**4 Best Blog Posts**

**Drawing the line between Hoaxes and Literature**
A hoax is a fraudulent, malicious, or even humorous deception. They are unexplained phenomena that stir a multitude of people into questioning their senses of reality. Many hoaxes take the form of urban legends, drawing public attention and steadfast believers; however, while most hoaxes are proven false by candid reasoning, some persist as unsolved mysteries. One of the most famous hoaxes in lore is the blurry, black and white "Surgeon's Photograph", seemingly depicting the "Loch Ness Monster", which brought horror to believers until the object in the photograph was proven to be a toy submarine, and only a meager three feet long. Nonetheless, the creators of this hoax enjoyed fame but now have their names synonymous with infamy as jokers who gained publicity by pranking society. In stark contrast, literature may convey outlandish events; however, unlike a hoax, the author does not claim his/her content to be honest and unexplainable, but rather fictitious and purposeful: an artful medium to make a claim or further an argument. Whereas a hoax captivates the public through altering one's sense of reality, literature influences the public through creative hypothetical proposition. While hoaxes may represent malevolent trickery, they serve as a reminder that no one is entirely sure of the world in which he/she lives in.

**This was our first blog post, and I put the most effort into it out of any blog post, carefully picking my words and phrasing my sentences. I use 3 direct comparisons at the end of the post, using comparison words like "in stark contrast", "however," "whereas", and "while" to draw concrete, specific differences. I also tried to vary my sentence structure, using semi colons, colons, appositives, etc. to make my writing seem less rhythmical.**

**At the edge of believability and wildness**
People commonly rely on a myriad of ways to convince people of their hoax being true. Often, these attempts of persuasion attack one's uncertainty, opening up an entire realm of possibilities. For example, the ocean has not been entirely explored since ships only follow exact trade routes; therefore, in some lurking corner of the vast ocean, in not only its wide but unfathomably deep dimensions, the existence of Mermaids does not seem entirely far fetched. Furthermore, Barnum, in his promotion of *The FeeJee Mermaid,* claims that "faith is sustained by the testimony of travelers and others in all ages of the world, and that is as good an authority as we have for the existence of many of the wonders that we constantly hear of", and thus attacks one's gullibility and lack of ability to disprove it (Cook 109). In the modern world, the same is true for potential alien life on other planets. To the uninformed listener, an enormous, relatively unexplored realm, such as the solar system or universe, is boundless as the ocean was to the now frowned upon mermaid myth. Barnum also quotes a "Professor of History in the City of New York", who says: "I have wondered that its existence should so long have been doubted" (Cook 110). While using an authoritative figure such as a history professor is already convincing, the acknowledgement of the professors conversion from skeptic to believer and newfound bewilderment for non believers attacks the doubts of the skeptic. Furthermore, Barnum uses hypothetical but 'plausible' propositions through flawed logic. If the "sea-lion, sea-horse, sea-wolf, and sea-dog" all exist, then, by conventional logic, there must also be sea people, mimicking a marine-themed mirror image of the world above the sea (Cook 109). If Barnum's

flawed logic and attacks on uncertainty are believable and intriguing enough, respectively, for the majority of the population, then the hoax will prosper.

**I start out with a generalization, elaborate on it in the next sentence, and then bring it home with an example. This was a useful way to build up context to my thesis, which brought in Barnum and *The FeeJee Mermaid*. I use 3 relatable quotes, which, for a short paragraph, is plentiful. I am able to incorporate aspects of the rhetorical triangle without explicitly using words ethos, logos, and pathos. I use a comparison of the modern day unexplored universe to the previously, and relatively still to this day, unexplored ocean. This works well because it compares something that we would laugh at today to our present that may be laughed at years into the future.**

**Comments on other podcasts**
These podcasts were a great way to not only expose us to new hoaxes and channel our inner creativity, but also open our minds to other media of knowledge transmission through podcasts. The podcast form allowed us to speak more personally and informally. Technology allowed us to fabricate sound or replicate it exactly, which we can use to our advantage in instances such as interviews.
I liked how some people chose to create an original hoax. I would probably have tried to create my own hoax instead of analyzing a real one because being able to create details allows you to make hoaxes crazy. I enjoyed how Yemaj used a spontaneous, news interview-like approach where not even the host knew what was going to happen during the interview. I would have tried to put some twist at the end such as Kyra's "government shutting down the broadcast" to leave open-ended questions. That really sent a chill down my spine. People who made their own hoaxes frequently used jargon to add credibility, and I found that to be very effective. I think I would have made a more official sounding title for the podcast.
The most important aspects of making a podcast successful is making it entertaining. Unlike reading, where reading times can vary, the time it takes to listen to a podcast is always the same. Thus there needs to be something to keep the audience engaged. Voice modulations are humorous and effective. Interviews should be kept real but voice modulations do a lot to satirize a quote.

**This was an easy podcast to write about because analyzing podcasts created by your peers is easier than analyzing a text written by a stranger. I used two direct examples from podcasts that I liked. I enjoyed the podcast assignment, and listening to these podcasts were very engaging, interesting, and humorous. I thought I did a thorough job of finding exact examples, such as those from Yemaj's and Kyra's podcast, that I liked without adding fluff to make the analysis seem longer and more comprehensive.**

**First Successful Face-Swap Showcases New Medical Advances**



I used an app on the iPhone app store called "Face Swap" which is programmed to recognize two faces and swap them and match proportions. It was almost too easy and it created such accurate looking heads that I had to find someone with a darker complexion in order for it to look as if faces had been swapped. That was probably the hardest part. The easiest part was actually creating the edited picture because the app just did it for you after you took the authentic picture. It is not easy to make convincing because many more props are needed to change the setting and give a valid impression so that the actual content (the face swapping) is believable.

**This was a hard assignment to think about but it really made me think creatively, and in the end I was able to come up with something pretty unique. The app is pretty silly it can convey something that looks very realistic when done correctly. My photo, while not extremely realistic, is eye popping at first, which is what hoax creators seek. I think I explained why I chose it well, adding that I needed someone with a darker complexion for one to get alarmed by it, otherwise it would be too realistic to notice a difference.**

Worst:
**Beer and Sports: A man's best friend.**
Baseball is an entertaining sport in many ways, including the antics that players and even fans pull on live TV. For Jayson Werth, a star outfield player for the Washington Nationals of the MLB, catching astray foul balls is a ubiquitous sighting. However, Jason Werth catching a foul ball in one hand, without spilling a single drop of beer in the other, as stated by the intriguing title of this article, entices me, the average male baseball fan looking for something other than a shabby 3-1 home loss for entertainment. Werth, who had not been paying attention to the game for the majority of the game, only needed one lucky moment of concentration to produce one of the best plays of the season, second to "Brandon Crawford catching a foul ball earlier this season while holding his baby". Upon first glance, the picture headlining the article looks very authentic, establishing ethos: his cave-man beard in full bloom, his signature home jersey, beer in one hand, and glove waiting to catch the ball in the other. Furthermore, the piece contains a story/inspirational quote from Werth himself, establishing authority. This story is also a form of ", as it vividly describes firstly, the rising action to Werth's stressful catching of the ball after he did not have enough time to put down his beer, and secondly, Werth's joy that he did not spill beer on his new jersey. Werth's comparison of his catch to Brandon Crawford's establishes

logos. The informative descriptions of the "clear plastic cup of Miller Lite",and the "incredible play that drew cheers from the whole stadium" (which is also ethos and appeals to emotion) amplify the logical reasoning of the article and makes it more believable.

**This one was hard to write because the articles on the onion were probably half the length of the blog post. I wrote lengthy and thoughtful piece, starting with summary of the article, but I feel as if my analysis could have been stronger. I overuse the terms of the rhetorical triangle, which I explicitly note. If I took out the words "ethos", "logos", and "pathos, and used instead "emotional appeal", "logical reasoning", and "authority", and elaborated on it, my argument would be less about how the author uses the rhetorical triangle and more about what the author establishes or appeals to in order to make the hoax believable.**

Revised Research Paper

Corrections are bolded

Alex Sabol

Lindsey Grubbs

English 181

11/24/15

The Psychology Behind the Enigmatic Popularity of Horror Movies

Since the 1836 debut of Georges Méliès's *Manior du Diable*, arguably the first horror

film to hit the big screen, horror has been a popular movie genre in the entertainment industry

(Dirks). The cinematography of today's horror has evolved significantly since its inception, and

it is safe to say that the modern day standards have trumped those of one hundred twenty years

ago by a sizable amount due to rapid technological advances. Modern technology has rendered

the possibilities for horror movies endless, letting the imagination run wild. One idea that has

been popular in horror movies is the poltergeist, or ghostly spirit, which enters the realm of

paranormal activity: the scientifically unexplainable. Paranormal activity has been documented

as far back as the First Book of Samuel (28:7) in the Bible's Old Testament when King Saul

consults Samuel, a ghost and prophet, and is the focus of the 2007 blockbuster *Paranormal*

*Activity*. As Tod **Browning's** rendition of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* forefronts 1930s' horror and

William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* epitomizes it in the 1970s, Oren Peli's *Paranormal **Activity** **is***

arguably the defining horror movie of the 2000s. Mathematically the most profitable film of all

time, costing a meager 15 thousand dollars to generate 193 million dollars in revenue,

*Paranormal Activity* set a new standard for horror (Ditzian). The film is shot using cinema vérité

realism: an amalgam of clips from a hand held video camera shot by one of the movie characters

to give the impression that one is watching real documentary-like footage. The film follows a

three week period of Katie and her wealthy boyfriend Micah in their extravagant San Diego

estate, in which a haunted spirit tries to communicate with Katie and Micah through paranormal

activity from moving doors, burning pictures, making unexplainable sounds, etc. to eventually

possessing Katie into killing Micah. Scary movies like *Paranormal Activity* are intensely

frightening, and it is not intuitive why this leads to a packed theater. **While many scary movies**

**rely on special effects, traumatizing faces, petrifying gore, or jump scares,** *Paranormal*

*Activity* **achieves its fright factor and ensuing box office success with its thought provoking**

**and mentally stimulating psychological attacks.** Although the genre continues to persist and

gain popularity, **some believe** that horror movies are detrimental and can cause psychological

problems; therefore it is important to understand the popularity behind horror before drawing

conclusions about its importance in society.

   **Director Oren Peli picked the topic of paranormal activity as he believe that the**

**topic would lead to potential plot possibilities with scare potential**; he chose to attack the fear

of the dark and the unknown during sleep, while keeping it personal and relatable to the public.

The movie is filmed from the perspective of Micah when the two are awake and from the

perspective of the tripod filming their room when they sleep. **The movie is popular because of**

**its ability to scare with subtle psychologically stimulating events happening at a slow pace.**

These small incidents are not hideously ugly faces or jump scares, but rather subtle paranormal

happenings that are just as terrifying. Peli further explains how "something that is just as scary as

the scares themselves is the anticipation of the scares. I want the audience in a state of anxiety"

(Peli). The stationary camera is also placed so that the paranormal activity, such as the moving

door, is not at the center of the shot, but slightly to the left; hence, Peli does not give away what

is going to happen, and the feeling of having to find where the scare is alone triggers anxiety and anticipation. On 'Night 5', the same sort of rumbling that is supposed to condition viewers is heard faintly, but instead of any paranormal activity happening, Katie shrieks from having a nightmare, a normal occurrence to many. The audience in this case expects random creepy movement, an object to appear, or an ominous sound, and that by itself is scary and thrilling even though the climax of the sequence is not horrific. To add to this trickery, in the midst of all the paranormal activity at night, Katie shrieks and calls Micah over only for the anxious Micah and viewers to find out that Katie was only screaming over a spider. Not only do these serve to condition anxiety and anticipation, but they also keep the plot grounded to its realism so that its paranormal aspect is amplified by the juxtaposition. This concept of realism is vital to creating the fluctuating safe day and dangerous night conditioning that makes the nights even scarier. For example, the two have a stereotypical relationship; Micah is the man of the house and Katie is a student who is serving as a housewife by doing domestic chores.  There is also a component of humor in the film, such as when the initially skeptical Micah plays creepy music before Dr. Fredrichs, the psychic arrives so that the psychic can **"feel right at home"**. Additionally, Peli wanted his film to "feel like a home video, so not too scripted. So it felt natural for the actors to improvise it on the fly" (Peli). This improvisation and home video adds to the realism of the movie as taking home videos is a common practice, and improvisation is the second most accurate form of portrayal to actual experience. Peli also uses cinema vérité realism to add a component of isolation and confinement. **Cinema vérité realism is shooting the perspective of the movie in the first person: the camera. Popularized by *The Blair Witch Trial* in 1999, cinema vérité realism intends to have the viewer experience the film as if he/she were actually in it. Unlike movies shot from the third person where the viewer is scared for the**

**wellbeing of the main characters, cinema vérité realism makes the viewer scared for the wellbeing of his/herself.** The lack of music adds to the realism in that the sounds that are meant to add fear, such as the paranormal footsteps at night are heard in the same way any viewer would hear them in his/her own house. **One study suggests that "humans have an innate need to stay aware of dangers in our environment, especially the kind that could do us bodily harm" (Sine 2). By watching** *Paranormal Activity***, which is from the realistic first person perspective, viewers subconsciously simulate their reactions to such stimuli if the movie were real, thus giving them comfort in having a plan of action if the events in the movie were to actually happen.** Furthermore, when Dr. Fredrichs adds that it is best they stay in their home to fight it and later "I have to leave, I cannot help you, I am only aggravating it. Leaving won't do you any good", he adds a feeling of quarantine (*Paranormal Activity*). Since paranormal activity is a broad topic that can be embodied in a multitude of way, a spirit following Katie around everywhere she goes is justifiable through paranormal activity. For Peli, home quarantine is at the crux of the horror: "if it were filmed in one home the entire time it would make the movie more personal and relatable" (Peli). Through the creative use of paranormal activity and its boundaries, Peli is able to create the perfect setting for his attacks on the fear of uncertainty during sleep.

Peli uses these subtle paranormal happenings as climaxes in horror and still achieves success from targeting psychological phenomena. Oren Peli's desire to make the movie as relatable as possible agrees with scientific evidence from studies using fMRI scans. wo main parts of the brain are shown to have increased activity when one tries to distinguish real from fictional characters: "The anterior medial prefrontal and posterior cingulated cortices (amPFC and PCC) are more strongly activated with they see real characters than fictional" (Zyga);

thus one can conclude that the brain separates reality and fiction after determining personal relevance, with high personal relevance feeling realer (Zyga). **Thus, making a fictional movie more realistic is critical** to the movie's potential to evoke real emotional and physical responses. Peli even mentions how he wanted to keep his film simple since "simplicity adds to the fear because it is easy to relate to" (Peli). Perhaps the scariest scene in the movie is the final night, when Katie is dragged out of bed into the darkness and all that can be heard are her screams (*Paranormal Activity*). Peli makes the female protagonist the target of the poltergeist and thus uses her high-pitched screams to cause anxiety. Studies have shown that "human cries possessing greater roughness activated the brain's fear circuitry. The more roughness that a scream had, the more it activated the amygdala" (Bushak). While screaming is intrinsically scary, Peli uses it in moderation to keep the movie enjoyably scary and not cause outright displeasure**. Other fears that Peli attacks are Sclereophobia, the fear of intruders, and Nyctophobia, the fear of the dark. Sclereophobia "is a common and prevalent issue in modern society", and thus many horror films target this fear (Fearof). Furthermore, "many children and adults suffer from Nyctophobia", or the fear of the dark, and thus Peli keeps much of the horror restricted to when the night comes (Fearof).** It has been concluded in evolutionary studies that humans fear the dark since "dangerous nocturnal animals in primitive times posed a threat to human survival, making them far more wary during night hours and thus evolutionarily primed to experience anxiety when it gets dark" (Bushak). The fear of the dark in this case is synonymous with fear of the night, and Peli exposes this fear frequently. This is best seen when the stone for the Ouija Board starts to paranormally move only after Micah turns the lights in the room off (*Paranormal Activity*). **Peli also keeps the characters from turning the lights on even when the couple goes downstairs after hearing unexplained sounds,**

**suggesting that there was something in the house that should not have been. Peli questions in an interview about the movie: "how scary would it be if someone filmed themselves while they were asleep and saw the footage that something was going on in their sleep that they were not even aware of?" (Peli). His thought process in creating this movie was to attack the joint fear of the unknown existing in the dark and sleeping in that unknown, with the option to see what happens to one when he/she is not conscious**. Furthermore, the couple sleeps in the pitch dark every night for all twenty one nights, when the paranormal activity happens, even though it hinders their ability to respond to an emergency. For example, Micah uses his small flashlight to track the footsteps discovered during 'Night 17' instead of turning on the lights, thus concealing potential attacks from the audience (*Paranormal Activity*). Through his use of realism, sensory stimuli, and evolutionary conditioning, Peli sets the scene for psychological scares rather than jump scares: perchance the trait that skyrocketed *Paranormal Activity* to massive success.

**It is important to understand why scary movies are scary before analyzing why people like to watch them; both are based on psychological processes.** Consisting of eight percent of the entire movie industry, horror movies are a thriving business; while many do not believe that there can be such thing as a horror movie fanatic, horror movies are popular because they induce psychological cravings (Statista). One well-established claim is that "we like horror movies because the people on screen getting killed deserve it" (Walters). **Arguably, Micah deserves to die because he naively does not take the clearly ominous paranormal activity seriously at the beginning of the movie when it was clear that it posed a threat. Furthermore, he does not listen to Katie when she tells him not to buy an Ouija board, which greatly angered the spirit (*Paranormal Activity*)**. **As seen through his lack of respect**

**for the psychic and for Katie, whom he later gets mad at for not telling him that she was cursed (in which he says he would never have been interested in dating her), his hubris ends up being his fatal flaw.** In addition, those with adrenaline charged personalities have been studied to be more prone to attraction to horror movies. As explained in a study conducted at Vanderbilt University by Dr. David Zald, "those who avoided thrills had more autoreceptors for dopamine, which act like built-in brakes for the pleasure chemical. The thrill-seekers had few such receptors" (Beck). The more one is adrenaline changed, the more dopamine is experienced when watching a horror movie that would enforce his/her horror movie watching habits. Since *Paranormal Activity* has, as noted previously, a big focus on anticipation and suspense, it enters the realm of thriller and thus is a good candidate for those who are highly adrenaline charged. Another theory is 'Excitation Transfer' or 'ETT', which is when "frightening movie stimuli physiologically arouse the viewer who then experiences an intensification of positive affect in response to plot resolution, whether or not this entails a happy ending" (Walters). It is the juxtaposition of the horror to its resolution that makes the resolution so positively influential to the viewer. In the case of *Paranormal Activity*, there is no happy ending, but rather the resolution is the anticipated death of the doomed Katie and her naive boyfriend. The resolution of the **movie is the aftermath captions that disclose** that Katie is lost and Micah is dead, and the movie is then effectively over. Viewers experience a brief catharsis: a sense of having completed a watching of something intended to scare. Finally, one can look to the experience of the theater for answers: "for others, being scared in a safe place is a source of enjoyment and makes them feel good physically and can even serve as a confidence boost by reminding us that we can make it through a scary situation" (Gander). Therefore, if one experiences horror movies with the conscious conclusion that they are actually safe, the sensation is interpreted as a short thrill

compared to those who interpret it as terror, or other negative states. Horror is arguably the most emotion-evoking genre, and thus the experience of watching horror is amplified by the theater experience. Sharing the emotion with strangers appeals to the fact that "humans enjoy intense emotional experiences in groups" (Gander). In a communal setting such as the theater, there is an event-like atmosphere, which keeps the audience grounded to the entertainment aspect of the film, thus making the sharing of emotion possible. While not for everyone, horror movies can be satisfying and rewarding, and there is no doubt that horror movies are a big business and a vital asset to the entertainment industry.

It is with good reason that Oren Peli's 2007 blockbuster *Paranormal Activity* will go down as one of the most influential and acclaimed horror movies in cinema history; the film's brilliant use of psychological horror and mental stimulation in lieu of jump scares and gore catapults it to the highest standard for horror movies. Furthermore, the film's profitability has revolutionized the industry in showing that the mind is more powerful than the visual; jump scares and special effects fall short of psychological stimulation. After understanding the popularity of horror, it becomes viable to assess its contribution to society. As horror continues to evolve, it is unpredictable what the next big craze will be, but at least it will use be well thought out psychologically.

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# Research Paper Analysis

My original paper had a lot of good evidence, but sometimes got confusing to the reader. This was mainly because what made sense to me, someone who had just watched *Paranormal Activity* multiple times, required much less explanation than the average reader who had either never seen the movie or had seen it but did not remember minute details. For example, I originally claimed that Micah deserved to die, but only backed it up with meager evidence. In fact, it sounded like I was saying that Micah deserved to die because he did not listen to what his girlfriend said he should do. I left out the fact that Katie was obviously slightly possessed and clearly said not to by an Ouija board thus saying that the spirit did not want him to buy it- a spirit that viewers knew was very dangerous. I added how Peli wanted to make the audience dislike Micah for his arrogance and nonchalance in order to add context to my claim that Micah deserved to die (Exhibit 1). Additionally, I defined a specific term, cinema verite, and used it in the context of the movie so that readers easily understood by those who did not know what the term meant (Exhibit 7).  I now feel that this is a very important issue to address because it shows that I need to think more about the perspective of the reader as well as my perspective. The most effective way of transmitting information would be to think in terms of the reader. This also helped when I was revisiting the paper over consecutive days and re-reading my paper; for one read through, I was the reader and could catch moments where I knew that what I wrote would not make sense to the reader because they did not have the same background on the movie and I.

Furthermore, I restructured my paragraphs so that they were more objective. I took out some repetition in my analysis that I did not at first notice. In my first body paragraph, I had an argument on how Peli used the topic of paranormal activity happening in specifically the dark to scare, but later in my second body paragraph say the same thing with the only difference being that I went into a psychological and evolutionary analysis of it. This duplicated my original point, which had potential but was weakened because I had separated it into 2 paragraphs. I chose to keep my argument specific to my third body paragraph and transfer the bit I had in the first body paragraph and transfer it to my second body paragraph about psychology (Exhibit 2). This helped me not only portray my point that the dark makes things more scary, but also further my argument with an example that I transferred from first paragraph. I wanted to make sure that I had a paragraph solely devoted to why people like scary movies, because that was what my thesis was about, so I cut my topic sentence to my third paragraph into two parts, with the objectivity of the paragraph as the second part and the significance of understanding why scary movies are scary and shifting the topic to why people love them as the first part. I believe that this way, I can include psychological phenomena such as catharsis and excitation transfer theory without having it sound like the previous paragraph. The counterintuitive aspect of popular horror movies is built around psychological processes, so therefore a solid transition is needed (Exhibit 6). I also moved my thesis down to make it closer to my first body paragraph. This made it more clear what the thesis was and what the first body paragraph was trying to prove. (Exhibit 5)

Finally, I made many small revisions. These included small grammatical mistake such as forgetting to put an apostrophe to indicate possessive, adding transition words such as "therefore" or "another reason" so that the sentences run more smoothly, condensing sentences or linking sentences together, and fixing citation errors. I also noticed that I cannot pull out facts and statistics without citation, even in the intro paragraph. I added citations to two important statistics in my intro paragraph (Exhibit 3). I Lastly, I added some more explanation to the fear of the dark and more specifically, the fear of intruders (Exhibit 4). I thought that this would help

further the point about why the dark is scary and give a direct scientific explanation to why the noises in paranormal activity are scary in context.

Consisting of eight percent of the entire movie industry, horror movies are a thriving business; while many do not believe that there can be such thing as a horror movie fanatic, horror movies are popular because they induce psychological cravings (Statista). One well-established claim is that "we like horror movies because the people on screen getting killed deserve it" (Walters). **Arguably, Micah deserves to die because he naively does not take the paranormal activity seriously at the beginning of the movie when it was clear that it posed a threat. Furthermore, he does not listen to Katie when she tells him not to buy an Ouija board, which greatly angered the spirit (*Paranormal Activity*). Through his lack of respect for the psychic and for Katie, whom he later gets mad at for not telling him that she was cursed (in which he says he would never have been interested in dating her), his hubris ends up being his fatal flaw.** In addition, those with adrenaline charged personalities have been studied to be

Exhibit 1

*Activity*). **Peli also keeps the characters from turning the lights on even when the couple goes downstairs after hearing unexplained sounds, suggesting that there was something in the house that should not have been. Peli questions in an interview about the movie: "how scary would it be if someone filmed themselves while they were asleep and saw the footage**

**that something was going on in their sleep that they were not even aware of?" (Peli). His thought process in creating this movie was to attack the joint fear of the unknown existing in the dark and sleeping in that unknown, with the option to see what happens to one when he/she is not conscious.** Furthermore, the couple sleeps in the pitch dark every night for all

Exhibit 2

The Psychology Behind the Enigmatic Popularity of Horror Movies

Since the 1836 debut of Georges Méliès's *Manior du Diable,* arguably the first horror film to hit the big screen, horror has been a popular movie genre in the entertainment industry (Dirks). The cinematography of today's horror has evolved significantly since its inception, and

Exhibit 3

that Peli attacks are Sclereophobia, the fear of intruders, and Nyctophobia, the fear of the dark. Sclereophobia "is a common and prevalent issue in modern society", and thus many horror films target this fear (Fearof). Furthermore, "many children and adults suffer from Nyctophobia", or the fear of the dark, and thus Peli keeps much of the horror restricted to when the night comes (Fearof). It has been concluded in evolutionary studies that humans fear

Exhibit 4

frightening, and it is not intuitive why this leads to a packed theater. **While many scary movies rely on special effects, traumatizing faces, petrifying gore, or jump scares,** *Paranormal Activity* **achieves its fright factor and ensuing box office success with its thought provoking and mentally stimulating psychological attacks.** Although the genre continues to persist and

Exhibit 5

**It is important to understand why scary movies are scary before analyzing why people like to watch them; both are based on psychological processes.** Consisting of eight

Exhibit 6

component of isolation and confinement. **Cinema vérité realism is shooting the perspective of the movie in the first person: the camera. Popularized by** *The Blair Witch Trial* **in 1999, cinema vérité realism intends to have the viewer experience the film as if he/she were actually in it. Unlike movies shot from the third person where the viewer is scared for the wellbeing of the main characters, cinema vérité realism makes the viewer scared for the wellbeing of his/herself.** The lack of music adds to the realism in that the sounds that are meant

Exhibit 7

Podcast Hypothetical Reflection

I thoroughly enjoyed this assignment as it really got me thinking creatively and humorously. As a music double major, this was the time for me to have fun with my audio recording equipment.

First and foremost, I would have edited the proportionality in sound better than I did. Some of my sound levels were too high, and it had to do with how far I was away from the microphone when I recorded it. I tried to account for this in my editing, and it worked to some extent, but I had a hard time getting everything to sound smooth and uncut. I believe the decibel level gradually increased as the podcast went on. Furthermore, my edited "grumbling from the deep" voice modulation was incoherent at some points, but that was mainly due to the fact that music was getting louder, and I wanted that presence, and that vocal modulation starts to get messy as the sound frequencies get lower. Additionally, I should have filtered out the feedback when I say a word that has the letter "p" in it, because if said with conviction, the p sound is way louder than any other letters.

I would have cut the entire interview with the teenage girl, or at least make it seem less derogatory (that was not my intention). I originally meant for it to be comedic satire of the main target group of the Facebook privacy hoax, immature teenagers, and the most common stereotype for that was basic white teenage girl. I would have instead had a comedic interview with 2 random callers. It would have gone along the lines of this:

Me: Hello sir, what is your name and age?
Caller 1: Hi, I am John and I am 63
Me: Did you post the privacy statement?
Caller 1 (in an old geezer voice): Of course not! My grandson had it on his wall and I told him to grow a pair!

Me: Hello sir, what is your name and age?
Caller 2: Hi I am Tommy and I am 19
Me: Did you post the privacy statement?
Caller 2: Of course! Don't tell anyone, but if anyone else other than my friends saw my pictures on Facebook then I may have to move to Europe! (implying his drinking pictures)

I also would have included a series name and episode number to the beginning of my podcast, like many others did to make me seem more credible in how there were many other of these podcasts before. I only said "Hello and welcome to this podcast" at the beginning, and it did not give much context. I also noticed that I talk way too fast at some points, and I should definitely have slowed it down so that listeners have more time to process the information.

I think that my music choices were strong. I had a calm, welcoming opening song which was juxtaposed by the ominous and suspenseful soundtrack from the suspenseful poker scene in James Bond- Casino Royale. I would have made that a focus of my podcast, including using more sound effects after the "dun-dun-dun" that I had after the ominous low voice. It was just me talking plus the interview for the rest of the podcast, and only when it was ending did the music fade in and out. I would have made more sound effects, such as sampling the Admiral Ackbar from the sixth Star Wars movie when he says "It's a trap!" so that it sounds like "it is incredibly unofficial in ever sense of the word. As Admiral Ackbar would say 'It's a Trap!'". I would also

make sure that music and humor were a hallmark throughout my podcast if it were 10-15 minutes long.

Alex Sabol

Lindsey Grubbs

English 181.000

24 Sept 2015

<div align="center">A Day in the Death</div>

Widely considered one of the most influential music groups of the twentieth century, the

Beatles enjoyed an extreme amount of success during the nineteen sixties, much in part due to

their bass player and singer Paul McCartney. According to some, however, the Beatles's success

may have been cut short in **1966** to the supposed death of McCartney in a car crash, if not for a

look alike assuming his identity. The myth gained popularity when diehard believers, eventually

known as "cluesters", went on a rampage of signal hunting in Beatles songs and came up with a

**large** amount of uncanny clues alluding to McCartney's death. While some outraged Beatles

fans are quick to denounce such theories, their enthusiasm helps to spread the phenomenon to a

wide spectrum of music fans who are interested enough to listen to the theories and potentially

become a believer. By presenting **believable and emotionally stimulating** aural and visual

evidence from unedited Beatles recordings and album covers, and by presenting circumstantial

evidence in the face of uncertainty, theorists of this hoax are able to draw large crowds of

believers and convert even the most tenacious skeptics.

**Wanting to be the epicenter of outcry and stir the world of not only music, but also**

**pop culture, clusters suggested the death of McCartney through the medium of Beatles**

**song lyrics**. These sound bites are primary sources that affirm the authenticity of the theories

attached to them. For example, when one plays the song 'Revolution 9' backwards, he/she can

hear what appears to be John Lennon singing "Turn me on dead man, turn me **on."** This

'backmasking' is pathos, and instills fear in the listener by turning something so familiar, a Beatles song, into something with a dual meaning: one meaning when played forward and one new, clandestine meaning when played backwards that was there the entire time but had gone unnoticed. Additionally, anyone interested in the hoax can view the backmasking for his or herself, thereby eliminating the need for expert testimony and replacing it with the most powerful ethos and trustworthy testimony: his or her own experience. **Believers or non-believers could have listened to the back masking through the rewind setting on their LP players, the popular medium of music recording at the time.** Similarly, in the song 'Strawberry Fields', John Lennon appears to say, "I buried Paul". The actual lyric is "cranberry sauce", but since it comes in almost arbitrarily after the singing is over, and is spoken rather than sung, its supposedly misheard lyric is believable. These theories need no professional analysis or testimony and do not contain any jargon; instead, it is supported by the realism of primary sources that are easily understood by the average Beatles fan. For this reason, the genre of the hoax is realistic, without bringing in any otherworldly concepts. Having an absence of technical jargon is good logos, making the explanation easier to follow logically. The hoax is therefore successful in presenting evidence that caters to its intended audience: Beatles fans, the population of which, is so large that there are bound to be people who will believe in these outlandish theories.

   **In addition to the plausibility of the hoax, the use of emotional appeal is also a prominent factor in how the hoax gained popularity. In the lyric "I buried Paul", the juxtaposition of such a harmless and joyful song to such a dark lyric also is an example of pathos. It serves to label the song so that the meaning of the song changes and induces the fear, not just the lyric. Skeptics may dismiss the 'I buried Paul' theory because on tape it**

seems inaudible; however, the lyric is haunting enough and close enough to affect a multitude of people and thus promote the hoax.  Furthermore, the statement seems even darker when inserted into a nostalgic song. The back masking of the "turn me on dead man" lyric also serves to instill fear, as bask masking a secondary meaning without establishing it appears to be a form of trickery. The listeners of the songs feel fearful in that they are being influenced in some predisposed way as back masking is widely assumed to induce subliminal messages. Back masking at the time was also a popular practice as well, as even Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin are theorized to have done so in a similar fashion. However, while many argue that since the Beatles have so many songs that something like this was bound to happen, all it takes is one creepy lyric to induce fear in many. Lastly, in the song "I am the Walrus", the lyric "stupid bloody Tuesday" is theorized to refer to the supposed Tuesday on which McCartney died on, and "the Eggman" refers to Humpty Dumpty who cracked his head open as McCartney did. Since the Beatles were known for their hallucinogenic drug use, particularly LSD, it is not surprising to hear very psychedelic lyrics that appear to have no meaning but to enhance the trip. The hoax thus associated "I am the Walrus" with the death of McCartney, again changing its impression from psychedelic to scary. Unlike fake photographs, presumed hidden messages hidden in everyday song lyrics that many knew by heart are tangible by hearing. The questioning is thus focused on the lyrics meaning, not their veracity. While they may be far fetched, many of the claims about the Beatles's lyrics have been used to transform conceptions about songs and induce fear which in turn leads to interest and uproar.

Cluesters also cite a myriad of visual clues on the band's album art, using not only primary sources to establish ethos and gain trust but also **logical reasoning** to establish accuracy.

For example, in the album cover of 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band', a toy Aston Martin convertible can be seen on the lap of a rag doll on the right-hand side of the cover: the same car that McCartney supposedly died in (Image 1). If one uses a mirror to bisect the phrase 'LONELY HEARTS' that appears on the drum, the phrase 'I ONE IX HE ◊ DIE' can be seen. One can read this as '11 9 HE DIE' and McCartney supposedly died on November ninth (11/9). Additionally, on the back cover, McCartney wears an arm patch that can be read "OPD" (although the D is slightly cut off and it is uncertain if the letter is actually D) which is police terminology for 'officially pronounced dead'. 'OPD' is not a commonplace abbreviation and therefore it sounds more convincing to the music fans hearing it for the first time. **The technical jargon is used to gain credibility out of something that is assumed to be clearly coincidental. In fact, when it comes to acronyms, there is a seemingly limitless amount of permutations that one can generate and fit a particular scenario and seem uncanny in its relevance.** Finally, above McCartney's head, there is an open palm, which represents the blessing of a dead body before it is interred. This connection is an example of logical reasoning, in which the cluesters make obscure deductions from the photo and explain **them in an orderly fashion**. Although naysayers will call it impossible to claim that these observations can verify such a hoax, the sheer quantity of bits of evidence give it a certain degree of possibility. Furthermore, while some skeptics are seemingly positive that it did not happen, **cluesters were sure to account for that, claiming that a McCartney surrogate assumed his role so that there would always be reason to believe tie hoax.** The hoax lost many believers after LIFE Magazine's interview with McCartney, but it was successful as a hoax since the Beatles benefitted from the publicity, regardless if that was their plan all along or not.

The apparent death of Paul McCartney remains one of the most prominent false death

rumors in recent memory, particularly due to the massive quantity of bandwagon cluesters who continue to ferment theories related to primary source material that can be found in the average music fanatic's iTunes library.  It is important to note that the theorized backmasking from 'Revolution 9' inspired a marathon of cluesters to scrutinize and form theories on other artist's songs, unleashing an entirely new method of analyzing music**. It becomes interesting to think of these theories as hoaxes, for the sheer amount of crazy hypotheses is almost satirical. Every minute detail is scrutinized until something that is marketable appears. Those who are steadfast non-believers still obsess over these theories because they are fun to think of and fun to hear songs and look at album covers differently. Furthermore, the reported evidence are theories, which are never asserted as true. The hoax is better described as a conspiracy theory, but its outcome was publicity and profit for the Beatles and cluesters alike due to attempted trickery.** While the death of McCartney may more unlikely than probable, it is without question that the Beatles have gained even more publicity due to it, and the music industry has become more scrutinized than ever.

Revisions to the Rhetorical Analysis

        I greatly changed the outline of this piece. I started out with two body paragraphs, with the first one dwindling on for too long. I then decided to separate them so that one massive paragraph on the Beatles's song lyrics became one on how they are believable and logical, and one on how they became popular through emotional appeal, pathos. I also added a lot of information to the pathos paragraph (second body paragraph) so that the information would be evenly divided. This paragraph focused mainly on the juxtaposition of dark lyrics in cheerful or psychedelic songs and the emotional aspect behind listening to music with a presumed back masking or subliminal message involved. I had to establish that back masking had come up in the music of many popular artists such as Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd so that readers would know that the theory is plausible, otherwise it would seem far fetched to assume its veracity (Exhibit 6). The public would only have been so stirred through such outlandish and fear inducing song lyrics, would the. I believe that this made the essay stronger because I was rambling on for too long and combining too many aspects of rhetoric in one paragraph. () The emotional appeal is so strong that it gets people into questioning its authenticity, which, along with the paragraph on believability, amplifies the hoax. All of my evidence was packed into two paragraphs: one for audio, and one for visual. I believe that the divide worked but I had to further it more detail. I believe that this made my argument more agreeable and cohesive to the reader through breaking up the paragraph about song lyrics into two components. I also had to change my topic sentence for this (Exhibit 5), as my previous topic sentence was not as descriptive, and the argument deserved to be broken up in the first place. I was sure to keep the paragraphs connected, so I introduced the second paragraph with "in addition to the plausibility of the hoax" (Exhibit 3). This allows for a smoother transition. I also changed the thesis so that it more accurately described the two paragraphs to come (Exhibit 9). Since the thesis should articulate what is to come in same order that the body paragraphs are presented in, I made sure to but "believability" before "emotionally stimulating", and "aural" before "visual".

        I added some more evidence about how cluesters used technical jargon to gain credibility out of something coincidental- something that is statistically probable to happen with any three letter acronym. I also deleted "logos" after "logical reasoning" in order to lose the less jargon-y term.

        I changed some errors in conventions such as writing out the year in numerals instead of letters when I had previously thought that all numbers were erroneous in scholarly writing (Exhibit 8). After looking at the owl.purdue website, I was able to clarify errors in writing conventions for my research paper. I added some context and background to why the back masking was a viable theory at the time, and still is today. (Exhibit 4) Otherwise I would not have been able to make the claim that being able to hear the back masking was accessible to anyone who owned an LP player at the time. Furthermore, I added missing analysis saying that the Beatles got a surrogate to replace McCartney so that there would always be reason to believe the hoax (Exhibit 7). It is the piece of evidence that makes the hoax something into something arguable.

        Lastly, in my conclusion, I added an important bit of analysis about how it does not really matter the extent to not only this hoax was believed, but also the extent to how this is considered a hoax. I believe that it does not have to be considered a hoax, but its outcome was similar to one, with intention of the creators to profit in some way. Not many people believe these theories but even if they do not, it is the topic of discussion and creative proposition. This was important to add because it describes the significance of the phenomenon- it does not have to be believable

and captivate the millions to be a successful hoax; it is a successful hoax because it made people think.

songs, unleashing an entirely new method of analyzing music. **It becomes interesting to think of these theories as hoaxes, for the sheer amount of crazy hypotheses is almost satirical. Every minute detail is scrutinized until something that is marketable appears. Those who are steadfast non-believers still obsess over these theories because they are fun to think of and fun to hear songs and look at album covers differently. Furthermore, the reported evidence are theories, which are never asserted as true. The hoax is better described as a conspiracy theory, but its outcome was publicity and profit for the Beatles and cluesters alike due to attempted trickery.** While the death of McCartney may more unlikely than

Exhibit 1

therefore it sounds more convincing to the music fans hearing it for the first time. **The technical jargon is used to gain credibility out of something that is assumed to be clearly coincidental. In fact, when it comes to acronyms, there is a seemingly limitless amount of permutations that one can generate and fit a particular scenario and seem uncanny in its relevance.** Finally, above McCartney's head, there is an open palm, which represents the

Exhibit 2

**In addition to the plausibility of the hoax, the use of emotional appeal is also a prominent factor in how the hoax gained popularity. In the lyric "I buried Paul", the juxtaposition of such a harmless and joyful song to such a dark lyric also is an example of pathos. It serves to label the song so that the meaning of the song changes and induces the fear, not just the lyric. Skeptics may dismiss the 'I buried Paul' theory because on tape it**

Exhibit 3

powerful ethos and trustworthy testimony: his or her own experience. **Believers or non-believers could have listened to the back masking through the rewind setting on their LP players, the popular medium of music recording at the time.** Similarly, in the song

Exhibit 4

**Wanting to be the epicenter of outcry and stir the world of not only music, but also** pop culture, clusters suggested the death of McCartney through the medium of Beatles song lyrics. These sound bites are primary sources that affirm the authenticity of the theories

Exhibit 5

induce subliminal messages. Back masking at the time was also a popular practice as well, as even Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin are theorized to have done so in a similar fashion. However, while many argue that since the Beatles have so many songs that something like this was bound to happen, all it takes is one creepy lyric to induce fear in many. Lastly, in the song "I am the Walrus", the lyric "stupid bloody Tuesday" is theorized to refer to the supposed Tuesday on which McCartney died on, and "the Eggman" refers to Humpty Dumpty who cracked his head open as McCartney did. Since the Beatles were known for their hallucinogenic drug use, particularly LSD, it is not surprising to hear very psychedelic lyrics that appear to have no meaning but to enhance the trip. The hoax thus associated "I am the Walrus" with the death of McCartney, again changing its impression from psychedelic to scary. Unlike fake photographs, presumed hidden messages hidden in everyday song lyrics that many knew by heart are tangible by hearing. The questioning is thus focused on the lyrics meaning, not their veracity. While they may be far fetched, many of the claims about the Beatles's lyrics have been used to transform conceptions about songs and induce fear which in turn leads to interest and uproar.

Exhibit 6

Furthermore, while some skeptics are seemingly positive that it did not happen, cluesters were sure to account for that, claiming that a McCartney surrogate assumed his role so that there would always be reason to believe tie hoax. The hoax lost many believers after LIFE

Exhibit 7

may have been cut short in 1966 to the supposed death of McCartney in a car crash, if not for a

Exhibit 8

By presenting believable and emotionally stimulating aural and visual

Exhibit 9

**Outcome 1:** I believe that by taking this course, I have a better rhetorical awareness and in the future will be better trained to perform a close reading and analysis of the text. This was mainly showcased in my rhetorical analysis, where I was able to choose which hoax I wanted to select. The first step in doing so was determining if there was enough evidence to make assertions on what is good ethos, logos, and pathos. For example, I chose to do the death of Paul McCartney because there are so many theories that give good reason to believe that McCartney actually died. This hoax had a perfect amount of evidence, which focused on emotional and logical appeal. Furthermore, in my podcast, I actually had the chance to vocalize my analysis in a casual, less formal way about the Facebook Privacy Hoax. This was one where I had to use different methods of forming an argument to analyze the methods that the Facebook Privacy Hoax creator used to popularize it. Additionally, my blog posts, which analyzed an article on theonion.com, was also a good practice of my rhetoric skills, which were then tested when I, myself, had to create a hoax: a picture of something which was "eye popping at first" yet believable (Exhibit 2). I found myself practicing rhetoric frequently throughout the semester, in and out of class. It was a hallmark of the semester.

**Outcome 2:** The course also focused on implementing strategies of research. I practiced these strategies a multitude of times, from my rhetorical analysis, when I drafted, edited, and delved into deep analysis of the interpretations of my hoax, to the research paper, in which this outcome is epitomized. In the research paper, I actually wrote my thesis after I had done my research. Having done biomedical research before, I learned to do research with an unbiased eye by not having a preconceived notion of what should happen, and let my evidence do the talking. My thesis ended up discussing how horror movies like *Paranormal Activity* use "thought provoking and mentally stimulating psychological attacks" to achieve box office success (Exhibit 3). We were instructed to write an outline of our paper, which was very effective as having an exoskeleton allows you to create a more focused and cohesive argument. We also had one on one discussions with the instructor, which was very effective, since having feedback from readers gives me a better idea of how convincing my argument actually is, whether I am leaving out crucial information, and what potential questions I can ask myself and explain in my writing. By the time I had finished the paper, I had revised it myself multiple times, and had a few classmates look over it so that I knew it would make sense to readers other than me. I can testify that all of these strategies were effective and I actually ended up enjoying my time writing an interesting paper.

**Outcome 3:** Critical reading is the key to understanding every piece of literature that we went over in class. This would also include the videos and radio broadcasts that we watched in class. The clearest example in my portfolio about this is my rhetorical analysis, in which I synthesized information and ideas about the death of Paul McCartney from a myriad of sources and reflected upon them in my analysis. I chose to question whether or not this theory classifies as a hoax, but came to the conclusions that even though many people do not believe in the hoax, it still serves its purpose as a means of publicizing something for the personal gain of the creators or the artists. At first, this had passed over my head, and it was only until I revised it until I noticed that the significance of this hoax could be interpreted completely differently. "Those who are steadfast non-believers still obsess over these theories because they are fun to think of and fun to hear songs and look at album covers differently" (Exhibit 1) This failure turned into subsequence success and I believe I benefited from the experience greatly. I believe that this

assertion developed me as a critical thinker in that I questioned a common conception ended up with a counterintuitive conclusion, but one that I could back up with evidence.

**Outcome 4:** Finally, I believe that I have developed a wide range of hoax expertise. Again, I believe that my conclusion at the end of the rhetorical analysis was the epitome of ambivilance towards the course material or the perpetrators of hoaxes. The definition of a hoax should not create a line of demarcation, but rather it should all fall under the umbrella of trickery to induce powerful thoughts, be them of terror, humor, or anger. After doing my research paper, I am more aware of the nebulous context surrounding hoaxes. The hoax that I did research on was the movie *Paranormal Activity*, which is not a traditional hoax by definition. People know that it is just a movie because they come to be entertained, and yet they enjoy getting scared, which is counterintuitive. Doing research on this helped me understand how the movie achieves its trickery, and also how the psychology behind horror movies keeps these movies a big business filled with horror fanatics. As I mentioned in conclusion at the end of my research paper, "the mind is more powerful than the visual" (Exhibit 4). A hoax can manifested in a movie, a book, a picture, a radio broadcast, an article, a rumor, and thus can be experienced in many different ways that it can transcend genres and give off different impressions and effects.

songs, unleashing an entirely new method of analyzing music. **It becomes interesting to think of these theories as hoaxes, for the sheer amount of crazy hypotheses is almost satirical. Every minute detail is scrutinized until something that is marketable appears. Those who are steadfast non-believers still obsess over these theories because they are fun to think of and fun to hear songs and look at album covers differently. Furthermore, the reported evidence are theories, which are never asserted as true. The hoax is better described as a conspiracy theory, but its outcome was publicity and profit for the Beatles and cluesters alike due to attempted trickery.** While the death of McCartney may more unlikely than probable, it is without question that the Beatles have gained even more publicity due to it, and

Exhibit 1

convey something that looks very realistic when done correctly. My photo, while not extremely realistic, is eye popping at first, which is what hoax creators seek. I think I explained why I chose it well, adding that I needed someone with a darker complexion for one to get alarmed by it, otherwise it would be too realistic to notice a difference.

Exhibit 2

frightening, and it is not intuitive why this leads to a packed theater. **While many scary movies rely on special effects, traumatizing faces, petrifying gore, or jump scares,** *Paranormal Activity* **achieves its fright factor and ensuing box office success with its thought provoking and mentally stimulating psychological attacks.** Although the genre continues to persist and

Exhibit 3

catapults it to the highest standard for horror movies. Furthermore, the film's profitability has revolutionized the industry in showing that the mind is more powerful than the visual; jump scares and special effects fall short of psychological stimulation. After understanding the

Exhibit 4