

## *Resident Evil & Doorways:*

# An Exploration of Transitional Spaces in Visual Culture

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Human beings distinguish any one thing through categorisations, which are themselves defined by how they differ from something else or “other”. This inquiry has been documented extensively in philosophy with key references including “Aristotelian Realism” and “Kantian Conceptualism” that continue to inform current theory (Thomasson, “Categories” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013). These categories often form opposites such as light and dark, which become a dominant way of considering much of our human experience. However, I wish to focus on doorways. They exist between two spaces, refusing to belong wholly to either of them, and consequently introduce an instance of transition.

Many artworks use the icon of a doorway to create ambiguity, uncertainty and apprehension. An example is the horror film trope of a door that creaks such as in *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), or the unpredictable revelations in *Dr. Who* (BBC, 1963 - present) every time the T.A.R.D.I.S. door opens. Of course, not all doorways inspire such an emphatic reaction, so I intend to illustrate how this is achieved through an implied narrative that is hinged upon the doorway. In both examples indicated above, the emphasis is on discovering what would be on the other side of the door, therefore on the indefinite potentialities of something unknown which suggests that traversing through to the new space will bring change that cannot yet be fully understood.

This paper will examine the film *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002), adapted from the videogame by Capcom, which features heavy use of doorways for emotional provocation. Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the sorts of doorways focused on in this paper are those that exist as part of a wall, floor, or ceiling where the surrounding surface is opaque and thus has the attribute of concealment. Furthermore, although a significant part of this exploration also refers to doors as part of the doorway concept, doorways without doors may also be considered relevant. The main difference in the addition of a door is that reactions are heightened by a greater provision of uncertainty and concealment, as well as emphasising a point of exit and ingress. To develop this concept, one must first acknowledge the work of European philosophers such as Gaston Bachelard on the subject of space and Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological discourse on anxiety.

## Contextual Overview

The treatment of doorways in philosophy is often rooted firmly in the larger concepts of space. Henri Michaux talks about “this horrible inside-outside that real space is” (Michaux in Blanchot 324), which addresses the immensity of space and thus the impossibility of locating its vastness. Although inside and outside are often posed as opposites, Bachelard, in relation to Michaux’s text, argues that: “outside and inside are both intimate” (Bachelard 217), which affords these spaces some familiarity. Yet whilst the issue of defining intimacy with exterior space is the result of it being an “ambiguous space [where] the mind has lost its geometrical homeland and the spirit is drifting” (218), the intimacy present with interior space is not the antithesis of the outside. Rather, it is the product of other existential phenomena, such as memory and time. The interior spaces of a home, for example, are filled with commodities in accordance with both the preferences of its occupants and each room’s function. As well as creating visual associations, living habits over time produce more connections, which relate memories to specific items and areas in a structured way that differs from external spaces. Rather than simply contrasting openness with the enclosing effect of walls, these interior spaces are adapted to become purposeful. Bachelard affirms the notion of “asymmetry” by noting that “nor can one *live* the qualifying epithets attached to inside and outside in the same way” (215), but nonetheless, they converge upon one another through boundaries.

To progress from inside to outside, one must acknowledge the traversal of a border. To begin to understand what such borders represent means understanding the nature of transitions in general. Aristotle’s clarification, as defined by Victor Kal of “a specific transition from potentiality to actuality” (Kal 79) provides the most relevant type of transition for this discourse. Thus, the transition takes place both spatially and temporally, so in terms of a doorway, there is an anticipation of what is through the doorway, and the moment when this other space is fully realised. Concerning space in relation to architecture, Barry Curtis states that the “negotiation of thresholds is anxiogenic, symbolizing the liminal border between life and death” (Curtis 148), suggesting that the ultimate temporal transition of life to non-life becomes imprinted upon spatial transitions, in this case thresholds.

In “Architecture and the Poetry of Space” (1981), Louis Hammer provides a broader view of the house, as an example of a building, where the binaries of “of lighting and darkening, [...] of storing and using up” (Hammer 382) become manifest within a structure of physical boundaries. The utmost of these embodies the core of human experience and relies upon the function of a doorway; when you enter a building or room, you are “aware that you can leave it” (382). Therefore, self-awareness becomes intrinsic to the iconography of the doorway, which relates to the existential phenomena previously referred to. Hammer explains that we are “noticing ourselves dwelling in the structure, by observing the connections between the boundaries of our space and our ways of perceiving, thinking, and feeling” (384). In *Resident Evil*, one example occurs through the emphasis placed on the main characters passing

through the doorway to an underground complex that connects to the automatic lockdown, and the resultant state of fear and entrapment. This claustrophobic sense corresponds to the characters' awareness of the locked doors, which will be discussed below.

Anuj Soni's article, "Understanding the Poetics of Architecture" (2010), similarly supports this idea, stating that "in a building the symbols are defined by how people experience them or people's past experiences with it" (Soni 4). Doorways then, do not merely represent current emotions and perceptions, but utilise our memories, both collective and individual, when eliciting current reactions. This secondary distinction, that it is "a socio-cultural phenomenon but it is also a very personal experience" (Soni 19) implies that at least some sensations may be experienced *en masse*, and it is these that visual culture seeks. The intent is to indulge the consumerist gaze, which "may not keep up with the pace of linear narrative, but it may feed on other registers of time and experience" (Hansen in Turner 413), so that the associations formed are shared amongst viewers. This can be as basic as a doorway depicted in a shadowy setting which for most audiences will resonate with childhood stories of monsters in the dark, and in so doing induce a perturbed response.

Continuing on the subject of experiencing spaces, self-awareness within a space has become more problematic due to urbanisation and developments made in telecommunications. Due to the lack of necessity of physical presence for electronic communications and technologies such as digital surveillance, protecting one's privacy has become a more complicated issue. In "Telecommunications and the City - Electronic Spaces, Urban Places" (2002), Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin propose that "accepted notions about the nature of space, time [and] distance [have come] under question" (Graham and Marvin 1) in recent years. This is because telecommunications "transcend spatial barriers" (1) meaning that space may be invaded without the necessity of physical presence. Moreover, if we are to accept that: "this sense that the home is isolated from the rest of the social world is changing rapidly" (208), then one's sense of privacy may also be questioned. As a result, structures such as doorways become a site of uncertainty; when a door is closed it is assumed that entrance can be denied to those outside, but this security is eroded to a degree by the possibility of virtual intrusions. *Resident Evil* is an excellent example of how this erosion may be exploited to produce a thriller narrative.

The very nature of doors in that they may be opened, and that boundaries may thus be breached, attests to Amanda Vickery's assertion in *Behind Closed Doors* (2009) that "apertures symbolis[e] points of human vulnerability" (Vickery 33). If this concept is added to the pervasiveness of telecommunications, then the instability surrounding doorways becomes significantly heightened. Doors do not completely deny access, due to their ability to be opened, which enables the potential for physical intrusion. Telecommunications do not require access to physical spaces in order to intrude, therefore rendering the door ineffective, exposing another form of vulnerability. Consequently, doors become unreliable as a boundary that prevents access, because they cannot be consistent in this capacity. It

becomes increasingly obvious how emotive associations can form as a result. I previously alluded to transitions as a process of potential outcomes when proceeding from one space to another, but now I will clarify how feelings of anticipation advance into stronger emotional responses. A good point of reference is George Pattison's discussion on Søren Kierkegaard's theory of the "anxious self [who] is a self caught up in a process of development, poised vertiginously in the moment of transition from innocent ignorance to free self-consciousness" (Pattison 66). Anxiety is cited by a number of theorists (Buben, Heidegger in King, Kierkegaard in Pattison) in relation to anticipation and therefore the crux of the matter lies with the future as something unknown.

It is important to acknowledge both Heidegger and Kierkegaard for their extensive writing in the realm of anxiety and the related concept of dread. Dread is not to be confused with fear which, as Kierkegaard explains: "refer[s] to something definite, whereas dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility" (38) and thus cannot be fully accounted for. Embodying "the dizziness of freedom" (55), dread represents how people feel lost and disoriented by the prospect of the unknown; we are free to wonder, but denied certainty of what is beyond the doorway. Since the potential has not yet been realised, it exists only as "something which is nothing" (39), and therefore as an opposite to the core of a person, as a real being thing.

Dread means to "anticipate with great apprehension" (*Oxford Dictionaries*), the intensity of which is exacerbated by the doorway because it acts as a visual stimulus when it comes into view. This stimulus in turn reminds us of our own insufficient grasp on what could happen, once it has been established that an indeterminable change may take place. In "Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic" (2009), Lorraine Clark similarly concurs that: "'potential' is fundamentally ambiguous" (54), therefore, the more ambiguity the doorway provides, the greater the emotional response. She explains that this anxiety surrounds our "freedom to realize any one of an infinite number of possibilities through decisive action" (54). By juxtaposing personal choice with these potentialities, anxiety can be related to a sense of responsibility. In films, such as *Resident Evil*, where the film focuses on the experiences of the main protagonist, viewers can feel connected to the character's choices as if they were their own. In this way, doorways cause a communal anxiety for the viewers, because whichever potential is actualised is the responsibility of those perceiving it.

In "Dread in Kierkegaard" (2007), Michael Duffy suggests that: "if [people] are seized by dread, they are seized by something that has a relationship to a knowledge that they do not know" (Duffy), which indicates another factor. People are not simply faced by an opposing non-thing, but are connected to it through their observance of the doorway's presence. Furthermore, the viewer is not merely responsible, but must be participatory. The process of reaching actuality, in Heidegger's words, requires "dislodging his Dasein" (*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 173), and actively seeking to cross the border, or traverse the doorway. This act, in its firm commitment to the transition refers to allowing

oneself to become changed, consciously deciding to enter a state where the self cannot remain the same. In “Heidegger's Reception of Kierkegaard: The Existential Philosophy of Death” (2013), Adam Buben describes how “Dasein pulls itself out of its standard (in the sense of a default-setting) fallenness and takes possession of itself” (980), therefore it is in a state of alteration that one passes through the doorway to unveil potentiality. This space is one of instability for both knowledge of self and surroundings, within which anxiety for that which is uncertain may emerge.

Heidegger provides a more detailed analysis of these ideas in his writings in *Being and Time*, with particular emphasis on the presence of anxiety when concerned with future events. By establishing that: “Anxiety ‘does not know’ what that in the face of which it is anxious is” (*Being and Time* 231), uncertainty about the future becomes synonymous with anxiety. Furthermore, by specifying that a self “comports itself towards its potentiality-for-being”(279), the feeling of anticipation is afforded a greater sense of preparation that could result in physical manifestations such as becoming tense, in the most extreme of circumstances. This exploration is part of Heidegger’s broader theoretical understanding of human existence and our concern for time as a progression towards death. However, to expand on this further would be to deviate away from the pertinent specificities of doorway narratives, and it is important to recognise its value in relation to other theorists.

Just as Hammer describes the house as a “spiritual structure of hiding and revealing” (Hammer 382), Kierkegaard refers to “an anxious dread of an unknown something” (Kierkegaard 17). The emphasis on the presence of an unknowable component is a recurring motif not only in theory, but also applied research. For example, in *Italian Women Writers* (2014), Katherine Mitchell makes the observation that conversation through doorways “typically signifies a possibility, a hypothesis, or a threat, or it details an unhappy event, a change in circumstance, a premonition, or something forbidden” (76), and so they become a plot device.

Therefore, I will demonstrate that, in conjunction with narrative function, doorways play a vital role in *Resident Evil* to provoke an emotional response, be it negative or positive. There is a conviction that committing to the transition from one side to another will instigate a shift from actuality to an indeterminable potentiality. Providing this distinction enables the significance of the narrative to become easily discernible. The narrative aspect of a doorway comprises of a temporal element, such as memory, storyline, or implied narrative by visual associations. These narrative properties can be just as effective whether they are real, created by the artist or inferred by the viewer’s imagination, and as discussed above, they can be both a shared and personal experience.

## ***Resident Evil***

In this section, I will illustrate how doorways in the film *Resident Evil* present anxiety as described above, as well as other emotional responses. To place this film in context, I will first discuss the videogame *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996) from which it is adapted, and consequently shares structural similarity. When faced with a doorway, the viewer of either the film or videogame is hovering before the prospect of alteration. They are suspended within the actuality of reality, and a future yet to be realised that will remain undefined until they choose to commit themselves to the new space. It is undefined precisely because the doorframe withholds areas from view, thus concealing unfathomable possibilities. Videogames have the freedom to construct any scene the creator wishes, which incorporates any number of unpredictable variables and naturally induces apprehension, especially within the horror genre. As a result, doorways become synonymous with emotions such as trepidation and caution.

The *Resident Evil* survival horror video game (Capcom, 1996), focusing on the first of the series, provides a good illustration of how this concept may be enacted. The game follows two elite task force members, one who is controlled by the player, who are investigating the disappearance of another team member in an old mansion teeming with monsters, predominantly zombies. Opening with a corridor and doorway framing a man in silhouette, the camera stalks forward, zooming into his face, now screaming in horror, before an extreme close-up of his eye. This aggressive image, so dramatically portrayed, becomes instantly associated with other doorways through the visual aesthetics of the shot. Thus, the iconography of the spatial presence of the doorframe gains the temporal 'memory' or narrative of threat and hostility. The focus on the eye emphasises how this experience will be conveyed through vision. In relation to the consumerist gaze discussed above, the player is made aware of their participation as a sequence of looking and reacting to what the game displays. The gaming experience is not only influenced by the narrative, but by the doors as visual stimuli, the individual's associations with this imagery, and their emotive responses to seeing them. Originally, the main uses of imagery of doors in the game was to disguise the loading screens between different rooms, however these had now become invested with emotion and quite suitably created tension for the player.

The introductory exposition that begins the plotline of the game sees a group of characters escape the monsters on the outside by entering a mansion. The cut scene ends with passing through the mansion doors, thereby creating a connection between the images of monsters and doorways, which the player knows remain outside. In this way, associations are formed by means of narrative, so any door now acts as a site of potentiality for hidden monsters (actuality). The anxiety surrounding the unknown contents of the spaces beyond each door is further heightened by the varying constructs of doors, including in which direction, inwards or outwards, or to which side they swing open. The presence of doors also draws upon the effects of being a person in control and consequently responsible for the "potentiality-for-being" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 279), which enhances the anxiety experienced.

Additionally, some doors do not open, or require the player to solve a puzzle, some are hidden, and others trigger traps. These doors have become personified by hostility and deception. The result of these negative associations and experiences is that the player is in a heightened state of awareness whenever approaching a door or, indeed, encounters similar visual structures. Scenes are often composed in corridors whose rectangular framing echoes that of a doorway, immersing the player in a field of oppressive uncertainty. One specific compositional feature evident is how the character is first captured in front of the door they have just been through. This obscures the unknown scene around them, which will only be revealed as the player progresses further into the room. Although the character is located in an open space, the combination of framing and camera angle presents a constricting scenario.

Before moving on to analyse the first film, I wish to draw attention to the words 'Resident Evil' themselves. The associations of such a condemning title include that of a home or domestic environment, but the connotations of "resident" do not emphasise home; they infer something merely dwelling or existing. Something evil, a menace instils the building with hostility, creating a personal threat. The proximity of this danger is appropriately felt throughout both game and film. Although the film is only loosely based on the video games, there are unmistakable allusions throughout its texture, especially in relation to doorways.

The science-fiction horror film *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002) follows the protagonist Alice (Milla Jovovich) as she works with a special military unit to ascertain what has happened in an underground genetic research facility called the Hive. The group alongside Alice consists of Matt (Eric Mabius) who initially introduces himself as a police officer and special military operatives, as well as Kaplan (Martin Crewes), J.D. (Pasquale Aleardi), and Rain (Michelle Rodriguez), who she meets soon after Matt in the mansion. They are later unexpectedly joined by Spence (James Purefoy) whilst travelling towards the Hive. Upon uncovering an outbreak of the T-virus, a flawed artificial mutagenic virus, they must neutralise the super-computer codenamed Red Queen (Michaela Dicker), and battle infected scientists in order to escape, whilst simultaneously aiming to contain the virus. The opening to *Resident Evil* begins with the scene in the centre of the frame surrounded by a thick black border. The camera then zooms in so that the scene expands, directly referencing the loading screens of the video games. In so doing, all of the emotions related to the original narrative have already been conjured into the minds of those familiar with the game. Those who lack such experience do not have to wait long before they begin to recognise themes that become structurally integral to the film.

After the virus becomes airborne, the building is plunged into lockdown so that all doorways now become barriers. This establishes automatic locking systems, which tie in with a larger fear of technology. This plays on the concept of removing control over our own environments as part of urbanisation that was previously discussed, whether it be commanded by someone else's will, or by these systems gaining

sentience. Fear, in this case, arises from technology's inability to empathise and the extent of its domain that incorporates any communication with the outside world. The people are left feeling indefinitely trapped, with attempts to plead rendered futile, and isolated away from any external aid.

However, these fears are far from irrational; the group in the elevator start to pry apart the doors with little effect. It almost seems like a punishment for their efforts when the woman becomes trapped with her head outside of the lift, which is soon severed quite graphically, serving to symbolise the friction that will ensue with future encounters with doorways. The following scene introduces Alice, who, despite being unacquainted with the preceding events, moves with hesitancy between rooms; her obvious lack of memory has enabled increased uncertainty. A person normally feels a sense of security in a room that they have previous experience of because they have acquired knowledge through familiarity over time. Her memory loss decreases this initial level of information, and thus accentuates the amount of unknown possibilities for what she may encounter. As she leaves the room we observe her through a point-of-view shot from the surveillance camera, her shadow appearing before her, which only serves to exaggerate the dwarfing effect of the camera's high angle and the doorway's extravagant size. Her appearance in this composition thence delineates an exposed, vulnerable state and the lighting causes the doorway to hang in ominous darkness, weighing heavily over her.

Alice's hesitancy is captured in more detail as she moves to exit the building. She opens the door, which creaks as one might expect with a horror film, hesitates, and then withdraws again to find the light switch before re-opening the door. This simple action demonstrates how we attempt to combat anxiety through the comfort of knowledge. In *Doorway* (2007), Simon Unwin describes the difference between two spaces is substantial in terms of how "the atmosphere changes [where] your eyes have to adjust to the new light level [and] the different quality of [...] air" (76). Here, Alice is attempting to reduce the amount of alterations that crossing beyond the door would cause, by revealing the outside space through sight, before she is forced to exchange potentiality for actuality.

At this point, doorways exemplify vulnerability, initially through a sense of peril when crossing between spaces. Just as the woman's head was severed, doorways succeed in forming other sites of struggle when various characters are grabbed whilst trying to run through, or when they are unwillingly pulled back unexpectedly. Firstly, Alice is dramatically pulled back into the mansion shown through the use of a jump cut shot, which is juxtaposed with a close up shot and a loud orchestral stab in the music. We discover that she was pulled back by Matt who proves to be an ally and not an assailant, which shows that it is the unknown that provokes anxiety as opposed to the certainty of a threat. Whereas later on, when the military operative, J.D., enters the code to unlock a set of doors, they open to reveal a horde of zombies behind him. He remarks "see how easy that was" before promptly being snatched out of sight. These two antithetical incidents in effect duplicate one type of action, in this case, being seized, which is a motif that reoccurs in other scenarios in the film that will be discussed later.



The final struggle of the film occurs when Alice tries to administer the anti-virus to Matt after he contracts the virus and is beginning to mutate. This takes place in a doorway as Alice wrestles with scientists in lab coats and whilst Matt is being abducted. The sequence uses shots fading to white as she is subdued providing an antithesis to the gloom of the hive's blackened spaces. This consequently illustrates that even the most prominent pairs of opposites of black and white or light and dark cannot be assumed to correlate to only positive or negative possibilities. The uncomfortably ominous white, shown only in the last section of the film, surprises the viewer, thus recapitulating the film's theme of caution and uncertainty when dealing with doorways. Moreover, the helpless image of Alice in a doorway aesthetically mirrors our own inadequacy, as well as that of the characters, when determining whether an opening will be safe before it is revealed.

A second version of vulnerability victimises the subject through a predatory gaze. In addition to the previously described shot with the surveillance camera, numerous scenes are established from a location not shown before, with the characters not yet in view. This occurs with the lift shaft, and later with a hatch, but two occasions meriting longer contemplation are when they enter the Hive complex, and the room of the red queen. Upon the military operative, Rain, announcing that they have reached the Hive, the sequence cuts to a shot from within the Hive as the door rises and reveals the task force stood pointing guns towards the viewer. The disorientation felt by presenting new space in this way separates the spectator from the group because they have been denied a gradual revelation, and instead feel conscious of their position as an observer. A reverse shot realigns the audience with the group's view of the impenetrable black interior, allowing us to share in their anxiety for the unknown. In so doing, this scene conveys the sense of being watched, alongside the anxiety of insufficient knowledge.

A similar situation transpires in this aforementioned room of the Red Queen. Beginning with a static camera facing the closed door, it establishes a wholly unfamiliar location, whose overt central position lends the space a sense of autonomy. This self-awareness is a conscious reference to the theme of surveillance by non-human entities such as artificial intelligence, which is underscored by the noticeable passing of seconds before the door opens. Unlike the previous example, the lingering time spent alone before the door's movement and the position of the camera are exceedingly distinctive. Firstly, it is framed as a long shot in an illuminated environment to which the viewer acknowledges no point of reference to previous scenes and proceeds to try to interpret the *mise en scène*. This moment emphasises that the room has not just been dormant and awaiting human interference; rather, it communicates the potent existence and independence of the Red Queen. The second effect of the long shot is that when the door opens, the group appear small and somewhat less powerful than before. Over the course of their journey, they have been transformed from the confident specialist heroes at the beginning to a hesitant group of fallible survivors.

Another important aspect portrayed in *Resident Evil* is that doors are deceptive. When the unit begin their mission with Alice, they enter through a hidden pair of doors disguised as mirrors. The doors' unexpected presence conveys to the audience that they cannot trust appearances. If knowledge is unreliable, then even less certainty is permitted. This deception progresses from a visual property to a physical one when Rain tries to open the transport door as they travel towards the Hive, claiming it is "sealed shut", only to be proven wrong when another military operative, Kaplan, successfully opens it. Not only this, but when opened, a man, Spence (James Purefoy), unknown and unexplained at this point, falls through suddenly. The emotions this sequence creates are surprise and curiosity at his success, followed immediately by a mixture of being startled, perturbed and subsequently alert and wary. The curiosity is borne out of a desire to know what is beyond the door in an attempt to reveal more of the narrative; the other emotions arise as a result of the realisation of an abrupt outcome. In this case, deception yields more intense emotions due to the urgent requirement to deal with misleading information.

The final section to shed light on the experience of doorways in this film is during a climactic clash with the monster whose aggressive mutation has rendered it a superior threat. Doorways have operated both in favour and adversely for the group, but always in the capacity of their function. In this scene however, the creature crashes through the doorway, thereby weaponising the door as it slams into one of the group, Matt, who falls to the ground, despite the preceding shot showing him bolt the door. However, doorways cannot be considered hostile, only ambivalent. The creature is vanquished by opening doors in the floor, and as it plummets, the doorframe is thus implied to have an ability to save through this dispelling act. Therefore, the scene exemplifies how doorways can act as a device for both positive and negative consequences, which are equally hard to determine without allowing potential futures to become actuality. This pinnacle moment of transition is one of uneasy anticipation for an outcome we can never fully control.

## **Conclusion**

Doorways have a physical presence as either an obstruction or enabling access between spaces. Although doorways seem relatively unobtrusive in most visual culture, they can be transformed into an iconic device when placed into conversation with the narrative of an art piece. The surveillance of the A.I. unit in *Resident Evil* epitomises the fear of being watched, a fear that is not uncommon within contemporary society. However, it is not necessarily the secret act of observation that is so distressing. The fear arises from the possibility that the knowledge gained by the observer may be used against them, and subsequently their inability to thwart this. Fear is part of the dread for potentiality that cannot be determined, predicted or otherwise fully known before a transition takes place. Significantly, this anxiety only exists when the transition causes awareness in those approaching that the crossover will bring the possibility of alteration, for which they must take responsibility.

Films are particularly useful because, as a temporal medium, they can exploit the doorway to demonstrate the complete effects of a transition as part of a narrative sequence. *Resident Evil* expands on this with doorways that gain autonomy. Their actions threaten the protagonists by confining the group, releasing hostile monsters, allowing them to be attacked, and even becoming a weapon when a door is thrown at Matt. However, the slight redemption of the doorway that vanquishes the ultimate opponent, amongst other mildly benign actions, provides enough uncertainty so that doorways come to signify anxiety and dread, rather than themselves being a thing to fear. This ambiguity thus emphasises that it is the unknown, the other side that is the source of such emotions when a narrative context triggers awareness that potentiality may bring considerable, and indeterminable, alterations upon current actuality. The invisibility of artificial intelligence, and by extension, virtual technologies is thus influential upon our spatial experience of these types of doorways, which, as a product of more recent developments, proves to exacerbate already prominent trepidations from centuries past.

Clearly, the iconography of the doorway not only holds powerful symbolism in contemporary visual culture but also demands increasingly critical inquiries to investigate the complications posed by telecommunications and cyber technology. As technological advancements occur, our perceptions of both virtual and physical realities are transformed. They have rapidly evolved over the past century, which means that their effect on perceived traditional concepts such as borders, barriers and spaces must be updated. The crux is that doors most certainly do not stay closed, and other methods of intrusion, such as surveillance, render them even less effective. If the majority of doors are open, or access is always on some level achievable, perhaps new research should grow to study the process of opening, and what new spaces mean. Whether our compulsive curiosity is due to concerns with the anxiety such accessibility provokes, or just an indulgence into the fascination we share for the indefinite state of the boundary of the doorway, is difficult to ascertain. It is certainly a rich area of questioning that demands further scrutiny as an integral part of our visual environment.

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