Why Found Footage Horror Films Matter : Introduction

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The cinematic image of a young woman staring into the camera – crying, hyperventilating, and talking directly to her audience – has become the definitive image of *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sanchez, 1999). It is arguably the most famous scene, and certainly the most parodied image of found footage horror cinema in general, perhaps even one of the defining images of cinema in the 1990s. This character, Heather Donahue, is played by a hitherto unknown actress called Heather Donahue, in her feature debut. From what we see on screen, and the manner in which her monologue is delivered, it can be inferred that she is not reciting scripted lines. She does not seem to be acting; her fear appears genuine. Heather is alone in a dark tent, shooting this footage herself with a handheld camera. The shot did not look like most other horror films that had been previously shown in cinemas; it is poorly framed, poorly lit, and the character knows and acknowledges that she is on camera.

There had been previous films in this style: *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980) contains the use of 'found footage' within its narrative structure, and *Man Bites Dog* (Belvaux, Bonzel and Poelvoorde, 1992) is a mock-documentary that purports to be completely filmed by a diegetic film crew. However, neither of these films had the cultural impact or box office success of *The Blair Witch Project*, a film that eventually spawned numerous imitators, and arguably the entire found footage horror sub-genre that now consists of hundreds of films.[1]

> There is a straightforward economic reason why filmmakers continue to produce found footage horror films. *The Blair Witch Project* made over $248 million at the worldwide box office[2] on a $60,000 produc- tion budget, thus ensuring that a new subgenre of horror films, labelled by critics as 'found footage' films, was born. As Brigid Cherry argues, 'since many horror films are produced at the low budget end of the scale, filmmakers are forced by circumstance to be innovative or inventive with what little resources they do

have access to, often making a virtue of ne- cessity' (2009, 34). Found footage horror films are cheap to make, with the highest budget to date being $25 million for *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008), but most are far cheaper. The majority of these films have budgets less than $1 million, and with the exception of a few, all have made a profit. With such small budgets, the financial outlay for investors is low, and the potential gross can be significant in the case of some of the popular found footage films (see Table 0.1). The most successful ti- tles grossed over 20 times the amount that they cost to produce: *The Last Broadcast* (Avalos and Weiler, 1998) reportedly cost only $900, but made $4 million; *Paranormal Activity* (Peli, 2007) had a production cost of $15,000 before earning $193 million at the global box office.

Economics are not the only reason for the ubiquity and popularity of these films. Their cheap-looking aesthetic is in fact a virtue because it is their look that makes them appear similar to authentic documenta- ries and home videos. Filmmakers working in genres other than horror have also begun to utilise the diegetic camera to create this distinctive aesthetic. For example, the release of *Chronicle* (Trank, 2012), *End of Watch* (Ayer, 2012), and *Into the Storm* (Quale, 2014) has seen budgets raise dramatically and the employment of found footage aesthetic and narrative strategies in superhero films, police dramas, and disaster films, respectively. Science fiction films such as *Earth to Echo* (Green, 2014) and *Project Almanac* (Israelite, 2015) have also recently adopted the approach, indicating the influence of low-budget horror filmmakers on more mainstream practitioners.

Top 10 budget to gross ratios in the found footage subgenre

Film	*Budget*	*Gross*	*Budget-to-gross ratio*
Paranormal Activity	$15,000	$193,355,800	1:12,890
The Last Broadcast	$900	$4,000,000	1:4444
The Blair Witch Project	$60,000	$248,639,099	1:4144
Unfriended	$1,000,000	$64,056,643	1:64
Paranormal Activity 2	$3,000,000	$177,512,032	1:59
The Zombie Diaries	$10,668	$526,552	1:49
Paranormal Activity 3	$5,000,000	$207,039,844	1:41
The Last Exorcism	$1,800,000	$67,738,090	1:37
Paranormal Activity 4	$5,000,000	$142,817,992	1:28
Cannibal Holocaust	$100,000	$2,000,000	1:20

This book reveals why and how the diegetic camera technique has become so popular to both contemporary horror filmmakers and audiences. I adopt a mainly cognitive theoretical framework in order to ad- dress the mental schemata and processes that are elicited and triggered by these films. I explore the concept of the diegetic camera and argue that this aesthetic and narrational technique can have many effects on the cognition of the viewer, including his or her moral evaluation of characters and the empathy he or she feels with the characters. Utilising and applying theoretical notions such as schema, priming, identification, recognition, alignment, and allegiance to the analysis of key films allows me to examine how the viewer's mind works when watching these films. In particular, Jean Piaget (1952) defined the notion of schemata as units of knowledge that people can draw upon when reacting to incoming stimuli. This suggests that viewers can organise information from films and use this information as a framework for future understanding. This is enmeshed with the concept of priming, suggesting that the early scenes in a film are vital in creating a mood for the viewer based on their previous knowledge of the techniques that they are seeing. I also consider how restricted narration is set up and maintained in these films. This is narration that is restricted beyond most other films previously made, with the exception of *Lady in the Lake* (Montgomery, 1947), a film in which the viewer is almost wholly limited to seeing events from the point of view (POV) of the protagonist.

This book explores how found footage horror films create a sense of increased immediacy and alignment with the characters

through various techniques associated with the diegetic camera trend. It is less important that these films are known as 'found footage', and more significant that they are shot with a 'diegetic camera', hence my use of this latter term to describe the films analysed in this book. Some of the films contain reference to the actual 'finding' of the footage (e.g. *The Blair Witch Project*) and others do not (e.g. *Man Bites Dog*). There is always the implication that the footage has been found and can now be revealed to the viewer. More importantly, however, there is always a diegetic camera operator present at the events being revealed. I inter- rogate the concept of identification by using cognitive concepts such as recognition, alignment, and allegiance (Smith, 1995). These individual concepts break down the notion of identification into distinct processes, allowing for a more rigorous examination of the idea of identification. Analysing these films from a cognitive perspective enables an exploration of the mechanisms of an audience's responses to the characters and to narrative and aesthetic strategies, including how priming and self-consciousness eventually affect the audience's perception and cognition of the films.

Throughout the book, I will use the term 'diegetic camera films' rather than found footage films, even though this category of films can be de- fined in many different ways. Alexandra Heller-Nicholas (2014, 13) offers the definition that they are simply 'films that feature material that is literally found or discovered'. In films such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Cloverfield*, there is clear reference to the retrieval of tapes or memory cards that contain footage and the entire narration consists of revealing this supposedly discovered material. However, in others such as *The Last Broadcast*, only certain sequences in the film consist of found footage and are situated within a given framing narrative as part of a larger mock-documentary narrational and aesthetic strategy. Therefore, Heller-Nicholas broadens the definition to include all 'movies filmed with diegetic hand-held cameras, surveillance cameras, or both' (2014, 13–14). For the purpose of clarity and precision, it is also important to distinguish diegetic camera horror films from the preceding use of the term found footage. In scholarly work on film, found footage was traditionally a term used to describe those films that 'employ material shot by someone else for another reason' (Heller-Nicholas, 2014, 14) such as *A Movie* (Conner, 1958) and *The Clock* (Marclay, 2010). The films analysed in this book can to some extent be considered

fictional versions of these original found footage films. Originally, the term found foot- age referred to a moving image collage of non-fiction footage. The films now being labelled as found footage and, in particular, those that are the subject of this book fictionalise this conceit. They are comprised of footage that has supposedly already been shot by someone (a character within the film) and has now either been edited or left as it was found, and finally released as a film product.

Scott Meslow (2012) recognises that found footage films are 'built on the conceit that the movie was filmed … by a character that exists within the film's world – and whose footage was discovered sometime after the events of the film'. While this is an excellent definition, it does not do enough to separate and recognise the diversity within this group of films. Heller-Nicholas calls this body of films 'a distinct horror category with its own readily identifiable features, some of which stem from documentary traditions and associated evolving trends in the field of mockumentary' (2014, 16). However, many of the films analysed have features that appear more familiar when compared to home videos and reality television. Therefore, I will divide the focus films into three distinct, albeit overlapping, categories: documentary and reality TV, home videos, and charismatic killers. More specifically:

1 The first category contains those films whose conventions most resemble documentaries, mockumentaries, and reality television programmes such as *The Blair Witch Project*, *Noroi: The Curse* (Shiraishi, 2005), and *Rec* (Balagueró and Plaza, 2007). *The Blair Witch Project* is about three student filmmakers who enter the woods of Burkitsville in order to make a documentary on the legend of the Blair Witch. The film is comprised of the footage they suppos- edly shot before their disappearance. *Noroi: The Curse* focuses on a paranormal investigator who disappeared while making a docu- mentary, *The Curse*. The film is comprised mostly of the recordings of the investigator's camera operator Miyajima. *Rec* is about the presenter of a reality television programme who is quarantined in an apartment block in Barcelona when a virus is unleashed. Her cam- era operator Pablo keeps filming through the night, and therefore, *Rec* is supposedly all of Pablo's footage.

2 The second category includes those films whose conventions

most resemble home videos such as *Paranormal Activity*, *Exhibit A* (Rotheroe, 2007) and *Cloverfield*. *Paranormal Activity* is about a couple, Katie and Micah, who believe they are being haunted, which prompts Micah to buy a camera and film everything that is happen- ing in his home. *Exhibit A* follows a middle-class family who are undergoing financial and domestic problems as the daughter films the family. *Cloverfield* is about a group of friends who are in New York when the city is attacked by a monster. One character, Hud, films the events as they unfold overnight.

3 The third category bridges the aesthetic, technical, and perceptual gap between the first and second categories; that is, between the most seemingly professional examples and those that look the most am- ateurish. This category – which I call charismatic killers – includes examples ranging from those filmed by documentary crews to out- right amateurs using domestic camcorders. What distinguishes these films from those in the first and second categories is that the camera operators are less victims of the horror, and more complicit with the actions of the monsters they are documenting. The 'monster' may even be considered by some to be an appealing anti-hero, hence my use of the term 'charismatic killers'. In this category, the focus films are *Man Bites Dog*, *The Last Horror Movie* (Richards, 2003), *Zero Day* (Coccio, 2003), and *Autohead* (Mittal, 2016). *Man Bites Dog* is about a documentary crew who follow a serial killer as he goes about his business, and eventually become accomplices with his actions. *The Last Horror Movie* follows a serial killer who has con- vinced an assistant to make a documentary about him. *Zero Day* is comprised of the footage of two teens who film themselves as they prepare to commit a massacre at their high school. *Autohead* concerns a documentary crew that follow a Mumbai auto rickshaw driver as he embarks on a killing spree.

Some readers familiar with the films listed above will undoubtedly note that my categorisation of these films as all belonging to the horror genre is contentious. For example, *Man Bites Dog* has been called a crime film or a black comedy, and *Cloverfield* could also be considered a science- fiction film. *Zero Day* and *Exhibit A* could also be only loosely considered horror films. However, it is not my intention to engage with genre theory in this book. As Xavier Aldana Reyes (2016a, 150) points out, found footage is not a subgenre of horror. It is a framing technique and it can be applied to many different genres of film and subgenres of horror. The genre crossover and hybridity of

the films selected above must be noted, but the representation of dark and disturbing subject matter and the aim to elicit fear, terror, dread, and shock is what primarily sets these films apart from other diegetic camera films (such as *Chronicle* or *End of Watch*).

The films chosen are representative examples of each of the three categories that I have listed above. Some of these films have been chosen for their cultural impact, influence on other films, and box office success (*The Blair Witch Project*, *Paranormal Activity*), some for their demonstration of the global reach of the diegetic camera technique (*Noroi: The Curse*, *Autohead*), and others specifically for their genre hybridity (*Man Bites Dog*, *Zero Day*, *Exhibit A*). I have also mostly avoided those films that require a 'double priming' of the audience. These films mix media forms, for example by first appearing to be a traditional film and then later utilising the diegetic camera approach. In these films, there are changes in the media form being mimicked; at first the film may appear to be a news report, then a documentary, and then a home video. Examples of these films include *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980), *The Zombie Diaries* (Bartlett and Gates, 2006), *Diary of the Dead* (Romero, 2007), *Resurrecting the Street Walker* (Uyanik, 2009), and *Rec 2* (Balagueró and Plaza, 2009).

Furthermore, I do not include films that are distinguished by their diegetic cameras being used for either surveillance or communication purposes rather than the creation of a media product such as a documentary or a home video. For example, *My Little Eye* (Evans, 2002) is supposedly made for an audience on the internet where viewers can watch a house full of 'contestants' and their every moves over the course of six months. Surveillance cameras are planted all around the house to watch the contestants. Similarly, *Alone with Her* (Nicholas, 2006) uses surveillance technology, but the subject of the camera's gaze is not aware of being watched and the end product is not designed to be watched by people over the internet. A character also wears surveillance cameras on his person in order to capture further footage of the girl who is his subject. On the other hand, *The Collingswood Story* (Costanza, 2002) and *Unfriended* (Gabriadze, 2014) have their characters communicating through webcams attached to computers. These films raise different issues in their aesthetic strategies, and my focus in this book is largely on the use of POV shots created by diegetic cameras.

Approaching Diegetic Camera Horror

Recently, there has been an increasing amount of scholarly attention to diegetic camera horror films. Zachary Ingle uses the term 'diegetic cam- era', which he defines as 'a camera within the diegesis, acknowledged by the characters, which is quite different from the typical subjective cam- era' (2011, 32). The diegetic camera is different to the subjective camera due to the supposed origin of the footage. With the subjective cam- era, the origin is supposedly the eye of a character, whereas with the diegetic camera, the origin is the lens of a camera that is present within the diegesis. Using the adjective 'diegetic' to describe the camera in these films is accurate in that it indicates that the camera is a prop that is part of the fictional world, and therefore a profilmic element. To be more precise, the camera is being used to narrate at what *Gérard* Genette calls the intradiegetic level (1980, 228). This is where a character within the story appears to tell the narrative, rather than some unseen extradiegetic narrator or narrating instance.

Keira McKenzie (2011) calls the found footage horror trend 'reality horror' but takes a more contentious approach, claiming that 'the viewer has become one of the characters, the imaginary real has become experiential and the viewer is directly involved in the narrative as it unfolds around them' (2011, 39). This statement requires some attention and further consideration in the book, particularly with reference to off-screen space and the idea that important narrative events are occurring behind the camera. McKenzie also argues that 'Reality Horror enforces engagement and in becoming one of the hapless characters within the film, the viewer cannot maintain distance between the events of the story and their own viewing' (2011, 40). The spectator's position is like that of a character immersed in the diegetic events, rather than being in the position of the more traditional invisible observer. However, when watching a diegetic camera film, I contend that there is still some distance. The viewer is forced to imagine some of the events and characters that are behind the camera, and therefore, the viewer still feels some detachment from the story and events.

Don Tresca also uses the term 'reality horror' and argues that these films place 'the audience in the "documentary mode of

engagement," creating an expectation of reality, and then undercutting such expectation by introducing elements into the film that cannot exist in reality (e.g. ghosts, giant monsters, demons, witches, etc.)' (2011, 45). Tresca also asserts that after viewing reality horror:

> the audience no longer feels safe and comfortable in the real world because the films imply that such terrors exist outside the movie experience. Even though, logically, the audience understands the fictional nature of the films, the audience mindset has been conditioned to create an assumption that any film presented in a documentary fashion is reality.
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> (2011, 47)

Although Tresca's claim points to a different experience for viewers of diegetic camera films, I would argue that he has overstated the power of these films to convince the audience. This is a central concern of this book as I consider the ways the spectator is primed to read and interpret the film in a different manner to more traditional narrative films.

Diegetic camera films may not make audiences feel less safe in the real world as Tresca suggests, but they do encourage viewers to engage in a more visceral imagining that what is presented is real footage.

In their edited collection *Digital Horror*, Linnie Blake and Xavier Aldana Reyes situate the diegetic camera horror film as one of many techniques that filmmakers use when contributing to the digital horror phenomenon more widely. Blake and Aldana Reyes include haunted technologies, handheld horrors, and diegetic camera films under the same digital horror category, arguing that the world has become increasingly networked and that this networking is subject to ongoing monitoring (2016, 1). Their definition of digital horror is 'any type of horror that actively purports to explore the dark side of contemporary life in a digital age governed by informational flows, rhizomatic public net- works, virtual simulation and visual hyper-stimulation' (2016, 3). Blake and Aldana Reyes argue that digital horror deals with four main anxieties over digital technologies: the proliferation of mediated images of real-world violence, the potential for surveillance societies, exposure of users to unwanted attention, and the impact these technologies could have on human identity (2016, 3). They highlight that the move towards more handheld forms of horror reflects the 'will to truth' during the era of the 'War on Terror' where many

members of the public felt they were being lied to by the government (2016, 3). While Blake and Aldana Reyes' volume conflates diegetic camera horror films with other digital horror films such as *FeardotCom* (Malone, 2002) and *Pulse* (Sonzero, 2006), there are significant essays that specifically analyse diegetic cam- era horror films.

Most notably, Aldana Reyes discusses the affective possibilities and stylistic limitations of found footage horror in his own contribution to the edited volume. Here he argues that 'found footage is almost inextricable from affect' (2016b, 150) and that found footage is a 'framing technique' (2016b, 150) rather than a subgenre of horror. With particular reference to *Rec*, Aldana Reyes also discusses the limitations of the narrative and aesthetic diegetic camera technique. He notes that the camera is limited in its movement, that non-diegetic music cannot be used, and that there always has to be a 'real reason for the recording to be taking place' (2016b, 155). Furthermore, Aldana Reyes insists in his essay, *Reel Evil*, that '"found footage" needs to be understood as a framing or narrative technique marking the product at a stylistic, but not a thematic, level' (2015, 2). His work reveals that found footage films vary greatly in tone and purpose and that there are many different thematic strands of diegetic camera films. Rather than labelling found footage a subgenre of horror, Aldana Reyes argues that diegetic cameras are utilised in existing horror subgenres, for example the demonic possession film, the supernatural or paranormal film and the monster feature. He also notes the presence of the 'killer video diary' that 'follows the … exploits of a murderer or group of them as they embark on a taped killing spree' (2015, 5). This is what I have termed the 'charismatic killer' category above.

The Processing of Point of View

The framework of this book is informed by Edward Branigan's writings on the POV shot, Noël Burch's theory of off-screen space and David Bordwell's theories of narration. Bordwell's seminal contributions stand out as a key turning point in cognitivist approaches to studying how viewers perceive films. As he argues, 'when spectators are confronted with a film that emphasizes its stylistic features, they will seek cues for constructing a story' (1985, 36). The diegetic camera films analysed certainly

emphasise their own stylistic features, constantly reminding the spectator that they are constructions that have been shot by a cam- era that is within the story world of the film. However, I believe that when these films highlight their own construction, they encourage the viewer to imagine that the film is a documentary, reality television show, or home video. By foregrounding the construction, mediated realism is invoked in order to support their supposed non-fiction status. Their self-consciousness makes them more immersive than traditional films and this is largely due to their privileging of off-screen space and the viewer's imaginings and perception of this space. With the camera so often in the hands of a character, these shots must often be categorised as POV shots.

Branigan (1984, 1992, 2006) frequently focuses on the POV shot. As a rule of thumb, the POV shot can generally be used in an objective manner, in order to simply show what a character is looking at, or it can be more subjective, as is the case in diegetic camera films. The POV shot offers a sense of what the character is feeling or thinking by putting the viewer into the eyes (or camera lens) of that character. Branigan identifies a number of variants on the POV structure, but diegetic camera films utilise one of these variants more than others: the continuing POV. This has implications for the viewer's processing of the films particularly in regard to imagining off-screen space.

Branigan's concept of focalisation[3] will also be key here, as diegetic camera films are clear examples where characters provide the spectator with information about the story world. As Branigan states, 'focalization (reflection) involves a character neither speaking (narrating, reporting, communicating) nor acting (focusing, focused by), but rather actually experiencing something through seeing or hearing it' (1992, 101). Though we may hear the camera-operating character speak, and we may even see their actions (or decipher them from the camera movement), diegetic camera films offer something akin to internal focalisation, where 'story world and screen are meant to collapse into each other, forming a perfect identity in the name of the character … the spectator's task is to identify the story world with the mental understanding of a specific character' (1992, 102). The continuing POV shot offers the viewer the perception of the character and also some impression of their mental state. Each of the films analysed later in this book is presented as a restricted narration where internal focalisation as described by Branigan is utilised. Some of this reveals what Branigan calls deep internal focalisation (perception and

thoughts of the character), but the majority is surface internal focalisation, revealing the speech and perception of the character. Therefore, due to deep or surface internal focalisation, the viewer gains considerable knowledge about a character. This is knowledge about what the character is both seeing and feeling. This increased familiarity with the character's POV should promote or assure empathy with the character.

Branigan quotes Raymond Durgnat's (2002) 'A Long Hard Look at Psycho' in saying 'a spectator does not watch a scene through a profilmic camera nor think about a scene by picturing a camera that is watching the scene nor imagine a camera to be an invisible narrator or invisible character' (2002, 92). While this may be true of classical Hollywood films, this claim does not apply to the body of horror films under discussion in this book. In the diegetic camera horror film, we do watch the film through a profilmic camera, and therefore, I suggest that we do picture a camera that is watching the scene. Branigan also argues that 'al- though a spectator may well imagine that he or she is "inside" a fiction (or "inside" a character), he or she is in a different place within the fiction from the view that appears on screen' (2002, 176). When a spectator remembers most films, he or she is likely to assemble what Branigan calls a 'mental matrix that permits us to freely visualize' (2002, 176). However, with diegetic camera films, I argue that our memory is tied to the POV of the diegetic camera much more closely. This means that our memory of the film is not only of what we witnessed, but almost exactly how we witnessed it. The origin of the footage is the camera that is involved in events on screen, and therefore, the experience must be more immersive. The cinematography is a key factor in our memory as we must imagine the position of our diegetic narrator who holds the cam- era. For example, when we remember scenes from *Cloverfield*, we recall details of the camera's position at street level as Hud pans the camera to watch the head of the Statue of Liberty crash nearby. The position of the camera is memorable because when watching the film we are likely to imagine the character holding the camera. However, in our memory of the film, the camera-operating character is less likely to be remembered: instead, the captured image – and therefore the camera's placement and our alignment with it – is much more important. We are just as likely to recall how the scene was filmed (and our ideas about why it was filmed this way) as what was filmed. Our imagination of what is happening behind the

camera in off-screen space is vital to our understanding and memory of many scenes.

This book will also complicate Noel Carroll's dismissal of the concept of identification. He asserts that

> what is meant by character-identification [is] emotional duplication [but] very often we have different and, in fact, more information about what is going on in a fiction than do the protagonists, and consequently, what we feel is very different from what the character may be thought to feel.
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> (1990, 91)

However, in these films, the viewer is confined to the POV of the char- acter, and there is therefore much greater alignment with the character. Duplication of emotions is much more frequent and common in found footage films than Carroll would suggest due to the viewer's almost identical knowledge as the character. But identification is still a problematic idea that will need further exploration, particularly with reference to Murray Smith's theory of 'recognition, alignment, and allegiance' (1995, 73), which will be considered in Chapter 6.

Developing a Cognitive Approach to Diegetic Camera Horror

Cognitive theory in film and media studies began in the 1980s with scholars such as David Bordwell and Noël Carroll initially challenging the psychoanalytic theory that had dominated film studies since the 1970s. In order to justify my use of cognitive film theory to elucidate the pleasures and purposes of diegetic camera horror, it is necessary to first clarify why I reject psychoanalytic theories that have been predominant in discussions over concepts such as identification and of the horror genre more generally. I also wish to acknowledge the work of Julian Hanich (2010) and Xavier Aldana Reyes (2016a) and elucidate how my own approach differs from their phenomenological and somatics-based approaches, respectively. I will argue that psychoanalytic film theory relies too heavily on cinema's relation to theories of the unconscious; instead, I explore the cognitive processes of the viewer when he or she is watching diegetic camera horror films. I emphasise how the use of the diegetic camera orients our emotions and cognitions when watching these films. Understanding how we cognize the diegetic camera will help to gain an appreciation of how we feel about the characters that operate it, and furthermore how this

can lead us towards certain emotions. My argument is that the diegetic camera is a key stimulus that provokes our emotional responses to these films, and that these emotions are far more complex than simply labelling them as pleasure and desire.

Limits of Psychoanalytic Theories for Diegetic Camera Horror Films

Psychoanalytic film theorists from Christian Metz[4] (1982, 4) to Laura Mulvey[5] (1989, 14) as well as countless others are preoccupied with cinema's relation to the unconscious. However, in this study of diegetic camera horror films, I am primarily focussed on cinema's complex relationship with the world, realism, and other non-fiction media forms such as documentary and home videos. I wish to look beyond Metz and Mulvey's assertions that a Freudian/Lacanian approach is required to explain the pleasures and desires of film viewing. Although I will be referring to the process of identification that Metz sees as the most important pleasure of film viewing, I argue that this is more intricate than psychoanalytic theory suggests and requires a more active engagement with the text that involves significant cognitive processes. I agree that identification is a crucial concept, but in following notable cognitive scholars such as Murray Smith, I will be breaking down the process of identification into numerous parts in order to explain the complex array of emotions that a viewer feels when watching a diegetic camera film. My concern is with the specifics of emotional experience and how these are tied to the utilisation of a diegetic camera in the horror film genre. According to Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith, 'the best of recent psychoanalytic theory is attempting to elaborate and enumerate pleasures instead of "pleasure," desires instead of "desire"' (1999, 12). For this book, however, the concepts of pleasure and desire are still too limited as there are more complex emotions to consider when a diegetic camera is utilised such as empathy and sympathy, fear, dread, and anticipation. I will be relying on the work of cognitive scholars because their central attention is on emotions and more specifically how these emotions are tied to cognitive activity. This approach stresses the activity of the viewer's mind when watching the films and moves away from subconscious drives.

I argue that the viewer of diegetic camera horror films has control over his or her cognition, actively making connections between media forms during the priming stage of the film and choosing who or what to identify with through a process of recognising characters and making moral evaluations about their actions. I will also argue that the viewer brings his or her own

previous individual experiences, memories, schemata, and expectations to the film, meaning that he or she will interpret meaning, narrative, and aesthetics individually.

Furthermore, Metz's notions of primary and secondary identification lack the precision of cognitive theorists and their fuller explorations of what identification entails. The diegetic camera also opens up many new avenues of investigation as its employment contradicts much of Metz's conception of the camera in cinema. For example, the diegetic camera does not provide the spectator with an illusion of power over the screen images, nor does it offer the spectator the feeling of avoiding being seen by those on screen. The diegetic camera is a fundamental component in the creation of identification, but this concept needs interrogating and clarifying beyond what psychoanalytic theory has offered in the past.

Cognitivism and How We Think about the Diegetic Camera

Cognitive theory is about studying the process of cognition or thinking. Encompassing a range of factors including attention, learning, memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and perception. Cognitive theory explores the conscious mind, and this makes it a suitable framework for analysing the diegetic camera horror film. I will contend that the films encourage the viewer to actively process the information contained within the films in specific ways, such as by imagining off-screen space and empathising with off-screen camera-operating characters. This is significant because it immerses the viewer and increases their investment in on- screen events. My question is: how do viewers respond to diegetic camera films and why do they respond as they do? I believe that cognitivism is central to answering this question because the use of the diegetic camera fundamentally affects the attention, learning, and perception of the film viewer. With their priming techniques, self-conscious strategies and the moral orientation of characters, diegetic camera films encourage viewers to be more engaged with the films.

In the following sections, I will explain how priming, engagement, empathy, attention, alignment, and allegiance are key factors in the cognition of the viewer while watching diegetic camera horror films. I argue that priming (the subject of Chapter 3) is the initial process that must occur in order for the viewer to be able

to recognise the off-screen cam- era operator as a character and begin imagining of off-screen space. The diegetic camera then affects the level of engagement of the viewer, the empathy generated for the characters, the way the viewer pays attention to the film, and how he or she becomes aligned with, and morally evaluates the characters.

Priming for Point of View

Peter Wuss's theory of priming argues that 'since the opening of a film has the function of programming the information processing of the whole reception process, the first sequences serve as a kind of priming. They formulate the aesthetic rules for the following course of experience' (2009, 34). This is especially true of the films in this horror trend as they have to prime their audiences with relatively new, but easily identifiable, aesthetic rules for a different viewing experience.

Wuss continues by stating that 'the formation of a successful opening sequence (…) must (…) prepare the spectator for a specific way or style of film perception that leads to the aesthetic code of the artwork here called its "priming pattern"' (2009, 49). The priming patterns of many diegetic camera horror films are strikingly similar. This will be developed with a detailed analysis of the opening scenes of *The Blair Witch Project* and *Rec* in Chapter 3.

Branigan's work on the POV shot will inform my discussion of the stylistic techniques used in the early scenes of the film as priming. This is of particular importance because diegetic camera films do not often con- form to Branigan's theory of the most common POV structures. With- out what Branigan calls the 'point/glance' shot to prepare audiences for the 'point/object' shot, the use of POV must be signalled in other ways. Therefore, these films must contain cues to ensure that the spectator understands the footage as a continual POV shot. Also, it must be under- stood by the viewer that the POV is not strictly that of any one character, but that of the diegetic camera.

POV shots help to limit what the viewer sees and therefore aid in cre- ating feelings of anxiety. With reference to Greg M. Smith, I will also consider how the early scenes establish an emotional orientation for the viewer and help to create what Matt Hills (2005, 25) refers to as a mood of anticipation. The opening text of the films is often a key element in establishing an anticipatory mood that will then orient the viewer's emo- tions for the remainder of the film. The viewer is primed for

two major responses: to anticipate a disaster befalling the characters and to recall other media artefacts that they have seen in the past that have a closer relation to reality than fiction film – for example documentaries and home videos. Diegetic camera films and particularly their opening pieces of text also activate what Jaak Panksepp (1998) calls seeking emotions. Torben Grodal (2010, 65) argues that these emotions are often activated when watching what he calls 'classical detector fictions' – films that set up a mystery for the viewer to attempt to solve. Many of the diegetic camera horror films, specifically those that follow the victims of vio- lence (as opposed to those who commit acts of violence) encourage the viewer to hypothesise and to search for clues as to what exactly is going to happen further along in the narrative. The viewer should ideally seek answers to the mystery that is teased in the opening text and he or she will hope that a character with a camera can provide some evidence as to what exactly happens to the characters. What we also see in di- egetic camera films is the seeking system appearing to be activated in the camera-operating characters as they search for evidence. This I argue creates an alignment of systems – a shared seeking – between character and viewer, especially exaggerated because of the continuing POV shots. However, these POV shots also restrict the narration creating a strong alignment, but limiting what the viewer sees. In Ed Tan's volume on emotion and the structure of narrative film, he suggests that 'as a privileged witness, viewers are allowed to see precisely what they need to see, at precisely the moment they need to see it' (1996, 55). This may be true of the formal strategy of classical Hollywood with the tradition of seam- less continuity editing and traditional cinematography, but the horror films discussed here do not position the spectator in a privileged way. While we may feel privileged in the sense of having access to a character's vision and perhaps even their emotions, the narration is also highly restricted because the viewer of the film is confined to the (often less than ideal) POV of a character and their camera. The viewer is primed to experience the film from a less privileged position than the traditional invisible observer camera. Similarly, Tan's assertion that 'the invisible witness is not addressed, indeed, not even ignored: for the characters of the fictional world the witness simply does not exist' (1996, 76) does not apply to diegetic camera horror films, where the camera operator and camera is frequently acknowledged. The viewer must be primed

to accept this shift in their spectatorial position compared to when he or she watches a classical film. I argue that this can create a stronger form of the fear that Julian Hanich (2014) labels dread. Hanich argues that dread is created when we anticipate a shock or threat in a scene and that dread is therefore a meta-emotion, where the viewer actually fears another emotion, for example the shock or terror of something jumping out of the darkness at the end of a suspenseful scene. This is exacerbated by the diegetic camera as we see constantly from vulnerable character's POV and the threat may launch itself not only at the character, but the camera itself (and by extension, the viewer). Hanich argues that 'some- thing we can see is manageable, whereas unseen horror cannot be con- trolled' (2014, 31). With the lack of privilege associated with the diegetic camera, many terrors remain half-glimpsed and therefore do not allow viewer's dread to dissipate.

Heightened Engagement in Diegetic Camera Films

Feeling, and being primed to feel, an increased level of dread will heighten the viewer's engagement, as will the activation of the seeking system. Aldana Reyes argues that 'dread demands a complex emotional and cognitive engagement and … it also privileges the body of viewers and their capacity for suggestion' (2016a, 111). I agree with the first part of this statement but believe that Aldana Reyes places too much emphasis on the viewer's body. I argue instead that viewers feel a sense of heightened engagement with diegetic camera horror films, but that this is largely due to the diegetic camera horror film's use of off-screen space and correspondingly the prolonged use of the POV shot. Aldana Reyes claims that 'somatics matters' (2016a, 186). However, somatics are not as central to viewer engagement as the use of off-screen space and the imagining of off-screen camera operators. The crew in fictional films are conventionally completely invisible to the audience. Their presence on screen would shatter the spectator's engagement with the fiction as a believable and engaging narrative. Even documentaries largely keep their crews off-screen as audiences are more concerned with the stories being presented than the people behind-the-scenes who have created them, with notable exceptions such as documentaries by Michael Moore and Louis Theroux.

However, the operators in diegetic camera horror films turn the camera on themselves or film themselves in mirrors, emphasising their pronounced involvement with the subjects they film. Not only are these cameras engaged with the profilmic event, but they are also of- ten communicating with, and explicitly attempting to engage with their audience. The camera-operating characters are aware that someone is watching, and the viewer can imagine that the character is communicating with him or her from within the fiction. This communication and engagement can lead to greater empathy with the diegetic camera operator. It is tempting to assume that this equates to a greater sense of identification with the characters, but it is vital to dissect the idea of identification before making this claim.

Identification has already been broken down into different processes by Murray Smith who defines specific concepts within it. Concepts that make up his 'structure of sympathy' involve three different ways that the spectator can 'apprehend the fictional world': these in turn involve different levels of engagement with the central character. The viewer may 'imagine the events of the narrative from the (physical and mental) perspective of the character' or they might imagine themselves 'in the exact situation of the character' (1995, 80). Diegetic camera horror films prove adept at helping the spectator share the perspective of the character, but the question of whether this leads them to imagine themselves more easily in the situation of that character is debatable. I argue that diegetic camera films do allow the viewer to easily imagine themselves in the situation, but that this is not necessary as the viewer is more likely to imagine the off-screen camera-operating character in the situation. Smith also argues that the spectator simulates the emotions of the char- acter that they are observing by hypothesising about what the character is experiencing (1995, 97). Furthermore, he suggests that hypothesising, imagining, and simulating are not always required. When the viewer reads the facial and bodily cues of a character, they may mimic those cues and, therefore, feel corresponding emotions. This 'affective mimicry' (1995, 99) may be harder with very limited or even non-existent facial cues of the camera-operating character, but their bodily cues will often be registered by the cinematography. For example, if a camera operator is running in fear, the camerawork will reflect this. Similarly, if a camera operator is

startled by a noise, their camerawork will register this shock and may also register their seeking of what made the noise. Smith also identifies 'autonomic reactions (…) such as the startle response' that are involuntary and can also add to the emotional processes of the audience (1995, 102). Though the character and spectator can often be aligned when they are startled by a shock, Smith notes that this is not a case of the spectator 'responding "through" the response of the character' (1995, 102). In other words, we do not jump because the char- acter jumps; we jump because whatever it is that made the character also makes us jump. However, diegetic camera horror films provide an example that suggests a counter-argument: when the character who holds the camera is startled, it is the operator's response itself that can startle the spectator. For example, if a character screams from behind the camera or suddenly drops his or her camera on the floor, this can encourage the viewer to respond through, or to, the character's response.

Character emotions are an important factor in making the spectator respond in an emotional way. The emotions of the camera-operating characters can often be expressed through their use of the camera, rather than in the regular use of close-ups. Branigan suggests that the viewer 'is expending energy in reacting to something that is familiar' (2006, 175). The energy that Branigan suggests the spectator is applying is the energy of imagining and drawing links with our own experience of the real world and making links between the characters and the people we know in real life. Moreover, in diegetic camera films, we are expending energy recalling other media such as documentary and home videos. We must recognise these forms in order to understand what is being mimicked in diegetic camera films. We activate what Bordwell calls mental schemata (1985, 31) derived from those previous experiences of watching other media forms and these schemata allow us to assess the new experience and recognise the similar pattern. Walton claims that 'we seem to be in *psychological* contact with characters, sometimes even intimate with them (…) Often we are privy to characters' most private thoughts and feelings. And we respond to what we know, apparently, in many of the ways in which we respond to what we know about the real world' (1990, 191–192). Similarly, Tan argues that 'when we watch a film, our general interest in the fortunes of our own loved ones and friends takes the form of sympathy with the fate of a particular character or characters'

(1996, 48). Clearly the viewer often cares deeply for the fictional characters, despite knowing them to be works of fiction. I would suggest that this is not due to interest in our loved ones as Tan suggests. Horror filmmakers that utilise the diegetic camera attempt to make this psychological link between the character and viewer as close as possible by persuading the audience that what they are watching is not an ordinary film but the video testimony of a real person. Audiences are not generally fooled, but they may find it less difficult to project their imaginings on to the fiction. Because the characters communicate with the audience, our psychological contact with them is closer, and therefore, we are more likely to share certain character's emotions. However, this does not mean that our sympathy for the characters is in any way linked to a more general interest in the fortunes of actual people that we know and care about. The viewer imagines that the characters are real. We do not think of our loved ones because we are imagining that the characters have their own loved ones and own reasons for feeling fear or sadness.

Horror filmmakers often aim to create corresponding emotions be- tween characters and the audience to increase the visceral impact of their films. According to Carroll, in horror 'the emotive responses of the audience, ideally, run parallel to the emotions of characters' (1990, 17). It is a fundamental point of diegetic camera horror films that the viewer shares a significant amount of the perception of events with a character. Identification, then, can be a case of almost literally putting oneself in the shoes of the character, as in we see from where the character sees. Gaut argues that when the spectator does this, he or she may then come to care for that character (1999, 202). Furthermore, Gaut maintains that 'the viewer imagines herself to be the character with whom she identifies' (1999, 202–203). By imagining oneself in the place of the character under the same stresses and in the face of the same horrors, the spectator may share or simulate the emotions of that character. This task is made easier by the constant alignment with the character's POV and imagining the off-screen space behind the camera.

The extent to which the viewer is invited into the mind and emotions of the character is another important factor when considering how these films engage the viewer. Subjectivity is key to encouraging identification with a character, as the more

the spectator is aware of the character's thoughts and feelings, the more likely he or she is to understand and potentially simulate those emotions. This suggests that the camera-operating character is the most likely source of identification if we assume that by holding the camera, the spectator is getting their subjective viewpoint on events. Cherry argues that 'subjectivity can account for the way in which the emotional and physiological responses of the spectator are oriented around a specific character' (2009, 129). If the viewer is 'in- side' the character's head, as opposed to simply seeing events as if from 'in their shoes', then they are more likely to respond with the same emotions as the character. Being inside the character's head involves a greater subjectivity than merely seeing from the same position as the character. This again demonstrates the importance of off-screen space. Hearing the character and being encouraged to imagine their movement through the cinematography creates a direct link to the reactions and emotions of the character. The viewer is forced to imagine what occurs not only behind the camera, but to some extent what is occurring in their mind.

Identification is unlikely to be the same for all viewers. Some viewers will resist any attempts at making a connection between themselves and the characters in the film. Many viewers would be less likely to accept the invitation to imagine that a diegetic camera horror film is a non-fiction document featuring real people. On the other hand, horror fans that particularly enjoy being terrified will welcome the techniques displayed and the chance to imagine that they are watching a non-fiction piece of media. Currie draws a line between sensitive and refined readers, arguing that

> the sensitive reader is one who knows what emotion is expressed in the work and is therefore able to respond congruently to it; the refined reader is one who responds congruently only to works that have a certain kind of merit.
>
> (1990, 214)

Currie also suggests that 'our responses to fiction are appropriate, then, when they are (…) congruent with the emotion we make believe is possessed by the fictional author' (1990, 214–215). In diegetic camera horror films, the fictional author is the camera operator and his or her emotions and fears are often registered in the camera work and the audio, making it easier for

the spectator to respond congruently, particularly if they are what Currie deems to be sensitive readers. For example, when Hud is screaming in fear and his camera shakes as he is caught between soldiers advancing towards a monster on the streets of Manhattan, it could be easy for viewers to feel a similar sense of the terror and confusion that Hud feels and performs. On the other hand, a refined viewer may be resistant to the techniques of the diegetic camera film, choosing not to imagine Hud, or to find his constant screaming from off-screen intrusive on the unfolding of on-screen events.

There will also be times of greater and lesser emotional connection be- tween character and viewer throughout the course of the film. Often in films, climactic moments produce the most emotional responses in spectators and diegetic camera films are no different. When the characters face difficulties and have to make decisions, emotional engagement and cognitive involvement become heightened in the spectator. Wuss argues that 'the affective arousal of the audience always rises when decisions and problem-solving seem to be approaching (…) and the viewer be- comes both cognitively and emotionally involved in what is happening' (2009, 109). I argue that this affective arousal can be heightened when a camera-operating character is involved in this decision-making process and particularly if there is conflict between the camera operator and a character on screen. For example in *Cloverfield*, Rob makes the decision to find Beth who is trapped in a building far away from his current location. The camera operator Hud is not in love with Beth, like Rob is, so has different feelings about risking his life to find her. Hud films Rob's face in close up as Rob receives a voicemail message from Beth saying that she is trapped. Hud remains silent as this message is played. In the following shot, Rob is ahead of Hud moving fast down a street while Hud is trying to convince Rob that finding Beth is too risky. In this sequence, we are not only emotionally involved with Rob, who is clearly determined to save a woman he loves, but we are also cognising about where Hud is, how he must be feeling and whether or not he should be following his friend into danger. The cinematography in Figure 0.1 reveals something of Hud's emotions, but only if the viewer is willing to imagine Hud behind the camera. The figure offers an excellent example of a conflict for the viewer: Rob is troubled by what he hears on the phone and caught in close up, while Hud films silently to give his friend the

impression of privacy. We can easily imagine that Hud is concerned both for his friend's emotional state, but also for what Rob might decide to do after listening to this message.

Despite arguments about the congruence between character and spectator emotions, there is often a disparity between the audience and the characters' emotions. Carroll argues against many of the commonly held assumptions about identification, though his arguments do not always apply to the characters in diegetic camera horror films. First, he argues that there is a disparity between the belief in fictional monsters held by the characters and the lack of that belief in the viewer (1990, 17). This is not always the case because often the characters in films such as *The Blair Witch Project* remain sceptical about the existence of the 'monster' just as the viewer does despite growing evidence of its presence. The scepticism is therefore shared by both some of the characters and the viewers. Because the characters resist drawing supernatural conclusions, the films engage the seeking systems of the cynical viewer as he or she attempts to hypothesise other reasons for what is happening to the characters. Carroll identifies some convergence between the emotions of the characters and the emotions of the viewer but not total duplication. Characters provide examples of how to respond to monsters – with fear, disgust, or panic (1990, 22). Carroll's theory rarely considers the object-less fear of films like *The Blair Witch Project* where the monster is unseen by either the protagonists or the viewer. However, the Blair Witch is still an object of terror, even if she is never witnessed.

I aim to extend Carroll's reading beyond the typical horror genre to include diegetic camera films. Carroll argues that character identification 'cannot be based on postulating an audience illusion of being identical with the protagonist' (1990, 90). One of his key arguments is based on the fact that the viewer is often given more information than the protagonist, particularly in the typical methodology of filmmakers creating suspense (1990, 91). For instance, the audience knows that the monster is approaching but the character does not. Therefore we experience dif- ferent emotions to the character. However, in diegetic camera horror films this is rarely the case. By limiting the viewer to the perceptual experience of the character with the camera, there is an epistemological alignment between character and spectator. Even when the viewer does have 'parallel emotive appraisals'

(1990, 92). Carroll argues that this 'does not entail identification'. Instead, he argues that 'what we do is not identify with characters but, rather, we assimilate their situation' (1990, 95). We do not duplicate the character's mental state but come to an understanding of it. With the prolonged alignment of diegetic camera films, however, I argue that there is a more pronounced attempt to make the viewer duplicate the feelings of the character that holds the camera, particularly empathising with a character's feeling of dread.

Aldana Reyes suggests that 'horror is premised on the emotion of threat, an emotion that is often … shared via imagination and somatic empathy with intradiegetic characters and, most importantly, their bod- ies' (2016a, 97). However, this is complicated by the idea of the off- screen camera operator, whose body the viewer may have to imagine in order to feel somatic empathy with it. While the viewer may 'align themselves with the harmed or tortured body' (2016a, 17) on screen, I wish to highlight the cognitive processes and empathy that is created with off-screen camera operators in the diegetic camera horror film.

Encouraging Empathy through Information Acquisition

Neill highlights the importance of empathy in the process of identifying with a fictional character (1996, 183). Empathy is the intellectual identification with or vivid experience of another person or character's feelings. I have already suggested that the utilisation of the diegetic camera technique in films can create stronger feelings of empathy between viewer and characters and that this is due to the viewer and the character having similar cognitive processes, including formulating hypotheses about what is happening. Empathy suggests something beyond feeling the same emotions as someone else; it also implies a distinct cognitive process that allows someone to actively engage with how another per- son is feeling. Neill goes on to suggest that identification and empathy depend on a viewer's ability to imagine what the character's beliefs and desires might be. Without detailed knowledge about the character, it will be harder for the spectator to imagine things from his or her point of view. Neill's argument also considers the similarities between the person in the audience and the character on screen. He suggests that the greater the extent to which the character resembles the

viewer, the more will the viewer be able to imagine events from the character's POV. While I do not strongly advocate that this similarity between viewer and character is strictly necessary, Neill's work is useful for highlighting the amount of knowledge the viewer has about characters and how easily the viewer can imagine what the character is feeling. This ties in with Smith's idea of 'recognition' as the viewer must be able to recognise the construction of a character, and imagine and understand some of the emotions of that character in order to feel empathy.

Grodal describes identification as the sharing of a given character's emotions that leads the viewer to simulating such emotions (1997, 93). Grodal suggests that the end result of cognitive identification will not always be empathy, but that feeling empathy for a character is likely to be a consequence of prolonged identification. For example, the longer we spend identifying with the characters by being positioned in alignment with their POV, the more likely we will empathise with them by the end of the film. This is also important to the study of diegetic camera horror films for obvious reasons. If we accept that a continuing POV shot throughout the majority of a film could lead to increased identification and therefore empathy, then Grodal's account is useful.

Often the character and the spectator share similar interests: for in- stance, the character wants to survive, and the viewer hopes that the character will. The spectator of diegetic camera horror films is forced into perceptual alignment with a camera-operating character for much of the duration. Therefore, though the viewer knows it is a fiction, he or she still sees the threat (or senses the presence of the threat) in similar ways. Carroll believes the audience's emotions are altruistic (for the character) whereas the character emotions are egoistic (for themselves). Grodal counters that there is compatibility between their interests (1997, 85). The spectator who is forced into perceptual alignment with the character does not only fear for the character, he or she fears for his or her self if they were in that situation (though he or she is aware that he or she is not). The viewer is expending effort in imagining that he or she is the character behind the camera or in imagining the mental state of the person who carries the diegetic camera. I posit that the effort spent imagining what a character is feeling is reduced due to the aesthetic and aural strategy of the films. Over the duration of the

film, if the techniques have been effective, then Grodal argues that 'empathy will very often be the consequence of a prolonged cognitive identification' (1997, 93). The prolonged use of POV camera allows the viewer to face the same situations as the characters (albeit from the safety of a seat outside the diegesis), and this makes the experience more immersive.

However, it is not simply the case that audiences identify and empathise with characters in terms of fulfilling goals such as staying alive. Between spectator and character, there is empathy beyond this convergence of desires. Grodal points to the empathy that occurs as a result of human bonding (1997, 94). Characters and their interactions are equally as important in aiding the spectator to identify and empathise with particular characters. This is important because in some diegetic camera horror films, the camera operator does not interact frequently (if at all) with his or her subjects, whereas in other examples there is frequent in- teraction. In Chapter 4, I will analyse the interactions between camera operators and their subjects to ascertain how empathy is produced and how the diegetic camera aids this process.

Even the most vicious of charismatic killers converses with the camera operators that film them. Whether it is a killer or a victim behind the camera, the narrators are often unreliable. For example, Heather in *The Blair Witch Project* is more concerned with filming than getting out of the woods quickly and likewise Micah in *Paranormal Activity* seems more concerned with capturing evidence of the supernatural than keep- ing his partner safe. The characters often descend into increasingly er- ratic, paranoid, and unstable mental states. Horror films in general, and diegetic camera films even more so, often end in the protagonist's death. The handheld camera and first-person POV do not offer any safety or re- spite from a decline in mental stability, which is not shared by the viewer. Though some spectators may become increasingly jumpy, nervous, even bordering on hysterical at certain points during the films, they do not go through the same cognitive and emotional process as the characters within the fiction. Horror viewers will likely have bodily responses such as muscle tension, speeding up of eye movements and rises in adrenalin, but Grodal argues that horror fictions often use 'problems of cognitive consistency and of paranoia, as both major elements in the creation of emotion and as means of involving the viewer in a claustrophobic, non-distanced

experience' (1997, 245). The camera-operating characters often cannot believe their eyes, but by capturing proof on camera, they seek to rationalise the irrational, or at least record it. When confronted with something they cannot fully understand, they wish to communicate an imagined witness. This reflects the activation of the seeking system, so although the character and viewer may not have similar problems of cognitive consistency, they will at least share a desire to have the camera seek out and capture something that they can then try to understand. Both viewer and character may not believe in monsters or witches, but both are more likely to believe in these things if they witness examples on film. The viewer knows that he or she is watching a fiction, but be- comes increasingly engaged as the characters strive to make the viewer believe the truth of what is being captured with the cameras. For example, the spectator of *Cloverfield* may not scream and run like Hud, but both viewer and Hud are left with a sense of awe and confusion when faced with the monster.

Those theorists who have specifically looked at diegetic camera horror films in relation to identification have used words like 'trapped' (McKenzie, 2011, 37) to describe the experience of the spectator of found footage films. McKenzie compares the films to being on a 'horrific ride' and argues that the 'blinkered limitations of the camera/viewer's eye are the only visuals and the viewer passively experiences the untenable situations in which the characters are acted on by external forces' (2011, 37). The idea that the spectator passively experiences these films may be true in terms of physicality but because of the continuing POV shots, I argue that the viewer is actively imagining his or her position in the narrative. While we are 'trapped' in the continuing POV shots, as on a ride, the viewer shares this experience with the characters. When analysing most fiction films, Carroll argues that 'the audience (…) frequently has access to many more scenes and incidents, as well as their implications, than are available to individual characters' (1990, 100). However, this is not the case with diegetic camera horror films. More frequently, due to the confinement of positioning to the character's camera's gaze, the spectator and character share almost identical knowledge. Tresca argues that in diegetic camera horror films,

> the camera (and, thereby, the audience) only knows as much of the reality as the person behind the camera; therefore, if the person behind the camera cannot perceive the "reality" of the situation, it will

> remain forever beyond the grasp of the film to capture it.
> (2011, 46)

The viewer is rarely separated from the POV of the character and therefore does not get to see elements that are hidden from the character.

I will argue that if the spectator accumulates information in a consistently similar way as the character, then empathy will be stronger. The viewer and the character have similar cognitive processes; formulating hypotheses about what is happening. Currie points out that 'the illusion peculiar to film is that the viewer is present at the events of the story' (1995, 23) but also that 'people watching movies do not behave like people who believe in the reality of the fictions they are watching' (1995, 25). In this sense, diegetic camera horror films and other more traditional films are no different. The focus films do not have the 'capacity to make the viewer think that he or she is actually watching real events' (1995, 22–23), but they do often offer increased intimacy and immediacy through their specific stylistic presentation and aesthetic and narrative strategies. The believability of the characters and situations and the way they are presented to the spectator are key to increased identification, but this identification is an active process.

Attention and Cognitive Participation: Activating the Seeking System

I argue that diegetic camera horror films encourage active cognitive par- ticipation from the viewer even more so than other films. The spectator does more than identify with the characters, hypothesise about how the film will end and empathise with the victims of the monster. They are encouraged to become participants in the film, searching the frame for monsters withheld from view and attempting to spot the subject that the camera-operating character is trying desperately to film. Grant argues that these films 'encourage or construct a spectatorial position that requires an intensely active engagement with the image' (2013, 165). He believes that they arouse 'the epistephilic drive of the spectator' (2013, 165), thus forcing the viewer to look carefully and search the frame shrewdly for evidence of what is menacing the protagonists. The films then shock the viewer by rewarding their careful gaze with an at- tack on the camera itself 'and by extension, the spectator' (2013, 168).

Aldana Reyes argues that the screams and assaults in these films are 'experienced by the image' (2015, 154). While the character attempts to see (and therefore gain knowledge) by using the camera, the spectator is similarly searching. The spectator is limited to scanning the frame presented, rather than being in control of the camera. Aldana Reyes has similarly highlighted the 'vulnerability of the camera' (2016b, 153) and the provoking of an affective reaction 'achieved by playing with the viewer's attention' (2016b, 154). Most importantly, the seeking system is activated by both character and viewer and the aesthetics of the footage encourage this seeking to become intensified. This seeking is also exaggerated as the viewer feels like a privileged witness to the footage. He or she does not imagine that he or she is the finder of the footage because the footage has already had opening titles added and there is often evidence that editing has taken place, but the viewer does also feel that the footage is evidence that needs careful consideration to reveal its truths.

This means that the viewer is constantly working to maintain his or her careful observation. Hanich labels 'appraisal' as one of the five components of fear in the cinema, arguing that our attentional focus is narrowed on what we consider to be threatening (2010, 20). Characters with cameras can zoom in to highlight important details, whereas at other times (particularly when the camera is put on a fixed rig) the viewer is left to search the frame. Branigan argues that 'attention is at work making what is "blurry" or "ambiguous" at a specific point in the space clearer and more vivid while making the rest of the space temporarily less distinct or not visible' (2006, 62). The spectator of diegetic camera horror films often does not have a physically present protagonist in front of the camera, and therefore, his or her attention is not taken up by this individual. Instead, he or she is more active in searching the frame for what is catching the attention of the protagonist who holds the camera. This also encourages the viewer to imagine what is occurring off-screen and particularly behind the camera more.

The amateur camerawork also stimulates cognitive activity. The im- pulsive and often frantic movement of a diegetic camera operator makes it difficult for the viewer to maintain attention on an object. Focus can be lost and disorientation may occur. When this happens, the viewer's mind must work harder on making sense of the on-screen action. Wuss notes that in Dogme films[6] where the camerawork is allegedly improvised

to some degree, there is a similar 'orienting reaction' (2009, 206). The camerawork, he argues, 'seems quite uncertain and rarely allows reliable prognoses about the coming plot development' (2009, 206–207). This leads to increased anxiety in the viewer, an effect in congruence with the feelings of the protagonist who holds the camera in diegetic camera horror films. Dogme films share similarities with many diegetic cam- era films in their shooting style, emphasis on improvised performances, lack of artificial lighting, and use of location shooting. Wuss adds that 'the agitation consequently produced in the viewer … [is] produced by the camera's attempts to find an orientation, provoking renewed orient- ing reactions in the viewer' (2009, 207). If the cinematography appears improvised and uncertain and the camera operator's agitation can be perceived through the cinematography, then the spectator will not only be more agitated, but will have to work harder to maintain a degree of orientation. This in turn makes their forensic searches of the frame more difficult and, perhaps, more urgent. I argue that this search for orientation involves imagining off-screen space, and an increased anxiety over what is occurring outside the frame of the continuing POV shot.

Alignment and Allegiance with Camera Operators and Charismatic Killers

In this book, I will be heavily drawing on Murray Smith's notions of alignment and allegiance. Instead of using the term identification, Smith uses these terms to provide an alternative for 'the psychoanalytic explanations that are put forward almost automatically for both the making and viewing of perverse material' (1999, 218). Smith breaks the notion of identification down into three different concepts: 'recognition, alignment, and allegiance' (1995, 73). He dubs these constituent parts of the 'structure of sympathy'. Sympathy is similar to empathy in that it is the sharing of feelings between people, but it often is used to describe a feeling of sorrow or distress for another person. First, Smith asserts that we must recognise and perceive the construction of a character. The next stage in the structure is alignment. This is the process of placing the spectator in a position whereby, using a variety of techniques, he or she has access to certain actions, knowledge, and feelings of the characters. Finally, through allegiance spectators will make moral evaluations about the characters and choose whether they will identify with them or not.

Smith differentiates between alignment and allegiance,

arguing that 'the contrast … is one between the narrative information that a text provides us with and the way a text directs our evaluation of this in- formation' (1999, 220). This distinction can determine how increased alignment with certain characters affects the viewer's responses, particularly in the case of the charismatic killer characters, which I will explore in depth in Chapter 5. I will not suggest that empathy or sympathy can be automatically produced by increased alignment, but that the viewer may have more complex feelings of attraction and repulsion when he or she is forced in alignment with a character. As Smith notes, 'sympathetic allegiance is not automatically produced by alignment with a character' (1999, 220), and the charismatic killer examples challenge the viewer's feelings of antipathy to atypically monstrous characters. Something more than morals are at stake here, and ideas of allegiance are entangled and challenged in some of the diegetic camera films.

Smith's argument is that

> fictions designed to elicit perverse allegiance … are actually exceptional and unusual, and that the major popular traditions that appear to elicit them (like horror) often reveal underlying structures that are more complex but also more conventionally moral than … psychoanalytic arguments have suggested.
>
> (1999, 222)

In the diegetic camera films, perverse allegiance is rarely present. The monstrous characters are not sympathetic and their actions are more likely to provoke disgust than allegiance. They cannot even be consid- ered anti-heroes; they are not vigilantes and none have any sympathetic moral code. The desire to watch them stems from curiosity, of which Smith notes that

> we appear to have a limitless natural curiosity in and fascination with the bizarre and the horrific. Such fascination and curiosity have an essentially amoral character and can take two forms: the first premised on the human kinship between ourselves (spectators, readers) and the object of our attention; the second on the complete absence of such kinship.
>
> (1999, 234)

The psychopaths represented in the charismatic killer examples are the subject of the spectator's amoral fascination, rather than perverse allegiance. The techniques used in diegetic camera films reward this amoral fascination in a number of ways, but they do

not generally encourage allegiance as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Smith considers the casting of Anthony Hopkins in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) as a way of heightening the spectator's aware- ness of 'the fictional status of the character', which allows 'our imaginative play with morally undesirable acts to an even greater extent' (1999, 227). However, diegetic camera films often lack stars, encouraging a greater sense of mediated realism and making the process of evaluating the character's monstrous actions potentially more straightforward. The spectator is not confronted with a fantasy world filled with stars, but something different; something more like non-fiction media forms. Actors in the majority of these films seem to have been cast on their ordinary appearances, adding to the mediated realism as the cast look as though they would more likely feature in a home video than a feature film.

For the remainder of this book, I build my analysis on these existing frameworks, paying particular attention to Murray Smith's concept of allegiance in order to discuss how identification is created with morally dubious characters in diegetic camera horror films (particularly the charismatic killers and the camera operators of documentaries and home videos). I will also use the concept of affective identification to further deconstruct how empathy is created in these films, especially with characters that hold cameras and are therefore off-screen for large amounts of diegetic time.

Taking priming, engagement, empathy, attention, alignment, and allegiance as my theoretical tentpoles, I analyse how diegetic camera films provoke different cognitive activity to many other more traditional films, such as imagining of the camera and its operator, recognising and empathising with an off-screen character and activating the seeking system in order to empathise with the camera operator. I will be using the theories of Murray Smith, Peter Wuss, Torben Grodal, and Gregory Currie to demonstrate, challenge, and build on the ideas of allegiance, personal imagining, affective identification, and priming when watching diegetic camera films. The diegetic camera is the key variable here, and its usage in horror films will be shown to have an effect on the imaginings, empathy, and engagement of the viewer. I argue that the viewer imagines off-screen space frequently in order to recognise and empathise with the camera operator. I argue that the camera operator and profilmic subjects' interactions with each other and the viewer create increased

engagement. Finally, I will argue that allegiance is not affected by the use of the diegetic camera.

Methods

In the second part of this book, I will analyse a small sample of diegetic camera horror films in order to apply the theoretical framework developed in the first half of the book. I begin this by investigating the priming pattern, looking at approximately the first ten minutes of the focus films. Here, I will examine how the opening text encourages viewer hypotheses and how the employment of the diegetic camera in the early scenes prepares the spectator to perceive the films in a manner which is repeated and adapted in all diegetic camera horror films. This will involve shot-by-shot analysis of key scenes, looking particularly at the cinematography, dialogue and reference to off-screen space. In Chapter 3, I will also explore how codes of various other media forms are mimicked in order to give diegetic camera horror films a convincing non-fiction aesthetic and narrational style – i.e. their mediated realism. I will focus particularly on *The Blair Witch Project* and *Rec*, and how these films mimic the forms of documentary and reality television. In order to analyse how mediated realism is created, I will identify the cues nested within the films designed to convince the viewer of the supposed authenticity of the product. In my consideration of priming, I also analyse the use of the POV shot and, more specifically, how it functions in relation to Branigan's POV structure. This will require analysis of how POV shots are constructed and emphasised within diegetic camera films. Following Burch's work on off-screen space, I will then analyse how what is behind the camera is created and privileged as part of the priming process for the viewer. Finally, in terms of priming and point of view, I will address mood and emotions that are encouraged in the early scenes of the films. The outcome of this chapter is that I argue that diegetic camera films use a variety of techniques to encourage the viewer to imagine both off-screen space and that the footage on screen could be real. The effect of this is to heighten emotions of fear and dread that are central to the horror genre.

When analysing the viewer's response to diegetic camera horror films, I will be continually complicating Currie's theory of personal imagining. I will be developing this theory to

demonstrate that the viewer is encouraged to imagine a camera operator that remains largely off-screen. The continuing use of POV shots forces the spectator to imagine seeing from within the diegesis, counter to Currie's argument for impersonal imagining. I will reveal how the viewer is forced into active imaginings, both about where the camera is positioned within the diegesis and about what is occurring off-screen. My intervention here is in reconsidering Currie's claims that we do not imagine seeing the film from the POV of the camera. When watching the focus films, imagining seeing or personal imagining is exactly what we do. The analysis will also examine the cinematography in diegetic camera horror films and its effects on the spectator's emotions and mood. The cinematography heightens anticipation and agitation, and inputs frequent cues to encourage the viewer to imagine the film is non-fiction.

I will also analyse the engagement and empathy created between cam- era operator and viewer, most notably when the diegetic camera is used as a tool for communication with the imagined future audience. From behind the camera or in front of the camera, many of the camera operators in diegetic camera films will reach out beyond the diegesis to the finder of the footage. This means that we must identify cues that aid recognition of the camera-operating character, including the cinematography that becomes a part of the performance of the character. My analysis of alignment and allegiance in the diegetic camera horror film will involve further examination of the POV shots used, but also how sound and off-screen space help to increase this alignment between viewer and character to aid in creating a mood of dread. I will focus on the alignment between responses of the spectator and camera operator, both in the cinematography and in the cognitive response of viewer and char- acter at crucial moments of decision-making in the films. The analysis will examine how information is accumulated by spectator and camera- operating character and the effects of this epistemological alignment on empathy. The viewer becomes an imagined (by the character) part of the diegesis that the characters are in as the witness or finder of the foot- age. Unlike in traditional films where the fourth wall remains largely unbroken, diegetic camera films deliberately have their characters imagine their audience. This prompts the viewer to feel a heightened level of engagement with the film and leads to him or her being more attentive to what the character says. I will also examine the interactions between

camera operators and their profilmic subjects to ascertain how empathy can be produced, and how the diegetic camera aids this process. Finally, I will argue that allegiance is affected if the camera operator engages in amoral behaviour, as the shift from observer to participant is shocking and unexpected, and therefore, the viewer's moral evaluation of these characters is increasingly negative.

In Chapter 5, I analyse how the killers on screen are constructed as amorally fascinating characters that are both 'inhuman' in their lack of remorse and undeniably human in their complex relationships with other supporting characters. This leads to an examination of the inter- actions of these killers with the viewers of the films and how this might affect allegiance. I also analyse the broader aesthetic approach defined by the killers being camera operators, particularly in *Zero Day*, and how this affects our allegiance with the characters. I will then consider how empathy, affective identification, and sympathetic allegiance are limited in these films, both with killers and their victims, before analysing how diegetic camera films complicate what Plantinga labels 'scenes of empathy' (1999, 239). I argue that allegiance is not always a result of recognition and alignment, and that diegetic camera horror films are more concerned with engaging viewer's curiosity than their empa- thy with monstrous characters. I will show how diegetic camera films, particularly those with charismatic killer characters reward the amoral fascination of the viewer using a range of techniques offering the viewer an experience unlike most other horror films. I will also argue that feelings of disgust and sadness can be heightened when the diegetic camera is used in these films to create mediated realism.

The analytical chapters of the second half of the book will investigate the cognitive processes of the viewer when watching specific diegetic camera horror films. The use of the diegetic camera is revealed as a central tool to orient our emotions when watching these films. With detailed reference to these filmic examples, I will reveal how the diegetic camera causes the viewer to feel specific emotions about the characters that operate it. The analysis will leave no question that the diegetic cam- era is a key piece of stimuli that provokes our emotional responses of fear, dread and anticipation to these films, and that these emotions are specific and significant.

This Book

Following this introduction is a genealogy of the diegetic camera horror film. The subsequent chapter will develop the theoretical context. The second half of this book is divided into three analytical chapters, utilising key films from around the world as case studies.

In Chapter 2, I develop a theoretical framework with a detailed con- ceptualisation of the diegetic camera. Drawing on Branigan's theories of POV, I reveal how the diegetic camera creates POV shots that are different from the traditional POV shot featured in films that do not employ a diegetic camera. I also emphasise the importance of priming in the process of ensuring that audiences recognise the shots as taken from the POV of a diegetic camera.

I then consider issues of narration and enunciation by following Branigan and Bordwell's work on levels of narration and self- consciousness. Here I argue that in diegetic camera films, narrator and character are frequently collapsed into one and that the author, narrator, and character are all aware that there will be a viewer. I also explore how diegetic camera films are distinctive as the narration is confined to a single character or occasionally multiple characters; the key point being that the audience's knowledge is limited to that of the camera-operating character, or the restricted viewpoint of the fixed diegetic camera as with surveillance cameras. These films posit a fake enunciator within the diegesis, whose role it is to mask the presence of the real enunciator (the films' production teams).

In Chapter 2, I also introduce the concepts of metatextuality, performance, and dialogue as central concerns of this book. The diegetic camera has an impact on the tone of the films, creating a critical commentary on other media forms such as documentary, reality television, and home videos. Performance and dialogue are also affected by the use of a diegetic camera, as I argue that cinematography is a part of the performance of a diegetic camera operator. These films privilege off-screen space significantly by having dialogue with off-screen characters and the performance of a key character – i.e. the diegetic camera operator – occur largely off-screen. Noel Burch's work on off-screen space is significant here due to his focus on theorising the implications of

what occurs behind the camera.

I conclude Chapter 2 by interrogating Gregory Currie's theory of personal imagining. Currie argues that

> when I imagine merely that such and such happens, without imagining that I see (or have other kinds of epistemic contacts with) what happens, we have a case of *impersonal imagining*. When imagining involves the idea that I am seeing the imagined events, we have a species of *personal imagining* … more specifically, it is a case of *imagining seeing*.
>
> (1995, 166)

Currie rejects personal imagining and what he calls the 'imagined observer hypothesis', and by extension the 'view that the imagining appropriate to film is imagining seeing' (1995, 167). However, Currie does concede that in the case of a few exceptional shots (such as the POV shot), imagining seeing (personal imagining) is appropriate. This is why I insist upon a theory of personal imagining in this book given that the diegetic camera clearly constitutes a stronger form of personal imagining. This chapter then leads on to a close analysis of the focus films where priming, allegiance and other concepts are used as the basis for an in depth analysis of specific case studies.

The second half of this book is divided into three chapters. Chapter 3 reveals how the viewer is primed while watching diegetic camera horror films. Chapter 4 focuses on the home video examples and explores how interaction between diegetic camera operators and the subjects on screen affects the emotions of the viewer. Chapter 5 considers the charismatic killer examples and through analysis, reveals how allegiance is problematic despite the promises of the diegetic camera.

My conclusions revolve around the activity of the viewer, particularly in terms of the imagining of the film as a non-fiction document, and the imagining of off-screen space in order to recognise the camera op- erator as a character. I argue that this imagining can heighten empathy with camera-operating characters, particularly when these characters are involved in interactions with profilmic subjects. With regard to al- legiance, I conclude that the diegetic camera is unlikely to affect the viewer's moral evaluation of characters, except in the case of camera op- erators that become profilmic subjects and engage in amoral behaviour. Finally, I detail how the findings of this book

can be used to explore the use of diegetic cameras beyond horror, beyond found footage, and how a cognitive approach will aid scholars in their understanding of diegetic cameras in the future.

Notes

1 According to fan-made lists on IMDb, for example, here: www.imdb.com/list/ls052694809/ Though there is some debate about whether all of these films could be categorised as 'found footage', there are over a hundred that are recognisable examples. There are also an increasing number of studies that have paid attention to this subgenre including an entire issue of Ol3Media: e-journal of Cinema, Television and Media Studies (http://host.uniroma3.it/riviste/Ol3Media/archivio_files/Ol3Media%2009%20Horror.pdf) as well as Alexandra Heller-Nicholas' volume Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality.

2 All budgets and box office figures are sourced from Box Office Mojo and/or the Internet Movie Database in order to triangulate data and confirm reliability where possible. On some occasions, the figures can only be found on one of these two sites.

3 Focalisation is a term used in narratological studies recognising that characters also provide spectators with relevant information. Branigan borrows the term 'focalization' from Genette (1980) who uses it to distinguish between three different types of restriction of narrative information: zero, internal and external. Branigan positions focalisation in a hierarchy of narrations below the first four levels that make use of narrators.

4 Metz argues that cinema can be used to explore the unconscious dream state.

5 Mulvey argues that the structure of film form reflects the unconscious of patriarchal society.

6 Wuss refers specifically to Breaking the Waves (von Trier, 1996). Breaking the Waves is not strictly a Dogme film as it does not follow all of the rules laid out in the manifesto.

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