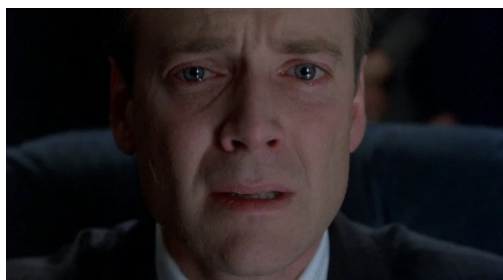


The Sixth Sense - Münchhausen Syndrome by Proxy/Poisoning Scene

The direction of *The Sixth Sense* by M. Night Shyamalan approaches its supernatural narrative with a rather quiet, suspenseful style grounded in reality. Shyamalan is able to scare and misguide his audience through his choice of creative decisions furthering the storytelling and the meaningful message it encases. Despite its paranormal features, they are not the crux of the horror that the narrative presents. Rather the ghosts, Cole (Haley Joel Osment) and the audience alongside him find terrifying at first, are shown to merely be a reflection of the cruelty and inhumanity that human behaviour is capable of. A particular example of this is the heartbreaking scene when a father is revealed the treacherous truth of his daughter's death. From this scene, the audience watches as Shyamalan turns the monsters upside down and is a rather pivotal moment in Cole's development and acceptance of his gift.



Cole accompanied by Dr Malcolm Crowe (Bruce Willis) attend Kyra (Mischa Barton) a young girl's funeral to carry on her will of passing a red striped box to her father (Greg Wood); red, being a symbolic colour of anything tainted or to do with spirits. The components of this scene depend on the lack of dramatics camera angles and distractions of props to focus on the characters and their emotions. Ominous music plays in the background before fading as he opens the box which cues what sounds like a release of air reminiscent of Pandora's box, building the audience's sense of dread and anticipation.



The camera holds still on the box's contents, a video tape, long enough that it is made clear that whatever is on there is important before cutting to static. Here we, the audience, see a grieving father watch a video tape of his now deceased daughter perform a puppet show as the camera presents a close view that feels intimate and tender focusing the attention on his emotions. Through the works of his facial expressions of pained sadness, reddened eyes, and momentary contained smile allows the audience to sympathise with the character and serves the reveal as even more impactful. Behind the father, more people are shown to have gathered around to watch. The camera is now consumed by the video tape, shadowing the edges and

through a slow sequence realisation slowly dawns on the audience that the stepmother (Angelica Page) had been purposefully keeping Kyra sick. The notion of someone you love and trust consistently keeping your child ill for selfish reasons to the point it leads to their death is presented to the audience in a way that unfurls as disturbing and scarier than the previous scenes of Cole's encounter with ghosts. As the stepmother uncaps and mixes the cleaning agent into the bowl, the camera starts to pan in the action before cutting to the man's expression, his confusion tipped off by the raise of his brows and subtle widening of his eyes and mouth and the pain or sadness he had held before is not present in that moment. During which this continues, we see the people behind him start to shuffle and squirm in unease, all the while the ominous music returns. The tape continues with the stepmother bringing the dish to Kyra and doting on her with a motherly tenderness that is now grasped to not be fully genuine and the dialogue continues as the camera cuts back to the father and pans in on his face uncomfortably close before flipping it around and we see what he does. A pixelated close up of Kyra eating the poisoned dish, the dish causing her death poisoned by his own wife. His facial expression conveys he is rightfully shaken and torn at the realisation and then it cuts to static.

The scene moves onto the back of a woman dressed in bright red surrounded by red roses and the music becomes more tense now and the camera is handheld and shaky. This use of red is not only symbolic in revealing her part in Kyra's death but also displays her vanity and need for attention explaining her motivation for wearing *red* at a funeral. The father is standing against her, with several people behind him with disgusted looks on their faces. His expression is pained and tearful but different from the subdued sadness at the start, rather than enraged, he's pained by his wife's treachery and he croaks out the sole, "You were keeping her sick", his voice chock full of restrained emotion. The camera closes in on her face and she grows steadily uglier as it happens. More wrinkles, the now downturned lips, the slight arching of the eyebrows into a glare, hollowing of her eyes, stiffening of the neck; we begin to see her what she is, a monster.



The eloquence of the direction is in that it is able to convey the emotions and thoughts of the characters to the audience so fluidly and have the audience react to the chain of events alongside each other drawing to the same conclusive realisations with a minimal and simple production. The realistic subdued performance only furthered the direction. M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* is spooky ghost story that unlike other spooky ghost stories begs the question of who the real monsters are and what are the fears we carry with us buried deep within our core.