through Freud as an uncanny environment for the couple, marked by frightening things that eventually lead them back to what is known and familiar.<sup>13</sup> This city of water evokes drastically different outcomes for the couple, although they both cope with the same trauma. Immediately upon arrival, John and Laura remark at the strange familiarity of this novel place and John mumbles to himself that “nothing is what it seems”.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, nothing is as it seems and the familiarity becomes increasingly uncanny as the environment begins to unfold itself, revealing its innate connection to the Baxters and their trauma.

After signing a restaurant bill with a red pen, Laura wanders into the bathroom. It is here that she meets two old women, Heather and Wendy. Laura’s first conversation with these women is accompanied by shots of the sparkling water in the Venetian canals and flashbacks to rain pouring down on their countryside home. Laura takes up endeavors of the supernatural as she comes in contact with a medium in the form of Heather, who claims to see the deceased Christine sitting between the couple. Heather tells Laura “You’re so sad and there’s no reason to

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<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, 1919, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Don't Look Now*, Nicolas Roeg.

be. I've seen her and she wants you to know that she's happy. She's with you my dear and she's laughing".<sup>15</sup> At first Laura is skeptical, but when Heather mentions Christine's red coat, Laura trusts that this is more than a coincidence.

Laura immediately faints at the thought of contact with the deceased Christine. As she falls, she knocks a glass of water off the table and it drips slowly onto the ground until the scene cuts. Upon awakening, Laura employs a joyous demeanor. She seems to have come to peace with her trauma through this notion of perceived contact with her departed daughter, telling John, "I haven't felt this good in months and months. I feel really great!".<sup>16</sup> John tells her that "seeing is believing", an interesting comment as he soon begins to see manifestations of Christine in the environment.<sup>17</sup>

While John is happy for Laura, he finds little solace in his wife's entrancement with these women, refusing to believe their connection to the supernatural. This denial comes as a symptom of his unconscious refusal to accept Christine as dead, which manifests later on. John's unconscious attachment is mirrored through his continued connection to the color red. He carries a red pencil in the front pocket of his suit jacket, which is later traded for a red scarf he wears around his neck. The perceived existence of Christine's spirit within this space harbors a comfort for Laura. Heather and Wendy are a product of the Venetian environment and even more so, a product of Laura's repressed trauma, as she uses this supernatural connection as a means of solace in the reassurance of Christine's forgiveness. Through these women, Laura finds peace in Christine's death inside the confines of the Venetian labyrinth. She begins to recover from her trauma, lighting red candles for Christine in a church as she begins to forgive herself, telling

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<sup>15</sup> *Don't Look*, Roeg.

<sup>16</sup> *Don't Look*, Roeg.

<sup>17</sup> *Don't Look*, Roeg.



John “I want to get rid of this. It’s been like some pain and finally, through these women, I’ve discovered how”.<sup>18</sup> Heather, speaking through Christine, warns Laura of the dangers of staying in Venice. The next morning, the couple awakes to a phone call bringing about news of their son Johnny’s accident at boarding school. Taking this as a sign, Laura leaves Venice, a symbolic moment in the acceptance of her trauma. Through interaction with the Venetian environment, Laura escapes the negativity of her trauma and moves forward while John remains trapped.

The women tell John that the deceased Christine fears for his life and they urge him to leave Venice, but he cannot. To understand this, it is important to examine Venice as a labyrinth. Labyrinths have been used throughout history, literature, and film as sites in which humanity confronts and conquers (or fails to conquer) its animal nature.<sup>19</sup> Animal nature is comparable to repression here, as it is what John represses that he must confront in his new environment.

It is while taking a nightly stroll through Venice that John first sees a red coated figure. According to Freud, “a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny sensations is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not”.<sup>20</sup> Throughout this city of canals, John aimlessly chases a red coated figure, a figment of his unconscious and repressed trauma, holding on to some far-fetched belief that this could be his deceased daughter. The Venetian environment holds significant importance as its overwhelming landscape of water encapsulates the water-born trauma that John has experienced and subsequently repressed. With Laura gone, John spirals. Walking along the canals, John stops to watch as a drowned woman is pulled from the water. Another scene shows John plucking a plastic baby doll from the canal. These uncanny scenes echo his trauma as Venice presents itself as a winding maze full of motifs

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<sup>18</sup> *Don’t Look*, Roeg.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Harris, “David Mitchell in the Labyrinth of Time,” *SubStance* 44.136 (March 2015): 5, online, Internet 5 Dec. 2019. Available: <https://muse-jhu-edu.ccl.idm.oclc.org/article/577268/pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, 8.

reminiscent of the musings of John's unconscious, in the form of water and this mysterious red coated figure who eventually leads to John's demise. John becomes trapped in this environment much like he is trapped within the confines of his own unconscious as he leads himself towards an untimely death.

John Izod describes *Don't Look Now* as "a search for the meaning of an image"<sup>21</sup>. John searches the living for remains of his deceased daughter, utterly unconscious of what he is doing.<sup>22</sup> The complexities that exist within the interaction between John and his environment can be understood through John's own misrecognition of the symbols he comes across, particularly the red coated figure. In "The Truth Arises from Misrecognition Part I", Zizek comments on a paradoxical structure that exists within this film. It is only through misrecognition that the subject is able to journey into the past, and ultimately create the future that was always intended to exist.<sup>23</sup> Zizek notes that "the truth literally arises from misrecognition".<sup>24</sup> This misrecognition is reality mediated by human error, a misidentification in order to make sense of reality. Misrecognition is a means of simultaneously excusing oneself from responsibility in the creation of this particular reality by overlooking how one's act is already part of the state of the current reality.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the truth is uncovered through one's overlooking, and the error becomes part of the truth. This structure plays out perfectly throughout the entirety of *Don't Look Now* as John's journey into the past is elicited through his misrecognition of a red coated figure as his

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<sup>21</sup> John Izod, *The Films of Nicolas Roeg Myth and Mind: Don't Look Now*, 1992, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Izod, 67.

<sup>23</sup> Slavoj Zizek, "The Truth Arises from Misrecognition Part I," Routledge (1991), in *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, 1991, ed. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher, 189.

<sup>24</sup> Zizek, 190.

<sup>25</sup> Etienne Poulard, "Shakespeare's Politics of Invisibility: Power and Ideology in *The Tempest*," *International Journal of Zizek Studies* 4 (2016): 6.

deceased daughter. Through this misrecognition John is led to intervene with a scene from the past, making his story become what it was always intended to be.

Far too traumatized by the passing of his daughter, John represses the truth, allowing himself to return to a period in which Christine is still alive. Although Laura is gone from Venice, John fails to accept that she has transcended without him, and even sees what he believes to be her, riding a boat along the Venice canals. When he speaks to Laura on the phone, she assures him she is not in Venice and he must be disillusioned. It is later revealed that the Laura John sees is a future version of her, riding the boat in John's own funeral procession. His misrecognition of the scene later leads to the truth of his death and his wife's evolution to a space less traumatized without him.

John's repression manifests in the form of the red coated figure who serves to end John's life. By believing that he can intervene with fate, and therefore redeem himself of the burden of responsibility he holds in relation to Christine's death, John follows the figure, trying to save the already departed Christine. As John chases the red coat through the labyrinthian environment, it is the reflection he sees of Christine in the water that is shown more than the reality of the red coated figure running along the canals. This reflection symbolizes John's misrecognition in a Lacanian sense, referred to as "méconnaissance systématique de la réalité" or paranoiac delusions that are often experienced through means of reflection.<sup>26</sup>

Laura, back in Venice because she is worried about John, follows him as he chases the figure through the labyrinthian environment into a gated area, shutting the gate behind him and ultimately sealing his own fate. Laura calls out "darlings" to both John and the red coated figure, although it is not Christine, because it might as well be.<sup>27</sup> This figure has emerged from the very

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<sup>26</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego", 1951, 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Don't Look*, Roeg.

same realm of unconscious, serving to punish John because he has “looked”.<sup>28</sup> This misrecognition of the truth is exposed when the figure turns around to reveal itself as an elderly woman, the utter opposite of the daughter John was so inextricably convinced he was going to recover. This moment of realization happens in slow motion as John comprehends that this figure is not Christine and he has consequently led himself into a trap. Seeing is believing, and John is brutally confronted with the reality of Christine’s death and his own delusions. The figure stabs John in the chest, ending his life, but also sending him into a space where Christine does exist again. Red blood seeps into the cobbled pavement and visions of Christine intermingled with the color red crowd John’s mind, bringing the repressed back into the conscious. The truth of John’s trauma and the truth of Christine’s death arise through the misrecognition of the red coated figure as something it is not. The repression of John’s trauma pours into the environment, eventually, and ever so briefly, forcing him to exist within the reality that Christine no longer exists in this world. The desires of John’s unconscious conclusively deceive him into assuming there is more to this figure because he has repressed the truth. Through misrecognition, John reunites with the truth of his trauma and the certainty of his fate. The film concludes with John’s funeral procession on the water in the rain, much like the death of Christine. Their son Johnny wears a red coat.

### **STANLEY KUBRICK’S *THE SHINING* (1980): A TRAUMATIZED HOTEL AND THE RETURN OF FAMILIAL TRAUMA THROUGH USE OF THE DOUBLE**

Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* follows the Torrance family as they enter the space of the Overlook Hotel. *The Shining* is characterized by both a failure to process trauma and a victory,

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<sup>28</sup> Jasun Horsley, “Fixed Images of Eternity: Time, Perception, & Grief in ‘Don’t Look Now’”, 2019, <https://cinephiliabeyond.org/dont-look-now/>.

following a similar trajectory to Laura's transcendence and John's demise in *Don't Look Now*, resulting in the survival of Wendy and Danny at the cost of Jack's life. In these two films it is the woman and, in the case of *The Shining*, the child, who surpass the horrors of their trauma while their male counterparts perish as victims. Slay comments on this trope, "Most often it is the women of these tales who are strong—who traverse the labyrinth with relative ease and confidence, who survive where men cannot."<sup>29</sup> Trapped within the workings of their own psyches, both Jack and John possess the inability to properly confront their guilts. The aberration of overlooking the labyrinthian environments, beset within their trauma, leads each man to his own demise. The traumatized Wendy and Danny manage to emerge from the traumatized space, although the environment does not make this a painless task. The Overlook Hotel ultimately presents itself as treacherous, a maze with peculiar horrors hidden around corners and behind doors, that must be solved in order to transgress.

Understanding the space of the Overlook Hotel as gothic leads to a productive analysis of the repressed trauma that is elicited through interactions with the environment. Traditional motifs of the gothic come in the form of raging storms, ghosts, mountains, immense buildings, madmen, and incarceration; all of which inhabit the Overlook Hotel.<sup>30</sup> Freud's notions of both the double and the uncanny are characteristic of the gothic, creating a space of horror that confronts us with a part of ourselves which we have denied and disowned, but which we can never entirely expunge or escape<sup>31</sup>. The gothic draws its deepest terrors from a return of this repressed as a space becomes the embodiment of repressive horrors.<sup>32</sup> This is exactly where the horror of the

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<sup>29</sup> Jack Slay Jr., *Ian McEwan*, 1996, 52.

<sup>30</sup> David B. Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," *New Literary History* 16, no. 2 (1985): 301.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," 307.

<sup>32</sup> Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," 307.

Overlook exists and can be understood even further through the symbolism assigned to repetition by way of Žižek's analysis on repeating events.

The film commences as Jack Torrance takes a job as the winter caretaker of the Overlook Hotel. Immediately upon entry into the space, Jack learns that the hotel is traumatized by the recent murders of two young girls and their mother, at the hands of Charles Grady, the past caretaker, who ended his own life. The Torrance family has experienced a trauma of their own, which is what makes their entry into this space particularly powerful. Both Jack and Danny are understood to be traumatized characters with Danny's trauma stemming from Jack's. Abused by his own father growing up, Jack is now a recovering alcoholic. During a drunken rage, Jack dislocates Danny's shoulder, an event that is more often than not described as an "accident", a justification pinpointing the Torrance's repression and the denial of Jack's violent nature.

The first parallel between character and space is seen through the Torrance family's return to an environment that ultimately represents their own repressed fears. The particular terror of an uncanny space is released through encounters with the disguised and distorted but inalienable images of one's own repressed desire.<sup>33</sup> What lies repressed within Danny's unconscious is this idea that his own father could hurt him. For Jack, the fear is his own violent potential—a potential that posits an ability to cause harm to his own family.

As Freud hypothesizes, the repressed will always return, and it is the space of the Overlook Hotel that entices the repressed trauma of the Torrance family out of the unconscious. If this space of the hotel mirrors the traumatized minds of the family and, as per Freud, trauma resides within the unconscious, this space itself also has a symbolic unconscious. Like Danny, the hotel chef Dick Hallorann possesses a supernatural ability to understand the space's effect on

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<sup>33</sup> Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," 307.

those it encounters. Dick warns Danny that he mustn't enter room 237. When he asks for further explanation, Dick Hallorann only tells Danny that the room has "nothing" in it.<sup>34</sup> This 'nothing' holds significant importance if understood in relation to Žižek's concepts of truth through misrecognition. The door of room 237 is the sort of door understood as part of a game, a door that conceals a secret meant only for the opener of this door, a secret that is ultimately one's own desires.<sup>35</sup> The horror of the gothic space ultimately stems from its ability to reflect repressed urges, and this is exactly what the Overlook Hotel conjures. Freud's Psychoanalytic theory posits that desires and trauma eliciting urges suppressed by society still exist within the space of the unconscious mind.<sup>36</sup> Pushed into the unconscious are Jack Torrance's violent desires, ill wishes against his family that remain trapped in this space, that is until the door to room 237 is opened.

As Danny's visions of twins and blood persist, he becomes troubled with a concerning thought as he begins to understand the symbolism of what he sees. While sharing perhaps the only typical father-son moment within the film, Danny suddenly turns to his father, asking Jack "you would never hurt mommy and me, would you?"<sup>37</sup> This emphasizes Danny's own trauma, as he connects his visions of the environment in a past time to his own repressed trauma, while also portraying a futuristic prophecy. While Danny is traumatized by these visions, he is also enlightened by them, as they provide him with an understanding of the interactions between his trauma and his environment. These visions reveal the secrets of the hotel to Danny and he learns precisely how his family's own past fits into the puzzle of the traumatized Overlook hotel. Jack's actions begin to lead him down the path of Charles, beginning with this self-inflicted isolation. Jack wistfully remarks that he wishes they could "stay in the hotel forever", a remark that seems

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<sup>34</sup> *The Shining*, Dir. Stanley Kubrick, The Producer Circle Company & Peregrine Productions, 1980. film.

<sup>35</sup> Žižek, *The Truth Arises*, 198.

<sup>36</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, 1949, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *The Shining*, Kubrick.

particularly uncanny when his fate is later revealed.<sup>38</sup> It is while Jack slips into sleep that Danny passes by room 237 to find the door ajar. As Danny enters the room a dreaming Jack screams disturbingly. In Freudian terms, the unhinging of Jack's repressed trauma occurs during sleep, as dreams provide the only direct intel into the unconscious mind. As Jack dreams, physical access to his repressed trauma is gained as the environment mirrors this 'return of the repressed' through the opening of room 237, leaking repressed trauma out into the space of the hotel. Zizek discusses dreams as a form of thinking only made possible by the conditions of sleep.<sup>39</sup> Dreams, in the context of Zizek's "The Sublime Object of Ideology", must be read in terms of their form and therefore their emergence in dream-thought. Under certain conditions, these thoughts are forced out of consciousness where they are eventually translated into the language of the unconscious.<sup>40</sup> Societal conditions inflicted the submergence of Jack's animalistic desires, that evidently re-emerge in the text of a dream. This is what Zizek refers to as the 'manifest content' of a dream, existing in this space between 'normal' thought and its translation into the dream.<sup>41</sup> Danny wanders into room 237, confronted with the embodiment of his own repressed trauma as he emerges with a physical injury to show for it. For Danny, the trauma suppressed behind this door is the fear of infliction of harm at the hands of his father, a repetition of the event that originally traumatized the family. Although Danny wanders into this room, he does not give into the seductive nature of the evils existing within the space. Instead he emerges with a knowledge of what this space encourages. When Jack awakes, he confesses to Wendy that he dreamt of killing his family and cutting them up into little bits, a story all too familiar to the Overlook

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<sup>38</sup> *The Shining*, Kubrick.

<sup>39</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *The sublime Object of Ideology*, 2009, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Zizek, *The Sublime Object*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Zizek, *The Sublime Object*, 34.



Hotel.<sup>42</sup> Jack's repressed trauma can be read through the 'manifest content' of his dream, a revelation of the possibility that something within him is capable of such harm, a trauma that is preyed upon by the space, as events begin to manifest Jack's worst fears.

Once the door to the unconscious is opened, the space attains its full potential. Repressed trauma returns, consuming the space and subsequently consuming Jack himself. Entering room 237, Jack is immediately seduced by a beautiful woman who walks naked out of the bathtub straight towards him. The environment symbolically encompasses Jack as his heartbeat is echoed in steady, continuous beats throughout the room. As he embraces her, the woman begins to disintegrate, revealing her true form as a rotting corpse. The seduction of Jack personifies the "seductive nature of the hotel", labelling it as a space that welcomes the evil that resides within us.<sup>43</sup> As he kisses this woman, the Overlook claims Jack, giving into his trauma, and returning him to the fate he is destined for—signifying the reclamation of Jack by the space. No longer suppressing trauma, the evils of Jack's mind guide him towards the embodiment of caretakers from the hotel's past. When Wendy asks Jack what he saw in the room, Jack tells her he saw 'nothing'. What exists in this space is not necessarily physical, but more so a figment of Jack's own mind, a 'nothing' which reveals its significance particularly for Jack.

As soon as Jack submits himself to the nature of the space, he becomes surrounded with his trauma in the form of the double. This notion of the double is an intrinsically gothic concept; "every uncanny figure or event is inevitably a substitute: the inexact double or surrogate of what we cannot know and cannot represent directly."<sup>44</sup> What Jack finds in the Gold Room of the hotel provides him with a window into the past, but this is a past which doubles as his future. The first

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<sup>42</sup> *The Shining*, Kubrick.

<sup>43</sup> Jeff Saporito, "Who is the Woman in Room 237," rev. of *The Shining*, Dir. Stanley Kubrick, *Screen Prism*, 8 June 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," 311.

time he enters this room he is met by Lloyd, a ghostly bartender, who appears in between Jack and his own reflection in the mirror. Although he is unable to explain it, Jack remarks at the uncanny familiarity of Lloyd, who is visually similar to Jack himself, although not a direct copy. The interaction with Lloyd encourages a resurgence of Jack's alcoholism, an urge that returns from repression after "five long months".<sup>45</sup>

The second time Jack enters the Gold Room he encounters a party scene. Spilling alcohol on himself he wanders into the bathroom where he meets another double, the ghost of Delbert Grady. Grady reveals that he too is complicit in the murder of his own family. Delbert is not only a double of Jack, but also a double of Charles Grady, the predecessor to Jack's role of caretaker. Freud notes that the uncanny is terrifying in the fact that it "leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar".<sup>46</sup> The double is a key element of the uncanny as it exhibits this familiarity in an unfamiliar form. It is through this repetition, the uncanny notion of the double, that the truth is revealed. This truth lies within the notion that what is found to be uncanny is frightening because it stems from familiarity. Delbert mysteriously reveals to Jack that Jack has "always been the caretaker" a variation of himself that he does not yet understand.<sup>47</sup> The truth here is found within repetition, uncovering Jack as a double of these men, situating him within the traumatized environment of the Overlook Hotel. Ultimately, Delbert convinces Jack that he must give into fate, continuing the cyclical pattern of trauma that resides within the hotel. By reproducing the events of the past, Jack assigns a symbolic understanding to this repetitive series of events, the trauma entrapped within the hotel preys on those whose are victims at the hands of

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<sup>45</sup> *The Shining*, Kubrick.

<sup>46</sup> Freud, *The Uncanny*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> *The Shining*, Kubrick.

their own repression. It is the interaction between trauma and environment that breeds such fated misery.

The concluding scene plays out within the hedge maze, as Wendy and Danny race to progress through the trauma that is now completely out in the open. Completely consumed by unresolved trauma, Jack chases Danny, wielding an ax, a double of the murder weapon used by Charles Grady the preceding winter. Danny's survival lies within his mastering of the space. Understanding the sequential horrors emboldened through the Overlook Hotel, Danny outwits his father in a sequence symbolic of the two characters' paradoxical relations to trauma. Retracing his snowy footprints so as to not give away his path, Danny is released from the space, running into Wendy's arms. Jack is left to freeze inside a prosopopoeia of his own traumatized mind, replaying the events for eternity as he becomes, like Delbert and Charles Grady, a piece of the traumatized space.

A younger Jack's face appears in the center of a group photo that hangs in the Gold Room, dating back to 1921. This final scene uncovers Jack as a reincarnate of the numerous caretakers of the hotel. A symbolic revelation that violence and abuse are cyclical events, repressed traumas repeat themselves just as Jack's childhood trauma produced Danny's.<sup>48</sup> When the traumatized family enters the traumatized space, destiny runs its course. The hotel brings about manifestations of this cyclical violence, preying on the repressed traumas of the Torrance family by evoking them out into the physical space to repeat themselves once again. The meaning of the repetition of events in the Overlook Hotel is thus understood retroactively, constructed backwards to reveal an ultimate truth.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Adrienne Tyler, "The Shining Explained: Why Jack is in The Photo," rev. of *The Shining*, Dir. Stanley Kubrick, *Screen Rant*, 3 Nov. 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Žižek, *The Truth Arises*, 188.

## **ARI ASTER'S *MIDSOMMAR* (2019): EXAMINING THE ROLES OF BASIC AND SURPLUS REPRESSION IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF TRAUMA**

Each of the previous two films represents the return of the repressed as a dangerous phenomenon, ultimately leading to violence, death, or both. It is here in the conversation that Ari Aster's more current *Midsommar* becomes an important text. By contrast, *Midsommar* uncovers trauma in a distinctive way by use of an environment that is free of the confines of societal repression. This film provides a contemporary look at the interaction of horror and trauma as an ultimately cathartic environment for processing trauma, rather than one that feeds off the evils caused by repression.

While both Jack in *The Shining* and John in *Don't Look Now* meet untimely demises at the hands of their unconscious traumas, Dani, in *Midsommar*, meets a surprisingly different fate. To further understand the representation and function of repressed Trauma in *Midsommar*, it is important to understand the distinction between basic repression and surplus repression. Robin Wood highlights the distinction between these two breeds of repression in relation to the horror film in the chapter "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" of his book *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*.<sup>50</sup> Basic repression is the sort of repression that "makes us distinctly human", a repression we need to maintain a functional and productive society.<sup>51</sup> Without basic repression society as a concept could not exist, as humans would be incapable of repressing violent and animalistic urges. It is surplus repression that makes us into "monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists".<sup>52</sup> Wood labels surplus repression as specific to a particular culture, as it is "the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on

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<sup>50</sup> Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 63-84.

<sup>51</sup> Wood, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, 64.

predetermined roles within that culture”.<sup>53</sup> As further explored in *Midsommar*, this sort of repression is essentially detrimental to the traumatized individual, as it encourages an unhealthy repression of trauma as per societal expectations rather than a reclaiming. Caruth writes that “to be traumatized is to be possessed by an image or event”, and thus the symptoms of trauma cannot be interpreted as a mere distortion of reality.<sup>54</sup> The repetition of traumatized imagery seen by Dani throughout the film are not distortions of her own reality but rather manifestations of experienced trauma. Because, by definition, trauma cannot be symbolized, the enforced societal repression of trauma provides a lack of outlet for the traumatizing event.

In *Midsommar*, Dani loses her family to a violent murder suicide at the hands of her mentally ill older sister, a death she feels partly responsible for, after ignoring her sister’s final warning at the encouragement of her boyfriend, Christian. Holding on to a withering relationship and hoping to escape her own tragedy, Dani follows Christian and his friends to a remote Pagan village in Sweden, called Hårga, for their summer festival that occurs only once every ninety years.

Though consumed by her tragic situation, Dani consistently conditions herself to repress her pain for fear of burdening Christian and his friends. Traditional society does not accept or acknowledge trauma but serves to repress it. Repression, as earlier explored, does not result in a disappearance of, but rather an unspecified return of, permitting trauma to later manifest in monstrous ways. While still in America, any expressions of pain that Dani experiences are deeply private. She shuts herself away from a society that’s only response to the overwhelming pain of individual trauma is an encouragement of repression.

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<sup>53</sup> Wood, 63-64.

<sup>54</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 1995, 4-5.

When Dani learns of her family's tragic demise, she expresses her emotions in an inherently natural way as she releases a heartbreaking and lengthy cry, an isolating sound within the closed walls of her own bedroom. Christian attempts to comfort her but does little more than sit silently and watch as Dani revels in the devastation of her loss. At any mention of family, Dani breaks into panic, excusing herself to enclosed spaces so that she may mourn in private. Her conditioning to see herself and her trauma as a burden to those around her is encouraged by the surplus repression enforced in her environment. When asked by Christian's friend how she is doing, Dani rushes to the bathroom, afraid to express her real emotions in public. On the way to Sweden, Dani lets out guttural sobs in the solitary confinement of the airplane bathroom. Upon first entry into Hårga, Dani rushes into a small wooden outhouse after hearing Christian's friends refer to each other as a "family"<sup>55</sup>.

Film critic Keith Phipps comments on the value of the unconventional societal structure in Hårga; "Once you strip away centuries of accumulated morality and agreed-upon taboos, the arrangement at Hårga makes sense".<sup>56</sup> Leaving the confines of traditional western society behind in the pagan commune village of Hårga, the environment not only invites Dani's repressed trauma out of the woodwork but encourages a processing of it, rather than a fear. The complete repression felt by Dani in her home environment begins to unwind. While driving along a dirt road, the final section of the journey to Hårga, the environment literally flips upside down employing a drone shot that signifies the deconstruction of American societal repression that is about to unfold in this new and unhinged environment. Almost immediately upon entering Hårga, Dani demonstrates an innate connection with the environment. While resting, she looks

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<sup>55</sup> *Midsommar*, Dir. Ari Aster, A24 Films, 2019. film.

<sup>56</sup> Keith Phipps, "Midsommar" Offers a Vision of what Awaits us After Society Collapses," rev. of *Midsommar*, Dir. Ari Aster, *Pacific Standard*, 12 July. 2019.

down to see the grass growing through her hand. Upon glancing upwards, she notices the trees seem to breathe with her. The environment understands her and, as Dani eventually discovers, Hårga is exactly where she is supposed to be. As she progresses through this traumatized space, Dani's repressed trauma emerges, eventually allowing her to feel what she was depriving herself of.

To understand the significance of the environment, it is necessary to put Hårga in conversation with Wood's notion of a society plagued by surplus repression. Societies that function under surplus repression rely on the fact that this repression is fully internalized<sup>57</sup>. It is only through traditional society's contrast with this commune that the constraining nature is revealed. Societies that operate within surplus repression bear certain characteristics including a repression of sexual energy and the concept of 'othering'. Repressing sexual energy relies on the ideal inhabitant to be "sufficiently fulfilled by monogamous heterosexual union".<sup>58</sup> In American society, Christian and Dani remain tethered to each other, despite the relationships unfulfilling nature, unconsciously seduced by this romanticized idea of monogamy. Their relationship slowly crumbles upon entry into Hårga, rupturing when Christian is coerced into sexual relations with one of the village's young women. Although this is devastating to Dani, it is quite normal here, as sex is a ritualistic practice shared by all the women of the community. Sex in Hårga is a female centered act, placing the choice of selecting a mate in the hands of the woman. This is exemplified in Christian's sex scene; first as he is undoubtedly sought out by and magicked into falling in love with Maja, and second when the elder women of the community crowd around them, echoing the sounds in song notes and even physically becoming a part of the experience.

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<sup>57</sup> Wood, 64.

<sup>58</sup> Wood, 63-64.

Sex does not hold the same secrecy, shame, and power dynamics that it holds in Western society, it is a coming of age celebration that counters assumptions of female passivity.

Repressive ideas of othering are also countered in this society, specifically the othering of women, alternative cultures, and political systems. Otherness stems from psychoanalysis and relies on the rejection of contradictions to the bourgeois ideology.<sup>59</sup> Dominant images of women are created by men and used as projections for innate repressed femininity.<sup>60</sup> This is illustrated when Dani and the others first enter the village. The man who greets them wears a long frock. Christian's friends are taken aback by his "girly" fit and the man brushes it off, simply explaining to them that this is the traditional dress for the Midsommar Festival.<sup>61</sup> Here the surplus repression of Western society is confronted by the utter openness of this contrasting society. The black and white notions of gender cloud the judgement of the Westerners but hold no ground in Hårga.

Christian's friend Josh also embodies this notion of othering. Josh travels to Sweden with the intention of writing about the Pagan festivities and rituals for his anthropology thesis. The community of Hårga is immediately cautious of him, ensuring he will not use revealing details, names, or photographs. This cautiousness stems from the disconnect between Western societies and those that stray from this mold. The community is so fearful of the violence that could be inflicted upon them if Western society knew where to find them, that they murder Josh after he blatantly disrespects the community by photographing their sacred book. The release from these Western repressions is what allows for an alternative relationship between repressed trauma and the individual.

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<sup>59</sup> Wood, 65-6.

<sup>60</sup> Wood, 66.

<sup>61</sup> *Midsommar*, Aster.



The laws of traditional western societies are completely overlooked within the progressive world of this commune. The release of Dani's repression is experienced directly through the environment. The most literal representation of this comes through the images of her past trauma that Dani sees superimposed into the natural environment around her. The ghostly image of Dani's sister can be seen watching over Dani several times throughout the duration of the film, a literal representation of her now blatantly obvious trauma. It is in the wooden outhouse in Sweden that Dani first sees her sister, a reflection standing behind her when she glances in the mirror. The return of the repressed is introduced here as Dani's trauma begins to manifest itself outside of her own traumatized mind and into the environment of this village that exists outside societal constraints of surplus repression. After witnessing two elders jump to their deaths, a deeply disturbing scene, Dani envisions her sister, exhaust tube in mouth, slumped at the bottom of the same cliff. With this manifestation of her trauma out in the open, Dani runs sobbing from the scene. The environment of this small commune provides Dani with a space to explore her repressed trauma, a space that accepts the traumatized human she is as the norm, contrasting the repressive society and friends she eventually leaves behind.

The dreams that Dani experiences while in Hårga help in discerning her repressed fears and traumas. Once again, Zizek's discussion of dreams becomes helpful, understanding the dream "as a meaningful phenomenon, something transmitting a repressed message which has to be discovered by an interpretative procedure".<sup>62</sup> It is then, through the text of a dream, that hidden meaning can be ascertained. Dani's first dream comes immediately after she sees her sister in the outhouse. She dreams of her family sitting on the couch with flashing blue and red lights in the background. Her next dream documents Christian and his friends speeding away in a

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<sup>62</sup> Zizek, *The Sublime Object*, 38.

car. When she screams out to them her screams disintegrate into black smoke and she is silenced. Her dream then cuts to an image of her late sister and parents. These dreams disclose Dani's crippling fear of abandonment and her reliance on Christian as her only support following the demise of her entire family. Dani eventually processes this fear, telling Christian that she "could possibly see" him leaving her behind.<sup>63</sup>

Upon preparing for the traditional May Queen competition, Dani glances down at her feet to see they are made of grass, she is growing roots within this community. Dancing around the maypole, Dani begins to understand the language of the commune, speaking Swedish with the other girls. Instinctively, Dani wins the title of May Queen, a role that initiates her as a part of the community. As the community officially accepts her, Dani sees her mother in the crowd of villagers. This signifies Dani's acceptance into a new family through the approval of her deceased mother, inhabiting the environment of Dani's new home. As she is raised up and paraded through the village, an image of Dani's sister, tube in mouth once again, is superimposed into the trees surrounding her, as if she is watching over Dani. This is the final image of Dani's family, symbolizing Dani's transcendence through acceptance and expression of her trauma, supported by Hårga's absence of surplus repression. Finding what she was lacking in the form of a supporting community, Dani releases her sister into the surrounding space. The trees begin to breathe with Dani as she and her environment simultaneously accept one another. Sitting down for a celebratory meal Dani is told "you are the family now", and for the first time the mention of family does not send Dani into a panic but comforts her instead.

Searching for Christian to share her success with, Dani discovers him cheating on her with Maja, one of the village girls. The isolating scene of Dani's desolate sobs following the

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<sup>63</sup> *Midsommar*, Aster.

death of her family is reimagined as Dani experiences this other trauma. This time her trauma is not isolating, but rather fosters a sense of community. As she screams in despair, her new family gathers around her. The women comfort Dani, holding her face and touching her hair while they echo each and every one of her harrowing cries. Dani's emotions are mirrored by the entire community, a community that understands pain, not as an isolating emotion, but as a concrete part of human nature that is better processed out in the open than pushed into repression.

The final stage of Dani's transformation involves her sacrifice of Christian. In a traditional ceremony to "purge [the] most unholy affects" of the community, Dani is given the choice to sacrifice Christian or a randomly chosen member of the community.<sup>64</sup> In choosing Christian, Dani let's go of anything tethering her to her repressed, codependent self. When Christian burns up in flames the community, Dani included, scream in pain empathizing with the sacrificed. This final release of repression frees Dani, and for the first time she smiles, accepting herself as an inherently traumatized being in an environment that both encompasses and accepts her trauma.

## **Conclusion**

The Freudian notion of 'return of the repressed' runs throughout each of these three films, bringing about specific interpretations of film environments as a space of released repression. The interplay between trauma and environment leads to differing outcomes within each film, a progression that holds significance when discussed in terms of society and repression. As Robin Wood proclaims, the nature of Western society is inherently repressive, fostering a burying of human urges that becomes dangerous in the case of repressed trauma.

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<sup>64</sup> *Midsommar*, Aster.

Each of these three films utilizes the environment as a space for acting out repressed trauma, as the pain of these protagonists manifests directly into the spaces in which they find themselves.

In both *Don't Look Now* and *The Shining*, repressed trauma is crippling and deadly. Present within the confines of Western society, trauma takes the form of a monstrous other that seeks revenge for the constraints it has too long suffered under. The Venetian environment of *Don't Look Now* takes the form of a labyrinth full of motifs significant to John's repressed trauma. His failure to progress through this maze mirrors the failure of Western society to employ an environment that is nurturing of the traumatized. The misrecognition of his trauma kills him, revealing the true nature of his actions as symptoms of a deeper cause and his murder as an event brought about by John's own unconscious doing.

The space of the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* also follows a maze-like structure, requiring the understanding and mastering of trauma to progress through. Repressing their familial trauma, the Torrance's are unprepared for its reappearance as they enter a space that holds mirroring traumatic memories. Danny and Wendy make it out alive, but they emerge with their trauma. This is exemplified in Mike Flanagan's sequel to *The Shining*, *Doctor Sleep* (2019) where a middle aged Danny copes with his lasting trauma by placing the monsters of the Overlook Hotel into boxes within his mind, a repression that will inevitably reemerge.<sup>65</sup> Jack Torrance is overtaken as both his repressed childhood and adult trauma comes out to play in the hotel, and he is eventually reclaimed by the space, becoming a tragic example of the repercussions of a Western mold of societal repression.

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Newby, "'Doctor Sleep' and the Competing Legacies of Two Visionaries," rev. of *Doctor Sleep*, Dir. Mike Flanagan, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 9 Nov. 2019.

*Midsommar* breaks this Western mold, taking the traumatized Dani into an environment that is free of the inhibitive surplus repression that led to her internalizing of trauma back home. It is in the village of Hårga that Dani begins to release her pain, gaining the support of a community who welcomes her trauma. This is depicted throughout the film as Dani's deceased family manifests in her new environment, eventually releasing her to become a part of this liberated space. It is also in Hårga that Dani releases herself from the constricting roles of Western society as she detangles herself from Christian, exemplified through her sacrifice of him which establishes Dani as part of a new family.

The repressed always returns, and the environment that entices it out of the unconscious holds extreme significance. The horror genre plays with this notion, and each of these three films exhibit a connection between the protagonists' repression of trauma and the interplay between this trauma and the specific film environments. These environments are each traumatized by some means, inviting manifestations of trauma out of the unconscious mind and into the daylight.

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Anker discusses the horror genre as a medium for mobilizing and intensifying fear through narratives of terror and screen violence. Horror as a genre depicts the ever-present threat social disintegration through monstrosities. This article highlights the horror film monster as standing for insecurities that lurk beneath society, and the horror film as a text for positioning liberalism as a solution to unstable social orders. This article provides evidence in my argument that the horror genre is known to critique and comment on social and national traumas.

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Caruth takes a psychological approach to the notion of trauma through a collection of essays and interviews detailing the notion of trauma and its interpretation. She discusses both personal traumas such as child abuse and national traumas such as the Holocaust. This article provides an understanding of trauma and evidence in my argument of the interpretation of trauma as more than a mere distortion of reality.

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Freud, Sigmund, and James Strachey. *Delusions and Dreams in Jenses Gradiva (1907)*, Translated by Helen Downey, Hogarth Press, 1964.

In this work Freud discusses repression of a forgetting of memory that cannot make its way back into the conscious mind without consequences. He details that repression may one day bring about physical consequences that can be considered derivatives of these forgotten memories. This article provides evidence in my argument that repressed memories often manifest in physical symptoms.

Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: (1915-1917)*. Hogarth Press, 1995.

Here Freud goes into detail about the process of repression. Repression is the process by which an act or memory is made unconscious. He discusses repressed material as unable to come into consciousness due to censorship. This article supports my understanding of repression and its place and purpose within the unconscious.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism (1939)*. Hogarth Press, 1995.

Here is where Freud first brings up the notion of 'return of the repressed'. He discusses how repression results in a return of unconsciously repressed material in physical symptoms. This return of the repressed is characterized by a distortion of the original repressed event or memory. This article supports my overarching framework of 'return of the repressed' and how, in Psychoanalytic theory, it is repressed trauma manifests as distorted symptoms of the original trauma.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the ID and Other Works: (1923-1925)*. Vintage, 2001.

Freud discusses the ID's function as the impulse center of the brain. It is here that desires, traumas, and urges repressed by societal regulations reside. These societal norms exist within the mind in the form of the superego, that unconsciously represses emotions and actions that do not fit into traditional society. This article provides evidence in my argument that society represses these taboos into the unconscious, although they still exist.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)*. International Alliance Pro-Publishing, 2010.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Unconscious*. Translated by Graham Frankland, Penguin Classics, 2005.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny (1919)*. Translated by Hugh Haughton, W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2011.

In this article Freud discusses the notion of the uncanny and why it is so terrifying. He discusses the strangeness within the ordinary. The uncanny is a psychological experience and describes incidents where a familiar thing is encountered in a strange setting. This article provides evidence in my argument of the environments of these horror films as significant in a psychological context. The characters encounter the uncanny familiarity of their traumas in unfamiliar environments.

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. Translated by A A Brill, George Routledge & Sons, 1919

Harris, Paul A. "Introduction: David Mitchell in the Labyrinth of Time." *SubStance*, vol. 44, no. 1, 17 Mar. 2015, pp. 3–7. *Project MUSE*, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ccl.idm.oclc.org/article/577268/pdf>.

Harris writes about labyrinths in the film and literature of David Mitchell. He discusses their ability to bend the linearity of time. Because labyrinths stray from the laws of nature, they often double back on themselves. This article is relevant to my interpretation of the environments of *Don't Look Now* and *The Shining* as labyrinths and the significance that stems from a labyrinthian setting.

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Morris discusses the idea of the gothic and its relation to the sublime. He characterizes gothic environments and highlights the notion that the gothic novels often play with an unconscious repression. By releasing long suppressed desires into fiction, the danger of an uncontrollable restraint is intensified. This article provides evidence of the interaction between repression and environment especially within the context of horror, as the medium is similar to the gothic, and exposes the horrors that stem from depression.

Murray, Robin L., and Joseph K. Heumann. *Monstrous Nature: Environment and Horror on the Big Screen*. University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

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Newby, Richard. "'Doctor Sleep' and the Competing Legacies of Two Visionaries." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 21 Nov. 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/doctor-sleep-explained-how-it-connects-stephen-king-kubrick-1253574>.

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White discusses the significance of the Venetian environment in both the novel and the screen adaptation of *Don't Look Now*. Venice as a setting is commonly used to capture horror. This article provides significance of Venice as an interactive environment especially in the case of horror films.

Wisker, Gina. *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*. Continuum, 2005.

Wisker gives an in-depth overview of the horror genre and its essential elements. She discusses horror and its relation to societal and personal fears. This provides evidence that the horror genre often deals with repression and unconscious fears and that the elements of horror specifically give way to an analysis of these unconscious fears.

Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan...and Beyond*. Columbia University Press, 1986.

In this book, Wood analyzes films affected by ideological crises in American brought about by national traumas such as Watergate and the Vietnam War. He discusses the modern horror film and uses the Psychoanalytic notion of repression to discuss 1970s era horror films. Using notions of both basic and surplus repression, Woods highlights the surplus repression of current society and the 'othering' that stems from this. Horror films revolve around this othering in relation to surplus repression. This book provides evidence in my argument that surplus repression in society leads to the repression of trauma that comes out later. It is in surplusly repressed societies that this return is more monstrous.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Essential Zizek: The Complete Set (the Sublime Object of Ideology)*. Verso, 2009.

Zizek discusses the significance of dreams and how they must be read in terms of their forms. Dreams are a form of thinking that is only made possible by sleep, and therefore provide access into the unconscious minds and traumas. This provides evidence of my argument surrounding the dreams of the protagonists in these films, highlighting that these dreams are manifestations of repressed trauma and must be read as so.

Zizek, Slavoj. "The Truth Arises from Misrecognition Part I" *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, edited by Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher, New York and London: Routledge, 1991, 188-201.

Zizek analyzes repression and its return, noting that it often returns from the future. Elements are assigned their symbolic meanings retroactively, and 'the return of the repressed' is an effect which precedes its cause. The truth arises from misrecognition

because it retroactively becomes what it always was. This article provides evidence in my argument that in these films, the return of the repressed leads to a misrecognition of some element of manifested trauma, which in turn provides a truth about the repressed trauma.