

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**  
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*University of Ain Temouchent - Belhadj Bouchaib*



**Faculty of Letters, Languages and Social Sciences**  
**Department of Letters and English Language**

**Manifestations of Guilt and Punishment in *Silent Hill 2*.**

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

**Submitted by:**  
Mr. Yacine AMAMRA

**Supervised by:**  
Dr. Samira LAOUFI

**Board of Examiners**

<b>President:</b>	Dr. Dalal BELARBI	(MCB)	University of Ain Temouchent
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Dr. Samira LAOUFI	(MCB)	University of Ain Temouchent
<b>Examiner:</b>	Dr. Sara BENSAPHLA TANI	(MA)	University of Ain Temouchent

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## Abstract

This dissertation explores the complex psychological themes of guilt and punishment as they manifest in the 2001 psychological horror video game *Silent Hill 2*, developed by Team Silent. The game is widely regarded as a landmark in narrative-driven gaming, offering a complex and deeply symbolic portrayal of psychological trauma, moral ambiguity, and emotional repression. A gap to be filled in the scholarly literature with an overt focus on guilt and punishment in the game's narrative with the central aim of this research is to examine how *Silent Hill 2* uses narrative structure, character development, environmental design, and symbolic imagery to externalize the protagonist's internal conflict and guilt. Through a multidisciplinary approach combining narrative media analysis, psychoanalytic theory, and video game studies, the dissertation investigates how the game's setting, monster design—particularly the iconic figure Pyramid Head—and branching endings reflect the psychological turmoil of guilt and its consequences. The study also considers how *Silent Hill 2* utilizes the medium of video games to immerse players in the emotional and ethical dimensions of its themes, fostering empathy and introspection through interactive storytelling. The purpose of this research is not only to deepen the understanding of *Silent Hill 2* as a culturally significant work of psychological horror but also to highlight the potential of video games as meaningful vehicles for exploring complex human emotions and moral questions. The findings suggest that *Silent Hill 2* offers a nuanced and deeply personal portrayal of guilt, punishment, and the human need for redemption, solidifying its place as a landmark in narrative-driven game design.

**Keywords:** *Silent Hill 2*, guilt, punishment, psychological horror, narrative media analysis, symbolism, video game studies, trauma, moral ambiguity, environmental storytelling.

## **Dedications**

This dissertation is a product of both my life-long passion and all my hard work during these past five lengthy years, and with great pride, I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my late dad.

*Dear Dad*, may God have mercy on him.

To that great man whose name I carry with pride, to the one who was my backbone and supported me with all his love, who encouraged me to reach my ambitions, to my role model and the source of my strength and generosity. You have left us and left a void that cannot be filled, but you are forever present in our hearts and our prayers. To the one whom words cannot describe, to the one who was the light in my darkness, whose prayers and words of wisdom are the source of my energy and the will to keep going in life and the secret of my success, to the one who accompanied me in all my times, who toiled without reward, to my hero, my great teacher, my coach and most importantly my best friend my dad.

*My beloved mum*, may God grant her health and wellness.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## **List of Acronyms**

SH: Silent Hill

SH1: Silent Hill 1

PH: Pyramid Head

PS1: PlayStation 1

PS2: PlayStation 2

PS3: PlayStation 3

3D: Three dimensional

## General Introduction

This research work emerges from a long-standing personal engagement with video games, and *Silent Hill 2* in particular, a title that has consistently drawn critical acclaim for its psychological complexity and symbolic depth. My interest in this game is not solely academic; it originates from years of immersive play and reflection, during which I became increasingly aware of its nuanced portrayal of guilt, trauma, and punishment. By turning this personal fascination into a scholarly inquiry, I aim to bridge experiential knowledge with academic analysis. As a researcher who is also a player, I bring an insider's familiarity with the game's mechanics, atmosphere, and narrative layers, which informs my close reading of its symbolic structure. This dual position allows me to approach *Silent Hill 2* with both emotional investment and critical distance, situating my work within the growing field of game studies while contributing a focused analysis on the psychological and moral dimensions embedded in its design.

The psychological horror video game, *Silent Hill 2* continues to be part of the conversation in interactive narrative, and a landmark title for the horror genre. *Silent Hill 2* was originally released in 2001 and then adapted into a novelisation by Sadamu Yamashita in 2006, but provided a shift away from jump scares and into a well-constructed, character-based narrative that explores meaningful human experience. The events of the story follow the long-standing internal conflict of protagonist James Sunderland, a widower, who has travelled to the fog-laden town of Silent Hill after getting a letter from his dead wife.

Critics have noted that *Silent Hill 2* has raised the bar with complex themes, such as grief and guilt, that can be personally experienced by players. The atmosphere, symbolism, and supporting characters, Angela, Eddie, and the numerous apparitions of Pyramid Head, manifested specific psychological traumas and moral dilemmas, turning Silent Hill into a

projection of James's mind. In this way, *Silent Hill 2* emerges as an opportunity to study how interactive media can depict guilt and punishment as part of being human.

The leading research question for this research project, then is: How is guilt and punishment represented in *Silent Hill 2*? This question calls for a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on narrative theory, psychoanalysis, and trauma studies in order to examine the detailed manner in which the game conveys multi-sense filled stories.

Despite the numerous game analyses of *Silent Hill 2* in game studies and fan writing focused on the symbolism of horror and various elements, there is a gap in the scholarly literature with an overt focus on guilt and punishment in the game's narrative. Many existing reflections stress *Silent Hill 2*'s psychological horror and existential dread, often its representation of trauma and mental illness. As an instance, several references identify grief or trauma as central themes, and some writers imply discussions around guilt and moral reckoning, often assimilating the protagonist's experience with that of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, which originally inspired the authors of this story. Yet the existant reflections rarely investigate guilt and punishment systematically, if at all, as two coherent ideas that link together.

There appears to be little rigorous academic work which discusses James Sunderland's journey as a psychoanalytic allegory of repressed guilt and self-inflicted punishment. This dissertation attempts to fill that void by foregrounding these two themes: firstly, it situates *Silent Hill 2* in relation to psychological and philosophical theories of guilt, and then it uses close readings of the game narrative, characters, and symbolism to interrogate the game from this perspective. Thus, the dissertation will contribute to both game studies and psychoanalytic literary criticism by applying dominant models of guilt, mainly Freudian, Nietzschean and existentialist thought, to an interactive form.

This study will fulfil the following objectives:

1. To analyse and interpret the narrative and themes of *Silent Hill 2* as they relate to guilt and punishment, including how guilt and punishment are instantiated in the story, dialogue, and symbolism.
2. To understand James Sunderland's character and environment through the lens of psychoanalytic and existential theories of guilt, including Freudian superego impulses, Nietzsche's notion of moral 'debt,' and Sartre's concept of existential guilt.
3. To engage with the existing literature on psychological horror as well as video game literature to fill the gap in scholarship on guilt and punishment in this genre.

With the above goal in mind, the core research questions are being addressed through a qualitative, textual analysis of the game. They are as follows:

1. How are guilt and punishment represented in the narrative and characters of *Silent Hill 2*?
2. What are the symbols and motifs represented in the game as forms of guilt and self-punishment?
3. How might established theories of guilt and punishment (Freud, Nietzsche, Sartre, Caruth) shed light on the player's interpretation of *Silent Hill 2*'s narrative?

In keeping with the proposed questions, the following hypotheses for the study will be examined and tested through textual analysis of the game.:

- *Silent Hill 2*'s story represents James Sunderland's repressed guilt through its characters and setting. For example, monster forms such as the nurses and Pyramid Head are manifestations of James's guilt and desires for punishment.

- The game represents punishment as an interior or moral exercise rather than a purely external act of revenge. Namely, James's environment, the "Otherworld" of Silent Hill, stands in for a judge or superego, exacting suffering to produce confrontation with guilt.
- The representation of guilt and punishment in *Silent Hill 2* aligns with Nietzsche's conception of guilt as memory of debt or internalised debt, and with Freud's conception of guilt as resulting from an internal conflict of ego and superego. Specifically, Pyramid Head as the Freudian embodiment of James's superego punishing him for his id urges.

This research draws on psychoanalytical and philosophical theories of guilt, trauma, and punishment. Furthermore, articulation of trauma, including the trauma of guilt, often does not reside within conscious memory until it is represented in some symbolic form. This clarifies why *Silent Hill 2* uses surreal, nightmarish imagery, for instance, the fog, monsters and cryptic letters to help reveal James's repressed guilt. Together, these theorists suggest that guilt in *Silent Hill 2* is an internal psychic force influenced by collectively held cultural and existential factors, and punishment is its counterforce enacted by the psyche itself.

This qualitative study will use a psychoanalytic interpretive methodology. The primary data will be the narrative text of *Silent Hill 2* provided by the faithful novelisation of the game's story, in addition to the environmental storytelling. The research work will be conducted in a close reading and visual analysis of the game by playing through all major scenarios and transcribing cutscenes of interest that are significant and relevant to our inquiry, and recording symbols, or other popularly repeated items, within the narrative for instance, James's reading of Mary's letter, and the player's encounters with Pyramid Head. These data will be treated as textual artefacts, then interpreted through the lenses identified above, such as Freudian psychology, Nietzschean notions, and Sartrean notions. The methodology seeks to draw out implicit meanings and psychological dynamics that are embedded in the narrative design of the game.

Throughout the analysis, this research work is attentive to the format of video games. It considers the implications of interactivity for the reception of narrative; players are not passive but assume James's perspective through agency. This agency is itself a part of how players experience guilt and punishment. This research work is also concerned with secondary materials, where appropriate, for example, the official novelisation and developer interviews, in order to expand on the narrative particulars. This is consistent with approaches to game studies that conceptualise video games as texts or cultural artefacts.

There is an overall structure to the dissertation, and it goes as follows: Chapter One establishes a current state of research and situates *Silent Hill 2* in the theories of digital narratives and psychological horror games. This chapter establishes how and why *Silent Hill 2* is a narrative-based horror experience, while also reviewing the existing scholarship on, and at the same time, examining how adaptation of narrative exists, genre, and what makes horror psychological in media. Chapter Two demonstrates the theoretical framework and lays out the key psychoanalytical and philosophical theories of guilt, punishment, and trauma. This chapter examines Freud's psychoanalytic model, Nietzsche's genealogy of guilt, Sartre's existential perspective, and trauma theorists such as Caruth, which establishes the foundational vocabulary for analysis. Chapter Three applies the framework to *Silent Hill 2*. It incorporates a psychoanalytical reading of James Sunderland's arc of character development and symbolism in the game; how James's denial and repression of own his actions affects the side characters such as Angela and Eddie, as mirrors and or contrasts to James; and how symbolism that lies in the monsters found in the town represent James's inner drive to punishment especially regarding Pyramid Head. This chapter articulates how the narrative progression of *Silent Hill 2* and possible endings correlate to encountering guilt or denying it.

By systematically blending narrative analysis within video game studies and psychoanalytic theory, this study aspires to illustrate that *Silent Hill 2* is much more than a

horror spectacle; it is a dramatised conscience existing both virtually in an interactive form (video game) and in a more traditional written form (official novelisation). In conclusion, this identifies not only the significant question of how *Silent Hill 2* depicts guilt, and the nuances of punishment, it helps engage with and contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding how interactive media can recognize psychoanalytical and philosophical ideas.

**Chapter One:**

**Historical**

**Background and**

**Overview of**

**Literature**

# Chapter One: Historical Background and Overview of Literature

## 1.1 Introduction

The analysis of narrative and genre in digital media requires a thorough understanding of how storytelling practices and conventions are engaged through interactive media. This critical literature review sets a theoretical context for analysing *Silent Hill 2* as a significant example of psychological horror gaming and, more broadly, narrative adaptation.

First, this chapter seeks to establish where "literature" sits in academic discourse, including how the definition of "literature" can be extended beyond traditional literature to encompass digital narratives. Then, it will discuss the *Silent Hill* franchise, more specifically *Silent Hill 2*, as an example of the game's evolution as an atmosphere of narrative engagement and psychological tension in horror gaming. It will contextualise the game as in the psychological horror genre and examine how, as a franchise, it is able to subvert the popular understandings of horror tropes to instead emphasise existential dread and trauma of introspection.

Finally, it considers what having *Silent Hill 2* as a narrative existence means and examines how it can be adapted across media and how it works in transmedia storytelling. Incorporating the game as a product of culture, but also as a lived experience, which can reshape cultural understandings of horror within interactive media.

## 1.2 Definition of Literature

Literature's origins are tightly related to humans discovering their ability to create, consequently nourishing their creative aspect, and when this happened, they realised that they could not only express their emotions and thoughts in writing but, in the process, convey messages of importance to society carefully hidden in words. Humans decided that they could play with words to entertain people who are willing and capable of reading set content.

Literature and writing, though seemingly connected, are not synonymous, meaning every piece of writing is not literature per se and vice versa.

Furthermore, literature is not confined by the borders of writing and can transcend the traditional printed mediums to other mediums such as: The performance-based mediums, and as the name suggests, this type of literature is an auditory rather than a written one and is performed, and it includes plays and theatre in general. For example, *Hamlet* is a play by William Shakespeare, considered as the pinnacle of Elizabethan drama, as it was first published in 1603.

The process of defining literature is largely individual, and there is no agreement amongst academics as to when the written record-keeping became more like literature. Literature is a collective phenomenon that encompasses both written and spoken discourse, and it includes a broad range of elements from creative writing to more technical or scientific essays. Still, often the word is used in association with works of the creative imagination, which means poetry, drama, prose, and novels.

Ezra Pound says in his book *ABC of Reading*, “great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.” (28). This statement from Pound indicates that great literature leaves readers with some meaning, meaning to what precisely? to life is the answer, thus literature gives answers to human’s questions about life, it tells that in the journey of life there are millions out there striving to carry on with the flow of life, feeling different shades of life, enjoying life to its fullest and suffering the deepest of miseries life can offer.

Literature helps identifying with others in the globe, strengthens and unites the rest of mankind with each other, reading literature books enables one to mature and may solve the inexplicable mysteries of life, it helps people experience life in all its colours and vastness in the journey of exploring different literary texts the reader meets distinct interesting characters

that teach many life lessons and even connect deeply alleviating the sorrows of the readers also elevating one's spirit at different levels. Humanity in all its shades is encompassed in literature, including sorrows, happiness, wars, birth and death. Literature is never confined to a single culture or country; it speaks to the readers regardless of one's race, culture or country.

Every time literature is read, there is some lesson to be learned or an experience to be gained from it that otherwise could not be achieved before; even reading the same text at different stages in life offers meanings that are missed the first time around. Literature is not just a mere writing but rather an art form, and oftentimes art imitates life, making literature a mirror reflecting life and a stage populated by characters navigating the joys and miseries of life. It's a shared human experience, literature offers understanding, solace and a glimpse into the profound mysteries of life.

### **1.3 Overview of the *Silent Hill* Franchise with a Focus on *Silent Hill 2***

The *Silent Hill* franchise stands as one of the most influential and psychologically complex series in the history of horror video games. Emerging during a formative period for the genre, *Silent Hill* distinguished itself through its emphasis on emotional depth, atmospheric tension, and psychological horror rather than traditional jump scares or action-heavy gameplay. This section provides an overview of the franchise's evolution, beginning with its groundbreaking debut in 1999. Furthermore, placing particular emphasis on *Silent Hill 2*, a title widely regarded as the series' artistic pinnacle. Through a closer look at the development, narrative, and legacy of these early entries, especially *Silent Hill 2*, this chapter will explore how the series redefined horror and storytelling in video games.

### 1.3.1 A Brief History of the Franchise

In the late 1990s, horror games were on the rise. The hardware capabilities of Sony's PS1 enabled developers to craft immersive 3d experiences that merged the atmosphere and shock of Hollywood's most terrifying pictures with the agency of games, creating a brand-new medium for exploring horror. Among these titles was a twisted yet comparatively demure experience called *Silent Hill* developed by a diverse crew of talented Konami employees, *SH* flipped contemporary horror game tropes on their head casting the player as an everyman in search of his daughter in a fog-shrouded town, the game would be well received and followed up by three sequels on the PS2 that would catapult the *Silent Hill* name into horror gaming stardom. However shifting interest within Konami would leave the Japanese company to disband the team that developed these early titles and outsource all future games in the series to Studios in Europe and America while this move would produce some genuine highlights mixed efforts and a lack of care on Konami's part would result in *Silent Hill* gradually becoming a shell of its former self a legend brimming with potential that always seemed to fall short of its glory days through some issue or another.

The origins of *Silent Hill* began in 1996 when Capcom released *Resident Evil* for the PlayStation a survival horror game centred on a special task force investigating a mansion of ghastly monsters, *Resident Evil* was a breakout success and a cult classic right of gates, inspiring a wave of sequels and other studios to develop similar games of their own one such studio was Konami still a few years away from the success of *Metal Gear Solid* Konami sought to create a Hollywood like experience inspired by *Resident Evil* that could conquer the American market, assigned to the project was an assorted group of developers that would come to be known as 'Team Silent', comprised of employees that had failed at their previous projects. Team Silent's structure would fluctuate over the years, which would come with some of the group's most

important and persistent members, including Akira Yamaoka, the crew's composer and occasional producer, Masahito Ito, their creature designer and art director and Hiroyuki Owaku, their main writer.

Despite containing considerable talent, the team would struggle to progress until a gradual loss of faith in the project on Konami's part gave teams silent the creative freedom to do with it as they saw fit instead of creating a Hollywood blockbuster designed to generate sales the team would create a more intimate experience with a gripping story that would appeal to players emotions. In order to do so their project would deviate heavily from its peers in some notable ways rather than starring a soldier or a person possessing supernatural abilities as *Resident Evil* and so many of its derivatives did, their game would star an 'everyman', weak yet sympathetic and relatable and rather than featuring a haunted mansion or a tower of terror team silent would choose a mundane American town as the game setting.

### ***1.3.2 Silent Hill 1***

*Silent Hill 1* was released in February 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1999, it follows Harry Mason into the titular town after his daughter Cheryl goes missing within the town Harry brushes against a varying cast of characters including Cybil Bennett a police officer, Michael Kaufman a hospital director and drug dealer and a group of enigmatic cultists driven by dark ambitions more terrifying than the latter however is the town of Silent Hill itself which is steeped in a perpetual fog swarming with unsettling creatures and sporadically transforms into a hellscape of blood grime and metal known as the Otherworld.

As the player makes their way through Silent Hill's deepest pockets areas forced to solve puzzles and fight enemies in order to progress gradually obtaining a small collection of weaponry that he clumsily uses to fight for his life based on the decisions made by the player Harry's story can arrive at multiple possible conclusions all tragic in their own ways. *Silent Hill*

would be tremendously well-received with critics praising the game for its slow unsettling atmosphere where *Resident Evil* and its contemporaries relied on window busting dogs and other tropey scares to terrify the player, *Silent Hill* used its haunting aesthetics and the tension generated by Harry's lack of aptitude to chip away at the player's psyche and players loved it in the years since its release *Silent Hill's* reputation has not aged perfectly with contemporary critics finding its dated controls to be more punitive than necessary and its voice acting a little rough at certain moments but at the time team silence first game was a genre defining effort one that would inspire many other horror games of a similar style and a wealth of successors of its own.

2001 would see the release of two very different follow-ups to Team Silent's inaugural title, the play novel *Silent Hill* and *Silent Hill 2*, released exclusively in Japan in March of the same year for the Game Boy Advance. Play novel is a visual novel adaptation of *Silent Hill* retelling Harry Mason's tale entirely using text images and a few basic puzzles while lacking the sense of dread found in the console version provided by its gameplay and 3d environments, play novel is still an interesting novelty and would be unofficially translated and ported to the PC in 2013 by *Silent Hill* fan site "Alchemilla Hospital".

The first entry of the *Silent Hill* series is an incredible achievement for how much they got right off their first attempt as it was Konami's answer to Capcom's *Resident Evil* games that were capturing the attention of every gamer at the time and taking the gaming landscape as a whole by storm, however the latter became so much more and branched out to a new whole genre of gaming and carved its own lane and legacy by innovating on the psychological horror genre in video games.

### 1.3.3 *Silent Hill 2*

*Silent Hill 2*, on the other hand, would be a proper successor to *SH1* and a far more ambitious project. The critical and commercial success of the first game had enabled team silent to take even more creative liberties than they were able to before rather than forcing another innocent father into a town of horrors, the team would craft a more challenging and morally ambiguous narrative with Takayoshi Sato at the helm of the game's story and CGI (Computer-generated imagery) cutscenes taking heavy inspiration from the characters and scenario of the famous Russian novel *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

The resulting game released in September 25<sup>th</sup> 2001 for the PS2, and it would be largely similar to its predecessor on a mechanical level yet delve far deeper into the complexity of the human condition on a narrative and psychological level taking place at an indeterminate point in time after the first game *Silent Hill 2* sees James Sunderland travel willingly to Silent Hill after receiving a letter from his deceased wife beckoning him to come James's confusion only increases when he encounters Maria a woman who looks uncannily similar to his wife and is forced to confront a series of nightmarish creatures that gradually lay bare that darkest secrets hidden within his soul chief among these creatures is the seemingly indomitable Pyramid Head, the brainchild of Masahiro Ito this monster hounds James throughout his journey providing both a challenge to the player that adds deeply to the game's tension while also serving to highlight the game's psychosexual undertones and some of the series most disturbing sequences.

*Silent Hill 2* would be critically lauded upon its release and quickly became the most beloved game in the series a title that it has continued to hold in the many years since similar to the first *Silent Hill* game critics were enamoured with its haunting and cerebral atmosphere as well as the new ways that elevated not just horror games but the medium of games by and large with the maturity of its subject matter *Silent Hill 2* would go on to receive an extended

edition for Microsoft's game console, Xbox in December in addition to containing a few small tweaks the Edition included a new scenario centred on Maria this version would later be ported to the PS2 in November of 2002 and the PC in December of the same year. In the wake of *Silent Hill 2*'s release, Team Silent would begin development on two new *Silent Hill* titles, one that would continue in the style of Team Silent's first opus and one that would explore a different direction for the franchise. The former game would become *Silent Hill 3*.

## **1.4 Psychological Horror Genre in Gaming**

The psychological horror genre stands as a distinct and surreal avenue of horror that can offer immersive and unsettling experiences that capitalise on the interactivity of games and psychological elements rather than horror elements such as jump-scares. In addition to accurately comprehending the brilliance of the horror intended through *Silent Hill 2*. First, define horror as a genre and identify its development and purpose as a genre. Then, define psychological horror as not only a subgenre of horror but also as an independent genre with explorations through different mediums, leading to finally exploration of psychological horror in the video games realm.

### **1.4.1 Understanding Horror as a Genre**

Countless books, articles and studies ask the question: "Why do people like horror?" with answers that can routinely be summarised as the adrenaline of safe scares, a natural curiosity for the strange and its mysteries. Horror as a genre is frequently predicated on the immaterial and the irrational, but because it occupies the interstitial, deliberately carving a space between living and dead, known and unknown, fact and fiction it is designed to deliver entertainment through the things that make the audience feel incredibly uncomfortable, and that perhaps more than any other genre, a person's inclination towards horror is a matter of personal preference. And so here the current situation can only be perceived as a space governed by the

whims of something scarier than mere monsters, a force forever shifting in the shadows of the subjective. Furthermore, its influence goes beyond personal exploration and gets right to the heart of the genre itself, a genre that even outside the context of art, strives to make a mockery of objectivity.

Horror immediately complicates ideas of objectivity through its fascination for the interstitial, one that is at odds with its own classification as a genre, in being at odds with the very concept of classification. Genre as a structure delights in boundaries, and horror as a genre delights in transgressing boundaries. All figures in horror are built from this foundational violation: the living/dead, animate/inanimate, human/non-human, interior/exterior, large/small, familiar/unfamiliar, etc. They resist clean categorisation, but building on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas on *Purity and Danger*, philosopher Noel Carroll concludes that: "... we initially speculate that an object or being is impure if it is categorically interstitial... contradictory... incomplete, or formless."(55). Horror has made a feature of the formless. Professor Isabel Pinedo in her book *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* also implicates: "physical violence against the body" as part of this same disregard for boundaries: "dismemberment, evisceration, putrefaction... " (18), all serve to disrupt the order of the body, creating an abject horror, which philosopher Julia Kristeva defined as, not only a disintegration of classification or the body, but "the place where meaning collapses."(11) Pinedo, too, comments on this complete dissolution of traditional understanding, where: "...categories break down, boundaries blur, institutions fall into question..." and, along with many other disintegrations, "the stable, unified, coherent self acquires the status of fiction." (12). So, horror resists even the most basic of certainties.

However it denies the simplicity of objective categorisation, and even extends this to the principal dichotomy of fact and fiction. In terms of fiction, horror is maybe the genre that has the most turbulent relationship with the truth, at once desiring a connection with the real

world, even with specific histories, but also frequently driving beyond these limits. The constant tension between 'based on a true story' and 'it is only a movie or a work of fiction in a novel. And it is a tension that is mirrored in the audience's spectatorship. The horror movie or video game experience is one defined by discomfort, the senses played in such a way that generates a constant transitioning between the fiction of 'there' and the reality of 'here', visceral responses drawn from fear, horror and disgust that drag the viewer or the player away from the imagined world only to be violently flung back to their own body. And that distance between there and here is further complicated if considering how horror is a genre that delights in its fiction, not only due to its supernatural and fantastical narratives, but because horror cinema and video games horror, more than any other genre, has built its conventions around a conscious cannibalisation of past productions and, in doing so, deliberately draws attention to its theatrical condition, to its entirely false depictions of a subject.

As writer Philip Brophy concludes, the contemporary horror film acknowledges that it has been before, as well as recognising the fact that it knows that the audience realise that it knows. This leads critics like Arthur Krystal to be sceptical of the genre in general, claiming genre readers simply want the comfort of a familiar voice recounting a story that they have not heard of before. And, as much as there is discussion about horror as a genre defined by more negative emotions, maybe something is comforting in the familiarity of those narratives, if not those creatures, because horror's affinity for repetition goes beyond literal remakes or archetypes. It's built on the ancient burial ground of the audience's past, the fears they passed down, that they have inherited, connecting them to ancient pasts and primal unease.

Horror can essentially be defined by the human psyche, and that doubt manifests again in psychological horror. Is the threat something supernatural, or is it a product of the mind? Virginia Woolf wrote on her essay "*On Being Ill*" that "literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks

straight and clear...", and that, regarding pain and illness, this is partly down to the "poverty of the language."(32).

Horror has evolved from these primordial stories that were used to explain the unknown, to a tool for expressing the known but intangible, and, in doing so, horror questions the dichotomy so often established as 'objective=good', 'subjective=bad' when what is left with is not a matter of truth but rather the competing discrepancies of personal experience. In attempting to extract the personal, the interstitial, the bodily, the objective is not necessarily a superior interpretation, simply another incomplete one. Just as any subjective interpretation is necessarily incomplete. However sometimes, in order to understand an abstract feeling such as pain, it is easier if it's given a form that can be seen. Though horror equally relies on the demonstration that, because something cannot be seen, it does not necessarily mean it is not there, and so it always encourages the audience to reconsider and investigate what might be missing. As much as horror is a genre defined by the unknown, it's equally defined by a simple desire to be understood. It connects individual and collective experience, especially in the world of video games. Creating online forums and communities that all share the experience of playing the same game.

#### **1.4.2 Understanding Psychological Horror and How it Reflects in Video Games**

Psychological horror is a sub-genre of horror literature that amplifies the distortion of the mind, fragility of emotions, and anxiety of an existential or internal disturbance, where traditional horror introduces some kind of 'monster' or 'external threat' such as vampires, zombies and mythical creatures. Psychological horror puts a character's disintegration of mental stability at the forefront, often introducing mixed abstract themes of paranoia, guilt, existential dread, and the uncanny, it also examines the notion of fragile perception, identity, and sanity

across narratives by using literary devices like unreliable authorship/narration, ambiguous and indeterminate atmospheres, symbolically dense imagery, uncanny realism, and much more to provoke discomfort.

The key element of psychological horror is the cultivation of the reader's own psychological state, with the narrative ultimately distorting the borders of both reality and mania. This can be seen through ways like working through repressed traumas, surreal spaces, or ambiguous morals. The result is a visceral terror that comes not from any explicit danger to the characters in the text, but from perceiving directly the characters' attempts to repress their anxieties and later the reader's repressed anxieties, societal taboos or limitations, or simply the unknowable, or unknowable self. Psychological horror often draws on Freudian terms such as the 'Unheimliche' (the Uncanny), which means familiar or ordinary spaces or relationships become eerie, or Jungian notions of personality, such as the shadow, which can be seen with people's latent fears.

Several notable examples include Edgar Allan Poe's explorative representation of guilt and madness in *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Shirley Jackson's isolation and haunted psyche in *The Haunting of Hill House*, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, as a critique of gendered and medical ideas of collective mental health. These examples could be presented in multiple ways; however in psychological horror, specific power dynamics, existential identity crises, and terror of cognitive distortions are easily seen and recognised. The significance of an academic understanding of psychological horror is that it can serve a vital purpose of metaphorically illustrating socio-cultural anxieties and existential subjects, making horror an intellectual and emotional experience and constructs capable of existing without the aesthetic of superficial fear.

This genre in video games especially aims to leave a lingering effect long after the game has ended and the player has stopped playing. Psychological horror is not easily defined in the world of video games as each game has its way of scaring the player and testing their psyche but this genre can be defined on a broader sense as it is defined as a game that can scare the player without the use of constant jump scares and other typical horror genre tactics but rather utilising other factors such as atmosphere and overall feeling of isolation and dread. A perfect example would be how *Silent Hill 2* utilises these factors to create a dreadful horror experience that tests the human psyche.

### **1.5 Significance of *Silent Hill 2* as a Narrative-Driven Psychological Horror Piece**

Narrative is a major aspect of horror games and is an essential element in the overall player experience and levels of emotional involvement. Although other genres of video games may prioritise gameplay mechanics as the primary focus of player experience, horror depends primarily on narrative to create fear and tension. As a result, an effective narrative can not only help build atmosphere but can also help develop character arcs and create a sense of urgency, which can contribute to keeping the player engaged. Though there are many different types of horror games, psychological horror narratives often include elements of human nature and explore themes of trauma, isolation, and existential angst. The focus on narrative increases emotional stakes but also enables the player to relate to the characters on a human level, making the player's ability to feel involved and engaged in the story that much stronger.

*Silent Hill 2* changed horror gaming significantly, especially in terms of where horror games went as a genre. Several things happened in *Silent Hill 2* that moved horror games from jump scares and gore to psychological horror that depended on emotional depth. The game introduced complex themes such as grief and guilt, along with the workings of the human psyche, which speak to players on a personal level. It's hard to understate how innovative *Silent*

*Hill 2* was at the time in its portrayal of sound, visual design, and ambient storytelling. It set a new standard for horror games, focusing on psychological content, and it served as an inspiration for many ensuing horror games, motivating those titles to explore similar themes. The *Silent Hill 2* legacy can also be seen in many later works, which prioritised narrative and character development, rather than shock value, which has provided exciting new opportunities in horror gaming.

*Silent Hill 2* is acknowledged for its complex character development, which is the backbone for the story design. The main character, James Sunderland, is on a journey that is just as much about self-discovery as it is about facing horror. As players guide James through the game, they also see him psychologically break down as he deals with guilt, loss, and the repercussions of his past. The supporting cast, namely Mary, Angela, and Eddie, are more than plot devices, but different types of trauma and mental illness that are also eloquently represented through James' dilemmas. Each character possesses depth and nuance in their background and purpose, and it allows the players to view the infinite layers of humanity and unresolved trauma they encounter. This helped increase immersion while also framing guilt and redemption as prominent themes of the game.

Individual characters reside within these larger narratives that surround them, and all of their stories shape the narrative design and thus the construction of psychological horror as a whole. Notable themes this game addresses are grief, punishment, and the idea of salvation or forgiveness. The game tackles the idea that *Silent Hill* is a reflective lens, revealing each character's biggest fears and wants. James' journey is particularly impactful in that as his guilt is represented in different forms, he is brought to revelation about himself, Mary, and his relationships with others. The game plays with subjective reality, as the experience of *Silent Hill* is reliant on each character's trauma; this connects each character and their desire action.

*Silent Hill 2* is more than horror, as the nuance of its theme has the potential to create an emergent and more rich level of psychological engagement for the players.

Symbolism and metaphor play a large role in how *Silent Hill 2* is narrated and develop a complex, layered sense of storytelling that enhances the type of psychological horror involved in the game. The town contains many meanings, and representatively, it is a metonym for the character's repressed feelings and unfinished business. Specifically, the fog in *Silent Hill* is a metaphor of confusion and obscured truths, and the litany of monsters coded in the game represents James's inner demons and sense of guilt. Each enemy and every aspect of the environment was made symbolic, which means that players are involved with the narrative on a psychological level. Symbolism and metaphor are also embedded in puzzles and various items in the game, specifically telling signs and symbols of the characters' struggle and desire. This story space encourages narratives of a richer nature and stimulates player critical analysis, when explored, allows for a more meaningful exploration of the human psyche in *Silent Hill 2*.

*Silent Hill 2* is also integrally layered within the ambiguities of mental health, and implies an entire narrative around the protagonist's psychological trauma. Grief, guilt, and depression predominate the narratives exhibited by James Sunderland, and their formative nature starts with the death of James's wife. The haunted and fragmented environment of *Silent Hill* is applicable at a micro-level to James's incongruous mental trauma; the town itself becomes a representation of James's psychological state. The unfolding of mental health is not merely an environment of the game, it is an integral component of the story that enables the player to engage with the characters' emotional turmoil and their understanding of unresolved trauma. The subject of mental health issues in the narrative of *Silent Hill 2* is both genuine and profound. The presentation of mental health issues is so reflective of real-life experiences and feelings of deep vulnerability that it not only allows the player to face their fears but also makes the experience feel deeply personal on an unsettling level.

Fear and anxiety are prevalent throughout *Silent Hill 2* and act as motifs that are central to the horror of the game. Fear is evoked through many avenues, like the atmosphere in both the sound design and the visual representation of the world, as well as the unknown that could threaten the player's existence at any moment. The fog, as well as the long silence, adds an almost suffocating dread. Furthermore, the monsters are grotesque and symbolic, and seem to echo the unresolved fears and aspects of the characters' lives that are not dealt with. There is a constant tension created throughout the experience, leaving the player feeling disturbed in their play experience. The playing experience is a reflection of the mood of the players if the player experiences the character's anxiety in an unknown world. The other aspect of *Silent Hill 2* that can influence the terror is the continuous experience of being manipulated psychologically. The way the game blurs the lines of reality with hallucinations makes the player question whether there is any reality at all. The game pushes the player closer to their fears, intensely and if the game demands a strange, surreal experience with their emotions, that somehow still manages to talk about something bigger.

Player agency can be incredibly important in *Silent Hill 2* to develop some emotional engagement and personal responses to the narrative. This allows the player to make choices to make a conscious decision to impact their experience of the narrative. The game encourages exploration and interactability with the world, and this in turn will unfold parts of the story and the psychological states of characters. The agency provided by the game allows players to face their fears, and choose in a way they feel understands the narrative. The significance of these decisions is guaranteed by the game's design, where almost all of those decisions change the player's ending, which will ultimately come from player interpretation. This uncertainty creates replay value, and players will be invested in the character's arc or journey while thinking about their decisions and possible decisions.

By intertwining player agency with emotional challenge, *Silent Hill 2* creates a unique psychological horror experience which extends its impact beyond the gameplay players are experiencing. Adaptation creates continuity across media, allowing narratives to be greater than the sum of their parts. Adaptations of *Silent Hill 2* have emerged in multiple forms, including film, literature, and graphic novels, with each medium struggling and benefiting from different advantages and disadvantages for relaying psychological depth and horror elements found in the original game. For instance, a film version could establish a veritable horror landscape simply by virtue of the audio and visual elements it could exploit, while in literature it can express characters' internal thoughts and motivations directly. As we move from an interactive experience to a passive experience, whether that be film or books, the emotional and narrative qualities of *Silent Hill 2* must be considered.

In contrast to conventional horror tropes that utilise external threats and more explicit villainy, *Silent Hill 2* goes against those elements, removing external threats and essentially villainy by making their subject matter the protagonist's internal struggles and psychological horror. Unlike most horror narratives where monsters are enemies merely existing due to them being monsters, the game presents antagonistic forces tied to the protagonist's psyche, resisting the conventional monster archetypes of horror narratives. By working against the expected external horror, it pushes the player into spaces to struggle with their fears and insecurities instead of simply escaping the constant threat of a monster. Also, the narrative structure of *Silent Hill 2* is non-linear and ambiguous and differs from the typical direct plots of horror movies and games, making it layered and complex, so players need to think deeper and analyse the events rather than simply enjoy it, although they do still have the opportunity to connect with narratives and themes.

The overall effect *Silent Hill 2* has had on horror narratives in a general sense is profound, given the abundance of titles and films that have resisted fear, anxiety, and

uncertainty elements. For example, *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* and *The Last of Us* have expressed the emotional mode of storytelling and character-driven narratives made popular by *Silent Hill 2*, with each continuing the response to ordinary aspects of the human condition with mental health and trauma themes. Not only have psychological horror elements evident in the media inspired stories in better engagement, but reflecting on the possible range of narrative structures, player perspective and experiences, genre-defying storytelling in horror narratives, and depth in developing characters contributes to complex and layered narratives, which only adds richness and variations in storytelling. *Silent Hill 2* set a course for both the psychological horror genre, but also narrative style, expectations and emotional engagement, which has persistently pushed larger mainstream games and films, and therefore a substantial shift for narrative entertainment both in horror and beyond.

### **1.5.1 From Gameplay to Storytelling: Translating Video Games into Screen Media**

Adaptation is one of the most abused and misunderstood artistic traditions of current-day entertainment. To begin with, it must be defined because this particular concept suffers a lot of misrepresentation, culture is obsessed with adapting art in various ways from wanting to adapt a story into another medium such as adapting video games into films and tv shows and vice versa, to trying to recreate an image using a different art style that is gaining a lot of attention recently since the addition of chat gpt's newest feature that can generate pictures in different art forms and styles such as the iconic Studio Ghibli anime style and even retelling a classic story with more modern sensibilities such as the remaking of the story of Snow White on film.

At its heart adaptation is about bringing a story from one context into another know that it is called adaptation not reproduction, because the objective behind adaptation is not trying to

just recreate something exactly the way it was rather the idea is to adapt something into an entirely different and new context, ranging from a different artistic medium or a different culture or even just a different time period. Linda Hutcheon, a university professor and an academic writer in a journal article, claims that: “Perhaps it is the very possibility of telling the same story in many different ways that provokes us to make the attempt. When we adapt, we create using all the tools that creators have always used: we actualise or concretise ideas; we simplify, but we also amplify” (109). All that to say, adaptations are not just meritless reproductions of previous work; rather, they are in fact re-imaginings of classic stories, tailored to the creator's interpretation, presented to a new audience, and sometimes altered to suit a new artistic medium. The adapter must have a strong and nuanced understanding of the original story to make this work, and if they were adapting it into another medium entirely, then it requires an equally strong understanding of how that medium works. Art is both a representation of culture as well as a shaping force for it. It is a product of the struggles and interests of its time and helps affect change in its culture even well it reflects it seeing the same story told across a bunch of different cultures can say a lot about each of them so for instance, Laurence Olivier's film adaptation of *Henry the fifth* is a perfect example, some of Henry's questionable decisions and morally grey choices were removed or downplayed this is because the film was made in 1944 and was intended as a historical war epic that would boost morale in wartime.

So, in fact, though it is based on a Shakespearean play, it still served that vital function of art by adapting itself to its cultural environment, and it was successful at doing so. Now of course that is one purpose of adapting a story and it generally tends to happen with adaptations that are made in a very different society or time period than the original story but there is another kind of adaptation one that simply seeks to transpose a story from one medium into another and this kind of adaptation does not always happen in a particularly different cultural context,

example at hand is the novel adaptation of the game *Silent Hill 2*, for instance it is not really trying to tell the story in a new cultural context due to the both of them being made by the same company which is Konami a Japanese video games based company, so there is not much cultural difference, rather it is an attempt to tell a great story in a new medium this accomplishes a few goals.

Firstly it allows the story to be seen in a different way which is just a very exciting and potentially quite enriching experience for people who fondly appreciate the original story but also secondly and most importantly, it allows the story to be retold using different tools and then presented to a new audience, because not everyone appreciates every artistic medium after all, also taking a story from one medium like video games into another like literature helps bring that story to an audience that may otherwise not have appreciated or even taken the time to experience it in its original form.

### **1.5.2 The Evolution of Video Game Adaptations**

This concept refers to the trans-medial process through which elements intrinsic to a video game, such as narrative, characters, aesthetics, mechanics, and ludic structures, are reinterpreted, recontextualised, or reimagined into a distinct non-interactive medium (e.g., film, television, literature, graphic novels, or theatre). This practice operates within a complex interplay of creative, commercial, and cultural imperatives, where the source material's interactive and participatory nature is negotiated to align with the conventions and affordances of the target medium.

Scholarly analysis of such adaptations often engages with frameworks like Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory, which positions adaptation as a dialogic process of "repetition with variation," as well as concepts from game studies that emphasise the unique challenges of

translating player agency, nonlinear storytelling, and procedural rhetoric into passive or linear formats. Proficient adaptations are not only based on their level of fidelity to the original, but also on the way they employ the affordances of the target medium to invoke the thematic essence, emotional complexity, or experiential ethos of the game. For example, a film adaptation could closely identify with a game's visual style and lore, but then reconfigure the branching narratives into a single narrative arc which aligns only in feeling to the original text. The film adaptation consciously gives priority to cinematic narrative over the interactive experience of the game.

These adaptations are important cultural artefacts that respond to wider industry trends like franchise proliferation, audience diversification and intellectual property commodification. They also stimulate conversations on authorship, canon and the audience's expectations, especially when audiences work through the tensions between interpretation and preservation of the source material. By interrogating adaptations like *The Last of Us* (HBO series) or *Detective Pikachu* (film), scholars explore how hybridised narratives negotiate the loss of gameplay agency, remediate game aesthetics, or expand narrative depth, thereby contributing to interdisciplinary dialogues across media studies, game studies, and cultural theory.

In essence, adaptation from video games is a dynamic, iterative practice that illuminates the evolving relationship between interactivity and traditional media, while foregrounding the cultural significance of games as source material in contemporary transmedia ecosystems.

### **1.5.2.1 Adaptation of *The Last of Us* from a Video Game to a TV Show**

*The Last of Us* is a video game made by Naughty Dog and published on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013. It is considered as one of the most notable games in the 7th generation, more specifically PS3 exclusive titles that pushed the idea of cinematic experiences in video games at the time. It was

one of the most unique horror game experiences offered with such cinematic finesse, telling an emotionally touching story that is set in a setting that is akin to a zombie apocalypse, and it offered stellar visual performance with strongly written characters, especially the lead characters. Ellie and Joel's dynamic is so fondly remembered and cherished by the players and fans of the series for a reason. The story showcases how two strangers from two different backgrounds and age differences can share a bond so close, almost like a daughter and father relationship. They grow closer during the course of a long campaign, slowly growing an attachment to each other, and during these moments of vulnerability that are done with a great sense of patience and build up, which ultimately helped sell the game's dramatic conclusion. Even more so, a conclusion that is still being discussed to this day it is a world populated by well-defined and well-developed characters. One that is easy for the player to be immersed in, with this in mind, adapting *The Last of Us* into a TV show seemed like an incredibly easy task that would generate a lot of success and that ended up being true as the show garnered critical success, as it won the 2023 Best Game Adaptation award at The Game Awards, amongst many other awards, making it one of the best TV shows in recent years.

The TV show is made by HBO and first aired on January 15<sup>th</sup>,2023, and it adopts the storyline of the game faithfully, with Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey as Joel and Ellie, managing to accurately deliver a lot of the game's most impactful scenes. In addition, the sets and the special effects are well done, as a lot of care was put into each scene to make it in line with the game's atmosphere and environments. In general, the show managed to do a better job when it came to world building compared to the game, while the game is mainly focused on character writing and is a lot stronger for it, the show touches on some parts of the game that are not touched or fleshed out without sacrificing much of the story's quality. Overall, *The Last of Us* TV show is a faithful adaptation of the source material, successfully transmitting a story from one medium to another.

### 1.5.3 Adaptation of Media to Video Games

It is the system of conceptualising and reorganising content from non-interactive media, namely literature, film, television, comics, or even historical moments, into an interactive digital game. This is a translation from the original source's narrative, themes, aesthetics, or ideology into the conventions of a game, such as mechanics, player agency, ludic systems, and procedural storytelling. Whereas adaptations from games are able to navigate the loss of interactivity, adaptations to games must navigate the passive enjoyment of the source material as well as incorporate the participatory, nonlinear, and often emergent nature of gameplay.

Scholarly analysis of adaptations to games engages with concepts of “Transmedia Storytelling” (Jenkins) and “Ludo-Narrative design” (Hocking), stressing how games revise source material by taking advantage of their affordances. For example, a linear novel plot may become an open-world environment in a game or a film’s visual aesthetics gets carried over to a game’s art direction while its narrative is expanded through side quests or environmental storytelling. It is important to recognize the difficulties of preserving the thematic coherence of the source material while allowing some pedagogical freedom of interactivity, the risk of “ludo narrative dissonance” which is when the mechanics of the game do not align with the narrative purpose of the game, and navigating anticipated audience expectations of both familiarity and originality.

Furthermore, adaptations to video games also often reflect commercial concerns to add on to franchises, whether it is *The Witcher* series adapted from Andrzej Sapkowski's novels or producing games from predetermined intellectual property, such as *Star Wars*. However they also exemplify cultural revisions by allowing players to engage in familiar but different ways. For instance, *Disco Elysium* adapted literary features such as its dense dialogue and moral uncertainty into RPG/gameplay mechanics. Another example is *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*

incorporates psychological themes from Celtic stories into its audiovisual and gameplay design. These adaptations suggest the potential of the medium to offer immersive experiences, present alternative perspectives or histories through interactive systems.

This point raises questions about authorship, framing, and medium specificity. Unlike adaptations for films that often contract original narratives for time, adaptations for games can and often do expand or distribute a story to accommodate player agency, which can be seen in *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* as it puts original characters in Tolkien's created world. This can also spark discussions amongst fans and scholars concerning authenticity and creative license when games omit fidelity for engagement, for example, the *Assassin's Creed* franchise fictionalising history.

Ultimately, adaptation to video games exemplifies how the medium will further take shape in a culture, not simply as a derivative work, but as a site for any kind of experiment. Animating static stories into active, player-designed experiences recasts what "adapting" means, demonstrating the further collaboration between designer and player. Games highlight how storytelling is changing, how boundaries of authorship, interactivity, and audience participation are dissolving in the digital.

### **1.5.3.1 Gamifying Horror: The Adaptation of *Saw* Movies into Interactive Media**

*Saw* movies are among the most popular movie franchises in history without a shadow of a doubt, and even people who never watch them or are even fans of horror usually still know about their general theme. The main story here centres around John Kramer, also known as Jigsaw, a man with a terminal illness, who believes people only value life through suffering and pain. This twisted man ends up orchestrating a game in which he targets people he deems

ungrateful for life putting them in deadly traps to test their desire to survive, for example in the first 2004 movie audience are shown two men wake up chained in a grimy bathroom and their only way to escape is working together within a time limit or breaking free by using tools like a hacksaw which is a horrible solution. The genius part is that there is actually a way for both of them to survive but they can only see it when they trust each other and work together, which is very hard because both men think the other is lying. Every participant needs to bypass gruesome challenges in order to survive and in certain scenarios, they need to sacrifice something valuable like a limb or other body parts or alternatively sacrifice someone to save their own lives. However there is a catch because if a participant behaves in a selfish matter like leaving someone behind for their demise, they can face a trap where they die instead in other words, Jigsaw is a man with declining health and dying but wants to see other people suffer before his own demise because he firmly believes that they do not deserve to live more than him.

This terrifying concept has been adopted very well in the video game made by Zombie Studios and published by Konami on October 6th, 2009. It follows investigator David Tapp after the events of the first film. This detective is obsessed with catching Jigsaw, and as a result, he becomes stuck in an abandoned asylum filled with deadly traps. Jigsaw wants the detective, aka the player, to navigate the facility, solve puzzles and save other victims. In addition to that, try to uncover clues about the killer's identity, as the player does so, the game introduces new characters, each with their own dark pasts tied to Jigsaw's twisted justice, but they're not what they seem to be. The story in the game masterfully explores themes of survival, redemption and moral choice as the player controlling the detective confronts his own demons. Nevertheless, the gameplay mechanics are well crafted and push the player to react quickly and think outside the box as if they are inside the movie itself.

## 1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has critically assessed the interplay between narrative, genre, and digital media, and has emphasised *Silent Hill 2* as an important artefact in psychological horror and a means to reshape literary engagement in interactive forms. The exploration has arguably altered the landscape of “literature”, even as the definition of the term, as beyond only text forms, has been challenged, digital narratives can be viewed as products that are complex and rich in culture, and are worthy of study. *Silent Hill 2* is a clear example that demonstrates how interactive media can move beyond traditional horror expectations and evoke more significant psychological engagement. It uses the intentionally constructed atmosphere of dread as an existential horror where feeling trauma and moral ambiguity, and reflective terror are antecedent to the narrative of psychological engagement.

# **Chapter Two:**

# **Theoretical**

# **Framework**

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a theoretical foundation for the proposed research, focusing on fundamental theories of guilt, punishment, trauma, and repression in both the psychological and philosophical literature. The internal workings of human emotional and moral life have been extensively theorized by a number of thinkers, for example: Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger. Furthermore, trauma theory, such as Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, can provide a vital interpretive framework for understanding how guilt is first repressed and later manifested. These frameworks are not simply abstract or clinical; they become dramatically charged when situated for modern interactive storytelling, specifically video games.

The psychological horror game *Silent Hill 2* embodies this, providing a rich symbolic environment in which repressed guilt is explored and the desire for punishment is expressed. In applying psychological, philosophical, and narrative theories to the structure and symbolism of the game, this chapter is intended to demonstrate how *Silent Hill 2* acts not only as an artistic representation of guilt but also as a theoretical model of repression and trauma.

The purpose of this paper is to offer perspectives within these frameworks by reviewing, analysing, and understanding the role of trauma and repression in applied psychological philosophy, and to show how environmental storytelling, such as that in video games, offers a particular practice to dissect the complexity of these human experiences.

## **2.2 Guilt within Psychological and Philosophical Context**

Guilt has always been at the centre of psychological theory, philosophy, and, more recently, artistic narratives such as video games. It has been a topic of analysis from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic conception of guilt as the internal censorship of primal urges to Friedrich Nietzsche's historical investigation of guilt as the memory of debt and even its usage as a mode of oppression and punishment felt through recognition from others.

In addition, the role of guilt cannot simply be relegated to the personal level, as it becomes a structural aspect of human existence. Philosophical movements, such as existentialism through thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, have shown how guilt is not just a personal emotional reaction, but a kind of existential dilemma, which is inseparable from human freedom and responsibility.

Beyond its theoretical frameworks, the feeling of guilt is felt in cultural and personal ways through stories, especially in a contemporary context within the context of video games. Through interactivity, players are not merely spectators of guilt but are also able to embody and inhabit guilt as it functions differently within a psychological space, like that of a video game, and is laid out as a landscape of narrative possibility with *Silent Hill 2* reflecting the psychological accounts of trauma and tends to reveal how guilt, punishment, and repression intertwine and operate in a dynamic process.

### **2.2.1 Defining Guilt**

Guilt is one of the most complex and powerful emotions in psychology, and it is more than simply emotional or affective like anger or sadness; it has a thoughtfully evaluative aspect as it comes from an awareness of having violated a standard and an internal acceptance of

responsibility. Psychologically, guilt serves both adaptive and maladaptive functions. Adaptive guilt engenders social cohesion; it causes people to comply with moral standards, seek forgiveness, and try to make amends. Maladaptive guilt becomes pathological guilt, which can cause anxiety, compulsiveness, and a form of self-destruction if it is excessive or misappropriated. Psychological perspectives on guilt require inquiries into guilt as a process—its formation, function, and internal regulation, particularly through the lens of psychoanalysis and existentialism.

One of the most influential and foundational models of guilt in the psychological literature is Freud's view; his model of the psyche (the id, ego, and superego) provides an account of guilt based on the conflicted dynamic of desire and an internalised morality. The superego takes shape through identifying with parental and societal authority and serves as the moral regulator of the psyche. It also monitors the ego's thoughts and actions and enforces violations through guilty feelings. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud writes: "Civilization... gets the individual to renounce his dangerously aggressive wishes by neutralizing and disarming them, and then creating an agency within him to vigilantly lookout for breaches of the social contract—his conscience." (71) The agency of conscience and guilt resides in the superego, and can derive guilt even when there is no actual impropriety.

Furthermore, Freud emphasises that guilt can be experienced not only for one's actions but also for their thoughts or impulses; this is an important point regarding the psychology of guilt. Guilt is not necessarily tethered to reality; it is tied to one's internal moral ideals and proscriptions. In the case of moral masochism, the ego has become the recipient of self-punishment, in the *Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud discusses this sense of obligation, stating: "There is one unfortunate tension between the actual ego and its position to the demands of the superego as the basis for the sense of guilt and supposed inferiority." Here, guilt has often served not just as a guide of moral behaviour, but as a symptom of unresolved conflict of the psyche.

Freud's concept of unconscious guilt is also of interest, especially in instances of repression and trauma. Frequently, the subject is unaware of the source of their guilt but is still aware of the emotional and behavioural sequelae. Repressed guilt manifests as anxiety, compulsions, and depression. The subject may make logical explanations for the discomfort, without an understanding that the source of the discomfort is an unacceptable impulse or memory that is both real and buried. This process indicates the complexity of guilt psychologically: it is emotional, cognitive, and symbolic and is often unaware of its own actions. Whereas Freud's model focuses on an individual experiencing intrapsychic conflict, Nietzsche provides a parallel account of guilt that is socially situated in the world and has continuously impacted psychology and cultural theory. In Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he coined the origin of the German word "Schuld" for either "guilt" or "debt." He argues that today's version of guilt comes from the ancient notions of debtor-creditor obligations, in situations where punishment was meted out to those who did not fulfil their obligations.

Eventually, as organisations of societies moved towards ever more internalised systems of morality, externalised punishment became an internal system of moral self-surveillance. Nietzsche's dissertation is that guilt is not a naturally existing moral emotion; rather that guilt is a psychological phenomenon produced across history. It is from this interiorization of punishment that we can understand a modern psychological guilt. Nietzsche claimed that the human being, who could no longer outwardly rage, turned this onto itself, creating what he termed "bad conscience." The mechanism of this psychology would create a model of guilt where the individual is forced to blame him/herself, to not only feel pain but internal pain, and where their internal authority becomes another way to adjust behaviour. Although Nietzsche's framework is primarily philosophical, it has serious implications when it comes to psychology: we no longer regard guilt as an instinctive reaction, but rather a social engineering of the mind.

This convergence of Freudianism and Nietzscheanism indicates that guilt is more than a response to wrongdoing; it is a state of internal division. The mind becomes a place of contention between primal urges, moral demands, and repressed memories. This contention produces psychological symptoms that are difficult to articulate rationally, and to remedy therapeutically, and at best present obsessive-compulsive behaviour, or simply obsessive phobias or some somatic complaints in the condition of repression. Once guilt is repressed, it becomes embodied in behaviour, not conceived in thinking.

Existential psychology takes these ideas further into psychological well-being as authenticity, freedom and responsibility. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Viktor Frankl view guilt not as a pathological neurotic symptom, but instead contend it arises from our freedom. For Sartre, guilt is an inherent part of humanity. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre writes: "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (567). Though these are not precisely Sartre's themes, as far as man may feel guilty of violating rules of society, they are not why he feels guilty; man feels guilty because he fails to be authentic, will not embrace his freedom, or is faithful to himself. This framework of an "existential" model suggests that guilt is not pathological, but ethically salient: it is a signal to be alert that separates man from authentic values.

In therapeutic environments, the acknowledgement of guilt and its articulation are typically at the heart of healing. It is reasonable to suppose that repressed guilt can impede emotional expression, anticipate inevitable isolation, and subsequently establish a facet of self-punishment. Guilt, once articulated and brought into consciousness, becomes the basis for understanding where it came from, whether it is valid, and what one should do about it, whether it is a self-forgiveness process, a reparative process, or a feeling that one's morality needs to be reassessed. These self-directed therapeutic dimensions of guilt and shame are explicitly not

abstract; they are profusely lived, and dramas unfold in very compelling narrative formats, including, of course, the medium of interactive media such as video games.

For instance, it can be argued that the protagonist James Sunderland, in *Silent Hill 2*, experiences a form of unconscious guilt, to the extent and what Freud would diagnose as repression, and what Nietzsche would define as the internalised voice of 'a lost moral order'. He is not personally aware of what he has done; he thinks his wife died due to her illness, but his psyche would argue differently, especially as articulated within the context of the game, where the monsters, the environments, and the characters he meets are avatars of his repressed guilt. The game externalises an internal separation through guilt, and allows the player to psychologically travel through guilt in an immersive symbolic space. Rather than being fearful of guilt as a rational abstraction, *Silent Hill 2* makes the player feel it, avoid it, and eventually come to terms with it, suggesting potential growth as it replicates the psychological trajectory of denial, repression, and realisation.

### **2.3 The Role of Trauma and Repression in Shaping Individual Experiences of Guilt**

The complicated relationship that is trauma, repression, and guilt has been a part of the central discussions in both psychoanalysis and trauma theory. Caruth believes that psychological trauma ruptures memory, creates dislocation of identity, and leaves underlying and affective residues that structure the moral and emotional lives of individuals (4). When trauma is repressed, it is then moved to the unconscious because of its intolerable nature, it does not disappear; instead, it appears later as symptoms and behaviour and a more devastating exhibit of guilt. As Freud himself explored and, alongside Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, traced for late twentieth-century trauma theories, trauma cannot be processed consciously. Retaining some warped semblance of memory in an essentially fractured psyche means that

guilt cannot be felt, but it can be remembered, or as commonly occurs, relived even in grotesque or symbolic ways. This theoretical composition is vividly materialised through the story of *Silent Hill 2*, in which the protagonist's fragmentation into the surreal, decaying landscape implies the re-living of repressed trauma. Just as the town of Silent Hill can be understood as the psychic landscape itself, James Sunderland's fractured memories and unconscious guilt meld information that allows players to endure trauma and repression psychologically as narrative forces that are interactive.

### **2.3.1 Understanding Trauma**

Even though a trauma is terrible, it is also a form of experience that has not been adequately processed, understood, or dealt with, a situation that could allow negligence to unreasonably and permanently darken some large areas of life experience. The concept of trauma was first observed in military contexts, for instance, the genocide of the Palestinians. People are in bed every night in a country torn apart by occupation and genocide, they hear a car alarm followed a few seconds later by a huge explosion caused by a rain of bombs, causing their neighbourhood to be destroyed, and several members of their family members are killed. They are devastated, of course, but under pressure to continue with their lives and are unable to reflect adequately or properly mourn what has happened; they are forced to move on from a dreadful experience with fateful haste and a lack of emotional assimilation. And yet the unattended memory of bloodshed, chaos, and loss does not disappear; instead, it curdles into an unknown interior presence called trauma, which means that in the years and decades ahead, even in the most peaceful circumstances. Whenever they hear a car alarm or indeed any high-pitched sound, that of an elevator's ping, for example, they are mysteriously, for reasons that are really not understood, thrown back into their original panic, as if thousands of bombs were

about to explode once again. However appalling this can be, psychologists have learnt that trauma can as easily be acquired in peaceful circumstances.

Another example would be a six-year-old child who makes an error in a math exam and takes the news home, suddenly her father, who drinks too much and might be battling depression and paranoia, flies into a rage, shouts. At her smashes a household object and slams multiple doors, from the perspective of a six-year-old, it feels like the world is ending. There is no way to make sense of the moment beyond taking responsibility for it, and as a result, feeling like a terrible human being, and from this, a trauma develops. This one centred around making mistakes; every slip-up on this person's part threatens to unleash an explosion in others, far into adulthood. Every time there is a risk of an error, there is a terror that someone else will get dementedly furious. Everyone becomes terrified because one person in particular, who was spine chilling has not been thought about and reckoned with in memory. Bessel van der Kolk, an author and psychiatrist, in his book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, affirms this idea by saying: "Traumatized people chronically feel unsafe inside their bodies: The past is alive in the form of gnawing interior discomfort. Their bodies are constantly bombarded by visceral warning signs, and, in an attempt to control these processes, they often become expert at ignoring their gut feelings and in numbing awareness of what is played out inside. They learn to hide from their selves." (97)

So, the solution in all such cases is to get a better sense of the specific incidents in the past that have generated difficulties in order to unhook the mind from its expectations the clue that in fact dealing with a trauma rather than any sort of justified fear lies in the scale and intensity of feelings that descend in conditions when there is no objective rationale for them it's peace time and yet still there is terror still there is self-disgust still there is shame.

An unprocessed incident from the past casts a debilitating shadow on a more innocent present. As traumatized people the memory of the founding incident is within them but their conscious mind swerve away from the possibility of engaging with it and neutralizing it through rational examination when they can finally feel comfortable and safe enough to dare look back, they will be able to see the traumatizing moment for what it was outside of their original panic. This leads to understanding the specific local and relatively unique features of what has caused trauma and then growing aware of how the minds have multiplied and universalised the difficulty in part to protect the person from an encounter which was once too difficult to grapple with.

### **2.3.2 Repression**

Repression is one of the central tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis, conceived both as a defence mechanism and a structural characteristic in the psyche. It describes the process by which unacceptable thoughts, desires, or memories are excluded from conscious awareness and expelled from consciousness into the unconscious. In Freud's account, this mechanism is not only a responsive means of preservation in the psyche but an active, constructive element of the ego's development and related to the experience of guilt, which accords with guilt as a moral construct within a familial and embodied context. Freud believed repression was also central to civilisation itself, otherwise, the uncontrolled instincts from the id, particularly aggression and sexual desire, would undermine individuals and society as a whole. Nevertheless, repression does come with a price. The return of the repressed comes in the form of neurotic symptoms, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive thoughts and dreams, and is often insidious as a language the unconscious employs to evoke it. Thus, repression is contradictory; it protects, but not necessarily psychosocial health.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud writes: "Repression is not a singular event but a series of processes that affect all future mental functioning" (17). The repressed does not vanish, it remains as part of the unconscious and indirectly shapes experiences of behaviour, perception, and affect. This distinction is critical, especially when considering how guilt is internalised and how trauma is stored in both embodied and retrospective perceptions. Repression often aims at traumatic experiences because they fail to be understood as part of the ego's narrative; the more violent or severe an experience, the greater the chances it is repressed. As Freud noted in his early clinical work, such as *Studies on Hysteria* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trauma tends to re-emerge in camouflaged states, what Freud famously termed the "return of the repressed." In this case, the repressed unconscious knowledge broke through in symbolic terms, which can be anything from psychosomatic symptoms to an inconsistency or rupture in narrative, or a breaking of whatever way of understanding that the individual had meant.

In trauma theory, repression is often reconsidered as a psychological imperative for survival. Trauma theorists such as Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth rely on Freud's initial contradictions to suggest that repression occurs when events are too overwhelming to adequately process and assimilate. Herman focuses on how trauma ruptures consciousness so that one's narrative memory and one's capacity to put experiences in context and articulate them into words become disturbed. She observes: "The psychological and bodily consequences of traumatic events exceed the demands of any ordinary system for care that might offer them a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (33). In this instance, repression can be thought of as a form of psychic compartmentalisation or a dissociation from unbearable affect or memories.

Caruth similarly describes trauma in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* as a wound one does not experience at the moment, but recalls at some point in the future. "Trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an

enigma of survival,” she reminds, “in no way mitigating the wound” (7). Repression provides complicated stakes in this enigma: it is the defence protecting life in the wake of trauma, while simultaneously disrupting coherent narrative. Mediating traumatic memories represents primarily a nonconscious form of encoding, storing them as a series of in the body fragments or images, which can lead to “insistent and intrusive repetitions of the traumatic event,” as Caruth points out. In this frame of reference, repression is not simply forgetting, but a system of dislocated time, preventing resolution of the past in the present.

From a philosophical standpoint, repression has been approached less as a clinical phenomenon and more as a structural condition of subjectivity. Thinkers of personal and social freedom, like Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, see repression as fundamentally intertwined with freedom and desire. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, discusses self-deception, or “bad faith,” where subjects repress their being towards freedom and responsibility. Existential repression then produces a guilt which is ontological instead of moral guilt; the subject feels for their failure to be-there for the other. Sartre’s view is complementary to the Freudian model that enables repression of forbidden desires to fade into becoming through existentialism.

In narrative media, especially video games and horror narratives, repression is not merely expressed; instead, it is lived. Game mechanics inductively emulate the effects of repression by leaving players out of key information, disconnecting one narrative in relation to another character employing the ‘the unreliable narrator’ technique used in traditional forms of literature, or placing gamers in states of disorientating psychological environments that enact psychic disarray such as the town of Silent Hill. Repression as an aesthetic category is then the structuring of the player’s experience by reproducing the dislocation and uncertainty of the repressed mind. The player is both subject and analyst of metaphorical symptoms, seeking to understand, even if that complicity is considered. This becomes evident when analysing games such as *Silent Hill 2*, which put repression at the forefront of its narrative mechanics.

This includes the main protagonist, James Sunderland, who has repressed the memory of euthanising his terminally ill wife, Mary. The entirety of the story occurs in this nightmarelike town, through which the environments adapt to James's repressed fears, memories. Importantly, the player also begins as decidedly unthinking of the displacing truth, just like James. The story unfolds through indirect clues such as symbolic monsters, letters and notes, environmental debris and distortion. The eventual realisation parallels the psychoanalytic understanding that repression operates to protect the conscious mind from trauma until the repressed material can be reassumed, what was deemed as 'encounters with the repressed'. The fog of the game is a looping geographical model, and inaccessible spaces are not merely horror signifiers, but symbols of James's psychological defences. The only way for a player and, by extension, James to engage with understanding is through prolonged narrative and game mechanics to uncover the repressed truth.

The takeaway is that repression is not merely a passive forgetting; it is an active, not conscious refusal to recognise truths that endanger the integrity of the ego. In addition to being active, repression evokes action on multiple registers: clinical, existential, and structural, as it remains key to reading how guilt and trauma are written into the body and psyche of the human subject. In both modalities, the analytic case study or the symbolic architecture of a video game, repression is both a shield and a prison for the agent subject. While trauma acts as a protective measure from things that can induce meaningful and adverse psychic collapse, it can also prevent healing by keeping silent what must be said. In this way, in the realm of narrative storytelling, or more significantly, as in the case of games like *Silent Hill 2*, repression is actively lived, embodied and confronted when the player is finally faced with the repressed insecurity of telling a truth.

### **2.3.3 How Trauma and Repression Play a Role in *Silent Hill 2***

Repression is a defence mechanism often used by individuals who have experienced overwhelming trauma or guilt, and in James's case, it is the murder of his wife, an act that conflicts with his self-perception as a loving husband. It is so emotionally devastating that his mind buries it deep within his unconscious. James unconsciously chooses to forget the event because fully acknowledging it would cause intense psychological distress. Furthermore, repression is a concept produced by Sigmund Freud, who argued that individuals often push painful or shameful memories out of conscious awareness to protect the self from emotional pain. However Freud believed that these repressed memories continue to influence behaviour even though the individual is not consciously aware of them for James the act of euthanising his wife becomes both a traumatising act and a repressed memory buried under multitudes of layers of denial and self-deception, James does not simply just forget what had happened rather he reconstructs his reality to avoid facing the truth.

In the case of the town of Silent Hill, repression does not erase the urges; however in fact, it transforms them into disturbing figures like the monsters who reflect James's inner turmoil. Freud believed that the superego not only enforces moral standards but also punishes the individual through feelings of guilt. In addition to that, the town plays a crucial role in breaking through this repression as it forces James to confront parts of his mind that he has long suppressed, as his journey progresses, Silent Hill chips away at his defences gradually revealing the truth about Mary's death and his role in it. James's oppressed memory of killing his wife serves as a way to protect his psyche from being overwhelmed by guilt and shame, resulting in cognitive dissonance which is when the mental discomfort experienced when holding two conflicting beliefs, it plays a significant role here with James, he wants to see himself as a good

person someone who loved his wife yet he also knows on a deeper level that he ended her life and to resolve this dissonance his mind blocks out the entire memory.

Repression allows him to continue functioning, but it comes at a very high cost; the emotional energy tied to the repressed memory does not simply vanish, it manifests itself in other ways through guilt-ridden behaviour, emotional numbness and the disturbing creatures he encounters in *Silent Hill*. Denial and dissociation are psychological mechanisms related to repression that also contribute to James's difficulty in processing what he has done. The town represents a confrontation with his repressed truth. From James's perspective his actions could be framed as an act of mercy, because matter of the fact is Mary was actually suffering from a debilitating terminal illness that caused her immense physical pain and emotional distress, her bedridden condition also left James as her primary caretaker and over time this role took a heavy toll on him, he felt powerless to help the woman he once loved which is a traumatising event for any man to go through, witnessing her suffering led him to believe that ending her life would be an act of compassion, however *Silent Hill 2* challenges the simplicity of this narrative as the game progresses, it becomes clear that James was not entirely motivated by love or mercy his feelings of resentment, frustration and guilt played significant roles in his decision. Mary's illness not only consumed her life, but it also consumed James's. His wife's deteriorating condition meant that the woman he once knew, vibrant, loving and affectionate, had become a shell of her former self, resulting in her being distant, angry and emotionally unavailable towards him.

## **2.4 Exploring Relevant Theories in Video Game Storytelling, Including Environmental Storytelling**

The rise of storytelling in video games has changed the ways in which narratives can be experienced, built, and understood. Video games exist in a hybrid state that does not exclusively

rely upon narrative dialogue or cinematic devices to produce a story; instead, video games provide a narrative that is built around a player's direct interaction with a digital environment. As the scholar Henry Jenkins referred to the concept of environmental storytelling as where narrative meaning is derived not from the story itself, but rather the spatial design, placement of objects and players' discoveries. This is important to consider in order to understand the ways in which games communicate complex emotions and psychological states through building narrative meaning in ways that transcend traditional linear exposition, allowing players to uncover trauma, guilt and hybridity. It can be argued that psychological games like *Silent Hill 2* and *The Last of Us* are more than just fictional spaces; rather, they allow players to navigate a deep fictional space in which characters surround themselves with loss, violence, and repressed memory. This section addresses understanding the theories of storytelling in video games, but more importantly, the way environmental design acts as a narrative mechanism to convey psychological and emotional depth.

### **2.4.1 Video Game Storytelling**

Video games are changing modern storytelling by creating interactivity and player agency as elements of narrative. Unlike traditional forms of narrative, such as literature and film, video games are an active experience where the audience can be a participatory agent actively engaged in the story, where their play and decisions can reshape, change, or subvert the story. It is this facet of storytelling via video games that has led to continued scholarly investigation on narrative in digital spaces, such as platformers and video games. For instance, some early theorists of video games advanced a narrative-ludology argument against each other's fields; however more critical scholars have consolidated around the idea that these positions exist in conjunction with one another. Much of the scholars reflect the premise that if video games are a combination of narrative and ludology, the two must combine in valuable

ways, especially those video games that utilise narrative features more as a component of gameplay than a background narrative.

Video games as a narrative structure are exemplified by the combination of narrative and interactivity in video games. For example, a novel develops as a plot and is not subject to the reader's influence, while a film develops a linear plot through the spectator's passive watching. However video games allow players to fulfil the role of protagonist and make decisions that carry weight in the development of the narrative. As such, unique experiential immersion exists when emotional engagement to play through a story derives not simply from watching character development but from performing on their behalf. This is especially valuable in games such as *Silent Hill 2* and *The Last of Us*. These titles do more than tell a story, but rather pull the player into a psychological construction of guilt, grief, and trauma. The emotional burden of these narratives resides not just in the writing or visuals but also in the player's choices, restraints, and experiences in the game space.

In *Silent Hill 2*, the player embodies James Sunderland, who is drawn into the town during the course of the story because of a letter he receives from his dead wife. The game slowly reveals that James has buried the truth regarding his wife's death, that he was the cause of it, and through guilt and need for punishment, he is trapped in a psychological purgatory. More importantly, the game does not reveal this truth in a cinema-like fashion, instead, the game reveals this truth through fragmented storytelling and environmental evidence. The player learns James's story through scattered documents, manipulated environments and increasingly disturbing events. As the player interacts with the game, they are actually remembering; the player is travelling the same psychological path as James. As the player moves deeper into the game, they are revealing more layers of truth through lived experience. This structure of storytelling offers an opportunity for an autobiographical and existential experience. When the

player learns the truth about James, they also wrestle with the moral ambiguity of James' actions, which also complicates the player's involvement emotionally and ethically.

Similarly, *The Last of Us* utilised this format of video game storytelling to deliver a complex emotional narrative. Set in a post-apocalyptic landscape, *The Last of Us* tracks the journey of Joel and Ellie as they traverse both physical danger and emotional trauma. While the story may be ultimately more linear than *Silent Hill 2*, the relationship of the player to the characters creates the emotional weight of the story. The mechanics of the game, such as scavenging for supplies, providing combat support for Ellie, and being faced with making morally ambiguous choices, contribute to the perceived sense of shared responsibility and emotional ownership over the unfolding events. At the climax of the game, when Joel chooses to save Ellie at the ultimate cost that is dooming humankind, the player has to emotionally process this act not as a spectator, but someone who has lived the relationship. The power of the game is in not mandating a moral perspective for the player, but rather immersing them into the world of the videogame where there is political, ethical, and moral ambiguity in every decision.

Furthermore, contemporary videogames utilise narrative ambiguity purposefully. Because of this narrativity, emotional and moral content can be interpreted by players through their own lens. This amounts to a belief that trauma, guilt, and psychic complexities cannot be fully verbalised, but rather felt. The ambiguous ambiguity in *Silent Hill 2*'s lack of answers, pacing, and dream logic encapsulates the disorientation of traumatic memory and repressed guilt. Similarly, *The Last of Us* does not have an ulterior moral positioning or ethical implications funnelling into Joel's decision about love, loss, and survival. This narrative ambiguity allows videogames to express ambivalence and uncertainty as the messiness of the human experience of pain and responsibility.

To conclude, videogame storytelling is an evolution distinctly different from earlier narrative forms; they are a new lens through which a story can be told, experienced, and understood. *Silent Hill 2* and *The Last of Us* exemplify this phenomenon, particularly when the narratives are understood as having the same psychological/spiritual density and thematic curiosity as historical literary or cinematic narratives, because, rather than a distributor providing emotional labour, they resemble embodiments of emotional labour to the player. By interlocking narrative theory with interactivity, these games create an innovative and potent site of inquiry into guilt, trauma, and moral ambivalence, repositioning players' conception of what it means to experience a story.

#### **2.4.2 Environmental Storytelling**

Environmental storytelling is one of the most significant developments in video game narrative design. In contrast with more traditional narrative structures, which are mostly dependent on dialogue, narration, or cutscenes, environmental storytelling communicates meaning through environmental elements of space, architecture, object placement, soundscape, and atmosphere. Rather than just providing a setting for narrative action to take place, the environment, through environmental storytelling, conveys psychological states, backstory, and emotional reactivity by being an active narrative agent in its own right. Environmental storytelling, attributed to Henry Jenkins, means that the world of the game is viewed as text; meaning is layered into the space and senses of the digital immersive environment. Jenkins notes that game designers do not just tell stories but instead design worlds, and they sculpt spaces through which the stories can be experienced. Environmental storytelling, placing a narrative into space, adds a nuanced richness to stories dealing with trauma, memory, repression

and guilt, where unspeakable emotions and sentiments are better invoked through symbolism than directly addressed through speech.

In the case of *Silent Hill 2*, it can be argued that environmental storytelling is not an addition to the aesthetic experience of the game; instead, it is the experiential narrative element. The town of Silent Hill functions as a psychological projection of James Sunderland's unconscious due to its supernatural nature. The ruined and distorted geography, the decrepit and distorted architecture, the fog and haze and the oppressive sounds and more importantly, the monsters all indicate James's psychological state. For instance, the Lakeview Hotel was once a place of fond memories for James and Mary as a young couple, but by the end of the game, it has sunk to the watery depths of memory—a drowned place. The guilt that James has makes things more complicated making it even harder for him to have any kind of clarity about his emotions. Another example of this is the looping circular pathways of the hallways and the locked doors which overview a kind of stuckness, with James stuck in the leftovers of his psychic repression. All objects and spatial design details carry a symbolic payload: the empty wheelchair, the blood-stained wall, the amnesic presence of locked spaces. None of these elements make themselves appear, but ask the player to make sense of them, to reassemble James' story as one would a broken trauma story.

What gives *Silent Hill 2* its particular significance is how it uses ambiguity to gaze at the treachery of traumatic memory. Often, players will confront locations or objects with some meaning that they do not quite understand. This mirrors the epistemological unsettlement so often faced by survivors of trauma, and they are often left with broken, displaced or avoided memories. It is recognised that the town may shift, in accord with the survivor experiencing it, meaning every character that gets called by the town sees it differently as it manifests the deepest parts of their psyche. *The Last of Us*, on the other hand, employs environmental storytelling in service of a narrative riddled with emotional weight, but in the more realistic

surroundings of a post-apocalyptic world. Each of the game's environments are enlivened with remnants of the past: broken toys, scraps of food, hastily scrawled notes from abandoned family members, and structural remains covered in vegetation. The environmental narrative elements amplify the protagonist's point of view, imbuing the world with a collective sense of trauma.

Gamers encounter stories that may not be conveyed with words but are shown visually a family that died of starvation together, a resistance that succumbed to a siege, a community that spreads as an infection. Although these stories may not contribute to the player's completion of the game, they do add to the emotional landscape, and they encourage empathy and immersion. They are also an economy of narrative since a child's drawing left on a wall in a school can convey more emotional heft than paragraphs of dialogue.

Furthermore, environmental storytelling also fits nicely with the approach taken by trauma theorists based on the idea of indirect articulation. Cathy Caruth observes that trauma often "comes too soon, too unexpected, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again" (4). In this way, the environments in *Silent Hill 2* and *The Last of Us* are the venue for this deferred experience. The environment acts as a kind of metaphorical language for all the unspoken whether that is grief, guilt or even the sense of horror that may be communicated to the player. These design choices allowed players to feel not being told, and the experience of trauma was direct, interpretive, and immersive.

Most of all, environmental storytelling also provides players with opportunities to repeat and return, two defining features of traumatic narrative. In both games, players return to places of visit, symbols from the past, or re-imagined versions of echoing former events. These design patterns suggest the repetitive, intrusive quality of traumatic memory and outline the compulsion to repeat referred to by Freud. In *Silent Hill 2*, the player returns again and again to areas of emotional importance, with each return registering a marginally different level of

understanding, fear, or epiphany. These returns are not redundant, rather, they have a transformative purpose in enabling a re-imagination of narrative in the same way that therapy or memory work attempts to piece together fragmented histories.

All in all, environmental storytelling entails more than the use of aesthetic devices; it is a narrative method that allows games to depict psychological states in nonverbal, spatial, and symbolic ways. While locations of trauma and guilt are built into the very structure of game worlds, *Silent Hill 2* and *The Last of Us* position the player from a passive consumer of the story to an active interpreter of emotional and moral complexity. In this manner, environmental storytelling enables video games to exist as more than spectacle and to likewise exist as interactive psychological spaces that evoke the inner life in a manner that is more nuanced and intimate than the effect of a similar economy narrative medium.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the theoretical parameters of guilt, punishment, trauma, and repression through psychological and philosophical lenses, especially the theories of Freud, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Heidegger. All these theories highlight that guilt is not just an emotion, but rather, an internalised force, effected and affected by historical, moral, or existential means. As recognised in the analysis of the contemporary theorists Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth, trauma and repression have the additional layers of a general understanding of how guilt persists when memory is non-existent or resistant when memory is attempted.

The aspects of theory are evident in the analysis of text and storytelling, such as video games what was abstract becomes playable. Rather than simply illustrating guilt, trauma, and punishment, through world design, gameplay and character development, *Silent Hill 2*, and to an extent other survivor horror games such as *The Last of Us*, externalise these concepts of

guilt, trauma, and punishment. These games facilitate players experiencing rather than simply enacting their psychological experiences in a fictitious world, through a recreation of lived emotional truths in the immersive medium of play.

Ultimately, this chapter shows how the study and analysis of guilt, punishment, trauma and narrative belong not only to psychology or philosophy, but also to digital storytelling, where the player's fears, desires, and regrets can be rendered to become both terrifyingly and beautifully real.

**Chapter Three:**  
**Psychoanalysis**  
**of**  
*Silent Hill 2*

## **Chapter Three: Psychoanalysis of *Silent Hill 2***

### **3.1 Introduction**

Psychological horror is often a compelling approach to exploring the complexities of the human mind, feelings of guilt, and mechanisms of repression. *Silent Hill 2* is an important entry within the narrative-horror genre that exemplifies this journey with its main hero, James Sunderland. His journey to Silent Hill is largely a metaphorical journey to acknowledgment, confronting denial, mourning, and recognition.

This chapter will examine James's psychological fragmentation, followed by a discussion about how the *Silent Hill 2*'s narrative, characters, and settings allow players to witness James's internal conflict relying on a mixture of in game cutscenes and the official novelisation of the video game. The chapter begins by examining James's denial of his culpability in his wife's death, which will ultimately allow us to consider James as an example of the repression of trauma, specifically through a Freudian psychoanalytic lens. Angela and Eddie, as secondary characters, are set up as reflections of James's conscious and unconscious mind, allowing the externalisation of James's depressive despair, violent impulses, and guilt. James's demons, or the monsters of environmental storytelling, will be represented by the various environmental characters that represent his desire for punishment, or the desire for some sort of form of moral reckoning.

### **3.2 The Protagonist in Denial**

In the very first shot of the game, James is staring at a bathroom mirror gazing into his shadowy reflection, in the visual language of film just about any time a character is shown looking into a mirror this way and so the spectator can see two versions of the same character on screen at the same time. This doubling effect is meant to communicate that this character has another self, often a darker self, in which there is more to him than meets the eye. And

throughout the story, James has deliberately repressed aspects of himself and therefore exists in a fragmented state. At the start of the story, James is presented as a quiet and thoughtful character. He is wounded and full of sorrow; he is dealing with grief after he lost his wife to an unnamed disease 3 years ago and has never recovered from that loss. He lives a stale life and works as an office clerk, further exemplifying his mundane lifestyle, but most importantly, he is defined more than anything by his love for her and by how much he is willing to do for her. How much terror and pain and suffering he is willing to endure throughout this story just for the slim chance that she might somehow, impossibly be waiting for him somewhere in this town.

He is on a journey down into unfathomable darkness; most sane people would have given up and turned around, and run away very early in this story. But for James to keep going forward despite all the terrible things that happened to him there must be something profound fuelling his determination and the source of that determination can only be his love for his late wife Mary, which is apparently enough to drive him to do almost anything except maybe not but that will be discussed more later. In his interactions with the other characters James tends to be softspoken, polite, kind and moral, he wants to help Angela by deterring her from self-harm, he tries to persuade Eddie to flee to safety, he wants to keep Laura and Maria safe too, he seems like a good person but every now and then glimpses of his other self and the darkness within him slips through the cracks and the facade he puts up.

At the end of the story, that darkness is put on full display when it is revealed that he murdered his wife, and she did not die of her disease, but rather she died by suffocation as her husband brutally smothered her face with a pillow:

“The room is dark.

Mary lies in their bed.

She coughs painfully.

Staring at Mary.

Standing at her bedside...

Reaching for her with trembling hands.

She gasps, a choked noise that barely makes it out of her throat.

Her anguished coughs have stopped.

The only sound is her stifled cries.

Her weak, frail body grows still.

He carries her lifeless body in his arms..." (103)

There was a monster lurking inside this seemingly softspoken good man all along, but that is only the big obvious truth that is not the truth that destroys him; there is something even worse, even more terrible yet to be revealed. James is not only in denial that he was the one who killed his wife but he is also in denial over when his wife's death occurred, putting him in a fragmented state he believes she died three years ago when in reality he murdered her mere days ago at most, it happened very recently but why this denial of the timeline and what happened during those three years that he does not want to remember.

Throughout the story, James can find multiple lying dead bodies that strangely resemble him. This can be interpreted as a representation of James's Freudian "Death Drive" or "Thanatos". Sigmund Freud, in his essay "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*", claims that within the human consciousness resides a subconscious desire for some form of self-destruction, a desire to a simpler state of nonexistence, simply put, a desire for death. (50), Due to James's

extreme mental turmoil and immense guilt, this “Death Drive” might manifest as a want for extreme punishment or even a desire to be killed. In James's case, this is manifested through Pyramid Head, whose sole purpose in the story is to punish James for his crime and guilt. After defeating Pyramid Head, the Avatar of his guilt, shame and desire for punishment, an echo of an interaction between James and Mary can be heard. This interaction from the novelisation of the game unravels what he is truly running from:

“What are you staring at!? Why won’t you just leave?

“I’m no use to anyone... I’ll be dead soon anyway...

“Are you still here, James!? Get out! You hear me? Don’t you ever come back here again!”

Her merciless tirade continued. There was a short pause, followed by the sound of a door slamming shut. As she began to weep, Mary spoke in a weak voice.

“...James...wait. Please don’t go. Please don’t leave me. I didn’t mean any of those things.

“Please...tell me everything will be okay. I don’t want to die.

James...help me...” (116).

Through this echo the disintegration of James and Mary's relationship is put on full display for the audience to witness, for most of the story Mary does not get a lot of character development because she is already dead at the start of the story she does not appear much on screen only in little brief flashbacks where she is portrayed as a vaguely loving and tender wife she is a less of a character and more of an idealized archetype something for James to pursue

and to long for but in this echo she suddenly bursts out onto the stage as a very complex and human character, she expresses a wide range of complicated and contradictory emotions confronted by her own mortality by the fact that nothing would stop the disease that she was going to die eventually, she suffered from a kind of emotional collapse she swung from hope to hopelessness from denial to depression to anger almost as if she went through all five stages of grief within mere seconds she became filled with rage she lashed out at the people closest to her she made them feel the same misery that she felt and then afterwards she was overcome by sadness by a need for human connection and comfort by a need to be with the very person she had just pushed away, this is what James is really hiding from the fact that his relationship with her had collapsed that because he could not handle her emotional distress he had essentially abandoned her in the hospital all alone with her pain and sickness as Laura mentions eventually James stopped visiting her at all. Because he could not face her rage or her misery, he was too weak.

In their final interaction in the other world, James at first tries to claim that her murder was altruistic that he was simply ending her suffering for her sake seeing how she was suffering from a terminally illness but then he corrects himself by admitting the truth was he did it for himself he did it because he had grown to hate her, hate what she had done to him, the miserable person she had turned him into the way her sickness had taken over his life he hated her for making him hate her he wanted it to all be over the reason why he cuts and represses all three of those years out of his memory is because it was during those three years that his love for Mary was truly tested however that failed and his love was not strong enough, her sickness and her rage transformed him first into a coward and then eventually into a killer he wants to forget all of that and only remember the time when they were in love before it all went wrong. It was not the truth of what he had done that he could not face it was the truth of who he was who he had become there is an ending where James leaves the town with Laura adopting her as his

child granting his wife's dying wish as mentioned in the letter left by Mary to Laura for her eighth birthday, apparently healed by his experience in the town where he is somehow able to not only move past his wife's murder but also what that murder revealed about him and who he truly is but there are more endings where he is not able to heal and move on like the one the novel adapts, called the In Water ending regarded as the canon ending by the majority of the fanbase, where he chooses to destroy himself by driving his car into the river with his wife's body in the backseat.

The other two characters in this story do not receive these generous options; they do not get any chance to heal and leave, and move on. Angela and Eddie both only get one ending, and it is not a happy one. Something important to note and keep in mind is that James is not only the main character of this story but the player character because the audience are in direct control of him, the players naturally tend to develop an intimacy with him, this character is the player to some extent he is their avatar in this fictional world his success or failure is the player's success or failure and perhaps even more than that because they spend so much time with him, they witness his humanity up close, through his best when he is fighting to do the right thing, his suffering, his pain and how hard he fights to overcome each challenge. The audience becomes deeply invested in his journey, and so when they finally see him commit these terrible, awful, perhaps even unforgivable crimes, it can lead to a fascinating emotional experience for the audience. Their reaction when this character, whom they have invested so much time and feeling into, is capable of doing such acts that they themselves would never choose to do, that they cannot condone or justify. A similar audience reaction from both gamers that played the game and readers that read the novel alike tends to categorise the protagonist into two sections; the first labels James as an evil person and a murderer, and his acts are unjustified.

However, from the other end of the perspective, James is a flawed human being, and the crime he committed is justified to an extent. Of course there is a middle road here where

video games characters can be recognised as written to be complicated and contradictory and to be both generous and selfish to be both empathetic and monstrous which makes them feel far more real than a character who is only “evil” or only “good”, making them have such complex personalities that makes the players often doubt their moralities and question what it means to be a human, because after all the nature of the human psyche is based on complex emotions, therefore making these decisions upon those emotions leads to either “good” or “bad” outcomes.

### **3.3 Secondary Characters as Mirrors of James’s Psyche:**

Silent Hill 2's supporting characters are designed not only as narrative tools but also as mirrors that reflect various psychological aspects of James Sunderland's personality. Angela and Eddie serve as symbols of suppressed trauma and unbridled anger, while Maria represents the sensual, escapist aspect of his yearning. Angela and Eddie are positioned as foils, two potential routes James can take based on how he manages his own inner turmoil through their interactions, revealing alternative outcomes of unresolved guilt.

#### **3.3.1 Angela: Shattered Hope**

In many ways Angela is intended to serve as a foil to James by mirroring his depressive mental state and trauma, she is on a very similar quest to his own she has come to this strange town in search of someone close to her someone she cares very deeply for, in her case she is searching for her mother their two journeys parallel each other as she explores her own nightmare world her own personal psychological hellscape just like James there are two truths to be revealed in her background a big obvious one and then a much uglier and more sinister truth underneath she is slowly ground down by her time in Silent Hill and by the end has seemingly given up all hope her ultimate fate demonstrates one possible end to his own story.

James first meets Angela in the graveyard near the beginning of the story, with this setting the writers are immediately making a connection between her character and death mortality and melancholy her behaviour feels distinctly off in this first scene like there is something not quite right here, she is young and completely alone she seems a bit confused as she is looking for multiple family members but does not appear to have any clue where any of them might be, she is anxious and nervous and suspicious and she offers a vague warning about the town.

James sort of dismisses her warning about the town, consequently leading to her feeling the need to impose herself by saying that she is not lying and later calls her mother “Mama” by accident. This highlights the lack of her emotional maturation and stunted psychological development in her personality. Throughout Angela's arc in the story, she's shown to be carrying a baggage of trauma with her, which, from a Freudian point of view caused a psychological arrest of development as mentioned beforehand, causing her to live in that developmental stage where her trauma occurred until it is resolved in some way possible. It is also important to note that she is looking for her mother, father and brother in the cemetery, foreshadowing how James is also looking for someone who has already passed away. The next time James sees her is in the apartment building, and one subtle element to notice is how the writers are reusing this doubling imagery with the mirror:

“A woman was lying on the floor in the middle of the mirrored room.

Like a child playing with a toy, she held a sharp kitchen knife in her

hands which she used to stab the floor with monotonous repetition.

The face reflected in the mirror was familiar—it was the woman he'd

met at the graveyard. Noticing James's reflection, the woman spoke.

“Oh, it's you,” she said listlessly. With her faint voice and vacant gaze, she seemed like a completely different person than the one he'd met before.

“Yeah. Call me James.”

“I'm... Angela. Angela Orosco...”

“Angela, huh? That is a nice name.” James addressed her in the gentlest way possible” (33).

Once again through the visual language of the scene they are telling the audience that there is something else to this girl due to her trauma she is more than she appears to be in this scene she is portrayed to be depressed and clearly experiencing some suicidal ideation, she is emotionally erratic switching dramatically between melancholy and accusatory from panicked and defensive to pleading and desperate she is all over the emotional map she has some serious psychological wounds James takes away her knife so at least for now she cannot act on any thoughts of self-harm she might have. Angela is entirely consumed by her “Super-Ego”, causing her to be this hyper neurotic person that she is, while James is more so consumed by his “ID”, which would allow him to keep his more stoical and detached persona.

The next scene, which takes place down in The Labyrinth this is one of the most disturbing scenes in the entire *Silent Hill* franchise. This is the “Abstract Daddy” boss fight this monster is shaped like two human figures lying on a mattress one figure is larger than the other and the larger one is lying on top of the smaller in a position that is clearly meant to appear sexual implying that Angela was assaulted by her own father, this monster chases James through a nightmare version of Angela's childhood home seemingly unstoppable where the only safe place is in a little closet with a stuffed animal the sort of place a child might hide it is one of the most genuinely terrifying and unsettling sequence in a horror video game and in horror media in general, this is the reveal of the big obvious truth in Angela's storyline her father emotionally physically and sexually abused her and in the end she killed him to save herself but there is an even worse truth yet to be revealed here her storyline is about as dark as dark gets following this boss fight Angela in a rage accuses James of pursuing her and having ulterior motives for helping her and of being unfaithful to his wife all of which he somewhat weakly attempts to deny, this is what Freud would call “Resistance”, in Freudian psychoanalysis resistance refers to the unconscious defence mechanisms that the patient employs to avoid confronting repressed thoughts, memories or desires that could cause anxiety or distress. Freud had observed that during therapy, his patients would often resist discussing certain topics, forget important details and sometimes become hostile to him. (113) These are all signs of the unconscious mind protecting itself from painful truths. James does not want to admit that at some point, he truly did not want Mary around anymore.

Angela then leaves saying that she still needs to find her mother in her desire to find her there is a suggestion that even though her father was a monster maybe she had a good relationship with the other parent maybe her mother was her haven her protector someone who loved and cared about her the way a parent is supposed to, however in her final scene something else is revealed that subtler uglier truth the one that finally destroys her and through this scene

once again the question of what is being revealed here and why is it even worse than what already been shown:

“It felt incredibly strange to be holding a casual conversation while standing amidst a blazing fire, but he wasn’t concerned.

The far-too-sudden outbreak, the fact that the blaze hadn’t spread beyond this room, the fact that neither he nor Angela had been burned...he was beginning to notice how unnatural the whole thing was. This was just another projection of the mind...a vivid illusion masquerading as reality... Angela’s delusion.

Her face turning grim, Angela replied. As if she were only talking to herself, she began to pour out all the hatred that had accumulated in her heart. “Mama...you knew, didn’t you? The things daddy and brother did to me every night... But you still pretended not to notice...” Finally beginning to understand the extent of Angela’s pain, James continued to listen in silence.” (110)

In this Scene, it is revealed that Angela's mother, the person she has been so desperately searching for the entire story, the one that the audience were led to believe might be the good parent and the one who cared for and loved her daughter was actually just as horrid and hideous as her father. Angela did not have any haven she did not have anyone to protect her she has spent all this time searching for someone who does not want her and when she finally accepts this truth it destroys her she has nothing left to cling to just like James the town of Silent Hill has forced her to confront reality and that reality might as well as be hell for this one scene the audience experience Silent Hill from her perspective, a place of fire and pain, flames that can never be put out and damage that can never be repaired. She has come to believe that no one will ever love her, care for her or heal all of her pain and trauma.

James can be seen startled by this encounter and left in silence in the face of her question leading to only confirmation for her that when she asks for the knife back, she has made up her mind and decided that her time in Silent Hill has caused her to finally lose all hope in this moment she chooses self-destruction apparent in the calmness of her voice and how her face is painted pale drained from all human emotions as if she is hollow and void this can be interpreted as a mirroring to a potential end for James own story in which he ends up killing himself by driving his car into the lake.

### **3.3.2 Eddie: The Wrathful Victim**

Eddie is another foil to James, whereas Angela is a mirror of James's depression and his misery and his trauma. Eddie reflects his violence and his resentment, those uglier aspects of his personality and unlike the other two, Eddie is not searching for anyone; instead, he is running away looking for somewhere to hide. In the same way that Silent Hill creates Maria a living breathing sentient person a fulfilment of James's desire to reunite with his dead wife a reflection of his psyche from a Freudian perspective maria could be seen as a manifestation of

James's ID and as a projection of his wife but idealised through his desires driven psyche. The town also creates something similar for Eddie; instead of a woman, it is a man, and instead of a lover, he is very much a hater.

Eddie is pursued throughout the nightmare by this man this is an incarnation of one of Eddie's bullies one of his tormentors out in the real world in Silent Hill this man follows him deeper and deeper into the town's other world mocking him, insulting him and borderline humiliating him relentlessly, imitating the real life persecution that Eddie feels and eventually Eddie cannot take it anymore he kills this man in the same way that the town fulfils James wish to reunite with his late wife in a twisted way via Maria it fulfils Eddie's wish to take revenge on his tormentor to have power over him via this man but then the bully just comes back just like it does with Maria. Silent Hill keeps creating new versions of this bully, no matter how many are killed, and their mockery of Eddie becomes more twisted and more relentless until he finally breaks.

In his introductory scene, James finds Eddie puking in a disgusting bathroom, looking at this through a Freudian lens, Eddie puking could be seen as an attempt to expel this part of himself and an attempt at purging that which his consciousness cannot bear. Eddie is meant to look pathetic and weak here this is a humiliating position to be in and that is furthered by his Physical traits mainly his weight, he is overweight and a lot of times in fiction overweight characters are portrayed to be ridiculous, unattractive and not to be taken seriously, of course this is not a fair portrayal but nevertheless it is a common portrayal in fiction. He immediately begins making excuses for himself, pleading innocence before he even gets accused of anything, and he doesn't even seem to know what he's claiming to be innocent of. Recognising how helpless this kid is, James tells him to depart the town to run away to safety and then leaves the kid behind in this bathroom, even after Eddie asks James to come with him. In a very subtle way, James is unintentionally treating Eddie the same way his bullies by not taking him

seriously and talking down to him, this creates a growing resentment which will eventually blossom into deadly violence.

In his next appearance, Eddie is speaking with Laura who tries to give him some decent if naive advice, he reveals to her that the police are after him and she tells him that instead of running away he should just go back wherever he came from and apologize, of course an apology will not solve all of his problems but she is right that his only chance of salvation is to stop running away and face his dilemmas head on. This scene takes place in a bowling alley, and Eddie is eating an inexplicably fresh pizza, which can be interpreted through a Freudian lense Eddie's binge eating could reflect a regression to what Freud would call the "Oral Stage of Development" (Nunez), the most infantile stage where comfort is only really found through actions like sucking and biting which is of course what babies do when eating. Freud would argue that if this stage is left unresolved, an adult could develop a sort of reliance on oral activities such as overeating as a way to seek comfort or cope with stress. (Mistry et al) For Eddie, however it might go beyond just comfort; his reliance on food very likely serves as a way to feel some semblance of control over his life, a life where, for most of it felt powerless.

The big obvious truth in Eddie's story is him being shaped by a lifetime of being bullied and belittled and has deeply internalised feelings of inferiority in which he projects onto anyone he perceives as mocking him including James in this case, through a Freudian perspective, Eddie's lifetime of being bullied and ridiculed left him unable to integrate the darker aspects of his personality and most importantly to integrate his "Jungian shadow", instead of confronting and reconciling his repressed anger, humiliation and resentment he had to suppress these symptoms resulting in his shadow eventually festering and manifesting in violent and destructive ways as a defence mechanisms causing his shadow possession, his profound insecurity fuels his desire to dominate and control others as he seeks to reverse the power

dynamic that has left him feeling powerless for much of his life. Violence for Eddie becomes a means of asserting control, which is a misguided attempt to reclaim a sense of agency.

He has discovered violence. If he can kill his bullies, then he is the one with all the power. This choice reflects James's own decision to murder his wife, he took control of his own miserable situation in the same exact way by simply killing the problem. What this scene is trying to really emphasise is how Eddie becomes a reflection of James's worst self, for a little while Eddie is in total control of this scene in the way he interrupts all of James lines and the way he dominates the conversation but it does not last eventually James pushes back reasserts control and once again Eddie is left in an embarrassing position lying on his back on the ground overpowered by another man but this time he refuses to accept it he desperately fights to cling to this new found power the subtler second truth in Eddie's story is the way his bullying has twisted his personality turned him paranoid depressed and full of hate again this clearly mirrors the exact same transformation James underwent during those three years of his wife's illness from loving husband into murderous monster.

There is a stark difference between James and Eddie and how they confront their Jungian shadow, on the one hand there is James's journey into the shadow or his "Shadow Work" as Jung would put it and it results into individuation which in Jungian terminology means the process of becoming whole by confronting and integrating one's shadow in a healthy social friendly manner (Jeffrey), while on the other hand Eddie's shadow work seems to result in what Jung would call "Shadow Possession", where the individual becomes ruled by his shadow consequently all that he was repressing in his case his capacity for violence and rage ends up defining him. This is a confrontation between the protagonist and the worst version of himself usually in fiction when a protagonist defeats a dark reflection like this it is meant to be a demonstration of some sort of character growth of strength but not this time James feels terrible

for having killed another human being for having once again failed this is one of James's darkest moments in the story.

### **3.4 Manifestations of Guilt and Need for Punishment:**

The monsters in *Silent Hill 2* serve as both symbolic representations of the protagonist's mental state and opposing gameplay components. This section looks at how these creatures, particularly the Mannequin, Pyramid Head, and the Lying Figure, represent hidden emotions, including guilt, repression, and the unconscious need for punishment. These manifestations are viewed as projections of interior suffering through the lenses of psychoanalysis and philosophy, especially Freudian theory and Nietzschean concepts. These monsters' backgrounds and designs demonstrate how *Silent Hill 2* externalises psychological trauma by turning intangible emotional states into real-world dangers in the game environment. The section seeks to illustrate how the game creates a complex examination of identity, punishment, and psychological disintegration by examining these symbolic manifestations.

#### **3.4.1 The Meaning behind the Monsters**

Pyramid Head is an example of the pursuer a very common horror video game archetype pursuers do not necessarily literally chase the player through the hallways, though they do that sometimes too, rather instead they are reoccurring antagonists who pursue the player across multiple chapters of the story or even throughout the entire game they often appear unstoppable unkillable and invulnerable, they shrug off fire, bullets, explosions and whatever else the player can possibly throw at them and in the end the only choice the player has left is to run and hide the *Resident Evil* franchise contains several examples of the pursuer like "Mr X" and *Resident Evil 2* and "Nemesis" in *Resident Evil 3*, "Jack Baker" in *Resident Evil 7* are some of the horror genre fan favourites and there can even be found examples outside of the horror genre, like "SA-X" in *Metroid Fusion* or "E.M.M.I" in *Metroid Dread*.

All of these antagonists share a similar role; their purpose is to make the player feel powerless and weak, and vulnerable. For most of the game, they usually have little to no personality; they are intelligent, but rarely, if ever, speak. Jack Baker being the notable exception to that rule, they cannot be bargained with they are more like avatars of death and fear than actual characters in most of these examples eventually usually in an epic final bloody showdown at the end of the game the player ultimately manages to defeat these seemingly unstoppable pursuers after overcoming many obstacles and surmounting many challenges the player is finally allowed to feel powerful but Pyramid Head is different the player can never actually get to defeat this monster not physically at least, the super ego cannot be fought or killed it is an intrinsic part of James's psyche in this case embodying his repressed guilt and his desire to be punished, fighting the super ego will only validate it's necessity even more.

Defeating Pyramid Head is not a matter of outwitting him or getting stronger than him instead what James Sunderland the protagonist of *Silent Hill 2* does is outgrow Pyramid Head or at least outgrow his own personal need for Pyramid Head when he no longer has any useful role in James's story Pyramid Head destroys himself which is particularly unusual for this type of character pursuers never kill themselves they almost never choose to give up, and Pyramid Head is different in other ways to all of those other examples they objectively exist in reality other characters in the story can see them and interact with them they have independent goals and motivations something they are trying to accomplish they have backstories and Origins something that explains where they came from and why they're doing what they're doing but not Pyramid Head not really he only exists in James story no one else can see him or interact with him with the single notable exception of Maria.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, Pyramid Head is James's "Super Ego"; throughout the story, he functions as a manifestation of James's repressed super ego, representing his guilt and, more importantly, his desire to be punished for all that he has done. With this established

it can be said that he is a manifestation of James's emotions and when these emotions change Pyramid Head vanishes, However it is important to note that Pyramid Head physically exist, he is real, he is not a mere illusion or hallucination this is an important distinction to make, the other world in Silent Hill is a real place but it is also a place that changes for each person that transforms depending on their psychology. There is evidence that for some people, the other world is actually a pleasant place to be; it only appears as a nightmare to James because he has a psyche warped by guilt, shame, loss, lust and wants to be punished for his actions.

Pyramid Head exists in James' version of the other world but nowhere else or at least he is not supposed to exist anywhere else but due to his popularity with fans he has made appearances in other *Silent Hill* Media, like in *Silent Hill: Homecoming*, and the movie adaptations: *Silent Hill (film)*, *Silent Hill: Revelation*.

The Lying Figure is the name of one of the other monsters that James encounters throughout the story mainly in the streets of the town, it's upper body is fully encased in skin almost like a body bag, where the lying figure is continuously wiggling around in to try and escape, however is unable to, this is meant to represent Mary's confinement during her hospitalization, and this theme of confinement is a rather reoccurring one throughout the design of the other monsters, leading to another possible interpretation which is it could be a way to represent James's own feelings of confinement over his extremely sick and dependent wife. The theme of confinement is further bolstered by the fact that Masahiro Ito, the creature designer of *Silent Hill 2*, has stated that he was inspired by BDSM clothing.

The Mannequin are another type of monsters found throughout the story, they are a pair of fleshy mannequin legs put on top of each other, through a Freudian lense the appearance of this creature can be psychoanalyzed as James's subconscious manifestation of a highly repressed Libido, taking then a depersonalized grotesque form, after all the *Silent Hill 2* novel

states plainly that this monster was born out of pure lustful desires. “The mannequin monsters, their bodies made up of two pairs of legs, were born from “lust”. (114)

During the course of the story, James finds a map of Silent Hill that has a mysterious quote written on it: “He who fears being watched from the abyss, will be unable to look into it himself. The truth can only be obtained by pressing forward. Follow the map. You'll find a letter.” (67) This could be interpreted as a reference to Friedrich Nietzsche’s famous quote, which in some translations reads: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.” The message expressed by the quote acts as a commonality between three interpretations: philosophically, it is a warning against avoiding reality, psychologically, it is an expression of crisis of cognitive conflict and trauma, and psychoanalytically, it dramatises the need to confront the unconscious portion of the mind. The “pressing forward” is a literal map instruction, as well as a metaphor about the courageous exploration of one’s own abyss, and the “letter” stands in for the hidden truths one must uncover. James Sunderland only manages the “gazing back” when he relocates into the darkness of Silent Hill, and in that gaze, finds the hidden letter of truth that liberates him.

### **3.4.2 Pyramid Head: The Executioner of Punishment**

Pyramid Head marks his debut in *Silent Hill 2*, and it is far more meaningful and impactful than anywhere else. That is the focal point to examine, from his horrific introduction to his surprising self-destruction, and discuss how his role in the story develops over time.

Pyramid Head is introduced on the second floor of the Woodside Apartments while exploring a dark hallway, the player’s radio will begin going haywire; plain harsh and distorted static. A game mechanic that indicates when a dangerous monster is nearby, the player will see

an ominous red glow a set of iron bars and on the other side of those bars a menacing creature awaits, it looks like a man wearing a stained butcher apron and a bizarre rusted triangular iron helmet that covers his entire head and much of his torso his appearance is designed to be inhuman alien and unsettling. That weird triangular helmet is famous now it has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the *Silent Hill* franchise but back when the game first released no-one had ever seen anything like this before most people did not know what they were looking at and that is on purpose his visual design is meant to be abnormal and bizarre. He does not speak and does not even move; he waits and he watches in total silence for now, with the iron bars standing between the player and this creature, creating a safe space. But that won't last for long after exploring a nearby room, the player re-enters the hallway to discover that he is gone. This introduction is so quiet and so subtle the player does not even know who this creature is or what he wants but there are ominous hints that can be a giveaway to an upcoming menace in which achieved through the sound design and the visuals that he is dangerous and it becomes quiet obvious that the player has to meet this creature again and next time won't be from a safe distance protected by a conveniently placed set of iron bars.

Pyramid head's second appearance and this one is by far his most controversial and most confusing, James wanders into a random room in the apartment building and witnesses Pyramid Head assaulting and then killing a mannequin type monster James hides in a nearby closet, and it hints at a form of surveillance, which from a Freudian perspective interpreted as a symptom of repressed desire, here he is a voyeur to Pyramid Head his super ego enacting a violation onto this mannequin. Since the mannequins are one of the most overt displays of pleasure and desire, his superego is enacting violence on his id and when Pyramid Head investigates the closet where James is hiding, James shoots at him with the gun, however Pyramid Head does not react to the bullets and just chooses to leave the protagonist alone, as mentioned before he is the embodiment of James's super ego therefore his purpose is not to kill James but to torment him

and confront him with his repressed guilt taking him out of the pleasure principle into the reality principle. Pyramid Head will continue to exist for exactly as long as James's guilt and subconscious need for punishment continue; bullets cannot damage one's own sense of guilt.

In this third scene James is trapped in a small confined space with Pyramid Head with no escape nowhere to run or hide, bullets have no effect on this monster so the only thing that can be done is to survive for as long as possible, eventually a siren plays in the distance and Pyramid Head wanders off as if something out in the void is calling him away, his true purpose is to inflict fear and pain and suffering as a punishment for what James did to his wife because that is what James subconsciously desires so he chases the player around just long enough to accomplish that and then leaves before things go too far.

The entire story of *Silent Hill 2* takes place in the other world however it is important to note and distinguish that other world has at least two distinct manifestations if not more one is the gloomy creepy surreal town covered in fog and the other is this rusted fleshy nightmare world and they each serve as manifestations of different emotions; the fog world always, is depression, despair and a state of helplessness, while the nightmare world is anger, rage and self-hatred. So, it seems like by setting the big confrontation in the nightmare world, the developers are linking Pyramid Head more closely with the self-hatred aspect of James's psyche.

Pyramid Head has two more appearances the first is up on the roof of the BrookHaven hospital, after exploring a room James turns around to suddenly find Pyramid Head standing directly in front of him who then seizes James by the neck and throws him down through the floor, however Pyramid Head does not actually do any damage to the player character and in fact he is helpful to the player, as the player is thrown down to an area that needed to be reached in order to progress in which the player could not access otherwise, this short sequence reveals

Pyramid Head's true purpose in the story that despite being a terrifying and aggressive ultimately he is also helpful through his violence and terror he is actually helping James move forward even if that aid is difficult to perceive at first. Through a Freudian lens, Pyramid Head serves as his repressed superego, aiding James in his journey of self-realisation.

Pyramid head's next appearance, comes after getting trapped in the nightmare world and reuniting with Maria, she and James moved down to the hospital's basement into a series of long straight narrow corridors and all of the sudden Pyramid Head emerges from behind and begins chasing them, this is by far his most terrifying appearance, it is a high stress, high anxiety and adrenaline inducing chase sequence where James only barely manages to escape but the same cannot be said about Maria who gets trapped on the other side of these closing elevator doors and stabbed through the heart killing her instantly. Maria's death is a pivotal moment in James's confrontation with his super ego because Maria is an idealised projection that represents what James wish could have, a version of Mary who is not burdened by illness or pain therefore her loss forces James to confront the reality that he has been avoiding, Mary's true suffering and more importantly his role in her death represented by him leading Maria into the hallway; her death and his inability to hold the elevator door for her.

After the death of Maria James has an emotional collapse as reality begins to break down around him, he reaches the prison by jumping down a black hole at the bottom of the Historical Society this descending act is symbolic of the abyss mentioned before or in the Jungian terminology the "Shadow" and it being the darker hidden aspects of the self, ranging from traits, desires and of course memories that a person might repress. The Jungian shadow is negatively built up through repression, evident in James's case. In his essay *On the Relation of the Ego to the Unconscious*, Carl Jung once described the shadow as a deep well (277). James is finally delving into that well, which leads him into a labyrinthine prison, fittingly, as there is no better place to represent James's most repressed feelings and memories than a prison.

Throughout the franchise the town of Silent Hill has been a sight of great spiritual power for a very long time for that reason it has also been the site of many strange and unexplained and tragic and grotesque events it attracts cultists and lunatics, so at some point in the past executioners in the town did in fact wear bizarre triangular iron helmets while performing their executions, creating two potential origins for the Pyramid Head manifestation. The first possibility is that James saw this painting when he visited the town with his wife all those years ago (“Silent Hill Wiki”) and it has floated around in his subconscious ever since as a grotesque symbol of punishment which then manifested in the other world when he arrived at the start of the story, and Pyramid being a judge fits perfectly also as a manifestation of James’s super ego. The second and much more interesting possibility is that James never saw this painting that he knows nothing about the town's ancient horrific history, but instead when manifesting these creatures in the other world whatever spiritual power is at work here is drawing not just from the character's own past but also from the town's history, either way it is important to state that Pyramid Head has a real world source and is not something that James conjured up out of nothing.

After exploring the prison, James descends even deeper into the nightmare to a place called the Labyrinth. At this point it no longer even resembles a real location the other world has become a twisting and confusing maze of monster infested corridors all designed to keep him away from Maria who has been inexplicably resurrected but is trapped behind a set of iron bars Pyramid Head can be found here too, he wanders around the maze, serving his role of the pursuer. An interesting point to note is that James can acquire Pyramid Head's weapon, though it is far too heavy to actually be wielded in combat, instead James uses it to carve a path through this nightmarish wall of monsters that have largely represented his repressed state and by using Pyramid Head's weapon James is symbolically bearing the responsibility of the super ego therefore through an immense effort can cut through the mass of repression, paradoxically the

super ego's immense burden represented by the insanely heavy sword becomes James's source of liberation he integrates a part of his super ego and is able to progress into a deeper understanding of himself which is ultimately the goal of this entire adventure. Furthermore, there is another subtle detail in which Pyramid Head starts wielding his iconic weapon around the same time James acquires the knife from Angela, foreshadowing the idea of self-harm being seeded in his mind and then manifested through Pyramid Head.

The conclusion of Pyramid head's role in the story comes in the final level of the game which is set at the hotel James is finally confronted with the truth with the fact that driven by grief and resentment he killed his wife, after this revelation he hears his wife's voice on the radio drawing him even deeper into the nightmare, there he finds Maria captured by not just one Pyramid Head but indeed two of them, she is strung upside down gasping in terror struggling desperately with her binds and calling out to James for help, he orders them to leave her alone but of course they do not comply silently and without expressing any emotion or hesitation at all they once again brutally execute Maria. In this moment they solidify their true historical purpose as merciless executioners, faceless avatars of death and punishment, despite being manifestations of his own psyche James has no control over Pyramid Head he cannot order it to stop, they keep going because his desire for punishment is not resolved yet at this particular time in the story and Maria is the one who has to keep paying the price at first James screams in frustration and collapses to his knees overcome by his emotions but then he slowly calms down gathers himself and finally gets control over those emotions and then says :

“I was weak...” James said softly. “That is why I wished for your existence.

He turned to the looming monsters. “I needed someone to punish me for my sins...but not anymore.”

He shook his head, and more confidence began to creep into his words.

I understand it now... I have to put an end to this myself.” (113)

At last, James wholeheartedly understands what the other world is, what the monsters are and why these things are happening to him; this is an epiphany that the other two characters lost in Silent Hill's other world, Angela and Eddie, never seem to come to. They are never able to control their emotions and never get the opportunity to overcome their demons, and never get an opportunity to make a new choice to change; instead, they are both destroyed by their confrontations with the darkest parts of themselves. The point here is that the other world is not a benevolent or malevolent place; it is morally neutral, a place of possibility of both potential destruction as well as salvation. The other world does not care if it saves the people who are drawn inside, and neither does Pyramid Head.

In countless fiction narratives the protagonist's final encounter with the antagonist is a confrontation with the most negative parts of their own character, and it has never rang truer than in this climatic confrontation, here James is confronting the ugliest and most twisted parts of his psyche; shame, guilt and, importantly his need for pain and punishment, all together in the form of Pyramid Head, James does not truly overcome Pyramid Head instead Pyramid Head becomes less of an enemy, his psyche does take control of himself more so than he does at the beginning of the story, with James psyche taking control the manifestations in the other world also transform to reflect this, Pyramid Head is not killed in battle, and cannot be killed by the player in the game but, instead killed through James's character development.

Pyramid Head is one of the most renowned and terrifying villains, not only in horror video game history, but in horror media history in general. From his bizarre and alien-like visual design that makes his character unsettling from the first look, to his silent brutality and to his

outright contradictory behaviour in the way he flips between wanting to kill the protagonist but never actually go through with this task and letting them go, to ultimately ending in his own demise by destroying himself, all of this has combined to capture the fans' imaginations for decades now.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The story of *Silent Hill 2* allows the player to embark on a journey into the depths of the human psyche's darkest parts, where guilt and denial combine to create a fractured reality. In dealing with the horrors of the town and the characters that reside in it, James's profound misalignment between his identification as a grieving husband is put on the forefront, as well as the repressed realities of acknowledging his responsibility for his wife's death. Characters like Angela and Eddie create a further discrepancy: Angela mirrors James' hopelessness and self-destructive behaviour, while Eddie represents James' moral guilt, more specifically the hate and violence that bubble underneath it. The game's engagements with environmental symbols, Pyramid Head in particular, represent James' superego and resolve in a tragic confrontation with the reality of his guilt.

The player's unique control over James complicates this representation, generating the potential for empathy to reside beside James' irredeemable actions and creating the potential to make moral judgements. This duality evokes the kinds of tensions between condemnation and empathy faced throughout the thematic landscape of the game. While characters such as Angela and Eddie appear to have unavoidably tragic endings, James remains more hopeful in regard to the possibility of growth, except where the endings present it as impossible. He emphasises the tragic themes explored and ultimately generates a dialogue around the ideas of redemption and self-acceptance. As such, *Silent Hill 2* is not confined to delivering a horror experience through

the game. The game is also a vessel that presents opportunities for reflection on trauma, identity, and avoidance-based experiences.

By addressing notions of trauma, identity development, existential crises, and avoidance, this chapter draws attention to *Silent Hill 2*'s potential as a psychological artifact, helping establish dialogue between horror fiction and psychoanalysis, broadening the conversation regarding the fragility of humanity.

**General**

**Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

This research work has demonstrated that *Silent Hill 2* is an ideal form of interactive narrative addressing guilt and punishment. It also articulated that video games can serve as literary narratives and was able to show how *Silent Hill 2*, in particular, provided a redefined avenue of horror storytelling, moving away from the jump-scare element of horror and instead offering psychological depth.

In Chapter One, it was established that *Silent Hill 2* was an innovator of the genre in horror gaming with engaging the player in grief and guilt and was able to provoke how horror tropes were manipulated in consideration of existential and trauma ideas rather than tropes of bodily horror. Furthermore, the dissertation was able to highlight how the atmospheric storytelling experience of each environment in the game extended old notions of "literature" as a form of interactive media. All in all, *Silent Hill 2* emerges from the literature as a narrative-heavy experience that provides scholarly opportunities to analyse its narrative complexity and symbolism.

Chapter Two provided the theoretical foundation as it merged psychoanalytic and philosophical notions of guilt and punishment. It articulated guilt as not simply an emotional but an internalised force that develops to shape subjectivity. Freud's model presented a disciplinary superego as an entity that punishes the protagonist's impulses. More so, Nietzsche's notion of guilt reframes the idea of guilt as historical debt or 'bad conscience', which is an inherited state from when primitive anger is turned on one's self. Sartre's existentialism complements these ideas, understanding guilt as an inescapable part of human freedom. Weaving in trauma theory, especially Caruth's unique contributions, which provided another way to communicate how extreme experiences reconstruct memory and guilt. In *Silent Hill 2*,

this theoretical framework suggested that James Sunderland's unrecognised guilt will come to fruition in nightmarish, hallucinatory forms, thus setting out the theoretical context.

Chapter Three applied these frameworks to *Silent Hill 2*. The psychoanalysis confirmed that James Sunderland's journey is metaphorically one of reckoning with the guilt of the death of his wife, Mary. In the beginning, James cannot consciously admit what he has done as he believes Mary died from illness and follows her letter to the town of Silent Hill in denial. The scenario presented is equivalent to Freud's notion of repression, which describes how the ego expels intolerable truths into the unconscious. The game's most recognisable monster, Pyramid Head, symbolises the pitiless superego or moral power of punishment, the monster uniquely punishes James by obsessively pursuing him, just like an internalised conscience is unrelenting. Pyramid Head enacts, in Nietzschean terms, the historical debt of guilt, James's crime he cannot acknowledge in memory, must be "paid" back.

Characters and locations throughout *Silent Hill 2* externalise James's internal struggle. Angela and Eddie are both literal mirrors to James's mind. Angela Orosco functions as a young woman lost to trauma and suicidal despair, in essence, a reflection of James's despair and guilt of self-destruction. Moreover, Angela's hopelessness mirrors James's repression, as she is stuck in the developmental stage in which her trauma occurred, unable to move across time. Freudian analysis in the research observed that Angela is consumed by her 'superego' subsystem, while James represses emotion more or less because he is directed by the 'id'. In the opposite direction, Eddie Dombrowski represents the hidden rage and resentment of James. More so, Eddie's narrative demonstrates a man tormented by violence and hate, he is a foil to James, who is physically depicting his violence and resentment, he is pursued by monstrous representations of his bullies and ends up violently rebuking them. This path of violence is parallel to what James is pretending not to want, James has the capacity for rage tucked into his sensibility,

which Eddie fully expresses. In Freudian terms, Eddie's extreme breaking point; becoming a murderer expresses the id's anger breaking through James's civil persona.

Most importantly, *Silent Hill 2* takes advantage of the interactive trait of video games to continue this exploration. Unlike traditional passive media, the player both protected James while empathically sharing and feeling his guilt. It is remarked that in such games, the player does not just experience guilt, but feels and acts in it. In practical terms, puzzles and decisions were meant to distinguish James from the act of revealing his crime, making the player a part of James's repression until the critical moment with a moral payoff. This tension then becomes explicit in the last part of Chapter Three, in the ability for the player to carry moral judgments, even while empathically guiding James through moral choices. For example, when the player sees James hesitate to kill Pyramid Head, or hesitates to confront Angela or Eddie, those ambiguities place a burden on the player to make the moral judgment of whether he deserves punishment or redemption. In other words, the interactivity of this medium intensifies Freud's and Sartre's claims as the player experiences the push-and-pull of guilt, and the process of finding authenticity, first-hand.

Significantly, the research work notes that *Silent Hill 2* does not simply use guilt for horror instead it uses guilt as the driving engine of the narrative. The game also utilises environmental storytelling, specifically James's arc, to externalise James's internal conflict between love and hatred, between memory and repression, for the player to interpret. This internalisation of compelling guilt within a game world also echoes Nietzsche's insight that guilt is not an instinctual emotion, but instead, it is a "social engineering of the mind", and in the case of *Silent Hill 2*, this engineering takes place in a game world. As it was concluded in Chapter Three, both Angela and Eddie had inevitable tragic endings, while James was offered a degree of redemption. In fact, some endings permit the opportunity for James to forgive himself, wielding player agency as a psychological mirror.

For punishment, the game does not portray punishment as an external judge but instead as James coming face to face with his psyche. Pyramid Head represents a punisher on multiple levels, he is not an avatar sent by fate, but a performance in James's mind, a need for atonement. Pyramid Head's emotionally calm execution of Maria is the embodiment of James's subconscious indication that Mary's murder must be punished.

Moving forward, the findings suggest several potential research avenues. Sticking to the thematic and methodological scope of this dissertation, an interesting direction for future research would be to apply a similar psychoanalytic reading to other video games. For instance, as continuing titles from the *Silent Hill* series exist such as *Silent Hill 3* which is a continuation of *Silent Hill 1*'s story, as well as to others in the narrative-driven horror genre like *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*, the *Alan Wake* duology, or *The Last of Us*, it would be valuable to see other video games that perform guilt and trauma in interactive form. Additionally, it would be telling to see if other games could yield the same manifestations of repressed guilt and psychic space as explored in *Silent Hill 2*.

Ultimately, this study has proven that *Silent Hill 2* is a rich, complex text about guilt and punishment. The narrative of *Silent Hill 2* and its design concretely represent Freud's repression, Nietzsche's internalised debt, Sartre's angst, and Caruth's trauma theory. The story and characters in *Silent Hill 2* depict these classic psychoanalytic and philosophical theories. *Silent Hill 2* disclosed the player's engagement as interactive stories normally do. The game has demonstrated the main character's guilt, one that the player must observe as well, and ultimately engage. The findings presented in this paper will add to the literature on video games as serious narratives, and that psychological horror games might also provide an uncommon laboratory for exploring the human conscience. *Silent Hill 2* is a psychological relic that combines horror fiction with interactive media, creating a video game that reminds players that it is more than entertainment, as it provides an opportunity for pondering over the depths of the human psyche.

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# Appendices

## Appendices

### Appendix one: Pyramid Head



(Den of Geek)

‘Red Pyramid Thing’, or Pyramid Head, is a humanoid monster in the *Silent Hill* franchise. He first appeared in *Silent Hill 2*. His red helmet and butcher's clothing are reminiscent of the executioners from the town's history, including those who worshipped the angel of rebirth, ‘Valtiel’. The monster's weapons of choice are the Great Knife and the Great Spear, representing James' inner torment and need for punishment.

1. Stone, Sam. “How Silent Hill 2 Remake Turns Pyramid Head into an Even Scariest Monster.” Den of Geek, 12 Oct. 2024, [www.denofgeek.com/games/silent-hill-2-remake-pyramid-head/](http://www.denofgeek.com/games/silent-hill-2-remake-pyramid-head/). Accessed 24 May 2025.

## Appendix two: “Misty day, remains of the Judgment”



(Silent Hill Wiki)

During James Sunderland's visit to the Historical Society three years before the events of *Silent Hill 2*, the paintings of the executioners left a lasting impression on his subconscious. The figure in the paintings would later align with his feelings of guilt, ultimately influencing Pyramid Head's physical manifestation.

1. “Paintings.” Silent Hill Wiki, 2022, [silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Paintings?file=MistyDay.png](https://silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Paintings?file=MistyDay.png). Accessed 24 May 2025.

### Appendix three: Abstract Daddy



(Silent Hill Wiki)

Abstract Daddy is a being that depicts two figures in an intimate embrace, on a bed frame, locked in that embrace by the flesh enveloping its body. It is an embodiment of the trauma of Angela's experience of abuse by her father, perceived in an abstract manner through the psyche of James Sunderland.

1. "Abstract Daddy." Silent Hill Wiki, 2024, [silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Abstract\\_Daddy?file=Abstractsh2.png](https://silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Abstract_Daddy?file=Abstractsh2.png). Accessed 24 May 2025.

## Appendix four: The Mannequin

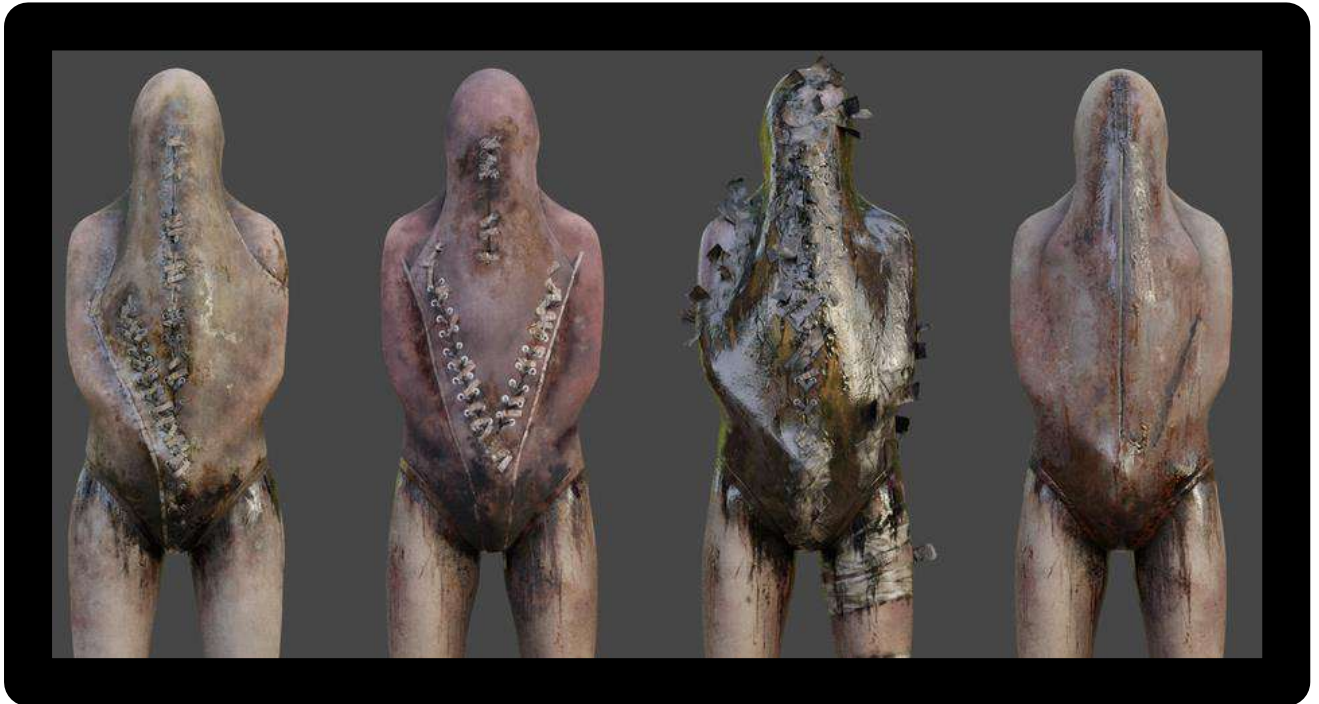
(Silent Hill Wiki)



The mannequin are amongst the many monsters in *Silent Hill 2* that the protagonist encounters during his journey through the town. The mannequin's unsettling reality is a part of James's instinctive impulses and instincts, and it shows memories related to his wife of being in hospital prior to her death. The creature designer, Masahiro Ito, drew inspiration from Japanese folklore, while creating this type of monsters.

1. "Mannequin." Silent Hill Wiki, 2024, [silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Mannequin?file=Mannequin\\_model.jpg](https://silenthill.fandom.com/wiki/Mannequin?file=Mannequin_model.jpg). Accessed 24 May 2025.

## Appendix five: The Lying Figure



(Open3DLab)

Lying Figures are monsters that eerily resemble a human body found in *Silent Hill 2*. It is the first creature James Sunderland comes into contact with when he starts his journey through Silent Hill. Lying Figures are a physical representation of the memory of his sick wife on her deathbed and of his own internal pain, taking on the form of a hospital patient writhing in pain.

1. "Lying Figure (Silent Hill 2 Remake)." Open3dlab.com, 2024, [open3dlab.com/project/9536dc4b-7402-42a7-b41c-c0b196020ad9/](https://open3dlab.com/project/9536dc4b-7402-42a7-b41c-c0b196020ad9/). Accessed 24 May 2025.