Monsters and Machines: Reframing Horror Video Games through Representations of Technology

by

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Abstract

Horror video games are an important site for technological examination. This thesis will explore the specific conjunction between the information medium of video game technology (within the game) and the cultural phenomenon of the representation of technology predicated in games. This thesis will discuss the nature of information dissemination mediated by technology, in relation to both monster and player, in horror video games. Using a qualitative methodological approach from Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton, combined with my contribution of understanding horror (power, networks, sensation), this thesis will discuss the perception technology encourages once inundated in horror games. Through this perspective, the significance of technology in horror games contributes to overarching Western cultural ideologies concerning the role of technology. Four games will be discussed as examples; these games will elucidate the relationship between technology, the monster, and the player as a mediated and carefully curated connection.
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1 Description

Ralph Waldo Emerson tells us: “dreams and beasts are two keys by which we are to find out the secrets of our nature” (1832, pg. 81). Whereas in contemporary society many dreams are tied to technology so too have they grown to play a role in many of society’s nightmares. Similar to dreams and beasts, technology exists on the periphery of human understanding. Technology frustrates any preconceived notions of familiarity and negotiates the boundaries of what is recognizable. A reciprocal relationship can be demonstrated between the development of technology and the fears of society: as technologies work to overcome weakness, the production of horror demands that new weaknesses must be found.

Niall Scott, in the introduction to the novel *Monsters and the Monstrous*, asserts that “the monster as metaphor continues to be a powerful expression of the imagination and the rational” (2007, pg. 1). The monster itself is set in opposition to humanity; as such, by its very nature, monsters provide a reflection of humankind. The monster is, in its antagonism, a signifier of what society presents as fundamentally different and unalike ‘acceptable’ society. At its very foundation, by representing transgression and dissimilarity, a society’s conception of monsters is an inextricable reflection of its fears. As fears reveal fundamental anxieties shared within society, the study of a society’s monsters can provide insight into its culture.

As Mary Shelley writes in the introduction to her famous gothic horror, *Frankenstein*, “Everything must have a beginning…. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos” (1831, pg. 1). Surely one of Shelley’s most wistful lines in English writing, Shelley’s introduction to her canonical work *Frankenstein* is haunting and pervasive. This phase, of course, laments and foreshadows the creation of Frankenstein’s monster and the attempted invocation of greatness through invention. The quote is also true for literary invention and its relation to the author. In this case, the inventor would be the author a piece of writing. With such psychological entreaties found within Mary Shelley’s notion, one can see that her audience, in the 19th century, maintained massive anxiety with the redefinition of their old values which were being challenged and provoked by invention and technological (and, therefore social) advancement. This quote echoes the work my thesis contributes to an ongoing
conversation and general cultural discourse. Just as the technology in Frankenstein was couched in environmental discourse, so too, do I assert that the representation of technology in games reflects a broader societal expectation and, thus, anxiety.

As societies develop and work to overcome their weaknesses, so too are monsters adapted to maintain their atmosphere of terror. As technology develops to compensate for human frailties, monsters must find ways to circumvent and undermine new technologies. The plots of horror games must compensate for the advantages of technology and still maintain the atmosphere of fear. To illustrate this phenomenon, my thesis will explore four contemporary horror video games: Slender: The Eight Pages, Amnesia: The Dark Descent, Outlast, and Five Nights at Freddy’s. Through these games, I will explore how ubiquitous technological representation is disrupted and frustrated through these games. Through this analysis, the technology one implicitly relies on -- and takes for granted in their everyday life -- crumbles and leaves the player in a more perilous position through its failure.

The textual forms of video games will be read, analyzed, and approached, from a humanities perspective. The chosen games will elucidate the relationship between technology, the monster, and the player as a mediated and carefully curated connection. Each game was chosen for their ‘flight-centered’ approach to the game as well as their position in cultural consciousness. This thesis argues that this assumed role (and hierarchy) between technology and the player is disrupted in horror video games; technology cannot be an entire means to liberation – this deliverance must come from within the player.
2 Thesis

The portable comfort zone which technology provides establishes a space in which individuals can always take refuge; horror video games, in challenging and confronting people’s safety, must find ways to violate this refuge. The study of horror video games will help expose the vulnerabilities in cultural perception of technological comfort. Horror video games pervert the reassuring promise of technological redemption and security and illustrate how monsters are inextricably a part of human consciousness despite the reassurances of technological innovation. This thesis will demonstrate, using the aforementioned video games, how technology must intrude into the preconceived ‘safety’ individuals have established prior to engaging with a horror video game.

3 Importance

Monsters are cultural signifiers of societal fears while technology works to provide safety from those fears – researching the interaction of technology and monsters in the horror genre will illuminate the vulnerabilities within cultural perceptions of technology. This consideration will expose the fears not only surrounding technology, but also how the cultural boundaries have shifted and manifested themselves in contemporary monsters. In the broader study of monsters, cultural boundaries, and societal perceptions of technology, my thesis will serve as a data point to better map cultural shifts.

This thesis also corresponds with the emergence of virtual reality headsets which are already being applied to video games. Even though virtual reality is in its infancy, developer kits have been released and some impressive virtual reality horror games have already been created to take advantage of the increased immersion. As horror video games take advantage of the increased capacities of virtual reality, the ways in which people interact with the monsters and technology within those video games will hold deep cultural significance. This thesis will help to provide a foundation for that cultural significance to be uncovered.
In the novel Digital Play, authors Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter discuss how ‘[o]ver the last couple of decades a growing number of voices have dissented from […] technological euphoria” (2003, pg. 17). As such, the authors reject this ‘technological euphoria’ (which is synonymous with technological determinism) in favour of a critical study of video games as one of many digital inventions. Kline, Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter stress the importance of not so quickly equating ‘passivity’ with television and ‘activity’ with digital texts (2003, pg. 18). Video games as a mediated form of communication are important to analyze and engage with as they elicit a sense of immunity from passive engagement. This thesis will aid in characterizing the sub-textual codes and cultural signifiers that are inherent in video games and their importance to society, therein. The element of ‘passivity’ this thesis will focus on deconstructing is that of the expectations and prospects imbued in technology via the technology’s use and strategy on the player’s behalf.

4 Relevant Background

This section will dissect the convergence between ‘technology’ and ‘horror’ by providing an in-depth analysis of the two terms. In discussing these two concepts separately, one is able to understand the applicable background in which this thesis rests. By combining these two elements, this thesis will investigate how the deliberate experience of being uncomfortable is couched in society’s perception of technology (and vice versa).

4.1 The Importance of Technology

Technology, as discussed in this work, is defined as objects created or modified by humans to serve a purpose to their whims. Technology, in this lens, is separate from humans, albeit not wholly so. Technology is a physical manifestation of an, once abstract, thought or question. As David Nye argues in his book Technology Matters, defining technology is an arduous and tenuous task; yet, one can think of it in terms of an ‘evolution’ of a natural object (2006, pg. 1). This ‘evolution’ of a natural object is important to this text’s understanding and definition of technology as I will be discussing technology in superficially ‘expansive’ conditions; however,
my discussion of technology is fundamentally based on its ‘evolution’. As such, the technology discussed in this text reflect the objects that are external to the character and essential for the game (in its progress, communication, and difficulty).

Nevertheless, despite technology’s precarious definition, one can see that technology is crucial to understanding the fabric and foundation of society. As Karl Marx ruminated in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, “the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist” (1847, pg. 49). Using Marx’s interpretation, technology is crucial and the central driving force of societal development, communication, and progress.

Under this foundation, this thesis will discuss technology as objects whose actions or repercussions, used by or against the player, impact and affect the avatar and its progress throughout the game. From David Nye’s work, this definition incorporates the past conceptualizations of technology along with its definition as an evolutionary concept. For Marx, under a technologically determinist perspective, technology is couched in the very fabric of society. These definitions help set the boundaries through which this thesis can analyze the subject matter.

### 4.2 The Significance of Horror

Horror video games represent a unique juncture between technology and fear. To remain plausible, horror games must include technology that one would reasonably expect to have in the situation the player is placed in; however, to encourage the atmosphere of horror, the game must negotiate the use of technology. The video game must also attack the security, power, and comfort that the technology provides to induce horror. The ways in which horror is produced, therefore, simultaneously reflect cultural perceptions about the capacities of technology and the vulnerabilities inherent within technology. Horror video games offer a profound exploration of the perceived boundaries of technology when technology is used to confront cultural fears.
6 Analytic Toolset

Three main themes will be found throughout the course of this thesis to help understand how technology is manipulated in horror games: networks, power, and sensation. The theme of networks will primarily be found in reference to technology found in horror video games, its connection to the infrastructure it relies on, and how it is severed to induce fear. The theme of power is found in the duality of technology in video games: while technology provides feelings of empowerment, the failure of technology in horror video games shatters that empowerment the individual takes for granted and forces them to confront the limited capacities of their body. And finally, the theme of sensation references the precarious nature of technology which must be rationed because it is severed from the infrastructure needed for its continued use. These three themes (also referred to as “elements” and the “analytical toolset”) all pertain to the use of technology and the ways in which they are manipulated will be foundational to understanding how horror is created. These themes do not replace the framework I will be using (see section 6.0); instead, they supplement each element of the framework to suit horror games. These three themes all pertain to the use of technology and the ways in which they are manipulated and will be foundational to understanding how horror is created; these themes frame the technologies in similar contexts to each other.

6.1 Networks:

The source of power for technology is finite; each relies on supporting infrastructure to continue to function and without it, the user is confronted with its inevitable uselessness. According to Tim Blackmore, “consumer technology” (i.e. what the average consumer uses) is “a nozzle on a supply chain” (2005, pg. 8). Blackmore argues that it is common to think a technology is the locus of a wider context of technological development, innovation, and supply which led to the device. However, a given device is more like the nozzle of the entire means and relations of production that led to its creation. Horror games can be seen as inducing fear by severing the infrastructure that allows the portrayed technologies to function. The horror games that will be studied illustrate the anxieties that arise when the individual and their technologies are severed from their infrastructure.
6.2 Power:

Technologies extend human capacities – they push the boundaries of human sensation and experience further and further. When surrounded by constantly connected devices, the world seems illuminated by the connections that form around each individual in contemporary society; this in turn creates feelings of comfort and protection from one’s surroundings. There is a false sense of power and comfort within technology – technology is seen as an empowering tool. When severed from the technology’s infrastructure, however, it is realized that one only has a tenuous connection to the comfort and safety that technology provides. The monster holds power over the human and, by extension, the technology as well.

6.3 Sensation:

The integration of monsters and technology in video games creates a new form of sensation. The human (player) is forced to rely on technology as a replacement or extension of the senses because their human capacities would otherwise fail in the scenario (such as a camera or flashlight for seeing in the dark). Horror games induce anxiety by forcing the player to rely on technology while being constantly reminded that it is no longer supported by infrastructure. The monster obscures the boundaries of the senses – when the monster perverts the function of the technology, the once seamless integration with the human and the technology is destroyed. Ultimately, the player is confronted with the failings of their own senses against the heightened, yet limited, capabilities of technology.

7 Methodology

This methodology section will first outline Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton’s framework for the qualitative analysis of video games which will provide the foundation for the next section to integrate it with the analytic toolset to adapt it to horror games. This thesis will be conducted under a formal analysis guided by Consalvo and Dutton’s framework. While this
analysis applies to video games generally, I tailored the approach to better reflect the elements of horror games. Within each of these areas of analysis, I focused on three themes specific to the horror context (as were discussed previously – power, networks, and sensation). As such, this thesis is approached from a humanities perspective with a focus on texts and merging the content of texts. Using Consalvo and Dutton’s framework, I will discuss how these games take shape if analyzed within their structure. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum’s work on close-reading video games is useful, here, as it discusses the “connotations embedded in the text of the games, and the associations by the player” (2011, pg. 293). By closely interrogating the texts and their representation of technology, in using close-reading methods, one can analyze artifacts and elements which might seem innocuous to fully deconstruct and examine the games. As Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum further discuss “Mia Consalvo and Nathan Dutton describe an analysis technique that is very similar to close reading, however they don’t situate it within a broader methodological tradition” (2011, pg. 290). This intersection is the point where I insert my techniques for further analyzing the text in specific relation to technology: via networks, power and sensation. As such, understanding these texts will be through the lens of a humanities perspective with a focus on symbolic and referential codes.

7.1 Qualitative Analysis Foundations

This section will look at Consalvo and Dutton’s framework for the qualitative analysis of video games. To that end, Consalvo and Dutton offer four areas of analysis to properly study a game: object inventory, interface study, interaction map, and gameplay log. While this method of qualitative analysis applies to video games generally, the next section will tailor this approach to horror video games.

The Object Inventory refers to the accounting and analysis of the items in a game (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006, pg. 4). In general, establishing an object inventory helps to identify the larger role of objects in the game. Interface Study looks at any “on-screen information” that is available to the player such as life, health, grid, and weapons. Interface Study will be useful to this project as it “helps determine what the game developers have deemed essential” (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006, pg. 5). The Interaction Map looks at the noteworthy interactions between characters in the game; in application to horror games, this section will primarily focus on the interactions
between a monster and the character, objects and the character, a how the character interacts with itself. The Gameplay Log explores “the overall ‘world’ of the game” and the “emergent aspects of the game that can come into being” (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006, pg. 8). The Interaction Map will provide a larger perspective of the game that may not be available through the narrow focus of the other sections (Consalvo and Dutton, 2006, pg. 8).

7.2 Application to Horror Games

Having established the foundational approach to studying video games, this section will adapt the approach to horror video games by integrating it with the analytical toolset. As discussed in section 5.0 the analytical toolset represents core elements that are necessary to induce horror; by integrating the core elements in the qualitative analysis, each area established by Consalvo and Dutton will be directed to help understand how horror is established.

7.2.1 Object Inventory

Object inventory, in application to horror video games, can be seen through the three contexts presented in the “Analytic Toolset”: power, networks, and sensation. In relation to power, the object inventory can also help discern the player’s ability to exert control over the environment. The framework of power will provide a context to answer important questions such as: which items can the player pick up, does the player have to prioritize which items are used, and does bringing up inventory pause gameplay?

The breadth of items available can help establish what remnants of networks remain in the player’s isolation. The networks section will help answer questions such as: are the objects single-use or multi-use (are the objects supposed to be limited in their use), and what is the normal function of this object?

Finally, under the context of sensation, analyzing each individual object for its vulnerabilities, faults, and failing relates to the precarious extension of the player’s sense. Sensation, as a toolset, will encourage questions such as: how does the object compensate for human shortfalls, what is the cost of using the object, is the object incompatible with other player actions (e.g. running)?
7.2.2 Interface

Interface, in relation to power, will look at what information is privileged and what power is given to the player’ in contrast, looking at what information is hidden can help discern how the player’s power is undermined or enhanced. The networks section will explore how the information available can help determine the essential elements to the player’s network; in a player’s isolation, their items cannot be replenished but instead be scavenged to survive. One must constantly seek these objects to create a frail network in which to survive. Sensation and interface will analyze the information available to the player that can help illustrate what the player is connected to.

7.2.3 Interaction Map

The Interaction Map is useful in the discussion of power as it confers where a player’s objectives come from and what drives these objectives (is it the monster, an intrinsic desire, curiosity?) Networks are important to help elucidate who (or what) the player interacts with. Finally, sensation will explore who and what the player can interact with beyond their isolation and the frailties within those connections.

7.2.4 Gameplay Log

Power in relation to the Gameplay Log is valuable as it will elucidate how much freedom a player is granted within the game and, correspondingly, how coerced the player is to follow the plot. Further, the broader perspective under this stage of analysis can examine the relationship between the character and the antagonist. Looking at this section through networks will illuminate in what ways a player is separated from society and how this is important or necessary to the atmosphere of horror. Sensation, within the context of the Gameplay Log, will be able to examine the overarching methods by which the security found in technology is undermined.

Technology, in horror games, negotiates the space of anxiety. If the technology were too successful in aiding the player, the game would not be “fun”; thus, technology must negotiate its own power “for” the player and, effectively, betray the player instead. If technology does have power over a monster, this power must be limited and managed. Games like *Amnesia, Slender:*
The Eight Pages, and Outlast all feature types of technology that would, conventionally, help the player navigate the space; however, due to the nature of the game, the technology must break, be limited, or lose its usefulness near enemies. In Amnesia, an oil lamp will save the player from insanity; however, it requires oil to work which forces the player deeper into the horrific environment. The same trope is true for Outlast, as the player must find batteries for his camera to be able to see in the darkness of a chaotic insane asylum. Slender: The Eight Pages features a flashlight with unlimited battery use but also attracts the monster to the player. This limited technology is symbolic of escaping societal boundaries and the comfort that’s been constructed. By providing only the remnants of technology, it is symbolic of living away from the comfort provided.

Between the benefits and dangers, the use of technology poses in horror games, technology can be seen as occupying a precarious position between the player and the environment that works to heighten feelings of anxiety and fear. As mentioned prior, technology ubiquitously mediates the interactions between an individual and their surroundings; a player must be able to disconnect from the security those mediations provide to allow the game to create a dangerous world. The unfettered use of technology, as is available in society, would detract from effects of the game by making it too easy. The position of technology is precarious because its use must be balanced between the objectives of realism and fear. If the technology is too useful, then the game will be too easy; if the technology creates too much disadvantage, then the game will either be too hard or too unrealistic. How horror games allow players to use technology is crucial to establishing an atmosphere conducive to instilling fear.

8 Game Choice Rationale

The games chosen for this work were chosen for three main reasons: their establishment in cultural awareness, their genre as nightmare-centered games, and their ‘flight-centered’ attributes of escape-focused play.

At its most basic, these games were chosen due to their embeddedness in cultural consciousness and their corresponding demonstration of technology as socially mediated. Each of these games have cultural fallings. To demonstrate this, there is massive notoriety due to the game Slender:
The Eight Pages and its corresponding monster. In Wisconsin in 2014, two girls stabbed another girl almost to the point of death, purportedly to impress the fictional Slender Man (Aiken, 2017, pg. 155). The trial surrounding this case has gained massive media and societal attention and evoked a strong reaction from concerned parents, the media and the authorities. The chief of police in charge of the investigation even went so far as to state that this stabbing “should be a wake-up call for all parents”; he further argued that children’s internet browsing should be monitored to prevent these ‘blackholes’ from impacting children (Aiken, 2017, pg. 155). As Mary Aiken, a cyberpsychologist, writes that Slender Man quickly “became a focus of fan fiction and a horror hero” (2017, pg. 154). Indeed, before Slender Man’s fame in the physical world, the creature had a famous presence in digital folklore. Andrew Peck discusses how digital communication accelerated the discursive aspects which led to the almost ‘legendary’ status the monster gained (2015, pg. 335). Before Slender Man gained notoriety in physical consciousness, the creature was wildly successful among online communities; this feat is central to my discussion as it encapsulates an important element of my thesis: that of a culturally notorious and embedded game. As such, these games were chosen as artifacts forged in cultural consciousness. Their impact has resonated throughout contemporary Western society and become a point of contestation; it is this contestation that this thesis will focus on. The remaining three video games, and their inundation in cultural significance will be discussed later and separately within their corresponding sections.

The second aspect of these chosen games was not only social consciousness but also ones where the player is not built as a hero. Instead of focusing on games whose central elements and genres are focused on a player shooting their way through a monster-infested space (Doom, Dead Space, etc.), the games I study are more akin to a nightmare. The definition of horror, itself, is very broad and bleeds into many different genres. Similar to horror movies which have slasher, gore-fests, psychological, thrillers, etc. my focus is on horror games where the player is put at a disadvantage to the monsters they face and must negotiate the use of technology with the monster(s). Even though Doom, for example, has horror elements, the game is not in the same league as Slender: The Eight Pages due to its FPS elements and focuses on monster-killing.

The final aspect of horror games I have focused on, here, is the specific subset of games which focus on ‘flight’ as opposed to ‘fight’ responses. The facets of ‘flight’ games I am interested in, here, include: the motivation of the player to escape the monster instead of
engaging with it, the inability (or major difficulty) to physically ‘fight’ the monster, and the potential ability to outsmart or surpass the monster via methods other than violence.

These methods, in conjunction with one another, will help me fully explore and explicate the relationship between the player, the technology and the monster. Furthermore, these methods will aid in elucidating the analysis between each game.

9 Slender: The Eight Pages

For a game with very simple graphics and a monster that has only a white face and no discernable movement, Slender: The Eight Pages is a surprisingly upsetting atmospheric horror game. There are very few mechanics and details but the simultaneous inclusion of non-diegetic music and technology creates a game which induces a simple and primal form of terror.

As the title of the game suggests, Slender: The Eight Pages requires the player to complete the game by collecting eight pages that are scattered around the map. The monster “Slender Man” will haunt the player, becoming increasingly persistent as the player collects more pages.

The player begins the game in a dark forest surrounded by trees. The text “Collect all 8 pages” appears on screen and the player is equipped with a flashlight which illuminates a small circle in the center of the screen (see Appendix A [1.1]). The pages are usually found on landmarks throughout the game: an abandoned truck, a non-descript building, a brick wall, and various trees. As if to taunt the player, the broken truck acts as a reminder of technology losing its functionality and usefulness in this environment (see Appendix A [1.4]). Furthermore, the player is reminded that there is no escape from the area and any attempts to leave are met with an immovable fence. In this world, the pages are the only remnants of technology which can still be said to fulfill their “purpose” – every other piece of technology (excluding the flashlight) is purely cosmetic in terms of use value.

As the player progresses through the game, the music becomes increasingly more “intense” and atmospheric. The music itself is one of the only clues a player has to signal the progress of the game. Each page collected spurs an increase in the unsettling music (this is discussed further in [9.1] Networks).
9.1 Networks

Within the world of *Slender: The Eight Pages*, the player has a sparse and contentious relationship with the game world. The world itself is very static as the player cannot interact with any aspects of the environment except collecting the eight pages (see Appendix A [1.2]). All elements of the analytical framework are only minimally present. The gameplay log is only present in the initial instructions received by the player to collect all eight pages and the “updates” provided whenever a page is collected. Furthermore, the player has no record of the gameplay log – making them unable to check their progress. Similarly, the player has no object inventory; despite being able to check pages, the player is unable to review the pages that have already been collected.

The interface works to accentuate the isolation and separation of the player from any support networks. While playing the game, there is no persistent information available to the player. The entire screen is meant to be embody the perspective of the individual – true to that intention, no heads-up-display (HUD) is provided. Contrary to convention, the player is not provided with a map of the area, progress indicators, or a tutorial to let the player know the full range of their commands. However, in some form, an interface is provided through the audio. As the player collects pages, the music becomes gradually more intense which serves as a vague and imprecise reminder of how close the player is to collecting all eight pages.

As the player progresses in the game, the non-diegetic music becomes much more prominent and unrestrained. Non-diegetic, in this respect, is discussed using Karen Collins’ definition; diegetic sounds, in her description are “sounds that occur in the diegesis (the narrative space or character’s space). Nondiegetic sounds refers to ‘background’ music and sound effects” (2008, pg. 184). This diegesis is important to this player’s reception as the experience of the game as a linear text. The diegesis is further experienced through ‘extradiegetic terms’ which denote a “corporeal response to the gaming environment and experience” (Collins, 2008, pg. 3). The player experiences a form of extradiegetic response in terms of the ‘conscious interaction’ which is created between the player and the game (Collins, 2008, pg. 3). This ‘extradiegetic response’ is realized in the interaction the player has with the music which signals the note collection process. As the player advances, in game, the music mirrors the progress of the player and plays an active role in triggering a particular response from the audience: in this case, the response is
the player’s awareness of their progress without any indicators. The music further plays a role in the ambience of the game and its reception as a horror game. As Kristine Jørgensen argues, “action-oriented” music clearly signals an intended function in which the player should attempt to accomplish (2006, pg. 2). As the notes are collected, the player understands the signal that the game is both progressing as well as becoming more horrific. The music acts as a framework for understanding the game’s urgency and gameplay.

The interaction map is similarly lacking in substance; while normally a motivation for the character is provided, no reason is given as to why the player should want to pursue these objective – rather, the player is only instructed and expected to follow. Once within the game world, and pursuing the objectives, motivation to continue is provided by the looming threat of capture by Slender Man. Throughout the game, Slender Man’s efforts to capture the player become increasingly intense; yet this pursuit does not start until interest is expressed in the objectives. Slender Man does not attempt to pursue the player until the first page is collected.

By omitting to provide motivation for the player to pursue the objective in the game, the assumption that the player will pursue by the objective (and abide by the instructions given at the beginning) reflects on the overarching paradox for engaging in horror video games. While being terrified is normally something to be avoided, people are attracted to horror games for that very experience. As Philip Nickel argues, “horror’s bite is explained as a sudden tearing away of the intellectual trust that stands behind our actions…. [horror] is a malicious ripping-away of this intellectual trust, exposing our vulnerabilities in relying on the world and on other people” (2010, pg. 28). Nickel’s assertion of horror is reminiscent of my argument that technology is couched in certainty and familiarity. By inducing paranoia surrounding something so fundamentally ‘safe’, the individual’s sense of security is benignly assaulted. As such, the player is able to reflect on the weakness and vulnerabilities present within the technology they had so fundamentally relied on. The value of technology, in this sense, is to show how the unabating trust one once felt can be epistemologically threatened. By providing no discernable motivation for continuing (or even beginning) the game, Slender: The Eight Pages confronts the individual with their own motivation for playing horror games by providing no motivation within the game.
9.2 Power

*Slender: The Eight Pages* has very little *overt* technology usage and disruption; however, the technology that is used in the game resists typical function and use. There is very little on-screen information in the game. The only information the player is given is the initial instruction to “[c]ollect all 8 pages” which is deliberately ambiguous (this is discussed further in [8.3] *Sensation*). Armed with only a flashlight, the player is thrust into a world where they must survive an unknown enemy with an unreliable piece of technology. The player has no object inventory and no real control over the environment.

The only items the player is able to pick up are the pages. Aside from these, the mechanics of the game are fairly simple and the game provides no further instructions. The use of the flashlight contributes to the unsettling atmosphere of the game. The flashlight simultaneously empowers the player by providing a light source in an otherwise dark and mysterious forest; however, concurrently, the flashlight cannot be used effectively while the player sprints as it is forcibly angled downward. The flashlight is central to the game as without it, the game cannot be completed; without it, the player will be unable to navigate the game and find the pages. The flashlight is necessary for the player to see; however, running gives the player even less control and ability to orient themselves in the game.

If the player encounters Slender Man, the computer screen will produce a “static-like” effect and high-pitched music will play to signal that the avatar will soon be “captured” (see Appendix A [1.3]). Slender Man, instead of overtly “killing” the avatar, “corrupts” the screen of the player. The corrupting effect of Slender Man attempts to induce anxiety in the player by interfering with the perceived functions of a computer. As the player is always separate from the game, the ambiguity of death is necessary for the game to maintain the atmosphere of horror after the game is lost. The static effect brings attention to the potential for manipulation inherent in computer and technology use.

The legend of Slender Man developed on an Internet forum dedicated to sharing paranormal stories and images (Peck, 2015, pg. 333). As such, Slender Man is a novel monster considering it was invented using photographic manipulation and relied on the Internet for its promotion. The nature of Slender Man’s origins obfuscate the lore itself. As such, one can only speculate what happens after Slender Man “abducts” someone. The death of the abducted is never shown or
discussed and only hinted. True to the lore, the plight of the avatar after they are captured by Slender Man is, correspondingly, ambiguous. Death is never certain but one can assume that the individual has been abducted. The abduction of the avatar is shown through the “static” that appears on-screen (see Appendix A [1.6]). The corrupting force of technology is enhanced, here, as this static reflects the avatar’s “connection” to the world being severed. The avatar, once dependent on technology is brutally severed from reality marked by a corruption of technology. The static represents the dominion Slender Man asserts over the player and the technology within the game.

Slender Man’s facelessness is reminiscent of horror vacui: “the fear of empty space” (Soderman, 2015, pg. 311). The monster, in itself, threatens to annex the spaces that are invisible. This annexation of the invisible affords Slender Man a great power over the player and their use of the technology in the game. Horror vacui, as utilized by Dmitri Mortelmans, ascribes a fundamental human principle to the instinct of filling empty space or “ornamentation” (2005, pg. 20). This empty space is so unnerving as it is uncontrolled, a mark of unchecked emptiness. Mortelmans argues that aversion to horror vacui is rooted in human instinct; he asserts that there exists a “natural urge to fill in empty spaces [which is] controlled by the civilizing process [of humans]” (2005, pg. 21). Slender Man’s existence and appeal of horror is fundamentally couched in this notion of horror vacui and the corresponding human reaction. As a silent, ‘empty’ creature, Slender Man’s power over the player in relation to horror vacui is twofold: firstly, Slender Man’s appearance is radically unsettling as it is wholly empty and unknown; secondly, the player must compete with Slender Man to colonize and conquer an empty space. The player is considerably disadvantaged as, inherent in horror vacui, Slender Man’s integral being is entirely emptiness. As such, Slender Man’s existence favours his settling of the space. As discussed in Tanya Krzywinska’s work, Hands-On Horror, “games are deeply dependent on the traversal of space, visual investigation becomes central to the trajectory of a game as to the way the story unfolds” (2002, pg. 216). The spectacle of the game demand the player attempt to find meaning in the game. The player cannot find easily meaning in Slender Man. There are no features in which one can understand outright – from the reasoning behind the haunting to the collection of pages, the player is left in the dark (so to speak). The fight with Slender Man is about being able to observe and the power that comes along with it. With the flashlight, one is able to fight back by attempting to observe Slender Man. As he must retain his emptiness, he has to disappear.
when he is observed. This is the site of conflict that is the *horror vacui*. The ‘empty space’, here, is about the power of the gaze and that’s what the flashlight enables. The challenge is for Slender Man to evade that while still capturing you. The emptiness is not from the literal emptiness of the space the player is in but the loneliness among the artifacts which represent previous human colonization. The act of colonization is an act of the repopulation of these areas. To be able to repopulate them as you search for the pages in these eight locations. The pages and collecting them, are an attempt at ‘defining’ Slender Man and populating him with meaning.

From this understanding, the technology available to the player is crucial for the game to be ‘playable’ and not wholly unfair. Without the aid of the flashlight, the player would flounder in a forest filled with darkness. The flashlight offers the only power the player can exercise against Slender Man. The light illuminates the darkness and guides the player through the vacuum of meaning presented. The flashlight is the only solace and biggest source of stability the player has in the game. To create meaning in the game, the player ventures to collect the pages and construct the meaning of the creature and its potential defeat.

The eight pages, themselves, bear deeply upon Slender Man’s meaning of nothingness. The player attempts to defeat Slender Man by populating the space with meaning found throughout the pages. These pages depict Slender Man in rudimentary drawings and warn the player of his power. Writing on the pages, such as “don’t look or it takes you” hints to the player that merely looking at the monster gives Slender Man phenomenal power (see Appendix A [1.5]). Yet, despite the player’s best efforts, under the context of the ending, the horror invoked in this game is that Slender Man refuses to allow any attempt to define the space. This denial of meaning is seen in Slender Man still defeating the player regardless of the attempt of the player to understand and collect all the pages.

### 9.3 Sensation

The pages collected are fundamentally contradictory. In one sense, the pages bring the player closer to completing the goal set by the game. However, each page collected makes the game more difficult by encouraging a more tenacious Slender Man. The presumed goal of finding the
pages is to defeat the monster; however, the shortfalls of the pages being collected means the player must face a more difficult monster.

The purpose of the pages is mysterious and their significance to Slender Man is never explained. The pages, themselves, are a static and unchanging piece of the game. These pages hold a mysterious usurping “power” which incites Slender Man to chase the player. If all eight pages are collected, the music abruptly stops but leaves the player surrounded, still, by darkness and forest. Then, despite “winning” the game, the avatar is still abducted by Slender Man. After spending time avoiding and surviving Slender Man to collect pages with an unknown purpose, the player is never rewarded. The player is, then, elevated to a harder level of gameplay the next time they play. The game does nothing to affirm the skills of the player and gives the player no reward for their performance. The player must find triumph in their own set “goals” and “mastery” of the game.

The pages have no electronic force; instead, the pages are a “simple” piece of technology. Correspondingly, Slender Man is enticed by the collection of these pages for unknown reasons. These pages seem to signal a return to the notion of familiarity and reliability; as well, they encourage Slender Man to haunt and stalk the player. The markings on the pages indicate Slender Man’s resolve and hint at others’ fears of the monster (see Appendix A [1.9]). The pages bemoan Slender Man’s facelessness and his incessant stalking of the player. Each page collected hints at the inevitability of the player’s death and inability to escape; however, the player must continue if they want a chance at potentially ‘winning’. As such, the game constantly mediates the power relations between Slender Man and the player through the technology and interaction with the technology in the game. The pages act as a milestone for the player to reach so they might continue and make it through the game; ultimately, however, the player cannot win and the pages act as a source of warning and mockery.

With little on-screen information, the player is forced to rely on very little support. The two major forms of clues the player is given to continue through the game are the “x/8 pages” text overlay that appears when a note is collected and the gradual addition of new instruments and complexity into the music (see Appendix A [1.7]).

The flashlight is an important piece of technology in this game. Without the flashlight, the player could not navigate and complete the game. However, the flashlight cannot be used while
running. As such the use of the flashlight is extremely limited and crippling to the player; however, necessary for the completion of the game.

9.4 Conclusion

As demonstrated, the space between the monster and player is highly mediated. Through the use of the flashlight and pages, the player utilizes the power available to them; however, this power is, ultimately, negotiated by the power of the monster over that technology. Slender Man, in this case, intervenes at critical parts during gameplay to conciliate any perceptions of technological usefulness and power (see Appendix A [1.8]). The player is forced to reconcile their notions of how technology can be used as a helpful extension and consider the possibility of technology’s power being curbed; horror games are exceptionally talented at accomplishing this inhibition.

10 Amnesia: The Dark Descent

Amnesia: The Dark Descent, despite being released in 2010 is still being adapted for the newest platforms. Although its release was intended for PC, in 2016, it was adapted for the PlayStation 4. The game has enjoyed massive success both critically and via their customers.

The game Amnesia: The Dark Descent begins with the character, Daniel, muttering to himself while stumbling down a corridor. The character’s words are foreshadowing for the theme of the game as well as the intention of the game itself: “My name is Daniel; I live in London at... ah... Mayfair.... Don’t forget, don’t forget, I must stop him. Focus.” As the title suggests, Amnesia: The Dark Descent follows a character who awakens with no memory of who he is or why he is there. In a broader sense, the introduction to Amnesia reflects the more general experience of starting a video game: each video game begins with the player assuming control over a character who is only known by progressing through the story. The most notable difference in Amnesia: The Dark Descent is that this process is shared by the character. Both the avatar and the player begin the game with the exact same information: a name and a phrase (“don’t forget”). Both come to the game with their own knowledge of language and basic skills but the identity of the avatar is largely unknown to both of them. This erasure of the avatar’s memory works well to
create an “empty shell” of an avatar for the player to impose themselves onto. Shown from a first-person perspective, the game encourages the player to take time to explore their surroundings and interact with objects. The doors are meant to be “pushed” or “pulled” as one would operate a door naturally and intuitively.

There are no direct instructions upon waking up in an abandoned castle. The player is meant to intuitively explore and figure out the game as they progress. If the player looks at their journal (by pressing “J”), and reads the text, they will find a brief direction instructing the player to “Follow the liquid trail and find its source” (see Appendix B [2.2]). This ‘liquid trail’ is the first direct ‘path’ the player can follow to complete the first objective (this is discussed further in 9.1).

Items that are picked up or found are signified by text that appears on the screen. When a player picks up an object, the cursor resembles a hand and the player is able to click on the object to add it to their inventory. Notably, a player can also ‘move’ objects toward or away from the avatar – such as chairs and tables. As such, one can ‘throw’ smaller objects and ‘carry’ non-inventory items.

Similar to Slender: The Eight Pages, Amnesia: The Dark Descent is unplayable without a constant light source. Central to the game’s difficulty level is Daniel’s inability to stay in complete darkness for long amounts of time. This inability to function properly in the darkness is coded as ‘sanity’ in the game; as such, the player must control Daniel’s sanity levels if they are to complete the game [this is discussed further in 9.3]. However, as the player explores an abandoned castle, much of the playable area is shrouded in darkness. To help alleviate the insanity Daniel experiences, the player must use the oil lamp or tinderboxes to soften the darkness and moderate the avatar’s sanity levels. These items are limited and the player must strategically decide when to use these and when to rely on in-game lighting.

The mechanic of ‘sanity’ in the game is further aggravated if the character is witness to upsetting and distressing scenes. As such, seeing a monster will drain sanity in the same way that staying in darkness will. Lower sanity is represented by a shrouded screen and difficult controls as well as an on-screen HUD display (this is further discussed in 9.3).
10.1 Networks

The network which surrounds the player are dictated by the overarching setting. While the time period is unknown to the player in the beginning, the story takes place within, what can be presumed to be, a castle. However, as the player collects diary entries which contain hints of the characters past, it becomes evident that the game is set around 1839. Consequently, the player must use technology which is unfamiliar to contemporary life.

Diary entries and pages are the main source of information which helps the player, and consequently Daniel, understand and progress in the story. This is the first note the player collects which tells the player why to continue the game:

19th of August, 1839.

*I wish I could ask you how much you remember. I don't know if there will be anything left after I consume this drink. Don't be afraid Daniel. I can't tell you why, but know this, I choose to forget.*

*Try to find comfort and strength in that fact. There is a purpose. You are my final effort to put things right. God willing, the name Alexander of Brennenburg still invokes bitter anger in you. If not, this will sound horrible. Go to the Inner Sanctum, find Alexander and kill him. His body is old and weak, and yours, young and strong. He will be no match for you.*

*One last thing. A shadow is following you. It's a living nightmare - breaking down reality. I have tried everything and there is no way to fight back. You need to escape it as long as you can. Redeem us both Daniel. Descend into the darkness where Alexander waits and murder him.*

*Your former self,*

*Daniel.* (see Appendix B [2.1])

Part of the interaction map is the motivation for embarking on the story. The diary entries the player encounters are past artifacts of a functioning network. These are the outputs of a well-functioning mind which only give the player hints about how to reconstruct the past successfully. This first note is central to the story and understanding of the game; in the note, Daniel mentions the ‘the drink’ he consumes to ‘forget’. As mentioned earlier, Daniel is instructed, by his journal,
to ‘follow the liquid trail’; after reading the note, one realizes implication that the ‘liquid trail’ is actually the tonic used by Daniel to induce amnesia, thus, beginning the game (see Appendix B [2.3 and 2.4]). The effects of this amnesia are provoked and intensified by Daniel’s ‘sanity meter’ (see Appendix B [2.5]).

The note, furthermore, represents a clear book-end to the game where Daniel discusses his motivations to kill Alexander. The final note the player finds in the game reads:

19th of August 1839

It’s not fair! I’m not to blame. I’ve been manipulated by that demon. He played my guilty conscience and duped me into facing the shadow alone. That vile, conspiring man. He expects me to meet my death as he steals power beyond imagination?

Alexander, I will kill you for what you have done. If only the shadow had caught me in London or Algeria, I wouldn’t have to suffer this humiliation. You made me a murderer, a monster!

And now, I merely await my death. I’m too weak to press on. I can hardly stand as my knees fail me, I cannot see, as my eyes are dressed in tears. I’m as broken as the men I’ve tortured. If only I could wipe my fear away as we did with them.

(See Appendix B [2.6])

Circularity is found across the first and last notes as Daniel’s intentions and past are revealed. In both notes, Daniel mentions the main mission of the game which is to kill Alexander. Furthermore, he references the difficulty to complete this task by situating his mental state as shaky. The object inventory is useful, here, as it designates a space for the player to fully access the ‘network’ found throughout the game.
10.2 Power

*Amnesia: The Dark Descent* is iconic in its ‘realistic’ portrayal of the avatar in relation to the monsters. Daniel, as a character, is irrevocably and conclusively ‘mortal’ and ‘human’. These traits simplify the character to very basic survival skills – none of which can be categorized as fighting, power or weaponry skills. The player is forced to rely on objects, wit and *hiding* throughout the game in order to progress. There is no way to ‘fight’ the monsters in this game; one can only ‘hide’ using various objects in the room. The player can hide in one of the many cupboards, or wardrobes found throughout the rooms. Alternatively, one can hide in the darkness of corners and desks; however, this is risky as, as discussed, one’s sanity meter is negatively impacted when exposed to pure darkness.

This powerlessness in darkness is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan’s demonstration of ‘the medium is the message’ in his discussion of the light bulb. McLuhan argues that ‘[t]he electric light is pure information; It is a medium without a message, as it were’ (pg. 8, 1964). Correspondingly, the light in *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* is a powerful and central facet of the game. The meaning from the light is subtle, yet all-enveloping and the implications of the various light sources in game are complex. Firstly, the light sets a precedent for all forms of ‘safety’ and character-object interactions. The light is a fundamental aspect to play and progress in the game. As such, the light acts as a central point of necessity for survival and continuation.

To explore, interact, and play the game, one must first find a light source. The light creates a space of safety from insanity and also from the various monsters found within the game. The light is important as it evokes a sense of security in the player; yet, the player’s relationship to the light is tenuous. Unlike *Slender: The Eight Pages*, the light source in *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* is not unlimited. There are two main ways to use light: via the tinderbox or the oil lamp. Both the tinderbox and the oil lamp have limited use and the player must tactfully conserve their resources by choosing which moments to ‘add oil’ to the lamp, or use the tinderbox to light torches candles or other light sources. As such, my central argument that the technology in-game negotiates the space of meaning is demonstrated with the indeterminate use of the main source of technology. Although the light carries no content, the light itself is meaningful in relation to the player.
10.3 Sensation

Daniel’s inability to cope with darkness plays an immense role in the playability and difficulty of the game; as well sometimes, this ‘insanity’ is used by the game as a plot device for important situations. There is a ‘meter’ for sanity levels; furthermore, the avatar’s sanity is measured by Daniel’s ability to visualize or see his surroundings. The measure of ‘sanity’, in this case, is shown on screen by the player (and, as such, Daniel) having clear vision and easy controls. Correspondingly, ‘insanity’ is measured by clouded and blurry vision which ‘pulses’ and ‘waves’ across the screen making it harder to both see and control the character – this ‘insanity’ is reminiscent of the avatar being drunk.

As light is coded as ‘safe’ and darkness is coded as ‘unsafe’, the implications of the light in-game allow for cascades of contact and interaction which one is not immediately aware of. The potency of the light supports the notion that one must rely on this technology to proceed in the game. Here, the light is coded, further, as an irrevocable and necessary part of the player. As Daniel is too ‘mortal’ and ‘weak’ to navigate the game, he requires technology to stand-in for the sensation of sight and the capacity to stay safe. Eugene Thacker’s discussion of ‘darkness’ in opposition to ‘light’ is useful, here, as it provides a clear dialectic of darkness in which one can understand the metaphysical implications of the duplicity. Thacker invokes Dionysius the Areopagite as a touchstone for his discussion about the fundamentally, in both language and experience, oppositional relationship between light and darkness. Dionysius is unique in his discussion of darkness as he uses an enigmatic phrase to describe it: a “ray of divine darkness” (Thacker, 2015, pg. 21). This ‘divine darkness’ is, inherently, according to Dionysius, ‘absolutely inaccessible’ and fundamentally ‘unknowing’ (Thacker, 2015, pg. 21-22). Instead of archetypal ‘light-coded’ divinity, Dionysius codes darkness as something that can be separated and, through this separation, ignorance on one end and transcendence on the other. The “divine darkness”, in his definition, rests on an excess of light which, in turn, creates darkness; alternatively, the via affirmativa darkness is the absence of light (Thacker, 2015, pg. 22). Dionysius’ ruminations on darkness is important here, as the technology in Amnesia is similar to that of the divine darkness. The technology found within this game supersedes the player in an, almost, transcendent fashion. The oil lamp, for example, possess both positive and negative attributes (which is, paradoxically, important to achieving a ‘divine darkness’). The positive attributes are, fundamentally, the obligatory features of the lamp in the players quest for game
completion; however, the lamp also acts as a beacon for the monsters to see and, therefore, hunt (and kill) the player. But, if the player endures the darkness for too long, they will go ‘mad’. The lamp, in this sense, acts as a necessary component of darkness. As the lamp can ‘save’ the player and supply an environment for knowledge, so too can it corrupt the player’s environment inasmuch as it encourages death. Technology, in this game, is axiomatically contradictory and reinforces the hierarchy between humans and (<) technology. Much like that of a divine figure who is able to transcend into ‘divine darkness’, so too does technology establish a contradictory ‘unknowing’ and yet ‘knowing’ of the darkness.

At the end of the game, the player can achieve a few different endings. Surprisingly, for horror, one of these endings is arguably ‘good’. The end-game finds the player finally facing Alexander (the man whom the notes urges Daniel to kill). At this point, light becomes overwhelmingly essential to the story. Once in the “Inner Sanctum”, where Daniel finds the final note, the player finds an altar and a circle on the floor. After spending the game relying on light, the player must now be so immersed in taking care of the light that if they do not, they will die. Near the circle are a few lights. These lights will blow out with different interactions being completed in the room. If the player does not relight the candles fast, Daniel will be enveloped in darkness; this process is repeated three times. After the third time of relighting the lights, the player can proceed to the “Orb Chamber” and the final ending of the game. The lights, at this point, require constant attention and supervision; they are among the last things you can do as a player to progress through the story. Furthermore, the lights, here, are reminiscent of the player’s tenuous power over the game itself. Although the player is given objects to keep the lights lit, and Daniel sane, the ending is a reminder that the technology and power within the lights is highly negotiated by the game and the monsters. As such, the player has limited power over whether or not these lights can be used to their benefit. This limited power is reminiscent of when the game ‘forces’ Daniel into a state of insanity. No matter how careful the player is of ensuring there is a light source, the game, and ultimately the monster, has the final control. This lack of power, combined with the inability of Daniel to ‘fight back’, is part of what makes the game so terrifying.
10.4 Conclusion

Amnesia’s establishment of a hierarchical relationship between the player and the monsters and, in turn the technology, is strengthened by the subtle use of the objects and navigation of the space, in-game. As the player explores the space and interacts with the objects, they must acquiesce to the sanctions put in-place in technology-use. The oil lamp is essential for game exploration and play; however, it also supplements the monsters’ ability to find the player with its use. As such, the lamp is established as an object not meant for the player to fully control. In fact, the object exhibits a sort of agency by exerting its use-value as something potentially antithetical to the player’s whims. The power of the technology over the player is incompatible with any preconceived notions (on the player’s behalf) of invulnerability and sanctuary. Technology violates any assured asylum by simply existing; and, as such, technology’s agency is elevated (in relation to prejudiced assumptions about its use).

11 Five Nights at Freddy’s

Five Nights at Freddy’s has enjoyed enormous success among a widespread demographic to such an extent that it has received a cult-like following. Few horror games are enjoyed so deeply that they receive a sequel the same year (2014) as well as innumerable merchandise and fandom triumph. Similar to Slender: The Eight Pages, Five Night’s at Freddy’s is successful based on its clever game mechanics and novel use of limited space within the game. Five Nights at Freddy’s has become so popular that it is now considered a media franchise based on the video game (now series). Alongside this, Five Nights at Freddy’s has enjoyed an interesting cultural acceptance among children. In 2016, a spin-off of the game (which is not horror related at all) was released called -Five Nights at Freddy’s World. This game is more RPG style with whimsical animatronics - the same ones used to frighten in the initial game.

Five Night’s at Freddy’s is a survival point-and-click horror game in which the player must overcome various animatronic creatures through tactful use of the (literal) power available. The premise of the game is that the player is a hired security guard for a pizza place named after the main ‘monster’: “Freddy Fazbear’s Pizza”. One’s only communication is received through instructions via a telephone. The aim of the game is to survive five nights in the diner by utilizing
the door closing mechanics and available security cameras to monitor the movement and location of the animatronics. The player utilizes a security camera to ‘check’ on the animatronic monsters to both check and track their positions on the map (see Appendix C [3.4]). The unsettling atmosphere is reminiscent of a children’s diner complete with animatronic animals (à la a dystopic Chuck E Cheese).

### 11.1 Networks

The most palpable form of connection found within this game is the contact the player receives each night from the manager via a phone call. The player’s first image upon beginning the game foreshadows the motive behind playing (see Appendix C [3.2]). At the beginning of each night, the manager calls the player to relay information about the upcoming night and give tips about completing the job (game) and warnings if his instructions are not followed (see Appendix C [3.3]). Each message is ‘pre-recorded’ as the voice states so there is no direct contact with anyone else. This element of ‘pre-recorded’ instructions is central to the game’s isolating physiognomy. The recorded clip is significant as it signals the manager’s knowingness of the danger and horror of the diner yet reluctance and even deliberateness in thrusting the player into perilous circumstances. The pre-recorded message is indicative of the isolation the player faces. Despite having contact with familiarity via a human voice, the uncanniness of the voice giving horrific instructions, combined with the fact that one cannot engage or ask questions, creates a distance from normality. The stark and terrifying instructions coupled with the involuntary detachment from a potentially life-saving device encourages an atmosphere of isolation and establishes the negotiated power one has with the technology in-game.

The first audio clip the player listens to, during the initial night, contains a preamble about legal measures in the case of ‘damage or death’ as well as how the player must ‘respect the characters’. The most notable correspondence is this excerpt from the manager:

> Uh, now concerning your safety. The only real risk to you as a night watchman here, if any, is the fact that these characters, uh, if they happen to see you after hours probably won’t recognize
you as a person. They'll most likely see you as a metal endoskeleton without its costume on. Now since that's against the rules here at Freddy Fazbear's Pizza, they'll probably try to forcefully stuff you inside a Freddy Fazbear suit. Um, now, that wouldn't be so bad if the suits themselves weren't filled with crossbeams, wires, and animatronic devices, especially around the facial area. So, you could imagine how having your head forcefully pressed inside one of those could cause a bit of discomfort... and death. Uh, the only parts of you that would likely see the light of day again would be your eyeballs and teeth when they pop out the front of the mask [laughs].

(Five Nights at Freddy’s audio, Night One, 12 – 2 am)

This section of the audio tape is, by far, the most unsettling as it clearly mentions the player will die if ‘caught’. The fervor with which the monsters would force one into a suit is reminiscent of the sacredness of religious practices. The creatures have only their perspective and, to them, the character is simply a ‘metal endoskeleton without a costume on’. To exist in this way is to be virtually sacrilegious. Any deviation or irreverence is coded as desecration as it is ‘against the rules’.

The monsters utterly denounce variance to the extent that one is killed if they are found to diverge. Here, the creatures’ faithfulness toward the ‘rules’ is a deviation from standard horror procedures. H.P. Lovecraft, in discussing his philosophy of horror writing, claims “[h]orror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage or ‘outsideness’ without laying stress on the emotion of fear” (1933, pg. 3). Although the monsters themselves exhibit alien-like otherness and they are ‘strange’ in their horror, their motives are clear: fidelity to their ‘rules’.

The final phone call is completely distorted and strongly hinted at being delivered by an animatronic creature instead of the typical call from the manager. A notable theory (which has not been confirmed) claims that the passage, when matched with the picked-out phrases, is close to an excerpt from “Autobiography of a Yogi” by Paramhansa Yogananda. The speculated passage is as follows:
It is lamentable that mass agricultural development is not speeded by fuller use of your marvelous mechanisms. Would it not be easily possible to employ some of them in quick laboratory experiments to indicate the influence of various types of fertilizers on plant growth? You are right. Countless uses of Bose instruments will be made by future generations. The scientist seldom knows contemporaneous reward; it is enough to possess the joy of creative.

(Paramhansa Yogananda, 1946, pg. 105)

Regardless of the truthiness of the connection between the final audio and Yogananda’s excerpt, this segment is germane to the underlying themes of the game. As will be further discussed in 8.2, the machines are coded as almost spiritual in their transcendence of technological forms. In this final correspondence, the monsters reveal their ‘strange powers’ in the form of complete control over any perceived network to reality. Further, the monsters are implied to encapsulate a spiritual connection with technology insomuch as they will literally *force* anyone who does not follow suit (i.e. wear an animatronic suit) into a literal suit; forcing one into the suit is virtually a form of salvation. As Leo Braudy argues, “the representation of both divine and diabolical forces, monsters of all sorts, has become a normal language of praise and contempt” (259). In this game, the monsters usurp all forms of convention *via* technology that their interaction with the human is inextricably bound in authority and violence toward any dissent. This complete usurpation is entangled with divinity and ascendancy over the norm. Much like Victor Frankenstein, and his uncontainable creation, the monsters’ relationship with the human is one of spite and demonization, the creatures in this game embody a spiritual centrality and disdain for their illusive ‘god’. The creator of the animatronics is unknown and, as such, reminiscent of the absent father figure Frankenstein’s monster lamented for. As such, these creatures capture a twenty-first century Frankenstein’s monster wherein the human figure is *deus absconditus*; because of this absence, the creatures abhor humankind and refuse to recognize humanness.

The zeal with which the monsters regularly oppose difference is a reminiscent of an outright inverted binary. While the creatures spend their days being a source of fascination and spectacle for humans, the negotiated ‘space’ in which they might have agency is permitted at night. During the day, humans have full reign of the creatures and their technological power is completely secondary to human whims. Correspondingly, during nighttime, the creatures achieve agency
and protect their space from trespassers by forcing them to obey the ‘rules’. The emphasis, here, is on their meaningful narrative of consequence and punishment. These creatures have a clear delineation through which they are all powerful. In this inverted world, there is no coexistence and only strict adherence.

11.2 Power

The gameplay in *Five Night’s at Freddy’s* is unique in the sense that the player cannot move at all; they are trapped inside the security room with no mobility whatsoever. As such, the player relies solely on technology to survive and overcome the terrors presented in-game.

Clocks are a paramount mechanic to the game as they are central in the player’s thoughtful use of power. The player is chastised by the game for the incorrect use of the available technology. As such, the aegis of the technology found within the game is quietly privileged. One might suspect that with the available ‘protective’ technology of the lights, cameras, and doors, the player has an advantage over the monsters and the ability to face the fears the game presents. The player never sees the creatures move or react; as such, the most considerable advantage the player has is the visual, or *gaze*. The player must pay close attention to the clock as it depicts how much time one has until the next night begins; this is important as the second predominate mechanic is the battery life.

There is much to be unpacked in terms of the type of monster chosen in this space; the monster in this game is exceptional as it is an animal-machine hybrid (see Appendix C [3.5]). A once insuperable line between human and animal power is thoroughly inverted and the player is transposed onto the ‘helpless’ side of animal-human relations. As suffering has become a crux of animal rights, so too does the player suffer completely at the hands of the animals. However, these are not “animals” proper; rather, they are machine first and animals second (see Appendix C [3.6]). The importance of this distinction lies in the power that is inherent in their being. As humans take accredit for the outright control and jurisdiction over technology, the creatures, in this game, subvert this narrative by embodying the cyborg. This cyborg is so ‘advanced’, they have complete dominance over technology and have ascended its weaknesses – something humans, in this game, are completely lacking. Whereas in contemporary society, humans enjoy
supremacy over technology and creatures, here, the roles are reversed and the technology available to the player is mediated by something once wholly monopolized (animals and machines). In this game animals are complex machines (in the most literal sense). The monsters in this game are allomorphic in the sense that they are so ‘othered’ and alien that they are elevated to an almost strange and spiritual dimension.

*Five Night’s at Freddy’s* gestures to the hierarchy of human-animal relations in its radicalization of typically ‘innocently-coded’ animals to a more self-conscious and superior station. This animalization of technology (and vice versa) is reminiscent of a broader cultural construct of complete human dominance and human privilege. As the creatures break down this implicit hierarchy, an allusion to reincarnation can be demonstrated through the inverted power structure and unfettered aggression toward the player. The player’s safety is violated through their defiled notion of superiority over technology and animals as well as the intrusion into their literal space (by forcing immobility). To allow the player any use of technology at all is a sort of warped reminder of the power once had and, ultimately, stripped.

As Jean Baudrillard writes, in his discussion of simulacra, “everything is already dead and risen in advance” (Mark Poster, 1981, pg. 171). He further writes that this mythology of the real is a “panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production” (Mark Poster, 1981, pg. 171). Horror games occupy a space of ‘alternate’ and ‘inexplicable’ reality wherein the player must accept a fabricated space of certainty which is only recognizable through “reference”. The notion of ‘reference’, here, being simulacra. In regards to horror games, and, specifically, *Five Night’s at Freddy’s*, simulacra are coded through various aspects of the game; one of the major aspects of a ‘copy’ is the other (read: monster(s)). The monsters in this game are the anthropomorphised animatronics given animal-likeness. In this case, the animal-machine hybrid is still othered despite being given power through anthropomorphism. One feels almost subsumed by the consequences of their real-life oppression and presumed power over life and technology. The unknowingness of the creature’s motives, and yet, the knowingness of their sovereignty is crucial in creating a chilling atmosphere.
11.3 Sensation

The loading screen of *Five Night’s at Freddy’s* is fascinating as it resembles the static screen used in *Slender: The Eight Pages* when the player was ‘caught’ by the monster (see Appendix C [3.1]). In a similar fashion, the player dies in this game when the animatronics ‘catch’ the player off guard or incorrectly using technology (via draining the battery). Perhaps one of the most successful elements of effective horror video games is how violence is couched in implication. As *Slender: The Eight Pages* suggests a horrific ending, no straightforward explanation exists as to the fate of the character. Analogously, in *Five Night’s at Freddy’s*, the player experiences a comparably heavily implied (but never directly shown) ‘death’.

In this game, technology is both central and demonic; the player is inextricably bound to the game’s rules and, in fact, is only able to interact with and through various forms of technology. Thus, the evocation of technology is couched in sight and use. Winning the game requires careful measurement of the capacity of one’s technology and its ability; to ‘win’ the game (and gain a 0.50¢ raise) one must engage *correctly* with technology (see Appendix C [3.7]). The player’s senses are irrevocably muted and funneled (via force) through the available technology. One can only respond to violence through non-violence and *vision*. The player’s vision is important, here, as to fully engage with the game and persevere, one must do all things *through* technology – including sight.

The technology, in this game, is encoded through horror itself. To interact with the technology in-game is to understand the values and ideals coded within broader culture. The root goal in this game is to endure the onslaught of technology by proving that one can be careful and skillful with its use. As such, an underlying ideal is to be technologically sensitive and perceptive to its limitations and use. To be inattentive and careless toward technology’s abilities is harshly punished. One must intrinsically understand and cautiously utilize the battery-life in order to proceed through the game.

11.4 Conclusion

*Five Night’s at Freddy’s* frustrates the barriers between any perceived ‘power’ over technology and the subsequent stripping of any power granted. Through the use of animatronics
and a security camera, the player is forced to reconcile notions of superiority and safeness which was once couched within the use of technology. The game forces the player to accept its stringent rules and unintuitive essence of technology. Through the suggestion, harbored in technology, one finds that their preconceived notions of technological explanation and power are useless, here.

12 Outlast

Among the games discussed in this thesis, the game, Outlast, is the most intense in its depiction of violence and horror. Compared to the games previously discussed, in their approach being subtler toward violence and horror, Outlast is wholly not delicate in its portrayals of pain, fear, and revulsion. This game is important, however, to this thesis, as to advance through the game, the player absolutely relies on a certain piece of technology (i.e. a video camera and its peripheries). The camera is so integral to the game and the ability for the player to navigate that if the camcorder is lost, the player cannot continue despite the avatar’s life being in danger (this is further discussed in 11.1). Outlast received very positive reviews across many game sites and sold more than 4 million copies between 2014-2016 (Co, 2016, para. 3). The backstory of Outlast is couched in cultural realism. It is drawn from real MKUltra Experiments conducted by the CIA in the 50s – 70s throughout the US and Canada (O’Shea, 2017, para. 8). The experiments were shrouded in secrecy and nobody is sure what the exact nature of those experiments is to this day.

As the title of the game suggests, Outlast, is a survival horror game which focuses on the player being able to ‘outlast’ the constant horrific encounters, torture, and suffering. The premise of the game focuses on an investigative journalist named Miles Upshur who is attempting to expose a secret within Mount Massive Asylum. Miles’ venture begins when he receives an anonymous tip which suggests that there are unethical human experiments being conducted on the patients. Once inside, Miles finds mutilated corpses of attendees and police strewn about the grounds and building. The player is able to collect notes which leave indications and hints about what happened in the asylum (see Appendix D [4.1]).
As with most horror games, there is no ability for combat in this game and the player must either run or hide to survive. Three items are essential to the survival of the player: a camcorder, batteries (for said camcorder), and documents (which push the story forward and reveal important information). As the player progresses throughout the game, the use of these items becomes both more necessary and, yet, more difficult.

12.1 Networks

As with many horror games, there is no mini-map available to the player and, as such, the player must navigate the space as if they were the avatar themselves – with only the technology of the camera as a type of heads-up display. There is no access to the ‘outside world’ in this game, at all. The only remnant of a connectedness the player experiences is that of the camcorder. The camcorder acts as a vehicle to the potentiality of escape. The use of the device is performative in that it suggests a ‘future’ in which the footage gathered by the player could be shown and discussed in a journalistic manner (as is the premise of the game). As the player records, they are reminded of the technology available to them if they are successful in their escape. As the atmosphere is saturated with decrepit emblems of a building that once was ‘modern’, there is no safe place among the rubble. The only comfort available to the player is that of their camcorder which is only substitute of safety. Using the camcorder is weighed down by the hope that the footage will be usable (and even found). As such, the camcorder is encumbered with deep connotation and implication in its use.

Nearing the completion of the game, the player finds themselves jumping from one platform to another; during this jump, the camcorder is dropped and falls down to the lower regions of the game, now lost (see Appendix 4.8). One’s objective immediately changes, urging the player to cease any attempts at escape or hiding and find the camcorder, directly. The game commands the player to find the camcorder as: “You need the camcorder to navigate the darkness” (Appendix 4.9). This sudden change in the game reveals (and recaps) to the player the inherent weakness in their being. At this point, in the game, the player has almost completed the story and has had experience running and hiding from the variants. The losing of the camera is crucial as it demonstrates to the player that despite any feeling of security they find within the technology, or
their own skills, they are positively and utterly subject to the whims and power of the game and the monsters, therein.

As the camcorder is lost, the music abruptly changes to that of a sad, melodic, slow and deep string-instrument piece (à la ‘lost love’ songs in cinema). In an almost humorous fashion, the music change signifies the aura of importance the camcorder held for the player. Whereas before, the music was ominous and dark with notes of long, sustained tones, the music for the lost camcorder is almost like a melodic mourning to hint to the player at the magnitude of the loss. After the loss of the camera, the player must navigate the space by championing the darkness without any external aid.

The significance of the lost camera is almost sacred in its implications. As Glibert Murray argues in his 1915 lecture on Stoicism: “[… Stoicism] fulfilled the two main demands that man makes upon his religion: it gave him armour when the world was predominantly evil, and it encouraged him forward when the world was predominantly good” (pg.49). As Stoicism requests the disciple to recognize the advantages one has in life, so too, does it claim that an integral element is living without these advantages in order to fully appreciate what one has attained. Outlast’s depiction of the lost camera is reminiscent of the ascetic practices in Stoicism. As a Stoic might sleep on the ground for one night to remind themselves of the usefulness and comfort of their bed, so too does Outlast force the player to recognize the inherent value the game has provided them in reference to the camcorder.

When the player does find the camcorder again, they realize it is cracked on one side; thus, obfuscating one’s vision even further and further solidifying the power relations between the player and the game (see Appendix 4.10). As with Stoicism, one is reminded of the significance of the camera (bestowed so generously by the game) and the implied dis/ability found within the technology.

12.2 Power

One of the most restrictive, and therefore terrifying, factors in Outlast is the limitation in the linearity of the game. One must follow a directed path or risk being killed or captured by an
inmate. These fixed trajectories force the player into horrifying situations which helps the game establish a sort of dominance over the player. The player loses any power of negotiation over the space and is forced to rely on the technology in-game as well as the carefully laid out paths available to them.

To escape the antagonists, the only relief available is for the player to run and hide (see Appendix 4.7). Not all variants attack, however, so although the asylum is saturated with variants, the player must pay attention to the monsters in order to escape or move on, if necessary. The variants can display a few ‘styles’: complete complacency, attack or chase when the player comes near, or attack/chase at all times.

The most salient form of power the player experience is that of the camera and its functions. However, although the camera provides a source of power, it also negotiates this power. The player is able to use a ‘zoom’ function as well as a ‘night vision’ mode to better see their surroundings. If the area is well lit the player does not need to rely on the camera; however, the player still records most times. In order for the camera to be fully functioning, one must also find and replace the batteries which are strewn throughout the game. A battery percentage meter is shown in the top right screen to indicate battery levels.

The creatures, themselves, are a signature of the game’s negotiation of power in regards to technology. The end-game reveals the variants (the antagonists and former patients) are a result of an experiment with nanotechnology gone awry. Most of these experiments failed with the exception of one variant called Walrider who is deemed the most dangerous and most un/controllable. Doctor Wernicke is introduced toward the end of the game as a former Nazi (with similar experimental methods to those in World War II). Once the player encounters him, the entire ‘mission’ of the game is explained as a sort of botched experiment meant to create a super-human via nanotechnology. Walrider is the most successful and powerful experiment and, it is also revealed, the creature is controlled solely by one inmate named Billy Hope. After this revelation, the player must kill Billy and shut off his life support system (hence killing Walrider). Once the player is successful in this mission, Walrider catches the player and possesses them, thus changing hosts instead of killing the variant. The game ends with the player being shot down by Dr. Wernicke’s armed guards; however, as the screen goes black, one realizes that the
possession was successful and the player is the new host. The game ends to the sounds of screaming and (assumed) mutilation and brutal beatings.

The end of the game is accompanied by a mass of new technology and power shifts. Firstly, Dr. Wernicke is bound to a wheelchair, thus signalling his complete dependence on technology in physical form. Dr. Wernicke’s reliance on technology in such an external manner is reminiscent of his complete obsession with technological potency and superiority among his experiments. This technological dominance is mirrored in Billy’s complete reliance on his life support system: both as a means to stay alive and to control the variant. The player is meant to usurp this ‘perverse’ use of technology to human whims. Through the player’s ability to appropriate seemingly ‘invincible’ technology (as it was these pieces which allowed the whole overturn), technology loses its strength and ability over the variant(s). As the player cuts the power source for the creature, one would assume that the variant is easier contained. However, this hope (personified by Billy Hope’s name) proves to be a delusion. The game ends with the maxim that the monster will always triumph: both over technology and the human. Any space of power the player has by using or annexing technology is meaningless as the player can never fairly negotiate this space with a monster. The monster, here, establishes itself as superior, hierarchal, and dominant; any attempts to overcome the monster (via technology) are proven to be fruitless.

12.3 Sensation

The ‘night vision’ mode is very limiting in what the player is able to see; the dysfunctional attributes of the camcorder reveal a deliberate dampening of the senses to induce an atmosphere of uncertainty and horror (see Appendix 4.2). This restriction is paramount to the game’s assault to the senses. The purpose of technology becomes perverse in the players attempt to evade the antagonists. The camcorder is charged with significance and its implications are reflective of the ambience of the game as well as its horrific underpinnings. The camcorder, which is typically used as a means to remember events and record them for later viewing, is fundamentally antithetical to its typical use, in its purpose in-game (while at the same time, not so). The player must use the camera to navigate the game space in the dark; however, doing this reveals depravity and evil. Although the camera serves its purpose in that it records the vicious and twisted state of the asylum (which was the initial motive for entering), the player is also forced to
use the camera as a replacement-eye rather than a supplementary device. This amputation of the sense of sight is reminiscent of the mutilated corpses and limbs found throughout the game.

The camcorder’s usability is centrally awry in relation to one’s typical vision. The static which subdues the vision of the player both makes the mutilation easier to stomach (via the distance) and, yet, acts as a barrier for safely exploring one’s surroundings. To safely explore the dark spaces, one is obligated to use the night vision (for sneaking and hiding at the very least). This requirement forces the player to always ‘see’. Despite any blurriness, on behalf of the camera, the player is compelled to operate under limited capacity. This finite capacity for vision is disconcerting which is crucial to the assertion of power and limited sensation technology demands.

One such moment of discombobulation the player experiences in the first interaction with a victim in the game. As the player explores the asylum, they find a police officer impaled on a stake (who is initially considered dead). As the officer writhes in agony, his last words urge the player to ‘get the fuck out of this terrible place’ (see Appendix 4.3). These words remind the player of their place among the game and antagonists. If a fully-clad police officer cannot win against these variants, a journalist with no weapon and no fighting skills stands little chance (see Appendix D [4.4]). Further, as part of the reminder via technology, the player is forced to recognize the relationship between themselves and the technology (in this case, the camcorder). Although the camcorder allows the player to see and interact with the officer, the officer himself stands as a warning to the player that despite any efforts, the antagonists will circumvent the player’s technology. After this interaction, the player encounters their first close meeting with a variant (the same one mentioned in the first note) (see Appendix D [4.1 and 4.5]). The player is hurled through the air wherein they find themselves injured and unable to move – a crucial moment which creates fear and tension and solidifies the boundaries of technology and the player. It is this stage of gameplay where Father Martin is introduced as both an enemy and a foreshadowing of the sacredness of technology (see Appendix D [4.6]). Father Martin exclaims that Miles is an apostle sent by God. Although Father Martin makes direct reference to Miles, here, the subtext can be read as holiness misconstrued; one might think that Miles is the one being referenced to however it is his technology that is couched in significant religiosity (as discussed previously in 9.1).
12.4 Conclusion

One might think the negotiation and, eventual stripping, of the player’s power would discourage potential players and cause those who do complete the game to find their experience of the game to be unsatisfying. However, I argue that this is a unique facet of horror video games in specific relation to technology. To frame a game in a successful horrific atmosphere, certain conditions must be met: a negotiation of power (as discussed in this thesis, done via technology), a muting or amputation of the players’ ability to function (sensation, power, networks), and a monster which understands or is in control of the available technology in-game.

13 Conclusion

Technology, in horror games, negotiates the space of anxiety. If the technology were too successful in aiding the player, the game would not be “fun”; thus, technology must negotiate its own power “for” the player and, effectively, betray the player instead. If technology does have power over a monster, this power must be limited and managed. Games like Amnesia, Slender: The Eight Pages, and Outlast all feature types of technology that would, conventionally, help the player navigate the space; however, due to the nature of the game, the technology must break, be limited, or lose its usefulness near enemies. In Amnesia, an oil lamp will save the player from insanity; however, it requires oil to work which forces the player deeper into the horrific environment (and further reveals the player’s position to the monsters). The same trope is true for Outlast, as the player must find batteries for their camera to be able to see in the darkness of a chaotic insane asylum. Slender: The Eight Pages features a flashlight with unlimited battery use but also attracts the monster to the player. This limited technology is symbolic of escaping societal boundaries and the comfort that’s been constructed. Similarly, in Five Nights at Freddy’s, one is inundated with comforting technology; however, the use of this technology is so controlled it becomes alien in its use. This foreign use disturbs conventionality and, as such, encourages an atmosphere of inexperience (which is crucial in establishing an authentic atmosphere of horror). By providing only the remnants of technology, it is symbolic of living away from the comfort provided. As Edward Young writes: “[w]e love to be at once, miserable,
and unhurt” (1759). As the player experiences profound discomfort, so too can they be confident in their ability to remain unharmed. To be confronted with evil and, yet, consolation and, even pleasure, for its influence is part of what makes horror games so tempting.

Through the unique combination of technology and monsters, horror video games provide exclusive insight into cultural attitudes. The way in which technology is represented can be used to understand anxieties surrounding technology while the monsters within the video game illustrate the boundaries of society. This thesis has explored contemporary video games to elucidate the vulnerabilities within cultural perceptions of technological comfort. In exploring this question, this thesis hopes to set the foundation for further research into the study of monsters as signifiers of societal fears and the boundaries that individuals desire to (safely) transgress. The significance of this research is accentuated by the emergence of virtual reality and the more immersive context it provides for future horror video games. In studying this topic, the three themes of networks, power, and sensation will play important roles in this interpretation process. These themes, in combination with established frameworks for video game content analysis, will be used to establish a specialized framework for the analysis of horror video games. Correspondingly, the framework that was developed will help future research of horror video games.

Video games are not only games as they do not exist in a vacuum of meaning and influence. Horror’s long history has culminated into a unique juncture between sensation, power, and networks that is horror video games. As such, to interpret and engage with this unique sub-set of games is to appreciate the irrevocable fascination with horror, in itself, and its imbrication in cultural consciousness. The socio-cultural consciousness of horror reflects a provocative undercurrent which is carefully and scrupulously demarcated from one’s experience. The implications and entanglement of horror, however miniscule in social consciousness, reminds us of the undercurrents of monstrosity and terror and the effects, introspectively, therein. Life itself is on no occasion entirely predictable, and, as many horror games offer an ending with no conclusion, so too, does life reflect art.
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Appendices

Appendix A (1.0): Slender: The Eight Pages

1.1. “Collect all 8 pages” text at the beginning of the game

1.2. Collecting a page
1.3. Seeing Slender Man
1.4. Abandoned truck

1.5. Collecting the final page
1.6. Static when Slender Man catches the player

1.7. Pages 8/8 collected
1.8 The final image of Slender Man

1.9 The eight pages’ text (The Slender Man Wiki, 2014)
Appendix B (2.0) *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*

2.1 Daniel’s first note to himself

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19th of August, 1839

I wish I could ask you how much you remember. I don't know if there will be anything left after I consume this drink.
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2.2 The first piece of text found in the journal

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*memories*

- Follow the liquid trail and find its source.
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BACK
2.3 The ‘liquid trail’ as referenced in the first journal note

2.4 The scene in “Rainy Hall” where Daniel gains consciousness and is first playable
2.5 The ‘sanity meter’ as displayed on the HUD (left to right – perfect sanity to extreme insanity) (Grip, 2014).

2.6 Daniel’s final note to himself

19th of August 1989

It's not fair for me, the dead, to be punished by the demon. He planted the idea of absurdity on me and made me into facing the Shadow. Am I, then, the emerging man? He expects me to meet my death in the presence of the Shadow. Is it imagination?
Appendix C (3.0): *Five Nights at Freddy’s*

3.1 The simple loading screen of *Five Night’s at Freddy’s*

3.2 The screen that appears when one presses ‘new game’ – an indicator of the motive behind playing
3.3 The clock which signals the beginning of each night

3.4 The view through the security camera of two of the animatronic creatures
3.5 The monster “Chica” as she appears on the security-camera after she ‘moves’

3.6 “Chica”: if she (or any other monster) ‘catches’ the player the game ends
3.7 When one beats the game, this screen appears congratulating the player (with a 0.50¢ raise)

Appendix D (4.0): *Outlast*

4.1 The first note that a player finds at the Asylum
4.2 The view through the camcorder in ‘night vision’ mode (and one of the first jump scares with a dead attendee hanging from the ceiling)
4.3 One’s first interaction with an dying attendee who urges the player to leave and (in the meantime) hide

You can’t fight them. You have to hide.

You have to get the fuck out of this terrible place.
4.4 Miles’ first note to himself after the interaction with the officer

I'm inside. Bodies everywhere. Blood. Burn marks. Heads lined up like bottles behind a bar. Dead. Moroff scientists hang from the ceilings; their badges say “Moroff Advanced Research Systems.” Moroff's longtime M.O. Has been to profit off the exploitation of supposed curiosity. Fuck the fine world and bankroll another billion.

How did Moroff think they would make money off a building full of crazy people?

There's some kind of tactical cap pinned like a pig on a spit. Tell me to get the fuck out and then dies. Would have been a good thing to tear when I could still leave the way I came.

4.5 The variant (Chris Walker) who throws Miles through a window
4.6 After the player is thrown by the variant, Father Martin appears claiming to see the player as an ‘apostle’ sent by god

4.7 Hiding from ‘the twins’ behind a pillar – the other option was hiding under the bed
4.8 Losing the camcorder – once reached for, it falls down

4.9 The objective changes immediately once the camcorder is lost
4.10 When the player finds the camcorder, they notice the shattered screen