



# Structuralist analysis of the Audio-Visual elements in The Conjuring and The Conjuring 2

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**Abstract :** Audio- Visual designs enhance the understanding and representation of films across all genres. The styling has helped the Horror genre achieve the status of sensory art. This art of combining both auditory and optical mediums helps build the electrifying unpredictability and heart-stopping edges in Horror fiction. From scary and dreadful speeches to deafening silence, innocent and sinless to jaw-dropping and gruesome segments, shrieking yells to hushed whispers, the Horror bracket has the most exciting, heart-stopping, and adrenaline-rushing thrills to offer. This paper will explore how the components of audio-visual styling are repeatedly made use of through many platforms and how the aesthetics of the horror genre can be understood not just by the eyes and ears, but can also be 'felt', 'tasted', and 'smelt'. Some of the platforms or mediums included in this research are -

*Audio-Visual agencies-* NOISE VS INNER VOICE- The outer turbulences or inconceivable events vs the intuitive voice; POSSESSION OF THE BODY - the Chosen Women; and GENERAL TO SPECIFIC- an ominous shift in pronouns ( 'THEY' (seems less familiar and distant) to 'IT' (more close and impending).

With the help of the above-mentioned agencies and a Structuralist approach, the paper aims at analysing the echoed or repeated Audio-Visual elements in Hollywood horror movies.

**IndexTerms** - Structuralism, Horror Fiction, Ghost-hunting, Conjuring, Demonologist

## INTRODUCTION

How are the repeated audio- visual elements employed in Hollywood horror films? Why do these echoes still serve to produce the desired effect on the audience? How can one single word, a mundane object or an exclamation mark succeed in making our hearts beat faster? How can a familiar rhyme or tune produce chills and an eerie atmosphere around? Why this constant repetition becomes the engine of horror?

These are some of the questions which will be addressed by exploring the realm of audio-visual elements used in the Horror genre.

This paper takes up the Structuralist approach to identify the repetition of elements, codes, conventions, and patterns of audio-visuals in the selected films. Structuralism is a literary movement that emphasised the fact that there exists a centre that provides a standard or basis for everything. It rejects the idea of individuality and embraces the relation of one aspect to another. This chain of logical patterns and dependence remains unbreakable as it believes in systematic interrelations. As it offers a methodical approach to comprehending the underlying structures and patterns that inspire fear and terror in the spectator, Structuralism can be a valuable foundation for analysing horror films. One may learn more about how horror films scare their viewers by looking at the Binary opposition, Established structures of Fear, Symbolic meaning, and Formal Analysis of these films. Hence, the echoes and duplication in the production of ideas serve as a significant factor to make such films horror worthy.

Audio-visual elements predominantly focus on a product containing visual imagery or sound or both. Some of its elements that are echoed or repeated are discussed in the paper to hint at the possibility of major horror films sharing the same universe. Repetition and recurring scenes and events replay and feed on our old fears and tensions. It's the most convenient and sought-after tool in horror style. By trapping the characters as well as the audience in the same empty circle and wounding the only silver lining, the audio-visual effects make the genre edgy and troublesome.

The research is divided into three parts wherein each part takes up one such recurring force.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

This research paper discusses the analysis of repeated audio-visual elements in the horror genre and its agencies through the lens of structuralism. The style of data collection is qualitative. The research predominantly focuses on the close reading of various auditory and

optical components that are reintroduced and retold by the directors in the selected films. To get a better insight into the possibilities of this genre, various existing primary and secondary data sources were put to use.

## CHAPTER 1- POSSESSION OF THE BODY The Chosen Women

Accidentally swallowing a spirit or the demon forcibly making its way into one's mouth and then body? The opportunity and responsibility as to who gets to invite the demon into the body remain one of the open-mouthed suspense keys in horror fiction.

In the horror sub-genre, gender authority is extremely important. Women's roles in old films were naive, powerless, and trivial; all they did was try to scream as a psycho hacked them in the shower. Horror films have also been relatively notorious for their sexist cliches, for instance, the fact that the "slut" always dies first and the "virgin" lives on. However, in the 1970s, which represents the rise of feminism in horror films,



women became the main characters and were victims of "sexualised terror."

Bruises and marks on Carolyn's body ( Partial possession)

The series of possession in *The Conjuring (2013)* begins with a distant, far-woven tale of a girl's spirit entering into a doll, interestingly, a porcelain female figure. It is revealed that the Mullins, the dead girl's parents, used some good old-fashioned black magic in their sadness to try to see their dead daughter once more. But a horned demon fooled the grieving parents into associating the demonic presence with the doll, transforming the child's toy into an unholy doll housing many forms of evil.

Flash forward to the current focus of the movie, Perron family seeks desperate and urgent help from the well-known demonologists (ghost-hunters as street people call them) Ed and Lorraine Warren. The family had recently shifted to a new ( extremely secluded) house and started experiencing disturbing interruptions, especially at dark hours. Carolyn, the mother, remains the only character who senses something weird and illogical going on in the house. For instance, the sudden appearance of a shadow in April's toy monkey or hearing three claps from inside a wardrobe( which seems quite impossible but also points to the fact that the demon, in the process of targeting Carolyn, mocks and insults the



Holy Trinity).

Carolyn Perron ( wardrobe scene)

Amidst the chaotic happenings, the least concentrated upon are the slow but ominous changes happening to Carolyn. With black and blue bruises covering Carolyn and constant headaches, the demon succeeds in creeping into the house through her body. Roger, her husband, seems a little tensed when the marks increase in number and intensity. Ignoring the sharp, painful-looking bite marks as iron deficiency, Carolyn stays unaware of her 'partial possession'. After Bathsheba's soul physically manifests itself above Carolyn's bed while she sleeps and vomits something crimson and bloody into her mouth, Carolyn first gets possessed. Later, Carolyn vomits the same stuff to expel the ghost. Carolyn



loses full control of herself once she goes through the 'total possession' which happens shortly after Bathsheba, the evil spirit, traps her in the basement. The possessed body of Carolyn surprisingly ends up sitting on top of one of the daughter's wardrobes, freaking her daughters out.

Bathsheba Sherman, the dark entity vomits into Carolyn's mouth, taking total possession of her

The second part of the series, *The Conjuring 2* (2016), shows Janet Hodgson, a teenage girl, as psychologically vulnerable and weak, who is



believed to be possessed by the spirit of an old man named Bill Wilkins, who as it is revealed in the third stage of the film, is just a pawn in the hands of the ultimate demon- Valak.

Janet, possessed by the old spirit, curling into impossible spaces

Throughout the film, Janet is portrayed as a frightened and timid young girl who is tormented by the evil presence. The film gradually captures the changes that alter the state of her body and mind. The lovely pink skin tone gets gloomed by a pale and white complexion, with dark circles



under her eyes and a contorted look on her face. She develops jerky, unpredictable motions as well as superpowers like curling up in tiny spaces or lifting and throwing heavy objects.

Valak, or the Marquis of Snakes, remains the key antagonist in the *Conjuring* series

At first, she transforms into the 'crooked old man' from the nursery rhyme and then finally lets the old man take control of her mind and body. Taking a place on the couch which belonged to the old spirit, Janet exhibits various signs of possession, including speaking in a deep, hoarse, guttural voice, showing violent outbursts, and levitating. The sought-after demonologists, the Warrens, are called in to help investigate the case after the possession gets progressed and her condition deteriorates further.

### Structuralist Analysis-

Horror films frequently employ metaphors and symbolic imagery to communicate deeper meanings and themes. Structuralists contend that these symbols are not arbitrary but rather are part of a wider system of linguistic and cultural meanings that influence how we perceive the world. The selected films, *The Conjuring* sequels, employ women as the centre of the conflict. Both films show the possession of female characters to hint at their physical as well as psychological weakness and proneness. This serves to repeat the underlying structures of female consciousness and vulnerability and shape the experience of the concerned gender.

In performing my analysis, I discovered that *The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2* both support the patriarchal binary standards by implying that female characters are weak, feisty, subservient, and well-suited for domesticity. This assertion is supported by how the Perron and Hodgson women are portrayed in *The Conjuring* series, particularly how it frequently emphasises their femininity when they are being physically abused by the ghost that haunts their house. It is also supported by the way Carolyn and Janet are portrayed in the movie as being fragile, subservient, and both physically and psychologically weak.

The recurring theme of female bodies being as open doors through which the supernatural can enter is present in both *The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2*. It seems likely that a lack of domination has allowed the spirit to stay in their body given the insinuation that both Carolyn and Janet, who were the targets of supernatural assault, can somehow outwit it and drive it out of her body. The idea of female openness is based on the notion that women's bodies are open and that they have the biological capacity to receive items into their internal spaces.

## CHAPTER 2- GENERAL TO SPECIFIC- While the centre remains the same

In the selected *Conjuring* series, the narrative structure frequently follows a general to a particular pattern, beginning with a broad overview of the supernatural creature or haunting and then narrowing down to precise elements and the haunting's conclusion. The spectator is given a basic feeling of the supernatural threat at the start of each film, such as a haunted home or a possession. The paranormal investigators or the individuals themselves start to learn more precise information about the haunting as the film goes along, including the identity, origin, and purposes of the spirit. When the characters identify a particular vulnerability or remedy to the haunting, they then utilise it to defeat the

paranormal force and put an end to the haunting. The interaction between numerous elements of horror fiction is demonstrated in *The Conjuring*



series via a variety of tactics, including visual imagery, sound design, and narrative structure.

Janice holding the possessed doll, Annabelle

In *The Conjuring*, after a doll-maker named Samuel Mullins and his wife Esther lose their daughter Annabelle in a car accident, they try to bring her back from the dead through black magic. Though their intentions were good, a horned demon tricks the couple into attaching his soul to the doll. The age-old tradition involving the summation of the supernatural becomes a family torment when the couple learns the truth of their actions. They realise the blunder and decide to house orphan girls as an attempt at atonement. The group of girls is overseen by Sister Charlotte who shows Samuel Mullins a photo from the Abbey that reveals Valak ominously lurking in the background. Unfortunately, the demon takes possession of Janice, one of the girls at the orphanage, through the Annabelle doll.

Bathsheba, who takes possession of Carolyn in the same film, is a great devotee of Satan. Learning about her husband's adulterous deeds, Bathsheba drowns her kids in the lake to seek revenge. She later targets the Perron family and punishes them for moving into her house and satisfying the dark lord, Satan. The torture of the family, especially of Carolyn gets intensified when the Warrens threaten the evil spirit with their Holy presence. The narrative of *The Conjuring* revolves around the interaction between the haunted house and the paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren. The Warrens seek to unlock the secrets of the mansion's past and release the family who is imprisoned inside while the house is portrayed as a terrifying and otherworldly creature.

Similar emphasis is placed on the connection between the Hodgson family and the evil spirit Valak in *The Conjuring 2*. The film explores the intricate web of connections that exist between the many individuals and portrays Valak as an evil force haunting the family. The movie emphasises the unavoidable nature of the bond between the family and the demonic creature by evoking a sense of claustrophobia and dread



via the use of sound and visual design.

Bathsheba hanged herself after drawing her kids in the lake

*The Conjuring 2* misguides its audience as well as the characters into believing that the antagonist is the wrinkly old man, Billy Wilkins. He tortures and punishes the Hodgson family, Janet in particular as he refuses to allow them to live in his house. The latter half of the film unveils an even greater devil, named Valak, who, Billy confesses to Lorraine, was ordering him all this while. Valak, or the Marquis of Snakes, remains



the key antagonist in the Conjuring series who in turn, serves the greatest fiend, Satan.  
The old man in control of Valak

### Structuralist Analysis-

Instead of focusing on individual pieces alone, Structuralism is interested in the interactions between elements within a system. According to structuralists, interactions between the many components of a system, rather than the components themselves, are what gives the system its meaning. The selected films show how the burning focus remains at the core (the greatest evil-Satan versus the greatest good- God), while the individual events provide a step nearer to reaching that centre.

In *The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2*, there is a consistent theme of a central evil force or entity that remains the same throughout the films. The films feature the demonic entity known as Valak, who takes on the form of a nun and terrorises the Warrens and other characters. Ed and Lorraine Warren remain at the centre of these unearthly events and all victim families run to them for help.

Overall, *The Conjuring* films highlight the connectivity of people, place, and supernatural forces by using a variety of approaches to emphasise the links between various plot aspects. As a result, the movies produce a tense and uneasy atmosphere that is essential to their success as horror pictures. The Conjuring series makes advantage of the general to particular narrative structure to build tension and suspense by progressively disclosing the entire scope of the supernatural menace and the methods needed to overcome it.

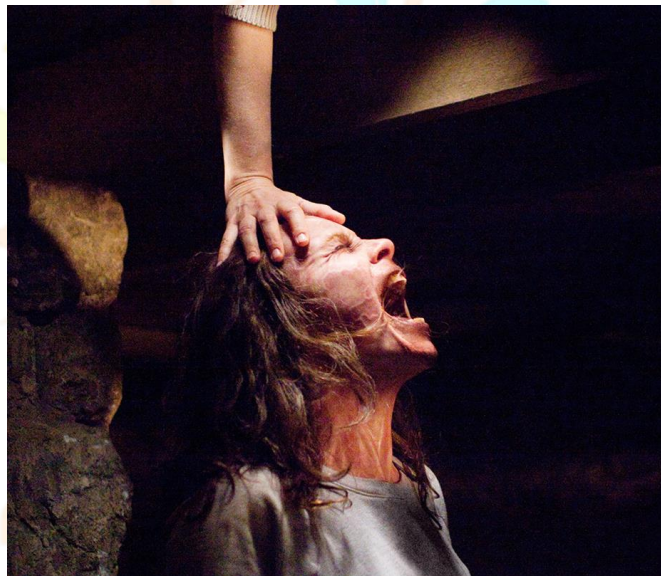
## CHAPTER 3- NOISE VS INNER VOICE

Horror exists as a genre primarily to reflect the ugly and the despicable parts of our world back at us through a funhouse lens that makes the trauma digestible. When it comes to seeing and comprehending the supernatural, there is a disparity between the outside world and the inner voice. While inner voice alludes to the characters' intuition and inner direction, outside noise alludes to the audible noises and disruptions brought on by supernatural beings.

In order to identify and fend against supernatural beings, the main demonologists of both *The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2*, Ed and Lorraine Warren, frequently depend on their strong intuition and inner direction in addition to listening for external sounds like creaking floors or whispering. They think they can grasp the supernatural and learn how to deal with it by listening to their inner voice. Other movie characters, on the other hand, tend to disregard their inner voice and focus exclusively on external sounds. These people are frequently the ones that are harmed by supernatural beings and are frequently represented as being skeptics of or contemptuous of the supernatural.

The Perron family in *The Conjuring* first disregards their gut feeling and concentrates primarily on the external commotion, such as doors slamming shut and inanimate things moving on their own. The adults don't take the daughter's screams and the death of the dog seriously and don't fully comprehend the scope of the paranormal activity in their home until they start to pay attention to Carolyn's inner voice. Lorraine sees a demon torturing the Perron family and her intuition causes this vision, which she utilises to direct her inquiry and ultimately assist the family in getting rid of the bad force. In the exorcism scene, Bathsheba's spirit warns Carolyn to stay away from the house and her family but

Lorraine helps and guides Carolyn to fight the demon's domination and listen to her heart. Carolyn recalls the family's beach holiday which



proves as the most powerful force as it strengthens her motherly love.

Lorraine helps and guides Carolyn to fight the demon's dominations, remind her about the 'beach day'

Similar to this, Ed and Lorraine in *The Conjuring 2* depend on their intuition to deduce the demonic presence haunting Janet Hodgson's intentions. In order to direct their inquiry and finally vanquish the evil presence, Lorraine is able to detect that the thing is a much commanding an evil demon. There is also a stark difference between other investigators and the Warrens. While others focus on the outer turbulences, Lorraine tunes in her intuitive voice to gain insight into the true nature of the entity.

In *The Conjuring*, the sound of clapping is among the most noticeable recurrent sounds. The clapping is first seen when the Perron family finds a secret cellar in their home, and one of the kids claps jokingly in the pitch-black room. Later, the clapping is connected to the evil force that is present in the home. The films also employs strange animal noises to distract the main characters from their inner thought process. In *The Conjuring*, there is a brief instance when the sound of a barking dog can be heard in the background during a scene where the character Carolyn Perron is looking into a weird noise in her basement. The sound of an owl hooting may also be heard briefly in the background of another scene where the family is seated around a table conducting a seance.

In *The Conjuring 2*'s possession sequence, Janet's voice shifts as she makes a range of disturbing ominous noises, including animal noises. Specifically, Janet makes sounds that mimic the growling and snarling of a dog or other dangerous animal. She also makes a low-pitched,



guttural noise occasionally that sounds like a lion's roar. It is intended for these animal-like noises to be unnerving and to heighten the tension and dread of the situation as a whole.

Janet producing rough animal noises

Finally, the series frequently features the sound of footsteps. This is frequently employed in both movies to great success since it gives the impression that something or someone is moving in the background but is not visible. In addition to the footfall, there are sometimes additional unsettling noises present that heighten the dread, such as whispering or the sound of cracking floorboards.

Overall, *The Conjuring* films emphasises the value of listening to one's intuition and inner direction while dealing with the paranormal by drawing a contrast between the external cacophony and the inside voice. Characters can better comprehend the supernatural and ultimately defeat it by paying attention to both external noise and internal voice.

### Structuralist Analysis-

Recurring patterns are a crucial aspect of structuralism. The fundamental structures that underlie human experience and behaviour, according to structuralists, are characterised by recurrent patterns and binary oppositions. Here the concerned repeated oppositions are outer noise versus intuition.

The methods in which these ideas are conveyed and how they relate to the overall meaning of the 'The Conjuring' series might be examined in a structuralist examination of the themes of noise and intuition. A text is seen in structuralist analysis as a system of signals that convey meaning through their interactions with one another. Symbols, pictures, and themes are a few examples of these indicators. We may learn more about the underlying structure and meaning of the text by analysing these indications and how they relate to one another.

Noise and intuition are significant motifs in "The Conjuring," which add to the overall discomfort and fear of the movies. It is hard for the characters (and the spectator) to distinguish between what is genuine and what is not since noise is there all the time, from squeaking doors to creaking floors.

On the other hand, intuition is portrayed as a mode of knowing that frequently runs counter to reason and logic. The main protagonists, Ed and Lorraine Warren, investigate the haunted home and face the evil spirit that inhabits there using their intuition and paranormal knowledge. Others, who are more concerned with scientific proof and logical explanations, however, respond to them with scepticism and opposition. These themes of noise and intuition are interrelated and contribute to the overall structure and meaning of the movie, as seen through the structuralist perspective. Chaos and unpredictability are evoked by the incessant noise, and the protagonists' dependence on their intuition stands for their readiness to face the paranormal and the unknown. These motifs work together to produce the suspense and uneasiness that are essential to the horror sub-genre.

### Conclusion-

*The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2* combine codes of reality and representation through the three main Audio-Visual elements discussed above. The Structuralist analysis shows the repeating patterns and narrative aspects that appear in both of the Conjuring films. Possession of the body shows how these films support an ideological standard of feminine vulnerability among female characters. In addition, by relying on the motif of women possessed, they connect femininity to traditional notions of openness, submissiveness, and physical and psychological vulnerability. General to specific part elaborates on how the individual events and forces work together to confront the main conflict or structure at the centre. Though the events, mis happenings and situations hold individual value, it all connects to the core structure, that is, fighting the evil force. While introducing different demons and characters, the films revolve their plots around fighting the ultimate villain- Evil. The last



part, Noise versus Inner voice, talks about the binary oppositions of external and internal voices and how the submissive becomes dominant when the turn of events happens. The outer turbulences and disturbances are driven away by the powerful truth of intuition and inner sights.

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