

Women in Slashers Then and Now:
Survival, Trauma, and the Diminishing Power of the Close-Up

by

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Abstract

This thesis will reconsider the role of the Final Girl in slasher cinema throughout time, disproving popular notions of her as either a teenage boy incarnate or a triumphant heroine. Instead, an examination of her facial close-ups will make evident that despite her ability to survive, the formal structure of the film emphasizes her ultimate destruction, positioning her instead as a traumatized survivor, specifically of male violence. My research will therefore use close film analysis and feminist film theory to ask how the close-ups develop character as well as narrative, what significance they hold in relation to the structure of the slasher, and most importantly, how they both speak to and challenge gender stereotypes. My methodology will include the comparative analysis of older films to their recent remakes.

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Introduction

“...the most valuable ‘asset’ of the female star, her face”

- Grayson Cooke (89)

As a (sub)genre, the slasher film tends to be overloaded with its own narrative and formal cliches and images, the most identifiable of all being the role of the ‘Final Girl’. First presented by Carol Clover in the early 1990s, the term has become part of everyday vernacular among film goers and slasher fans whose expectations of the genre invariably include such a protagonist. General assumptions about the Final Girl, all more or less springing from Clover’s theory, typify her as follows: she will be a young and pretty virgin, and although her much wilder friends will all be killed throughout the course of the narrative, she will survive the wrath of the killer by fighting cleverly for her life. Furthermore, the final showdown will likely result in the her killing the killer. A more specific characteristic of the Final Girl is that she possesses ‘masculine’ characteristics, such as the abilities to be rational and violent (when necessary). This idea is born out of Clover’s assertion that this character is an identification point and double for the teenage male viewer. I intend to disprove this idea. An examination of the facial close-up makes clear the Final Girl’s vulnerabilities in such a way that rather than representing male heroism, she embodies trauma, which is a rather ‘feminine’ psychosis insofar as traditional gender coding allows. This trauma considered alongside the violent survival techniques employed by the Final Girl indicate that her role falls somewhere between contemporary feminism (as opposed to ‘masculinity’) and traditional femininity.

As an archetype of the genre, the Final Girl has garnered much attention among film critics and theorists, especially within the frameworks of gender and feminism. Indeed, this

character has effectively legitimized women's rights to enjoy an otherwise misogynistic and sadomasochistic genre. Growing up, the role of the Final Girl certainly justified my own draw to slasher cinema. However, as I began to watch these films from an academic perspective, I became increasingly aware of their problematic nature. The films are constantly under scrutiny for their portrayals of violence against women. Especially problematic here is the sexualization of the violence which is paralleled by the objectification of the female body. The victimization of women through the use of phallic weaponry and narrative conventions such as the post-coital kill (also a term coined by Clover) arguably create an atmosphere within which the value of women is solely in what Laura Mulvey would call their 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. That is to say, if classical cinema imagines a male subject position and thus perpetuates a male gaze as Mulvey has theorized, then classical horror cinema must perpetuate a sadistic gaze - taking the violence implied by Mulvey's theory to a much more literal level. In considering all of this, finding solace in the Final Girl's victory makes a lot of sense for female viewers. However, it should be noted that as simple as this reading of the Final Girl is, it is not in line with Clover's theory which sees her as representing the male spectator as opposed to a vengeful and powerful young woman, which is the position taken by Isabelle Christina Pinedo.

However, the Final Girl is sadly not always so victorious. Many times she is unable to successfully defeat the killer, and even if she does it does not make up for all he has taken from her, including her sanity and sense of safety. This is why I am offering a third point of view within which the Final Girl is neither an incarnation for the teenage boy, nor simply a heroine, but rather a survivor, specifically of male violence. If slasher films can therefore be thought of as trauma narratives responding to the abundance of male violence in society (referring in this case to, but not limited to, North America), Laurie Vickroy's arguments on the matter become

extremely relevant when she states that trauma is “an indicator of social injustice or oppression, as the ultimate cost of destructive sociocultural institutions” (x). In these films patriarchy itself becomes the harmful sociocultural institution as it allows (if not encourages) female victimization, despite the violent self-defense of the Final Girl.

One problem with Pinedo’s heroine theory is that she tends to assume that when the Final Girl survives she has obviously defeated or overpowered the monster, but as aforementioned, this is actually quite rare. In a quick survey of some of the most popular and genre defining slashers, the findings are overwhelming. Sally (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre* 1974) and Laurie (*Halloween* 1978) are both rescued from their psychotic assailants. Jess (*Black Christmas* 1974) kills the wrong guy, and Nancy (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* 1984) finds all of her efforts for naught when, at the end, she remains trapped by Freddy in the killer nightmare. Exceptions include Alice (*Friday the Thirteenth* 1980) and perhaps the three remaining girls in *Slumber Party Massacre* 1982 (Courtney, Valerie, and Trish) who work together to take down their attacker. My interest though lies in the first round of survivors, the Final Girls who cannot defeat the killer. Despite surviving, in these films the Final Girls still lose - they are hunted, tortured, their bodies and spirits left broken. They are survivors rather than heroines. The ephemerality of their power when they do finally fight back is emphasized by the fear and vulnerability written on their faces. Consider here the iconic horror image of a woman’s screaming face, which is almost always a close-up. Most significantly, in early slasher cinema, the final facial close-up of the survivor makes evident her absolute trauma, ranging from catatonic to vacant. In becoming astutely aware of how important the close-up is to slasher cinema, I began to look for and find interesting patterns. Strikingly, throughout the course of these films, facial close-ups of the Final Girl tend to

be used to exhibit her ability to see, a trait which is incredibly powerful as well as key to her survival. And yet, it is what she has seen that will leave her so broken by the end of the narrative. If, as Clover has suggested, it is her masculinity that saves the Final Girl in these early works, then it should too be noted that the final close-up, which invariably points to her trauma, acts as a way to restore the patriarchal social order in which she is a fragile female.

Although it is indisputable that it is her ‘masculine’ characteristics that allow the Final Girl to escape to whatever extent she does, I would like to offer a distinction between ‘masculinized’ and having characteristics that have traditionally been thought of as ‘masculine’. In line with traditional thought the ability to see, rationalize, and fight are all considered masculine. While Final Girls do possess these qualities, I am not inclined to consider them ‘masculinized’ because throughout the course of my research I have found that the portrayal of gender within slasher cinema is not so black and white. As Clover puts it, “within these worlds masculinity and femininity are more states of mind than body” (22). This is interesting in relation to slasher cinema because the concept of victimization tends to be associated with femininity, since traditionally female characteristics have been thought of as weaker than their masculine counterparts. Such films play on these stereotypes, especially through the use of the close-up. However, as I will argue throughout the chapters, the power of these close-ups diminishes overtime, as remakes often avoid re-using these strategies. Although the final close-ups remain focused on emphasizing the trauma of the Final Girl, that throughout there are very few close-ups that seem significant lessens the impact of character development. Thus, it has become very difficult to decipher whether contemporary slasher narratives are thinking about Gender in any significant way. Perhaps this is the result of ‘postfeminist’ thought, sometimes thought of as implying invisibility is equality.

‘Gendering’ the Face

In slasher cinema, there is a very interesting three-way relationship that carries throughout the entire film between the Final Girl, the killer and the viewer. The relationship is based entirely on a power struggle which is itself founded on gender politics, and is reminiscent of Laura Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze. Mary Ann Doane explains that while the face is never accessible to its owner except as a reproduction or reflection, it is the most accessible part of a person to the other. In the case of film, the spectator is this “other”, and by being given access to the heroine’s terrified face filling the screen, the spectator is also being given permission to revel in the violence it implies. Moreover, with its typically gendered plot formulas, this implied sadistic gaze is on the tortured girl, with the close-up of her scared eyes and quivering mouth as the climax, and with her scream as the bodily release, a point which has been made by Linda Williams in a piece entitled “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”. In discussing body genres, that is, films which illicit physical reactions from the audience, Williams relates pornography, horror, and melodrama, by way of their excesses. Interestingly, she notes that while pornography is most often criticized as excessive for its violence, “horror films are excessive in their displacement of sex onto violence” (2). The spectacle of horror, she adds, is its portrayal of violence and terror. “Aurally” however, “excess is marked by recourse not to the coded articulations of language but to inarticulate cries of pleasure in porn, screams of fear in horror, sobs of anguish in melodrama” (3). So, while within the silent cinema faces were the most apt way to extend to the viewers what literally could not be said, in the body genre of horror, being void of communication skills in times of fear similarly inspires a facial close-up to capture the moment of climax of both the narrative and the emotional state of the character - the

scream. Moreover, ‘in-articulation’ and hysteria, both of which are represented by the scream, are generally considered ‘feminine’.

I do not intend to suggest the slasher cinema is necessarily a form of ‘torture porn’ with exclusively male viewership. I do however argue that the relationship between violence and sexuality in such films is explicit, and that while the notion of the Final Girl can be read through a positive feminist lens, there is a very problematic structure to the films which tends to sexually objectify women and position the male gaze as a destructive and powerful force. Because of this structure, there does seem to be an imagined heterosexual, “deviant”, male viewer, to whom the violence is displayed as pleasurable. This of course has nothing to do with empirical audiences, nor does it take away from the ability for other viewers to derive pleasure. In fact, Pinedo points out that by the end of a slasher film, the Final Girl (whom she appropriately calls the ‘surviving female’) is the main source of violence, killing, or attempting to kill, the killer himself (97). She argues that at this point, the spectator is given permission to enjoy the violence by recognizing the killer as deserving, and the heroine as empowered. Women can thus find solace in the Final Girl’s ability to defend herself as well as get revenge for all she and her loved ones are put through during the course of the narrative. However, I complicate this by adding that these final showdowns between killer and heroine often avoid facial close-ups until the very end when she is ‘triumphant’, thus becoming the Final Girl.

In a final close-up it is typical for her face to express a myriad of displeasurable emotions such as shock, denial, fear, and anger. Therefore, despite her win, the close-up reminds us of her many losses. The image of her traumatized face is thus what the audience is meant to leave with and, significantly, this is an image that returns the otherwise strong, “masculinized” girl to her

‘proper’ gender assignment. The point I would like to make here is that gender-coding these girls as masculine is to ignore many other aspects of her character. If, as so many theorists suggest, the Final Girl is male because of her competence and agency, she is at the same time female for her hysteria and trauma (traits rarely given to male characters, even when they are victims), both of which are given special attention through the close-up. Furthermore, what is to be made of this agency when the Final Girl fails at defeating the killer and/or saving herself, and finds herself needing rescue?

A more apt argument, and one I aim to make, is that early slasher films point to society’s desire to negotiate the concept of gender within a women’s liberation (and post-modern) atmosphere. Ultimately, these films are an attempt to re-work the damsel-in-distress narrative that has always been so prominent within the patriarchal structure. Narrative elements allow the Final Girl an extraordinary amount of power, but consistently resign her to a weakened, even helpless, state by the end. I argue that the films therefore fulfill fantasies of *both* female heroism and male superiority, thus blurring the boundaries of masculine/feminine and traditional/modern. Formally, the films negotiate this through the use of the close-up which is used to highlight the Final Girl’s ‘femininity’, giving it precedence over indicators of her potentially ‘masculine’ qualities such as violence. Today, many of the classic slashers have been remade, with a recent explosion beginning in the early 2000s. Some are re-imaginings, some are even more like sequels than remakes, but one thing holds true across the board - the depiction of the Final Girl has become less inspired by the close-up. In *Black Christmas*, and *Halloween*, both protagonists fail to defeat their attackers. Worse, both girls are left vulnerable at the ends to a second attack because of this. Close-ups reveal that they are complete mental disasters by the end, implying

they may not even be able to handle a second battle. In the remakes though, both girls are able to kill their attackers and final close-ups reveal them to be forever changed by the experience, exhibiting symptoms of trauma to varying degrees. A third film worth exploring, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is quite different in both versions, perhaps because of the supernatural element. In the original, the Final Girl revels in her success at defeating Freddy, only to find out soon after that the battle is not over. In a final close-up she screams uselessly for help and the credits roll. The remake stays true to this ending, having the Final Girl's accomplishments stripped at the last moment, with a final close-up to emphasize the incredible amount of danger she is in. However, her initial 'defeat' of the killer is handled differently, having her rely heavily on a male partner and exhibit far more trauma (specifically from childhood).

The chapters of this thesis will explore the evolution of these Final Girls by considering their close-ups as moments to pay special attention to. My research will use close film analysis and feminist film theory to ask how the close-ups develop character as well as narrative, what significance they hold in relation to the structure of the slasher, and most importantly, how they both speak to and challenge gender stereotypes. Chapter 1 will therefore examine and discuss *Black Christmas* (1974 and 2006), and how the two versions interact with their respective understandings of contemporary feminisms. Chapter 2 will look at *Halloween* (1978 and 2007) and discuss how they interact with the concept of the Gaze. Lastly, Chapter 3 will consider how *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984 and 2010) interacts with the notion of female paranoia and victimization. What will be evident is that despite the obvious effort put into constructing sympathetic Final Girls in the 1970s and 1980s, today the case is often that the role of the Final Girl has lost much of its significance. One way that the film structure removes the focus from her

is by giving less attention to how her close-ups function within the narrative (if they do at all).

First though, I would like to take a brief look at Michael Powell's 1960 film *Peeping Tom* as an important predecessor to the slasher film, especially in regards to its obsession with the face (and the close-up).

Peeping Tom and the Face

“Horror privileges the eyes because, more crucially than any other kind of cinema, it is about the eyes” (Clover 167). *Peeping Tom* is exemplary of this. Despite Michael Powell’s assertion that his film is not a horror film, but rather a film about the cinema from 1900-1960 (qtd in Clover 169), Clover rightly describes the film as a “*horror metafilm*” (169). It is the story of a young man named Mark who, psychologically damaged from growing up as the subject of his fathers intense voyeurism, finds himself suffering from “scopophilia”, which the film describes as “the morbid desire to gaze”. To satisfy this desire, Mark obsessively carries a camera with him everywhere, secretly recording women until he can get them alone, at which point he murders them. His weapon of choice is the sharp end of a tripod, which he stabs women with while recording their reactions. Moreover, he attaches a mirror to the camera allowing the women to watch themselves die as well. Due to the films’ own obsession with faces, *Peeping Tom* is loaded with facial close-ups. Arguably, this film does not strictly adhere to the conventions of slasher cinema which were not defined until the 1970s. It is, however, an important predecessor with its focus on the stalking of women, the objectification of women, and a serial killer who targets sexual transgressors.

Raymond Lefevre writes that Mark's "wicked voyeurism" is specifically aimed at women who enjoy being looked at; women who "offer their faces and bodies up for examination" (91). His three victims throughout the course of the film are a prostitute, an aspiring actress, and a nude model. In fact, the actress and model both willingly put themselves in front of his camera just before they die. In a line that bears remarkable resemblance to *Sunset Boulevard*'s iconic phrase "Alright Mr. Demille, I'm ready for my close-up" (Norma Desmond), the model in *Peeping Tom*, Millie, poses for Mark's camera and exclaims "C'mon Sonny, make us famous". Not entirely unlike Norma Desmond, It is this desire for stardom, this desire to be looked at, that is eventually her demise. Because my interpretation of the facial close-up in the horror film involves the act of silencing women, leaving them with only muted fear and hysterical cries for help, it seems worth noting the eerie and unexpected connection between *Sunset* and *Peeping Tom*. Both are self-reflexive films; films about films, but more significantly, both also deal with this in relation to the to-be-looked-at-ness of women. Mulvey describes this as the way the cinema positions women as passive - as existing only to be ogled by the male characters, the implied male viewers, and the implied 'male' camera. While Norma struggles to have agency, to remain desirable in her old age and in the new world of sound cinema, the truth is that she was only worth anything when she was young, beautiful, and silent. In *Peeping Tom*, Mark's "phallic gaze" (Clover 173), which arguably belongs just as much to his camera, also constructs women as to-be-looked-at. Millie, despite being outspoken and even crude, is effectively silenced by the camera, which captures her as a still, silent, erotic, image for men. Meanwhile, the aspiring actress cannot find work beyond that of a stand-in. Both are punished for their resistance to silence, and this moment is presented to the viewer as a close-up. Their terrified faces occupy the

entire screen as they realize that they are facing death with no escape. Moreover, in this moment their voices are taken from them by the fear, by Mark, by his camera, which has been converted into a weapon. The symbolism is quite clear. The filming of women in *Peeping Tom* is, as Mulvey has suggested about all classical cinema, an act of violence against women which both subdues and objectifies them.

Although the model and the actress are both conveniently chatty right up until the moment the weapon is revealed to them, stopping them dead in their verbal tracks, interestingly, only the prostitute is being recorded without her permission, and only she is rather silent. However, even though she is not interested in having a conversation with Mark, her voice can be identified as authoritative in every small remark she makes. The first thing she says to him is what her price will be. Next she tells him to follow her and eventually says “shut the door”. Her independence is therefore established through her voice; she is calling all of the shots, until Mark reveals his weapon. At this point, the camera slowly zooms in as she begins to panic and by the time she lets out a bloodcurdling scream it is a tight facial close-up. It is worth noting as well that the prostitute is not only the first woman he is shown killing, but it is also the first sequence of the film. Thus the theme of non-submissive women being punished is established immediately. The opening shot is a dart board with its black, ‘pupil-esque’ centre being penetrated by a flying dart. The film immediately cuts to an extreme close-up of an eye, presumably Mark’s. Once the motif of eyes has been established it cuts to a street where the camera’s point of view allows the viewer to hunt the prostitute along with Mark.

Once she screams (the scream is always the cue of murder, but the murder itself is never shown), the viewer is taken to Mark’s apartment where he is shown watching his masterpiece

projected onto his wall. While the opening credits play, the prostitute sequence is replayed, this time as a black and white silent film with only conspicuous orchestra music to be heard. Also, this time the zoom-in lasts longer, taking the viewer into the prostitute's wide mouth which desperately screams with no sound. So, not only does Mark steal their voices from them during the attack, he also has their voices permanently removed. His reviewing and manipulating of these images harkens back to Doan's theory that it is by the face that one is most accessible to the 'other'. For Mark, the face is the most important aspect of the body, especially because of its ability to express, and to express fear in particular. It is through capturing the face that Mark can own these women in an intimate way; a point that relates to Clover's conception of the killer as sexually inept. In *Peeping Tom* though, it is less the act of killing than the ability to own their image that replaces the sex act.

Because *Peeping Tom* is such an early example of the slasher film, the Final Girl archetype has yet to be established. Still, if Helen can be thought of as having something of a Final Girl role it has to do with her being the only woman Mark cannot kill. The difference is, of course, that he does not try to. Her desire to befriend him provides him a level of emotional attachment to her through which he does not need to *own* her to have her. Also, she is not portrayed as a sexual being or as wanting to be looked at. The women he kills are those who do not properly perform gender; they are not 'lady-like'. Helen, although opinionated and forward, remains throughout the film more feminine than the ambitious and sexually-free women Mark goes after. Thus, it could be argued that Helen represents a sort of 'decent femininity' while the victims represent 'threatening femininity'. The facial close-ups of Helen are therefore less interesting than those of the victims, however, they are still worth considering, if only briefly.

Early on in the film her close-ups are rather authoritative, used when she makes bold attempts to pursue Mark. Subsequently, there is a sense of role reversal. Mark, being ‘stalked’ by Helen, is disempowered and reverts back to the role of victim - subject of the gaze. This is a role he knows well, having been the guinea pig in his father’s ‘scopophilia’ experiments his whole life. In these scenes, Mark is feminized by his lack of control, by a sense of impotence. He is unable to stay calm, and this is emphasized by his close-ups which serve to point to him as a victim. In fact, Mark is not only a victim of his father’s gaze but of his own scopophilia.

While Helen’s close-ups in these moments do give her a sense of assertion, to the viewer, they still accentuate her vulnerability because she is completely ignorant to the danger the audience believes she is putting herself in. By the end, it is clear that Mark does not intend to hurt her, but when she takes it upon herself to put on one of his films while he is away, Powell still takes full advantage of the expressiveness of a face. In close-up, the viewer watches Helen watch the video, not once cutting away. Her face expresses, at first, delight as she is excited to finally experience his work. Quickly her expression turns to bewilderment and then suddenly to complete terror. Rather than turning off the film, Helen becomes irrational and tries to escape the terrible images by getting up and moving further away from them. A moment that serves too to emphasize the power of the close-up; the images are too large, Helen feels overwhelmed by the lack of distance between herself and them. Breathing heavily, and quickly slipping into hysteria, like all Final Girls that will follow, she finally screams. The last close-up of Helen’s face shows her devastated, dropping her head against a wall, too powerless to even hold it up on her own anymore. The moment resembles the epitome of on-screen femininity - the faint. There is no final showdown between the Final Girl and the killer, but after a confrontation, Mark kills

himself in front of her. Traumatized by what she has witnessed, including his film, his confession and his suicide, Helen is desperate and in tears. Just before he stabs himself, pathetically, she pulls at him, only to be overpowered and thrown to the ground, where she stays, crying, until the credits roll.

The facial close-up is obviously a powerful cinematic tool. It conveys to the viewer what cannot be said. What *Peeping Tom* demonstrates (and what would become more apparent in the 1970s) is that in the slasher film, the power of the close-up is quite literal as victimizing scenarios tend to steal the voices of women, reducing them to passive, helpless, objects of the gaze. By the end of such films, even the Final Girl is mentally and physically destroyed and shown to be nothing more than a victim herself. This is expressed through the facial close-up which revels in its attention to her scared eyes and open mouth, which either quivers and murmurs inarticulately, or is completely silenced. These final shots do not necessarily disregard the strength displayed early on by the final girl, but they do diminish her heroic position by ultimately positioning her as a ‘damsel in distress’, allowing her to speak to both female power fantasies and male macho-savior fantasies. A conceivably appropriate response to women’s liberation and the confusion it incites in patriarchal society.

Chapter One:

Addressing Feminisms in *Black Christmas* (1974 and 2006)

In 1974 *Black Christmas*, a low-budget Canadian horror film directed by Bob Clark, was released. In many ways this film has set the stage for what is now appropriately referred to as ‘slasher cinema’, and just like any other slasher film that would follow, it is highly problematic in its representation of gender. What is specific to this particular story though is its direct relationship with female victimization; *Black Christmas* is explicitly about sexual harassment and the vulnerability of women. In a 2010 issue of Cineaction, Sara Constantineau wrote a glowing review of Clark’s film, hailing it for its progressive Canadian sensibility. She writes that although the film contains violence against women, “any potential sexism is undermined by a prominent feminist subtext” (60). Even so, this interpretation of the film as pro-feminist presents its own set of challenges, namely, how to account for the destruction of feminist characters.

Like *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes) which was released one year later, the pessimistic ending of *Black Christmas*, which leaves its final girl Jess completely disabled, insinuates that feminism does not stand a fighting chance against patriarchy, and that women will always be little more than a close-up of helplessness in the face of male violence, and sexual assault in particular. But the message is perhaps more complex than simply making a mockery of the feminist movement; it challenges second wave feminism by confronting it with the reality of the powerful and systemic violence of patriarchy. In calculatedly taking down the blatantly feminist characters and pointing to the ineffectiveness of authoritative male protection, *Black Christmas* can be seen as expressing the need for stronger feminist action.

The efforts made by the film to openly acknowledge feminism are sadly lost in the remake. However, the decision to endow the new final girl with the necessary vigor to defeat her assailants should not be taken lightly. It does after all provide a more positive view of what feminism has been able to achieve, that is, a normalization of depicting female ableness. Still, my research suggests that in both films the victimization of women is made a spectacle of, evident especially in the remakes (over)use of facial close-ups of terrified women as they face their respective killers. These close-ups emphasize the women's vulnerability and deem them helpless, especially because the decapitating nature of the close-up physically removes her body from the equation, without which she is unable to fight. Moreover, the Final Girls may masquerade as inviolable during the final showdown, but a final lingering image of the face conclusively presents these women as weakened, emotionally unstable, and even childlike. Essentially, final close-ups establish the trauma of the final girls, repositioning them as victim.

1974

In the opening scene of *Black Christmas*, a point-of-view shot “later used to equal effect by John Carpenter in his preface to *Halloween*” (Normanton 76), Clark invites the viewer to immediately identify with the killer, as he peeps into the windows of a sorority house. The five minute opening sequence crosscuts between the killer sneaking into the attic, from his point-of-view, and the unaware girls and their party guests carrying on. Like *Peeping Tom*, the film prioritizes the insidious action of looking as the main source of horror, bringing to mind Clover’s statement that “eyes are everywhere in horror cinema” (166). At the level of narrative, she explains, either seeing too much, or seeing too little, is problematic (166). In this brilliant scene, *Black Christmas* reveals the danger of both. The gaze is positioned as dangerous since it belongs

to a psychotic serial killing pervert. On the other hand, being ‘blind’ to the dangers around them, the girls’ lack of seeing is what will inevitably get them killed.

Unlike most slasher films today, the Final Girl is not the first character introduced to the audience in this film. On the contrary, Barb is the first of the doomed girls to appear on screen. Despite a subtle knack for observance when she yells at the other girls for leaving the front door open (ironically this is not how the killer enters), Barb is drunk and continues to be so throughout the film. The viewer learns very little of her, but it is clear that she has left an unstable home in the city to attend university in a small town. Likely on her own for the first time, she takes full advantage of the free-spirit of the sorority house (“this is a sorority house, not a convent!” (Barb)) and the independence it allows. The House Mother provides minor supervision and is herself an alcoholic and expects the girls to be able to take care of themselves (“I can’t be responsible for the morals of every girl in this house!” (Mrs. Mac)). Not surprisingly, Barb’s irresponsibility is said to provoke the ‘moaner’, a name given to the killer by the girls for his perverted phone calls.

It is important to note that this film is released at the same time that sexual harassment becomes named as a social issue. Prior to the 1970s, the lack of name for the issue made it so that victims were unsure of how to address it. This changed in 1975, just one year after the release of *Black Christmas*, when Working Women United became the first group to speak openly against sexual harassment (Markert 30). Obviously, Clark’s film draws on some major concerns within the social atmosphere at the time in order to create a sense of horror; essentially the film builds on what would have been collective fears about women living independently outside of the boundaries of their traditional roles. Moreover, he creates an atmosphere that at the

very least predicts a dreary outcome for second-wavers who were anxiously venturing out of the domestic sphere and into the male dominated public sphere.

Less than ten minutes into the film, the girls receive the first on-screen call, although it is made clear that they have been receiving them quite regularly. Jess, who will turn out to be the Final Girl, answers and immediately calls all the girls to listen in. During the disgustingly graphic call the camera slowly pans from a close-up of the telephone receiver to each of the girls faces. The framing is tight, creating a sense of claustrophobia so the viewer is left only to hear the pervert moan, groan, and threaten, and make starkly sexual comments, and to watch each of the girls react; they are all afraid. Their eyes are squinted with concentration and blink with discomfort, but the sense of powerlessness is abruptly broken when Barb grabs the phone to give him a piece of her mind. Some girls are lightened by this, smiling, and even giggling, however, the fun stops when the voice becomes suddenly stern stating “I’m going to kill you”.

Displeased with Barb’s provocative tactics, Clare flees to her bedroom, where the killer awaits. His face is obscured by hanging plastic suit covers as he sits in her closet and menacingly watches Clare pack her bags. Suspicious of a cat’s cry, in a medium close-up she slowly approaches the closet. Upon reaching the suit covers she is leapt at with them. As the plastic is wrapped around her face we watch her gasp for air in a close-up that is also shown from the killer’s point-of-view. Thus, we are made to experience her murder as though we are ourselves committing it. Although the murder is not executed in a phallic manner (she is strangled rather than penetrated) because of the use of the point-of-view, it is obvious that there is something morbidly sexual about watching her open mouth rock towards and away from us as the killer yanks her about.

This pornographic technique becomes something of a motif; the next time we see Clare it is also a facial close-up. Still wrapped in the plastic, her face in profile rocks slowly back and forth in a rocking chair in the attic. In a manner reminiscent of *Psycho* which boasts its own relationship to the sexualization of women, Clare's mouth is still wide open, as are her eyes. The emphasis on the emptiness of dead eyes has often been spoken about in relation to *Psycho*. William Schoell writes of the sudden silence against Leigh's "dead, vacant eye" in relation to "the dreadful void that comes at the end of someone's life" (15). Robin Wood alludes to this same comparison when he notes that "when it is over, and [Marion] is dead, we are left shocked, with nothing to cling to" (146). I would like to add to the discussion that such wide, unblinking eyes are also associated with the affect of fear, an expression that can be identified in both Marion's and Clare's postmortem close-ups. This fear stems from the realization that they have been overpowered, that they are vulnerable, that they are powerless. These final close-ups therefore emphasize the victimization of these women.

What I call the 'pornographic kill' can be spoken of in a similar way as the 'postcoital kill'. My conception of the pornographic kill, however, deals with the sexualizing of women by the manner in which they die, as opposed to having them die just after expressing themselves sexually. The pornographic kill then has little to nothing to do with the victim's sexual escapades and all to do with the repressed sexuality of the killer (or his sexual ineptness turned obsession). As objects of a psycho's sexual fantasy, both Marion and Clare are targeted and viciously murdered. In *Psycho* she is attacked in the shower; she is nude and vulnerable. Left for dead, Marion's final position leaves her bent over the bathtub ledge. The sexual suggestion in the position needs little interpretation, as does her open mouth. The open eyes, though, are reminders

that this was not a sexual act - she is dead, and died in terror with a sense of utter helplessness. It is the same for Clare. Despite the sexual connotations of her open mouth rocking back and forth, her eyes express fear and victimization. The pornographic kill is therefore the ultimate violation just short of physical rape. It seems worth noting that the most iconic images from both films are facial close-ups of female victims of the pornographic kill; Marion screaming in the shower, and Clare's plastic wrapped face, which is not only recurrent in the film but was even used as the theatrical poster.

After Clare, there are a string of more murders, the most graphic of all being Barb's, which is not surprising since she is positioned as a wild, heartless, "slut". This pornographic kill is executed while she is sleeping off an evening of heavy drinking. Boldly, the killer mounts her and holds a glass unicorn over her body, horn down of course. In a close-up, Barb's eyes jerk open with little time to react as the horn is thrust down into her. The weapon penetrates her again and again as she flails about. She does not even have time to scream; instead we hear desperate moans and gasps as she is relentlessly attacked. The violence is shot very much like the violence of the shower scene in *Psycho*, the penetration is all implied. An immense amount of blood however deems it worthy of being described as graphic.

That the audience is meant to experience these horrible deaths from the killer's point-of-view is very interesting. Pinedo argues that the post-modern horror is obsessed with the dialectic of seeing/not seeing. For the audience, mutilation and the "wet death" are made to be spectacle, and yet "not being able to see structures the act of looking" (51). The idea then is to make the films as gory as possible in order to make audiences want to look away. Pinedo explains that for Barbara Creed, looking away allows the viewer to redraw the boundary between their own body

and the tortured body on-screen (66). But by connecting spectators to the killer through the recurrent use of point-of-view, *Black Christmas* refuses the viewer this identification with the tortured bodies, disrupting the desire to look away by being given permission through this powerful camera position to revel sadistically in the victims torture. The invitation is to fully accept the gaze, to be active in one's spectatorship, to either share the power of the killer, or to at least recognize the easiness of his power. Notably, all the murders are constructed this way. Clover has argued that all slashers provide this identification with the killer but only until the Final Girl takes the stage as a fighter (23), but that is clearly not the case with this film. Especially since the final girl here is unsuccessful.

A major way that *Black Christmas* gets ignored by critics is in discussions of the Final Girl. The concept is generally attributed to being developed by *Halloween* (as is the killer POV opening), but Jess is a very interesting example. Her relationship with Peter might be the one significant difference between her and other Final Girls because it is clearly one of a sexual nature and a major characteristic of the Final Girl is her sexual reluctance (Clover 48). This is related to the idea that sexual women die, virgins live; a slasher film stereotype. Moreover, her decision to have an abortion works with the feminist aspect of her character. She aspires to have a career rather than a family, and makes this perfectly clear to her boyfriend, despite his pleas for her to keep the baby and marry him.

Another significant feminist quality is Jess's "active investigating gaze", a quality that Clover attributes to her interpretation of the Final Girl as masculinized (48). But this gaze is problematic to say the least. This can be proven by a discussion of her facial close-ups through the final sequence of the film, in which she is forced to take on the suspected killer all alone. Her

terrified face is made apparent all throughout by way of close-ups. Jess is aware that she may need to fight, and prepares for this by grasping a knife for dear life, but it is obvious that she would much rather hide. Silently, save for the occasional pant, Jess sneaks into the basement in the hopes that the killer will stop pursuing her if he cannot find her. The camera remains attentive to her face, closely watching her fear build as her boyfriend, Peter, enters the basement from outside. Afraid he may be the still unidentified killer, Jess' eyes grow wider as she slowly backs away from him in a state of complete confusion. Peter asks her again and again if she is alright, but she remains silent. Her voice has been stolen from her by the fear, by the killer. Already she is being forced into a much more "feminine" position by making herself small and silent as she is literally backed into a corner. As she attempts to keep her distance from Peter her shifting eyes suggest a desperate attempt to make a plan. Here, the film cuts to the police outside the house who hear three consecutive blood-curdling screams. It is the voice of a woman, presumably Jess since there are no other survivors at this point. The police hurry to the basement where they find Jess sitting against a wall, head hung back lifelessly, with a dead Peter lying across her lap. A close-up of his face assures the viewer he is dead at which point the camera tilts up to Jess who, upon hearing a policeman say her name, looks up slightly. This close-up reveals a sense of vacancy within her. She says nothing. It then dissolves to another facial close-up of her, this time unconscious in a bed, monitored by male authorities as if she were nothing more than a little girl. This is the last close-up of Jess and it is one of complete powerlessness.

As the film comes to a close with this as its final scene, male police officers and male doctors surround Jess' bed. It is revealed that she has had to be "put under" due to shock, making evident the severity of her condition. Here, the power she must have asserted against Peter is

devalued by returning her to a state of helplessness and by placing her under the care of multiple powerful male figures. She is effectively re-established as traditionally ‘feminine’, she is subdued. Moreover, after lingering on her practically lifeless body in bed for a striking thirty-eight seconds, the camera slowly pans through the house exposing the empty blood stained rooms. When it makes its way into the attic, the audience is provided with one more gruesome look at Clare’s plastic wrapped face. In the background is the all too familiar sound of the madman’s perverted mumbling. Jess has killed the wrong man, and the torture will continue; she will continue to be victimized. This space, initially representative of all second-wave feminism had to offer as an academic setting boasting freedom, sisterhood, and privilege, has been made into nothing more but a prison. It has failed to live up to the expectations it sets, that is, a space for independent women to safely blossom. The camera zooms slowly out of the house, careful to keep Clare’s face in the frame through the window, ending the film with a fade to black.

Clover has argued that “the image of the distressed female most likely to linger in memory is the image of the one who did not die, the survivor, or Final Girl” (35), but what Clark’s film evokes with this final string of close-ups is a sense of utter doom for her. By taking the viewer from her unconscious face to the menacing emptiness of the other rooms and finally to Clare’s lifeless face, it makes clear what Jess’s fate will be: death. As if this were not enough, the soundtrack pushes it even further by reminding the viewer of the killer’s overwhelming presence. This ending not only makes him seem invincible, it also makes male violence seem unstoppable, especially since his identity is never uncovered.

Horror is intentionally associated with a particular affect, fear; and a key moment in many horror narratives that takes advantage of this is the moment in which the girl faces the

monster for the first time. Noel Carroll has noted that the audience's emotional responses are modeled to a certain extent on those of the characters in horror fictions. Common reactions towards the monster include fear, disgust and (especially in literary horror), indescribability. Often enough, "along with fear of severe physical harm, there is an evident aversion to making physical contact with the monster. Both fear and disgust are etched on the characters' features" (Carroll 23). Of course, this supports my assertion that the close-up is the most significant shot in the genre, and Carroll intrinsically links it to the facing of the monster, or the monstrous being in this case, making it also the moment to establish victim-identification. In slasher cinema this is not only the moment the Final Girl meets her assailant, it is often the first time the audience properly meets him as well, thus justifying the mirroring of emotions that Carroll writes of.

However, *Black Christmas* does not feature this moment. The girls are stalked, hunted, and tormented primarily via the phone. Some victims briefly face the killer while being murdered, but neither the girls nor the audience is ever fully confronted by him. This is interesting in relation to how often the film exploits the terrified faces of the girls through the close-up. Without ever having to fully reveal to the audience or to the characters what the killer looks like, Clark elicits the same reactions Carroll refers to. More often, the moment in which the Final Girl meets her assailant is dramatized by way of the close-up which moves us, even if for only a moment, out of the narrative and into her headspace. It effectively freezes time in order to concentrate on the trauma of this particular instance, which recalls Balasz's concept of the close-up as being outside of time and space in his evaluation of *Joan of Arc*, and how to be outside of time and space generally means to be deluded in some way (fainting, daydreaming, hallucinating, etc.). For Carroll, to be in an emotional state is to be in a state of transition (24).

This is relevant because the facing of the monster and the close-up that tends to accompany it is generally the signal of change in the Final Girl - she becomes in this moment someone else, a fighter. The trauma that will follow thus cements the idea that this moment forever changes her. In *Black Christmas*, this happens with the close-up of Jess speaking to the pervert for the third time. She finally stands up for herself and asks him what he wants. She is finally angry and puts her foot down, calling the police immediately thereafter. But because the “monster” is left virtually invisible he is even more intimidating, there is a sense of immortality attributed to him; he is an endless threat. The real trouble is that he could be pretty much any man (a feeling prescribed to the audience by way of this invisibility) and the victim, any woman.

Consider the one murder that happens outside of the primary narrative, Janice. The young high schooler is attacked by an unnamed assailant on her way home from school in the middle of the day. She is murdered (and likely sexually assaulted) in a nearby park and although the search party finds her body, her death is an open-ended subplot. It could not have been Billy because he is in the sorority house, but this is all we know. Fear spreads throughout the town like wild fire when the news of Janice gets out and the pervasive connotation seems to be that no girl or woman is safe. This is made abundantly clear when the young carolers are torn away from the front steps of the sorority house and shuffled back into the car. In this sense, the film plays on the social fear of the ‘woman-in-danger’. This is the same social fear that tells women it is unsafe for them to be out on the streets alone at night. *Black Christmas* brings this fear right into the homes of women even on the happiest of occasions, Christmas. Thus, the horror of *Black Christmas* is founded entirely on something very real. That is, the very real fear of male dominance, a fear exclusive to those who do not fall into the category of white, middle-class, male, heterosexuality. The most obvious victim, of course, being woman, although spectators that do fall into this

category of privilege may derive horror from the position of ineffectiveness that is depicted through the characters of policemen, doctors, and even Clare's father.

The setting is significant because not only is it portrayed as 'small-town anywhere, USA', it is also representative of second wave feminism itself which was "largely limited to college educated, white, middle-class women with career aspirations ... but its ideology began to eke through wider society during the 70s" (Markert 28). Around this time the Consciousness Raising groups formed by women looking to speak openly about women's issues had crossed over into the universities creating the first Women's Studies courses. By the late 1970s, the CR groups would be completely replaced by the academy which became the official setting for feminism. But of course, this is a site of class privilege which meant feminism became very restrictive in its definition and motives (hooks 9). *Black Christmas* therefore represents the most typical image of second wavers - free-thinking, outspoken, sexually active, white middle-class students, with Jess and Barb acting as opposite ends of this one spectrum.

While Jess is career-oriented and rational, Barb is party-oriented and tempestuous, an image more closely associated with the radical faction of second-wavers. Such feminists have often been demonized in mainstream culture, imaged as hairy, bra-burning lesbians. Although this is not exactly how Barb is depicted, her raunchy dialogue and constant drinking makes her far removed from any image of traditional femininity. As a greater offender to patriarchy, it is fitting that Barb's death is made to be the most brutal in the film. Meanwhile, Jess is depicted as the most responsible of the girls, even motherly in her way of looking out for them. Still, her decision to have an abortion in order to pursue her dreams places her in the heart of second-wave feminism. Since the movement followed in the wake of civil rights and sexual liberation it made sense that issues around the female body were foregrounded, but the concept of "free love"

brought women face to face with the issue of unwanted pregnancies (hooks 25). In an overview of feminist politics, bel hooks discusses the abortion issue in quite personal terms: “Many of us [late 60s-early 70s] were the unplanned children of talented, creative women whose lives had been changed by unplanned and unwanted pregnancies; we witnessed their bitterness...” (26). The abortion issue ultimately was a direct challenge to the idea that women’s sole purposes were to reproduce (hooks 27). This is what Jess wants Peter to understand. His anger points to the frustrated atmosphere surrounding the feminist movement, culminating in much backlash which both perceived and depicted feminism as evil and unnatural (hooks vii).

Despite her conquer of Peter (she not only stands up for her rights to him, but also kills him when she feels overwhelmingly threatened by him), Jess is left with little to celebrate. By the end, she is rendered helpless as she lies in a state of absolute trauma, emphasized through the two final facial close-ups, with the killer nearby, able to strike again at any moment against a now weak and pathetic Final Girl.

2006

Admittedly, Glenn Morgan’s *Black Christmas* is not a terribly coherent film. In a messy effort to do too much, the film does too little - it loses the essence of the first one which was about the actual terror of suspense. Billy’s extensive backstory crosscuts throughout the plot, exposing a set of reasons why he is incapable of functioning ‘normally’ in society. Moreover, the theme of sexual harassment is played down by having the calls no longer be perverted, and yet Billy as a voyeur becomes a major theme. Meanwhile, the film seems to try to use the themes of voyeurism and the breakdown of the family to create an intertextual relationship to *Psycho*.

Although the murdering of women is presented as circumstantial and is less pornographic than in the original, the depiction of women can still be discussed since they are subjected to rather ruthless violence. The recurrent victimization of women in slashers has been discussed by many, including Schoell who asserts that this tactic is connected to the fact that the idea of women needing protection is simply “ingrained in the public consciousness”, and is therefore unlikely to ever go away (41). Ultimately though, Billy’s violence becomes a consequence of his life and psychosis rather than being explicitly about women as it was in Clark’s version. Instead, violence is all he knows. This is one example of the way the film may be thought of as borrowing from *Psycho*. Speaking about Hitchcock’s film as a pre-cursor to the slasher, Clover notes the significant conventions as follows: “the killer is the psychotic product of a sick family, but still recognizably human; the victim is a beautiful, sexually attractive woman; the location is not home, a terrible place...” (24). Unfortunately, *Black Christmas* certainly lacks both the cinematic and narrative sophistication of Hitchcock’s film. Instead, major themes such as voyeurism, consumption, and the virgin/whore dichotomy, seem to be simply thrown together in a blender with little to no use of critical thought. Still, in my effort to understand this remake as something other than a failed attempt at commercial success, I will analyze it in relation to the social atmosphere of 2006 as compared to 1974.

In the three decades it took for *Black Christmas* to be re-visited, updated, and remade, a lot had happened within the feminist movement. In fact, by the 1990s feminism was so transformed as a movement that many people were convinced a new wave had risen, officially dubbed the third wave. But what is third wave feminism? This question has boggled many. In the summer of 2008 an essay by this very title was published by R. Claire Snyder. “What is Third Wave? A New Directions Essay” attempts to breakdown the many aspects of the movement in an

effort to find a way to define it. What she finds is that the third wave is very much about non-essentialism, as opposed to sisterhood per se, as was the second wave:

First, in response to the collapse of the category of "women," the third wave foregrounds personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third-wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third-wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political. In other words, third-wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition. (Snyder 176).

So if sisterhood, the academy, and female independence were the crucial elements of the second wave that so heavily informed Clark's *Black Christmas*, does this new approach to feminism, which aims to pay respect to the idea that each woman is her own person with her own needs and desires, affect Morgan's 2006 version? I argue that, whether this is conscious or not, in a fashion appropriate to the third wave, the remake struggles to find a safe but modern woman's voice in its Final Girl. To do so, she is initially endowed with incredible strength but is left traumatized and broken by the end of the ordeal, despite her victory, reasserting the patriarchal norm that positions women as the weaker sex.

Like in the first film, none of the characters identify at any point in the narrative as "feminist", but all exhibit feminist qualities. This time, however, the girls come off as two-dimensional, stereotypical caricatures, each representative of different aspects of the second wave. Not surprisingly, these are the characters who are killed. This time, instead of emphasizing

fear per se, the close-ups tend to be reserved for moments of pure helplessness during the rather abrupt deaths, and are therefore more in line with what Pinedo calls the spectacle of the wet death. Still, the close-ups tend to draw attention to a very basic connoted line of action: women who pose too great a threat to the patriarchal structure by stepping too far outside of their traditional gender roles have to be killed. At the same time though, the film also seems to criticize women who may be a threat to modern Western society, which embraces strong women provided they assimilate to function productively within a patriarchal system - that is, a system which still most values traits that have traditionally been gendered male. These women are thus too "feminine". Accordingly, the maternal and virginal women are all also murdered, with their last breaths presented as close-ups as well. The sole survivor, Kelli, manages to balance her feminine and feminist characteristics. The narrative rewards her for this by allowing her a true victory - she kills the killers. The film's desire to create and salute an 'ideal' woman such as Kelli can be thought of as inspired by the third wave which, despite its desire to change the system and systemic prejudices, does not demonstrate the same radical approach to dismantling the system as second-wavers.

Also, the film is no longer explicitly about the vulnerability of women as there is no sexual harassment (save for the one scene in which Billy secretly watches Lauren shower as an obvious and out of place homage to *Psycho*). Instead, it becomes more traditional in its exploitation of the bad mother/good mother myth through its use of the virgin/whore dichotomy, albeit updated to embroider the good mother/virgin (Kelli) with feminist characteristics such as rationality, and authority and vigor when necessary. By the end however such characteristics are subdued when she is taken home by her mother in a traumatized state. Since the film is a Hollywood remake of a Canadian film, Constanineau attributes this thematic change to the

conservative nature of the USA (60). I, on the other hand, am more inclined to attribute it to a (post)modern Western sensibility. That is not to say the film is made by or for third wavers, but simply to say that contemporary society is far more accepting of women assuming powerful roles as long as there is no real threat to patriarchy, and particularly, the family, of which the dominant ideology is still nuclear.

The film opens with lively Christmas music and takes the viewer inside the seasonally decorated sorority house. Clare is alone in her room, sipping wine, and wrapping Christmas presents. While uneasily filling out a card she is suddenly attacked from behind. In a close-up, a plastic bag is wrapped around her head and although she has had no time to react beforehand, her muffled cries invade the soundtrack. The film then cuts to black and the title appears across the screen. Immediately, Morgan is preparing the viewer for a fast-paced thriller that promises plenty of uncalled for violence, and many suffering women. Moreover, because these deaths are so quick, close-ups are not used to emphasize the victim's recognition of her own helplessness (as with many other slashers discussed throughout this work), but only to show the viewer how helpless the victims are.

By the end there is a grand total of twelve deaths; eight women, four men - including the killers, Billy and his long lost daughter Agnes - the result of an incestuous rape in which Billy was victimized by his own mother. Since the women invariably die in close-up and close-ups are hardly ever used at other times, the most useful approach to the formal analysis of this film is to consider who dies. In looking at who the film is willing to kill off and what specific characteristics they represent, the suggestion that Kelli's worthiness is measured by her ability to encompass aspects of both the feminine and the feminist becomes clear, supporting the

implication that modern feminism has reached an acceptable point and should not continue to try to radicalize the system.

Clare is too maternal; she strenuously reaches out to her sister in an effort to unite her family. Magen exhibits signs of overt sexuality and voyeurism given that she is sleeping with Kelli's boyfriend and her computer's screensaver is a flying eyeball. She is also too 'macho-masculine' in her approach to investigation; she is killed when she barges into the attic in a rage because she hears suspicious noises and has no plan or weapon. Dana, while smart and practical is also cynical and unprepared. Like Magen, she launches herself into an investigative process that is not planned or thought out, and is killed. Eve is simply awkward and is killed off-screen. However, the fact that they find her head detached from her body afterwards lends itself to the decapitating nature of the close-up itself. Mel, like Clare, is too maternal. She focuses all of her attention on an ill Lauren and in refusing to leave her side leaves herself completely vulnerable to the killer. Lauren is Barb incarnate; she is drunk, vulgar, and aggressive. Furthermore, she is dressed provocatively. She is the only girl to be sexualized within the film, and the only girl subjected to Billy's male gaze. Heather and Ms. Mac are cowards, deciding not to stay and fight. Leigh is demanding, authoritative, and aggressive. Although she makes it pretty far and even burns Billy's body, she is eventually killed by Agnes when she becomes emotional and lets down her guard in the hospital. Each of these deaths happens in a similar manner. The camera will cut to a close-up just as they are unexpectedly attacked. Most of these deaths are quite lengthy, leaving time to include the ripping out of their eyes, holding Pinedo's words true when she states that the destruction of the body occupies centre stage in the postmodern horror film (57). Exceptions include Clare, Eve, and Lauren, all of whom are killed off-screen. Still, when Kelli and Leigh finally enter the attic and are faced with all of the dead bodies it is made clear

that whether shown or not, the girls all end up without eyes. Of course, eye removal can be very symbolic, but in this case it seems to be more about spectacle with a shallow attempt to link it to Billy's own obsession with seeing.

Kelli, of course, not only keeps her eyes but lives. Her survival seems based upon the fact that she is at once protective of her 'sisters' but independent as a woman. She gains power from her investigative gaze (always carefully surveying her surroundings) but never enters a situation without preparing for it, and although it is implied that she is in a sexual relationship she remains sexually unavailable to the viewer making her appear virginal, especially when she puts spending time with her sorority sisters above alone time with Kyle. She is willing to be authoritative and take charge when necessary but the decisions she makes are always with everyone's best interest at heart. These moments serve as her most prominent close-ups. By forcing us to pay attention to these specific traits, the film positions Kelli as the ideal modern woman because of her ability to take care of herself and her equal willingness to take care of others; subsequently, she is the only woman the film sees fit to survive.

The strength Kelli displays throughout the narrative is sandwiched between far more timid aspects of her character. She is introduced in a close-up explaining to Kyle how she must split her time between him and her sorority sisters because of her obligation to them as her new family. Inside the house, she comes off as too quiet and too sweet to really fit in with the other girls as she wraps Christmas presents and listens in on their crude conversations. As the film comes to a close Kelli is hospitalized despite the fact that she is never actually injured. There she lays when suddenly Agnes appears to finish her off. First, Kelli attempts to get help, but after pressing the emergency call button in her room repeatedly, she realizes that once again she is on her own. After looking around desperately for a weapon she sets her eyes on a defibrillator. It

charges just in time and when Agnes attacks from behind Kelli presses the machine against her face taking her down. A tight close-up reveals a mad look on Kelli's face as she screams. When she is sure the job is done there is an immediate switch in her demeanor. She drops her weapon and scurries cowardly away from the body until she is against the wall, shaking, in the fetal position. She seems frightened of herself, of what she is capable of as a human being. Even if temporarily, she was the aggressor and this has made her very uncomfortable because, as we learn in the beginning, that is not who she is but a role she was forced to take on to survive. The very next shot shows a vacant and lost expression on Kelli's face as her mother escorts her out of the hospital as if she were only a child. This is the final shot. Like Jess in the original, Kelli finds herself forced to be extreme but obviously suffers greatly for it.

However, there is an extended version of the film in which Kelli is portrayed as less traumatized by the end, albeit still obviously damaged by the experience. In this version, Kelli has virtually no time to react to her victory over Agnes, because Billy suddenly returns in violent pursuit of her. Rather than cowering in a corner, Kelli is forced to make a run for it. Although initially she displays true authority over the situation, staying calm and even providing condescending dialogue towards Billy - in attacking him with a crutch she happens upon Kelli states "Merry Christmas Motherfucker" - but this demeanor quickly falls apart as well. Upon being tripped by Billy Kelli hits the floor and whimpers as Billy towers over her, reclaiming his power. Somehow she manages to get back to her feet but at this point her goal becomes to escape, not to triumph, evidenced in her clumsy desperate manner of running as she screams and cries for help. Billy catches up to her in no time and begins stabbing her in the back until she is finally able to turn to him and, in an attempt to keep his weapon away from her, she throws him over the railing. This maneuver saves her life and kills Billy who lands on a christmas tree

impaling himself, but it is important to recognize that it seems fairly unintentional. It is a consequence of her fighting back, which is great, but it is not a calculated measure by any means. Thus, her “triumph” is circumstantial.

Moreover, while a low angle medium-close-up of Kelli as a final shot suggests she has been awarded a sense of power, this is undermined by the rather blank facial expression she wears, and the soundtrack which privileges the sound of her heavy breathing and whimpers. Her face then implies that she is reduced to a state of trauma, outlined by her vacancy which suggests and inability to process what has happened. She does not look victorious. Furthermore, that this shot is only a medium-close-up still demands a recognition that her final close-up remains the chaotic moment in which Kelli was pushed to the extreme while killing Agnes. In that moment she is portrayed as having “lost it” so to speak, which still implies the killers hold power over her, forcing her to do things she would rather not.

Obviously, the facial close-up is a powerful cinematic tool. It conveys to the viewer what cannot be said. In the slasher film, this is quite literal as victimizing scenarios tend to steal the voices of women, reducing them to passive girls in need of help. By the end, even the Final Girls are mentally and physically destroyed, silenced, and shown to be nothing more than victims themselves, suggesting that they will never be the same. In both versions of *Black Christmas* this is expressed through the final facial close-up which revel in its attention to Jess’ and Kelli’s lack of stability and sanity. Contrary to the strength displayed early on by the girls, these final close-ups position them as simply ‘damsels in distress’. As such, the valuable masculine characteristics of seeing, rationalizing, and fighting, are completely diminished, thus re-establishing the social order which demands that traditional male/female roles remain intact to some degree, therefore challenging the notion that feminism has the power to change the status and view of women.

While the first film seemed to demand more of feminism, the remake may be questioning whether feminism has come as far as it can go, despite the continued victimization of women. Unfortunately, although the use of Kelli's close-ups supports this idea, that close-ups are so often used to show death instead makes it almost seem like a moot point. Thus, the close-up can still be seen as losing its effectiveness in character development for the Final Girl.

Chapter Two:

Male Gaze/Maternal Gaze in *Halloween* (1974 and 2007)

The power of the gaze, especially in film, cannot be overstated. It objectifies, making the subject an object to be had and overpowered. In patriarchal societies this is a male privilege which inherently makes vulnerable women and girls. This social structuring of the gaze has resonated in the structure of cinema, a point made by Laura Mulvey in the 1970s, and although her work has been found to be quite problematic, the basic fact that the male gaze is dangerous to women holds a fair amount of truth. It is arguably most evident in the slasher film. In John Carpenter's *Halloween*, this is very apparent with the stalking of Laurie and the overt sexualization of other female victims. However, Laurie's survival becomes very dependent on her own ability to see. She is immediately and constantly aware of the threat Michael poses because she *sees* him when others do not. She is endowed with a "female gaze", which is greatly influenced by her role as maternal (which I will elaborate on shortly), emphasized by her many facial close-ups. Thus, while Michael gains power from his "male gaze", Laurie gains power through her own. Linda Williams has posited in an essay entitled "When The Woman Looks" (1984) that female characters tend to be punished for attempting to assume power through looking, and although on the surface *Halloween* seems to be challenging this by giving the look to the Final Girl as a tool for survival, it is important to note that in both the original film and its 2007 remake a final close-up of Laurie proves that she is ultimately left traumatized by

what she has seen. Therefore, as patriarchal society would have it, the power of the female gaze is not without its own consequences.

Halloween (1978)

As customary for the stalk n' slash, *Halloween*, like *Peeping Tom* and *Black Christmas* finds itself obsessed with the gaze. The film is constructed entirely around a dialectic of the dangerous male gaze, which belongs to Michael, and the investigative gaze which belongs to the Final Girl, Laurie. Significantly, the victims (three girls, and one boy) are caught completely off guard by Michael. It is their inability to anticipate danger that costs them their lives, and the inability to anticipate it has everything to do with lacking the ability to see, or more appropriately to *look*. Both seeing and not seeing are portrayed as important narrative elements through the use of the facial close-up. Weighted even more so are the facial close-ups of the women, especially since the film is particularly brutal to female victims, including Laurie despite the fact that she survives Michael's attack. But there is something special about Laurie's gaze.

As the babysitter, Laurie well represents the maternal-feminine and the strength that can be associated with that role. It is what most sets her apart from not only from her female peers within the narrative, but other slasher movie survivors. While Laurie does represent Clover's concept of the victim-hero to some extent, she is markedly different from the typical Final Girl as defined by Clover. There is nothing traditionally masculine about her character (aside from her name), and it is by accessing a power specific to traditional ideals of femininity that Laurie learns to fight. Both her maternal instincts and her mastery of the domestic sphere enhance her

ability to see, rationalize, and react to the danger at hand. Her power is therefore bound up in something of a ‘Maternal Gaze’, meaning that her gaze is related not only to her perspective as a young woman, but maybe more so to her perspective as a protector and caretaker. It is through the power of this particular gaze that she becomes a heroine. Although she is unable to defeat Michael, or even save herself (Dr. Sam Loomis will eventually scare him away), it is worth noting that she does save the children, who are above all her first and foremost priority. This concern for the children which is her heroic nature, is far removed from the self-motivated nature of the teens that Michael actually murders.

The first victim is Judith Meyers, Michael’s older sister, and it is presented to the spectator from Michael’s point of view. It therefore competently utilizes the male gaze to position the audience as active, sadistic, spectators. Viewers are forced to align their gaze with Michael’s voyeurism as he watches his sister from outside the living room window take her boyfriend up to her bedroom, and as he approaches her, knife drawn, as she sits unsuspecting, naked, and vulnerable. In fact, she is so unaware of her surroundings that she is carelessly humming a melody in the mirror. When she finally does see Michael it is too late and, as she screams, rather than a traditional close-up, her shocked and terrified face is obscured by Michael’s limited vision through his halloween mask. The scene is intensified by the chaos induced by the restrictive visuals. Erratically, what is shown is first her naked body, then her spooked face, and then her bloodied body falling to the floor. Meanwhile, all that is heard are her screams, and Michael’s heavy breathing, as if aroused. Thus, this kill is both post-coital and pornographic, as defined in Chapter 1, emphasizing Judith’s femininity by exposing her body, highlighting her scared face, and by placing her in a completely passive position whereby all she

can do is scream. Even her pleas for him to stop are only partially formed as she calls out his name almost inaudibly. As the owner of the gaze, Michael is in complete control of the situation. He derives power from his ability to see and not be seen.

The scene therefore enacts Mulvey's suggestion that the male gaze is active, while the women on-screen are left passive (204). Interestingly though, despite being the active killer, Michael functions without expression, almost robotically. This relates to Clover's statement that unlike a character such as Norman Bates, Michael Meyers is only a killer (30). In fact, he is faceless, committing all of his gruesome crimes behind a mask. When he kills for the first time as a child, he wears a clown mask, suggesting something carnivalesque, or unnatural, about the scenario of a psychotic child murderer. By the time he reaches adulthood, Michael has proven himself to be pure evil and therefore inhuman, a point made again and again by his psychologist Dr. Loomis. Subsequently, Michael dons a blank, white, mask - expressionless, unsympathetic, and even ghost-like.

The moment when the female victim sees her assailant just before he kills her is a great example of how the powerful female look is always punishable. It is a point made by Williams who argues that while male voyeurism is always properly distanced, allowing him to control the situation, "the woman's look of horror paralyzes her in such a way that distance is overcome". In this scenario, the woman's "curious look in a trance-like passivity" gives the killer power to master her through her look (Williams 62). In *Halloween*, this happens not only to Judith but to all of the female victims in different ways. The second victim, for instance, is Annie. Rather than having just engaged in sexual activity, Annie is actually preparing to pick up her boyfriend, whom she intends on having sex with as soon as they return. Not only is this a pre-coital kill

then, Annie is also scantily clad. Having had an accident in the kitchen she has left her clothes in the washing machine and thrown on an oversized men's shirt and her shoes. As she approaches her car where Michael is hiding and watching, she does not sense any danger. In fact, like Judith before her, she is humming a tune. Once in the car, however, she is alerted by the fogged windows, which of course indicate heavy breathing from within and is an image often associated with sex. The humming ceases as she investigates, touching the window to make sure the fog is not on the outside. Sure enough, while in this "trance-like" state of investigation, Michael takes full advantage and strikes from behind. He begins choking her and from angles inside the car we watch her legs spread in the air as she fights for air. Heard is only her choked cries and moans while Michael breathes ferociously.

The image is of course 'pornographic', especially because it takes place in a foggy-windowed car. The camera then moves outside the car and looks in. While this is not a killer point-of-view shot, it does position the viewer as a voyeur; the viewer is not in the car with Annie anymore, but looking in on the action from the outside. The image is again obscured, this time because of the fog, and yet it is clear that Annie's face is up against the window as she flails and struggles. Finally, Michael slits her throat, at which point her eyes widen even more from the shock. In a close-up from outside the window, Annie's head is shown falling lifelessly against it, landing in such a position to allow the camera to linger on her open lifeless eyes. Once again, the close-up is used to emphasize the woman's victimization and powerlessness.

The third murder scene is quite different from the first two. A major difference is that two people are killed (post-coital), a couple, male and female. Bob dies first. This is a very interesting scene because although the struggle does not last as long as it does for the women,

implying Michael is not getting as much pleasure from it, it remains pornographic with an emphasis on the face. Unlike the women, Bob is immediately expecting something to happen, but is not afraid. He believes the noises he is hearing are part of a prank someone is playing on him. He therefore swings doors open with no regard for danger. Thus, his investigating gaze is less than it is blind ‘macho bravery’. When he does open the door to Michael, he has absolutely no time to react as Michael’s hand is immediately wrapped around his throat and he is pinned up against the wall.

While he is being strangled his face is held in a close up, but because of the dark, and his eyeglasses, his eyes are completely shadowed. Rather than seeing wide-eyed fear as is the case with the female victims, Bob’s eyes are virtually non-existent. In being victimized, Bob is stripped of his privilege to own the gaze. Simultaneously, this has the effect of making him virtually non-expressive, thus keeping his victimization on a separate (and less invasive) level than the women’s. Within seconds Michael tires of Bob and thrusts the knife into his heart causing immediate death. At this point it cuts to his feet and we watch his toes uncurl, lifelessly. The toe curling and audible grunts do make the kill seem pornographic, but Bob is by no means sexualized the way the women are during their deaths. He is fully dressed and does not flail or moan. Afterwards, Michael takes a moment to admire his work, staring at Bob’s dead body, tilting his head back and forth as if examining. This moment suggests a sense of curiosity and pride. His fascination with death here seems to move beyond the psychosexual drive suggested by his obsession with teenage girls and towards a more simple desire to overpower. It is therefore as if Michael is experiencing something new when he kills a male. Still, he quickly moves on to

find Lynda, whose death will be far more drawn out, and will include nudity, moaning, and wide-eyed terror.

Unlike the other girls though, Lynda is not given an investigating look because she believes Michael, who is dressed in a sheet and Bob's eyeglasses, is in fact Bob. She trusts this, but eventually turns her back on him out of annoyance. It is then that Michael strikes. Thus, it is her inability to see that costs her her life. This is more to Williams's point that women on-screen often fail to look, to return the gaze (61). She speaks of this in relation to the 'good girl' heroine who gets to be the object of desire but never herself desires - "in classical narrative cinema, to see is to desire" (61). In order to perform proper femininity, she must not see, must not desire, and must exist only to-be-looked-at. Anything else is punishable. But in the horror film, to not see is just as dangerous. This explains Clover's findings that the only survivor, the Final Girl, must take on a masculine role. She must be able to see, to look, to assess potential threats around her, and lastly, to fight.

Halloween, however, offers a completely different Final Girl than the masculinized heroine Clover describes. Laurie is introduced as a typical 'good girl', displaying very feminine traits. Heading off to school, dressed in a floral patterned knee-length skirt over white nylons with a turtle neck and a cardigan, she agrees without argument to do a favor for her father on the way. The favor, to drop off some forms at the old Meyers house which her father is trying to sell, sends her on a different route than usual. Along this route, she bumps into a young boy she babysits for, at which point her maternal instincts are made abundantly clear. She walks with him and patiently answers all of his annoying, unimportant, questions. When she learns he is frightened of the Meyers house, she assures him that there is nothing to be afraid of. This will

continue throughout the film when, babysitting him on Halloween night, she eases his nerves by promising there is no boogeyman and that she would never let anything bad happen to him.

Significantly, the first scene featuring Laurie does not offer any facial close ups. In fact, it does not come until the next scene while sitting in an English Literature class being lectured about “fate”. While the unseen teacher speaks in the background, Laurie is shown noticing a suspicious car outside and it is in this moment that she is given a close-up. The car does in fact belong to Michael, and her ‘fate’ will be to face him eventually. Fittingly, the first time she sees him it is presented as a close-up, but the first time he sees her it is a medium long shot from behind as she makes her way to school, humming along the way. The longer shot is more agreeable with the theme of voyeurism, as Williams notes, the voyeur always keeps his distance. The close-up however, allows the viewer to recognize how Laurie is set apart from other characters by making significant her ability to look. After this initial close-up, they are provided every time she sees Michael. Therefore, much of the film is constructed around her look versus his look. The power struggle between them is thus visualized through the play between her facial close-ups and his point-of-view shots.

In the final showdown, Laurie is faced with the task of not only saving herself, but protecting the two children in the house as well. Before Laurie discovers Michael, however, she finds the bodies of her friends, one by one. In what can be considered a face-shot, a medium close-up which makes the expressiveness of her face the point of intrinsic interest, Laurie screams and bolts for the door. After a quick struggle, she is able to escape just as Michael enters the room. When she makes it back to the house she is babysitting in her first action is to send the children into hiding. Next she investigates the house. Taking note of an open window she

prepares to face Michael, but not without first collapsing on the floor, murmuring “oh please” repeatedly in a facial close-up. This shot foreshadows the trauma she will soon be saddled with. Laurie manages to put up a good fight though, she stabs Michael with her sewing needle and cautiously checks the body. Again, this is a close-up which allows the viewer to see through her bravery straight through to her trembling nerves. Thinking she has killed him, Laurie goes to get the kids but, of course, he rises again and comes at her. This time she hides in a closet and fashions a weapon out of a coat hanger, and waits, shaking and teary-eyed. Finally, after another stabbing with the hanger, she gets her hands on his knife and delivers a final blow. Now convinced she has saved the day she sends the kids for help and drops to the floor. In a close-up, she is shown completely exhausted, and in the background Michael is shown rising, again. But this time, a gun shot stops him in his tracks.

Laurie has been saved by Michael’s therapist, Dr. Sam Loomis, who has spent the entirety of the plot searching for his escaped patient. Another medium close-up displays Laurie crumpled on the floor moaning incoherently, crying, and covering her ears. Here, knowing the children are out of harm’s way, Laurie breaks down and allows all the powerful senses that kept her alive and fighting to effectively shut down. Finally she manages the words “it was the boogeyman”. In one final shot of her, a medium close-up again, Laurie completely breaks down, clutching her mouth with bloodied hands. Like in *Black Christmas* her inevitable trauma is portrayed as completely destructive to her mental state. Furthermore, Michael’s heavy breathing can be heard in the distance as the camera takes the viewer through the empty rooms and then to the quiet unsuspecting houses on the street. Thus, again like *Black Christmas*, the killer is not gone, the Final Girl is not victorious, and she is likely to be victimized again and again. So

unfortunately, despite her heroism, the final image portrays her as completely helpless, and basically eliminates the power of her gaze since her eyes are shut and filled with tears.

Still, Laurie's heroism in this final sequence should be credited and discussed.

Interestingly, it has much to do with what I refer to as her maternal gaze. First, there are her astute maternal instincts. As Kendall R. Phillips aptly points out, "beyond her overall goodness, Laurie is, perhaps more importantly, the 'good mother' in the film... We see Laurie with Tommy on a number of occasions in which she assuages his fears, chastises him for his naughtiness, and even tries to elevate his reading material" (139). He goes on to note that these instances represent her "inherent maternal quality" (140). Ultimately, it is not only a promise to protect Tommy from the boogeyman, but an instinct to protect her friends as well that finds Laurie in a fighting position. After receiving a strange phone call from whom she fears may be Annie, Laurie is compelled to investigate the house Annie is meant to be in. The moment when Laurie looks out the window anxiously and makes the decision to check in on her friends is heavily based on a gut-feeling, intuition - something like a sixth sense typically associated with motherhood. Significantly, Laurie trusts herself, and happily accepts that other people trust her. With a smirk, Laurie states, "the ol' girl scout comes through again" when she agrees to take Lindsey off of Annie's hands for a while. Her role as the dutiful and trustworthy daughter, babysitter, and friend reinforces her position as the maternal-feminine.

Secondly, there is her mastery of the domestic sphere, without which, she would be unable to protect herself long enough for Dr. Loomis to get to her. Consider first her hiding spots: behind a couch, and in a closet. Consider next the weapons she relies on: a sewing needle, a coat hanger, and Michael's kitchen knife. In *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, Clover discusses the

significance of the Terrible Place trope in slasher films, a trope I argue is greatly subverted by Carpenter's film. The Terrible Place is usually, explains Clover, a house or tunnel in which victims sooner or later find themselves. "What makes these places terrible" she adds, "is the terrible families that occupy them" (30). While they may initially seem to be a safe haven, eventually they become a prison, trapping the victim in with the killer so that she has to fight (Clover 31). Clover notes the Meyers house as being the Terrible Place, but in doing so she overestimates its role in *Halloween*. In fact, none of the action after the opening sequence takes place there. Of course, Laurie's having to go there to drop off papers is what allows her to be seen by Michael and therefore has a strong role in the causality of the narrative, but the actual events take place in Lindsay's and Tommy's houses.

That the majority of Laurie's attack takes place at Tommy's is quite a significant counterpoint to Clover's theory, because it is a place in which Laurie is comfortable, at home even. For Clover, the Terrible Place seems to represent not home, giving examples like the Bates Motel (*Psycho*) and Jason's hut in the woods (*Friday the Thirteenth II*). Ultimately, the comfort that Tommy's house affords puts Laurie in a privileged position. Her sewing needle, for instance, is right where she needs it to be. She is familiar enough with the setting to make quick getaways and utilizes the space intelligently to hide. This familiarity heightens her active gaze, she is constantly aware of her surroundings, and this keeps her alive. So although women being restricted to the domestic sphere is majorly problematic (especially in the 1970s), in this wonderfully crafted final sequence, Carpenter manages to use Laurie's maternal-feminine position in a refreshingly positive way, subverting both the trope of the Terrible Place and the representation of the Final Girl as masculine. Within this subversion I find a desire to expose

both the strengths and weaknesses of the Final Girl, rather than a desire to challenge gender roles. Therefore, when Laurie breaks down at the end, it is less about repositioning her as helpless, although it does to an extent, and more about a rational display of the trauma induced by (male) violence.

Halloween (2007)

In the introduction to a book entitled *Film Remakes*, Constantine Verevis opens the discussion by posing a list of questions designed to inspire critical thought about how we understand the remake. He notes that the remake has not had a great reputation as it has been criticized for its ‘laziness’, that it lacks originality, but he also points out that they work to “satisfy the requirement that Hollywood deliver reliability (repetition) and novelty (innovation) in the same production package” (4). Rob Zombie’s 2007 remake of *Halloween* surely achieves this. Whereas, originally Michael Meyers was spoken of as nothing more than a killer, this time around he is made the protagonist for the first half of the film. Moreover, by revealing to the audience Laurie’s true identity as Michael’s sister early on, Zombie is able to make Michael’s disturbing pursuit of normalcy central to the plot. That he is driven by this alone adds a sympathetic layer to his character, and this subsequently develops an interesting tension between reactionary narrative and progressive narrative, as defined by Robin Wood in “The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s”. Reacting against the Other, the troublesome depictions of class, gender, and violence position Michael as a deity-like figure with unstoppable punitive power, on a mission to reinstate surplus repression, even within himself. Still, his excessive violence by the second half of the film and Dr. Loomis’s insistence that he is pure evil suggests progression

insofar as the characters resist and defeat the punishing oppressor. While the film is not apocalyptic per se, it does refuse to apologize for its unfavorable portrayal of the world. Michael therefore becomes the hero gone mad, driven so by his own obsession to protect. For this reason, Laurie becomes a heroine when she kills Michael at the very end, but unfortunately it leaves her in a completely catatonic state. Indeed, without being so strongly endowed with the maternal gaze, this Laurie's survival instincts are far too unrefined to handle Michael's wrath.

Like in the original, the film's structure marks the tension between Michael's gaze and close-ups of Laurie. This tension is heightened by juxtaposing Michael's pursuit of normalcy in relation to a particular image of family and the maternal, with Laurie's being immersed in this ideal of normalcy. The opening sequences of the film make it abundantly clear that Michael has never tasted anything like normality; that is, the heterosexual bourgeois patriarchy Wood describes in his book (64). Ironically, what seems to predominantly drive his violent tendencies is his abhorrence for the violence he experiences in his home. I am of course speaking of violence here as existing on a continuum. Pointed out to the viewer first is the verbal violence between the stepfather Ronnie and the mother Deborah. Then there is the physical violence between them (even if only alluded to). Then there is the sexual violence that seems to exist for both Deborah and her oldest daughter Judith. Although far more subtle, Deborah's role as a stripper allows her to be submitted to the violence of the Male Gaze, and even Michael experiences violence at school from boys who make vulgar comments about his mother because of her job. Moreover, Judith is subjected to Ronnie's gaze in the home: "Man that bitch got herself a nice little dumper". Lastly, Michael himself is a target for bullies not only at school but also in the home, with Ronnie's homophobic slurs and Judith's excessive taunting, making it no

surprise that these two suffer rather brutal deaths early on in Michael's killing career. By ridding the home of these two, Michael clearly hopes to create a more pleasant, and more nuclear family unit, albeit with something of an Oedipal structure, for his mother, his baby sister (Laurie), and himself.

As this sympathetic character, Michael's childhood trauma is exploited by the use of the close-up in the same way that slasher films exploit the trauma of female victims. Throughout these early sequences, tight facial close-ups of Michael are always used to emphasize his powerlessness when he is being taunted. His obsession with masks is revealed very early on and is explained by Michael himself as a way to hide his ugliness. He is thus seen as actively resisting the close-up, that is the attention to his face and the unhappiness that can be read on it, therefore resisting any further victimization. Specifically, he refuses his own to-be-looked-at-ness. It does not seem a coincidence then that the first day of the plot, is also the day Michael has decided to stop being a victim and to violently act out against his oppressors, seeking both vigilante justice and power. His mask provides him this particular power as he becomes the owner of the gaze rather than the subject of it.

Without his masks though, Michael remains vulnerable. While locked away in the institution he becomes increasingly agitated with what he perceives to be his own victimization and subsequently becomes increasingly reliant on his masks. Close-ups of Michael's actual face remain reserved for moments to emphasize his vulnerability - asking when he can go home and frantic tantrums where he screams hysterically out of utter frustration with his imprisonment. These moments mirror those of the Laurie's frustration at her own victimization within the final showdown. Although Laurie's screams are of both frustration *and* fear, her catatonic state at the

end looks remarkably like Michael's own catatonic breakdown in the institution as a child, during which he murders a nurse. Both are given close-ups as they flail and scream, bloodied from just having killed. Their affinity then is based on their link not only as brother and sister but in their extreme responses to powerlessness as well.

As aforementioned, the link between Michael and Laurie is also made apparent through the film's structure. For the first half of the film the viewer watches Michael grow increasingly disgruntled with the chaos of the world around him, calculatedly destroying all of the threats to his fantasy of normalcy. Then for the second half, we watch Laurie's hyper-suburban life come undone at Michael's hand. He is both envious of his sister's life, and envious of the people who have been able to provide his sister with the life he tried so to give her. Unlike in Carpenter's film, Michael has no intention of hurting Laurie at first. In fact, Michael seems to want to protect Laurie from those who taint her perception of 'good' and 'right'. Most obviously that is her promiscuous, lying, foul-mouthed friends, but for him this also entails those who have taken her away from him, her rightful family. His gaze in this film is thus quite complex. As a 'protector' he watches Laurie with love, but as a "return of the repressed" figure he watches the breakdown of traditional values, simultaneously aroused and angered. Therefore, his relationship to Mulvey's perception of the Male Gaze has everything to do with power and control.

Accordingly, he seems to kill those in particular who make him feel powerless (especially to his repressed urges). For the women of the film, this means being violently subdued for their expressions of sexuality and lack of compliance with (male) authority figures. In discussing the portrayal of gender in this film though, one cannot dismiss the many violent male deaths. Not only is Michael's first human kill a boy who bullies him at school, it is incredibly uncomfortable

to watch, thanks in large part to how graphic and long the sequence is, consequently challenging Clover's argument that male deaths are circumstantial, swift, and largely unseen (#). In *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*, when Pinedo writes of porn as the wet dream and horror as the wet death (61), she is referring to the postmodern horror film's obsession with mutilation of the body and, specifically, its tendency to make spectacle of this (51). Since Pinedo's book was published in 1997, I would argue that this has only become more true. From *Ginger Snaps* (John Fawcett 2000), to *Hostel* (Eli Roth 2005), to *The Collection* (Marcus Dunstan 2012); at this rate it does not seem the mass crave for gore will ever subside, and Rob Zombie's films fit right in. With sixteen on-screen murders, two off-screen, and three survivors of Michael's vicious attacks, *Halloween* well exemplifies the spectacle of the wet death.

Although many of Michael's victims are given a close-up just before they die, once introduced, they are mostly reserved for Laurie and her gaze, especially during the showdown sequences (however, the first hour of the film features many close-ups of Michael as a boy). Just as in the original though, her first close-up is provided when she sees Michael standing outside her school from a window. More uncomfortable than curious, Laurie tries to ignore the strange figure and forces herself to focus on her friends and their conversation. Still in a close-up, Laurie exclaims "I hate lying, you know that" when asked to help Annie scheme for some alone time with her boyfriend. Although prior to this there has already been an entire scene introducing Laurie as a rather average suburban teen (happy and playful), that her first close-up defines her as the observant 'good girl' is significant. These aspects of her personality are being pointed to as more relevant; these will be the reasons she is able to overcome the killer.

Moreover, this sequence points to the tight-knit friendship between the three girls Laurie, Annie, and Linda. Through it, Laurie is positioned as having something of a maternal role within the trio, she is to some extent their conscious as well as their caretaker. There is a sense that without her they would be lost. This is even more evident later on when Linda calls Laurie to make sure she does not think ill of her character after Annie calls her a slut: “I couldn’t give a shit what Annie thinks of me. But I care what you think”. The film’s emphasis on the relationship between the girls makes it so that, this time, Laurie’s maternal gaze (albeit far more limited than in Carpenter’s film) has far more to do with her role as a good friend than as a babysitter. While she is depicted as being good with kids due to her playful demeanor, she is only ever shown legitimately comforting her girl friends. In response to Linda’s concerns about being thought of as slutty, Laurie responds with a sweet, soft tone, “you are not a slut. That’s ridiculous”. She also regularly refers to Annie as “baby”, most explicitly in the scene when she finds her topless, bloodied, and hanging on to her life by a thread after being attacked by Michael.

While most of the film’s murders do feature a ton of blood, they are generally rather sudden from beginning to end (an efficient way to fit in so many). But despite her survival, Annie is one of the few characters to have a horrific and drawn out attack scene. Not surprisingly then, the attack ensues with she and her boyfriend having sex, much like the earlier post-coital kills of both Michael’s sister and Linda. The scene begins with the two teens making out and removing their clothes while Michael watches. Despite the partial nudity, the pleasure of the male gaze is denied to the viewer by putting Annie fully in control. First, she scolds her partner for tugging at her shirt as he attempts to remove it: “You’re gunna stretch it out you fucking idiot”. After removing it herself she proceeds to demand certain manners of him: “You wanna

fuck me? Say it. I wanna hear you say it". As expected, Michael's curious or objectifying male gaze quickly turns to a maddening rage as he rips the boy off of Annie, killing him immediately, and then goes after Annie. But while screaming and crying, she still manages to fight hard as Michael drags her about, slashing her body repeatedly. When Laurie arrives at the house to return Lindsay, she opens the door to a gruesome mess. But the shock does not slow her down, in fact, she reacts without missing a beat. Embracing the motherly role, she drops to her knees to be at Annie's side, scoops her up into her arms and sends Lindsay out of the house. Rightly, she only coddles Annie for a moment, assuring her everything is going to be alright, before exiting the room to call 9-1-1 for help. While she is on the phone, Michael reappears and Laurie is forced to make a run for it. From this point on, the close-ups of Laurie screaming and crying occupy most of the screen time.

Following a close up of Laurie screaming as she runs down the street she arrives back at Tommy's house where the children are waiting for her. She orders them into hiding in the bathroom, then locks the front door and joins them in the tub where they all huddle each other in tears. When the police arrive and pound on the bathroom door Laurie is hesitant to open it to them. As she slowly makes her way across the room the police officers are killed and Michael forces his way in. In an incredibly chaotic scene made up of fast paced editing and facial close ups, Laurie and the kids scream hysterically as Michael picks her up and carries her out. In fact, she is so overwhelmed by her own powerlessness that by the time Michael has gotten her out of the house she is unconscious in his arms.

When she awakes, she finds that she has been taken to the Terrible Place, the Meyers house. Moreover, she is confronted with Linda's dead naked body, to which she reacts by

irrationally begging her to wake up. In this sequence, Laurie is all alone, with no help to speak of, and is therefore forced to fend for herself. Although she strategically remains calm to keep Michael calm, repeating softly “I wanna help you”, once she gets her hands on his knife she only stabs him in the shoulder, and leaves the knife in him as she runs towards a fenced up window with no escape plan. Angered by her rejection (he only wanted to be a family again, made obvious by his attempt to make her remember him by showing her an old photograph of him holding her as a baby), Michael goes into attack mode. After screaming out for help to no one in particular (in fact no one is around) Laurie finally finds a way to dismantle the fence and get out of the building. But before long, she stumbles into an empty in-ground pool. Her helplessness is emphasized again and again throughout this entire sequence by the many close ups of her fear. Finally though, Dr. Loomis arrives and shoots Michael repeatedly until he falls down. Laurie embraces her rescuer and stays glued to him all the way to his car where she finally asks in a teary-eyed close-up, “Was that the boogeyman?”. Loomis replies, “Yes. I believe it was.” But this is not the end of Laurie’s battle.

Michael suddenly reappears behind Laurie, busts in the car window, and drags her out again. Loomis is quick to go after her but is badly injured by Michael. After a long game of cat and mouse all around the Meyers house, all the while keeping Laurie’s terror front and centre, she finally gets a hold of Loomis’s gun. Her inability to actually use it because of how physically broken she is by this point gives Michael time to charge her out of a second story window. As the two fall to the ground Laurie’s blood-curdling scream cuts through the soundtrack with intensity and the screen goes black. Inexplicably though, she has landed on top of him. In a moment that resembles a psychological break, Laurie sits on top of him, expressing anger for the first time,

pulling the trigger at his head repeatedly, but no bullets are being released. She even spits on him. Suddenly, in true slasher style, Michael reaches up and clutches her arm at which point she pulls the trigger a final time, releasing a bullet into his head. She drops the gun and in an extreme close-up, Laurie is shown screaming hysterically. She is catatonic. The image of her wide mouth dissolves into a home-video image of her crying in Michael's arms as a baby. These video sequences continue throughout the end credits, reminding the viewer of how sympathetic a character Michael was in the beginning.

The *Halloween* remake does not offer an image of Laurie that is as mature, as aware, as alert, as capable, as or as rational as she was in the original. Sadly, she is all but stripped of that powerful maternal gaze, and exercises almost no survival instincts as she is barely even willing to fight Michael. By not seeing enough, Laurie gives Michael all of the power of the gaze. By the end of the film, she is completely broken both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, as the final close-up of her, this image of defeat really lingers. In discussing the female viewer and her desire to look away from on-screen horror, Williams writes: "There are excellent reasons for this refusal of the woman to look, not the least of which is that she is often asked to bear witness to her own powerlessness" (15). If Michael as both a psychosexual being and a punitive repressor can represent the violence of the Male Gaze and thus power, as I believe he can, then this statement can be applied to the female characters in the films as well. The many female victims of Michael Meyers (in both films) can be faulted for allowing themselves to exist only to-be-looked-at. However, in Carpenter's film, despite being unable to kill Michael herself, that Laurie's heroism is related to her role as the maternal-feminine is unexpectedly powerful. That this is missing from Zombie's remake leaves me less inclined to call his Laurie a heroine, but I

can appreciate her eventual willingness to pull the trigger. All in all, the trauma the Final Girls express during their final close-ups is more forgivable in this story because it has such a strong foundation in representing femininity in a positive light by exploring the potential strength of the maternal-feminine. Although much of the film focuses on Michael's young face, *Halloween* (2007) exhibits a now rare ability to utilize the close-up as a tool with which to develop character.

Chapter Three:

From Paranoia to Repression: *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984 and 2010)

The American film industry has profited greatly from exploiting women's vulnerability and the patriarchal desire to have men protect women, especially from male violence itself. Out of this good man/bad man dichotomy comes one of the hero/villain, a structure that can be found in many classic tales in which a beautiful woman needs rescuing by a strong man to whom she will then happily give herself. In slasher cinema however, female characters are often left with only themselves to depend on due to the incompetence of male characters, which is a source of horror in and of itself. Furthermore, the 1980s saw the growing independence of women. Mirrored in these horror tales, this allowed for an abundance of "alone at night" scenarios, in which young women are attacked, their independence used against them. Strongly connoted in such texts is what authors Margaret T. Gordon and Stephanie Riger describe as 'the rape fear'. That is, women's deep-rooted fears of being attacked and violated. Their book, *The Female Fear* discusses how this affects women to varying degrees, being so strong a fear in some that they adamantly refuse to go out at night alone.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) takes this general concept to a whole new level, placing the violent male threat within the literal nightmares of young girls. Granted, boys are attacked by Freddy Kruger in their dreams as well, but in true slasher tradition, special attention is paid to a female protagonist, Nancy, who must find a way to destroy the threat on her own. In short, Nancy is being violently pursued by a madman in the dark; she is literally trapped in the social nightmare of a woman without protection. Nancy quickly realizes that she must fight the urge to rationalize in order to properly identify the source of danger. This is highlighted by close-

ups which emphasize her willingness to think outside of the box and to confront authority figures. Even so, all of her efforts to protect herself prove to be for naught when, at the end, a close-up of her screaming shows that she remains trapped in a nightmare that will continue to victimize her, thus dismissing any power she has attempted to obtain over the situation. However, the female paranoia that Jonathan Markovitz attributes to playing a key role in Nancy's "survival" can be associated with Gordon's and Riger's concept of rape fear. Subsequently, it can be argued that this particular sense of paranoia becomes such a useful survival skill for women that it is able to transcend the borders of reason and reality, allowing women privileged access into the realm of the supernatural. Despite being unable to defeat Freddy, it is this privilege that keeps Nancy strong and fighting until the very end. She proves herself to be smart and resourceful, but the film's ending assumes that this is not enough.

In the end, Nancy is just a girl facing a violent man, and she will lose, as have the many women outlined in Gordon's and Riger's study. The construction of gender roles here is very clear, and the implication about gender and society is very bleak. Without the protection of good men, women are left incredibly vulnerable to the bad ones. In the 2010 remake, the outcome, and therefore the suggestions about gender and society, remains the same. This time, Nancy is weakened by her position as a victim of sexual assault. This is made abundantly clear by having her reaction to the evidence represent her breaking point. From this moment on she is no longer able to maintain control of the situation. Her false defeat of Freddy, while powerful in its imagery, only makes more evident her trauma - once a victim, always a victim. These endings are in accordance with the stories of the women interviewed by Gordon and Riger, who live in the aftermaths of their rapes for the rest of their lives. Like them, Nancy is forever trapped in a nightmare that her assailant has complete control over. In both cases, this character's special

access to the supernatural thus becomes a curse as opposed to a privilege. She can see, experience, and connect. But she cannot win. Herein lies the trauma, emphasized through final close-ups of terror and hysterics.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (Wes Craven 1984)

In this analysis of Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, it will be important to understand how I view the characters as respectively representing multiple contemporary social issues. The teenagers represent an issue all on their own, since the overall concept of childhood is rather recent, and the concept of "teenage-hood" as an in-between stage even more so. In an examination of child sexuality within the subgenre of vampire cinema, Simon Bacon finds that the nostalgia with which childhood is approached in such films has to do with disparities and tensions that come along with the blurred boundaries of child/adult (26). He finds the vampire film particularly suited to his ideas because of their obvious stunting of maturity, however I argue that this ambivalence towards the pubescent years is pervasive in horror cinema as a whole. It is especially noticeable in the slasher film which tends to thrive narratively from this tension, having so much of the danger come from teens lacking adult supervision and their willingness to engage in adult activities such as sex and alcohol consumption. Like all liminal spaces, adolescence therefore represents the abject. As outlined by Barbara Creed, in its ambiguous nature, the abject is "that which disturbs identity, system, order", and therefore no matter how alluring, it is to be feared and subdued (36). Thus, there is a monstrous affinity between the teen victims (male teens especially) and Freddy Kruger that only Nancy can overcome, making her the perfect candidate for Final Girl.

In this specific film, the teenage boys represent the teenage desire to let loose. Rod is presented as a rebel, wild and sexually potent. This demeanor however is met with derision from adult authority figures to whom Rod's behavior is seen as not only juvenile, but a threat to their social order. Glen on the other hand is a pretty good guy. For instance, his lying to his mother about his whereabouts when spending the night at Tina's is justified by his benign, even altruistic, intentions. He is there as a source of support for Tina who has been terrified by a nightmare. Despite his sexual desires towards his girlfriend Nancy, he is never forceful, and always respectful. Still, such desires render him restless to a degree. This is expressed openly when he states "morality sucks", while sleeping alone. Meanwhile, the teenage girls represent the tension between feminist and patriarchal sentiments. In their pubescent states, the girls at once fight for their freedoms and crave male protection and support. Tina expresses this by engaging in a sexual relationship with Rod, presented in a scene which shows the two sharing her parents' bed. Nancy expresses this tension by first reaching out to her father and boyfriend for help, and then by accepting that she is on her own when she is treated as though she is suffering from insanity. At this point she recognizes the fault in the system and disassociates herself completely from "rational" behavior. Giving into her paranoia turns out to be her best shot at survival.

The parents and other adult authorities represent the broken social system and its inability to properly address issues to do with sexuality and violence (and especially the intersection of the two). What is made clear is that the system is too clogged by the old thinking of patriarchy to properly handle contemporary issues such as "rape fear". Finally, Freddy Krueger of course represents the threat to the social order by embodying sexual violence. He is a violent pedophile, the bad man that the feeble need protection from - in this case, children, and girls in particular

since their deaths are shown to be far more brutal. In accordance with this alignment to sexual deviance, Freddy is literally, as Carol Clover puts it, “a collective nightmare” for the 1980s (?).

In compounding such issues, *Nightmare* manages to raise considerable questions about the safety of women and the perceived circumvent threat of rape in the 1980s. The film in fact legitimizes the pervasive fear of rape by proving Nancy’s paranoia to be founded of sound mind, sounder even then those around her who try to settle her nerves with a patronizing rationale. Mostly unwilling to accept Nancy’s conclusions and evidences, authority figures in her life repeatedly tell her she simply needs to rest. While seemingly harmless advice, it is suspiciously anchored in the once respected “rest cure”. Masked as medical science in the 19th and early 20th century, this form of subjugation was prescribed almost exclusively to women who were considered to be “nervous”. In 2007, Dr. Diana Martin revisited the theory in an article for *The American Journal for Psychiatry* in an attempt to better understand what patients of this treatment really endured. Martin’s article is not by any means a condemnation of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, creator of the rest cure, but rather a recognition of his efforts, however misguided. Still, Martin also greatly considers the words of author Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who recounted her negative experiences with the rest cure publicly in the form of short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper”, and again in a subsequent explanatory article directed to Dr. Mitchell himself. Thus, with Gilman as a primary reference, Martin concludes:

...the implicit prejudices inherent in the rest cure are clear. The patient was to be infantilized and confined for her own good, and the cost, as “The Yellow Wallpaper” shows, could be devastating. In the confrontation between S. Weir Mitchell and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one can see a 19th-century microcosm of the tension between beneficence and autonomy. This tension persists in psychiatry today (738).

This conclusion is especially suited to my interpretation of Craven's film, as it points to the historically patriarchal structure of the medical institution and how it continues to shape the system. More significantly though, it alludes to what can be noted as Nancy's fundamental problem - as a teenage girl she lacks authority. The problem is twofold; she is young, and she is female. Nancy's victimization, imposed by Freddy Kruger and her parents alike, is therefore extremely gendered.

Arguably, the fear of rape can fall well within the boundaries of paranoia, especially in relation to the speciousness of it as a serious threat. That is not to say that rape is not to be cautioned about, but simply to say that Gordon's and Riger's findings suggest both men and women view rape as a more rampant issue than statistics tend to imply. They explain that early experiences of sexuality and sexualization paired with "vague warnings" to beware of strangers "leave young adult women with a sense of danger and vulnerability related to sexual organs, to adult men, and a confusion about the appropriate way to behave" (4). Clearly this points to problems within social structures. "Female fear", they write, "is the result of the interaction of social, sexual, and psychological forces" (8). Still, for the many women who have been violated in such a way, it is a completely rational fear, which makes it easier for others to rationalize it as well. In this respect, the character of Nancy can be admired for her intransigence. She is so unwavering in her certainty of danger that she becomes endowed with the power to cross over and access the realm of the supernatural, which proves to be quite the advantage over Freddy.

In *Nightmare* especially, the so-called paranoia that is born out of women's extreme sensitivity to violence transcends borders of reason and plausibility allowing women to enter other realms and understand them as the men simply cannot. The very act of reasoning (in using a rigid definition which prohibits beliefs outside of the scientific rationale) is proven to be

dangerous. This is made evident by dedicating close-ups of Nancy to moments in which she actively defies reason, figuring these moments as starkly significant to the plot by choosing to point out these moments by drawing the viewer's attention to her and her alone. For example, the very first close-up of Nancy shows her in Tina's bed, rattled from the realization that she and Tina have somehow shared a nightmare. In this shot, she holds a cross in her hands and is suddenly eased. This is the first instance in which her character is shown to be willing to accept that which cannot be explained by science, religion and Freddy. Her next close-up takes place at the police station after Tina has been murdered. In tears, Nancy defends Rod who is the assumed murderer without any evidence other than her assessment of his character, which of course does not mesh with how the adults see the delinquent. Still in a close-up, Nancy even attempts to tell them about Tina's dream.

Furthermore, close-ups of Nancy vigorously refusing to sleep litter the rest of the screen time, despite the warnings that there will be detrimental consequences for her body and mind. Again telling the viewer to learn something about her in these moments. Certainly, the camera is unwilling to allow her determination to fight the odds go unnoticed. This apparently also resonates with female viewers. In "Refusing to Refuse the Look: Female Viewers of the Horror Film", Brigid Cherry surveyed women in an attempt to gain insights into their general tastes. One twenty-four year old respondent singled out Nancy's resistance to submission stating: "I love the female lead in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. She knows what is going on and doesn't fall for all of the typical 'crazy female' coddling that everyone around her tries" (21). Significantly, Nancy is the only character who insists Freddy is responsible for the recent atrocities, a point also made by Markovitz. "This insistence" he argues "results in her growing isolation as more and more people decide that she is paranoid" (214). But this isolation does not impair her ability

to fight. Actually, it does the opposite as she only becomes more convinced that she needs to find a way to defeat Freddy without any effective help. At this point she is not only fighting Freddy, but those around her as well, especially her mother, who easily becomes her greatest obstacle.

Throughout the film, Nancy's mother tries time and time again to reason with her. As Nancy's resistance grows stronger so too do her mothers efforts to control her. To this point Markovitz notes that "Some of Nancy's most important battles aren't with monsters who kill women, but with a variety of social actors who insist that monsters can't possibly be killing women". From this he gathers that the film itself is not so much misogynistic, as it is pointing to the existence of misogyny (219), and concludes that "whatever potential there is for feminist recuperation of horror films comes in moments" (220). By refusing to accept what her daughter is going through she increases the risk to her safety. Nancy has to fight her on everything from attending school, to drinking coffee. Eventually she finds herself imprisoned by locked doors and barred windows, security measures that her mother believes are the measure to which she must go to for Nancy to sleep. She remains steadfast on this goal, despite seeing what comes of Nancy's nightmares at the sleep clinic. In fact, it is when she is forced under by her mother and doctors that she is first physically harmed by Freddy.

Giving into this induced deep sleep, Nancy surrenders for just long enough to fully enter Freddy's realm. Although she is harmed, she also finally acquires tangible evidence, his hat. When Nancy grabs Freddy's hat during their scuffle, she is able to bring it out of the dream and into her own reality. Along with the retrieval of the hat she also obtains his name, etched inside the lip, and the realization that she holds some level of power. That is, she has access to the supernatural realm. This is foreshadowed earlier in the film when Nancy dreams of Freddy killing Rod. When she awakes Craven provides a close-up of Nancy recognizing a feather

floating in her bedroom. She is taken aback by it because of its relativity to the dream in which Rod's pillow had been torn open by Freddy's metal claws. Immediately she rushes to check on Rod but is unfortunately stalled by her father and his fellow officer at the station who refuse Nancy access to Rod based on such absurd claims. She sounds crazy because she knows things that she cannot possibly know.

The affinity between women and the supernatural has been discussed within many disciplines, the study of horror cinema being no exception. From witchcraft to the monstrous-feminine, women on and off screen have been coded other-worldly for centuries. *The Hammer of Witches* is a medieval treatise which claims to explain the nature of witches through what Mario Jacoby refers to as using extensive treatment of the sexual theme, since witches were said to engage in sexual activity with the devil, and crude repudiation of women. The treatise argues that women are superstitious because they are gullible by nature; “since they have no strength, they readily seek to revenge themselves in secret through witchery” (Jacoby, 202). While Nancy is not ostracized as a malevolent force such as a witch, this idea of women being superstitious or gullible does persist in her treatment as a troubled girl who needs to rest. No one takes Nancy seriously. And yet, this “superstition” is in accordance with the film’s verisimilitude. As the viewer, we know that Freddy exists and is a real threat. This is made clear from the very first sequence which features a montage of close-ups of Freddy’s knives being sharpened. Such an opening demonstrates that close-ups will carry significance throughout the film as they will always seem juxtaposed to these opening shots and therefore signify danger in some capacity. Specifically, it is Nancy’s ability to assess danger that becomes the focus of the film through the use of close-ups. (Therefore in the original *Nightmare*, close-ups are used specifically, and almost exclusively, to intensify the masculine danger that threatens normality and highlight the feminine

response to this traumatic peril. As will be discussed below, this effective formal juxtaposition disappears in the remake)

Additionally, a historical relationship between women and the supernatural has been prominently represented as having to do with the menstrual cycle itself. In films such as *Carrie* (1976) and *Ginger Snaps* (2000) the link is made directly. But even when menstruation is not featured in these thrillers, it is easy to see puberty itself as a factor of causality between the teenage girl and the supernatural realm, and how it becomes paralleled with sexual awakenings. In an essay entitled “Horror, Femininity, and Carrie’s Monstrous Puberty”, author Shelley Stamp Lindsey argues that “Menstruation and female sexuality here are inseparable from the ‘curse’ of supernatural power” (284). What this means for Nancy, who unlike Carrie and Ginger is not represented as monstrous, is that her transition to womanhood is muddied by the problematic relationship between woman and monster. This provides her with special access to Freddy. Upon realizing this, Nancy becomes motivated to fight, stating: “Fred Krueger did it, Daddy. And only I can get him. It's my nightmare he comes to”.

Arguably though, Nancy’s innocence plays a role in her heroism as well. While *Nightmare* is quite unoffensive in its portrayal of sexuality compared to other benchmark slasher films, it does not hesitate to create a distinction between virgin/whore. These spaces are clearly occupied by Nancy/Tina. Tina is not presented as wildly promiscuous, but her sexuality is certainly pointed to. Not only is she happily sleeping with Rod, made evident in the one off-screen sex scene which occurs just before Tina’s death, but she is also curiously drawn to Freddy, like Lucy to Dracula, in a way that is not characteristic of Nancy. Blatantly put, Tina dies because she gives herself to Freddy. In her dreams, she walks toward Freddy’s sinister beckonings more often than she runs away from him. She walks right into all of his traps. This

does not mean she is not afraid of Freddy, but does imply that she is also fascinated by him. Nancy on the other hand wants nothing to do with the sexual advances of Freddy, or even Glen for that matter. Rather than answering Freddy's call, Nancy hunts Freddy with the intention of punishing him. The ever-increasing trauma that Nancy endures throughout the narrative until she is finally broken can be seen as a testament to the destructive power of rape fear. No matter how resilient and heroic Nancy is (or at least tries to be), Freddy's violence weighs too heavy on her. There is no escape. Worse, it is only when she refuses her paranoia that she is overpowered by Freddy.

In a close-up, Nancy prays nervously as she prepares for her final showdown with Freddy. But it is no use. Despite all of the work she puts into her booby-traps, and all the faith she puts in herself, there comes a moment when she realizes she cannot win. She decides then that he must be fueled by her fear and in one last effort to survive, Nancy turns her back on Freddy, actively refusing to let him control her. But this fails as well. In a false ending, Nancy is shown to have reversed the terrible effects of Freddy. Happily, she heads off to school with all of her would-be-dead friends. But just then Freddy's presence invades her life once again as she is shown to be simply trapped in his world. A close-up reveals the horror on her face as she yells and begs for help as Freddy whiskers her away. Notably, this ambiguous ending was not what Craven had in mind. In fact, in a recent interview Craven discusses his initial intention to have Nancy defeat Freddy, but allegedly the producers pushed for an ending that would have the potential to spawn sequels. However, this information does not detract from the fact that Nancy's final appearance strikingly represents defeat and trauma. This close-up of Nancy is one that

lingers, so powerful in its depiction of her loss of power. In fact, Freddy is, and it seems has always been, in complete control. This is proof that Nancy's paranoia was justifiable all along.

A Nightmare on Elm Street (Samuel Bayer 2010)

Despite remaining loyal to the basic premise of Craven's story (and in fact relying heavily on his subtext of pedophilia) and recreating some of the staple imageries, Bayer's *Nightmare* can only classify as loosely-based on the original. The film is for horror fans, not *Nightmare* fans. In its appropriation of genre conventions it completely disregards the original's appreciation of social context and character development. In particular, the close-up is over-utilized to convey a sense of fear among all of the characters. This means that everyone is paranoid, and Nancy's role becomes far less special. While in the original close-ups of Nancy stood out for emphasizing character traits essential to her survival, the remake spreads close-ups around carelessly. Rarely does a close-up of Nancy stand out in the remake, and when it does, it seems to be emphasizing how vulnerable she is feeling. An example of this is when the camera closes in on her face while she panics at the realization that she is micro-napping in Quentin's car while he is in the pharmacy.

The film slowly but surely removes paranoia from the equation entirely, choosing instead to make the film about the dangers of repression and the trauma associated with childhood victimization. Nancy becomes our main player, not because she is the smartest nor the strongest as in the original, but she is simply the most victimized - she was always Freddy's favorite. So truly a victim, this Final Girl lacks the power associated with the heroism of Craven's. Thus, in

this remake, even more so than the others, the close-up itself holds no power; they are utilized only to set the atmosphere as claustrophobic, as all the characters come to terms with being trapped. The first half of the film is presented almost as a series of vignettes, laying out what the characters are going through. First Dean, and then Kris, and then Jesse. Finally, after this third death, Nancy takes over the plot. She is warned by Jesse of the threat Freddy poses and turns to Quentin for support.

While Craven's film stresses the need for Nancy to develop and trust her own sense of paranoia, this film creates a partnership between Nancy and Quentin, both of whom seem to already have a fully developed what seems to be for them a comfortable level of paranoia that they can rationalize with total ease. This has to do with the film's unexpected insistence on the themes of trauma and repression. The teens are all living with traumatizing repressed memories. When Freddy comes for them, the memories return -obviously, to a further degree for some, but always enough to alert them to the very real threat they face. Because of this, they need little to no convincing that Freddy is real. They already *know*, somewhere deep down, that they have to be on guard. Compared to the original, this completely disrupts the dynamic between them. Most significantly, Nancy's role as the convincer, investigator, and fighter is erased. Furthermore, Bayer's Nancy is completely dependent on Quentin. She is unable to function, defeat, or even survive without him.

In his 2014 book entitled, *Making and Remaking Horror in the 1970s and 2000s: Why Don't They Do It Like They Used To?*, David Roche samples the most popular and acclaimed films of the genre, taking the time to examine the connections between text, subtext and context in order to understand the failings of the remakes. He writes:

The American independent horror films of the 1970s do more than contain imagery that echoes various events of their time... contextual events are deeply embedded in the narrative structure, and the handling of space, so that it is not mere backdrop but a foundation. In other words, context pertains to subtext just as much as to the text, the subtext often producing a critique of the context (28)... [Whereas] the remakes of the 2000s tend to make a fairly superficial and decorative use of contextual events, which are more of an explicit backdrop, obtained with profilmic elements such as props, costumes, and diegetic music, rather than a subterranean foundation for the narrative (35).

This is a relevant statement because even though the original *Nightmare* was released in 1984, it remains ostensibly connected to this time period. Not only had Craven written the story in the late 1970s, he had already made a name for himself with *Last House on the Left* (1972), and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), in which his sensitivity to social climate is apparent. Moreover, both of these earlier films are analyzed extensively with love in Roche's book, demonstrating Craven's ability to create powerful, meaningful works. Noticeable throughout is the strength of Craven's Final Girls. For instance, in *Last House* Mari makes it home all on her own despite having been beaten, tortured, raped and left for dead.

Unfortunately, Bayer seems to have missed the memo on all of this, leaving his film lackluster as it neither recreates affectionately (homage), nor subverts - which would demand a demonstrated recognition of what made Craven's film worthy of discussion. Wiped away here is not only context and subtext, but the relationship between the two. Thus, the story lacks depth,

for which it cannot make up in character, sadly leaving no significance in Nancy's close-ups. In fact, a more interesting female character in the 2010 version may well be Kris, whose investigative skills allow her a narrative arch (albeit short) within which her growing paranoia is shown as necessary. Like Craven's Nancy, Kris is portrayed as understanding her paranoia as essential to her health and safety. Still, this privilege does not lead to more interesting close-ups. Worse, she is not given a chance to fully develop this sense which may have saved her. In this way, Kris can be seen as a Tina 2.0. About the character of Tina in the original film, Markowitz writes:

[Her] efforts to discuss her dream might be seen as an attempt to gain control over her fear and her nightmare. The fact that these efforts are ultimately unsuccessful is due partly to male intervention, and partly to the fact that her own sense of paranoia was never fully developed. Initially, Tina responds to her dream fairly dismissively (216).

While Kris is very obviously meant to echo this character, her reactions are far more determined. After witnessing Dean's death, Kris's repressed memories of Freddy begin to return. Upon seeing herself as a child at Dean's funeral, and then seeing a picture of herself playing with Dean as a child (in a time before she can recall knowing him), Kris immediately suspects something strange is happening. As she begins to investigate she becomes heavily entrenched in the role of the Final Girl and even appears paranoid. However, it is important to note that unlike in the original, Kris is not threatened by an abstract "stranger danger" but is in fact exposing herself to the very real violence of her own past experiences with Freddy. In her

search for truth, Kris seems aware of the danger, but unsure of what she will learn about herself. She thus chooses to tackle the issue alone. That is, unlike Tina, she does not reach out for help. She is simply not paranoid enough, and this certainly may have to do with the idea that to an extent she is confronting a memory rather than a literal monster. In many ways though, Kris remains the stronger candidate for Final Girl as Nancy must rely heavily on others for survival.

While in Craven's film it becomes clear by the end that Nancy's power has been an illusion, and that Freddy has been in control the whole time, we can at least commend her for her fighting spirit. In what I can only assume is an attempt to clarify all subtexts, Bayer's film lets the viewer know from the beginning that Freddy is in charge. Nancy's first "nightmare" happens the night of Dean's funeral, but she does not even know it. The viewer can see Freddy pushing his way through the wall behind her but she awakes before he can act. Perhaps her awakening is linked to her Final Girl intuition, or perhaps to her long struggle with repression - the damage that Freddy caused her as a child has clearly not gone away, despite her inability to recall the events. In fact, at Dean's funeral this is made abundantly clear when a doctor reminds her that he is still available to see her, pointing out that she should "remember" where to find him. Perhaps then, Freddy has been haunting her for all these years, always on the verge of striking. Either way what this scene shows us is how very easily Freddy can impose himself on her as she lies vulnerable in bed. That he does not seek Nancy out in this scene and attack like he does to the others only makes the scene more disturbing, creating a peeping-tom scenario. If he has been watching her all this time, this could account for why she never properly expresses paranoia; nothing about this is irrational to her because it all exists in her memory. Nancy is well acquainted with the victim-role and knows the horrors Freddy is capable of, rational or not. This

would also account for why she knows she needs Quentin; she is aware of her vulnerabilities and shortcomings.

Arguably, Quentin's character is an especially interesting case because he forces us to reconsider Clover's statement that victimization is inherently feminine. While Quentin is not particularly "masculinized" by superficial aspects such as sexual virility, he is never feminized. He is active, rational, and (tries to be) unafraid, with a considerable take-charge attitude. He is always willing to fight. This is particularly unlike Glen in Craven's original, who when asked by Nancy to hit Freddy replies, "Are you crazy? Hit him with what?" To this Nancy responds, "You're the jock". Without being macho per se, Quentin remains comfortably stable at all times, even when coming to terms with his own abuse (granted, this takes some time). In a recent article outlining the details of Posttraumatic Growth among men who have a history of being sexually abused, a collective of researchers within the medical institution explored men's reactions to such experiences. They find that the social imposition of male gender norms poses "significant problems for men recovering from childhood sexual abuse", particularly because "the male socialization process has sanctions against both victimhood and homosexuality" (Easton, Coohey, Rhodes, Moray 213). The effects of the consequential feelings of stigma are cited as including long-term mental health problems as well as avoidance as a coping strategy. These are both evident in Quentin's character. He admits to Nancy that he suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder, something he has been medicated for since childhood. Furthermore, he has not only repressed the memory of Freddy (like all the other teens), but denies the abuse; Quentin avoids facing the memory by insisting that he must have lied as a child.

While Quentin is masculinized by his own heroism and stoic responses to his victimization, Nancy is feminized by how quickly she allows the trauma to invade her sense of self. She becomes the typical victim - emotional, weak, powerless - which are all of course characteristics that typify femininity as well. Although Nancy's introduction as independent, free-thinking, and strong-willed is enticing, it stands to reason that this hardened demeanor is simply the result of her victimization. By constructing a somewhat "masculine" costume for herself, Nancy is fashioned more to Clover's image of the Final Girl. But she may well be exhibiting a resistance to objectification as a defense mechanism, making it intrinsically connected to her role as a victim in the first place. Once again, the image of a strong woman can be easily deconstructed to reveal a sense of powerlessness in the face of patriarchy and the dominance of the male sex.

When Nancy is forced to confront her own victimization, she is stripped bare, until all that is left is her core; a broken little girl. The film makes this literal for the viewer; as the eminent final showdown with Freddy nears, Nancy and Quentin take it upon themselves to exercise their investigative skills and hunt the monster down. Here, Nancy tries to be brave without hesitation, but this turns out to be a naive approach. Ultimately, she is too unprepared and too damaged, which leaves her extremely vulnerable. Luckily, Quentin remains in reality and is able to pull her out of Freddy's realm, but as in the original, her special access to that realm allows her to bring him with her. Back on her own turf Nancy has more control, no doubt strengthened by the realization that she does have power in the situation, and together she and Quentin destroy Freddy. But of course, this is a false ending. The two separate, exhausted from what they believe to be their ultimate triumph. Nancy returns home but just when she feels safe

Freddy appears, grabbing her mother and revealing once again that he holds the power. The camera cuts to a close-up of Nancy who lets out a terrified scream - frozen, inactive, and helpless once again. Perhaps the entire film has been a dream, perhaps she has always been trapped in his world, perhaps she can never leave. One thing is for sure, her strength was an illusion, and like many Final Girls before her she is only a traumatized survivor, if she will even survive this time.

Nancy's biggest mistake, it turns out, was parting ways with Quentin who until then had always been there to save her; when she micro-naps in the school and in the pharmacy, when she is about to be sedated in the hospital, and finally when Freddy traps her in her childlike state. Obviously, the film seems to struggle with how it should represent gender. Much of the action and problem solving is evenly divided between Nancy and Quentin, making them both act out the role of victim-hero that is usually designated to a young woman, but Nancy is always weighted towards victim, Quentin hero - evident especially in this last scene which makes a point to finally separate them, leaving Nancy defenseless. Although her ability to think critically and outside of the box gets her into Freddy's realm, without Quentin her own weaknesses are simply too heavy. This can be seen when she is trapped in the nightmare with Freddy awaiting Quentin's rescue, but it is even more poignant in the film's ending because it emphasizes the fact that in reality she is not strong enough to face the threat. Ultimately, Quentin can survive, but Nancy's trauma proves stronger than her will. Even though Craven's Nancy is doomed in the end as well, the explicit role of sexual-trauma in the remake changes things. While Craven's finale is something of a jump-scare, in maintaining its link with rape-fear in the 1980s it does insist that the threat is all-consuming and everlasting. In the 2010 version however, it is not just a threat, it is a reality. Not only is everyone afraid, but everyone is traumatized, and everyone has a number

of close-ups to emphasize this. Freddy is a monster, and the past has a direct link to the future, he is even more so this time the embodiment of the Return of the Repressed. Thus, the role of the female victim is shown to be inevitable in both cases, but more recently as unalterable.

As it turns out, Nancy is disposable, not even worthy of particularly striking close-ups (although this may be a failing on Bayer's part as a first time director). Be that as it may, my analysis of this rather unimpressive film does not leave me convinced that the consistent use of close-ups serves any other purpose than to make the viewer uncomfortable. Where the close-up was originally associated with paranoia and power, in this version it responds instead to the environment of fear and the Return of the Repressed. Moreover, it loses all meaning when used to the extent Bayer uses it. Eventually it becomes nothing more than an element of the space as the characters allow their fear to close in on them. In other words, it comes to privilege atmosphere over character development. This is not so dissimilar from *Black Christmas* (2006) nor *Halloween* (2007) which both also showed less concern for the face of the Final Girl than their respective original counterparts, although for Zombie the close-up remained an important tool in telling the story.

Conclusion

What is made apparent by my research and analysis on the topic is that where the Final Girl has historically been figured as heroic, her role as the traumatized survivor is made more prevalent by the strategic use of the close-up. As suggested by Constantine Verevis, remakes are more than just pre-sold tickets (3). My research indicates that they demonstrate a clear desire to revisit the subtexts of the originals, and “re-contextualize” them. Unfortunately, they lack the connection to the political and/or social context of the 1970s and 1980s. The consequential problem of not knowing what to say, especially in regards to gender in a “postfeminist” era, leads to the problem of not knowing what to *show*.

This postfemenist sentiment that I am referring to differs from my approach to discussing the third wave in chapter 1. Whereas third wave ideals seemed pervasive within the remake of *Black Christmas*, in speaking in more general terms about the direction of slasher cinema today, it seems appropriate to cite the always ambiguous nature of “postfeminism”. While third wave has often been argued as having come to a close with the turn of the millennium, the turn to postfeminism has often been criticized as too confusing a term to properly be tasked with defining these new times. As a student in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department, I heard these debates all the time. Yet, I have chosen to use the term here in order to stress just how ambiguous the new slashers tend to be in their connotations about gender and society. This can be seen throughout all of the remakes, although sometimes to a greater extent than other times. As a result, we witness in the remakes a great decline in the power of the close-up. Throughout the plots, they are used mainly to emphasize the spectacle of the wet death (as in *Black*

Christmas), and to emphasize a sense of claustrophobia (apparent in all three, especially *A Nightmare on Elm Street*). At the end, the camera simply gazes superficially at the trauma of the Final Girl without addressing why the victimization and powerlessness of women remains necessary to the structure of the slasher film. Are these final close-ups just a way of remaining loyal to the original text? If so, can we assume the slasher has completely lost its ability to explore subtexts through the use of facial close-ups? After multiple viewings and scrutinizing analyses, these are the questions that linger.

While I have attempted to account for the influence of third wave feminism in *Black Christmas* (2006), I believe it is painfully obvious that the feminist politics I recognize as informing the original film have been lost. In *Halloween* (1978) the social context of middle-class suburbia was foundational in forming a subtext about sexual repression, but *Halloween* (2007) completely redefines this context by making the Meyers family working-class. Moreover, the film normalizes sexuality with the mother working as a stripper and the sister being scantily clad, even hinting at Michael's incestuous desires towards them. Finally, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1980) is intrinsically connected to the vulnerability of women and the phenomenon of "rape fear", but in the remake the story is clearly more about childhood trauma in general, with little-to-no special attention given to female victimization in particular. That the remakes lack the "subterranean" political level is not lost on Roche, who discusses how these newer films tend to focus more on killer motivation (276), although he does credit Zombie's remake as being even more coherent than the original due to its critique of the slasher (274). By making Michael the protagonist Roche points out that the film subverts the notion that the killer should be dehumanized, that he should only be "the shape" or "the boogeyman". Arguably though, to some extent this has been a trend in the 2000s. Billy and Agnes finally get their allusive story told

Black Christmas (2006), and to a lesser degree so does Kruger in the 2010 *Nightmare* film. Thus, perhaps it should be acknowledged that the Final Girl is no longer burdened with carrying the narrative. The victimization of men has become increasingly present in the slasher and I do not doubt that this is connected to the “postfeminist” politics of the last twenty-odd years. Attention has been pulled from the Final Girl to be spread among her, other victims, and especially the killer. But what does this dilution of the role mean for the representation of women?

Critics such as Clover, Pinedo, and Creed saw the role of the Final Girl as rather empowering. However problematic her position as victim-hero was in the 70s and 80s, it did not diminish the fact that these young women were fighting, and winning. I complicate this notion by illustrating how the use of the close-up emphasizes her vulnerabilities, placing her as a Traumatized Survivor, rather than a Heroine. Even so, that she does survive necessarily points to a strength that does not exist within the other characters. This is what makes the Final Girl so special, and it is why she gets to carry the plot. An unavoidable effect of turning our attention to the killer is that the Final Girl’s role shrinks, taking away from the ability to watch her character develop into a fighter, for better or for worse. In *Black Christmas* (2006), Kelli shares the spotlight not only with Billy and Agnes, but with other female characters who fight alongside her (even if they do not make it). In *Halloween* (2007), Laurie is not even introduced until an hour in, by which point the viewer has already settled into having Michael lead the narrative. In *Nightmare* (2010), Freddy’s role is expanded slightly, but Nancy is still forced to partner-up, taking away from her independent significance.

With the roles of the women so diminished they become even more objectified, existing only to be tortured, until they finally break and reciprocate the violences they suffer. Whereas in the originals, the close-up is often used to point out their strengths such as seeing and fighting,

(until the end when all of this IS made a mockery of by the close-up of trauma), the close-ups in the remakes reiterate the insignificance of the Final Girl by either under-utilizing them (*Halloween*), or over-utilizing them (*Black Christmas* and *Nightmare*). So yes, nowadays the Final Girl is more likely to defeat the killer with examples including *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *Black Christmas* (2006), *Halloween* (2007), and *My Bloody Valentine 3D* (2009), as well as the false endings of *Friday the 13th* (2009), and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010). But it is clearly represented as a reaction born out of the trauma of being strictly victimized. Significantly, all of these Final Girls are mercilessly tortured, and none but Erin of *TCM* carries the plot alone. Although in the past the Final Girl was strong enough to survive but weak enough to fall apart, it is more standard these days for her to become so overtaken by hysterics that she is finally able to kill, with *Halloween* being the best example of this. Thus, it seems unsupported to claim that the image of women in slashers has gotten stronger as a result of equality or “postfeminism”. In fact, it seems the victim-hero position she occupies has only become more ambivalent.

My research indicates that between 1974 and 1984, the identity of the Final Girl adamantly remained fixed to the role of surviving, with the characters becoming stronger willed with each film. Jess was left unconscious, but Laurie managed to fight harder, and finally Nancy geared up, preparing a strategy for combat. Thus, their strength was progressive despite the fact that none were able to overpower the monster, and all were left in traumatic and helpless states. However by the 2000s these roles had been greatly disabled, existing more and more often as only a body through which to fully capture the threat of the monster, and subdue it - which implies a surprising return to what Robin Wood would define as reactionary cinema. While Craven's Nancy was the strongest of the sampled Final Girls, Bayer's Nancy is the weakest. She is the only Final Girl to rely completely on her male partner, a surprising approach considering

the character's self-sufficiency in the original. In *Black Christmas* (2006), the weakest of the Final Girls is made the strongest since Kelli (a replacement for Jess) refuses to let the killers make the rules, much like Craven's Nancy, and wins. Both versions of Laurie Strode are willing to fight, but the events lead to catatonic conditions. Still, Rob Zombie's Laurie is far less resourceful, and much more unstable by the end of her fight than Carpenter's. The results of these character analyses suggest that while the 1970s and 1980s saw a progression in the Final Girl's heroism, the remakes of the 2000s point to a regression, not only in the potential of the Final Girl but in the ability to masterfully construct coherent close-ups of her. But there is a counterpoint in that the more recent Final Girls are more capable of murder, yet another reason why these newer texts seem incoherent; a sentiment shared by Roche.

In his introduction, Roche points out that while many of the horror remakes he discusses (and that this text discusses as well) are all "acknowledged", but that they tend to oscillate between "close" and "transformed" (13). He also points out a paradox in that the original and remake become mutually beneficial to one another, since the new big budgets legitimize the old low-budget films. But did they ever need to be legitimized? The answer to this lies in how we choose to analyze the films and what conclusions we can draw from such analyses. For my purposes, identifying the strengths and weaknesses in all six films has obviously been dependent on the representation of gender, specifically through the use of the close-up, within a larger social context. From this perspective all three remakes are conclusively weaker than their original counterparts for their inability to look outside of themselves. Although the post 9/11 world does in some ways resemble the "social climate" of the 1970s (Roche 28), the politics of the 1970s were also being markedly informed by liberation movements that have largely disappeared from today's "social climate", especially with the movement towards a less politically driven 3rd wave

of feminism (and even beyond), as noted in chapter 1. Moreover, Roche concludes that “overall, the remakes of the 2000s tend to make a fairly superficial and decorative use of contextual events” (35). Therefore what may remain of feminist politics is hardly front and centre within these new plots, which explains why the role of the Final Girl is no longer significant. For these reasons I would argue that the earlier films do not need to be legitimized by big budget remakes, because the new approaches to the stories detract from what those filmmakers were expressing, thus making illegitimate the main ideas.

It is always a daunting task to predict the future of a genre, but given my findings and the considerably steadfast tendency towards remaking, it seems likely that the trajectory of these films will continue to victimize women, and make a spectacle her trauma through the use of the close-up. But just as Pinedo found solace in the Final Girl’s willingness to fight, a newer generation may be able to find solace (however superficial) in the Final Girl’s ability to kill - even if it is only a reaction to trauma as I have suggested above. To conclude, the close-up of a screaming woman may only be a convention of the genre now, but historically it is an iconic image which represents the state of women as vulnerable, making it so that even a smart and capable Final Girl is left traumatized by her subjugation to male violence within the patriarchal state.

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