Horror and post horror films, as body genres, have the ability to affect their audiences with visceral emotions, enabling ideas to be communicated somatically before any subconscious bias interferes with a viewer's reception of that film. In the case of Jordan Peele's *Get Out (2017)*, this text uses post horror methods such as the apprehension engine and a drawn-out tonal dread, to affect viewers with fear and disgust towards the human antagonists or monsters, allowing them to empathise with the protagonist's experiences regarding contemporary racism more substantially. Though for the sake of argument "post horror" will be distinguished as a specific subgenre of horror media, *Get Out* that elements and conventions of traditional horror that remain, such as jumpscares which are used within the film (Landsberg, 2018, p. 631). The affects of *Get Out* are constructed such that they are effective in communicating the black experience to all audiences, tying actions such as microaggressions that an average audience might consider to be innocuous, to a horrific moment. This trend of revealing the experience of marginalised groups continues today, with similar affects evident in Ryan Coogler's *Sinners (2025)*.

The apprehension engine is a key feature of post horror cinema, a boxy contraption with magnets, and coils which is designed to make the various disturbing sounds that are used within more contemporary horror films. The engine was built to create discordant sounds whose sources were obscure and

unfamiliar to regular audiences, heightening the affective impact of these sounds (Church, 2022, p. 1). In *Get Out,* this technique is combined with the jumpscares of traditional horror to perpetually keep audiences paranoid and on edge, in an attempt to help them understand why the protagonist Chris is so on edge as the narrative progresses. The very first jumpscare in the film is likely completely unexpected, where Chris and his girlfriend Rose are driving through a rural highway to her parents' house, the tone is initially quite light-hearted, even wholesome as the audience watches the two characters banter between each other. Then abruptly there is a loud crunching sound as their car hits a deer, completely disrupting the established, comfortable atmosphere, and in a sense, punishing audiences that might have fallen into a state of complacency. For viewers on their first watch with limited knowledge about the film, this scene would have been especially startling, considering it was both marketed as and categorised for the Golden Globe awards as a comedy (Landsberg, 2018, p. 629). Those who might have then written off the opening kidnapping scene as dark humour and were expecting a light-hearted film are further affected by the jumpscare. The film additionally uses this jumpscare not only as a momentary disruption, but as a tool to completely shift the tone of the film and begin building a sense of dread in their audiences. Immediately after hitting the deer, both Chris and Rose are visibly shocked, mirroring the audiences' emotions here, and though Rose gets over the accident relatively

quickly, Chris is clearly on edge from that moment all the way until the film ends. As a black man entering the white dominated neighbourhood of Rose's parents, Chris has been socially conditioned to be on his guard and through the fear created by the jumpscare, Peele manages to justify and mirror that paranoia in his audience. Chris walks into the forest to inspect the deer and there is a relatively long sequence of shots which alternate between the dead deer and Chris's face, as a tense soundtrack grows in volume, which creates a strong link between Chris and the deer. This link is paid off, when the two arrive at Rose's parent's house and her father on hearing about the deer is vitriolically celebratory that they had killed a deer. At this point, audiences have been primed by the jumpscare and surrounding sequences to associate that moment with fear and dread, so now with the father responding positively to a moment of fear, even audiences who might otherwise personally share the father's hatred for deer are put off by his behaviour. This is a method that Peele uses frequently where he primes the audience with fear, so that they are put off by the vibe of the local white populace, even among rural white viewers who might themselves behave similarly and would otherwise relate.

On Chris's first night in the house, we see even more jumpscares and the apprehension machine is used more frequently. As Chris walks outside the house past midnight, the audience is assaulted with a series of jumpscares

when the two black servants on the property are shown walking around. The audience might already be unsettled by these characters with the way they talk and adopt mannerisms which are more reminiscent of the white bourgeoise, rather than the working-class black people which they appear to be. However, in this sequence, through the use of discordant tones, Peele can directly link the behaviour of these two characters to a sense of dread, confirming many viewers' suspicions and directly communicating that something is wrong to viewers who might not have picked up on the earlier hints.

As Noel Carroll argues regarding traditional horror, the affects of *Get Out* are also built around feelings of fear and a visceral disgust which compounds that fear (1987, p. 53). The fear within this film is far easier to see within the film, generated through features such as its jumpscares and rising tone, the disgust evoked by the film is initially less apparent, falling in line with post horror trends of subtle emotions. The monsters in *Get Out* are human, and so any disgust felt towards them must be emotions we regularly feel towards humans. Initially our revulsion towards Rose's parents manifests as cringe, where audiences who are observant or familiar with AAVE will be slightly repulsed by the way Rose's father makes an artificial attempt to copy black speaking styles in an attempt to appear nonracist. This sense of cringe compounds upon itself as Rose's family continue to behave awkwardly around

Chris, commenting on what they perceive to be the physical exceptionalism of black people. These are microaggressions brushed off by Chris as harmless social ineptitude, giving implicit permission for uncomfortable audiences who see themselves in the behaviour of the parents to laugh off their discomfort. However, once the narrative reveals the true intentions of the white community towards Chris, their previous microaggressions are recontextualised as we see how their complementing of Chris's black identity was nothing more than a performative progressivism to mask a "noble savage" attitude to black people. The white neighbourhood had always viewed Chris through a colonialist lens where his body was just another vessel or tool for them to justify taking with their internalised white supremacy, and this framing now compels audiences to feel a more visceral disgust towards the white peoples' past awkwardness, which they likely had brushed off as innocuous. The audience is now entirely on the same page as Chris, able to feel with him any empathetic disgust that they have missed originally (Hanich, 2011, p. 22). The climax of the film is built entirely around a more classical horror anticipatory disgust as the art collector explains his intentions to Chris and the entire mystery of the neighbourhood's intentions are revealed. We have a sequence of Rose's father prepare for a surgery where he is to transplant the mind of the collector into Chris's body, and with prior context as well as a building soundtrack with incomprehensible chanting, the audience is

given a foreboding dread and "'leans forward' in time, scanning the imminent temporal horizon," as they expect to be confronted with a repulsive operating sequence (Hanich, 2011, p. 14). Even as the brain of the collector is removed, while this is a scene which evokes disgust, the moment of Chris's own operation is made "temporarily absent-present" (Hanich, 2011, p. 18) as the film continues to point to this outcome by showing the audience through images of the hypnotic teacup and the father calm and controlled, that Chris's odds of escaping the house are overwhelmingly against him.

Get Out makes use of a dialectic between sleeping and waking up (Landsberg, 2018, p. 636), which represents the original concept of "woke", loosely defined as black political consciousness and awareness about the material influences and systematic injustices which affect their lives. As a postmodern film, the story *Get Out* exists in a realm of hyperreality and its narration addresses through explicit metaphor, a number of complex social issues. In this way, the film is both simultaneously subtle and non-subtle, allowing it to be clear in its message and affective impact on viewers without activating the thought stopping cliché of "too preachy". Within the film, the concept of sleeping is represented by hypnosis and connected to a feeling of helplessness which is communicated through the audience via the 'sunken place' (Landsberg, 2018, p. 636), where we can feel the distance Chris has from his own body and

empathise with his lack of control. From this we can make broader connections around how this “sleeping” seems to imitate the control that white people of power have over black lives, as though they can manipulate the bodies themselves of black people, where the overwhelming systematic power is represented as a complete physical helplessness. Then opposed to this we have the idea of waking up, regaining consciousness or political awareness, which is enabled through Chris’s artistic ability through his camera. The process of waking up here is dramatized through the camera, where only the black characters who are awake have any control over their bodies. We can better understand the sunken place through the sequence in which Rose’s mother manipulates and hypnotises Chris. Here, she manages to steer their conversation to a moment of personal vulnerability and trauma for Chris: his belief that he is responsible for the death of his mother due to his inaction when she didn’t return home on time. The mother brings this moment to the forefront for Chris and through this imposed personal trauma he enters the sunken place, reflective of how a white liberal society often tries to blame black people in an individualistic sense for the systematic issues, such as poverty or low literacy rates, that they are impacted by. Chris’s camera here is the tool which disrupts the border between awake and sleeping, providing the ability through photography to reveal truth, “exposing things as they really are” (Landsberg, 2018, p. 638).

In *Sinners,* set in Jim Crowe era America, the monsters are neither entirely monstrous nor human, but vampires who appear to retain their identity but develop a thirst for blood. The vampires, led by the Irish man, Remmick, are an extension of modern western imperialism. Towards the climax of the film, Remmick tells the black protagonists that he was made into a vampire as a result of the British colonialism that destroyed his country and culture, and which brought the disease of vampirism with them. Now Remmick belongs to the lifeless monoculture of the vampires, who exist to absorb black culture into their group (Mathai, 2025) as a desperate attempt to regain the Irish culture that was lost. This idea draws clear parallels to the white neighbourhood of *Get Out* as they attempt to co-opt black language, and even black bodies for their own purposes. *Sinners* however explores how this assimilation serves to destroy the very cultures and groups which the assimilators claim to admire. Audiences are made here to empathise with Remmick, through a “long-take sequence with a heightened, dreamlike atmosphere full of anachronistic imagery” (Mathai, 2025), where viewers are affected by the black culture and music of the juke joint which the protagonists occupy. Then we see an almost equivalent musical response from Remmick, only this performance is framed as eerie and unsettling, a fragmented echo of the genuine cultural expression within the juke joint. The use of fear to frame

the vampires in *Sinners*, depicting them with inhuman eyes and teeth, a compulsive desire for violence and to 'take' from their targets, suggest to the audience that these vampires are fundamentally incapable of any cultural exchange in which they do not end up dominating whatever group they interact with.

Get Out's ending was initially intended to affect audiences with a "sad truth", cynically having Chris arrested for the murders of Rose's family though this was changed with poor reception among test audiences (Orlando, 2022). As the film was released in a time of heightened racism and bigotry with the new Trump presidency, Peele concluded that audiences did not need cynicism, but rather that a hopeful ending better served to convey his message about racism, that using his camera and the wakefulness it granted him, Chris is able to maintain his autonomy and successfully escape from the neighbourhood. In a very similar vein *Sinners* brings optimism into the second Trump presidency, affecting audiences with the idea that racism can be defeated with violence and continued resistance.

The affective capabilities of both *Get Out* and *Sinners*, using the strategies and tropes of horror, using jumpscares, disgust and metaphors, a minority experience can be directly and effectively communicated to wide audiences.

References

Carroll, N. (1987). *The Nature of Horror. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, [online] 46(1), pp.51–59. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/431308.

Church, D. (2022). *POST-HORROR : art, genre and cultural elevation.* S.L.: Edinburgh Univ Press.

Coogler, R. (2025). *Sinners*, motion picture, Warner Bros. Pictures.

Hanich, J. (2011). *Toward a Poetics of Cinematic Disgust. Film-Philosophy*, 15(2), pp.11–35. doi:https://doi.org/10.3366/film.2011.0023.

Landsberg, A. (2018). *Horror vérité: politics and history in Jordan Peele's Get Out* (2017). *Continuum*, 32(5), pp.629–642. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2018.1500522.

Lowenstein, A. (2022). *Horror Film and Otherness*. Film and Culture Series.

Mathai, J. (2025). *How Sinners Director Ryan Coogler Evolves Jordan Peele's Very Specific Horror Mission*. [online] SlashFilm. Available at: https://www.slashfilm.com/1837263/sinners-director-ryan-coogler-volves-jordan-peele-horror-mission/.

Orlando, A. (2022). *The Original Get Out Ending Was Way Darker*. [online] SlashFilm. Available at: https://www.slashfilm.com/843860/the-original-get-out-ending-was-way-darker/.

Peele, J. (2017). *Get Out*, motion picture, Universal Pictures.