

**THE CINEMATOGRAPHY OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS
DISORDER IN *HEREDITARY* (2018)**

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK
IBRAHIM MALANG**

2025

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THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)

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2025

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled “**The Cinematography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Hereditary* (2018)**” is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 23 June 2025

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MOTTO

“So, surely with hardship comes ease.”

(Ash-Sharh: 5)

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to Ari Aster, as the author of *Hereditary* (2018).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

All praise and gratitude are due to Allah SWT, whose endless mercy and blessings have enabled the researcher to complete this thesis entitled “**The Cinematography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Hereditary* (2018)**” in a timely and proper manner. This thesis is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Literature (S.S.) degree at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. May peace and blessings always be upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who conveyed the message of Islam and served as a noble role model for all of humanity.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, the researcher is sincerely thankful to all individuals and parties who have provided encouragement, support, and guidance from the beginning until the completion of this academic work. With deepest appreciation, the researcher would like to extend this gratitude to the following:

1. Whida Rositama, M.Hum, as the supervisor who always provides guidance, motivation, advice, and also her patience in helping the researcher to complete this thesis without any significant obstacles.
2. Vita Nur Santi, M.Pd, as my advisor during my lectures at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, who always gave researcher encouragement and advice for my success during college.
3. Dr. Muzakki Afifuddin M.Pd., As the examiner and refiner of this research. With his kindness and guidance, this research can be considered worthy of being

called research. Respecting this, the researcher also considers it an undeniable obligation.

4. All of the English Literature Department's lecturers, researcher appreciate their help in teaching various things from the first semester to the tenth.

5. My parents, Lutfi and Nurus Sa'adah, who have sent me from elementary school to college, and also their enthusiasm for educating and guiding me in a better direction.

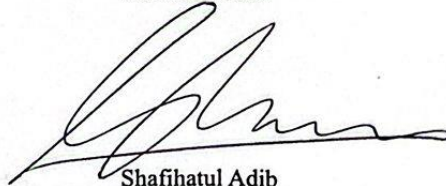
6. My sister and my brother-in-law, Umdatun Najia and Abuzar, as discussion partner in the researcher critical thinking to analyze this research.

7. And the whole family, Izaatul Musafa, Fatihul Wijdan, Izyanul Kamil, who often provide input, suggestions, also support in this research.

8. My beloved students of the English Literature Department, Faculty of Humanities, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, class of 2020. Especially for Yusron Abdillah, Andi, Juna, Bastuta, Refa Suherman, Lily, Wahyu, Firda, Dewi Nur Auliya, Aldi, Vaye, Firman Shalihudin, Fahri, Faizal, and Calvin Marcello, who have greatly helped the researcher complete this research.

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ABSTRACT

Adib, Shafihatul. (2025). *The Cinematography of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Hereditary (2018)*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Whida Rositama, M.Hum.

Keywords: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Psychological Horror Film, Cinematography

This study aims to examine how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is represented through cinematographic techniques in the film *Hereditary* (2018), directed by Ari Aster. Using a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of film analysis, this study specifically focuses its analysis on cinematographic aspects without involving other formal elements such as narrative or sound. The analysis is conducted based on Park's (2018) theory of horror film cinematography and Kring et al.'s (2012) theory of abnormal psychology to identify PTSD symptoms. Data is collected through intensive film screenings, followed by visual documentation of each scene, and the selection of visual moments that depict psychological stress. (2012) to identify PTSD symptoms. Data was collected through intensive film screenings, followed by visual documentation of each scene, and the selection of visual moments depicting psychological pressure. The results of the study show that *Hereditary* effectively utilizes extreme close-up techniques, handheld camera movements, low and high angles, and dim lighting to represent PTSD symptoms such as intrusive memories, hyperarousal, and affective incapacity. These techniques visually translate the characters' internal psychological suffering into cinematic language. This study contributes to the development of film studies, particularly in understanding how mental disorders can be aesthetically articulated through cinematography in psychological horror films. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope to other film elements such as sound, mise-en-scène, and narrative, and to consider cross-film analysis to evaluate patterns of PTSD representation in the horror genre more comprehensively.

ABSTRAK

Adib, Shafihatul. (2025). *Sinematografi Gangguan Stres Pascatrauma dalam Hereditary (2018)*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Whida Rositama, M.Hum.

Kata Kunci: Gangguan Stres Pasca Trauma, Film Horor Psikologis, Sinematografi

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana gangguan stres pascatrauma (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD) direpresentasikan melalui teknik sinematografi dalam film *Hereditary* (2018) yang disutradarai oleh Ari Aster. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dalam kerangka kajian film, penelitian ini secara khusus memfokuskan analisis pada aspek sinematografi tanpa melibatkan unsur formal lainnya seperti narasi atau suara. Analisis dilakukan dengan mengacu pada teori sinematografi film horor dari Park (2018) serta teori psikologi abnormal dari Kring et al. (2012) untuk mengidentifikasi gejala PTSD. Data dikumpulkan melalui penayangan film secara intensif, dilanjutkan dengan dokumentasi visual adegan demi adegan, serta seleksi momen visual yang menggambarkan tekanan psikologis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Hereditary* secara efektif memanfaatkan teknik close-up ekstrem, pergerakan kamera handheld, sudut rendah dan tinggi, serta pencahayaan remang untuk merepresentasikan gejala PTSD seperti memori intrusif, hiperarousal, dan ketidakmampuan afektif. Teknik-teknik ini secara visual menerjemahkan penderitaan psikologis internal karakter ke dalam bahasa sinema. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian film, khususnya dalam memahami bagaimana gangguan mental dapat diartikulasikan secara estetis melalui sinematografi dalam film horor psikologis. Untuk penelitian selanjutnya, disarankan untuk memperluas cakupan pada elemen film lainnya seperti suara, mise-en-scène, dan narasi, serta mempertimbangkan analisis lintas-film guna mengevaluasi pola representasi PTSD dalam genre horor secara lebih komprehensif.

مستخلص البحث

أديب، شفيحة التول. (٢٠٢٥). التصوير السينمائي لاضطراب ما بعد الصدمة في فيلم *Hereditary* (٢٠١٨). أطروحة البكالوريوس. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، الجامعة الإسلامية الحكومية مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج. المشرفة: وحيدة روزيتاما، ماجستير في العلوم الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة، أفلام الرعب النفسي، السينماتوغرافيا

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل كيفية تمثيل اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة النفسية (PTSD) من خلال تقنيات السينماتوغرافيا في فيلم *Hereditary* (٢٠١٨) للمخرج آري آستر. استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهجا وصفيا نوعيا ضمن إطار دراسات الأفلام، مع تركيز خاص على تحليل العناصر السينماتوغرافية دون إشراك عناصر الفيلم الأخرى مثل السرد أو الصوت. استند التحليل إلى نظرية سينماتوغرافيا أفلام الرعب لـ Park (٢٠١٨) ونظرية علم النفس غير الطبيعي لـ Kringl وآخرين (٢٠١٢) لتحديد أعراض اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة. تم جمع البيانات من خلال عروض متكررة للفيلم، مع توثيق بصري دقيق للمشاهد واختيار اللحظات التي تعكس الضغط النفسي. أظهرت النتائج أن الفيلم استخدم تقنيات مثل اللقطات القريبة جداً، الكاميرا المحمولة باليد، الزوايا المرتفعة والمنخفضة، والإضاءة المعتمدة لتمثيل أعراض اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة مثل الذكريات المتطفلة، وفراط اليقظة، والاضطراب العاطفي. تنقل هذه التقنيات المعاناة النفسية الداخلية للشخصيات إلى لغة بصرية سينمائية، وتسهم هذه الدراسة في تطوير دراسات السينما، خصوصا في فهم كيفية تمثيل الاضطرابات النفسية من خلال الجماليات البصرية في أفلام الرعب النفسية، كما توصي بمواصلة البحث مستقبلا ليشمل عناصر أخرى مثل الصوت، المشهد البصري، وبنية السرد، بالإضافة إلى تحليل مقارن لأفلام مختلفة لاستكشاف أنماط تمثيل اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة في هذا النوع السينمائي بشكل أوسع.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the introduction to the research and focuses on the study's background. It outlines the background of the study, the research objectives, the scope and limitations, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Cinema has long been recognized as a powerful medium for representing psychological experiences, including trauma. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2008), film can function as a formal system that conveys emotions, psychological states, and narrative tensions through its structured visual language. Trauma, as defined in abnormal psychology, refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that can result in long-term psychological disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Kring et al., 2012). PTSD is characterized by intrusive memories, avoidance behaviors, negative alterations in mood and cognition, and hyperarousal, often triggered by events perceived as life-threatening or profoundly shocking (Kring et al., 2012). The cinematic form, with its capacity for sensory immersion, symbolic framing, and narrative manipulation, offers unique tools for depicting such symptoms, particularly within the horror genre, where internal psychological conflict can be externalized through stylistic techniques (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

The intersection between trauma and cinema provides fertile ground for interpreting visual and narrative strategies used to portray psychological disturbance. Film is not merely a storytelling platform but also a space of symbolic reconstruction, where internal fears and suppressed memories can be projected and processed (Kring et al., 2012). Trauma theorists have argued that the fragmented nature of traumatic memory—marked by flashbacks, dissociation, and repression—can be effectively expressed through cinematic devices such as disjointed editing, distorted visuals, and subjective camerawork (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Such depictions align with the mechanics of PTSD symptoms, in which the mind relives trauma through involuntary repetition and perceptual distortion (Kring et al., 2012). This convergence illustrates how cinematic language is well-equipped to simulate trauma's psychological dimensions in ways that are affectively and intellectually resonant for viewers.

Horror films, in particular, have proven to be an effective genre for dramatizing trauma and fear through aesthetic and psychological means. According to Freud (1976), the concept of the “uncanny” captures the eerie discomfort that arises when something familiar becomes frighteningly alien—an idea that horror films often capitalize on by presenting disrupted realities or grotesque imagery. Cherry (2009) notes that horror is uniquely positioned to reflect not only individual psychological distress but also collective anxieties and societal fears, frequently through themes of isolation, bodily invasion, or familial disintegration. These themes often serve as metaphors for traumatic experiences, which horror cinema renders visible through its stylized representations of vulnerability, loss, and

existential dread. Thus, horror functions not just as entertainment, but as a cultural apparatus for exploring and negotiating trauma and the unconscious.

Ari Aster is widely recognized as a contemporary auteur whose horror films foreground psychological and emotional distress, often rooted in family trauma (Story, 2021). His directorial style incorporates a slow-building narrative, muted color palettes, and psychological realism, distinguishing his work from mainstream horror tropes that rely on jump scares or gore. Scholars have highlighted Aster's use of existential dread and repressed grief as narrative motors, situating his films within the lineage of "elevated horror," a subgenre that emphasizes character depth and formal aesthetic over sensationalism. Aster's commitment to portraying inner turmoil through filmic technique solidifies his relevance to psychological horror discourse and positions his works as essential case studies in trauma cinema (Story, 2021).

Hereditary (2018), Aster's directorial debut, is lauded for its unsettling portrayal of inherited trauma and psychological disintegration within a nuclear family structure. The film deploys horror not merely as a spectacle but as a vehicle for exploring the devastating effects of unresolved grief, guilt, and intergenerational suffering (Story, 2021). It strategically intertwines naturalistic domestic drama with supernatural horror, utilizing formal elements such as diegetic silence, symbolic framing, and spatial claustrophobia to externalize internal psychic collapse. As a result, *Hereditary* (2018) exemplifies how the horror genre, through specific filmic elements, can become a powerful medium for representing trauma, making it an ideal object of analysis within the scope of film studies.

Some previous studies have been found and reviewed by researcher to find out what gaps is be obtained in the continuity of this research. The criteria for previous studies that researcher find at least have relevance to the object of study and theoretical approaches, but remain within the scope of literary psychology studies. The researcher categorized at least ten previous studies into two parts. The first part is related to the object. The second part is related to theory. All previous studies are taken from journal articles and thesis research.

In the first part researcher found five studies from journal articles that have relevance to the factor of the object of study, which is the film *Hereditary* (2018). The first article from Morris (2022) discusses the film *Hereditary* (2018) from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis to show how trauma and psychosis play a role in the lives of the main characters, especially Peter, who experiences psychosis after a tragic event. The second research by Adinda et al. (2024) discusses how trauma, anxiety, and PTSD affect the life of Dani's character in Ari Aster's film *Midsommar*, and how she tries to overcome her grief and rediscover her social life. The third from Brkljačić (2024) discusses how Ari Aster's film *Midsommar* (2019) serves as a reflection of a traumatized society, exploring themes of grief, cultural rituals, and the psychological impact of trauma within the context of horror cinema.

Fourth is, from Story (2021) analyzes the emergence of a new wave of American horror films, particularly focusing on Ari Aster's works *Hereditary* and *Midsommar*, arguing that these films utilize horror tropes to explore and represent the complexities of trauma, emphasizing the viewer's emotional engagement and the ethical implications of narrative knowledge in depicting traumatic experiences.

The fifth is from Pjetrushaj & Melonashi (2020), which examines the intricate relationship between trauma, grief, and coping mechanisms, particularly in the context of the film *Midsommar*, highlighting how early-life trauma shapes emotional responses and psychological well-being while emphasizing the importance of open communication about death to enhance coping abilities throughout life.

Furthermore, in the second part, the researcher found 5 theses, all of which have relevance to the theoretical approach that the researcher use in this study, namely post-traumatic stress disorder. The one entitled *Psychological trauma of the main character in E. Lockhart's We Were Liars* (Liyyah, 2021); *'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Experienced by Ruth Weber in Kate Quinn's The Huntress'* (Nugraha, 2020); *'Post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by Nora in Anna Quinn's The Night Child'* (Nurjayanti, 2021); *Post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by Private John Bartle in Kevin Powers' The Yellow Birds* (Satriawan, 2020); *'Psychological Trauma in Paula Hawkins' The Girl on The Train (2015)* (Yatimah, 2021) that examines psychiatric disorders called PTSD in literary works. Most of them have a similar theoretical basis, namely the theory from Davison (2012) that the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder are mainly divided into three categories. That is, avoid symptoms, re-experience symptoms, and wake up symptoms.

B. Research Questions

A sensible strategy is to establish a single primary research question around which to focus the study plan (Farrugia et al., 2010). So, based on the background provided, the researcher has outlined one research question for this study, as follows: How is post-traumatic stress disorder represented through cinematography in *Hereditary* (2018)?

C. Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it systematically applies a film studies approach to analyze the horror film genre, particularly the psychological horror subgenre. This approach allows researcher to examine how the form and structure of films are used not only as a means of storytelling but also as a medium for representing the psychological conditions of characters, such as trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). By integrating film theory into the study of *Hereditary* (2018), this research expands the scope of horror film analysis from mere entertainment to an academic discourse relevant to the study of psychology, culture, and the cinematic representation of human suffering. This approach also contributes to the development of film criticism grounded in formalistic and psychological theories, which have yet to be comprehensively applied in the context of modern horror films.

D. Scope and Limitations

This research focuses exclusively on analyzing cinematographic techniques in the film *Hereditary* (2018) to identify how they visually represent symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) within the film's overall narrative and atmosphere (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The study does not include analysis of other formal elements such as editing, sound, or narrative structure to maintain a strict focus on cinematography as the primary expressive medium. Furthermore, this research does not investigate the psychological states of individual characters through clinical diagnosis, but rather examines how visual aesthetics evoke PTSD-related imagery and emotional cues consistent with trauma theory (Kring et al., 2012). Limitations arise from the qualitative nature of the study, which is based solely on textual and visual analysis without empirical audience reception data or insights from the film's creators. Additionally, the research is limited to a single film object, which restricts generalizability across genres or directors but allows for in-depth formal analysis.

E. Definition of the Key Terms

a. Cinematography

It is the art and technique of capturing moving images on film or digital formats, involving control over framing, lighting, lens choice, and camera movement to shape visual storytelling (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008).

b. PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

A mental disorder that develops after an individual experiences a major catastrophic event. (Chen, 2023)

c. Psychological Horror

A subgenre of horror films that focuses on the mental and emotional states of characters as the main fear in the film (Prohászková, 2012).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the researcher explains some relevant theories, including literature and psychology, film of psychological horror, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

A. Film Studies

Film studies is a scholarly discipline that critically investigates cinema as both a cultural artifact and a visual narrative form, primarily focusing on close analysis of its formal and technical components (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). This field examines elements such as *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, sound, and narrative structure to determine how meaning is constructed through visual and auditory form (Monaco, 2009). According to Monaco (2009), film operates with its own “language” that viewers decode by interpreting formal devices, lighting, and editing to understand thematic intent. Film scholars assert that film studies is distinguished from production disciplines by its primary aim: interpreting cinematic texts rather than training in filmmaking craftsmanship (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

The role of formal and technical analysis in film studies lies in elucidating how films communicate emotion, thematic depth, and cultural meaning through their construction (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Formal elements, such as shot composition, musical score, pacing, and symbolic imagery, are analyzed to reveal how they shape audience reception and narrative comprehension (Monaco, 2009).

As noted by Monaco (2009), understanding how visual style and sound design work in unison enables scholars to discern how a film creates affective tension, manipulates temporality, or communicates subtext. In this research, researcher divided and defined these into elements of film according to Bordwell and Thompson (2008), to simplify the definitions relevant to this study.

Film elements encompass the fundamental formal components of a film, such as *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, sound, narrative, visual symbolism, and formal style, that collectively construct cinematic meaning (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). These elements are understood not as isolated techniques but as interrelated systems whose interaction generates the film's aesthetic coherence and emotional resonance (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Bordwell and Thompson (2008) argue that analysis of these elements allows for a deeper understanding of film form and structure, revealing how meaning is embedded within the cinematic medium. In the context of this study, from the aspects of film mentioned above, the researcher only uses cinematography as a tool for analysis. This means that the focus is not on other aspects of film, such as *mise-en-scène*, sound, narrative, visual symbolism, and formal style.

Cinematography is the art and technique of capturing moving images on film or digital formats, involving control over framing, lighting, lens choice, and camera movement to shape visual storytelling (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Brown (2016) elaborates that cinematographic decisions—such as shot scale, exposure, and motion—critically determine narrative tone and viewer emotion. The pivotal role of lighting in cinematography is that contrast, shadow quality, and light

direction directly influence mood and audience perception. Giannetti (2014) affirms that camera angles and movement mediate character perspective and intensify narrative tension. Finally, Cutting et al. (2012) demonstrate that formal cinematographic structures—especially shot duration and motion—align with human attention patterns, thereby shaping how viewers segment and engage with filmic events.

Bordwell & Thompson (2008) identify four primary aspects of cinematography: framing, duration, camera movement (mobile framing), and other cinematographic properties. These categories form a comprehensive schema for examining how visual composition, temporal rhythm, and technical variables convey narrative meaning and emotion.

Bordwell & Thompson (2008) define framing as the arrangement of visual elements within the frame, encompassing angle, level, distance, and kinesis. Angle choices (high-angle, low-angle, eye-level, and Dutch tilt) shape psychological and dramatic perspectives (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Distance and scale (from extreme long shot to extreme close-up) modulate viewer engagement and emotional proximity to the subject (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Duration refers to the length of individual takes and the pacing established by editing rhythm. Short takes accelerate urgency and intensity, while long takes build sustained tension (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). The interplay between take length and shot transitions determines the film's overall tempo and mood (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Camera movement, or mobile framing, comprises pan, tilt, tracking/dolly, crane, Steadicam/hand-held, and zoom to alter framing within a

single take. These movements guide viewer attention smoothly through space, maintain narrative continuity, and can evoke emotional responses depending on speed and direction (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Other cinematographic properties include choices of lens and focal length, focus and depth of field, motion speed, filters and color treatment, and in-camera special effects. Wide-angle, normal, and telephoto lenses distort perspective to support thematic intent (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Variations in depth of field (deep focus, shallow focus, rack focus) direct viewer attention to key elements within the *mise-en-scène* (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008)

B. Psychological Horror Film

According to Wijaya (2020), film is a cultural and artistic product that functions as a medium of communication. It serves as a reflection of cultural values, depicting lifestyles, traditions, and societal norms that resonate with audiences. Through visual storytelling, films convey messages that shape perceptions and influence behaviors. Films can also provide social commentary, addressing pressing issues like environmental concerns or social justice, thereby fostering discussions that can lead to real-world change. By engaging with interdisciplinary approaches from sociology, anthropology, and literary criticism, cultural studies highlight how films reflect and shape societal structures and identities.

According to Carroll (2003), etymologically, the word “horror” comes from the Latin “horror,” meaning to stand upright or to bristle, and the old French “orror,” meaning to bristle or shudder. However, the original conception of the word was to

relate it to an abnormal physiological state (from the subject's point of view) of feeling uneasy. So it doesn't mean that our hair has to stand on end when we're horrified. If it's related to psychology, then horror can be defined as a psychological feeling of fear or anger caused by something bad for the owner of the feeling.

More clearly, horror films are a genre designed to provoke fear, suspense, and emotional intensity by presenting threatening or uncanny scenarios, be they supernatural, psychological, or visceral in ways that challenge viewers' comfort zones and expectations (Carroll, 2003). According to Carroll (2003), horror is distinguished from other genres by its characteristic invocation of "threat response"—an emotional reaction rooted in the anticipation of harm.

The researcher has a hard time defining horror as a genre, as it has many different definitions. According to Prohászková (2012), there are at least three categories of the horror genre: the uncanny horror, the marvelous horror, and the fantastic horror. The uncanny horror film is stories contain elements that seem supernatural, unreal, or impossible. Ultimately, however, these elements remain rationally explainable, even though they may be shocking, disturbing, or unusual. The laws of reality remain intact, and the viewer or reader can give their interpretation. Examples are the films *Taste of Fear* (1961), *Nightmare* (1964), *Psycho* (1960), and science fiction films that feature aliens or strange creatures. Meanwhile, the marvelous horror category involves phenomena that seem irrational or difficult to understand, but to accept them, we must acknowledge the existence of new laws of nature or a different layer of reality, namely the supernatural. Elements such as vampires, werewolves, the undead, or demons are also included

in this category. This differs from the story of fantastic horror, which does not provide a clear explanation of the phenomenon. The audience or reader is left in doubt between explaining the phenomenon as paranormal or as an illusion/hallucination of the main character. This horror creates ambiguity and creates a sense of doubt between the natural and the supernatural. Examples are the films *The Shining* (1980), *Cat People* (1942), *The Innocents* (1920), and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943).

Although broadly speaking, some horror critics divide the horror genre into two main subgenres: supernatural and psychological horror (Cherry, 2009), however, Prohászková (2012) also defines more detailed sub-genres of horror films. There are rural horror, cosmic horror, apocalyptic horror, crime horror, erotic horror, occult horror, psychological horror, surreal horror, and visceral horror.

Rural horror is a horror set in remote places far from civilization, often drawing on local legends, myths, or superstitions. Meanwhile, cosmic horror combines elements of science fiction with existential dread, depicting the effects of forbidden knowledge or extraterrestrial existence. Furthermore, apocalyptic horror focuses on narratives about the end of the world due to various factors such as plague, war, or supernatural forces. Then, crime horror is a blend of crime or detective stories with horror elements, usually featuring plots involving major crimes with horrific suspense. In addition, erotic horror combines sensual or sexual elements with an atmosphere of horror, often featuring creatures such as vampires. On the other hand, occult horror deals with themes of exorcism, antichrist, curses, and the occult, highlighting the mysteries of the supernatural world. Furthermore,

psychological horror explores the fears, guilt, or emotional instability of the main character, creating horror from within the mind. Not only that, surreal horror uses elements of surrealism such as strangeness, dreams, and absurdity to disturb and provoke the audience's thinking. Lastly, visceral horror is the most extreme subgenre, filled with blood, mutilation, and scenes of shocking and brutal violence.

Based on the relation between the approach and the object of the research, which is based on the psychological approach, the researcher is only focusing on finding a definition of the psychological horror sub-genre. According to Prohászková (2012), Psychological horror is based on the fear of the main protagonist, his feelings of guilt, his faith, and his unstable emotional state of mind. It means this genre emphasizes mental, emotional, and psychological states to evoke fear and unease in the audience. It explores themes such as madness, anxiety, guilt, and paranoia, often featuring elements of mystery and characters with unstable or unreliable psychological conditions. These elements work together to create a deeply distressing and unsettling atmosphere.

C. Cinematography in Horror Film

Cinematography, as a technical and artistic dimension of filmmaking, refers to the manipulation of visual elements such as framing, camera movement, lens choice, and lighting to construct meaning and atmosphere in cinema (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). In horror films, these visual choices are not merely aesthetic but deeply psychological, designed to heighten tension, depict inner psychological states, and evoke discomfort or fear (Park, 2018). Horror

filmmakers often use visual language to externalize terror and distress, constructing a sense of claustrophobia or unpredictability through tight framing, erratic camera motion, or dim lighting (Park, 2018, p. 13). Thus, cinematography becomes a central medium through which horror is not only shown but also *felt*.

The cinematographic techniques commonly used in horror films are specifically designed to evoke emotional distress, disorientation, and suspense. According to Park (2018), horror directors frequently utilize tracking shots, wide shots, perspective shots, and extreme close-ups to enhance psychological engagement. Extreme close-ups, especially on the eyes, are used to “invade the character’s intimate space” and convey emotion without words, often suggesting terror, trauma, or internalized horror (Park, 2018). These visual methods are complemented by handheld camera movements to mimic shaky subjectivity and generate a sense of presence, as if the audience were stepping into the character’s shoes (Park, 2018). Additional techniques, such as high and low angle shots, express power dynamics—high angles render characters vulnerable, low angles make antagonists seem dominant (Park, 2018). Furthermore, foggy textures, Dutch tilts, and shots through objects simulate an eerie, unbalanced world, reinforcing the genre’s emotional unease (Park, 2018). These cinematographic elements serve not only as stylistic choices but as fundamental mechanisms of fear production in horror.

These visual tactics become especially relevant when horror films aim to portray trauma symptoms, particularly those associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Kring et al. (2012) outline key PTSD symptoms, including re-

experiencing, avoidance, mood and cognitive change, and arousal symptoms. Cinematographic techniques such as sudden lens shifts, tight close-ups, abrupt lighting changes, or spatial incoherence can simulate these symptoms visually, allowing the viewer to experience perceptual and emotional disturbance similar to that of the character (Park, 2018). In this sense, horror cinematography operates not only as a narrative device but also as a form of visual psychology, mirroring the cognitive distortions of trauma sufferers within a cinematic framework (Park, 2018)

D. Traumatic Experiences and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms

In DSM-5 (2013), it is explained that traumatic events can be re-experienced in a variety of ways, with individuals generally recalling involuntarily recurring memories of the event that can be disruptive and eventually lead to PTSD. Traumatic experiences also can adversely impact various aspects of life over the long term, affecting an individual's physical well-being, appearance, career, and financial circumstances (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). This phenomenon is a hallmark of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), where distressing memories interfere with daily life, causing significant emotional and psychological turmoil. The memories are often very vivid and distressing, leading to increased anxiety, irritability, and avoidance behaviors as individuals attempt to escape the memory of the trauma. The involuntary nature of these memories does not mean that survivors choose to remember them; rather, their minds bring them to the surface without warning, often triggered by seemingly innocuous

stimuli. This interference can lead to a cycle of re-experiencing the trauma, which exacerbates feelings of helplessness and fear, further trapping the individual in PTSD symptoms.

According to Rademaker et al. (2011), PTSD is defined as an anxiety disorder that comprises three symptom clusters: re-experiencing of the traumatic event, avoidance of trauma-related thoughts and cues and numbing of general responsiveness, and hyperarousal and hypervigilance symptoms. The researcher also found the symptoms of PTSD from Ehlers & Clark (2000), that based on a traumatic event, individuals commonly experience symptoms such as intrusive recollections, flashbacks, irritability, mood swings, difficulty concentrating, and emotional numbing. These reactions are typical in the immediate aftermath of a distressing incident. But Kring et al. (2012) explain that 4 PTSD symptoms consist of intrusively reexperiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event, other signs of mood and cognitive change after the trauma, and symptoms of increased arousal and reactivity. For clarity and accuracy of the researcher's analysis, the researcher is use the symptoms of Kring et al. (2012) as the theoretical basis for this research regarding the symptoms of PTSD, that is consists of reexperiencing symptoms, avoidance symptoms, mood and cognitive change symptoms, and arousal or reactivity symptoms.

1. Re-experiencing Symptoms

According to Kring et al. (2012), the individual might experience recurring memories or distressing dreams related to the incident. They may also exhibit significant emotional distress or pronounced physical

responses when confronted with reminders of the event. When an individual experiences a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster or a serious accident, it is common for them to struggle with recurring memories or distressing dreams related to the incident. These intrusive thoughts can be overwhelming and disruptive to daily life, causing significant emotional distress. Additionally, individuals may also exhibit pronounced physical responses, such as increased heart rate, sweating, or muscle tension, when confronted with reminders of the traumatic event.

2. Avoidance Symptoms

According to Kring et al. (2012), individuals who have experienced a traumatic event may engage in avoidance behaviors as a way to cope. They explain an example from McNally's book titled *Remembering Trauma* (2005), a survivor of a Turkish earthquake chose to sleep outdoors after being trapped under rubble at night. Some individuals may actively avoid thoughts or reminders of the trauma, leading to fragmented memories of the event. While these avoidance strategies may appear to contradict symptoms of reexperiencing, they often prove ineffective, ultimately resulting in the resurgence of traumatic memories.

3. Mood and Cognitive Change Symptoms

According to Kring et al. (2012), other signs of mood and cognitive change may encompass difficulties in recalling crucial elements of the incident, ongoing negative thought patterns, attributing blame to

oneself or others for the occurrence, widespread negative feelings, disinterest or disengagement in meaningful activities, a sense of disconnection from others, or an inability to feel positive emotions.

4. Arousal Symptoms

Kring et al. (2012) explain that these symptoms encompass irritable or hostile conduct, reckless or self-sabotaging actions, trouble initiating or maintaining sleep, challenges with focus, heightened alertness, and an exaggerated reaction to sudden stimuli. Research conducted in laboratories has verified that individuals with PTSD exhibit increased arousal, as indicated by their physiological reactions to images related to trauma (Orr, 2003).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter outlines the research method. It includes sections on research design, data sources, data collection, and data analysis. This chapter emphasizes the application of research methods and data processing in the context of the research.

A. Research Design

The research employs a descriptive qualitative design within the film-studies approach, which focuses on textual analysis through close reading of cinematic form and content (Nelmes, 2012). Descriptive research prioritizes rich description and nuanced interpretation over quantification or hypothesis testing, making it suitable for analyzing *Hereditary*'s formal elements (Brennen, 2017).

B. Data Source

This research relies solely on the 2018 motion picture *Hereditary*, directed by Ari Aster, as the primary data source. The film itself serves as a comprehensive cinematic text, providing visual and auditory materials for close analysis of its cinematographic elements. In qualitative film research, the filmic artifact is regarded as a complete and autonomous object of study, suitable for textual analysis without dependence on supplementary documentation (Brennen, 2017). Such an approach is aligned with the conventions of film studies, where meaning is derived from the visual form and technical composition of the film itself. The exclusive focus on the film allows for an integrated reading of cinematic form, supporting the study's emphasis on visual representation of psychological phenomena.

C. Data Collection

Data were collected through systematic viewing of *Hereditary* (2018), during which relevant cinematographic elements were documented via scene-by-scene screenshots. This visual-based method aligns with qualitative film analysis procedures, emphasizing the need for close reading of audiovisual content. Each screenshot was timestamped and annotated to capture specific cinematographic choices—such as framing, camera movement, lighting, and angle—that are relevant to the depiction of psychological horror. Film analysis requires careful selection and cataloging of visual segments to support rigorous and replicable interpretation.

D. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed through a focused lens on cinematography, as defined within the formalist framework of film studies. Specific shots were coded based on timecode and analyzed below, following the theoretical delineations presented by Bordwell and Thompson (2008). Each captured frame was then interpreted about how its visual composition evokes psychological tension or mimics symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as conceptualized by Kring et al. (2012). The process also incorporated aesthetic principles specific to horror film cinematography, including extreme close-ups, distorted angles, and tracking shots that produce feelings of disorientation or fear (Park, 2018). Through this analytical process, the study identifies formal patterns in the cinematography that symbolically reflect on *Hereditary*'s (2018) characters' trauma-related psychological states.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the discussion is focused on one sub-chapter. It is post-traumatic stress disorder represented through cinematography in *Hereditary* (2018).

A. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Represented Through Cinematography in *Hereditary* (2018)

This sub-chapter aims to answer the research question of how post-traumatic stress disorder is represented through cinematography in *Hereditary* (2018). Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are analyzed based on the theoretical framework of Kring et al. (2012), which categorizes PTSD into four main clusters, namely: (1) re-experiencing symptoms, (2) avoidance symptoms, (3) mood and cognitive change symptoms, and (4) arousal and reactivity symptoms.

These symptoms were identified through visual analysis of the film's cinematographic elements, such as framing, camera movement, shot scale, angle, and visual composition, that are relevant to *Hereditary* (2018) characters' psychological state. The categorization and interpretation were based on the psychological criteria defined in Kring et al. (2012) and the American Psychiatric Association (2013) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5). In this film, Annie is portrayed as a mother suffering from a psychological breakdown after experiencing the deaths of her daughter, Charlie, and her mother, Ellen. These traumatic events lead to observable symptoms of

distress, which are cinematically conveyed through visual techniques that reflect internal fragmentation and emotional instability.

Each subsequent section in this sub-chapter discusses each category of PTSD symptoms systematically, presenting selected screenshots from the film as primary evidence. These are analyzed through a cinematographic lens and interpreted based on trauma theory to demonstrate how technical aspects of visual storytelling reveal psychological disturbance. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive and valid analysis of how *Hereditary* (2018) characters' PTSD symptoms are externalized and represented through the visual language of cinematography.

1. Re-experiencing Symptoms: Annie Graham's Nightmare (minute 01:08-56-01:12:46)

The pictures below (Figures 1.1 to 1.33) are sequences from the film *Hereditary* (2018) that tell about Annie's nightmares. Annie's nightmare contains several points that contextualize Charlie's death and Annie Graham's attempt to abort Peter. According to Kring et al. (2012), traumatic experiences can be in the form of circumstances that will continue to imprint subconsciously. It will also usually appear subconsciously, one of which is with nightmares. So, in this sequence, Annie Graham is experiencing PTSD symptoms, namely re-experiencing symptoms that repeat her thoughts about 2 her traumatic experiences, which are Charlie's death and Peter's abortion attempt unconsciously.



Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

(Hereditary, minute 01:08:59- 01:09:10)



Figures 1.3

(Hereditary, minute 01:09:23)

Getting into the topic of cinematography, this sequence opens with figure 1.1, which is the state of insomnia experienced by Annie on the bed (with Steve next to her). This state of insomnia is further depicted in Figure 1.3. In this sequence, the shot is taken with a tracking technique from the direction of the bedroom window until it finally focuses on Annie, which in horror films usually means a moment of being monitored or a tense moment (Park, 2018). For the shooting angle, this scene is taken with a high-angle shot that highlights the meaning of vulnerability or weakness in the object (Annie). The entire sequence is also depicted in low-light cinematography to increase the gripping and uncanny intensity of the film (Park, 2018). The above does not exclude other PTSD symptoms (arousal symptoms) that occur in Annie Graham with excessive feelings of anxiety in this part of the sequence (Kring et al., 2012).



Figure 1.4



Figure 1.5

(Hereditary, minute 01:09:25-01:09:46)

In the next cut of the sequence, figures 1.4 and 1.5, foreshadowing scenes that refer to Charlie's death (a mass of ants) begin to appear. The mass of ants is a feature that Annie remembers of Charlie's death, which acts as her traumatic experience (Kring et al., 2012). Ari Aster uses a close-up technique to illustrate this in Figure 1.4. The close-up technique is also consistently used to equalize the meaning or context with the previous scene (the beginning of Annie seeing ants), which in Figure 1.5 focuses more on the initial movement of ants from the left side of Annie's bed.



Figure 1.6

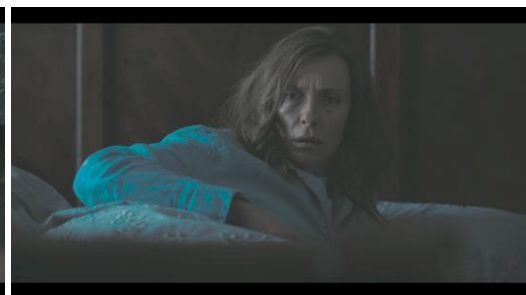


Figure 1.7

(Hereditary, minute 01:09:47-01:09:50)

Next, the explanation of the ants' origin begins to be shown by shooting through the object in Figures 1.6 and 1.7, to create distortion in the image (Park, 2018). This technique creates a sense of peeking, and on the other hand, creates

anxiety or a sense of mystery in the audience. This technique is also accompanied by a POV shot of Annie Graham in bed, which increases the audience's emotional involvement with Annie's character's anxiety (Park, 2018).



Figure 1.8
(*Hereditary*, minute 01:09:51-01:09:54)



Figure 1.9



Figure 1.10
(*Hereditary*, minute 01:10:01)

Annie's view is clarified by the next scene, which is in Figures 1.8 and 1.9. These 2 images are a series of tilt-down scenes of a group of ants that Annie saw earlier. Tilt-down shots are taken from top to bottom, with the camera position tending to be stable. This technique is intended to clarify the meaning and express it with a certain tempo, which in the context of horror films is allowed to slow down to build the intensity of horror (Park, 2018). The set closes with a very close-up of Annie's eyes in figure 1.10, which makes it clear that this is Annie's vision that Ari Aster wants to communicate to the audience. Extreme close-ups are used to maximize intensity even without dialogue (Park, 2018).



Figure 1.11

(Hereditary, minute 01:10:02-01:10:08)



Figure 1.12



Figure 1.13

(Hereditary, minute 01:10:12-01:10:20)

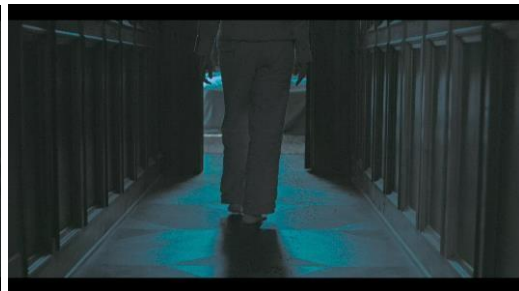


Figure 1.14

In the next scene, namely in figures 1.11 to 1.14, are scenes of Annie's movement in searching for the origin of the collection of ants with curiosity. This curiosity is seen with the slow tracking technique backward in the image capture (Park, 2018). This represents Annie's thoughts about her traumatic event regarding Charlie's death. This scene is taken with a low-angle shot that is based on the point of view of a group of ants that are below (Park, 2018). This refers to the objects Annie sees in her search for the ants' origin (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). This low angle continues until figure 1.14, which depicts Annie having found the origin of the ants with a symmetrical dark image or scene focused on Annie's shadow in front of a room after following the trail of the ants.



Figure 1.15



Figure 1.16

(Hereditary, minute 01:10:40-01:10:48)

The medium static shot camera is carried out in the next scene in figures 1.15 and 1.16, which can be interpreted as focusing on the object as well as the object's space in the shot (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). The shooting point is also chosen as the point of view of the object seen by Annie. In the context of horror films, this is usually done again to focus on the intensity of horror values. In the context of this scene, the focus is on Annie's initial reaction to what she sees (Park, 2018).

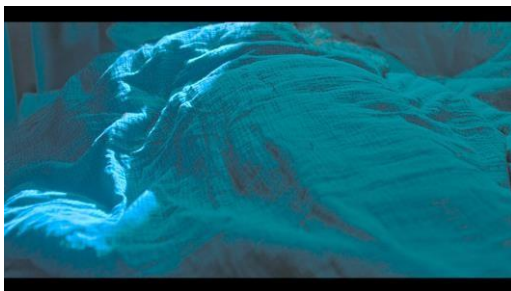


Figure 1.17



Figure 1.18

(Hereditary, minute 01:10:51- 01:11:01)

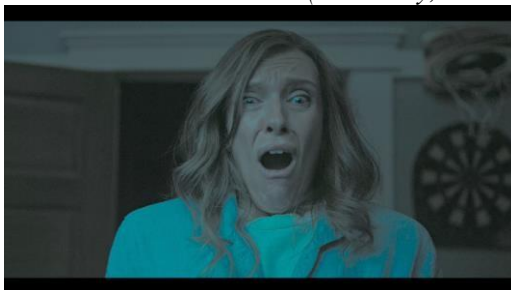


Figure 1.19



Figure 1.20

(Hereditary, minute 01:11:03-01:11:06)



Figure 1.21
(*Hereditary*, minute 01:11:12)

Annie's scared thing is revealed in the next scene, which can be seen in figures 1.17 to 1.21. This sequence is done in parallel editing, namely, intercutting. For the cinematography, the series of techniques used includes tilt-up camera, static camera, and close-up (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008; Park, 2018). In Figures 1.17 and 1.18, the camera tilted up slowly to show Annie Graham's curiosity, which at that moment changed to the audience's curiosity. The reveal is the function of cinematographic aspects to convey the message in the film to the audience (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). Then the static camera is carried out in images 1.19 and 1.21, which functions again to focus the meaning, which in this context is Annie's reaction, which in these 2 images shows the symptoms of PTSD starting to appear with a face shocked by what she saw (referring to Charlie's death). The last is a static close-up shot that occurs in Figure 1.20 (Park, 2018). Without jump scares (really intensely and slowly), this scene explicitly represents Annie's trauma, namely the death of Charlie, whose head is infested with a bunch of ants. Figure 1.20 is one of the 2 cores of this sequence, which means that the previous scenes are only built to communicate this idea (Charlie's death as a traumatic event for Annie) (Kring et al., 2012).

The next scenes refer to Annie's next traumatic event, which is Annie's plan to abort Peter. The scene begins with a wide shot of Peter's room from figure 1.22 to figure 1.32. This series of scenes tends to be taken with a static medium shot technique, as in Figures 1.23 to 1.32. There are only 2 differences in shooting angles, namely, beside the object and the front side of the object.



Figure 1.22 (Hereditary, minute 01:11:14-01:11:37)

In the scene in figure 1.22, the film is taken with a wide lens shot of Peter's room with a side angle of the room that depicts the entire reality that occurred at that time in the room (although still in the context of Annie's nightmare, the reality between Peter and Annie is depicted) (Park, 2018). Park (2018) also explains that this technique serves to clarify everything in the scene through a wide shot that is limited by the angle of view, including when Peter wakes up and Annie realizes that there are no ants.



Figure 1.23

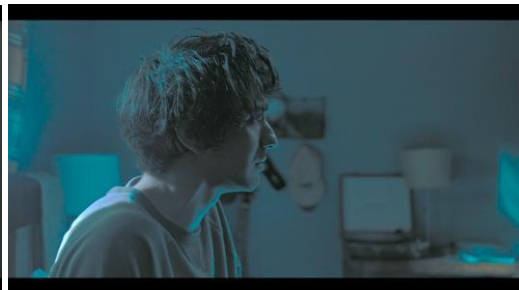


Figure 1.24

(Hereditary, minute 01:11:39- 01:11:47)



Figure 1.25



Figure 1.26

(Hereditary, minute 01:11:56-01:12:10)



Figure 1.8

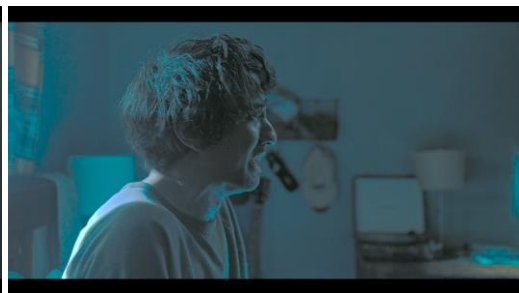


Figure 1.9

(Hereditary, minute 01:12:16- 01:12:24)

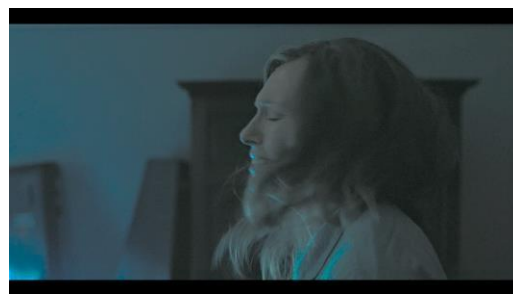


Figure 1.29

(Hereditary, minute 01:12:33)

Then in the next scene, namely in Figures 1.23 to 1.29, it can be seen that the image is taken medium shot with a fixed angle from the side. This serves to make the focus of the film, which was previously as wide as Peter's room, change to each character. In the context of PTSD symptoms, Annie's symptoms are seen in Figure 1.25 trying to prevent her mouth from speaking, namely mood and cognitive change symptoms as well as arousal symptoms that occur when she unconsciously

reveals that she does not want to be Peter's mother, appearing based on intrusive thoughts and negative alteration thoughts (Kring et al., 2012). This series of scenes also moves with intercutting techniques that function to move the emotions from Annie to Peter in turn.



Figure 1.30



Figure 1.31

(Hereditary, minute 01:12:34-01:12:37)



Figure 1.32



Figure 1.33

(Hereditary, minute 01:12:41-01:12:46)

The next scene is seen from Figure 1.30 to 1.32, which changes the angle of shooting from the side to the front. This is done to clarify the state of each character that occurs, which is to clarify the details of the two of them who are wet with liquid (Park, 2018).

Then, this sequence of scenes is closed by Annie's awakening (Figure 1.33). Annie realized that what had previously happened was a nightmare. The shooting is used with a medium shot technique, which only serves to explain Annie's

awakening from the nightmare (re-experiencing), which contains Annie's past trauma (Park, 2018; Kring et al., 2012).

2. Avoidance Symptoms: Annie Avoids Coming into the Gymnasium Building (minute 44:22-44:50)

Before Annie's sequence takes place at the gymnasium, the film *Hereditary* (2018) has already depicted a series of traumatic events that have befallen the Graham family, particularly the sudden death of Charlie, Annie's youngest daughter. Charlie tragically died after her head was severed in a car accident caused by Peter, Annie's son. This death not only intensified the tension within the family but also became the primary trigger for Annie's psychological breakdown. Not only did she lose her child, but she also carried the burden of guilt because she had previously urged Peter to take Charlie out that night, even though Peter was clearly uncomfortable. This unresolved guilt exacerbated Annie's trauma, which had not yet fully healed from the death of her mother, Ellen.

After Charlie's funeral, the house was filled with an oppressive silence and emotional detachment among family members. Annie and Peter seemed to avoid direct interaction. They were under the same roof, but psychologically separated. Annie felt Peter was at fault and showed no remorse, while Peter himself was haunted by guilt but didn't know how to express it. Her husband, Steve, tries to maintain the family's emotional balance, but he himself appears exhausted and overwhelmed by the increasingly uncontrollable situation.

In this state, Annie begins to experience sleep disorders and dissociative

behavior. She often wakes up confused, even experiencing sleepwalking and terrifying nightmares. The trauma and psychological pressure drive Annie to seek refuge or a place where she can feel heard and emotionally validated. She directs herself to a place she had previously visited after her mother's death: a grief support group that typically meets in a gymnasium building. However, when her car arrives in front of the building, Annie does not immediately get out. This is where the sequence unfolds.

In this sequence (Figures 2.1 to 2.5), Annie experiences the second PTSD symptom, which is avoiding the Gymnasium building, which she considers to be the object that triggered her trauma (Kring et al., 2012). Because previously, Annie had told her story there after the death of her mother, Ellen Graham. This time she feels very heavy to tell because now her daughter (Charlie) has just left her. And this can also be used as a reason why Annie stays away from the building.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2

(Hereditary, minute 01:12:16-01:12:24)

In terms of cinematography, this sequence begins with Figure 2.1. Figure 2.1 shows Annie in the car quite intensely. The scene in the car is shown for quite a long time, starting from image 2.1 and ending in image 2.2. The scene was shot using a static medium shot technique with internal frames to focus the tension

experienced by Annie in one shot. With this cinematographic technique, the audience will be able to feel the tension through the internal frames presented (Park, 2018).



Figure 2.3



Figure 2.4

(Hereditary, minute 44:35-44:42)



Figures 2.5

(Hereditary, minute 44:50)

In the core of this sequence, seen in figures 2.3 to 2.5, which shows her avoiding her trauma by turning the car around as if she aborted her intention to enter the Gymnasium building (Kring et al., 2012). The camera is angled on the dashboard of the car, pointing towards the front of the car. The steadicam or mount shot is used as an impression of the consistency of Annie's vision in the car (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). is angled ward ais angled The use of cameras like this, in addition to providing the subject's point of view, is usually also a long take

to condense the meaning of the story, which in this context is Annie's actions away from the gymnasium building (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008).

3. Mood and Cognitive Change Symptoms: Dinner Sequence Scenes

(minute 56:07-01:00:46)

In the dinner sequence, there are 48 scene changes, which is quite monotonous. But even though it looks monotonous, the tension during dinner is because of that. Almost all of the scenes (from Figure 3.1 to 3.13) employ the static medium shot technique, which appears to be designed to draw the audience's focus to the tension of the moment, to the point that even the slightest movement of the audience will still be noticeable (Park, 2018).

This sequence begins in a very tense atmosphere at the dinner table, following Charlie's tragic death. This is the first time Annie and Peter have faced each other directly since the incident. Both avoid each other, shrouded in feelings of guilt and pent-up anger. Annie seems to blame Peter for Charlie's death, while Peter is also overwhelmed with guilt. However, their positions are locked—it was Annie who asked Peter to bring Charlie to the party that night, making it impossible for either of them to blame the other. The conversation began flatly and politely, as Peter praised the food prepared by his father. Steve responded briefly with “Thanks.” However, Peter noticed that his mother hadn’t touched her food. He realized there was something Annie was holding back and tried to start a conversation with her. Peter asked in a gentle tone, but Annie remained silent, holding back an expression that was hard to read, as if trying to contain a surge of emotion.

Annie responded sarcastically, denying that there was anything on her mind. She said, “No, there’s nothing I want to say,” but it was clear from her facial expression and body language that the statement was dishonest. The audience is guided to feel the pent-up emotional explosion—a psychological tension that Ari Aster has built since the beginning of the film. In the camera framing, Annie's expression is locked in a pressing close-up, showing her unresolved inner turmoil.

Peter finally tries to press the situation, pushing his mother to be straight about what she is thinking. The tension escalates when Peter says something harsh and provocative, a reckless act to push his mother to speak openly. Annie’s reaction is uncontrollable—she erupts with deep anger, telling Peter never to speak to her in a raised voice. This is the climax of the sequence, where trauma, loss, and family conflict explode at the dinner table. In her emotional outburst, Annie expresses how deeply hurt she feels by Charlie's death, and more deeply still, how her family—especially Peter—seems to show no remorse or guilt. She insists that the loss is real, that everyone is acting as if nothing happened, even though the wound is still raw. The cinematography amplifies her emotional outburst, with the camera zooming in on Annie’s face and her voice beginning to tremble.

Meanwhile, the audience knows that Steve and Peter also feel the loss. However, they choose to hide their sadness, trying to cope by acting normal. This has been foreshadowed from the beginning of the film, such as when Peter could still smile when Steve asked him in the room about his feelings after Ellen's death. These reactions reflect the different defense mechanisms each family member has developed in response to the same trauma. After Annie pours out all her emotions,

she says that Peter has never even apologized for the incident that night. This is the core of her pain: the feeling of being abandoned, unappreciated, and unheard in her suffering as a mother. Peter finally responded, stating that the decision to bring Charlie to the party was Annie's own insistence. The tension escalated again, but before the argument could escalate further, Steve intervened and told them to stop.

Steve's intervention halted the argument, but did not resolve it. Annie didn't respond further, choosing instead to stand up and leave the dining table. She exited the room, leaving Peter and Steve in silence and unspoken pain. This sequence ends with an emotional void hanging in the air, revealing how trauma, sadness, and guilt are quietly yet intensely distributed through the tense verbal and nonverbal interactions.



Figure 3.1

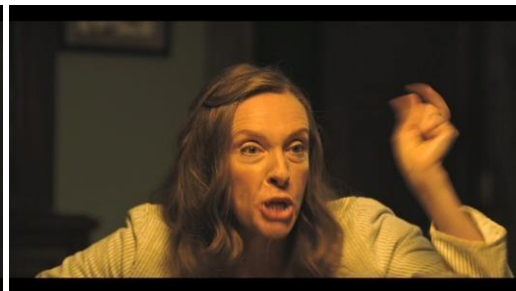


Figure 3.2

(Hereditary, minute 58:01-58:02)

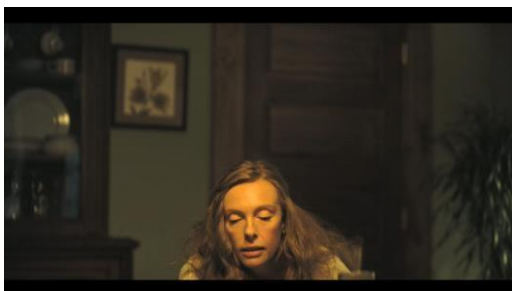


Figure 3.3

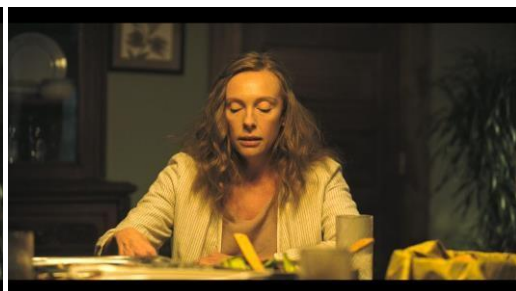


Figure 3.4

(Hereditary, minute 59:18-59:19)

There are only two different camera movements in this entire sequence. The first is seen in Figures 3.1 and 3.2, when the static camera in Figure 3.8 changes to a tilt-up camera movement that represents Annie's anger towards Peter. The second can be seen in Figures 3.3 and 3.4, where Annie stops her anger using the tilt-down technique, which also represents the situation in the storytelling in visual form. In this context, Annie experiences a decrease in emotion afterwards (Park, 2018). Apart from these two moments, the camera remains static.



Figure 3.5



Figure 3.6

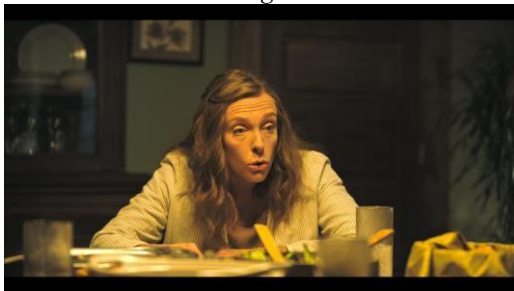


Figure 3.7

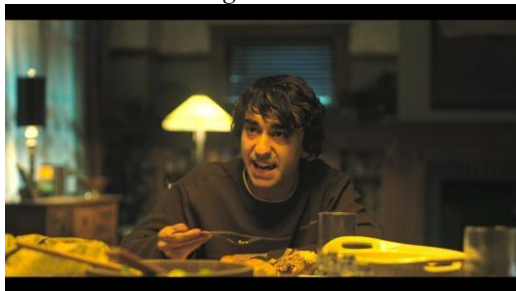


Figure 3.8

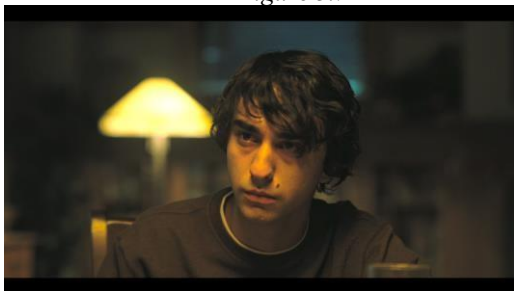


Figure 3.9

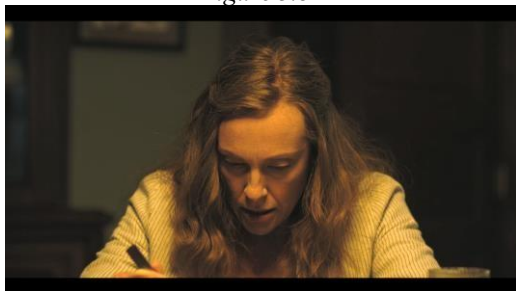


Figure 3.10

(Hereditary, intercutting shot minute 56:07-01:00:46)

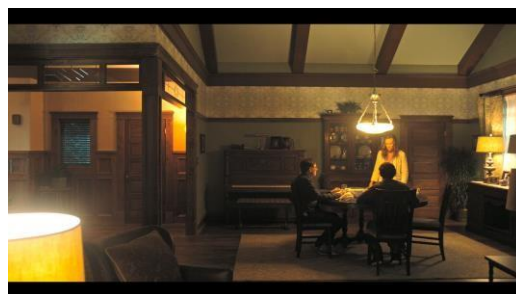
The camera movement, which tends to be static (Figures 3.5 to 3.10), indirectly focuses the audience not only on the tension of the dinner, but also on the narration. The function of shooting at this moment plays an important role in reinforcing it so that the audience can easily feel the tension at this dinner. The feeling is actually not only from Annie, but also Peter and Steve, because this form of static camera is reinforced by intercutting techniques so that it does not feel monotonous from one point of view (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). The depiction of the symptoms of negative alteration cognitive and mood or mood and cognitive change is seen in the form of narration delivered by Annie when she is angry, and the cinematographic technique of static cameras and the movement of tilt up and tilt down during the transition of her anger is only an explanation for it (Kring et al., 2012; Park, 2018).



Figure 3.11 (Hereditary minute 56:07)



Figure 3.12 (Hereditary, minute 58:53)



Figures 3.13 (Hereditary, minute 01:00:11)

In this sequence, there are only minor camera angles. It can be seen in figure 3.5 and similar images using a high angle medium shot approach, then in figure 3.11 at the beginning of the sequence that similar to 3.12, just changed to a wide-angle shot, although only briefly, and finally in figure 3.13 also with a wide-angle shot, although with a rather long duration. Still, the longest tempo is during the medium shot because it aims to focus on the characters' reactions (Park, 2018). The wide shot lens is only used to display the state of the entire room, filled with all the characters. There are 3 wide shot points, the first at the beginning of the scene (Figure 3.11), then during the middle of Annie's anger (3.12), and the last for the closing scene of this sequence (Figure 3.13). Each point is the halfway point of the entire sequence; the first is the orientation, the second is the middle of the sequence, and the third is the closing of the sequence. Each of these points has a role in shaping the tension that occurs. The first is to show the awkward situation after Charlie's death, showing Peter, Steve, and Annie (wide shot behind Annie). The second marks the middle of the sequence, which is the scene between the calm state (in the opening) and Annie's post-anger state (in the closing). The third is the closing scene with a relatively long duration, focusing on the moment of Annie's departure and Steve's reaction after Annie leaves the dining table.

Cinematographically, this entire sequence is an important part of how Annie experiences the symptoms of PTSD. With shots that are deliberately made to focus only on the narrative form in this film. As an audience, the viewer will feel Annie's PTSD symptoms through Annie's reaction when answering Peter with rudeness, Annie's reaction when expressing anger in a high tone, and Annie's reaction to

leaving the room, are symptoms of PTSD related to mood and cognitive change (Kring et al., 2012). All scenes are depicted and also conveyed to the audience through this static medium shot technique.

4. Arousal Symptoms: Annie's Grief after Charlie's Death (minute: 37:45-39:04)

This sequence shows Annie's grief after knowing of Charlie's death through her discovery in the car when she was about to leave the house in the morning. This sequence is the main conflict point in the film, as well as the revelation of the origin of Annie's trauma. This sequence consists of several scenes that are short but have a deep meaning. This is expressed through the cinematographic effects, although also through the music scoring, acting, mise en scene, and editing.



Figure 4.1

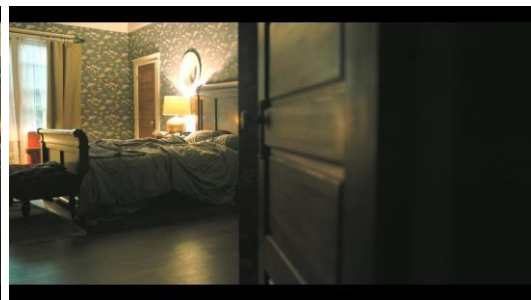


Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3

(Hereditary, track out shot minute 37:45-38:37)

It is clearly seen in Figure 4.1 that Annie's deep sadness is depicted in the frame. This scene is continued until Figure 4.3 with a track panning shot technique to another object, Peter, who is standing in the hallway. In addition to the track panning shot technique, the shooting is done with a wide, low-angle shot, which implicitly functions as an explanation of 2 situations at one time, namely Annie's deep sadness and Peter's guilt (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). Annie's sadness in this scene is a form of representation of PTSD symptoms related to arousal symptoms that are depicted directly through cinematographic techniques. The tracking of camera movement is one of the intense arousal images when compared to a static camera, because after that, the scene moves to Peter, who is in the hallway (Kring et al., 2012). Peter's standing, which is recorded by the tracking out the camera, becomes an accessory that adds to the horror of the film through the main context of the cause of this conflict (the main cause of Charlie's death).



Figure 4.4



Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6

(Hereditary, tilt down shot minute 38:38-39:03).

Not stopping there, the scene continues as shown in figures 4.4 to 4.6. Again, the mobile cam technique, especially the tilt crane shot, is used as the camera movement. What is unique here is the double focus used as a transition to the next sequence, which is between the extreme wide shot of the crowd to the extreme close-up to the ground (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008). All of these techniques focus on the storytelling of Annie's Grief, which is explicitly depicted as one of the traumatic events for Annie, and throughout the film, nothing looks heavier than this (Kring et al., 2012).

In other words, the cinematography in this sequence is very relevant and very suitable for Annie's grief after Annie's death; all shots and scenes feel very close to the audience to the point that this sequence is the most iconic in the film in representing horror through Annie's grief.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents conclusions and suggestions drawn from the problem formulation, research findings, and discussion that have taken place. The conclusion serves to summarize the results of the analysis in the previous chapter, while the suggestion is intended to provide a reference for future researcher who are interested in researching similar fields, either in theory or in the object of this research.

A. Conclusion

This analysis shows that the cinematography in *Hereditary* (2018) systematically reflects the four categories of PTSD symptoms in several scenes from the film. First, re-experiencing symptoms are manifested through the use of tracking shots, high-angle framing, and low-light cinematography that trigger a sense of being “followed” and explore the trauma of Charlie's death and Peter's abortion attempt. Second, avoidance symptoms are reinforced by a static medium shot with internal framing and mounted POV (Steadicam) that marks Annie's avoidance of facing the traumatic space in the Gymnasium building.

Third, mood & cognitive change symptoms are reflected in a series of static medium shots supported by intercutting techniques and tilt-up/tilt-down displacement to emphasize Annie's emotional fluctuations and intrusive thoughts during the dinner scene. Fourth, arousal & reactivity symptoms are expressed

through tracking/panning shots, wide low-angle framing, and tilt crane shots that bring out the intensity of anxiety and deep sadness after Charlie's death.

Thus, every cinematographic decision—from framing and camera movement to take length and lens placement—works synergistically to visualize *Hereditary* (2018) characters' psychological dynamics, presenting a horror experience that is not only visual but also an authentic and clinical manifestation of trauma according to Kring et al. (2012) framework.

B. Suggestion

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, several suggestions can be taken into consideration for future researcher who want to study a similar field, both in terms of theoretical approaches and filmic objects of study.

Further research could expand the focus of cinematography by integrating analysis of audio elements and mise-en-scène, and editing techniques. An in-depth study of sound design—how sound effects, musical scores, and silences evoke traumatic memories—would complement the visual findings of cinematography. Similarly, a mise-en-scène study examining spatial arrangements, props, costumes, and color palettes could reveal layers of psychological meanings that accompany PTSD symptoms, while an analysis of editing—specifically the rhythm of cuts, montage, and cross-cutting—could highlight how the film manipulates the perception of time to depict flashbacks or memory distortions.

Additionally, the application of the PTSD framework and the cinematography-psychology approach could be tested on other critically acclaimed

psychological horror films. Among them are *Midsommar* (2019), with its sectarian rituals and isolated atmosphere that create collective anxiety; *The Shining* (1980), where the isolation in a hotel and the use of vertical space reflect psychological fractures; and *The Lighthouse* (2019), which places tension in confined spaces and shadow-sound as a medium for trauma. In addition to psychological subgenres, the same methodology can be applied to supernatural horror to see how cinematic techniques personify metaphysical forces. For example, *Talk to Me* (2022) and *Satan's Slaves 2* (2022) feature paranormal elements depicted through lighting, noise design, and framing that evoke a sense of the “unseen” lurking, making them suitable as further case studies to test the generalizability of PTSD symptoms in the context of supernatural horror.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



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