

**Neither Soul Nor Body: A Hauntological Exploration of the Folkloresque  
in Horror Video Games**

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Table of Contents	
Introduction.....	iii
Chapter One: Legend to the Diagram .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Bourdieu on the Social.....	1
1.3 The Folkloresque .....	3
1.4 Hauntology.....	6
1.5 Application.....	9
1.6 Conclusion .....	11
Chapter 2: Horror in the Familiar .....	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Silent Hills <i>P.T.</i> by Hideo Kojima.....	12
2.3 The folklore of filicide in encroaching poverty .....	13
2.3.1 Lisa (Yūrei).....	14
2.3.2 Fairy Godmother.....	16
2.3 Hauntology of the suburban spectre. ....	17
2.3.1 The suburban home as non-place.....	18
2.4 Who are the folk?.....	20
2.4.1 The folk of <i>P.T.</i> .....	21
2.5 Conclusion .....	23
Chapter 3: The Community of the Futile Loop .....	24
3.1 Introduction.....	24
3.2 Endless Loops and Collective Consciousness .....	24
3.2.1 The Myth of Sisyphus.....	24
3.2.2 Camus' Sisyphus & Comfort.....	25
3.2.3 <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i> Mercerism & Sisyphus.....	26
3.3 My Sisyphus .....	29
3.3.1 The Installation .....	29
3.3.2 The Technology .....	30
3.3.3 Tone .....	31
3.4 Hauntology and Cassette Tapes.....	32
3.5 Conclusion .....	33
Conclusion .....	35
Bibliography .....	38
List of Figures.....	40



## INTRODUCTION

In past research I have explored folklore, from its origins to modern day cyberlore<sup>1</sup>, and have noticed there to be no clear and definitive definition of folklore that all folklorists can agree on. Definitions changed and morphed as time progressed and technology advanced. The folk evolved from “lower class” to manual labour workers, and then into the contemporary folk of technology and cyberspace. Tele-technologies<sup>2</sup> and the internet allowed folklore to transcend geographical boundaries and contrast the face-to-face nature that ‘classical’ definitions of folklore were based on – progressing from what folklorists define as folklore to what the 'folk' deem it to be.

These contrasts are where I find myself with this text, asking if video games can be considered a medium for creating or communicating folklore in the present day. My research question thus asks: is it possible for folkloresque products to become folklore through their assimilation into popular culture?

The aims of this study are not to redefine folklore; instead I propose that through academic exploration, the study of what folklore is can serve to include interactive technology and digital media content. I focus specifically on the genre of horror within video games as I believe horror to be synonymous with folktales. An example of how folklore incorporates horror is through the teaching of gruesome lessons that often end in gory deaths. A well-known example is that of Rumpelstiltskin (the fiendish imp) who, enraged after having lost a bargain, tore himself in half.

While there has been extensive writing on folklore in horror video games, little has been written on the folkloresque in relation to horror video games and how the motifs therein connect to the horror origins of folktales. A horror video game that has, however, been touched on in folkloresque writings is Slenderman, which was written about by Jeffrey A. Tolbert, whose writing will be discussed extensively in this text when referring to the book *The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World*. In his text, Tolbert mentions Slenderman more in connection with online urban legends, authenticity and beliefs. In this text, my aim is to supplement that which has already been written about the folkloresque and horror by adding a strong connection between classical folktale texts and the folkloresque cannibalisation of them in contemporary horror video games.

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<sup>1</sup> Folklore in cyberspace whose community is connected through computer networks and the internet.

<sup>2</sup> I use tele-technologies in this text when referring to technologies that use electromagnetic signals to transmit audio and visual information across distances. These technologies include examples such as television and radio.

In an attempt to answer my research question I analyse, compare and explore horror video games and films where folkloric motifs have been used. I approach horror through the lens of the 'folkloresque', a term used by contemporary Folklorists to describe the phenomenon of popular culture products, borrowing from traditional folktales in order to evoke a folkloric authenticity through association. Within the folkloresque process of cannibalising folklore, I identify a phenomenon that resonates with the continued (re)use of things from another era. This anachronism<sup>3</sup> is engaged in this study through the lens of hauntology – a theoretical perspective that speaks of the dangers inherent in borrowing from the past. Theorised by Jacques Derrida (2011), hauntology contrasts ontology (the nature of being) through wordplay, suggesting the replacement of 'being' with a spectre. Hauntology illustrates how the endless loop of re-use and the recycling of the past threatens to forgo newly produced futures in favour of nostalgia. Hauntology permits the past and future to haunt the present, and in doing so acts as a warning through contrast.

Following this theoretical method, I explore the folkloresque as an infinite cycle that borrows and (re)uses from established folklore (and ultimately itself) in order to create new folklore. Through this exploration, I aim to identify motifs and pinpoint how the creators of games or films, such as Guillermo Del Toros's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Hideo Kojima's *Silent Hills P.T.*, reinterpret the motifs of folklore to create a new tale while continuing to carry the authenticity of the original. As hauntology highlights, a problematic aspect is the possibility that no new culture or folklore is created because of the infinite recycling. This is where I propose a focus on folkloric motifs and their reinterpretation. I explore the idea that the cultural value of this (re)use does not lie in the content of the motif, but in the new use of the motif to tell an original tale.

In order to gain insight into the relevant folk, this study makes use of online forums and social media platforms (where the folk of video game communities gather to share cultural capital and lore) in order to explore the folklore that surrounds *Silent Hills P.T.* I aim to examine how these online platforms change the competency of the members of the culture when playing the video games that their community is built around. I use one horror video game in particular that the creator specifically made, with the idea of collaborative play in mind, namely, *P.T.*<sup>4</sup> of the Silent Hill franchise.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Something belonging to a different period than the one it is currently in. Anachronisms are time slippages where things from contrasting times intrude on one another.

<sup>4</sup> *P.T.* stands for Playable Teaser as described by Hideo Kojima.

<sup>5</sup> The game features puzzles that could only be solved through real-world interaction between players of different languages and gaming proficiencies.

In my own practical work I also attempt to reinterpret folkloric motifs as an interactive video game installation that encourages the forming of a temporary community with its own unique folklore. My practical work accompanies this text in the same way an illustration in a textbook would, expanding on ideas that text cannot. In both theory and practice, my work thus deals with cyclicity and infinite loops, much like Pierre Bourdieu's ideas relating to the creation of culture. My theoretical framework thus specifically makes use of Bourdieu's concepts of the field, capital and habitus to engage the creation of new lore by the folk. Bourdieu uses capitalist metaphors to explain the interplay between cultures and the folk in order to highlight how the power struggles between the folk ultimately change the culture symbiotically.

This study is structured to first introduce and unpack key terms and definitions related to folklore and the folkloresque, hauntology, the work of Pierre Bourdieu pertaining to popular culture and video game culture. The first chapter thus includes definitions of the folkloresque by Jeffrey A Tolbert and Michael Dylan Foster (2016) that I use to examine the 2006 film, *Pan's Labyrinth*, by Guillermo Del Toro. In this examination I identify motifs and discuss how their (re)use relates to established folktales while assisting with the crafting of the new tale of Del Toro. Thereafter I move on to define hauntology by looking at the first use of the word in Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (2011). I follow the progression of the term from Derrida to Mark Fisher's use thereof in popular culture where this author writes of the over-referencing of the past in music and film. Pierre Bourdieu's theories of the field, capital and habitus are unpacked in relation to both hauntology and the folkloresque. This chapter thus lays the theoretical foundation for my own exploration of hauntology in video games.

The second chapter of this text is a practical application of the first as I use the theories of Derrida and Bourdieu as well as the writings of Fisher to explore the interactive horror video game *P.T.* In this chapter I sift through the game to identify folkloresque motifs in order to identify how the creator, Hideo Kojima, uses them to manufacture a unique and original story that carries the authenticity of traditional folklore. This is achieved by examining the visual language of *P.T.* through a hauntological lens and the concept of 'non-place' (the idea of a place without distinguishing features that adds horror to a suburban setting). In the final section of this chapter I define and identify who the folk in the community surrounding *P.T.* are, while comparing the communication between the folk in cyberspace to the face-to-face communication that the classical definition of the folkloric concept of 'the folk' refers to.

The third and final chapter offers a discussion of my own practical work. Here I compare my work to both the classical folklore that I have borrowed from and the Science Fiction writings of Phillip K Dick that inspired it. The myth of Sisyphus, which tells of the gods punishing Sisyphus to a life of repetition, is explored in both my own words and the words of Albert Camus (1955) in an attempt to make sense of the infinite loop of repetitive futile action. This text culminates in this chapter by laying bare the cyclical nature of all the theories, definitions and ideas addressed throughout the study. My practical work and even the physical act of writing this text, are all shown to be, in the grand scheme of things, a Sisyphian loop of both punishment and hope.

## CHAPTER ONE: LEGEND TO THE DIAGRAM

### 1.1 Introduction

This first chapter defines the key theoretical framework as well as the terms and concepts used throughout this study of folkloric motifs, horror, and interactive video games. It acts as would the legend on the side of a diagram<sup>6</sup> by providing a framework to navigate the discussions in the chapters that follow. I refer to both this text and my practical works as diagrams because of their practical and explanatory nature. By this I mean that their functions are to explore subjects of varying origins in an attempt to simplify them and connect them as a whole, thereby allowing them to resonate with each other and amplify their core meanings. An important theme in this chapter, the text as a whole and my practical work, is cyclicity. In this chapter I look at the creation of popular culture through the capitalist metaphors of Pierre Bourdieu. The theme of creation and recreation is continued in an exploration of the folkloresque where I introduce the term in full. Thereafter I bring forth hauntology and discuss how the definition thereof has grown and in what context I use it in this text. Finally I apply the concepts introduced in this chapter to Guillermo Del Toro's film *Pan's Labyrinth*, and in doing so I demonstrate his effective use of the folkloresque in popular culture. The ideas and concepts in this chapter loop back on themselves and, as a whole, they thus auto-cannibalise in order to exist, constantly fluctuating between absence and presence.

### 1.2 Bourdieu on the Social

Pierre Bourdieu is a sociologist whose work delves into a wide range of subjects including education, power dynamics, and (most important to this text), culture and cultural production (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:1). Among the wide range of subjects and sources with which Bourdieu's work engages, Karl Marx's name stands out; this is largely due to Bourdieu's use of a Marxist economic metaphor (particularly the concept of capital) in his writings on cultural creation and power dynamics in culture (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:1).

Bourdieu's method of generative structuralism<sup>7</sup> exposes the endless symbiosis of the individual and

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<sup>6</sup> I understand a diagram to be a simplified drawing of a complex thing or concept that attempts to explain the structure and inner workings.

<sup>7</sup> "To analyse and take account of the genesis of the person, and of social structures and groups" (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:3).

the social by showing that the “personal economic practice and the external world of class history and social practice” are ultimately enmeshed (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:3). In particular, his writings highlight that while the structure of the 'external' social world bears on the individual, the individual's agency and knowledge similarly effects and changes social reality (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:3). To effectively navigate this symbiosis, Bourdieu proposes two essential conceptual tools: the habitus and the field (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:4). These tools are "supported by a number of other ideas, such as symbolic power, strategy and struggle for symbolic and material power, along with various forms of capital" (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:3).

Symbolic (rather than economic) capital is a mode of domination because it divulges the presence or absence of knowledge within a particular social arena (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:5). For Bourdieu, capital encompasses both the tangible and the intangible, including prestige and status (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:13). Capital of this kind thus provides a form of social dominance; as in Harker Mahar, Richard K. Harker and Chris Wilkes's offer:

[s]ymbolic systems are instruments of knowledge and domination, which make possible a consensus within a community as to the significance of the social world, as well as contributing to the reproduction of the social order [...] symbolic systems [...] attempt to legitimate domination by the imposition of the 'correct' and 'legitimate' definition of the social world (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:5).

But symbolic capital can only operate within a particular socio-cultural framework or, in Bourdieu's terms, a particular 'field'.

Bourdieu's use of the word, field, points to an idea of a 'field of forces' that is constantly changing and which has an infinite amount of potentialities (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:8). Bluntly put, a field can be seen as the social space that a community of people share – for instance, the belief of a specific piece of folklore. A field is kept active by a constant struggle between participants for their individual position within it (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:8). As Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes suggest, "[p]ositions are determined by the allocation of specific capital to actors who are thus located in the field" (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). But a field (and those operating with it), function according to a certain set of rules and norms – what Bourdieu calls habitus.

The habitus is defined by Bourdieu as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" (Bourdieu 1979:vii). While it operates on a primarily subconscious level, the habitus structures collective knowledge and thus determines what is of value within a given field. One's competency within a field (i.e. a person's ability to successfully participate within it), is thus dependent on their symbolic capital (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:10).

It is convenient that Bourdieu uses games and playing when talking about fields, the habitus and capital (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). When entering the sphere of play, a player is under a set of implicit and/or explicit rules that apply to all the players in the game (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). Upon entering the field of play, the player already has an idea of how the game works; in other words, the player has in some sense mastered its logic (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). This mastery (or competence of the game), is shared knowledge among all the players in the field; without this communal knowledge the game would not be able to function (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). The player's knowledge, mastery and capital of the game is the habitus in this case (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7). It is shared unequally between the players, leading to power struggles (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:7).

But while the habitus contributes to and changes the world, so too does the world change the habitus; it is flexible and ever shifting as are the individuals who are shaped by and perpetuate its norms (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:11). Be it in the field of technology, folklore, video games, or even the field of a specific game genre or title, if the player gathers capital, then their habitus grows and changes, and they in turn change the field by sharing the knowledge of their habitus. The changing of the field then opens opportunity for more capital to be gathered, not only for the person who initially shared their knowledge, but for all the players in the field. This circular process constantly changes the positions that players occupy within a field. I believe the cyclical process of the field, habitus and capital resonates with the progression and assimilation of 'the folkloresque' into popular culture.

### **1.3 The Folkloresque**

The 'folkloresque' as a term is the result of a collaboration between Jeffrey A Tolbert and Michael Dylan Foster after discovering that they were both investigating a similar set of ideas on how popular

culture<sup>8</sup> uses and re-uses folklore<sup>9</sup> (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:vii). In the introduction of the edited volume titled *The Folkloresque* (2016), Foster loosely introduces and defines the term as:

[p]opular culture's own (emic) perception and performance of folklore. It refers to creative, often commercial products or texts that give the impression to the consumer that they derive directly from existing folkloric traditions (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:5).

Something that is folkloresque often claims elements from established folklore to give the impression that it has emerged organically (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:5). This cannibalisation of traditional folklore brands the word with the suffix “-esque”, which is used to indicate that the word now punctuated by this suffix is worthy of the meaning of the root word (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:5).

By fusing select elements of folklore into a new product – an act the authors refer to as pastiching – the folkloresque creation aims to prove that it carries the same weight as the legitimate folklore referenced (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:5). In short, the word folkloresque implies that:

an item is in the “style” of folklore; that it is connected to something beyond/before itself and that the product itself is potentially of folkloric value, connected in some way with processes of folklore creation and transmission (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:6).

Films that sample from folklore, such as the *Harry Potter* series (2011-2016), are successful because they are densely populated with elements that signify folklore to the viewer (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:20). In Foster and Tolbert's words, “[t]heir authenticity comes from their connection to 'authentic' folklore” (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:20). But appropriation alone does not make a cultural product folkloresque.

Crucial to the concepts of the folkloresque is that it goes *beyond* the mere use of folkloric motifs; it necessarily evokes the feeling of folklore. As Foster and Tolbert offer:

Approaching the folkloresque through the study of motifs [...] should not stop simply

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<sup>8</sup> I use pop culture in this text to refer to aspects of social life that dominate the culture of most of society at specific points in time (Delaney, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Folklore entails knowledge shared by a group of people who have something in common.

at identifying their usage; it should push toward redefining what a motif is in the first place, and also understanding the process by which popular culture producers draw on their own cultural meanings (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:21).

It is one thing to copy directly from folklore, but what makes something folkloresque lies in the production of something novel that carries folkloric authenticity – it draws cultural value from the original folklore it references.

The folkloresque instils folkloric authenticity in the mind of the participants of popular culture (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:37). In other words, the authentic folkloric feel produced by a folkloresque product should not be accredited to the folkloric motifs in the product, but the existing folkloric and cultural knowledge experienced by those who interact with the product (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:37).

Foster and Tolbert's definition of the folkloresque presents the concept as largely unconcerned with the geographical or anthropological origins of folklore. Instead, it focuses on popular culture's "perception and interpretation of authenticity and origins" (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:12). It is important to distinguish between what a professional folklorist<sup>10</sup> classifies as folklore and what the people who are part of folkloric communities and popular culture, or folk, identify as folklore (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:9). In the official and lay concepts I find that it is more important for people who engage with a piece of media to feel that something is folkloric, than it is for it to be officially classified as folklore within academic circles. Rather than having its origins queried and being scrutinised in relation to rigorous criteria, the folkloresque lies where popular culture deems unofficial folklore to be folkloric (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:9).

The folkloresque thus offers a language the opportunity to revisit and explore the symbiotic relationship between folklore and popular culture; and it is in this capacity that the term is adopted within this text. Investigating a piece of popular culture through a folkloresque lens thus cannot conclude with the identification of motifs or in pinpointing how folkloric elements are sutured together.<sup>11</sup>

Foster suggests three main categories of the folkloresque: parody, portrayal and integration (Foster

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<sup>10</sup> One whose academic field is dedicated to the recording and studying of folklore.

<sup>11</sup> This has been termed 'motif-spotting' by folklorist Mikel Koven, defining it as the "study of specific, identifiable folkloric motifs as they appear in works of popular fiction" (Koven, 2003:181).

and Tolbert, 2016:15). Parody loosely refers to folkloresque products that self-consciously comment on folklore through caricature, homage or ridicule, while portrayal focuses specifically on how "folklorists as people and folkloristics as a discipline are portrayed" (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:15). For this study, however, I focus specifically on the final category of the folkloresque, namely integration, as it is concerned with how the creators of popular culture products reference and sample from folklore to create something new while maintaining the feeling of being folkloric (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:15).

Tolbert, and other authors who contribute to *The Folkloresque* (2016), place specific emphasis on allusion – the inventive (re)use of folkloric elements by artists and creators (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:15). In his introduction to integration Tolbert states: "[t]he folkloresque [...] works through the mechanisms of allusion and pastiche, a hodgepodge suturing of bits and pieces of other things to create a coherent new whole (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:15)."<sup>12</sup> Emphasis is thus placed on how the integration of traditional folklore into contemporary products fuses the old with the new (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:15).

Due to the sampling and pastiching nature of the folkloresque, this storytelling genre is neither folklore nor a completely novel product. Instead, it resides in a spectral realm in which the borrowed motifs of folklore can flourish to make a new tale. This uncertain landscape provides a platform where folkloric traditions not only retain their cultural integrity, but pass on their cultural value to newly produced narratives and characters.

I propose that through the sampling, re-sampling and assimilation into popular culture, a folkloresque product could become a piece of folklore in and of itself if the folk navigating the sphere of popular culture accept it as such (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:42). Foster suggests that even the most commercial folkloresque products can be subjected to the same pastiching as original folklore – its (re)use thus creating the possibility of a new folkloresque product (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:42). The cyclical symbiotic relationship between folklore and its suffixed form (-esque) thus feed into each other indefinitely.

#### **1.4 Hauntology**

In his book, *Spectres of Marx* (2011), Derrida speaks of philosophical spectres haunting Europe. The

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<sup>12</sup> This same definition can be applied to the term 'sampling', used in this text.

idea came to him when he reread Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx' *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) for the first time in a decade. He paused at the first noun in the manifesto: *spectre* (Derrida, 2011:10).

A spectre, as Derrida describes it, is:

neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, in the very coming of the revenant or the return of the spectre. There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as re-appearance of the departed (Derrida, 2011:9).

Like screen burn on a television that has been left on an image for too long, a ghostly stamp of the image lingers over the display of changing content. It is neither the past content itself nor is it part of the current scene; it is simultaneously there and not there, of then and of now.

The phenomenon of not being able to experience time as fully present, but always simultaneously in the past and the future seamlessly intertwined with the present, is what Derrida calls hauntology (Derrida, 2011:10). The term plays on the word 'ontology', the “discourse on Being of beings, or the essence of life and death” (Derrida, 2011:63). The hauntological thus speaks to the border between private and public, living and dead, past, present and future; it is constantly moving, misplaced and spectralised by media (Derrida, 2011:63). Derrida suggests that we can only make sense of and experience the present through the past and the future (Derrida, 2011:63); the present cannot exist on its own.

Derrida's observation of this slippage of time sparked the writings of British cultural theorist, Mark Fisher, an author synonymous with the theory of hauntology. In a *Film Quarterly* article predating his book, *Ghosts of my Life* (2014), Fisher distinguishes between two directions of hauntology (Fisher, 2012:19). In Fisher's words:

[t]he first refers to that which is (in actuality is) no longer, but which is still effective as a virtuality (the traumatic “compulsion to repeat,” a structure that repeats, a fatal pattern). The second refers to that which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behavior (Fisher, 2012:19).

Fisher identifies that one may make sense of how these two forms work together when listening to a piece of music. If one heard only the current note being played, this sound would be wholly decontextualised and it would not make sense as a tune. It is only in relation to the note that came before it and to the note that we anticipate (that which will follow it), that a single note becomes a decipherable part of a song.

Hauntological things can thus often only be experienced by comparing them to human artefacts from the past or the imagined future (Fisher, 2012:19). This reliance of references (both past and future), suggests a lack of innovation – it is not a new sensory experience but rather a pastiche of what existed before it and what will remain after it has passed (Fisher, 2012:17).<sup>13</sup> This slippage of time is known as anachronism and emerges beyond the cultural realm of music (Fisher, 2014: 5)<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, Fisher contends that 21st-century culture and media are plagued by anachronism that has:

been buried, interred behind a superficial frenzy of ‘newness’, of perpetual movement. The ‘jumbling up of time’, the montaging of earlier eras, has ceased to be worthy of comment; it is now so prevalent that it is no longer even noticed (Fisher, 2014: 6).

I feel that hauntology occupies the side that is opposite to the folkloresque on the coin of folklore in digital media. It warns of time slippages and a hindrance of progression in the re-usage of motifs from the past. If too much faith is put in pastiching, or the past into new technologies, then one runs the risk of stagnating the study of folklore in digital media, causing folkloristics to be assimilated into other fields of study. But, if approached strategically, hauntology can also instil a feeling of authenticity in a piece of work, through its interplay with the past.

The role which hauntology plays in this study is that of a tool for exploring the physical technology, visual aesthetics and audio of horror video games as folklore. One can imagine hauntology as the spectre that haunts digital media, in this case video games. Just as the ghosts in ghost stories haunt the listener, so does hauntology haunt the medium. Before engaging this form of media in the

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<sup>13</sup> Fisher also refers to music when exploring hauntology. A thought experiment he proposes is to imagine that one could beam a song back twenty years in time to play it to a person (Fisher, 2014:8). Would it sound completely foreign to them, or would it sound like the same existing genres played on newer technologies?

<sup>14</sup> Hauntology does not only concern time. Be they anachronisms in physical space or spectres in digital spaces, "‘Tele-technologies’ collapse both space and time. Events that are spatially distant become available to an audience instantaneously" (Fisher, 2014: 20).

following chapter, however, I turn first to a filmic application of the theories thus far discussed.

## 1.5 Application

The 2006 film, *Pan's Labyrinth (El Laberinto del Fauno)*, by director, Guillermo Del Toro, is set against the backdrop of the Spanish civil war and tells the story of Ofelia, a young girl absorbed in fairy tale books (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006). The film, as described by Del Toro, is a fairy tale for adults with disobedience as its moral lesson; in following Ofelia as she completes folklore-like tasks, it is ultimately her subversion of all convention that is the key to her growth as protagonist (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006).

From the outset, Del Toro draws a thick folkloric veil over the film with the first spoken words being, “a long time ago” (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006). The film makes use of many identifiable motifs that Del Toro has sampled from folklore (including fairies, ogres, giant toads, fauns, and mandrakes, to name but a few), while the morphology and tale structure (including the evil stepfather, magical helpers tests of purity, etc.), offer multiple opportunities for comparative analysis with traditional folktales. But, beyond these moments of integration, allusion, and pastiche, Del Toro also uses the folkloresque for a very particular purpose: the articulation of violence often omitted from child-orientated filmic fairy tales.

Unlike the 'kid-friendly' animated productions of entertainment conglomerates like the Walt Disney Company, *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) brings the horror of folklore to cinematic life (thus introducing it into the terrain of popular culture). To achieve this, the director's handling of the folkloric subject matter draws on techniques of the folkloresque.

A key scene highlighting this in the film is in a tender moment between Ofelia and a fairy-like creature, in which the latter alters its appearance to better fit Ofelia's expectations (Fig. 1). Rather than humanoid figures, fairies in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) are at first shown to be insect-like mantis creatures that move and click in a peculiarly fashion. They do not look like the traditional fairies of fairy tales (miniaturised human figures sporting delicate insect wings); yet, despite their unconventional appearance, Del Toro's fairies nevertheless have a magical aura about them. Ofelia questions the fairy's appearance and shows it a picture of an illustrated fairy silhouette in one of her books (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006). The fairy stares at the illustration for a moment and slowly starts to morph its body into the more recognisable humanoid shape (Fig. 2). This post-transformation form

is an example of the folkloresque in the film.

Ofelia is told over and over through sensitised fairy tale books what the 'correct' form of a fairy is in the field that she occupies (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006). Del Toro visually presents the dominance of symbols when the fairy is forced to transform into what is seen as the appropriate physical incarnation of 'fairy' in order for Ofelia to further interact with it comfortably (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006). We thus see the habitus at work, operating through intangible forms of capital (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990:8).

The subconscious nature of the habitus resonates more broadly with the feeling of folkloric authenticity in folkloresque products like *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006). The art in the use of motifs lies in the creator of a folkloresque work's ability to curate the use thereof in this filmic product, with the intention of invoking the feeling of folklore in the viewer. It is this characteristic that products of popular culture rely on; it is what grants the motifs of folklore their authenticity (and thus allows the transfer of this authenticity to the folkloresque).

Following Foster and Tolbert, the effectiveness of the folkloresque in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) does not depend on how well the film references and borrows from folklore, nor how many folkloric motifs it features. Instead it is the film's ability to make folkloric motifs resonate with the collective cultural knowledge of participants of popular culture (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:37). I thus credit said resonance and the feeling of folkloric authenticity with a folkloresque habitus.

Del Toro uses and exposes the folkloresque through deconstructing motifs (such as the fairy) and extracting from them the essence of folklore. He goes beyond making mere reference to folkloric elements or cobbling them together; instead the director inserts his own performance of a folktale. Del Toro's approach is thus to *distil* established motifs, make them his own, and, crucially, use them to evoke the feeling of folklore in the viewer.

However, if folkloric motifs are essential for authenticity, then it does not matter if the motif in question was sampled from traditional folklore or a folkloresque product. By shifting the focus away from the origin of a motif, an opening is created for folkloresque products to be regarded as true folklore in popular culture.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The concepts and definitions in this chapter are spectres of the past that roam through popular culture, influencing the future. Through the folkloresque, popular culture cannibalises existing folklore and sutures together various extremities of folktales into a new beast with a familiar howl. As time passes, even this howl will embed itself in the unconscious mind of the folk, assimilating into culture as a piece of folklore that might one day be ripe enough to be consumed in a new folkloresque process. I find the process of haunting, cannibalisation, pastiching and then assimilation, to be most evident in the horror genre of video games, and will therefore continue this text with an exploration of their construction. In this chapter I have applied key concepts to a piece of cinema as an example of how they function in popular culture. My exploration of *Pan's Labyrinth* shows the importance of the creator of a folkloresque product's role in reinterpreting motifs in order for them to resonate with the habitus of the viewer.

## CHAPTER 2: HORROR IN THE FAMILIAR

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore horror video games, the Silent Hill series specifically, in order to further develop and implement the ideas that I have explained in chapter one. This chapter serves as a practical analysis and examination of the folkloresque and hauntology, and introduces the hauntological idea of the non-place as a mechanism of horror. In this chapter I show how the creator of *P.T.*, Hideo Kojima, successfully uses folkloresque motifs without them relying on recognisable elements of established folklore. In order to achieve this, the chapter offers an in-depth exploration of *P.T.* including its creation and the community (or folk) that surrounds it.

### 2.2 Silent Hills *P.T.* by Hideo Kojima

*Watch out. The gap in the door... it's a separate reality.*

*The only me is me. Are you sure the only you is you?* (Kojima, 2014).

A silent black screen with white text poses this question; the image cuts to a first-person view of your character lying on a cement floor; you appear to be in a basement; there is a door in front of you (Kojima, 2014). The door creaks open as two conjoined cockroaches scuttle before your eyes (Fig. 3); your character can be seen picking themselves up off the ground; once standing, the controller of the video game console is activated; your character's actions are placed back in your hands. Instinctively you make your character walk towards the door and open it; in doing so, you step as one inside the cyclical suburban horror-maze that is *P.T.* (Fig. 4) (Kojima, 2014).

*P.T.* is a survival horror game created by Hideo Kojima in collaboration with Guillermo del Toro and Norman Reedus (Kojima, 2014). It was released onto the Play Station Network digital game store for Play Station 4<sup>15</sup> on 12 August 2014, with no prior advertising or information about who made it and where it came from (Kojima, 2014). Fans of the Silent Hill franchise were ecstatic over the announcement of a new addition to the series. Players from around the world quickly sought to make sense of its creators by diving into the game and posting their findings on online forums, social media and video sharing platforms, forming a virtual community around the games and its mysterious origins.

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<sup>15</sup> Play Station 4 (often abbreviated to PS4), is a video game console made by Sony.

*P.T.* puts the player inside the home of a suburban family, where they slowly navigate the main hallway of the house (Kojima, 2014). A radio in the middle of the home (Fig. 5) plays the news, and reports what happened to the family that previously occupied the space:

*As the Congressional Debate over gun control flares up yet again, we regret to report the murder of a wife and her two children by their husband and father. The father purchased the rifle used in the crime at his local gun store two days earlier. The mother, who he shot in the stomach, was pregnant at the time. Police arriving on-scene after neighbors called 911, found the father in his car, listening to the radio. Several days before the murders, neighbors say they heard the father repeating a sequence of numbers in a loud voice. They said it was like he was chanting some strange spell (Kojima, 2014).*

The house is both quiet yet ominously filled with ambient sounds; a chandelier swings creakily over the front door, breathing, groaning and an extra set of footsteps can be heard as you are made to realise that you are not alone in the house (Kojima, 2014). The atmosphere is thick with tension as the game compels you to carefully plan every step forward. You progress through the L-shaped hallway of the house to find another door. Upon opening it you end up back at the beginning of the hallway, forced to walk down in an endless loop as your surroundings change and the house becomes more surreal, and strangely, horrifyingly alive (Kojima, 2014).

### **2.3 The folklore of filicide in encroaching poverty**

*There was another family shot to death in the same state last month, and in December last year. In each case, the perpetrators were fathers. State police say the string of domestic homicides appears unrelated, though it could be part of a larger trend, such as employment, childcare, and other social issues facing the average family (Kojima, 2014).*

The narrative of *P.T.* is centred around the phenomenon of familicide and filicide<sup>16</sup> that is framed to be on the increase, according to the radio broadcasts played in the deserted home (Kojima, 2014). The subject matter of filicide at the hands of a husband or father has been the starting point of many

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<sup>16</sup> When a family member murders their family, or a parent kills their child.

well-known folktales. Most notable of these is a tale entitled *The Children and the Witch*, classified according to the Aarne-Thompson-Uthe (ATU) index under supernatural adversaries as folktale 327A (*Multilingual Folk Tale Database*, n.d.). Better known in the western world as *Hansel and Gretel*, the children's father and stepmother take the young protagonists deep into the forest under the pretence of going to chop wood (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857). The children are given bread to eat and told to wait by a fire while the parents go to supposedly complete the chore (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857). With no intention of returning, the parents tie a branch to a tree that swings in the wind and bangs against the tree stump, mimicking the sound of an axe hitting wood. The intention is to fool the children into thinking that their parents are still close by. Actually, the adults abandon them out of financial desperation (they have no money to care for both themselves and the children) (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857).

Filicide of this kind is often used in folktales as a trigger or catalyst for the main events of a tale (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857). It creates a backdrop of consequence that is synonymous with the use of most folktales as cautionary tales directed at children,<sup>17</sup> while sudden and violent deaths are often used as the explanation for the existence of and encounter with ghosts.

In *P.T.*, filicide is used as a narrative element to give the player a background and history of the house they find themselves in and thus insight into the characters that previously inhabited it. But the radio broadcast (in mentioning the murder of the family), also plants the idea in the player's mind that the family may still, in some form, surface during the game. The horror of filicide as a folkloric motif in *P.T.* conjures previously learned knowledge about ghosts, foreshadowing and creating an expectation of some of the characters that the player is to find in the game.

### 2.3.1 Lisa (Yūrei)

The first of these characters that one encounters is the ghost of the mother, Lisa (Fig. 6) (Kojima, 2014).<sup>18</sup> She appears as a woman with short, ruffled black hair, wearing a white nightgown and a heeled shoe on her right foot (Kojima, 2014). She is missing one eye,<sup>19</sup> stands with drooped shoulders and walks with unusually long legs (Kojima, 2014). The white gown she wears is blood-stained from

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<sup>17</sup> Cautionary tales are stories that are told, often to children, to illustrate what harm would befall them if they did not mend their wrongful ways (Carpenter and Prichard, 1999). These tales often ended with injuries, loss of limbs and in most cases, death. Their gruesome and gory nature intended to scare children into behaving and obeying (Carpenter and Prichard, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Kojima reveals her name in later gameplay videos and interviews (Kojima, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> This characteristic ties into puzzle elements which appear later in the game.

her middle down, thus visually confirming that the ghost is that of the mother who (as the news broadcast stated), was shot in the stomach while pregnant (Kojima, 2014).

Lisa's appearance is very similar to that of a Yūrei (Fig. 7), a figure, who in traditional Japanese Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, is the result of a sudden or violent act, or if they have been buried without proper rites. A proper burial (conducted with the proper funeral rites), would see a person's *Reikon* 霊魂, (similar to a soul in Western beliefs), freed from the body and continue onto the afterlife (from where it protects the living members of the family) (Davisson, 2015: 81). When this is not achieved, however, a Reikon will transform into a Yūrei that, much like a ghost, remains behind to haunt the physical world, but with harmful intent (Davisson, 2015: 82).

Yūrei are said to wear a white kimono, traditionally reserved for burial rituals as they signify purity (Davisson, 2015: 44). Their hair is long and black, coming from the old tradition of Japanese women who grew their hair and tied it on top of their heads, only letting it down for funerals (Davisson, 2015: 44). Lisa's appearance takes on a modern version of this appearance: her short hairstyle resonates with the aesthetics of the time period represented in the house.

The connection to Japanese folklore and beliefs used in *P.T.* is what Michael Dylan Foster refers to in *The Folkloresque* (2016) as allusion, of which he notes two categories: *precise* allusion and *fuzzy* allusion (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:43):

The first category of allusion speaks of when "theme, characters, plot, and other elements of a given folk narrative or belief system are used within an original storyline" (Foster and Tolbert, 2016:44). Using Lisa as an example, it is clear that her existence as a ghost and how she came to be a ghost is lifted from existing themes, plots and other elements and used in the original storyline of *P.T.* to lend folkloric authenticity in the mind of the player. The folkloric motif of 'ghost' is precisely alluded to in the storyline of *P.T.* But the learned reference of 'ghost' in the case of Lisa has less cultural strength in the West than it does in Japan due to its connection to the folklore of the Yūrei. Where a Western player sees a frightening female ghost, a Japanese player may recognise the reference to Yūrei in Lisa's appearance.

This is where the second category of allusion comes into play. According to Foster and Tolbert, fuzzy allusion speaks to "a wholly new creation that is not based on a specific tradition but – and this is what makes it folkloresque – alludes to folkloric elements in a generalized and imprecise way (Foster

and Tolbert, 2016:46). Lisa's white nightgown alludes to a white kimono and her black dishevelled hair to that of the Yūrei. The use of folkloric motifs in the character of Lisa are quite easy to recognise, despite their slight difference in meaning and significance from one culture to the next. However, with each loop of the hallway in *P.T.*, the references and motifs delve deeper into the folkloric memory of the player.

### 2.3.2 Fairy Godmother.

*I walked. I could do nothing but walk. And then, I saw me walking in front of myself. But it wasn't really me. Watch out. The gap in the door... it's a separate reality. The only me is me. Are you sure the only you is you?* (Kojima, 2014).

During another loop of the hallway the player is suddenly attacked by Lisa, who strangles and kills them (Kojima, 2014). The player awakens on the floor in the basement where the game began, only to find a bloody, brown paper bag lying on a table nearby (Fig. 8). Rustling as it speaks, the bag repeats the words from the introductory screen, reminding the player that they cannot be sure of their own personal existence (Kojima, 2014). Up until this point the player has only been addressed by disembodied voices from the radio and noises around the house. The brown paper bag is one of very few instances where Kojima has placed another character in the scene who talks directly to the player (Kojima, 2014).

The personification of the brown bag echoes the use of magical helpers in folktales (classified in the Multilingual folktale Database by codes 500-559) (*Multilingual Folk Tale Database*, n.d.). Folktales, including Cinderella, fall into this category, featuring the famous figure of the fairy godmother. It should be noted that in the Grimm brother's record of Cinderella, there is no fairy godmother (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857). The idea of the fairy godmother was added in later adaptations and translations, as a form of censorship, to mask the horror of the true tale for young viewers (Cinderella, 1950). It is in fact quite hard to find any record of a fairy godmother in traditional folktales, as most supernatural helpers take on the form of personified animals. In the Grimm brother's version of Cinderella, the role of 'fairy godmother' is fulfilled by the spirit of Cinderella's dead mother that takes the form of a hazel tree that grows from her grave and under which Cinderella wept every day. Cinderella's wishes uttered to her dead mother's spirit are carried out by talking birds, rather than a magical winged woman (Grimm, Grimm and Grimm, 1857).

In *P.T.* the roles of magical helpers are carried out first by the brown paper bag, and later a foetus found in the bathroom sink (Fig. 9). The latter divulges this information to the player in a monologue to the father of the house:

You got fired, so you drowned your sorrows in booze. She had to get a part-time job working a grocery store cash register. Only reason she could earn a wage at all is the manager liked how she looked in a skirt. You remember, right? Exactly ten months back (Kojima, 2014).

The foetus's monologue gives the player additional backstory on the timeframe and financial problems leading up to the filicide. It also hints at the father's slow decay under financial pressure when mentioning alcoholism; the player finds further clues in the form of beer cans scattered around the house (Kojima, 2014).

Kojima's choice of showing the player the foetus in the sink, and the brown bloody bag, is rooted in the nature of traditional folktales as cautionary tales that openly use horror and gore as mechanisms to teach moral lessons to the listener or reader (Carpenter and Prichard, 1999). Unlike Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (in which the disturbing insect-like appearance of the fairy is censored), Kojima leaves the fairy godmother as a bloody brown paper bag and an unformed foetus. Rather than pacifying these gruesome features, *P.T.* infuses the harsh reality with the magic qualities of re-animation and speech.

### **2.3 Hauntology of the suburban spectre.**

The brown paper bag's monologue about the endless action of walking and being confronted with one's own existence (walking and seeing oneself walk), resonates strongly with the idea of the spectre in hauntology; the thing that does not exist yet is present, it is both there and not there at the same time, it is the player but it is someone, something else.

The spectre disrupts the flow of time. Conjuring the idea of hauntology as a spectre allows one to tangibly understand how the past, present and future can never be separated from each other (Fisher, 2013:44). Additionally, the spectre rearranges ontology to assert that "'being' is not equivalent to presence", in contrast to its original definition (Fisher, 2013:44). The spectre of hauntology, according to Derrida, stretches its hand out from the realm of tele-technologies and the digital world

to encroach on the physical plane (Henriksen, 2016: 19).

Sound offers a striking example: a vinyl record makes a crackling sound when it is dusty, scratched or aged. The sound of vinyl crackle is unique to the medium of records, just as the 'hiss' of tape is unique to audio cassettes. Musicians have used recordings of these medium-specific sounds in their music to infuse a sense of a past era, infusing it with a time-specific authenticity. The anachronous sound of vinyl crackle on a digital musical file (for example, an mp3), is the spectre of our technological past haunting through present technologies, complicating the progression of future technologies (Henriksen, 2016: 19).

Video games have thus often been seen as something signifying the future and are thus commonly associated with an era's younger generation (Fisher, 2013:45). However, video games are also plagued by "the problem of memory and its imperfect recovery" in the visual, audio, narrative and hardware of these games (Fisher, 2013:45). An aspect of this problem of memory can be interpreted as nostalgia; not the psychological nostalgia of yearning for the past, but a nostalgia of recalling lost time and revisiting the past through its haunting of the present (Fisher, 2013:45). This form of nostalgia resonates with Bourdieu's habitus, as it may be seen as dipping into and using elements inherent to the habitus in order to locate and perpetuate a sense of historical authenticity in the present.

### 2.3.1 The suburban home as non-place.

Tele-technology has provided a habitat for hauntology and its anachronisms due to its ability to contract space and time (Fisher, 2012:19). Content and events that are geographically distant become available to a global audience in an instant (Fisher, 2012:19). Physical borders lose their hold and the spectre of hauntology is free to roam the internet and all that is connected to it. The instantaneous movement of information across the globe shows that "hauntology concerns a crisis of space as well as time" (Fisher, 2012:19).

The crisis of space comes to light in the form of the non-place, a term coined by Marc Augé, which he uses to describe generic spaces<sup>20</sup> of transit where temporary interaction between people takes place (Fisher, 2012:19). These spaces all look and feel the same despite being in different geographical locations (Fig. 10). Their cloned and implacable appearances resemble each other more than they do

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<sup>20</sup> I note that Augé places emphasis on places of temporality, such as airports, malls and chain stores, and not on spaces in which people live permanently. However, I find similarities between the suburban home and Augé's non-places that deserve further exploration.

the place in which they are found, both in a geographical and chronological sense (Fisher, 2012:19).

In *P.T.* the geographic location outside the home is completely removed to accentuate the feeling of non-place (Kojima, 2014). When the player looks out of the window they find only endless black; there are no recognisable suburban features, as if the house is floating in a void, trying to recollect itself (Kojima, 2014).

Time also plays an important role in *P.T.* Broken time in the home leads to an anachronous space for the player wherein time loses all linear progression (Kojima, 2014). The home in *P.T.* creates a feeling of impermanence that subverts the main function of a home as a permanent safe space for its occupants, cementing it as a non-place. This feeling of impermanence is attributed, among other things, to the aesthetic appearance of the home and the traces of the family that haunts it (Kojima, 2014).

The home's infinite hallway is lined with photographs, some of the family and some with nondescript imagery that make it hard to place the home in a specific chronological or geographic time (Kojima, 2014). These photographs, some of blurred shapes or close ups of dead branches, are not recognizable to the player as a specific space or thing, but elicit an anachronous feeling of unease (Kojima, 2014).

As Fisher offers:

Haunting can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenization of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time (Fisher, 2012:19).

Turning the suburban home into a non-place amplifies horror and causes fear to linger by making the player feel as if the events in the game could happen in their own home. The familiarity of a suburban home as non-place thus acts in the same way as disclaimers at the beginning of some horror films indicate the narrative to be 'based on true events'.

There are also more direct references to the passage of time in *P.T.* The home is physically stained by time as the player finds tally marks in the concrete room where they wake up, along with a scratching sound of more being made, indicating that time has been kept in the home itself (Kojima, 2014). After opening the door, and at the beginning of each loop of the hallway, the player finds an

electric clock; on some loops it displays 23:59 and on others 00:00 (Kojima, 2014). Time in the home has broken down, been thrown out of sync, and has lost all linearity by which to measure it. With each loop of the hallway, time spirals more and more out of control until it finally breaks through the 4<sup>th</sup> wall by showing the screen glitch in the same way that a broken Video Home System (VHS) tape does (Fig. 11), indicating to the player that what they have been watching or playing was pre-recorded all along (Fisher, 2013:49). The game freezes and an error screen comes up, addressing the player directly:

*This game is purely fictitious. It cannot harm you in any way, shape, or form* (Kojima, 2014).

## 2.4 Who are the folk?

The English term, folklore, was originally defined in 1846 by William J. Thoms as "traditional beliefs and customs of the common people" (Etymonline.com, 2019). Thoms' notion of folk refers to an illiterate society "whose culture is handed down orally" (Etymonline.com, 2019) through word of mouth. Folkloristics as a study thus originated when a literate elite saw it as their duty to record the traditions and tales of the illiterate folk. In the article "Who are the Folk?" (1980), Alan Dundes argues that this use of the term folk is problematic because it always excludes a population group, but most importantly, it stands in contrast to the social elite (1980:1).

But the etymological origin of Folklore also translates to the Old English *folclar*, meaning homily, referring to a "sermon" or "an assembled crowd" (Etymonline.com, 2019), thus opening the term beyond this narrow exclusionary definition. As Dundes suggests, the folk can refer to any group of people that share at least one common factor. In opposition to this original use of the term, I similarly open up the concept of the folk by highlighting a paradigm shift in the concept from common folk (excluded, dependent), towards a community (inclusive, independent).

Industrialisation brought to light new folk cultures; innovations in and the popular adoption of personal technology, including the computer, have seen such devices play an omnipresent character in contemporary folklore (Dundes, 1980:17). New communication technologies like the internet not only increased the transmission tempo of folklore; they also constitute a more democratic platform on which folklore can be transmitted.

In the text *Folklore and the Internet* (2009), Trevor J. Blank discusses the idea of Bourdieu's fields in relation to the internet when he indicates how it duplicates material from the physical field and transfers it into an “electronic vernacular” (2009:7). Democratic platforms like online forums simulate Bourdieu's fields as they are virtual locations where the capital of folklore can be spread amongst the digital folk. This electronic vernacular subverts traditionalist definitions of folklore that suggest it can only be spread through word of mouth.

Although the new definition of folk escapes the historical narrow definition (Blank, 2009:6), it does not displace folklore. Instead, this opening up of the concept sees the internet act as a novel channel or medium – in Blank's “mediatory agent” (2009:5) – that reconfigures the nature of the communication of folklore.

#### 2.4.1 The folk of *P.T.*

My first interaction with the Silent Hill game series was when I was at a sleepover at my cousin's house. I watched through my fingers as my cousin played *Silent Hill I* (1999) late at night. I remember him telling me that if I heard the two-way radio in the game making a loud static noise, then something dangerous was coming. Over a decade later *P.T.* was released and I still do not have the controller in my hands. Shortly after it became available in 2014, *P.T.* was taken off of the Play Station Network, leaving most without an opportunity to play the game. These players, myself included, had to take to online message boards, social media and video sharing platforms to experience the game vicariously through others.

During the game Kojima deprives players of all information, including the fact that he made the game. To complete *P.T.*, a final puzzle needs to be solved; this reveals that Kojima, Del Toro and Reedus are behind the making of the game and it also allows the player to exit the house (Houghton, 2019). The information needed to solve this puzzle is hidden in code and foreign languages in order to encourage community interaction and co-operation in the real world and online (Houghton, 2019).<sup>21</sup>

The first online post about the game birthed the folk of *P.T.* Through forums, articles and online videos, players worked together to decipher the final puzzle by sharing the capital they accrued while

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<sup>21</sup> During interviews after the release of *P.T.*, Kojima stated that he expected players to take weeks to solve the puzzles and finish the game (Houghton, 2019). To his surprise it took only a couple of hours for the first person to complete the game and post their findings online (Houghton, 2019). However, those involved in solving the final puzzle first were unsure of how they had managed it.

playing the game with the community (Houghton, 2019). Players realised that in order to finish the game and exit the house, that they had to perform three actions that would trigger the sound of a baby's laugh in the house (YouTube, 2019). The clues to these three actions were found in pieces of text shown on the screen in different languages after the player collects pieces of a photo scattered around the house (YouTube, 2019):

*Non mi mossi più nell'attesa inerte, poi il suo indice scivolò sulla mia mano.* Translated from Italian, this reads: "I didn't move anymore during the waiting, then his finger slipped over my hand" (Kojima, 2014).

*Sussurrei seu nome, mas o vento da noite levou sua voz embora.* Translated from Portuguese, this reads: "I whispered your name, but the wind of the night took your voice away" (Kojima, 2014).

つめたい手でした からだがふるえました。 Translated from Japanese, this reads: "It was a cold hand, body was trembling" (Kojima, 2014).

*Never moving a step, his hand in mine, I waited for it to pass.* (This was originally written in English) (Kojima, 2014).

*Und durch Nebel schwindenden Bewusstseins glaubte ich ein telefon zu hören.* Translated from German, this reads: "And through the mist of fading consciousness I believed, I heard a phone" (Kojima, 2014).

Through the translation of these phrases by global members of the folk via online discussions, these cryptic messages were deciphered and distilled into a list of commands that would enable players all over the world to complete the game (YouTube, 2019). The steps are as follows:

1. The player waited until the clock struck midnight then they had to walk ten steps and stop immediately (YouTube, 2019). When doing so the player will hear the first of three baby laughs.
2. Through deciphering the numbers 204863 (the repeated mantra of the father repeated before the murders) the community found that the numbers spell out the name Jarith or Jareth (YouTube, 2019). In whispering this name to the controller the video game console's voice

recognition software will register it and the baby will laugh for the second time (YouTube, 2019).

3. The controller will vibrate after the second laugh at which point the player must remain completely still until the telephone rings (YouTube, 2019). Upon answering it the player will be told that they have been chosen, allowing them to leave the house and complete the game (YouTube, 2019).

The folk in the field of *P.T.* thus collected capital in the form of clues and hidden details that would allow them to complete the game. By finding new information about *P.T.*, players' competency was collectively increased to navigate the field. As the player shares new information with others, the field changes and evolves, allowing for new capital to be discovered. This process repeats itself in a circular manner, over and over. Echoing Dundes' definition of the folk via this author's application of Bourdieu's field, capital and habitus allow for the definition of the folk to transcend the constraints of the medium used to transfer folklore from one folk to another in cyberspace. Defining the folk in this way allows for the archaic constraints of word-of-mouth transmission to fall away by shifting the focus to the field and the folklore in it – i.e. that which the folk have in common.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to introduce *P.T.* and explore a new definition of folklore with an emphasis on the community or the folk. By delving into the horror in folktale narratives, this chapter aimed to show how the use of folkloric motifs in *P.T.* created authenticity in the mind of the folk. By de-censoring and laying bare folkloric motifs, Kojima took the folktale narrative back to its horror roots while adding to the horror by turning the suburban home into a non-place. Through the use of hauntology and the non-place, Kojima created a space that all the players in the community could recognize in the sub-conscious, allowing for rich collaboration and the sharing of folklore between the folk of *P.T.*

The digital libraries of the internet allow for the proof of something, or the thing itself to exist long after it is erased in its original form (Houghton, 2019). Through online communities, *P.T.* has become a spectre. It no longer exists, but its folklore and folk keep it alive, allowing it to haunt through their conversations with each other (Houghton, 2019).

## CHAPTER 3: THE COMMUNITY OF THE FUTILE LOOP

### 3.1 Introduction

At the beginning of 2019, a disheartening day led me to scrap all of my practical work. That evening I sat with the image of Sisyphus in my mind, struggling to make his way up the side of the hill. I decided to reinterpret the myth of Sisyphus through video games in an attempt to better understand my imagined futile struggle. In this chapter, I explore my practical work through all of the concepts mentioned previously in this text. Firstly, I introduce the myth of Sisyphus and how exploring its meaning led to my practical work. I also look at other reinterpretations of Sisyphus, such as the religion of Mercerism in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2012) by Phillip K. Dick and how my practical work resonates with the empathy boxes found in the novel. Thereafter I compare my practical work, both in its physical appearance and folkloresque references to the original Myth of Sisyphus and Mercerism. In this chapter I also introduce a second piece of work from my practical exhibition called *A Diagram in Haunting* (2019), which I use to visually and audibly illustrate the concept of hauntology. I explore hauntology in the physical appearance of my practical works in a gallery space and in the sounds that they emit.

### 3.2 Endless Loops and Collective Consciousness

#### 3.2.1 The Myth of Sisyphus

Ancient Greek mythology tells of a cunning, devious and cruel king named Sisyphus who ruled over the land of Corinth (Graves, 1960: 68). He was known for killing guests and displaying their bodies to his subjects as proof of how cruel he was (Graves, 1960: 68). One day Zeus (the king of the Olympian gods) abducted Aegina, the daughter of the river god, Asopus. This infuriated Asopus, leading him to search all the lands for Zeus and his daughter (Graves, 1960: 68). Asopus arrived in Corinth and questioned Sisyphus about his daughter's whereabouts, agreeing to give Corinth an endless spring of water if she was found (Graves, 1960: 68). With this offer, Sisyphus betrayed a divine secret by revealing to Asopus where Zeus had taken Aegina (Graves, 1960: 68).

Sisyphus' betrayal enraged Zeus and he ordered his brother Hades, the god of death and the underworld, to take Sisyphus to Tartarus, an abyss where the gods send those destined for torture (Graves, 1960: 68). When Hades arrived in Corinth, Sisyphus appeared fascinated by the chains and cuffs that Hades had brought for his capture and imprisonment (Graves, 1960: 68). In awe he asked Hades to demonstrate how they worked and as soon as Hades touched the cuffs to his wrists Sisyphus

cunningly locked them and trapped Hades in his own chains (Graves, 1960: 68). While Hades was trapped in Sisyphus' home, no human on earth could die, not even those beheaded in battle, because there was no god to take them from the world (Graves, 1960: 68).

After days of no one dying during battle, Ares (the god of war) grew bored and went to search for Hades (Graves, 1960: 68). He found him in Sisyphus' home, freed him and delivered Sisyphus to be killed and his soul taken down to Tartarus once again (Graves, 1960: 68). But before his body died on earth, Sisyphus instructed his wife to throw his body out and not to bury him (Graves, 1960: 68). Upon arriving in Tartarus, Sisyphus went to Persephone, the wife of Hades, who rules the underworld with him, to plead his case for a proper burial (Graves, 1960: 69). Sisyphus persuaded Persephone to send him back to the land of the living for three days in order to arrange for a proper burial and to carry out revenge on his wife who he claimed had dishonoured and neglected his corpse (Graves, 1960: 69). As soon as Sisyphus returned to the land of the living he reneged on his promise to Persephone and stayed in the land of the living to continue his cruel reign as king (Graves, 1960: 69). When the gods realised that Sisyphus had again deceived them, they sent the godly messenger, Hermes, to retrieve him by force and deliver him to the underworld (Graves, 1960: 69).

The Judges of the Dead decided that Sisyphus' punishment for his deceptions and devious life was to place him at the foot of a hill with an enormous boulder that he had to roll up the side of the hill (Graves, 1960: 69). However, as soon as Sisyphus neared the top, the boulder would become immovable and would roll back down, forcing Sisyphus to walk back down the hill and restart his journey (Graves, 1960: 69). With this punishment Sisyphus was left for all eternity; "though sweat bathes his limbs and a cloud of dust rises above his head" Sisyphus was doomed to repeat the same action over and over (Graves, 1960: 69).

### 3.2.2 Camus' Sisyphus & Comfort

It is from the frustration of the thankless and futile effort of Sisyphus to reach a goal that is in sight (but always out of reach), that the concept of the Sisyphean loop was born – an action or task that one has to repeat over and over without ever effectively completing it (Merriam-webster.com, 2019). Existentialist philosopher, Albert Camus, was most intrigued by this loop, particularly the moment the boulder rolls back and Sisyphus pauses and turns to head back down the mountain to retrieve the rock (Camus, 1955: 75). Camus imagines this a time of rest and reflection, contrasting with the time of torture (Camus, 1955: 75). As Camus articulates, Sisyphus knows that the time of rest before

retrieving the boulder will return just as surely as the time of pushing the boulder up the hill will. In that moment Sisyphus is exempt from the frustrating torture of his boulder (Camus, 1955: 75). In that brief moment Sisyphus is free; in Camus words, "that is the hour of consciousness" (Camus, 1955: 75).

It is this consciousness that makes the myth of Sisyphus tragic, because it is in that moment that he must realise that there is no hope of ever completing his task (Camus, 1955: 76). Camus contrasts this consciousness by referring to the average workman, who carries out the same ritual torture on a daily basis, but remains blinded by the hope of possible success in the form of wealth and future comforts. It is in the consciousness of futility that is where the frustration and tragedy lies (Camus, 1955: 76). Camus does not see the physical act of rolling the boulder up the hill as the torture; instead it is the consciousness that the act is futile, that causes anguish (Camus, 1955: 76).

Camus implores the reader to regard Sisyphus as an absurd hero who is happy with his lot in life (Camus, 1955: 76). Camus stresses that it is not the futility of the task that takes meaning away from life, but that the existence of the task itself which gives meaning to one's life (Camus, 1955: 76). Camus suggests that the consciousness of futility should be accepted and harnessed in order for one to find meaning in pointless, repetitive action (Camus, 1955: 76). Through my practical component I explore this consciousness (or unconsciousness) of futility within a temporary community. I aim to illustrate how, like in *P.T.*, through suffering and acts that appear futile, one can find a community around technology.

### 3.2.3 Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? Mercerism & Sisyphus

While the myth of Sisyphus offers a means to think through the endless cyclical looping of time, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2012) by Phillip K. Dick provides a framework for the ability of technology to affect human beings collectively in the real (rather than the virtual) world. Dick's novel follows the actions of Rick Deckard<sup>22</sup> and John Isidore<sup>23</sup> in parallel (Dick, 2012). The book is set in post-apocalyptic San Francisco with characters that include humans deemed unfit to migrate to (the now colonised) planet Mars, those who chose to stay on earth, and androids (Dick, 2012).

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<sup>22</sup> Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter employed by the police to hunt the androids that have escaped their duties on Mars and are thus deemed hostile (Dick, 2012). Deckard's main motivation to do this job is to save up for a real living animal, the ultimate rarity, as most animals went extinct due to the global nuclear war (Dick, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> John Isidore is unknowingly hiding six escaped Nexus-6 model androids that are being sought by bounty hunter, Rick Deckard (Dick, 2012: 8).

Technology offers a means for otherwise disconnected individuals in the novel to experience emotional relief from an otherwise numbing life as well as take part in a religious community infused with folkloric motifs.

The religion in question, Mercerism, is based on the life and experiences of Wilbur Mercer. Mercer was found by his foster parents, Frank and Cora Mercer, floating on an inflated rubber air-rescue raft in the ocean (Dick, 2012: 16). The description of Mercer's life contains a collection of folkloresque elements used to create the authenticity of a religious figure in the mind of the congregation or folk of Mercerism. From the outset, his implied decent from the sky hints that he is not from this planet, but from somewhere higher – another plane. Having come from above, Mercer's arrival echoes the origin stories of other Messiahs whose arrival similarly originates from the heavens. But it also hints at other tales of arrival including those of Moses, who was found by the Pharaoh's daughter and her slaves, while he was drifting down the river Nile in a basket.

Mercer's early life tells of his power to resurrect beings (particularly wild animals) by using a unique nodule in his brain (Dick, 2012: 18).<sup>24</sup> One day he is captured and told that his actions are in violation of local law that prohibits time-reversal, the manner by which he brought animals back from the dead (Dick, 2012: 18). As punishment, Mercer's brain nodule is bombarded with radioactive cobalt, rendering it useless (Dick, 2012: 18).

Mercer's abilities and punishment echo those of the Christian Messiah, Jesus, who was similarly able to resurrect the dead and was also punished by those in power. But the former's punishment extends to echo that of Sisyphus. Mercer is namely condemned to struggle his way up the side of a hill while rocks are continuously thrown at him by onlookers (Dick, 2012: 16, 18). Mercerism thus tells the tale of a tragic hero that has fallen and is stuck in an endless loop of climbing the hill. But Mercer's futile repetitive action is a source of hope in the community and is used to strengthen the folk.

Mercerism is built on two laws: empathy for the individual and labour for the good of the community (Dick, 2012: 16). A particular piece of technology, the empathy box, acts as a conduit for Mercerism as it shares the experience of Mercer's punishment with his followers (Dick, 2012: 16). The empathy box is a cathode ray tube screen with graspable twin handles that emerge from a black exterior (Dick, 2012: 16). When switched on, the screen displays a random collection of colours and shapes that

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<sup>24</sup> Two animals in particular feature heavily in his life story, namely, the donkey (a preferred animal of Jesus Christ), and the frog (a plague motif).

flicker and contort in a similar manner to a television that has not been tuned to a channel (Dick, 2012: 16). When the handles of the empathy box are grasped, the screen shows a dull hillside dotted with skeletal shrubs (Dick, 2012: 16). In this landscape the congregation (all users dialled into the empathy box), see the lone figure of Mercer as an elderly man dressed in tattered ropes, struggling to make his way up the side of the hill (Dick, 2012: 16). One's physical surroundings fade away and the viewer becomes Wilbur Mercer walking up the hill while unseen entities just beyond one's field of vision, throw rocks (Dick, 2012: 18).

When the one protagonist (Isodore), grabs hold of the twin handles of his empathy box, it is described how he, along with anyone else who might be engaging with their empathy boxes at the time, sees what Mercer sees, feels what he feels and struggles with him (Dick, 2012: 16). Everyone using their empathy boxes at the time share a collective consciousness and are able to communicate with each other through their thoughts (Dick, 2012: 16). During Isodore's session with his empathy box, Mercer is struck on the arm with a stone (Dick, 2012: 16). Those engaged in the ritual walking all feel the impact on their arm and they all begin bleeding in the real world (Dick, 2012: 18). Through this sharing of a burden, the folk are shown that they are all in the struggle together. I see Mercerism as an example of what Camus meant when he spoke of harnessing the consciousness of futility in an action. The folk of Mercerism know that the climb up the hill will start from the beginning one day, but their goal of reaching the top is what gives them hope and motivates them.

A second piece of technology that affects the characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2012) is the mood organ. Iran, the wife of parallel protagonist, Deckard, makes use of a dialable mood organ that allow her to change how she feels at any given time on any given day (Dick, 2012: 3). One could dial 382 for happiness, or a 481 for an “awareness of the manifold possibilities open to [one] in the future” (Dick, 2012: 3). Iran realises that she has never felt what it is to be depressed, as all she feels upon awakening is lethargy. Even when she realises her isolation in the thousands of empty and deserted apartments that surround her and her husband, she does not experience sadness (Dick, 2012: 3). She finds her lack of sorrow worrisome and longs to experience the feeling of depression (Dick, 2012: 3). After extensive tinkering with her mood organ, Iran finds the setting for “self-accusatory depression” (Dick, 2012: 3). She dials this setting twice a month for six hours, what she finds to be the perfect amount for a person to be fully absorbed in a depressive state (Dick, 2012: 3).

The technology of the mood organ thus allows her to feel connected to human emotions that the post-

apocalyptic nature of the real world has disallowed her. This is like the empathy box, and the lives of those described in Dick's novel

### 3.3 My Sisyphus

The practical component accompanying this thesis explores the idea of the collective consciousness and the sharing of emotion and experience through technology in a similar manner to that in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2012). Through my work I aim to echo the importance of folkloric motifs used to create both folklore and the folk. In both Mercurism and the practical component titled *Sisyphus* (2019), that accompanies this text, it is the use of a shared struggle mediated through technology that acts as the glue between the folk.

#### 3.3.1 The Installation

*Sisyphus* (2019) consists of a 4:3 aspect ratio Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) television<sup>25</sup> mounted to the wall just above eye level with four buttons set in perspex underneath it at roughly hip height (Fig. 12). The piece is meant to be interacted with by up to four people at any given time, be they strangers or acquaintances. On the television screen, the viewer-cum-player finds a figure standing behind a white car with their hands on the boot, in the position one would take to push-start a car. The edges of the screen are hidden in a black, circular vignette in order to place emphasis on the character and the car, thus obscuring what has passed and what is yet to come on the road (Fig. 13).

The scene is quiet until a player walks up to the piece and holds down the first button. The scene comes to life with a drone and the sound of wheels rolling on tarmac is accompanied by sporadic bursts of the car attempting to come to life. The player does not know where the car is going or where it has come from; the only indication of progress is the continuing movement of the road lines on the tarmac and the occasional tree passing by on the periphery. The car will move faster with each player who joins as they hold down a button. The sound plays faster and the engine noises become more frequent, suggesting an increasing likelihood that the car will jump to life. By the time four players have joined (and thus all of the buttons have been pressed), it appears that the car will start at any moment and the character will be freed from their loop – but this moment never comes. Once the

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<sup>25</sup> Also known as a box television that was popular from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. The particular model used in *Sisyphus* (2019) is from the 1990s.

players give up by releasing the button, the car slowly rolls to a stop, the sounds fade away, and all the progress that a player might have made, is discarded.

The aim of *Sisyphus* (2019) is to create a temporary community surrounding this piece. The players act as a collective Sisyphus in gathering around the character and his car and working together in an attempt to get its engine started. The activity offers a common factor around which the folk of the game can gather on a small scale through a sharing of joint struggle and frustration. It thus joins the folkloric motifs of the original myth with the technology enabled collective consciousness of Mercerism's empathy box.

In contrast to the myth of Sisyphus, Mercerism substitutes the cruel king for a tragic hero. The main function of Sisyphus' loop is lonesome punishment without the help of others; but in my practical component there is no inherent hope or punishment; it is left up to the viewer as to whether or not they wish to engage the installation by becoming a player. The character pushing the car has no tale to shed light on the circumstances leading up to their predicament; instead there is a void that allows each viewer to insert their own personal history. The screen character's lack of distinguishing features is further intended to encourage players to project themselves into the scene and take the communal role of Sisyphus. The non-place is implemented in the ambiguity of the scenery wherein the character finds himself, allowing for further submersion of the player. The players have a choice; whether to share hopeful or hopeless capital in the field of the installation. In doing so they influence the habitus of the folk involved. The futility of the task thus lies in the hands of the folk (*Sisyphus*, 2019).

### 3.3.2 The Technology

The visual and aural aesthetics of the display devices used, as well as the content shown in *Sisyphus* (2019), are intended to mentally transport the viewer to the 1990s through the physical use of a CRT television set, the inclusion of a high frequency hum (typical when switching on technology of this era), and the visual 'scaliness' unique to the CRT technology (visible lines moving across and subtly obscuring the screen). While the design and coding for the installation was done on a present day<sup>26</sup> computer, the appearance of the game has harnessed digitally replicated filters to evoke a sense of the desired time period.

In order to achieve this aesthetic transformation, the visual language of *Sisyphus* (2019) is created in

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<sup>26</sup> June 2019 at the time of writing.

a similar style to video games originally produced for the graphic capabilities of the Sony PlayStation 2 console (popular during the 2000s). In using three dimensional characters and environments that appear ‘low poly’ (i.e. designed with a low polygon count), their visual style is less smooth and contains less detail in comparison to those produced today.

The executable file for *Sisyphus* (2019) – compatible with the latest computer operating systems – is played on a contemporary computer linked to the CRT television. In order to disguise this fact, the video output is run through a series of converters in order to change the digital HDMI image from this modern device into the analogue NTSC colour scheme of the television. By sending modern digital visual from a High Definition (HD) source and converting it to analogue, I am able to mask the contemporary making of *Sisyphus* (2019): the addition of visual scaliness and, consequently, a sense of the CRT television age, evokes an experience of the era, the past.

To complete the appearance of past decades, the four perspex-mounted buttons available to players are industry standard SANWA arcade buttons from Japan. These buttons were installed in most arcade cabinets in video game arcades from during the early 1980s. Most people who grew up during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s in South Africa, myself included, have come across these buttons in shopping mall video game arcades, or in arcade cabinets found in convenience and corner stores.<sup>27</sup> In using machines of this kind, players would partake in the video game community in public – sharing this experience with both those they did and did not know. From my personal experience, growing up during the culture of arcade cabinets thus had its own laws, taboos and lore surrounding the folk – much of which was lost with the privatising of gameplay through individual ownership and the home-based use of console gaming.

By jumbling the different eras (1980s, 1990s, 2000s) into a single installation, I aim to remove *Sisyphus* (2019) as a whole from any discernible time period. It is, instead, intended to exude a vague sense of the authenticity of all the technology that it features, while avoiding too clear a decade. Both familiar and strange, this ambiguous merging of historical references is similar to the strategies of non-place to prompt a feeling of unease rather than nostalgia. It is in this way that *Sisyphus* (2019) is thus made to feel spectral – an anachronous collection of past technologies.

### 3.3.3 Tone

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<sup>27</sup> These cabinets usually featured games like *Street Fighter* (1987) and *Pac-Man* (1980) that could be played by inserting coins into the machine.

Tone is used to describe a musical sound or note (Etymonline.com, 2019). The word has its roots in French, Greek and Latin, all of which defined it in relation to sound made by stretching or tightening, be it in relation to a string on an instrument or human vocal chords. In a less literal sense, the tension that tone speaks of is explored through the use of the Shepard's tone in *Sisyphus* (2019). The Shepard's tone is an auditory illusion discovered by Roger N. Shepard that comprises "[a] special set of computer-generated complex tones" that are "shown to lead to a complete breakdown of transitivity in judgments of relative pitch" (Shepard, 1964: 2350). According to Shepard:

the tones can be represented as equally spaced points around a circle in such a way that the clockwise neighbor of each tone is judged higher in pitch while the counterclockwise neighbor is judged lower in pitch. Diametrically opposed tones – though clearly different in pitch – are quite ambiguous as to the direction of the difference. The results demonstrate the operation of a “proximity principle” for the continuum of frequency and suggest that perceived pitch cannot be adequately represented by a purely rectilinear scale (Shepard, 1964: 2350).

The Shepard's tone is thus able to create the illusion of a sound infinitely rising or falling as it leads to the breakdown of judgment of relative pitch, leading the brain to believe that what is being heard can rise forever or fall forever (Shepard, 1964: 2350). This auditory illusion has been used in music and film to create tension in the listener by instilling a sense of impending climax (Shepard, 1964: 2350). The anticipation is met with frustration when the listener discovers that the sound does not lead to a climax, but continues rising or falling infinitely (Shepard, 1964: 2350).

This auditory non-place is used in *Sisyphus* (2019) as a layer of sound combined with that of tyres rolling on asphalt. The Shepard's tone thus emphasises the sense that the car is picking up speed infinitely, instilling expectation and hope in the player. However the sound of the tyres on the asphalt rise along with the Shepard's tone, never leading to the climax of the car starting. It is thus introduced to induce shared anxiety and frustration in the players, thereby echoing the infinite punishing ascension of Sisyphus.

### **3.4 Hauntology and Cassette Tapes**

*A Diagram in Haunting* (2019) is a work inspired by Fisher's writings on Hauntology. This installation essentially acts as a diagram in which I define hauntology in my own terms. From this idea came which is a sound installation piece (Fig. 14; Fig. 15; Fig. 16). The purpose of the installation

is to communicate the core idea of hauntology, the concept of replacing being with spectre, through audio. It acts diagrammatically in that it offers a simplified rendition of a complex concept that attempts to explain the latter's structure and inner workings.

The installation consists of two modified cassette recorders placed a set distance apart. One machine records the sounds of viewers passing through the room and sends the sound down the black tape loop to the second machine which in turn plays this recording back. The delay in playback allows the sound of the viewer to haunt the space even after they have left the area, allowing the technology to facilitate a lingering presence of an absent body caught in an infinite cassette loop. It is neither the viewer in the space, nor is it the absence of them, but the spectre of their existence.

The endless Sisyphean loop is also visually illustrated via the use of audio cassette tapes in that the tape in the cassette itself illustrates the passing of time, both through its continued spooled movement while it literally records the passing of time through the logging of sound.<sup>28</sup> The tape loop is also displayed by being suspended in the air, exaggerating the infinite movement of thereof from one machine to the next. This has the effect of creating tension in the viewer, particularly when they become aware that they are being recorded and that this sound is played back into the space.<sup>29</sup>

In being recorded and seeing the sounds one made invisibly travel on a piece of tape that cements the moment audibly captured (in the past), the delay of this moment's travel between machines (in the present), and the anticipation of hearing one's existence (in the future). In seeing the tape travelling, there is the recognition that a part of one's past has been sent into the future – confusing and complicating time and space. But the cassette tapes themselves also infuse the sense of a bygone era into the recording, both through their visual and material reference to analogue (rather than digital) technology, as well as their effect on the recorded sound. While vinyl crackle introduces a nostalgic sense of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, cassette tapes similarly produce a distinct, yet subtle 'dusty' hiss. Hearing this effect mentally transports the listener back to a time that they associate with their use of this technology.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the myth of Sisyphus and the religion of Mercerism through a comparison

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<sup>28</sup> The piece works on a scale of approximately 30 seconds per meter of tape.

<sup>29</sup> This experience was shared with me by viewers who attended the first test exhibition that included this work.

of the main characters. The contrasts between Wilbur Mercer and Sisyphus brought to light important folkloric motifs that I reinterpreted into my practical work. In *Sisyphus* (2019) I use the infinite loop of futility in conjunction with the concept of non-place in order to create a gap for the viewer/player to insert their own conclusion of either punishment or hope. I further expanded on the non-place through technology, by creating an ambiguous environment and character in *Sisyphus* (2019) which encourages cooperation between the four players engaging with the installation. Lastly, I explored the effectiveness of hauntology in audio by discussing *a Diagram in Haunting* (2019) and the phenomenon of the Shepard's tone that I use in *Sisyphus* (2019). This chapter documents my interpretation of folkloric motifs and how I have used them to create the folkloresque product that is *Sisyphus* (2019). In *Sisyphus* (2019) I show how using the folkloresque in tandem with hauntology, as opposed to in contrast with, amplifies authenticity and engagement when approaching interactive video games as a medium for folklore.

## CONCLUSION

In this text I have explored the idea of folkloresque products becoming folklore through their assimilation into popular culture. I have approached this idea through a hauntological lens and the work of Pierre Bourdieu in an attempt to provide an idea of how folklore is being (re)used and circulated by the creators and folk of digital folklore communities. Hauntology aided me by acting as a warning system, sounding alarms when progress was falling into a stagnant loop. While Pierre Bourdieu's capitalist metaphors of pop culture gave me tools by which to navigate the folk of online communities. I have found that through the use of motifs and allusion to folklore Hideo Kojima has created new folklore in the form of *Silent Hills P.T.* His own interpretations of classical folktale motifs and tale morphologies created a new tale that carries with it all the weight of the classical folklore that it references, complete with a community of folk. By exploring P.T. and Guillermo Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, I found guidelines which I followed to create folkloresque products of my own in *Sisyphus* (2019).

I started the journey through this text in chapter one by defining the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the cyclicity of cultural production. I later related these ideas to folk groups and saw how power struggles within the field of a specific group of folk drives folklore forward. Bourdieu's work speaks of the external world influencing the individual and how, in turn, the individual changes the social reality of the external world. The symbiosis between the field and the habitus illustrates the process by which the folk (re)use folklore. Bourdieu's theories form the foundation for my understanding of the folk and popular culture as I use them in this text.

Following the work of Bourdieu I discussed how the folkloresque uses and re-uses folkloric motifs in popular culture to instil authenticity. In this section I found that it is more important for the people who engage with a piece of media to regard it as folklore than it is for something to be regarded as folklore by academia. I also spoke of the importance of not simply using folkloric motifs as they are found in their original context, but to insert one's own performance into their use. To illustrate this I applied the folkloresque to Guillermo Del Toro's film, *Pan's Labyrinth*, where I found Del Toro to use folkloric motifs by distilling them to their essence and using them with his own performance. In doing so he added the authenticity of folklore to a wholly new folkloresque product.

The last theoretical piece I introduced in the first chapter was hauntology, the idea of replacing being with spectre, and how this idea has become more relevant as technology progressed. Tele-technologies have created a new space for the human presence to be spectralised and recored out of

time. I noted in this section how hauntology warns of the re-use of the past and how it could cause the cancellation of the future. Re-using motifs from the past could hinder innovation and may cause anachronisms that could counteract authenticity and be jarring to the viewer.

In the last section of this chapter I applied before mentioned theories to an exploration of *Pan's Labyrinth* and found how Del Toro uses the folkloresque to reference back to the horror roots of folktales in an attempt to reverse desensitization of folktales by popular culture. He finds authenticity in horror through retelling cautionary tales in his distillation of folkloric motifs. I ended this chapter by pondering the possibility of the assimilation of the folkloresque into popular culture as true folklore.

In the second chapter of this text I introduced the video game, *Silent Hills P.T.*, by Hideo Kojima and explored how the creator uses folkloric motifs in the interactive horror game. I found that Kojima does not directly use motifs, but merely alludes to them through tale morphology and character roles, such as the fairy godmother and magical helpers. His use of motifs and folktale morphology in horror resonates with cautionary tales in their visceral use of gore and death. In some cases, such as the allusion to *Hansel and Gretel*, I found Kojima to amplify the use of horror while alluding to a classical folk tale.

I found hauntology to be present in *P.T.* through how time has stained the game and its characters. Kojima uses the idea of the non-place in conjunction with the suburban home to amplify horror. The non-place in *P.T.* turns it's hallway into a familiar space that the viewer feels they might at some point have encountered in the real world. The hauntology found in *P.T.* shows how it can be used in an effective manner without preventing progress as was mentioned in the first chapter.

In this chapter I introduced the folk and community and explained how I define the folk in the digital world with its infinite connectivity. The classical definitions of folklore and the folk are challenged here by doing away with the traditional 'face to face' transmission by which classical folklorists define folklore. In this chapter I show how, through *P.T.*, Kojima created a game that encourages collaborative play across geographical and language barriers. Through worldwide collaboration, *P.T.* encourages the creation of a community of folk that share the folklore of *P.T.* Through exploring the community of *P.T.*, I discovered how it functions as a diagram for explaining Bourdieu's theories in the real world. Players in the *P.T.* community shared their expertise with the field and in doing so influenced the habitus of those in the community which changes the field, allowing for more capital

to be found. Through the folk of the *P.T.* community, all the puzzles were solved and the game was finished collectively.

*Silent Hills P.T.* does not exist as a video game anymore, but because of records of its existence in the folk surrounding it, *P.T.* has been rendered immortal through folklore. It has become a hauntological product in the sense that it no longer exists in its original form, nor has it been completely erased. *P.T.* exists in a spectral form within folklore shared amongst its community.

In the third and final chapter of this text I introduced the myth of Sisyphus and its duality as both a source of punishment and hope through the view of Albert Camus. I echo the sentiment of hope by comparing Sisyphus to Mercerism and how Mercerism creates hope through futile labour by including a community. Mercerism shows that through working for the greater good of the community one focuses on the hope of a collective progression instead of the infinite loop of futility for the individual. I reinterpreted these ideas by borrowing motifs from Sisyphus and creating a new interactive video game work from them. *Sisyphus (2019)* leaves the outcome of the action up to the player(s), placing the possibility of hope or torture in their hands. I showed in *Sisyphus (2019)* how hauntology could be incorporated through visuals, the physical installation and sound in order to amplify authenticity and relatability in the folk. I further explored hauntology in audio in *A Diagram in Haunting (2019)* by imagining hauntology as a visible and audible diagram. This chapter documented my practical work and the mental processes I went through to create them. Through my practical work I took folkloric motifs and incorporated them in my personal unique way in a folkloresque interactive exhibition.

Through my own work, and the films and video games that I have mentioned in this text, I have shown how the folkloresque could possibly be assimilated into popular culture as folklore. I feel that the archaic word-of-mouth constraints of classical folklore has fallen away with the rise of technology in everyday life. There is a clearly defined place for the study of folkloristics in the digital world where folk are connected to each other regardless of geographical location.

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## LIST OF FIGURES



Fig. 1. Fairy in Insect Form, *Pan's Labyrinth*. 2006. Screenshot by author.

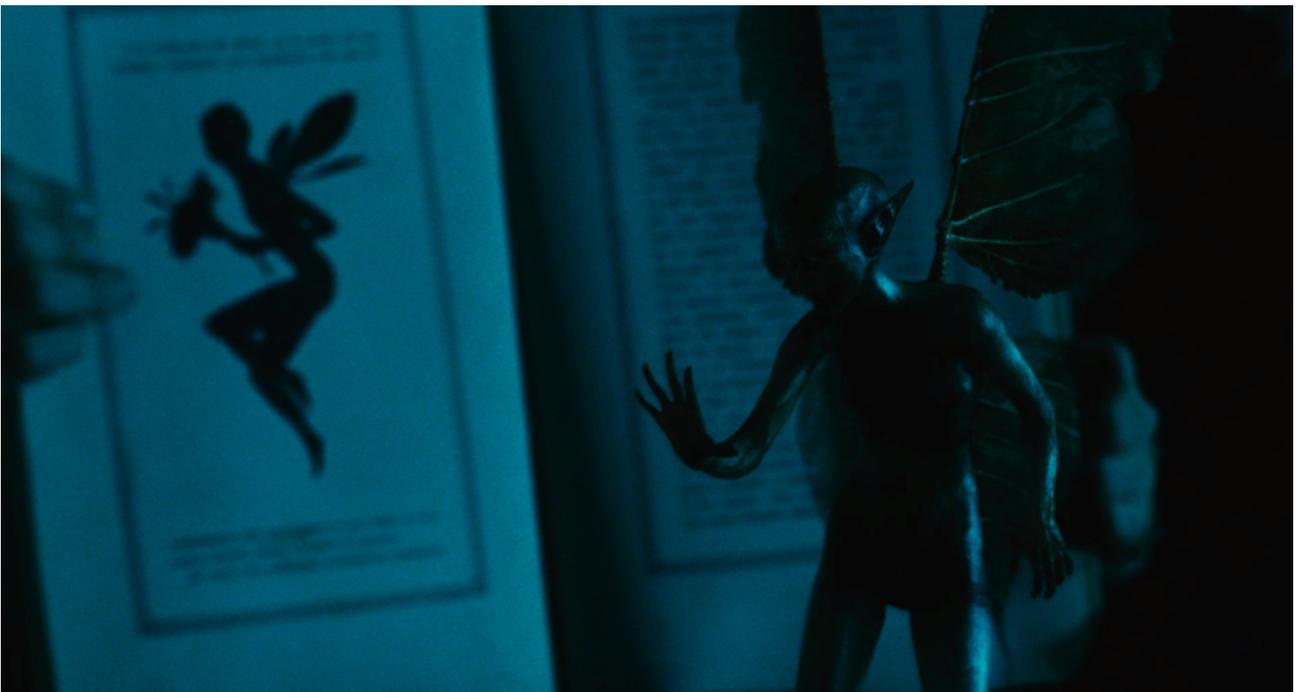


Fig. 2. Fairy in Winged Humanoid Form, *Pan's Labyrinth*. 2006. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 3. Two-headed Cockroach Crosses the Floor, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 4. Hallway, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 5. Radio Playing News Broadcast, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 6. Lisa, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig 7. Sawaki Suushi, *Yūrei*. c.a. 1737. (commons.wikimedia.org)



Fig. 8. Bloody Brown Paper Bag, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 9. Foetus in Sink, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 10. Non Place



Fig. 11. Screen Glitch, *P.T.* 2014. Screenshot by author.



Fig. 12. Louis Odendaal, *Sisyphus* (Installation View). 2019.



Fig. 13. Louis Odendaal, *Sisyphus*. 2019.



Fig. 14. Louis Odendaal, *Diagram in Haunting* (Installation View). 2019.



Fig. 15. Louis Odendaal, *Diagram in Haunting* (Detail of Cassette Recorder). 2019.

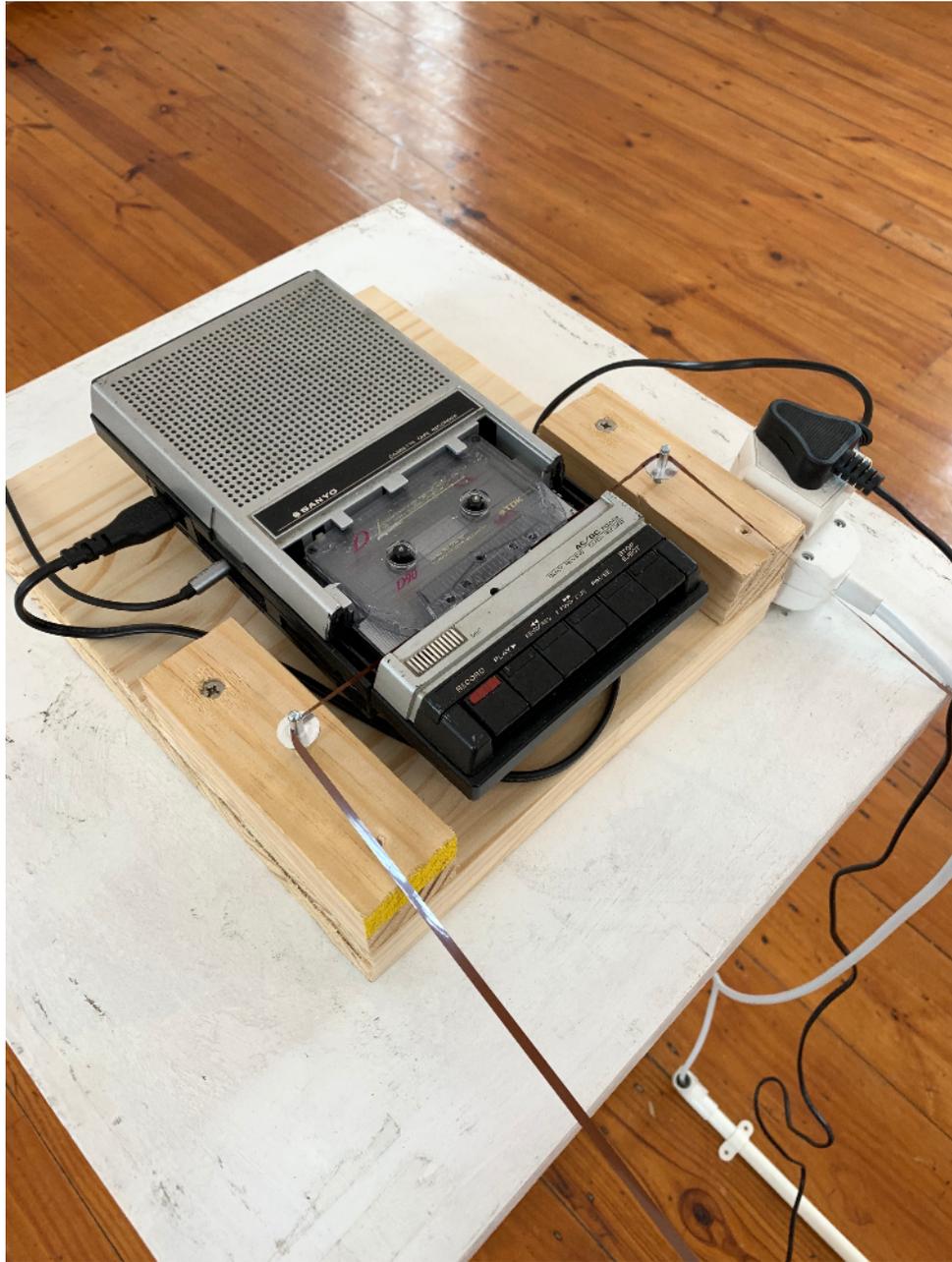


Fig. 16. Louis Odendaal, *Diagram in Haunting* (Detail of Cassette Player). 2019.