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Submission date: 29-January-2023 08:39AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2101952500

File name: Hapsari_dan_Lynda_1_Desember.pdf (308.49K)

Word count: 9261

Character count: 47622

The Deconstruction of Horror Film Formula in *Midsommar* by Ari Aster (2019)

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Article History:

Submission
 June 6th, 2022

Accepted
 July 4th, 2022

Published
 January 31st, 2023

ABSTRACT

The research entitled “The Deconstruction of Horror Film Formula in *Midsommar* by Ari Aster” aims to figure out the deconstruction of the horror film formula in *Midsommar* in contrast to horror film formula in general by Brigid Cherry. The researcher used a qualitative method to analyze the data. The primary data are taken from Ari Aster’s movie, *Midsommar*, in the form of cinematic codes such as setting, lighting, sound, and color. In addition, the researcher also used deconstruction theory in literature and cultural elements such as Scandinavian culture to analyze the deconstruction of horror film formulas in *Midsommar* film. The researcher found four binary oppositions of the horror film formula in *Midsommar*. The first one is the deconstruction of setting where *Midsommar* changes the common horror film formula setting of terrifying into peaceful. The second one is the deconstruction of lighting as *Midsommar* uses bright lighting instead of the common dark one. The third one is the deconstruction of sound as *Midsommar* uses dramatic sound instead of the common creepy one. Lastly, the deconstruction of color in *Midsommar* as it uses various colors instead of monotone ones that are commonly used in the horror film. This research illustrated the deconstruction of the horror film formula in the movie *Midsommar* from Brigid Cherry’s common original formula by reversing the non-dominant elements into becoming the dominant elements.

Keywords: *Midsommar*, Deconstruction, Binary Opposition, Cinematic Codes.

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the cultural mainstream of horror films was produced in the thousand years since the beginning horror films appeared in 1896. Motion picture technology in the late 19th century began to try to make horror films that turned out to have characteristics that have been used in almost every horror film until now, such as elements of ghosts, witches, or vampires, or they can address more realistic psychological fears, creepy soundtracks, and dark lighting, or simply known as horror film formula. The horror film formula by Brigid Cherry is depicted as the use of lighting codes used to create darkness, shadows, obscurity, discordant or unsettling sound effects, musical cues to enhance feelings of suspense, moments of shock, or general feelings of unease.

Horror film formulas also can be defined as the narrative framework of the dramatic structure of literary works and have worked out behind the perfect horror films. Some filmmakers also decide to present a different formula to the horror film they narrate and deconstruct things that exist. In this case, the formula of horror film in *Midsommar* (2019) can be taken as an example. This film lifts ancient rituals that occur in Swedish culture, involving festivals and practices in the middle of summer (midsummer) that take place every 90 years and is also one of the holiday moments when Swedish citizens reconnect with a more agrarian heritage. This seemingly joyful festival changed drastically.

In *Midsommar*, the author changes the horror film formula, which was previously associated with darkness and creepiness, into a pleasant and peaceful one. Furthermore, the author adds other powers that the normal horror films do not have, such as a close relationship between culture and films that are not possessed by other horror film industries. In the opinion of Rita L. Cloete (2017) film as a cultural product and medium, has the potential to be an essential medium for meaning-making. Because cinema and film are rooted inside culture, there is a complicated and fascinating relationship between film, culture, ideology, and the audience. Corrigan and White (2004) acknowledged that film is an aesthetic work that is heavily interwoven with cultural practices. This type of art is also defined as innovative and hybrid, entrenched in a matrix that moves between "reality" and "fantasy," "art" and "entertainment". Thus, *Midsommar*'s transformation of horror film formula may be used as an example of deconstruction in literature.

Therefore, Deconstruction is a method of reading a text that is based on the philosophical scope popularized by Jacques Derrida. Silverman (1989:4) defines deconstruction as a reading of texts in terms of their margins, limits, or frameworks, and in terms of their self-circumscriptions or self-delimitations as texts. The idea of deconstruction is concerned with opposing the concept of a transcendental origin or natural referent. It refutes the notion that it is possible to get around the institution to discover something else — the presence of a distinct origin. Derrida (2002-70-71) states that deconstructing reading reveals the text's unconscious rather than conscious dimension, all the aspects that overt textual glosses over or fails to recognize. To examine the agreement of those descriptions, the deconstruction theory will be applied in this research to analyze the changes in the horror film formula from the original horror film formula described by Brigid Cherry.

The meaning of a text is undecidable. A text has various interpretations or meanings. In this context, the deconstruction theory is employed to examine the horror film formula that has been deconstructed in *Midsommar*. Since the object of this research is a film, the cinematic codes cannot be abandoned. The Cinematic Codes in this film formed a film language in examining the cultural context of *Midsommar*. In other words, this research figures out the deconstruction of horror film formulas, and the researcher focuses on the formula and cinematic codes approach. To see the deconstruction of the horror film formula in *Midsommar*. The old horror film formula by Brigid Cherry becomes the reference of this research. Aside from that, the purpose of this research is to reveal that the narrative of a horror film is not only inherently the same as the other Hollywood films, but also can be further enhanced to make viewers feel out of the box by applying a different formula that provides the same horrifying sensation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

DECONSTRUCTION

The term deconstruction was coined in the late 1960s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (Enwald, 2004:50). Deconstruction is a text reading approach that is entirely different from typical reading methods. Derrida's approach to literary interpretation is based on the premise that all texts, literary or otherwise, can be deconstructed. In David Carter, "Derrida also develops the notion of violent hierarchy" (2006:110). Deconstruction focuses on revealing the existence of a hierarchy in a text and reversing it to prove that the dominance of one opposite of the other is not permanent and that all opposites are independent. Derrida himself explained that every element in the structure is part of a dynamic, so it can also be center.

It may be argued that deconstruction is a way of reading philosophical texts to challenge such authors themselves, pressuring them to take note of their inconsistencies and of revealing the antagonisms they have overlooked or repressed. Thus, it is needed to classify something outwards or a pair of things that cannot be separated in the text. For instance, we know light because we know dark. The creating of these hierarchal is the basis of Western metaphysics to which Derrida objects (Bressler, 1999:125). Bressler (1999:31) has agreed with Derrida about the system of opposite (binary opposition) that these binary opposition—man/woman, nature/culture, privileged. privilege type present absent in which present takes precedence over absence. Deconstruction will disclose of including along privileges.

Midsommar, as a new level horror genre, has four binaries which has different formula from the old horror film formula by Brigid Cherry that are known to be inferior and repressed because the formula that are commonly used by horror filmmakers is the old horror film formula which known as the dominant or superior since it has dominant elements. As a result, the theory of deconstruction is used to help the researcher analyze the changes of horror film formula. The old horror film formula is seen in the characteristics that are commonly used in various horror films such as gloomy and terrifying setting, darkness, shadows, and obscurity lighting, creepy, discordant, pulsing with the rhythm of a heartbeat sounds, and monotone or rely on black and white color. The characteristics of the old horror film formula can be considered for being distinctive in contrast to those in the new horror film formula who have been portrayed in a peaceful setting, bright lighting, dramatic sound, and various colors. In this research, those distinct portrayals are obviously represented as deconstruction.

Therefore, to systemize the steps in doing deconstruction, Derrida (1981:41-42) in his book *Positions* states that there are two steps in deconstruction:

1. Locating the opposition

If anyone desires to deconstruct a text, they should look for significant or neglected sections of the text and examine these from different sides in order to create new interpretations. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment, to overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflict and subordinating structure of opposition, therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively (Derrida, 1981:41).

2. Determining which term is privileged

After locating the opposition existing in the text, the next step is to determine which side is privileged. Determining the privileged term by revealing how the repressed, marginalized meaning can as well be central. In order to subvert the original hierarchy of the first term over the second, this phase of reversal is required. They were looking for binary oppositions in the text because they thought they reflected established and accepted ideologies that frequently claimed the presence of transcendental signified. In fact, these binary processes constrained meaning since they assumed a fixed interpretation.

Based on the description above, the researcher concludes that there are two phases in Derrida's deconstruction theory, which are: locating the opposition and determining which term is privilege.

CINEMATIC CODES

Cinematic Codes in the film uncover the actual mechanism involved in understanding what a motion picture portrays or represents, and symbolize everything that is ultimately stated in the film. The term *Mise-en-scène* came from the French and was used to describe those visual aspects that appear within a single shot. This concept encompasses both what the audience can see, and the way in which we are invited to see it (Gibbs, 2012:5).

Essentially, cinematic codes are techniques that can be seen in the tone, atmosphere, and style being used to tell the story in order to convey empathy and emotion from the audience as well as understand the scene through timing, transitions, and cinematic effects which express feelings to the audience.

There are many elements in *Mise-en-scène*, but the researcher applies four elements that are related to this research. These are three elements from Jill Nelmes's book entitled *Introduction to Film Studies*. They are setting, lighting, and sound. Lastly, the other element is color from Blain Brown.

SETTING

A setting is a must in a film because it determines the location, social conditions, and period of time of the film itself. The setting is a prime aspect of film production since it will not only function as a room packed with human events, but it may also partake in acts effectively. Setting can also function to place the performers and majorly affects the feeling or tone of narrative work. The setting of time concerns a particular period of time when a scene occurs in a narrative work (Holman, 1980:413). This type of setting includes several units of time such as hours, minutes, seconds, days, months, and years, as well as phases of the morning, afternoon, and evening which are very helpful for the audience to avoid confusion when watching a film. Then, the setting of the social environment deals with the social life of the characters which includes religious, mental, moral, and social values (Holman, 1980:453). This kind of setting often appears in every movement of the main characters which makes the film more exciting.

LIGHTING

Lighting should be seen as a part in the style of an entire film, or over a variety of scenes, rather than as a single light for a particular set-up. Lighting requires a variation of intensity and direction of light that can be used to focus our attention to a specific part of the picture. Lights are one of the most important elements to create the mood and the atmosphere of a film (O'Brien and Sibley 1995). Generally, scenes with a lot of darkness and shadows portray a horror film in order to create fear and horrific in the audiences. A high-key lighting would be more comforting, it can bring up

elegance, purity, tranquility, and romance. So, the scenes with bright light increase the feeling of well-being.

SOUND

According to Nelmes's book entitled *Introduction to Film Studies*, sound can be used to reinforce the continuity of the action, while the image is fragmented by the cuts from one shot to another which we 'know' can hide temporal ellipsis – a character not shown crossing a room for instance – an unbroken soundtrack signifies a continuity of time. Sound provides a connection between emotional substance of the narration and the actual activities portrayed on the screen, expresses and reflects the story in a non-verbal manner, covering the narration gaps through being able to tell more than the actual picture does, especially in terms of emotions. Moreover, sound is one of the most significant components in movies for several logics. First, it may create distinctive impressions. Background music, such as orchestra and piano, furnishes the quietness and allows the audience to acquire an absolute experience (Bordwell and Thompson in *Picture Bordwell and Thompson in Film Art: An Introduction* 2013).

COLOR

Color is used to construct atmosphere and feeling, informing the viewer where the scene is centered, or offering details regarding characters and surroundings. Color can be added for showing different colors in the sets, costumes or locations, selecting a color match lighting, applying gels to adjust the hue of the lighting, adjusting and scoring the hue at the editing level. Color also have their respective meanings such as blue can indicate automation or loneliness, but it can also imply winter or night, warm, orange colors typically indicate summer, nostalgia or sunset, black and white may indicate that a scene is in the past or in the mind or recollection of a character or red which reflects masculinity, rage and passion. Moreover, color may influence the psychological understanding that the audience has of the images, alter their mood and convey emotions, since color is a powerful storytelling tool and an important factor to express emotions through images (Brown, 2012).

THE CONCEPT OF HORROR FILM FORMULA

The term film refers to traditional motion pictures that are screened and watched in movie theaters. Petrie and Boggs in Marlina et al (2021) said that film is considered as a unique and potent art which is equal to drama, music, even Sculpture. Although the photochemical film medium is a thing of the past and has been replaced by digital electronics, film is still a more established and convenient term than digital cinema (Zettl, 2013:4). Formula is defined as a conventional method for the structuring of cultural products. Thus, Brigid Cherry in her book entitled *Routledge Film Guidebooks* (2009) argued that one of the best ways to begin to determine how the formula created is to focus on the aesthetics of horror, the horror genre having clearly established sets of aesthetic traits which serve to heighten the emotional responses of the viewer (Cherry, 2009:53-54). She explains about formula or the aesthetics of horror film which will create a message in films then be conveyed by visual and auditory to the brain of the audience, where the audience would decode the message to create a meaning through lighting and set design, sound, color, special effects, and the shock cut. Lotte Eisner (2008: 17) succinctly describes lighting as 'pools of light falling from a high window into a dark interior'. In the way that the lighting is combined with the stark black and white of the sets, costume and make-up, not to mention the extremely un-naturalistic angles of the sets and props, there is a resulting abstract quality to the films. This shows that lighting combined with black and white color has an important role in a horror film to create tension to the audience.

Then, sound. Horror films, which aesthetically are as strongly dependent on sound as on the visuals, were no exception in this respect. Horror film music can often be discordant, pulsing with the rhythm of a heartbeat. With long eerie sequences that culminate in a sudden orchestral or operatic climax, such music operates in conjunction with the images of cinematic horror, the music is often dark and brooding in addition to creating the ambient sound of a film. In terms of color, the palette for much of the horror film is rich and yet quite subdued, consisting of the black, greys, white, aqua, green and brown reflecting the cold, clinical, sociopathic personality of the central figure.

Special effects which are seen on the screen will (empathically, maybe, because we see and hear characters on the screen) impact all senses, like sound, scent, yet taste, as well as a good sight and sound. Last, the shock cut is thus an editing device designed to emulate the actual, physical experience of a moment of shock. It can have a visceral or tactile effect in the sense that it is a 'single savage moment' that possesses force and velocity (2004: 52). Moreover, a lot of horror films have been shown with the same purposes, and mostly use the same formula by Brigid Cherry. In brief, formulas may be described as the rules for choosing such storylines, characters, settings that have been constructed, embedded in the specific narrative structure. The phases to analyze the method will therefore need further exposure to the specific narrative structures.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher uses qualitative research as the direct source of the results. The steps of the research are collecting data, analyzing the data, and drawing a conclusion. Meanwhile, Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research as "...an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducting in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1994). Moreover, according to Strauss and Corbin (2008), "Qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in a given situation".

Viswambharan and Priya (2016) state that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret issues or phenomena systematically from the point of view of the individual or population being studied, and to generate new concepts and theories. Therefore, the qualitative research is related to the issue and the methods of this study, as this research aims to figure out the deconstruction of the horror film formula which has the cinematic codes that has a meaning in order to help us understand about the phenomena

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Horror films have taken various forms ranging from subgenres or styles such as the Gothic, serial killers, and gore films. Along with the development of literature, the formula for horror films has also changed in defining the horror genre. *Midsommar* did not use a common formula that was used by any filmmakers in making horror films. The horror film formula by Brigid Cherry represents many elements in terms of the emotional influence modes of horror. Terrifying monsters and other special effects aim to have more shocking sequences to heighten audiences' interest to make them enjoy the story and play on audiences' darkest nightmares.

In contrast to the horror film formula by Brigid Cherry, the *Midsommar* formula has been deconstructed but still emphasizes the impact that horror films want to create on the audience since the emotional response remains consistent even though other characteristics have developed. For

example, the community in *Midsommar* and things they do can also be considered quite strange because it shows the Scandinavian culture which is still very traditional. Moreover, the theme of this film is about a mixture of break-ups and elements of horror film that are rarely used in cinema horror films. These differences are what lead to the deconstruction of the horror film formula. The analysis leads the researcher to the conclusion of these binary oppositions of the horror film formula in *Midsommar*.

TABLE 1. The binary opposition of horror film formula.

Common Horror Film Formula by Brigid Cherry	New Horror Film Formula in <i>Midsommar</i>
Terrifying	Peaceful
Dark	Bright
Creepy	Dramatic
Monotone	Various

The analysis of the movie will be broken down into four sections. These are the deconstruction of the setting, lighting, sound, and color of *Midsommar*. Setting itself has three subcategories; that being place, time, and social. Firstly, place. In a regular horror film formula, the setting enhances the gloomy atmosphere; it is typically regarded as the first primary cycle of horror film since it created such a powerful image of horror. To make the setting even more terrifying, plenty of horror films took place in a town where the streets are roughly angled, the houses are crooked, the windows and doors are at odd angles, and the walls are full of dust. The film begins in the main character's, Dani, apartment.

The horror element is not coming from the layout of her apartment but rather from her experiences in it. Throughout her life, she is alone with a disturbed psychological condition and anxiety, and her sister has bipolar disorder which results in her having many burdens while living in the apartment. The room was also a witness when she had to receive an email from her sister, and later she received news of the death of her family. From the description of the general apartment that is commonly used in horror films, filmmakers use elements related to demons and mystical things which has become a dominant characteristic in many horror films. In comparison to Dani's apartment, her apartment is a non-dominant characteristic in a horror film because it has different elements than usual. Furthermore, this non-dominant characteristic is then reversed to become dominant in *Midsommar* by making the apartment in horror film not always have to use the elements of supernatural beings in creating tension, but from what the character feels.

The second point is Halsingland, which was the majority of the setting. Halsingland is the Hårga people's homeland, located in the center of Sweden. Flowers bloom everywhere in Halsingland, a land of eternal sunshine during the summer due to the midnight sun, and great people live in peace. People visiting Halsingland can have fun, join the villagers in banquets and ceremonies, and take part in dances and celebrations in the hot sun, bringing them closer to the people. Unexpectedly, the community that looks good and polite turns out to be an evil community that performs the ritual of human sacrifice once every 90 years in the summer.

Halsingland has been known as a quiet peaceful place filled with lots of flowers and plants. However, the settlement has become something scary in *Midsommar* because the festivals held in that place are the cover to seek sacrifices. Two elderly commit sacrificial suicide in a public ceremony as part of what this community thinks is the circle of life, which is one of the most terrible scenes in *Midsommar*. This disturbing incident takes place in a lovely, and pleasant

location that has unexpectedly turned into a place of death for two elderly people. Still, the peaceful atmosphere exists as the dominant element in the setting of the place because the story occurs in a quiet place like Halsingland, and the Hårga community performs rituals in a unique way that visitors who come to visit are never aware of.

¹⁸ Another distinguishing feature is the one-of-a-kind ¹⁸ structure. As stated by BBC Monitoring on *Midsommar: What do film critics in Sweden think?* Everything in this film is well thought out, from the ancient paintings to the log houses, which reflect Swedish customs. The buildings that the Hårga live in are full of symbols. It is visible in the complex murals painted, sketched, and stitched onto different items in the film, which serve as frightening foreshadows of what's to come. Also, every house or building in Hårga is designed to have a particular vibe and is constructed of logs. This is shown in Siv's house, which is black and white and full of logs, and they created a whole wall around the bear (painting).

The other major part of the setting is the forest surrounding Halsingland. They are famous in real life for more than just their lovely green landscape. Behind its beauty, the forest has always had a sinister impression and mystical appeal due to its remote location, making the forest often considered a haunted place, such as the appearance of demons, people who commit suicide in the forest, and many more. However, the forests of *Midsommar*, more precisely in the Halsingland region, give an impression of tranquility. This fact is shown in minute 35:10 which shows Americans enter the forest while music played by the residents of Hårga filled with a lot of greens combined with beautiful yellow flowers and a clear sky along the road leading to the Hårga village and made them excited to get there quickly. This scene shows a clear difference from other forests in general horror films where the forest is always associated with the mystical, dark and supernatural.

According to Park (2018:27), Scary films usually take at night in forests or mountains that have a lot of trees that cover the landscape, and the absence of light reduces the visibility which is perfect for jump-scars. Meanwhile, the forest surrounding the Halsingland area offers a different sensation and ambiance, unlike any other horror film which gives a new perspective on a forest that is usually closely related to darkness and mysterious things. In the second point of the setting of the place, mainstream horror films use a setting that emphasizes a gloomy atmosphere to evoke fear, suspense, and thrill. This idea makes Halsingland and its forest a non-dominant element in the film. By showing Halsingland as a place where deadly rituals take place in a beautifully scenic area surrounded by a serene forest filled with flowers, *Midsommar* is deconstructing the old horror film formula of the setting of place by reversing the marginalized or non-dominant element to be the dominant one.

Another part of the setting is time. The time setting in horror films continues to follow the developments from the beginning to be able to satisfy the audience and scare people through stories. The time setting is also closely related to the characters because it supports the storyline, atmosphere, events, and themes. From the setting of time in horror films, it can be seen that the ¹⁹ the setting changes according to the period of the movie. For example, the 80s were prevalent with cauldrons, animated skeletons, ghosts, transforming bats, and, ultimately, an incarnation of the Devil, and the 90s began to include elements of monsters.

Midsommar is different from what is told and used in many films. *Midsommar*, which is set in the twenty-first century, not only shows the tropes of current horror movies but also reveals the deconstruction of the present time setting, which can be seen from the use of cultural elements, particularly Scandinavian culture. Even though Sweden is a modern and urban country where social sustainability plays an integral part, in *Midsommar* the Swedes reconnect with their more

agrarian heritage. The agrarian heritage that was displayed in the daily lives of the characters in *Midsommar* is a stark contrast to what happens in real life. If there is a big celebration that is always awaited in Sweden, one of them is the Midsummer celebration. Midsummer or Summer Solstice is celebrated as a form of overflowing joy for a day that is considered special.

This celebration is maintained to introduce and pass on Swedish culture to the younger generation which contains fun, crowds, dances, food, unique costumes, and many other fun things that are certainly not as scary as in *Midsommar*. Meanwhile, what the Hårga people do during summer festivals, the dancing, how they always paint, and how they do things together show a clear and contrasting difference to what happens at festivals that Swedes usually do nowadays. The first evidence is the characters' clothing. The costume helps to portray the place and setting time of the story, the culture of the actor as well as the social class. Besides, it also determines the characters' depiction. The Americans who visited Helsing¹⁷ all wore normal clothing. Stewart on the web entitled *Traditional Around the World* said that *The United States is usually known for western wear, which includes denim jeans, cowboy hats, and flannel shirts*. Whereas the Hårga wore white²⁰ and embroidered folk-style clothing that is inspired by the traditional Swedish costumes of the Swedish commune which all wear traditional white garments decorated with colorful floral embroidery.

Another key finding is that the Hårga people still wear white costumes even when sleeping. This discovery proves that their cult is different compared to the normal Swedes who celebrate this festival in real life and only wear costumes during the event. Therefore, the Hårga people are an unusual cult that cannot be found anywhere. The points that are previously mentioned are deconstructions of the time setting depicted through terrifying clowns, masks, or costumes to provoke fear. This description indicates that scary costumes are the dominant element of the old horror film formula. Meanwhile, the white traditional Swedish costumes that highlight a peaceful original Swedish embroidery is a non-dominant element of the old horror film formula. This is then being deconstructed by the new element in the *Midsommar* film. This non-dominant characteristic is reversed to be the dominant characteristic of the new horror film formula.

The last part of the setting is the social environment. Common horror films may also deal with external social or cultural aspects that influence the individual daily. It represents social fears, they may be connected to the routine of everyday life as well as significant events or issues such as the AIDS epidemic, the war on terror, etc. *Midsommar* also consists of the customs and Scandinavian culture of the society. It is depicted in the aspect of life in *Midsommar* which has its characteristics and values due to the influence of the social environment which is closely related to customs and traditions. The researcher found three aspects of the social environment that affect Hårga people such as Ättestupa, The Hårgalåten, and Love spells with pubic hair.

Ättestupa is an element that greatly affects the social environment for the Hårga people. It is a public ceremony as part of what the community believes to be the circle of life. In *Midsommar*, Hårga people committed suicide at the age of 72 and their names were given to younger members of the community. This ritual involved not only the Hårga people but also Dani and her friends as well as British visitors who were forced to witness the incident in broad daylight. Things like this make people experience fear and anxiety more than a horror scene filled with ghosts and jump scares. However, it makes Hårga people feel at peace.

Another cultural event is The Hårgalåten or The May Queen which is part of Victorian culture. This dance ritual is a reenactment of myth, and only women can participate. Before the May Queen, the women must drink a substance of bright yellow-green paste made of ground-up flowers that strengthens them. Even though the competition was held in broad daylight, it still had

dark and ominous shadows around it. Moreover, the traditional song that accompanied their dance made a mystical impression on it. Even before *Midsommar* appeared, Hårga had a connection with evil, which led to the film ending with riffing. The myth of "The Hårga Song," or "Hårgalaten," describes a demon camouflaged as a violinist who comes to Hårga and forces the villagers to dance until they die.

The last aspect of the social environment is the love spell with pubic hair. The relationship between Dani and Christian fell apart, and that was when a member of the Hårga people named Maja waited for her turn to form a bond with him. Moreover, Maja just got a *byxmyndig* in the previous year from when the American came. *Byxmyndig* is a slang word meaning the age of consent. In the film, Swedes are allowed to have intercourse or *byxmyndig* at age 15. As Maja came of age, she was allowed to have sex. When preparing pies for the other, Maja put her pubic hair in it in the hope of seducing Christian, Dani's boyfriend. This method succeeded as Christian eventually had sex with Maja in front of chanting naked women.

The next deconstructed part is light¹. Dark lighting indicates something terrible or horrible, and the climax moment of horror as well as an increase of terror, anxiety, excitement, and thrills in the aftermath. Since horror brings the elements that should have stayed hidden in the shadows, it is no wonder that this might cause emotions of uneasiness or fear, even when one identifies with the visuals on the screen. However, the dominant "dark" lighting of the horror film formula in *Midsommar* is unloaded and made the opposite or to be non-dominant in the new horror film formula. Besides, "bright" lighting which was the non-dominant in the old horror film formula became the dominant characteristic in the new one.

This focus on light is supported by the fact that the *Midsommar* festival celebrates the coming of the summer solstice and depicts the long days of natural light, as well as the turning of the season, and light defeating darkness. These unnatural long rays of sunshine made the Americans uncomfortable, especially in one scene of the movie where it was 9. pm, yet the sun was still up. The switch⁶ from dark, moody lighting to a bright one meant that everything could be seen by the audience. The brightness is essential from the cinematic point of view so that we can experience the fullness of the horrific sights that turn the youngsters' stomachs. A face explodes open when a body hits a rock after a long fall, as part of a ritual suicide; another one is coolly demolished with a mallet, folding in on itself like paper-mâché.

Dark lighting is an obligation in every horror film where it aims to give a tense and scary effect for anyone who sees it. All elements related to the darkness like ghosts, shadows, and jump scares become dominant in a horror film formula compared to "bright" lighting. Furthermore, the characteristic of "bright" as a non-dominant is reversed to become a dominant characteristic in the new horror film formula.

Another formula that is being deconstructed from the old horror⁹ film formula is creepy to dramatic sound. Brigid Cherry desc³ed sound in the horror film can create sensations of tension, ¹arm and anxiety in the audience, it can often be discordant, pulsing with the rhythm of a heartbeat, with long eerie sequences that culminate in a sudden orchestral or operatic climax, such music operates in conjunction with the images of cinematic horror. Then, it is deconstructed in *Midsommar*. By reversing the dominant element which is "Creepy" to be the non-dominant element and taking the non-dominant element "Dramatic" to be the dominant element in the new horror film formula. In *Midsommar*, sound places the audience in the middle of such a strange and eventually deadly Swedish commune's festival, as well as the use of sound to produce a high level of emotional pain and fear.

Midsommar also has a dramatic sound which is categorized into two types: diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Derived from the Latin, *diēgēsis*, meaning 'narrative' or 'to tell' is the internal telling of a fictional world and refers to the sound that both the audience and the characters can hear. This will be the sound effect or music playing in the scene. There are a few instances where the diegetic sound was prominent.

First, the very first scene at Dani's apartment is when she is trying to get in touch with her bipolar sister after receiving an ominous email about her sister and her parents' death. For the following five minutes, there is no background music to elicit an emotional response. The lack of music heightens the situation because we are given no hints about where the tale is heading next, except for when the character is unconscious. For almost 9 minutes, the following scene had no music to enhance the atmosphere.

Second, the music played when in the scenes. *Midsommar* is about performance, and so much of the performance in the film is linked to sound. Some of the music that was played sounded beautiful which was precisely aimed at creating an uncomfortable atmosphere that fosters the story's descent into insanity. For example, when the American group first enters the village through the forest, they are greeted by the sound of flute music played by three local people. Most horror films use a Theremin or Piano which can make a creepy sound and can make people quiver. Those instruments are as eerie as the sound it creates. However, *Midsommar* uses a Flute with a calming yet simple melody. In this scene at minute 35:52, it becomes part of the diegetic sound because the music is played directly in a scene that can be seen and heard by both the characters and the audience. In addition, the sound of the flute being played also becomes a sound effect when showing the whole Halsingland. This sound cannot be found in other horror films because the flute in *Midsommar* is based on tracks that mesh well with the vast grasslands and grand rituals performed by the villagers.

Third, the dramatic yet disturbing sound. Since *Midsommar* is linked to sounds like deep breathing, gasping, moaning, and shrieking. These sounds make the film deep and encapsulate all the emotions as to what could be diegetic sound. In showing the differences in the horror sound, the disturbing sound has a dramatic impression that the audience has never heard of nor is it used in any horror film formula. This is clearly illustrated when they finished eating together, the two elderly in blue robes made strange sounds in minute 55:22, starting with the woman saying a spell or some kind of ritual in Swedish. She said it like a whisper, then followed by the heavier sounding voice of the man in minute 55:32. This scene is completely quiet, only moans, deep breathing, and spells can be heard. This makes the sound sounds disturbing which can be seen from the confused expressions of the Americans, but it also expresses the dramatization because the sound that they both make is the last before they carry out the Ättestupa ritual.

Other than the diegetic sound, the non-diegetic sound also helps to tell the story. Non-diegetic sound refers to sounds that only the audience hears. Usually, this includes the soundtrack and sound effects that are added by sound editors in post-production to build tension for the audience but are not part of the scene itself. In *Midsommar*, several sounds are categorized as non-diegetic sounds.

First, at minute 01:39 the opening music was purposefully anchored to that point of sadness, and the sound was added before entering the first scene to provide an impression or image of the whole *Midsommar* film. The audience heard a non-diegetic voice at minute 01:21, which represented grief, followed by a background that is just a perfect fit between the music and the visual. The vocal melody that follows the first score acts as an extension of that score, carrying the set atmosphere and informing the audience of the first stage, an unlisted voice track.

Second, at minute 09:29, the magnificent score gas at the front which mixes with the emotion serves as a description of the images, with the strings and other effects replicating the ambulance siren, the leaking gas, and even Dani's cries. This soundtrack combines Dani's actual cry as an instrument into the mix to heighten the fear. It feels more fascinating by the time we hear the zipping of the body bags, and also with the track becoming increasingly melodic, the line between noise and music becomes blurred. Both of these are functioning as each other.

Third, in minute 46:35 when Americans first entered the room they would be staying in Hårga village. The sound effects are meant for the audience to show the beauty of a room whose walls are decorated with many paintings which are actually a hint of what they will experience, it is like another world, even in heaven. The non-diegetic sound packs it into a beautiful and relaxing melody, a bit like the sound of church music. In addition, the music also seems to follow where the camera is going. The audience is not only spoiled by the painting but also by the sound effect in this scene.

Therefore, all of the elements that give the impression of "Creepy" in *Midsommar* are made differently without giving the impression of usual "Creepy", which has long been a dominant element in horror film formulas. The addition of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds in *Midsommar* is packaged in something new that no one has heard before, the sounds that are classified as diegetic and non-diegetic are categorized as "Dramatic" sounds because they have characteristics and meanings that describe sadness, anxiety, panic, which describes Dani's life journey. With the evidence mentioned above, it becomes strong evidence that the "Creepy" sound element is no longer the dominant element in *Midsommar*, which makes the non-dominant element "Dramatic" a new dominant one.

The last part of the deconstruction is the colors. The version of the horror film formula by Brigid Cherry depicts that cinema used black and white film stock; although horror films did use color, the monochromatic images are 'ghostly' in appearance. **Horror is thus inherently linked with the aesthetics of cinema itself**; the images created by plays of light and shadow on the cinema screen. Therefore, Horror cinema continued in the main to rely on black and white cinematography – and it must be noted that in addition to the cult classics a few of these remain in the canon of horror cinema for their uncanny aesthetic. It means the old horror film formula has a monotone characteristic of color. From this, it is known that "monotone" becomes the dominant element in the old horror film formula.

In contrast, the new horror film formula in *Midsommar* movies has various characteristics of color and it becomes the deconstructed element as "monotone" becomes the non-dominant element in reverse to the old horror film formula by Brigid Cherry. It can be seen from the first color that we will see throughout the film, which is the sunny blues. Blue became one of the colors most commonly seen in *Midsommar* and was most significant when Americans began locking themselves in the village of Hårga.



FIGURE 1. The colorful painting on the wall

As seen in the picture, the bright blue color dominates the walls in the room which is equipped with paintings of symbolism that signify what is to come such as their eating habits, existing rituals, and also the way of life of the Hårga people which alludes to the fear of ritual. In the scene, it is seen that they are amazed by what they see without knowing that the beauty of the bright and clear blue color is part of the story to tell us what will happen to the characters through violence.



FIGURE 2. The green scenery of the village

The second color that is prominent is green. Green is important in *Midsommar* because there is so much green everywhere. Green is also the dominant color throughout the film because the setting used is Halsingland which is famous for its green and beautiful natural scenery with lots of forests. Before Americans entered the Hårga village, they rested in the middle of a large field with green grass and trees, then passed through a beautifully drawn and rich forest in minute 26:05. Therefore, when they arrived at Hårga village, there was something threateningly hiding behind the green under the bright blue sky.

In color psychology in movies, green is healing, calming, perseverance, tenacity, pride, health, luck, and more. Meanwhile, in *Midsommar*, as well as symbolizing it all, it also signifies psychological trauma. The Swedish spooky traditions are set amidst a stimulating green landscape with a film that takes place solely in energetic sunlight and is set against a lush landscape where there is nothing for us to hide behind as we encounter the Hårga people's violence.

The third color is white. The thickness of the culture in Hårga village can be seen not only in their daily lives and different rituals but also in the clothes they wear which have a special meaning. The Hårga community made their own original *Midsommar* festival clothing with all dressed in white both men and women.

The color white has its unique meaning in the idyllic-seeming which is a symbol of rebirth and fertility. Meanwhile, the traditional white and embroidered folk-style clothing has a terrifying world of *Midsommar* because each costume has a different meaning according to their age and also, they perform all the scary rituals behind the white color which has a sacred meaning. The color white also shows us our main characters' isolation and otherness, notably when Dani is proclaimed May Queen and Christian is the only one clothed in darker clothes.

The last color is yellow, a color that symbolizes several things in *Midsommar* since the film depicts the sunny Swedish folk festival. The color yellow will appear in some scenes and have different meanings. In the first example, yellow can also be seen to signify youth versus age. If the blue represents the age, yellow here represents a youth that must be sacrificed. The color yellow which should be associated with warmth, sunshine, and positivity has been deconstructed in *Midsommar* to be something that represents death, another example is Dani's sister who also passes away is dressed in yellow which shows that yellow has a huge impact on the film.

In short, the black and white color becomes an element that gives the impression of a scary horror film formula, so the color "Monotone" is a dominant element in every horror film compared to "Various" elements. In addition, non-dominant characters in *Midsommar* are reversed to become dominant characters. Various colors such as blue, green, yellow, and white represent new elements in horror films because they still provide tension even though they present new characteristics. The "Various" color continues to appear throughout the film so "Monotone" does not have the slightest space in this film.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSIONS

There are four formulas that appear in *Midsommar* which distinguishes this film from the formula in other horror films. The first formula is that the terrifying setting in *Midsommar* is deconstructed to be peaceful. In the original horror film formula, the setting of place is always depicted with creepy elements and gloomy settings, as well as the character's house which is often depicted in the middle of a dark forest or far away from the crowd. Meanwhile, the new setting in the horror film formula depicts a peaceful feeling with a mesmerizing view and has a unique building since the majority of this film was shot in Halsingland, which is not portrayed as a haunted or scary village.

The second formula that distinguishes this film from the formula in other horror films is lighting that uses bright lightning instead of dark. Horror movies are generally known to use dark lighting, as an image of sumptuous liquid black, dark walnut, and dried blood with a lot of details to create dread, suspense, and what is in the audience's mind. On the other hand, *Midsommar's* new horror film formula demonstrates how dark lighting is reversed into bright lighting, which has a significant influence on generating spooky and scary moments because all of the violence occurs during the day with very bright lighting, and without even the slightest element of darkness.

The third formula that distinguishes *Midsommar* from the formula in other horror films is the use of dramatic sound instead of creepy sound. The horror film formula uses a creepy sound to create a sensation of tension, alarm, and anxiety in the audience. On the contrary, the new horror film formula has a dramatic sound to produce high levels of emotional pain and fear in a different way. *Midsommar* also uses flute and several other musical instruments whose melodies are very simple but very calming.

The last characteristic that distinguishes this film from the formula in other horror films is the way *Midsommar* uses various rich colors instead of monotone colors. The color in the old horror film formula is considered to rely on black and white cinematography. On the other hand, the new horror film formula in *Midsommar* shows various colors. It can be seen from vibrant and rich colors against a backdrop of summer festivals and blooming nature such as blue, green, white, and yellow which always appears from the beginning to the end of the film.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two different approaches to analyze the *Midsommar* movie that may be utilized as theory recommendations. Semiotics theory and psychological theory are the two theories. It is expected that these recommendations would inspire further research into Ari Aster's movie *Midsommar*.

The first recommendation is semiotic theory. The semiotics theory can be used to express the purpose of communication, thoughts, feelings, or any expression conveyed by an artist to the audience through the composition of signs. The theory might be helpful to uncover a lot of signs

that appear in *Midsommar* which aim to give messages about ideology, thoughts, and philosophies about a group that has customs or cultures that contain intent and meaning.

The second recommendation is psychological theory. Psychological theory tries to emphasize the human thoughts, emotions, mental health and behaviors. The psychological theory is required to analyze Dani's painful experiences and emotions which can be discovered within the movie and its script. Knowing that literary work has a connection with psychology to comprehend a specific literary work.

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